



**Sarmin Shahriath and Rezaul Bahar**, married since 2005, are avid travellers. So far, they have travelled more than 118 countries across seven continents.



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#### REZAUL BAHAR

Would you go somewhere today, far, far away? A place so remote and isolated, so vast that the only thing left to focus on is the wilderness and its untouched beauty. A place where time feels irrelevant, and the horizon stretches forever. That place, for us, is Alaska.

Sarmin and I have been travelling around the globe for over 17 years. We've explored 118 countries across all continents, experiencing the diversity and wonder of this incredible world. Yet, a question always stumps us: which place do we love the most? The answer is elusive because every corner of the earth holds its own magic. But when it comes to a destination we could return to without tiring, it would be Alaska. We both

orange and pink. There is a certain magic in the air here, a rawness that pulls you in and demands that you appreciate it in its purest form. It's a place where the modern world feels like a distant memory, and nature commands all attention. The world doesn't often venture

## a sanctuary of the soul



skies. A small aircraft took us soaring over the towering peaks of Denali, the tallest mountain in North America. The landscape below -- snow-capped mountains, vast glaciers, and frozen rivers -- was simply breathtaking. As we looked around from the 4,000 feet high glacier, where we landed, the world around

would become a deeply personal one. Eight thousand miles away, in Bangladesh, I had just lost my Ma, my mother. She had been fighting a terminal illness, and though I knew her time was near, nothing prepared me for the pain of losing her. Then I lost her. Bangladesh then closed its doors for all international travel due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Unable to return to her, I set

inexplicably. The quiet of the land, the towering mountains, the icy rivers -- it all seemed to remind me of her love. My mother, in her unconditional grace, had always shown me the path forward, teaching me to be strong, to love, and to never stop exploring. She was the one who taught me that life was about the journey, not the destination. So, as I drove through the vast landscapes of Alaska, I felt her strength within me, propelling me forward.

The memories and the landscape became a part of the journey. Every mile I drove was a tribute to her, to the love that had shaped me and guided me through the darkest of times.

In Alaska, I found a sense of peace. Amidst that sheer isolation, I could feel a connection with my soul, where two of my most precious gems -- love for nature and the memories of my mother -- reside. I felt the nature itself had wrapped its arms around me, offering solace.

Alaska, for me, is not just a place; it's a part of nature that heals me, leaves me feeling whole in a way no other place can.

