

About Us

Description

WE ARE WANDERERS COMPASS

Welcome to our travel blog. Thank you for taking the time to learn about us and our story. We are pleased you have stopped by for a visit. Let us start by introducing ourselves. We are Joelle and Ryan, co-founders of [Wanderers Compass](#).

As we embark on this blogging adventure, we do so with excitement and apprehension. We look forward to sharing the ride with you; likely bumpy at times, but our goal is simple. To inspire and encourage you to make all your travel dreams a beautiful reality.

So who are we, and how did we start our Wanderers Compass journey? Our unique story has taught us that our greatest gifts are when we live in the moment, follow our hearts, and think outside the box.

*"Live life by the needle of a compass, not by the hands of a clock."
Ryan From Wanderers compass*

About Joelle

I am married to my high school sweetheart and am a proud mom to two wonderful adult children. I have three beautiful and charming grandsons who own my heart! Every moment with them I cherish, which I am blessed to do often. As a first-generation American born to French immigrants, I am bilingual and hold dual citizenship. My first language was French, which I still do a decent job at, except my grammar can sometimes be atrocious. My parents passed their wandering genes onto me, and I am proud to continue that tradition. Traveling internationally started as a toddler, and I have not stopped.

I have a BSN in Nursing and a BA in Behavioral Sciences. My professional nursing career has been in oncology, both on the clinical and research sides. With my healthcare background, the blog will have a health component. There has always been a passion for me, leading to many years of public speaking engagements across the United States and several medical publications. My greatest joy in life comes from my family, followed by travel. My other interests are photography, gardening, cooking, wine, and volunteer work with our military service members. I tend to burn the candles at both ends but know no other way to live.

