



193

A 31-year quest across every country on Earth.

Based on the accounts of Simon Laub | January 18, 2026

True exploration looks outward, not inward.



While sitting at a cafe in Aarhus, an older couple fumbles with a phone. A younger couple offers to take their selfie. The older man declines, noting he already knows what he looks like.

A quiet reminder that the purpose of travel is to look at the world, not at a camera with the world as a mere backdrop.

As Hans Christian Andersen wrote: "To travel is to live."



At that exact moment in the cafe, a text message arrives on the phone. It contains a single number: 193.

Three digits signify a rare human achievement.

193

The total number of recognized UN countries in the world.

24 Hours

The strict minimum time required on the ground for a visit to officially count under the Travelers' Club rules.

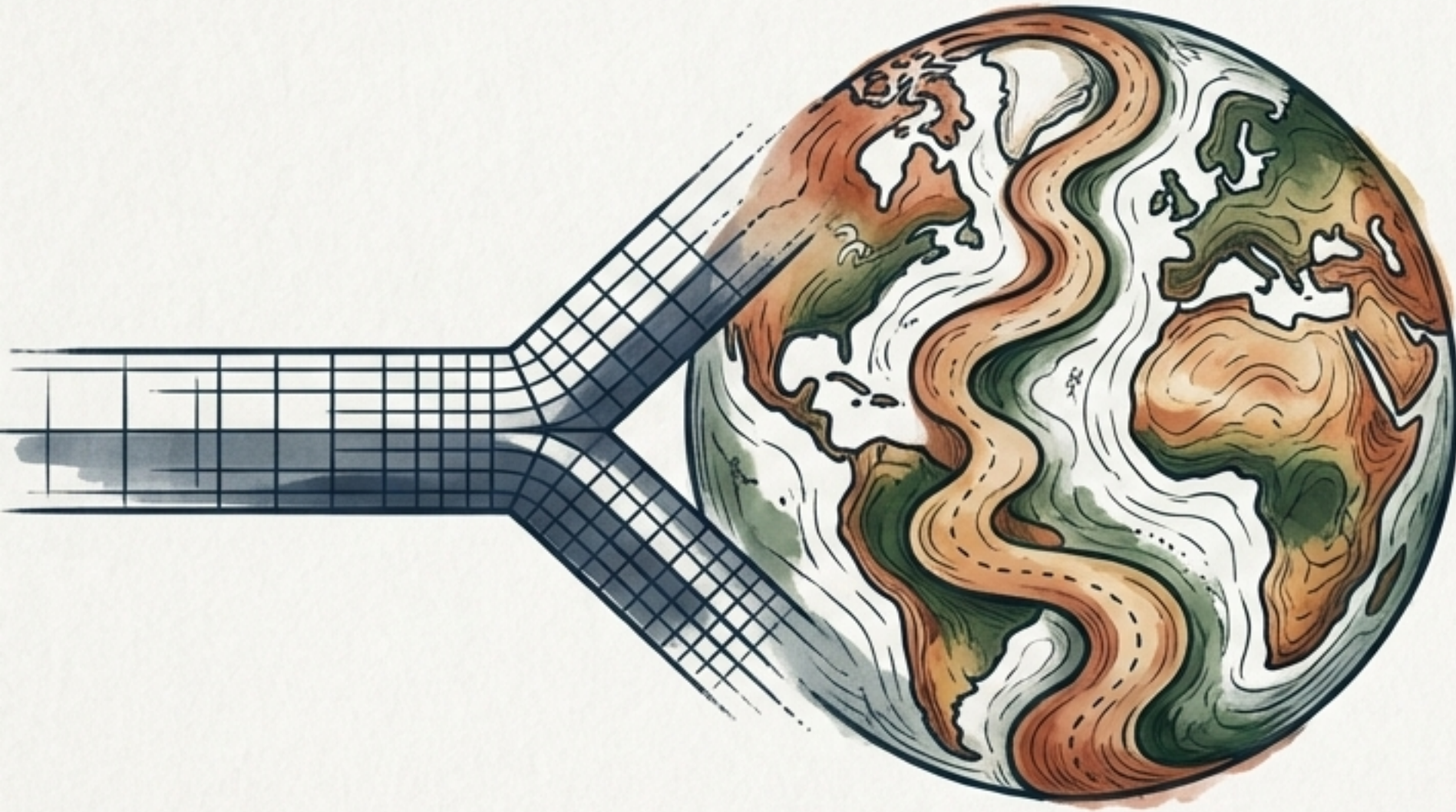
31 Years

The total duration of the quest, from the very first trip to the final border.

