

Agoraphobia is a mental illness characterized by the extreme level of anxiety a person experiences whenever they are in an environment they feel they cannot control. Such an environment is perceived as unsafe, and therefore, it produces anxiety. Agoraphobia sufferers often experience panic attacks in these situations. Being in public place, open spaces, or even just outside of their home can be enough to cause an attack. The condition is estimated to affect around 1.8 million Americans. Doctors believe agoraphobia is rooted in a combination of hereditary and environmental factors. It often runs in families, and stressful experiences such as the death of a parent or being physically attacked may trigger the disorder. People afflicted with agoraphobia almost always require counseling in order to get better.

While the term Agoraphobic Traveller sounds like an oxymoron, Instagram user Jacqui Kenny goes by that name. This agoraphobic sufferer has made quite a name for herself staying at home and capturing photos using Google Street View. What started out simply as a way to distract herself from negative thoughts has attracted over 88,000 Instagram followers. Agoraphobic Traveller could also be described as an agoraphobic photographer. Around 200 of her screen-grabbed photographs can be viewed on her Instagram account. As a virtual travel photographer, Kenny has explored back streets and rural towns in a variety of locations such as Chile, Mongolia, Senegal, and the Middle East, taking over 27,000 screen shots in the process.

The positive response to her Agoraphobic Traveller photos led to an exhibit being put up at a gallery in New York City, where visitors donned virtual goggles to view the Google Street View images in 3D. Kenny's success on Instagram also had another unexpected side effect. Through the hard work of counseling and visualization exercises, she was able to overcome her agoraphobic fear of traveling. Kenny flew to New York City from her home in London to attend her first photo exhibit last year.