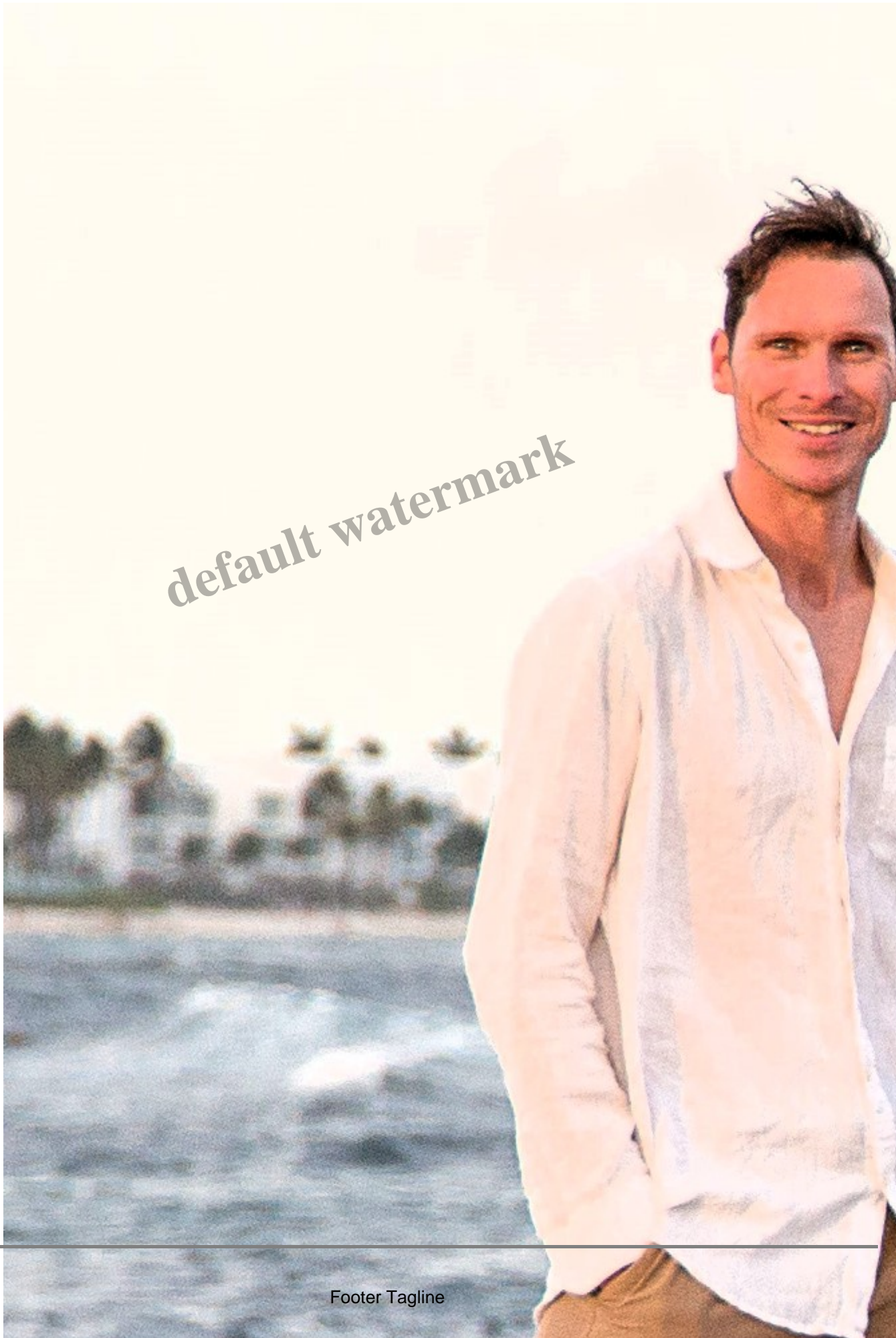
About Ryan

Ryan is a single dad to a fun-loving and sweet little boy. His son is the absolute light of his life. He adores being a dad and works hard to fully engage in his son's life. Ryan's professional career is in a civilian role with the Department of the Army. He also is a Sargeant First Class in the US Army Reserves. He was on active duty army for several years and is a disabled Veteran. Ryan served his country with courage, honor, and pride in three deployments to Afghanistan and one tour in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He has over 16 years of military service and counting.

Ryan has made endless sacrifices for our country. In my eyes, he is a hero. You will never find him accepting that title; he is too humble to use that term for himself.

His son is the center of his life, followed by his love of travel. Travel planning is his primary role on our travel team, researching and detailing our day-to-day itineraries. Ryan's other interests include riding his customized Harley, pottery, woodworking, poetry, music, and making Mead. I am always in awe of all that Ryan juggles in his life.

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Ryan in Tulum, Mexico

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Joelle In Fes, Morocco

How we met

Now you might wonder how we got here. First, we are the most unlikely of business and travel partners. We live on different coasts of the United States and are in entirely different life stages. We met in 2007 when I became part of an organization called [Soldiers Angels](#). I was working in Oncology full-time and supporting a parent with advanced cancer. Feeling the need to engage in something completely detached from Oncology, I started looking for new places to give my time. I have always been in awe of the sacrifices made by those who serve in the military. I volunteered to “adopt” a deployed soldier committing to sending packages and letters regularly.

It might not be hard to guess that my first “adopted” soldier was Ryan in 2007. He was stationed in Afghanistan at the time of Operation Enduring Freedom. Crossing each other’s paths was life-altering for both of us. I adopted deployed soldiers over the next ten years through this organization. Several have become treasured members of my family. I am enormously proud of them and feel incredibly honored and touched to be part of their lives.

Travel Inspiration

Ryan and I kept in close touch after he left active duty. I luckily had frequent business trips to where he lived. Over time we became friends and then subsequently family. Ryan came on some of our family vacations, and the bonds grew stronger with time. I often traveled during this time all over the US and Europe: solo or with family and friends. Ryan was captivated when I shared stories and photos from each adventure. He had some tough times after leaving active duty. To get his spirits up, I suggested that maybe he could join me on one of my trips to Europe one day.

Ryan has always been fascinated by history and culture. Though he never traveled except locally as a child and for military deployments, he dreamed that he could see these places he admired one day. Ryan spent many hours in his youth watching PBS travel and history programs. He dreamed big but never, not once, believed it was possible. That day I suggested traveling to Europe, his eyes lit up, and I knew I had to make it happen for him right then and there.

Our first overseas trip

In 2014 that “maybe one day” became a reality. Ryan was in the right place in his life; he had just bought a house with a GI loan and had money available. I planned the flights and accommodations, and Ryan planned the day-to-day itinerary. Every aspect of our trip we arranged ourselves. It was a big one, 21 days in Ireland, England, France, and Italy. I figured this could be his only exposure, so it better be amazing. Also, during this trip was his 30th birthday. It would be his most memorable one ever.

The trip was beyond all expectations.

