

Wild at Art

Art is at the heart of one woman's business

Ute Amann-Seidel believes that art is “a very authentic way of connecting with a location” and feels that Scotland is the perfect creative travel destination.

Originally from a small town in Germany, Amann-Seidel has lived in Scotland for more than two decades.

“I am totally in love with this country and always keen to share my passion for it with visitors,” she shares via email. “I have always been into creative things and doing art. Scotland has so much to offer in terms of talented artists, interesting galleries, stunning locations, a vibrant music scene, wonderful history, and a strong cultural heritage.”

Amann-Seidel co-founded Wild at Art with Ellen Colingsworth in 2012. In the beginning, the company put on an annual program of two or three group “painting holidays” during the summer months. At that time, both women had other day jobs. However, as the program evolved, Wild at Art became a full-time venture.

“In a nutshell, our mission is to create unique art experiences for visitors, and opportunities for them to take part in courses and workshops while on holidays in Scotland,” explains Amann-Seidel.

“Travelling in general is a form of personal development. Creative travel takes the experience to another, and more enriching level.”

“More and more, visitors are looking for experiences that give them the opportunity to learn and create. Being creative allows us to really understand a place and connect with its culture and the people. Wild at Art has become a portal for visitors from all over the world who are looking for transformative, creative experiences.”

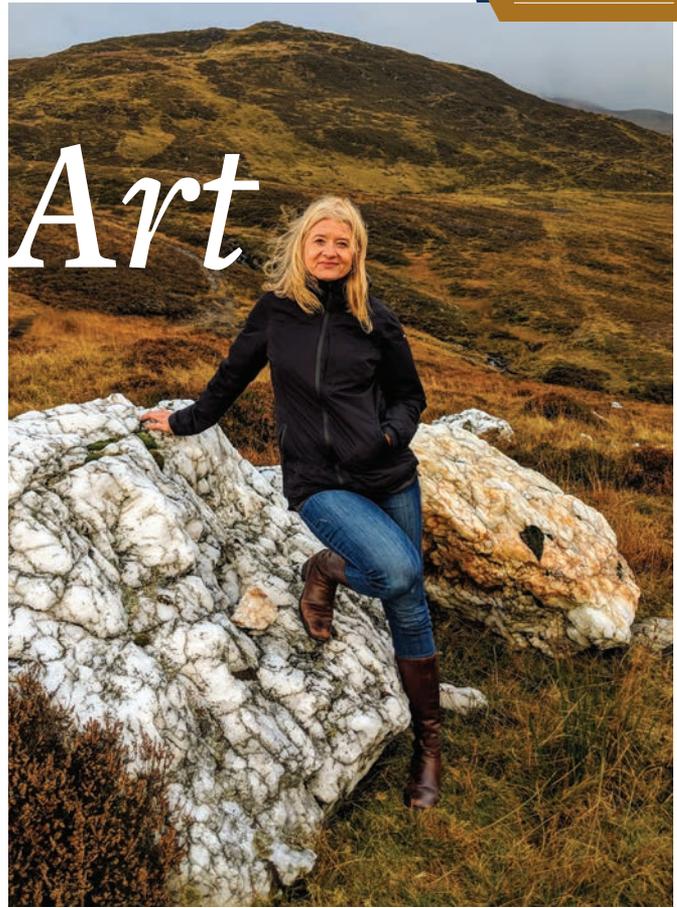
As such, her role, she explains, is very much “hands on.”

“One of my favourite tasks is designing a new art experience - researching the location, planning the workshop part together with the tutor, picking the best accommodation, and adding bits that further enrich the package. This could be, for example, a visit to a gallery and a local artist's studio, a themed walking tour, or something like a Celtic folk music night in a local pub.”

Currently, the company's workshops include drawing and painting, photography, printmaking, weaving, pottery, creative writing and more via group tours to customized individual experiences. A 10-day, artist-led Outlander Art Experience, during which guests stay in Linlithgow and Inverness - visiting many of the filming locations featured in the smash STARZ TV series - has become very popular.

The dynamic duo is looking to expand both their destinations and activities, always growing their team of artists and partners.

“The latest addition to our program is a singing holiday in traditional Scottish song with the amazing Robyn Stapleton - one of the



country's most respected folk singers,” says Amann-Seidel. “I am very excited about developing this new side of the business, where people from over the world can come together to share the joy of singing right in the heart of Scotland.”

The position is not without its challenges, however.

“The days are too short; I always have so many ideas buzzing around in my head and, as director of the company, I have the freedom to put into practice whatever I want. Because I absolutely love what I do, and work doesn't really feel like work, I often find it hard to switch off.”

Along with Wild at Art, Amann-Seidel also owns and operates Fire & Rain Soul Spa, which offers retreats for people who have lost their partners.

“Following the sudden death of my fiancé I went through a major life crisis. Once I felt stronger and able to function better again, I decided to set up a project where I can share some of the things that had helped me on my grief journey with other widows and widowers.”

The rewards of both vocations, she notes, is beyond measure.

“First and foremost, I really enjoy meeting happy and inspired guests from all over the globe, and getting to know the fantastic Scottish artists, the accommodation hosts, gallery owners, minibus drivers, café staff and shop owners. Of course, I love taking part in the workshops and being surrounded by creative spirits.

“And I get to explore more of this beautiful country; the wilderness, the buzzing cities, historic towns, dream beaches, the rugged hills, vast open spaces and the many glens. There couldn't be a better workplace anywhere else in the world!”

www.wildatartscotland.com

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