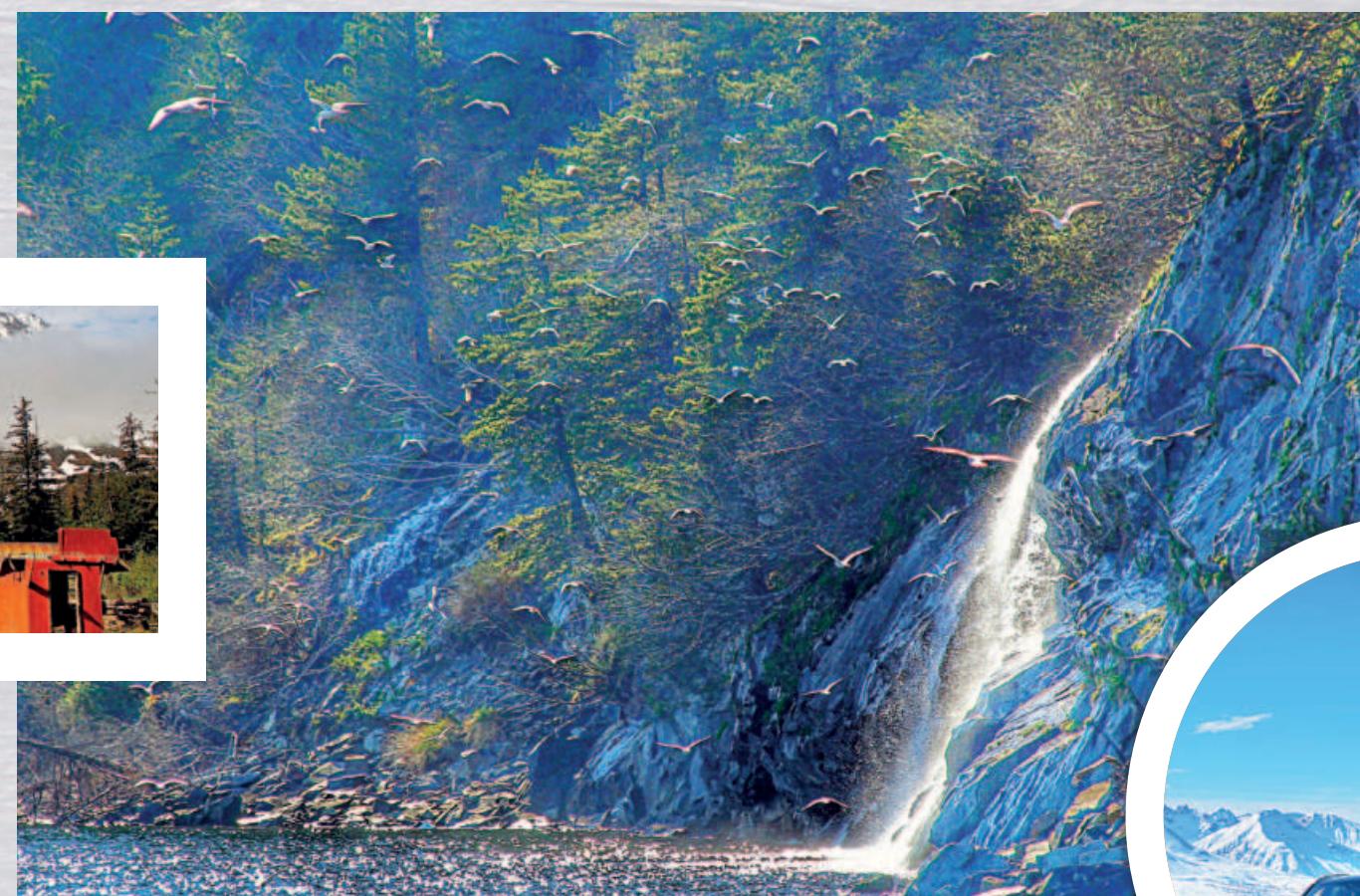
In Alaska, nature generously gives you the courage to embrace the unknown, freeing you, if only briefly, from the world's expectations.

Its purity reflects your own imperfections.

It offers peace and reconnects you with something greater than yourself.

I'll keep driving -- maybe that's all life is: the ride, not the destination. The people we meet are the bumps -- moments that jolt, lift, or slow us.

People say Alaska is the last frontier. To me, it's the land where my soul reconnects with the supreme. Alaska remains my destination, my sanctuary.



agreed on that.

Our first journey to this paradise close to the North Pole was nothing short of awe-inspiring. Alaska is so detached from the mainland United States that it feels like stepping onto another planet. Its vastness is unparalleled: the landmass is over one-fifth of the US mainland, has more than 3,000 rivers, three million lakes, and a hundred thousand glaciers. Sounds absurd, but true. Its wilderness is equally unmatched.

Pristine and untouched, mountains, glaciers, and forests seem to stretch endlessly, making Alaska truly special.

Alaska's isolation makes it even more resounding. Parts of the state experience the sun hovering on the horizon for months, painting the sky with hues of

this far, and that's precisely what makes Alaska so alluring.

It's said that twenty times more bears live in Alaska than humans.

Our first trip to Alaska was an exploration of its grandeur from the ground up, driving through the state's expansive roads and marvelling at the land's immensity. But the best part was when we took to the

us looked like a picture, unruffled and pure. At that moment, I realised I hadn't seen anything more beautiful than this. For me, time stopped there.

Yes, for this, everything can wait. It is the kind of place that stays with you forever, etched into your soul.

Our second trip to Alaska was unplanned, an unexpected journey that

off on a road trip to Alaska -- unsure what I was seeking, only that I needed solitude to feel her presence and honour her memory. I guess, somewhere deep, I needed solitude.

As I drove through Alaska's wilderness, I felt a connection with my mother