On our first day in Ireland, it was like new life energy formed in Ryan. He blossomed. This shy, often not-so-confident young man was animated, engaged, bold, and excited. Every moment, every site, and especially every castle had him in amazement. He loved the culture, the people, the roads, the crazy

schedule, the food, and the libations; he even loved getting lost. Afraid of nothing, Ryan had gained this wondrous spirit of adventure. For myself, who had already traveled extensively, it was as if seeing many places for the first time through Ryan's eyes. His sincere gratitude, energy, and pure childlike joy were contagious.

The trip was remarkable. To my surprise, traveling with Ryan was easy and enjoyable, and we shared similar travel styles. Finding someone that makes every travel moment fun and unique is a rarity. His boundless enthusiasm was exhilarating. On our way home on the plane, we began planning our next trip, and this travel team was officially born. Ryan fell in love with everything castles, and the focus of the next trip was to see as many as we could in one overseas adventure.

Castle focused

That next trip occurred in 2015. Our travels took us to England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and Northern Ireland. We called it our Castle Hunters Adventure. It was a mind-blowing trip, and there was never enough time in the day. We visited over 100 castles with some visits to whiskey distilleries along the whiskey trail. Because when in Rome...

You would think 100 castles might get a bit boring. We were never tired of these magnificent structures. Each had its own character and story. Each pulls at our imagination of what life was like in those days long ago. We found magic. Add to this the gorgeous countryside, the magnificent scenery, and the welcoming locals. It only cemented our determination to keep traveling, in other words, to experience the world.

Want to see all the castles we have visited? Check out our Master Castle List page [here](#).

The Birth of Wanderers Compass

After that, life became busy for Ryan in the following years, which included a deployment. I kept traveling every chance I could get in the US and internationally with friends and family. I had some grand adventures, including a trip with my gourmet cooking club to France's Provence region and a sister bonding trip to Greece. I adore traveling with people who share a passion for travel. After a few years off, Ryan was able to begin traveling again. It made him feel fulfilled and in control of his life. He loved sharing stories of his adventures with others and encouraging them to start traveling.

Then Ryan got this crazy idea.

He suggested we start a travel blog. He wanted others to find the magic he experienced. People who had dreams that they were sure could never come true. He wanted others to be encouraged and inspired—especially disabled Vets who struggle after service. He wanted to share how it could be affordable using the tips and tools we had used.

I was not entirely on board, and his idea stayed on the back burner.

Interested in how to start a blog? Learn more about us and our blogging journey [here](#).

The adventures continued

In 2019 we had two remarkably successful European trips. After these trips, Ryan's idea took a life of its own, and we commenced on this journey to start a travel blog. Wanderers Compass was "born" in the fall of 2019. It has had some ups and downs, as would be expected. Moments of feeling overwhelmed and lots of frustration. Neither of us is tech-savvy, nor have we done anything like this in our lives. The learning curve was substantial. The support from our loved ones made it possible as well. Was it a massive leap of faith or jumping off the precipice? We have had those "Are we outright nuts?" moments.

But we persisted and remained determined. It was about us making a dream a reality; quitting was not an option.

We answered some of the most common questions on our [FAQ page](#).

Best laid plans

Wanderers Compass was to launch in April 2020 during our next European trip. I was in Norway with my husband when COVID-19 began exploding on the world stage in March and abruptly ended our trip. Subsequently, Ryan and I had to cancel our April plans. We watched with broken hearts as the virus gripped the world and, for the unforeseeable future, international travel stopped in its tracks.

At first, we were unsure how to proceed with the blog, but we were confident that moving ahead was important. Once people could venture out again into this beautiful and fascinating world, they would need the inspiration and tools to do so. There is also a whole industry that would need to rebuild when that time comes, and because of that, we could play a role in making that possible. Therefore we tried to make the most of this time in lockdown to learn more about the ins and outs of travel blogging and build our Wanderers Compass brand.

Here we go

Consequently, we come to today. The amount of work has been enormous. Life gets in the way sometimes. Funny how that works.

This road has been fun and engaging. There is so much left to learn, and we are excited to do so.

We are nervous. It feels a bit like putting your child out into the world. In a way, it is no longer about us. Will they be OK? Did we do everything we needed to give them their best start? Will they fall flat on their faces? Will we?

It is hard to believe, but here we go.

Thank you for taking this journey with us and taking the time to learn about us.

