

World's Top Adventure Trips

T+L has surveyed the field to create the ultimate directory of adventure trips around the globe, each listed with a top outfitter.

From March 2010

By Jeff Wise

Wave-battered headlands ripped past us, shrouded in fog, as the tiny plane banked and turned, weaving along the ramparts of the rugged coast. Abruptly, the pilot steered into a bay where the receding tide had laid bare a broad patch of sand. Down we floated and stepped out to find ourselves in a valley of riotous green. There were no houses, no roads. Only the tallest peaks even had names. At that moment I knew that I had been transported, not only to another place in the world, but to another way of living in it.

My first trip to Alaska, a dozen years ago, cemented a long-gestating passion for adventure travel. And in the years since, that passion has spread around the globe. Never have there been so many people who want to see and experience the farthest corners of the world, and never have there been so many adventure-tour companies, of such high caliber, offering such a wide range of destinations and activities. We're living in a golden age of adventure.

Adventure isn't just about escaping into the wild, of course. It's about engaging and committing yourself no matter what you're doing. "People today have the mind-set of wanting to master things," says Keith Walden of Virtuoso, a network of luxury travel agencies. "They want to go and dive in and learn and be hands-on."

For a truly profound experience, adventure travelers should plan on spending at least a week. One needn't endure rough living conditions; some of the wildest landscapes on earth can be enjoyed in luxury tented camps or sumptuous lodges like those operated by Explora, in remote corners of South America. One of the company's guided excursions heads across the Bolivian altiplano, one of the world's most rugged environments.

Travelers pursuing personal transformation are increasingly looking for trips that include immersion in a foreign culture or a chance to volunteer on behalf of a worthy cause. Journey

Mexico, for instance, focuses on Mexico's cultural and natural heritage and brings guests on trips that involve weighing, tagging, and releasing endangered sea turtles on the coastline of Baja California.

Then again, if it's a profoundly life-changing experience you're after, there's nothing like a really long journey in a truly remote region. Wilderness Travel conducts 29-day treks on the Tibetan Plateau, which kick off in Kathmandu and ascend to a base camp within 8,000 feet of Everest's summit. Along the way, guests explore the ancient monasteries of the Lhasa valley.

While the ongoing financial meltdown may have temporarily taken the wind out of adventure travel's sails, the state of uncertainty only makes the quest for adventure all the more relevant. As I write in my new book, *Extreme Fear*, times of crisis have a way of deepening our sense of connection and purpose. After all, as far as we may travel, the real destination lies inside.

**All rates are per person and include lodging; airfare not included.*

Costa Rica: Local Culture

Zipline through a forest canopy, hike an active volcano, and learn from locals about their country.

Go with: Classic Journeys, whose philosophy is that you can get as much of an adrenaline rush from chatting with a shepherd on a remote hillside as from shooting Class Three rapids through the rain forest. *Monthly departures except in May and September; seven days from \$2,995.*



For more information, call 800-200-3887 or visit www.classicjourneys.com/costarica

Emerging Destinations

Adventure outfitters are always looking for the next under-discovered spot. Here's where they're headed.

The Balkans: A sense of Old Europe authenticity can be found here in spades, along with a stunning Mediterranean coastline. This year Classic Journeys introduces Dalmatian Coast Family Journey. *June 27–July 3; seven days from \$3,995.*

www.ClassicJourneys.com/croatiafamily