

the week

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12 **MATINEE - SPLIT**

Director Manoj N Shyamalan makes a comeback with this film that has been enjoying critical acclaim, though the horror quotient is limited here



THERAPY BETWEEN SAND AND THE SKY

Seventy year old Carla Perrotti helps people find themselves and cleanse their souls in the desert

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Teen designs solar powered lantern



the darkness in which the villagers carried out some of their routine work after dusk, he decided to brighten up their lives by inventing something they could afford.

On returning to Muscat after a fulfilling holiday, Abdullah got down to building a solar powered lantern from recycled material, as part of his individual project



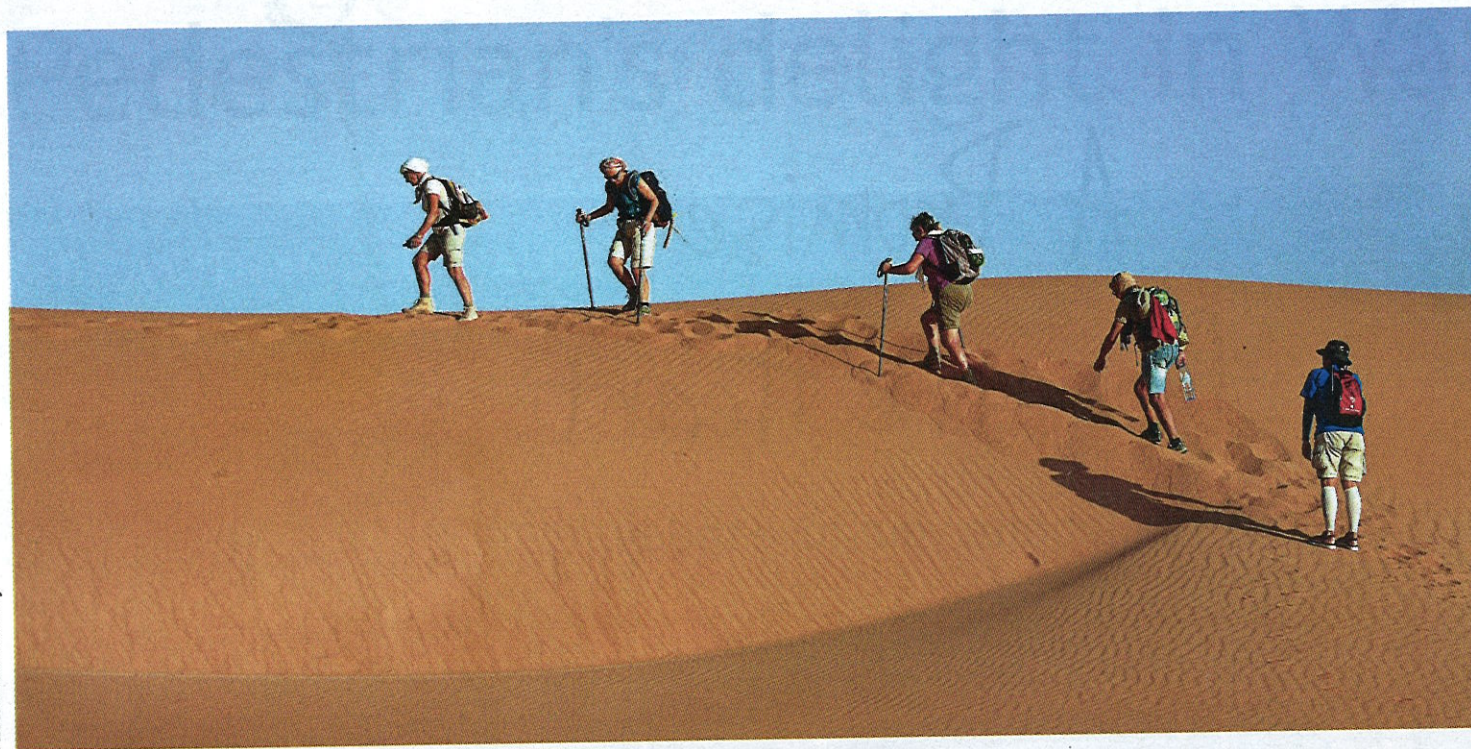


Photo: Anne Conway

THERAPY BETWEEN SAND AND THE SKY

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Tridwip K Das
theweek@apexmedia.co.om

