

He avoids many comfort zones, but this travel author is still ...

David Chew
david.chew@newstoday.com.sg

TRAVELLING is actually very easy, most people just have to overcome their fears and get out of their comfort zones," said Tan Wee Cheng, travel writer who just published his first book, *The Greenland Seal Hunter*.

Containing but a fraction of his travel experiences, the book covers his visits to nearly 20 countries. Tan, a policy analyst with a statutory board, has travelled to more than 100 countries.

"Contrary to belief, one doesn't need to know the language of the place," he said. "English, for example, is spoken everywhere, with the Internet and media so pervasive everywhere, there will always be someone who can speak English in any part of the world, and learning 20 of the most common words of any language really isn't very difficult."

"Of course one can always point and gesture," said the 35-year-old with a laugh.

It was after his post-graduate studies at the London Business School that Tan was bit the travel bug. In 1993, he backpacked in western Europe and found that, contrary to his beliefs, it was easy to travel. From there, he "conquered" East Europe, the Middle East and beyond.

"Initially, I wanted to travel because I wanted to

Travelling easy

visit all these places I read about in books. When I found out it was so easy to travel, I just did more and more of it," he said.

Tan then began to plan his trips based on two points on a map, "from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, for example", he said.

Tan has been chronicling his travel tales since 1995, and has a website which he updates regularly and an email list to which he sends daily updates from various cyber cafés on his travels.

And this is where Tan drops a little known fact about Internet cafes around the world.

"Ironically, in poorer countries it's easier to find one than in more developed countries! In developed countries, everyone has their computer at home, so Internet cafes aren't popular," said Tan.

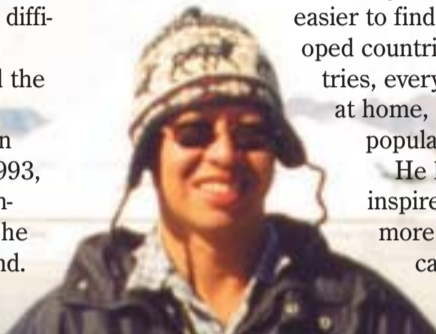
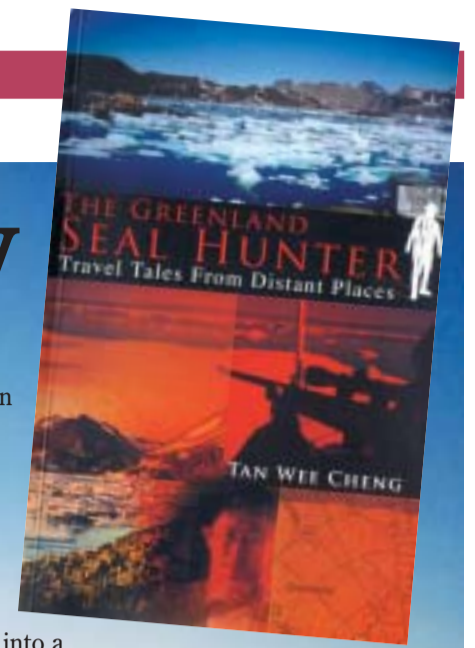
He hopes his book will inspire others to travel and see more of the world. Just take calculated risks is his advice.

"Once, in Colombia, I was in Leticia and the President there announced the end of a cease-fire, which I watched on TV in a café. Minutes later, I went into a cyber cafe to surf the Internet and there was no power in the city as the guerrillas had taken over the power stations. Soon, tanks and Jeeps were rolling out on the streets."

"That was quite impressive, but it was only at that point that it dawned on me I might be in danger so I started to walk back to my hotel," said Tan.

Another bit of advice is to keep your details on a Web-based server. "I scan in the details page of my passport and keep it in a Web-based account somewhere," he said. "You never know when it might come in handy."

The Greenland Seal Hunter, is out in major bookstores at \$17.50. Tan's travel website is at <http://weecheng.com>.



Your Quest To Perfect Looking Skin Begins With Cortry

Day 1

Day 14
After using Cortry Face mask

The key ingredient in Cortry products is Ginseng, which nourishes the skin, while it accelerates the removal of toxins in the blood, thus promoting metabolism to give your skin an overall radiance and well-being. Cortry Mask ingredients include aloe, angelica pearl powder, astragalus root and other herbs and plants grown from the fertile soils in the mountains of Sichuan. Look and feel better with Cortry today.

pH level Graph

花
开
富
贵
福
满
人
间

Cortry's products are carefully and specially formulated to help your skin regain its natural pH level so that your skin is left feeling baby soft; baby smooth. Visible results at the shortest possible time. Results that will leave your skin looking as white as snow and feeling smooth as silk.

Our Range Of Products

Acne Deep Treatment Mask

Intensive Whitening Mask

After-sun Treatment Mask

Face Mask

Eye Mask

Neck Mask

Buy 1 box of Face Mask and get 1 box of Neck Mask worth \$27.90 absolutely FREE!
(While stocks last!)

Available at

Also available at all leading pharmacies.

Sole Agent
BLUETRY ENTERPRISE
Hotline Email
67471505 enquiry@bluetry.com.sg

BOOK REVIEW

War Trash

Ha Jin

HA JIN'S *War Trash* is unsentimental and probably as close as it gets to an actual documentary of life as a prisoner of war during the Korean struggle in the 1950s.

Trapped within the confines of a war prison, its politically-indifferent narrator describes the horrors of being hustled from one ideological camp to the other and back, sometimes with terrible consequences.

Using this forthright and usually self-possessed narrator, Ha Jin cleverly unmasks extreme delusions and passions in a dry, academic manner.

He speaks of fears, betrayals and tortured minds matter-of-factly and tells how thousands of captured men jostled with consciences and peer pressure.

Interspersed with small details of daily camp routines, it is almost as if he is handing the reader unedited footage of prison life in its entirety for him to acknowledge and process until he finds some way to comprehend the psychological chaos within those detention barracks.

For a good part, *War Trash* reads not much different from a soulless report. But its unflinching candour latches onto the imagination and prods the reader forward until the last page. — Cheng Puay Koon



Andrea De Cruz is back in the limelight, serving as fitness ambassador for health club Phillip Wain and starring in Toy Factory Theatre Ensemble's production of *Dangerous Liaisons*, which runs from Feb 18 to 20 at the Victoria Theatre.



Currently, my book of choice is *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. A simple yet powerful and wisdom-filled read, it tells about a shepherd boy who goes in search of a treasure while meeting lots of obstacles along the way.

My interpretation of the book is about self-discovery — much like what most of us experience. We look high and low for worldly possessions without realising that what matters to us most, has always been right there, before our eyes!

Who's reading what...

SNG LI WEI