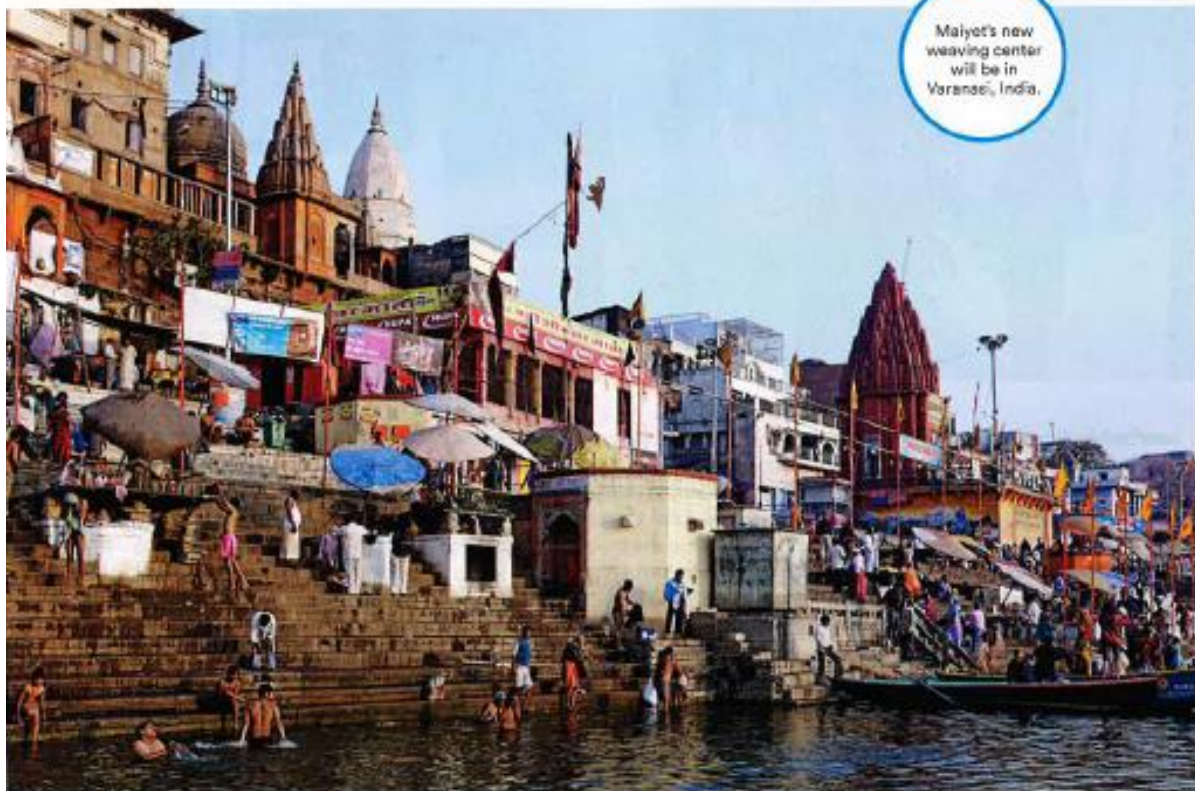


PUBLICATION: Conde Nast Traveler  
DATE: September 2014



While most creative people travel for inspiration, few truly repay the debt to their foreign muses. The following innovative designers, whether by supporting disenfranchised artisans or employing sustainable grazing practices, are teaching the rest of the industry how to walk the walk. Proof that good style and doing good are no longer mutually exclusive. By Nandita Khanna

# Fashion Forward



Maiyet's new weaving center will be in Varanasi, India.

## Maiyet



*Because they know that behind every great dress is a great artisan.*

In 2010, when Maiyet co-founders Paul van Zyl and Kristy Caylor set off on their first exploratory 20-city trip around the world, an early stop was

Varanasi, India, to visit the silk weavers for which the city, one of the oldest on earth, is renowned. "I remember Kristy admiring the silks and the complex way they're made," says CEO Van Zyl. "The experience encapsulated everything we hoped to do with Maiyet—create rare, beautiful, and covetable product, but also enable artisans to collaborate more productively." Now the company has joined forces with Nest, a nonprofit organization that

offers support to artisans in several countries, to finance a David Adjaye-designed silk-weaving facility opening next year in Varanasi. The new space will allow up to 100 craftsmen to work together in safe conditions—and to grow their own textile businesses. "We wanted to give them a chance to help themselves," Van Zyl explains.

This hands-on approach is at the center of Maiyet's mission. In Varanasi, Creative Director Caylor found





For another fashion innovator we love, download our digital edition or visit [cntraveler.com](http://cntraveler.com).



inspiration in both the place and the crafts produced there. In recent years, Indian saris have been made using a distinctive jacquard weaving method, and this fall some of Maiyet's own polka-dot silk dresses will incorporate the same technique. Van Zyl and Caylor's collaborations don't stop in India, however; they're currently working with Kenyan artists to create brass jewelry, and with Indonesian textile makers on experimental batiks. "One of the things our travels have taught us is that any craft demands a skill set, pride, and dignity from its practitioner," says Van Zyl. "To be able to connect with these artisans and then bring their work to a Paris Fashion Week runway and to customers in London, Miami, and Tokyo—it's at the core of what we do."

## Stella McCartney



*Because she took cruelty-free fashion from frumpy to fabulous.*

It's little wonder that McCartney, a lifelong vegetarian who was raised on an organic farm in the English countryside, has had a heightened eco-consciousness from an early age. "Nature is part of my roots," she says. "The environment has always been

important to me." Since the launch of her line in 2001, the British designer has been a maverick for fashion that's at once ethical and luxurious, and stubborn in her refusal to use fur or leather in her collections. That same sense of conviction brought her to Argentina, where she partnered with the Nature Conservancy and Ovis 21, a network of more than 140 farmers across Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay who have banded together to reverse the devastating effects of 100 years of continuous grazing in the Patagonia grasslands by adhering to a multi-pasture protocol that replicates natural grazing patterns. Argentina is the world's fifth-largest producer of wool, and McCartney sourced much of the material for her fall 2014 collection (including oversized fringed woolen blanket coats) from Patagonian farmers who participate in Ovis 21's program.

This isn't the first time travel has played a vital role in McCartney's designs: Her clothes are rich with visual references from different destinations. Last year, she also collaborated with the International Trade Centre, a Geneva-based agency that has helped match luxury labels with artisans across Africa, to create printed totes made in Nairobi. "It's important to encourage industry in small communities," she says. "The luxury goods market has a long way to go, but we should all be taking steps toward sustainability." ♦

McCartney's wool is from Patagonia, Argentina.



Maiyet's fall 2014 Drape Flange Dress is made from hand-loomed silk that was woven and cut in Varanasi ([maiyet.com](http://maiyet.com); \$1,595).



Stella McCartney's fall 2014 collection will feature wool from her new partnership with Patagonian farmers (Stella McCartney, N.Y.C.; \$730).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTIAN HANDEL; OVIS 21; TOM SOMMER (2); STYLED BY EWA DZIEDUSZCZYK.