Carla Perrotti has a calming presence that belies her adventurous

earned the distinction of being the first woman – with a team of indigenous Tuaregs. In 1994, she undertook a 180km six-day solo crossing of the Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flat in Bolivia, pulling a trolley weighting 130kg

nates Carla? Much is lost in translation, while one must also make sense of the words Carla is unable to put in words when she describes the desert and her passages in solitude. There are some things one can describe about the desert but there are many others

step. New friends are added along the way and with me they mark the sand with their footprints, sharing the fatigue and the sensations," she says. "But I have learnt from the desert – my great love for which I was always jealous – that the joy, and the discovery of oneself is right

your soul, it helps you find yourself."

Following a 80km crossing in Sharqiyah Sands in 2016, Carla returned this year and this visit was organised with logistical support from Al Koor Tourism. In her group this time around was Gianni Palmieri on his fifth Desert Therapy with Carla. He's been with her thrice in Egypt and once in Morocco. He has come to the conclusion that one must experience the desert at least once in a lifetime. "It'll help you find yourself."

For photojournalist Anne Conway – a veteran having published four books and worked with photography magazines all over the world – who joined the group to document Carla's Desert Therapy, this desert passage in Rub al Khali posed its own problems. "The logistics and challenges of photographing in the desert anywhere are similar – the problems of sand and dust, which is so damaging to cameras. I tried to keep my material as sand-free as possible by keeping them in sealed plastic bags, but the sand inevitably gets in."

But all the problems were compensated for by the subject she had to shoot. "What impressed me so much in Rub al Khali was the geometric juxtapositions of the dunes, the contrast of the colours of the sand with the plants, often stark silhouettes of seemingly dead branches, that manage to grow there. They are like huge sculptures that at every turn offer a different viewpoint."

"Every desert has its own char-

moment you ask her age. How old do you think she is, she'll challenge you and take great pleasure when your guesswork is way off the mark. Seventy! And she's just completed a 58km walk in Rub al Khali over five days leading a team of five other Italians, all over ten years younger. This was part of a desert appreciation and self-discovery programme called Desert Therapy.

Carla has earned the moniker Woman of the Desert, and for good reason. In 1981, she crossed the Tenere in Sahara – and in doing so

in 1996, she crossed 350km of the Kalahari in 15 days feeding on what the desert could offer to eat and drink.

Seven years later, Carla was 56 when she achieved her 'grand slam' – one desert per continent. Alone, with a backpack weighing 25kg on her shoulders, she crossed on foot the Simpson Desert Down Under in 20 days. So what is it about the desert that so fasci-

desert, but there are many others that one can only experience.

"Thanks to the desert, my life has changed and the discovery continues, day after day, step by

and the discovery of oneself is right to share with others, to teach my companions who follow me along the way to know and to love themselves and life," she says sounding poetic but also partly owing to transliteration of her thoughts from Italian to English.

With her new objective to help others experience the desert, Carla did a 250km 15-day desert crossing of the White Desert in Egypt in 2008 guiding a blind marathon runner – Fabio Pasinetti. That experience led to the Desert Therapy which she now offers all around the world. "It cleanses

"Every desert has its own character and particular points of interest. I 'feel' what I see, and my photographs are a result of the complete experience of being there – bare feet in the sand, the silence, the vastness, the 360° sky. It is an emotion as much as a vision," Anne said.

It's this very emotion and experience that captivated Carla and she is now helping share with others. "My life has been marked by the desert, all the most important passages, the most significant moments are born there, between the sand and the sky," she says.



Thanks to the desert, my life has changed and the discovery continues, day after day

CARLA PERROTTI



(Left to right) Marisa Masi, Gianni Palmieri, Clara Corona, Carla Perrotti, Anne Conway, Graziella Di Berardino and Maria Grazia Bulligan at Muttrah Souq