



National Geographic *Adventure*

The ADVENTURE Ratings 2009: A comprehensive ranking of the world's top outfitters—surveyed, sorted, and scored.

By Costas Christ and Claire Martin

For the second time in as many years, we've conducted an unprecedented survey of adventure travel companies, based on the idea that a traveler's most important decision is not always where to go but who to go with. For the 2009 edition, we spoke to more guide services—and their clients—than ever before (248 in all). We contacted companies that lead 85,000 people a year and those that cater to a hundred. We surveyed paddling outfitters, trekking guides, safari specialists, and the ones that do it all. We evaluated companies that will take you places you've only dreamed of (the Tibetan Plateau, the Serengeti on foot) and those that specialize in your own backyard (the Grand Canyon, the Grand Tetons).

And after asking them the tough questions (Have you tested your risk management strategies? Are your guides trained to "leave no trace"?), we scored each one using criteria synonymous with National Geographic—environmental awareness, reliable service, local knowledge. Because in a time when travel dollars are stretched, it's essential that an outfitter deliver the trip of a lifetime, the first time. These are the world's leading travel specialists. Each offers a unique way to explore the planet. The only question now is: Who will you go with?

HOW WE DID IT:

We reached out to hundreds of tour companies, asked them to complete a comprehensive survey, and interviewed their clients. The magazine's 55 selections are divided into six major categories: all 200 Best Adventure Travel Companies are listed online.

KEY:

- **Education:** The extent to which clients learn about destinations (geology, culture, history, etc.) from guides, locals, and pre- and post-trip information
- **Sustainability:** The emphasis outfitters place on practices that help protect the planet's cultural and natural heritage while also benefiting local communities
- **Quality of Service:** How well outfitters take care of clients, from providing up-to-date gear and high-comfort accommodations to developing solid emergency plans
- **Spirit of Adventure:** The degree to which trips involve outdoor physical activity and introduce clients to innovative experiences in classic and emerging areas
- **Client Satisfaction:** Customer assessment of education, sustainability, service and adventure (multiple clients were interviewed for each outfitter)

HIKING & TREKKING

Pro Pathfinders + Authentic Experiences

Classic Journeys

| Rating Criteria Scores | |
|---|------|
| Overall Score | 91.7 |
|  Quality of Service | 89.0 |
|  Sustainability | 91.0 |
|  Spirit of Adventure | 90.0 |
|  Education | 93.5 |
|  Client Satisfaction | 95.0 |

| | |
|-------|---|
| Price |    |
|-------|---|



| Outfitter's Activities |
|------------------------|
| Hiking/Trekking |
| Cultural Encounters |
| Family Adventures |
| Luxury Adventures |
| Nature and Wildlife |

| Countries Visited |
|---|
| Africa: Morocco, Zambia |
| Asia: Cambodia, China, India, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam |
| Australia, Oceania: New Zealand |
| Europe: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, England, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Spain, Switzerland |
| Latin America: Argentina, Belize, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru |
| U.S. and Canada: Canada, United States |

Costa Rican rainforests, Roman ruins, Napa vineyards—most Classic Journeys are, well, classic. What's unique is the chance to see these areas under a microscope, thanks to the slow pace of walking. Locals often invite clients into their homes and introduce them to everything from regional cuisine to sporting events.

New for '09:

Name: "Victoria Falls, Villages & Wildlife"
Destination: Zambia
Activities: Hiking
Duration: 10 days
Price: From \$6995



Website:
www.classicjourneys.com