We would sincerely appreciate it if you shared our Wanderers Compass Travel Blog with your friends and family.

May you always wander in wonder!

Now that we have shared About Us. Tell us a little about yourself, or ask what you want to know about us. We would love to hear from you! Go to our FAQs and comment page, or contact us privately. We will respond to everyone who writes us!

[Go to our FAQs and Comment Page](#)
[Contact Us Privately](#)

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Check out our [Travel Tips and Resources Page](#) to optimize your travel

Our Travel Stats

Countries	Flight Miles Flown	Continents	States/U.S. Territories
57	1,950,537	6	52

So much magic out there.....Where is your next trip?

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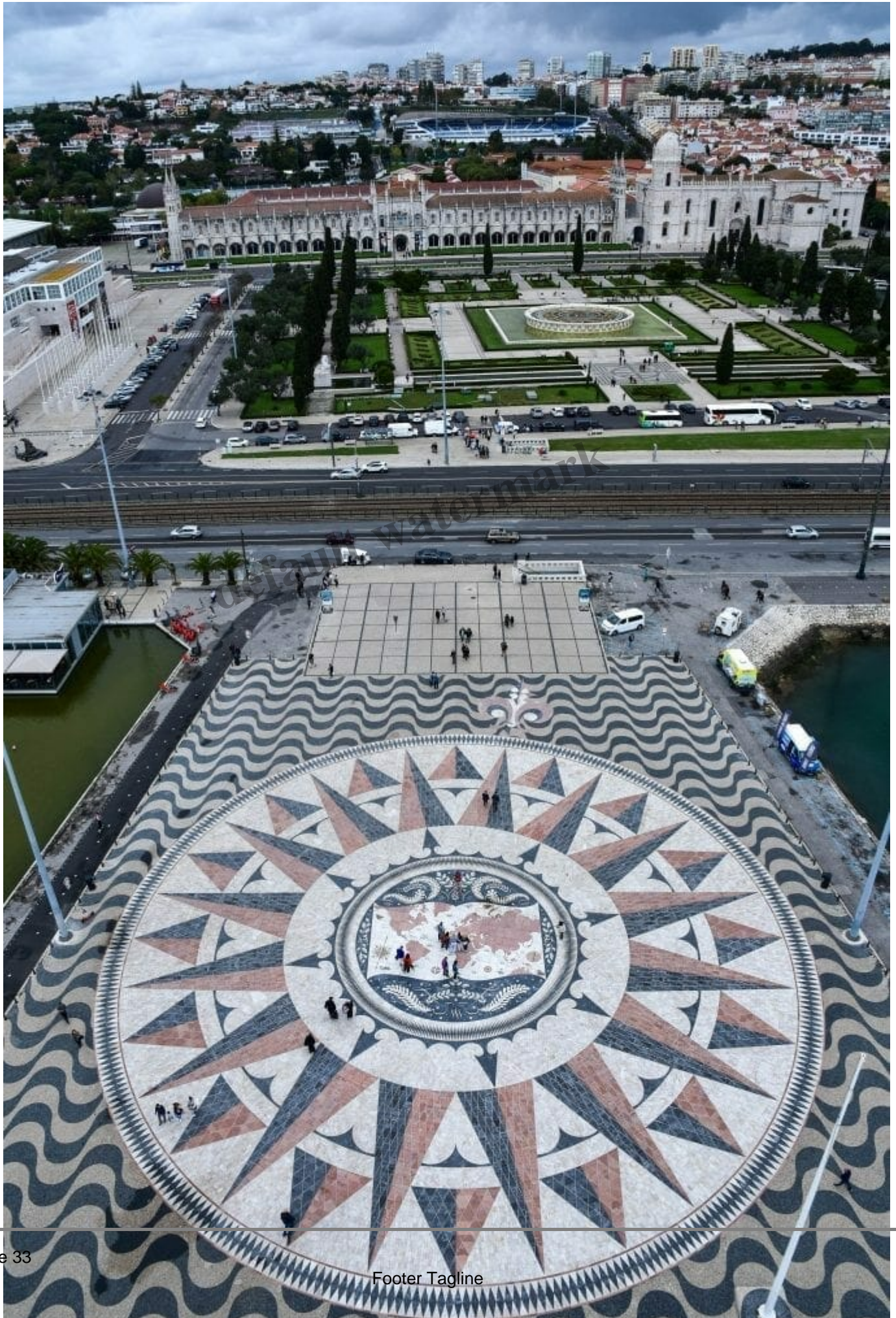






