



## Luxury Walking Tours

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Tue Jul 10 12:30:00 EDT 2007

### Global strolls

Suddenly, it hits you. You've spent the morning ambling around China's remote Guizhou Province, sharing dirt roads and terraced rice paddies with the occasional water buffalo or curious pre-schooler. Now, hundreds of miles from anything resembling a restaurant, you find yourself very, very hungry.

Fortunately, about a hundred yards ahead (atop a postcard-perfect stone bridge), your traveling chef has laid out a gourmet dim sum picnic. And a few hours later when you arrive at a village, local masseuses will be flexing their fingers in anticipation. It's all par for the course on Butterfield and Robinson's Shanghai to Tibet walking tour.

Perennially popular with recent college grads and earthy types, walking tours are nowadays attracting a more amenity-oriented clientele.

"With the whole soft adventure boom," notes Karen Cleary of Boundless Journeys, "more and more travelers want to get off that tour bus and really see a region up close and personal...and also enjoy a big dinner at the end of the night."

As any seasoned trekker will attest, though, moments of serendipity can be hard won. Getting lost in bad weather, getting lost in good weather, sore feet, and even boredom can sometimes plague the most intrepid foot traveler. Hence the importance of a good trip outfitter.

These are the experts who take care of all the requisite due diligence: locating the best footpaths, restaurants and hotels, crafting imaginative picnics, arranging private tours, classes and massages, and bringing along the vehicular assistance should the skies suddenly turn grim.

According to Sarah Thies, marketing director for the California-based operator, Classic Journeys, "We spend about one to two years researching a destination before starting a trip there. The guides we hire, all local to the region, are intimately familiar with what people should see—both in terms of the hotspots as well as those out of the way secret places."

For example, Classic Journeys' [Moroccan Tour](#) puts you in touch with the world's earliest wanderers—nomads. After a few days meandering through the crowded markets of Marrakech, travelers leave the medina behind for an authentic Berber encampment, where they then spend the night in camel hair tents amidst the Sahara's rolling red dunes.

Today's walking tours are anything but pedestrian, and include diversions for the trekker inclined to skip a mile or two. "Part of our definition of luxury", notes Pam Byron who founded the much lauded outfitter Off the Beaten Path with her husband Bill, "lies within the notion of choice. On many of our trips there's usually an option to do something else, like fish in a secluded lake, go on a photo safari or get a massage back at the hotel."

More dedicated types might enjoy Off the Beaten Path's Patagonia Tour, which includes horseback riding through the Pampas, glacial hikes with crampons, and Shackleton-worthy slogs through thigh-high mud fields. In a similarly adventurous vein, San Francisco-based Geographic Expeditions offers a popular trekking tour to Uganda to get up close and personal with silverback gorillas, and Abercrombie & Kent arranges a number of custom "tramping" tours through the south island of New Zealand.

To generate a list of thirteen walking tours, we asked several high-end tour operators the same question: which one of your tours absolutely, positively could not be replicated by an independent traveler? In other words, we were only interested in those trips so unique and insiderish that the savviest of travelers wouldn't be able to match them (at least without some serious connections).

So while anyone can make arrangements to stay at Ravello's ultra-swank Le Sirenuse hotel, not everyone can get the place to themselves -- which is the case on Butterfield and Robinson's Amalfi Coast Trip. Nor can most people rent out the Tibetan Museum, or glide through the famously cloistered wineries of Bordeaux and Tuscany. So tie up your laces.



**Classic Journeys:  
Morocco—Fès to Marrakesh**

From dizzying alleys to towering red dunes, Morocco's scenery deserves an up close and personal approach. Stops on this seven-day trek include a restored Thirteenth Century fortress; Fes' Jnan Palace, a sort of Persian Central Park with seven acres of private gardens totally sequestered from the Medina market hustle; as well as some bona fide desert digs -- a Berber nomadic encampment, complete with camel hair tents and decorative lanterns. From \$3395.

[www.ClassicJourneys.com/Morocco](http://www.ClassicJourneys.com/Morocco)

**Classic Journeys:  
Tuscany and the Cinque Terre**

Dante mentions the Tuscan village of Monteriggioni in *The Inferno*, but this eight day trek from Classic Journeys is far from hellish. In addition to the former Tuscan fortress, notable rest stops include a Portofino monastery, an 11th century Benedictine Abbey, a private family vineyard located on the grounds of a 15th Century castle. In the village of Chianti, walkers learn how to make terra cotta pottery and the odd batch of sheep's milk. From \$3495.

[www.ClassicJourneys.com/Tuscany](http://www.ClassicJourneys.com/Tuscany)



View the complete slideshow of all thirteen walking tours at [www.forbestraveler.com](http://www.forbestraveler.com)

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For more information on Classic Journeys' Cultural Walking Adventures in Morocco, Tuscany and around the world, call 1-800-200-3887 or visit [www.ClassicJourneys.com](http://www.ClassicJourneys.com).