



# The world of Lauren Bravo



I, LIKE several million others of my gender, went to see Bridesmaids last month.

We were driven there not by our second X chromosome bleating "Wedding! Weddings! Flowers and dresses!" like a child in a sweetie aisle, but by the critics' promises that it was a female answer to all the bromance comedies of the past few years. According to the reviews, it had hilarious female leads, being funny with no help from men and ridiculing the whole elaborate hoopla of the modern wedding. All this was true. It is a great film.

But while Bridesmaids did its best to deftly sidestep every girl-film cliché, it still landed face first in one. If my Twitter feed is anything to go by, I was just one of many people going "great film - but WHY the bloody cupcakes?" Central character Annie is on a downward spiral after her bakery went out of business. She seeks solace in decorating a solo cupcake, then refuses to bake anymore because she is sad, then finally does bake a cake when charming love interest Officer Rhodes encourages her to.

Over the last decade, a funny thing has happened to cake. It has gone from an innocent teatime treat that you're allowed to eat as a morning or afternoon snack and publicly sink your face into on your birthday, to something wholly more loaded. Cake, and specifically cupcakes, became first fashion accessories, then status food, then, suddenly, a heavily-frosted projection of all female emotion. I could blame Sex and the City, but that would be lazy. Whatever the reason, cake is now intertwined inexplicably with our gender. I have a uterus, therefore I am a cupcake obsessive.

I'm not sure precisely when starting a cupcake shop became the Plan B career for women, but it seems it has. Every market and food festival I go to is full of pretty, bunting-bedecked cupcake stalls. Each one believes it is breaking brand-new culinary ground ("Ours are vegan!", "Ours have photos of babies on them!") and each one has an air of financial doom, about them, mingling in with the smell of buttercream.

And the really annoying thing in all of this is that I love cake. I adore it. It is probably my favourite food. Visits to Parklife Bakery are one of the highlights of my Worthing visits. But now "I love cupcakes" doesn't sound like "I love potatoes" or "I love Reece's Peanut Butter Cups mashed onto digestive biscuits." It sounds like "I love cupcakes, and also Disney films, and Cosmo quizzes and pedicures and the gender pay gap".

So while Bridesmaids got a lot of things right, it got at least one thing wrong. Women are not genetically programmed to want to run a little bakery and make sugarcraft flowers all day. We enjoy cake because we are human, and cake is delicious - and we're more than happy to cut the blokes a slice. A small one.

# It takes some magic to beat Worthing...

by Katherine Hollisey-McLean

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**BALI, Australia, Borneo - apparently none of them can beat living in Worthing.**

And according to Gavin and Erin Mallory, the only place that can is one that is inhabited by elves, dragons and wizards.

Having travelled the globe in a bid to find somewhere better to live than Worthing, it was only the combination of the Wizarding World of Harry Potter within the Islands of Adventure theme park and Walt Disney World, both in Orlando, Florida, that could beat our humble seaside town.

But despite vowing to move to the highest-rated place, the couple have decided to stay living in Worthing.

Gavin, 33, of St Elmo Road, said: "There was a tie at the top for a long time, and we were wondering if we would ever find a winner, but then we went to The Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Florida, and the combo of that and Disney World was too awesome for Worthing to beat.

"There were many reasons why, but the big some of them were the massive portions of junk food, lovely people (well, lovely staff) and the Butterbeer at The Wizarding World of Harry Potter which was truly amazing!

"I said at the time that I preferred it to Harveys, but now I'm home I've had a rethink. Nothing is nicer than Harvey's, but Harry Potter's Butterbeer is a close second."

Before embarking on their year-long adventure, the couple



The diverse landscape of New Zealand - including glaciers, above, and stunning coastlines, below, helped its south island come joint second overall



No place like home: Erin and Gavin Mallory at Worthing's seafront after returning, above. Below, the challenge laid down in January.

rated Worthing out of 10 in five different categories. It received a score of 41, which was the number other countries would have to beat if they were to become the pair's new home.

The categories were: Is the weather better than Brighton?; Proximity and quality of the seaside (a pier must be present for full points here); Local delicacies and quality of food; Friendliness and attractiveness of the locals and the Availability and quality of real ale.

In each country they stopped off in, Gavin wrote a blog revealing the scores it had received. Eventually, four other countries - Japan, Singapore, Cambodia and New Zealand's south island - ended up with a score of 41, putting them tied with Worthing.

But it was not until the couple's last stop before they arrived back home that they found a winner, with Orlando's theme parks scoring 44 out of 50. Unfortunately,



as it is too hard to move to a theme park, the couple have decided to stay in Worthing, but say they hope to visit there again soon.

Erin, 30, said of the experience: "It was an amazing year and we had the best time. It is surreal to think that a few months ago we were bumping along a dusty road in a rickety tuk tuk driven by a toothless man, and now we're back home, in our house.

"Travelling makes you appreciate what you have, as well as broaden your horizons and experience something incredible."

Gavin and Erin returned to Worthing in May, and gave their friends and family another reason to celebrate as they revealed Erin is pregnant.

"It's been great to get back and tell our friends and family the happy news," Gavin said.

Gavin added: "The trip is one of the best things we've ever done. There were lots of reasons not to go on a round-the-world trip, but we did it, anyway and have no regrets whatsoever. It was worth every penny. As well as that, we know officially that we live in the joint-second best place in the entire world, so that's nice."

## FactFile

Here is the leaderboard of the world's best places to live, according to Gavin and Erin...



- 1 The Wizarding World of Harry Potter and Walt Disney World, Orlando, Florida (pictured above and below) - 44 points
- 2 Worthing, Japan, Singapore, Cambodia and New Zealand's south island - 41 points
- 3 Malaysia (second visit) and Thailand - 40 points
- 4 Laos - 39 points
- 5 New Zealand's north island - 37 points
- 6 Borneo - 36 points
- 7 Vietnam - 35 points
- 8 Australia - 32 points
- 9 Air Asia - 30 points
- 10 Malaysia (first visit) - 28 points
- 11 Bali - 18 points

