

Away from home

In the third of a series of articles charting the experiences of a Wanstead-based travel writer, **Carole Edrich** talks about deadlines, dining out and Dutch art, and teases her Wanstead comedy night this month

While freelance journalists occupy the same place in editors' priorities as the Taliban give to womens' football, columnists are different. Like seagulls they get everywhere, do what they want, and often leave others to sort out their doings.

I've always wanted a travel column. Not needing commissions means I could be more strategic and arrange trips that would feed both the column and my stand-up events, like the one coming up in Zoology. One recently landed! It hit like a gift from one of those seagulls. Hard and sudden and a total surprise. *BlowUp The Hague*, I decided, would make a perfect start. It fit my target demographics, would make for great stand-up material and have me home with loads of time to write before the deadline.

But within hours of the trip's confirmation, Editor-Arcee called to ask if I could deliver it three whole weeks earlier. My mouth said: "Yes, of course!" while my head was going 'aargh!' and I went into such a big spin that it took some days to locate my wits, put them back in their place, and decide on my column's new theme.

Around The World in 18 Plates would have me eating out in London as research, which would be fun to do with my friends. We visited Badiani Gelato (smooth traditional, tasty Italian yum, in Canary Wharf), Paro in Covent Garden (an East Ender's spicy ode to Calcutta with stops at Iran, Goa and Bethnal Green) and Elondi (a perfectly portioned, mouth-wateringly wonderful Sunday lunch in a light and airy spa-like haven in Stratford Westfield). However, despite the magic words 'press' and 'urgent' and more than 50 emails, my gastronomic research



moved forward at a similar speed to that of a heavily drugged snail.

I changed the theme again to 'getting lost in London', filed to my deadline, and hated every word. Next morning I woke up in a sweat, worked on it until I only hated every other word, and submitted the new, marginally less awful version at OMG in the morning.

I went to *BlowUp The Hague* anyway. It's not a series of Dutch demolitions or a vivid explosion of tulips, but an annual arts festival. This year, a lush, environmentally sensitive, temporary pontoon-gallery of inflated sculptures by great Dutch designers. I'll use it – and the vibe of the city – as a metaphor for the Dutch approach to sustainability in my next piece. And there was gin.

From perfect start to perfect storm, I got the thing written on time. That's not the end of the story. To discover the last twist, taste four great wines and hear more of my mad travel experiences, come to Zoology on 9 July.

Carole will host a wine tasting, travel and comedy event at Zoology, 145 High Street, Wanstead on 9 July from 7pm (tickets: £25). Visit wnstd.com/9july