

A Social Gathering Gnostic Travel Guide
Destination 1: **An unspoilt nutopia**

imagine an island

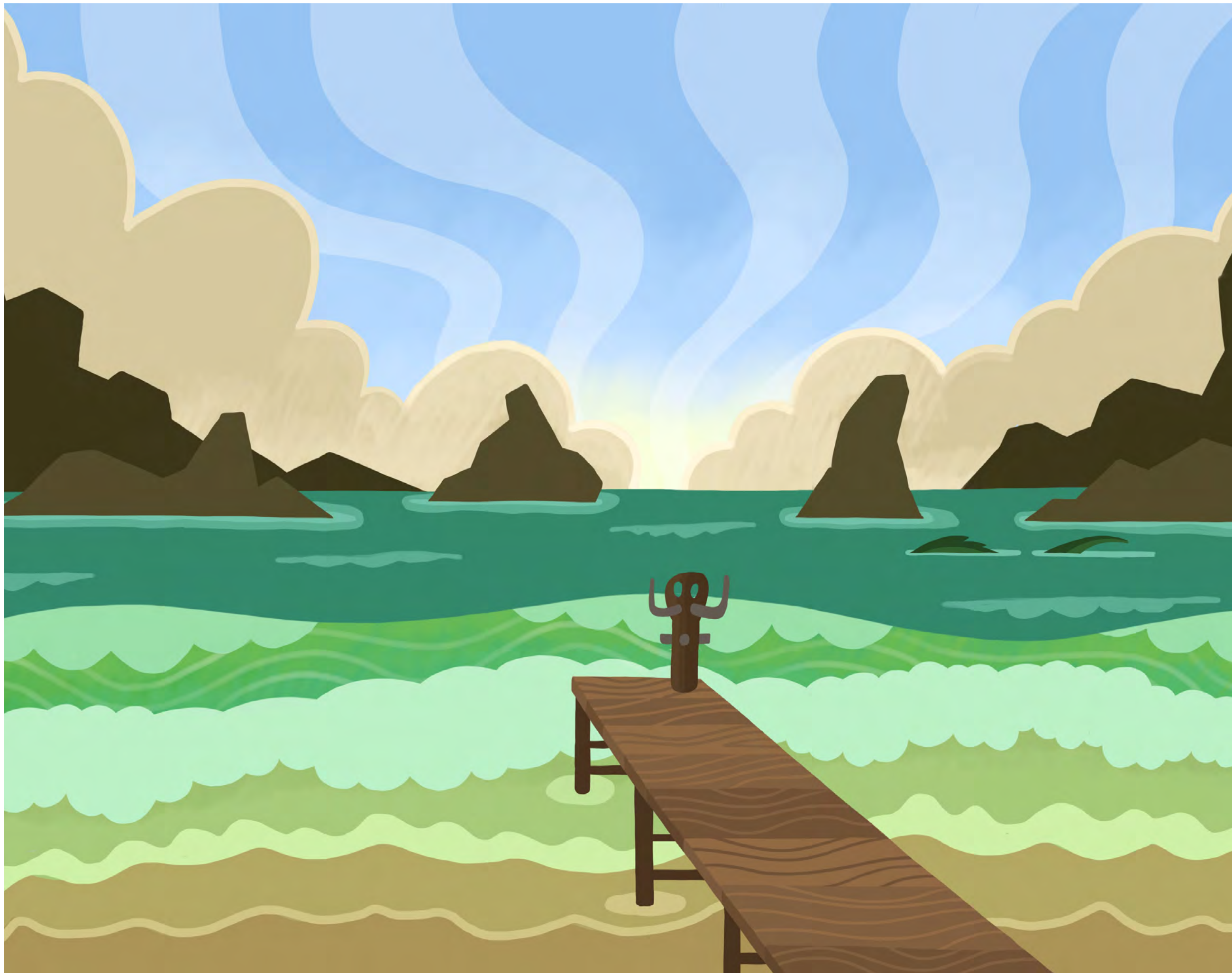


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Words by Robin Turner.

The first indication that the island is ahead is the sight of a mountain peak rising on the horizon, seemingly coming straight from the depths of the sea.

A bold silhouette ringed by clouds in the distance, this nameless alp is still the best way to navigate landwards. Although the waters on the approach may appear inviting, many over-zealous travellers have quickly come to regret attempting to swim the last stretch of the journey. Unfriendly marine life, hidden undersea rock formations and vicious cross-diagonal rips make it very unwise to disembark your boat until you can smell land.





Following a slow drift across shallow harbour waters that ripple like just-set jelly, sailing crafts can alight at a wooden jetty that juts out from the beach on the island's west side.

The jetty is built around a piece of timeless carpentry - a carved memorial to the old Gods that used to be worshipped in this part of the world that is now less likely to be revered than used as a bollard to secure ropes aiding disembarking. The sculpture's vintage remains shrouded in mystery, some have dated it as far back as 500 BC. The jetty is still the only reliable way on or off a landmass that wilfully resists the conveniences of modernisation. Ahead is your destination - an impossible topography that sweeps and falls between fiercely contrasting terrains, that rises and glides between myriad idylls and offers endless stimuli for the solo traveller.