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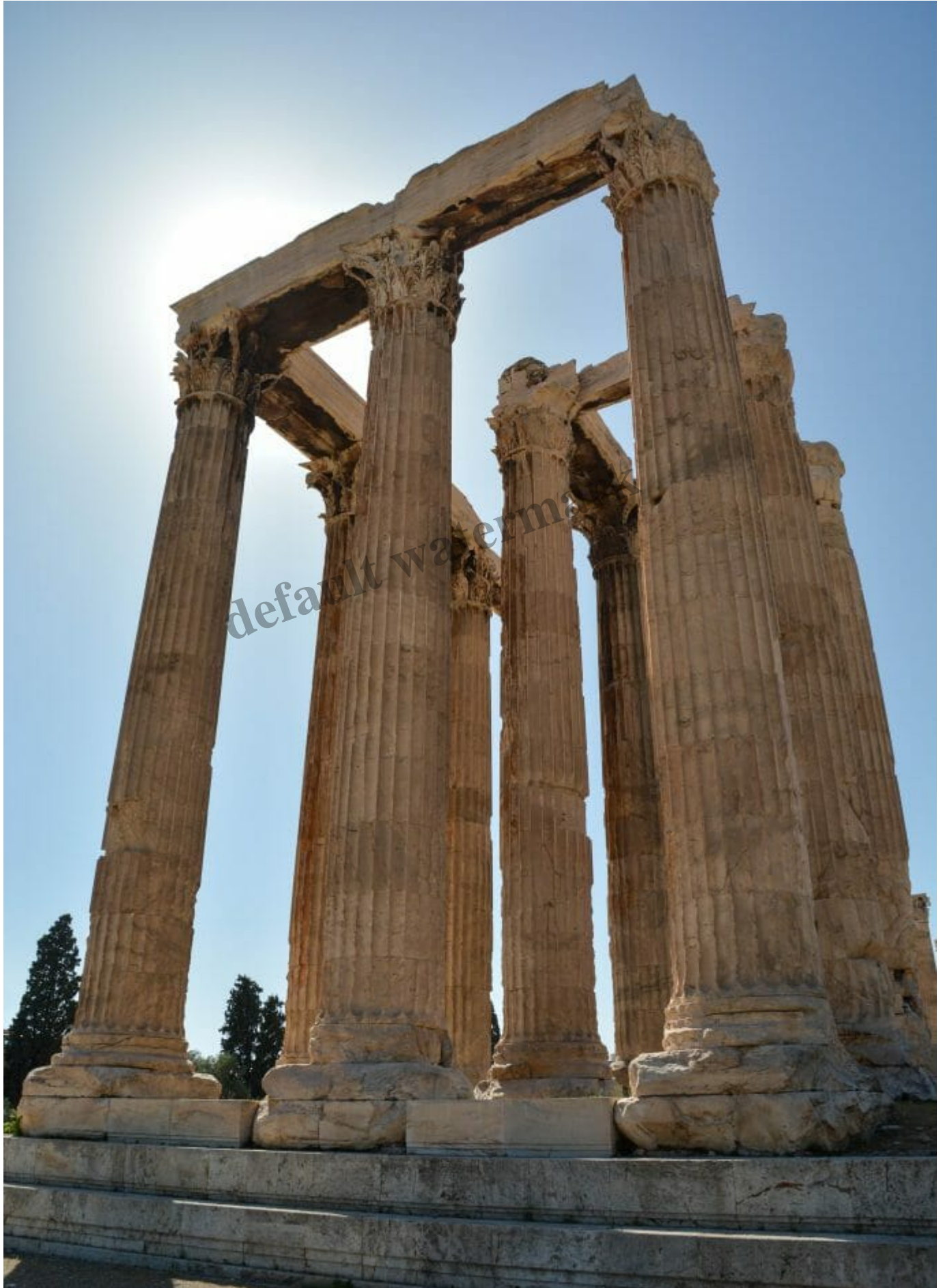








