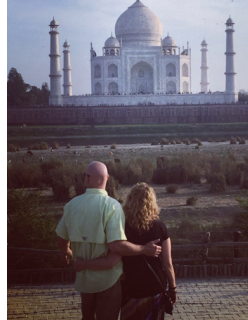


Dr. McCabe's personal and professional explorations have taken her around the world.



OPHTHALMOLOGY ON THE GO

A passion for travel fuels professional and personal growth.



BY CATHLEEN M. MCCABE, MD | CATARACT AND REFRACTIVE SPECIALIST, THE EYE ASSOCIATES, BRADENTON AND SARASOTA, FLORIDA

I have had a passion for travel my entire life. Although I did not travel much as a child, I was exposed to cultures outside of my own through my parents' involvement in international programs. My family would often host exchange students from other countries for a year. Similarly, we would host people who had come to the United States for business for several weeks to a month. Because of these programs, from an early age, I interacted with people from about 30 different countries.

HITTING THE ROAD

When my father asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up, my answer was always: "I want to travel." Fortunately, I now have a career and a specialty that enables me to attend conferences around the world, and I have a family that is just as passionate about travel as I am. This past month, my husband came with me to Vienna, Austria, while I attended the ESCRS annual meeting, and from there we extended our European visit with a short trip to Copenhagen, Denmark.

Earlier this year, I made my first trip to Barcelona, Spain, to attend the World Ophthalmology Congress, and I traveled to India for the first time for another conference. Our trip to India was fortuitous because we happened to be in the best city to celebrate Holi—the Hindu spring festival also known as the *Festival of Colors*. We also toured a tiger sanctuary and were lucky enough to see a mother tiger and her two cubs come up to our Jeep and bathe in a nearby puddle. Not only was this trip eye-opening from a professional standpoint—I got to hear international perspectives

during the educational sessions at the meeting—but it was an amazing experience on a personal level as well.

ON A MISSION

I believe that mission work is a great way to combine my passion for helping patients and my passion for experiencing other cultures. It is a valuable growth experience for me as a surgeon because it takes me out of my comfort zone. I am without optimal tools and managing patients who may not fully understand the procedures I am performing.

One mission trip I made to Kenya was particularly memorable because it provided me with an interesting combination of experiences. On the one hand, I witnessed profound poverty and cared for patients with advanced diseases. On the other hand, I had the opportunity to have my family with me, and we saw the natural beauty that the country has to offer during a safari in Maasai Mara National Reserve.

INSPIRING A NEW GENERATION

I take my family with me on missions as much as I can to provide them with memorable experiences and opportunities to learn about other cultures. Years ago, when my children were 5 and 7 (now 27 and almost 29), we spent a month in Belize while I completed an internship. We lived in a little Mayan village with no running water—we had to pump our own water from a communal well—and my children attended a local English-language school. Our whole family immersed itself in that culture while I managed a general medical clinic in the village. For my husband and me, our time in Belize ignited our passion

for travel as well as for giving back and involving our kids.

We all have fond memories of many life-changing adventures on that trip. It had a profound effect on our children's perception of the world. When we returned to the United States, the simple things that we used to take for granted seemed like luxuries. For example, we had an old van as our family vehicle that we had considered sort of a *junk car*, but the trip gave us an entirely new perspective, and we were more appreciative of everything we had.

We just welcomed our third grandchild into the world, and we look forward to sharing our passion for travel with the next generation of our family.

ALL ABOARD

We expand our horizons by trying new things when we travel. Every other year, my husband and I get together with good friends—either with our children or without—and take a trip to experience a new culture together. Nurturing that part of our lives through close relationships with dear friends is rewarding.

One of our favorite ways to travel is by sea. My husband and I are involved in a sailing group led by Tania Aebi, the first American woman and the youngest person at the time, in the mid-1980s, to circumnavigate the world. These have been some truly incredible adventures. On just a small boat with a small group of people, we have sailed to Thailand, Cuba, and many other places.

No matter how I travel, I am incredibly thankful and grateful that I have these opportunities to see new places, meet new people, and experience new cultures. ■