As feet touch sand for the first time, your senses will come alive at scent rolling from the land out to sea. An almost tangible smell that sits somewhere between the deep, resinous odours of pine and eucalyptus and the tangy fug of Notting Hill Carnival on a hot Monday afternoon, it is characteristic to this part of the world and emits from sources unknown. Due to the density of the atmosphere, many have tried to bottle the island's aroma. Sadly it doesn't travel well, much like Brains SA outside of Cardiff town centre.



The island's only accommodation is a short walk from the beach across the subalpine mire at the foot of the mountain.

A one-room stone bothy, it features a fold down bed, cooking facilities, a well-stocked larder and a miraculous fire that never stops burning, despite low season periods with scant few visitors. Something about the

island's pervading atmosphere encourages deep, peaceful vision heavy sleep - a psychedelic slumber to rival any helped along pharmaceutically. The bothy sits at the foot of the island's only peak, the mountain

visible from miles out at sea. Although climbing is discouraged between November to March and May to September due to freak weather conditions, bravado dictates that most people give it a go anyway.

Nearly all flora and fauna on the island is edible, some could be described as uniquely delicious, or very effective.

The biggest issue faced is the foraging itself taking you to places that most tour guides would describe as 'extremely hazardous'. For example, the gently effervescent swamplands are renowned for their abundance of psilocybin fungi and algae (and even the odd hallucinogenic amphibian). The main problem is getting to them without killing oneself in the process. However appealing the desired experience might be, the risk is probably not worth it. If lucky, you'll be able to spot an electric mud jack here.





Typically, island meals are consumed as picnics due to the fact that there are no restaurants and no staff to serve in them.

That said, food is abundant. Meals are generally accompanied by two different types of alcoholic beverage - a local 8% beer and a cocktail that utilises sea water and Mountain Ash to create an intense chemical reaction.

Local food delicacies include: a bubbling, egg laden congee that's best enhanced by a live green squid (you don't consume the squid - its highly active presence in the bowl removes neurotoxins and increases an almost

ridiculous umami hit); a gelatinous digital tofu and a kind of dumpling that's probably best not chewed. The climate conscious traveller can breathe easy knowing that each meal comes without generating any food miles.



The island's one Wi-Fi point is a short stroll away.

As is usual in places as remote as this, it takes a bit of effort to connect to the outside world. If the wind-up handle has rusted due to low-level mist, you can fire it up with wood from the stack of logs piled nearby. At full power, expect a decent 3G signal, which should be clear and fully visible. Warning - if the router is covered with the swamp's green algae, expect the signal to have be operating at a fully contagious, brain frying, conspiracy theory spreading 5G.

Three of the most awe-inspiring sights on the island sit beside other on the island's northside.

Best approached from the bothy, these ancient clusters represent the very heart and soul of the place. After a twenty-minute downhill trek, you reach the first - a deep, almost Brobdingnagian forest where insect noise and bird song harmonise to create a perfect ambient drone - think of it as Eno's Music For Treetops. After following the holloway, the woodland gives way to an ancient coppice.





Here, a group of roughly hewn standing stones emerge out of wild flowers.

Although similar in style to European menhirs, their almost anatomical shapes place them closer to some of the wilder forms found in Polynesia. It is stated that passing through the centre of one of these stones increases fertility, yet one may question that when faced by the lack of a native population on the island.

Facing the stones on the beach is a carefully constructed stone soundsystem.

Unlike its mainland equivalents, this bass heavy megalith is driven not by electricity and DJ selections but by approaching weather systems. A gentle sea breeze across the back of the stack will produce gorgeous, Balearic sunset music, while a vicious sea squall has been known to kick out something akin to a badly-tuned pirate station jungle set. The steady ebb and flow of the sea at night creates a pretty much perfect form of deep, hypnotic techno. Whatever the weather, this is one of the few chances on this planet to hear genuine, wild music in its natural habitat.

It's these wild sounds that have brought people to the island for generations and, invariably, will keep bringing them back. People often return just to try to recapture the feeling of the first time they hear this evolving, undulating, untranslatable sound and feel the type of fizzing energy that makes you realise you're truly alive and physically connected with music for the first time. And why the hell not? All are welcome. Just remember the squid is not for eating.



EDITOR'S NOTE:

The term nutopia was first introduced by John Lennon and Yoko Ono on April 2nd 1973. Their nutopia was a conceptual country founded partially as a way to address Lennon's then-ongoing immigration problems with the U.S. through satirical means (in these situations, he always ends up sounding less like Richard Curtis' benign Zen demigod and more like a bit of a prick). They decreed that the nutopia would have no leadership, and no defined population. The nation's flag was a white rectangle, less a symbol of peace or surrender, more a passive shrug - a 'meh' of white tissue paper. The Nutopian International Anthem on Lennon's Mind Games LP is four-seconds of silence.