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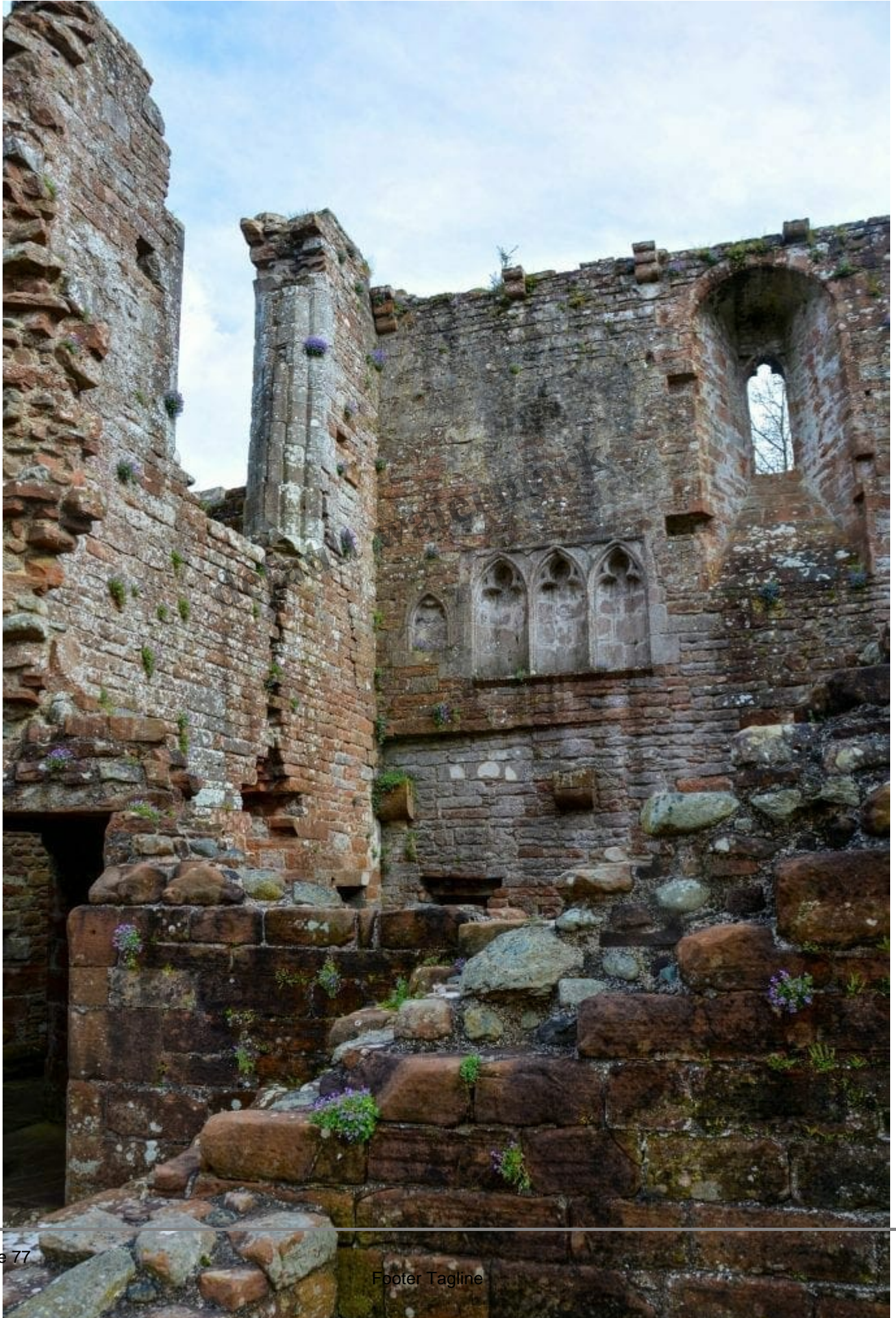








