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Contact: Sarah Theis  
Marketing & Communications Manager  
Classic Journeys  
Tel: 800-200-3887  
Email: [sarah@classicjourneys.com](mailto:sarah@classicjourneys.com)

## **Classic Journeys Named #6 Tour Operator In The World By *Travel + Leisure* Magazine**

*Provider of upscale adventure tours earns high marks from traveling public in prestigious annual poll*

La Jolla, CA – Classic Journeys, the California-based provider of luxury walking tours, has received its third World's Best award from *Travel + Leisure* magazine, capturing the #6 spot on the Top 20 list of Tour Operators & Safari Outfitters.

"The World's Best award is especially gratifying to our team because it's voted on by members of the traveling public," explains Edward Piegza, chairman and co-founder of Classic Journeys.

"Not only regular *Travel + Leisure* readers, but any travel enthusiasts who feel strongly about their experiences are invited to vote for their favorites each spring."

Respondents to the annual World's Best questionnaire are asked to rate members of major travel categories like hotels, islands, destination spas, cruise lines, and more on a series of key characteristics. In the Tour Operator & Safari Outfitter category, companies are rated on the quality of their staff/guides, itineraries/destinations, activities, accommodations, food, and value. The ratings – based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being "excellent" – are then averaged, creating an overall score.

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*Named a World's Best Tour Operator by Travel + Leisure Magazine*

Classic Journeys • 7855 Ivanhoe Ave., Ste. 220 • La Jolla, CA 92037  
800-200-3887 or 858-454-5004 • fax: 858-454-5770  
[www.classicjourneys.com](http://www.classicjourneys.com) • [moreinfo@classicjourneys.com](mailto:moreinfo@classicjourneys.com)

Classic Journeys' rating of 93.31 out of 100 possible points was just four percentage points behind the overall winner in the Tour Operator category...a narrow margin considering that the company has only been in existence for 14 years.

"Mutual wanderlust is definitely what brought the partners of Classic Journeys together," observes Piegza. "We knew from long conversations about the nature of travel that we wanted to create something different: a tour company that balanced walking with history and culture, immersing our guests in each region on a deeply personal level."

In 1995, with their backyard guest house serving as company headquarters, Piegza and his wife, Susan, began scouting 10 initial itineraries – dubbed *Cultural Walking Adventures* – throughout western Europe, including Tuscany & the Cinque Terre, the Amalfi Coast, the Italian Lakes, the Swiss Alps, Provence, Burgundy, the Basque Pyrenees, and England's Cotswolds.

Over the years, dozens of cultural walking adventures have been added to the company's portfolio, along with culinary tours and family journeys. Due to this flourishing expansion program, the company now boasts more than 65 unique itineraries on five continents, including North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

"Guests can join a Classic Journey from New Zealand's South Island to Zambia's bushveld," says Piegza. "Whatever the region, our goal is for guests to experience a real connection, not just to the place, but to the people."

The company's network of more than 150 full-time, native guides makes those connections possible. From Jorge, the naturalist and practicing biologist in Costa Rica who introduces guests to a stellar cast of rainforest creatures, to Mario and his father, Teo, the winery owners in Croatia who invite guests into their home for a private tasting, it's the interaction with local residents that really makes history and culture come alive.

As for the current economy, when travelers might be prone to sticking closer to home, Piegza notes, "The reason we're able to not only survive but thrive is the value we provide our guests. By literally removing logistical headaches and language barriers and adding the person-to-person touch, we're able to provide a richer experience than guests could ever have on their own."

## **About Classic Journeys:**

Classic Journeys offers cultural walking adventures, culinary tours and family journeys in North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the South Pacific. Guests enjoy luxury accommodations and gourmet meals that reflect the best of each region, coupled with soft adventure activities, daily interactions with locals, and native guides who make countries and cultures come alive. Tours are six to 12 days long with two to four hours of easy-going walking per day. Land-only tour prices range from \$2395 to \$6995 per person (with discounts for small groups and children traveling with parents). Average tour size is 10, limited to a maximum of 18 guests per departure. Full details and links to itineraries are available at [www.ClassicJourneys.com](http://www.ClassicJourneys.com).