300-400

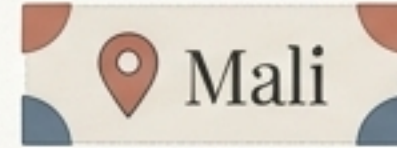
The estimated total number of people in human history who have accomplished this feat.

The architect of this journey is an IT inventory planner.



- **The Origins:** Erik Futtrup grew up in Thy, Denmark. A happy childhood entirely devoid of foreign travel.
- **The Professional:** Living in Aarhus, building complex IT inventory management systems.
- **The Method:** Highly industrious, precise, and structured.
- **The Drive:** An indomitable will to overcome every conceivable physical and logistical barrier on Earth.

Field Notes: Contradictions in Timbuktu



- 🌀 **The Reality:** Erik blends in, wearing traditional blue Tuareg headgear. He is welcomed by locals and even interviewed by a local TV station broadcasting the return of tourists to Timbuktu.
- 🌀 **The Warning:** Simultaneously, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues an urgent mandate: Evacuate Mali immediately due to the extreme risk of kidnapping and terror.

Field Notes: Environmental extremes on the Equator



Rwenzori Mountains (Mountains of the Moon),
Uganda/Congo Border | 2009



The Companions: Trekking alongside his Spanish friend, Sepp.



The Terrain: A punishing sequence of dense, lush rainforests, challenging swamp regions, and snow-capped peaks situated right near the equator.



The Outlook: Enduring conditions that most travelers would actively avoid, yet finding profound joy in the unique wildlife and isolation.

Field Notes: Hostility and heat in the Danakil.



Danakil Desert & Erta Ale Volcano,
Ethiopia | 2011



- 🦋 **The Threat:** Navigating a region where locals heavily armed with Kalashnikovs have little regard for tourist comfort.
- 🦋 **The Industry:** Sharing the route with camel caravans transporting massive blocks of salt cut directly from the dried lakebed.
- 🦋 **The Climate:** Standing near the 'smoking mountain' of Erta Ale, where the extreme desert heat causes carried drinking water to boil, making it impossible to consume.

Field Notes: Complete stillness under the acacia tree.

📍 Masai Mara, Kenya



- **The Guide:** Standing with Kios, a local Maasai guide.
- **The Backstory:** Kios was allowed to attend school to learn English only because his parents deemed him “**the dumbest child**,” making him the easiest to spare from daily labor.
- **The Moment:** Escaping the sun beneath a tree usually reserved for lions and giraffes, staring out over the Masai Mara in absolute silence.

**The wisdom of the road
requires no words.**

When asked what he had learned after visiting every country on Earth, Erik offered only silence.

It is a humility shared by others from Thy, like Tour de France champion Jonas Vingegaard.

*“He who knows, does not speak.
He who speaks, does not know.”*

— The Tao Te Ching

The final border required two years of maneuvering.



The Target: Sudan.
Country 193.

The Obstacle: The capital airport in Khartoum had been entirely closed to commercial traffic since 2023.

The Solution: After nearly two years of continuous planning and waiting, securing a rare flight via Ethiopian Airlines into the coastal city of Port Sudan.

The Result: The message '193' is finally sent.



The greatest joy of leaving is the ability to return.

There is immense excitement in setting out on a new adventure once the affairs at home are in order.

However, Erik insists the ultimate reward of a 31-year global quest is always the same:
coming home to his wife, Birgitte, and their children.

Adventures are magnificent, but they are meaningless if you have no one to share them with.

The obvious question receives a silent answer.

With all 193 countries conquered, friends naturally ask Erik the exact same question: "What will you do now?"

The answer is a slight shake of the head, followed by a knowing silence.



New adventures await.