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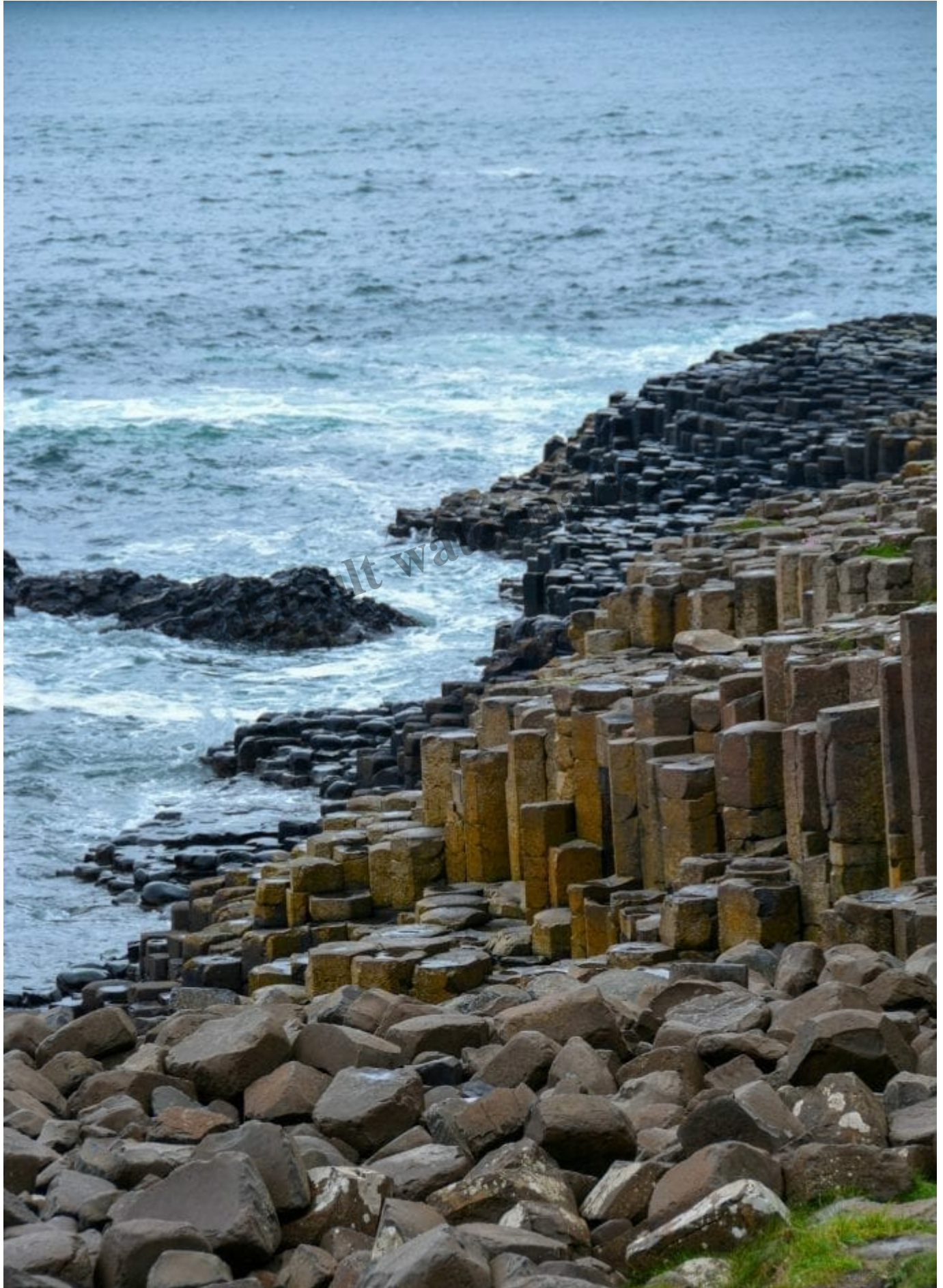


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Our favorite travel insurance site!

If you book a trip, don't forget to get travel insurance within 14 days of your first booking. We could not be stronger advocates of being well-insured. Not just for the little stuff but the big things like medical emergencies. We never leave home without it. Over the years, we have used many sites but have now found our go-to place. [Squaremouth.com](#) does a fantastic job; it has a user-friendly interface, uses top-rated and reputable insurance carriers, and most policies cover COVID-19 medical issues and cancellations. They also mediate on your behalf if you have problems with your policy.

To empower you as a consumer, we suggest you read our [blog post](#) on the importance of travel insurance and how to get the best coverage from top-rated companies for an affordable price.

[MedjetAssist](#)

Medical transport back home from anywhere in the world

They are the premier global air medical transport. One caveat to travel insurance is that medical evacuation usually gets you to the closest facility to care for you. Medjet gets you back to the U.S. to the hospital of your choice once you are stable enough to fly. They cover COVID-related transport as well.

[Medjet](#) carries its own policies. These policies are only for transport and do not cover other aspects of travel insurance. They have individual trip policies starting at \$99 and annual policies for around \$300. Most of their policies limit the age to 74 and younger. Prices are not based on age below that.

