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# Me and my travels

Ruth Rogers, chef

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Interview by Carl Wilkinson, The Observer Sunday January 21 2007

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**My idea of paradise is ...**

Mnemba Island off the coast of Tanzania. You pay for what you don't get there! You don't get a phone, you don't get a fax, tennis courts, music. I think of luxury as not having more and more but less and less.

**My top travel tip is ...**

Change your plans if you don't like where you are. I've been in ski resorts where we've booked for two weeks and left. Don't feel you have to stick it out.

**The luxury I can't live without is ...**

Extra virgin olive oil. Sometimes I even take a bottle with me on a trip so I can pour some good olive oil over whatever I'm eating and it tastes better.

**I always bring back...**

Cookbooks. I've just come back from Peru with a cookbook. Many restaurants are doing their own cookbooks, I buy them or people often give me local ones. And if there aren't any to buy, I tend to come back with the recipe for something I've eaten.

**My most memorable meal was in ...**

Vernazza, in the Cinque Terre in Italy at my son's wedding in 2004. We've been going there forever and he got married in the village square. Everybody came and it was like a big fiesta.

**The most romantic place I've ever been ...**

Was a room on the 55th floor, I think, of the Four Seasons Hotel in New York. It's a corner room with an incredible view of the city.

**The best beach I've ever seen was ...**

Newport, Rhode Island. It's a wild, windswept beach with huge sand dunes.

**My last trip was to ...**

Cartagena, Colombia. We stayed in the walled town on the Caribbean coast then went out to the islands just offshore. It was wonderful and the restaurants are great.

**My first trip was ...**

To Cuba when I was 12 years old in the early Sixties. It was just after Castro came in and my father took us. My father had been there under Batista and

was very excited at the new socialist revolution.

**When I'm travelling I always miss ...**

My bed, my copy of The Observer and Channel 4 News. The other thing I miss is cooking. Even if I'm in Italy I miss the food at the River Cafe.

**My favourite hotel is ...**

La Bandita, in Val d'Orcia, southern Tuscany. It's the most beautiful house, which friends bought and are opening as a hotel in June.

**I've always wanted to visit ...**

Yemen, Syria and Iran... although probably not this year! I've always wanted to go to Isfahan.

• The River Cafe Pocket Books by Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers are available now (Ebury Press)

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