Bitten hard by the travel bug

From struggling to catch some much-needed sleep on an overnight bus zig-zagging its way across South America to being "adopted" by local families, there isn't much *Lonely Planet* writer Kate Armstrong hasn't experienced. She says travel writing has its fair share of less-than-glamorous moments because of covering large distances and having to reap so much information.

But the outpouring of generosity in the areas she visits outweighs the challenges.

"I've been invited to African villages to eat at their local feast — they hardly have enough to eat themselves but people want to share their lifestyle with you," she says.

"Families in Bolivia have adopted me. We keep in contact and when I go back, I'll see they've kept me alive there through photos and by talking about me with the children."

Armstrong has been to Swaziland, Lesotho and Bolivia and speaks Spanish and Portuguese, which is invaluable.

She's on the go from the moment she wakes up, visiting hostels, restaurants and sights. She spends evenings in her hotel collating notes — or out getting a feel for the night life.

Back home, it takes time to readjust: "From when you wake up to when you go to bed the adrenalin goes all the time, it's hard to switch off. I'll go out for coffee and scour the price ranges as I'm so used to doing it."

AIMEE BROWN

Picture: JOHN FOTIADIS