To learn more about how Medical Evacuation membership with Medjet Assist works, check out our [blog post](#) for a more detailed review.

[Expedia.com](#)

Hotels, home rentals, BNBs, flights, and other transportation & tours

[Expedia](#) is a US-based company whose mission is to power global travel for everyone and everywhere. Whether planning a family vacation, booking for business, or organizing the trip of a lifetime, they are a fantastic resource. Wanderers Compass focuses on independent travel, and using sites like [Expedia](#) makes that possible. Every aspect of travel you need, from airfare, accommodations, rental car, and cruises to activities to do at your destination, can be booked on [Expedia](#).

[Booking.com](#)

Hotels, Home rentals, BNBs, Flights, and other Transportation & Tours

[Booking.com](#) connects millions of travelers to memorable experiences, various transportation options, and incredible places to stay – from homes to hotels and much more. It is one of the world's largest travel marketplaces for established brands and entrepreneurs of all sizes.

We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

[Vacation Rental By Owner \(VRBO\)](#)

Are you traveling with a family or having an extended stay at your destination?

With over 2 million bookable vacation rentals, [VRBO](#) connects homeowners with families and vacationers looking for something more than a hotel for their trip. The [VRBO](#) community offers families or groups various rental property types such as condos, cabins, lake rentals, beach houses, etc.

[VRBO](#) is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

[Viator](#)

As the leading marketplace for travel experiences, [Viator](#) believes that making memories is what travel is all about. And with 300,000+ experiences to explore—everything from simple tours to extreme adventures (and all the niche, interesting stuff in between)—making memories that will last a lifetime has never been easier.

With industry-leading flexibility and last-minute availability, it's never too late to make any day extraordinary. This one site has it all and has experiences throughout the world. We use them often during our travels, especially for food tours. We especially take the time to read the reviews provided.

[Amazon.com](#)

An excellent source for travel essentials and guides

We now have our own Amazon Storefront with all our favorite travel accessories and gear in one place. Check out our travel store at the link below.

[Wanderers Compass Amazon Storefront](#)

Amazon is one of the most comprehensive online shopping sources in the world. Teams worldwide provide lower prices, better selection, and rapid delivery on behalf of customers. They offer a vast inventory, and their 1.7 million small and medium businesses worldwide selling on Amazon.com offer extensive options to customers.

We buy most of our travel books, accessories, and luggage from Amazon. We have ordered up to two days before travel and get what we need.

HYDAWAY

This is not your ordinary drinkware company. The **HYDAWAY** difference is what their products do when you're not using them. Practical and portable, HYDAWAY doesn't take up unnecessary space in your already-packed life or pile up in landfills. We all know that trying to pack light while being environmentally conscious can be difficult. Having the right items can make a world of difference. **HYDAWAY** provides that.

We have used their collapsible water bottle, carrying case for the water bottle, and collapsible insulated drink tumbler. They are all lightweight and durable. A conservation-focused product you can be proud to buy.

Use our Promo Code. WANCOM15, at checkout for 15% off your Hydaway order

Welcome Pick-ups **(Airport and sightseeing service)**

A global leader in ground transportation for travelers. They help hundreds of companies worldwide enhance their services and boost their revenue with our 5-star ride experiences and hassle-free automation.

Founded in 2015 in Athens, Greece, **Welcome Pick-ups** goes above and beyond the standard transfer service as the first company to deliver a holistic, in-destination travel experience. From the moment a traveler arrives at a new destination until they return home, Welcome accommodates all their travel needs (transfers, travel products, things to do, information) as the easiest, friendliest, and most personalized solution.

PhotoAiD

Do you feel like you are wasting time visiting an on-site photographer only to be embarrassed by the photo? Would you like control of the final product? Get the perfect VISA or passport photo online with PhotoAiD.

When traveling, you often need to apply for official documents such as a passport, ID, and different kinds of licenses or cards. Those applications require a picture that must meet specific conditions to be accepted, depending on the country. Now, it is possible to take this picture at home without the help of a professional photographer. PhotoAiD allows you to take the perfect biometric photo you approve without leaving home.

This article contains affiliate links. If you use these links to buy something, we may earn a small commission at no additional cost to you. Thank you!

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Our quarterly newsletters will inspire your wanderlust

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