

A voyage to Antarctica tops many travelers' bucket lists. "This is the wildest, most dramatic place on Earth," says Lindblad Expeditions' CEO, Sven-Olof Lindblad.

JOURNEYS OF A LIFETIME

Every great story begins with a quest.
Let curiosity be your guide with these 21 adventurous
ways to see the world

grew up in downtown Manhattan. By the time I was 18, in 1994, I was tired of my competitive high school and of babysitting and of subway commutes. I was ready for my real life to start. I wanted to learn actual skills and see actual nature and sleep with actual Europeans.

I had saved a bunch of money, so I deferred college admission for a year and, not long after graduation, left the country with a frame backpack, some traveler's checks, and a bonkers list of destinations. This was pre-internet, so my haphazard plan was culled from Lonely Planet guides, the 1994 Hostelling International book, and advice from my local STA student travel agency. I'd sent away by mail for a series of pamphlets, and Friends of the Trees Society provided a typewritten list of farms in India. Volunteers for Peace sent a catalog of work camps offering room and board in

exchange for manual labor.

I signed up for two VFP camps—one in Bangladesh, one in Switzerland. I wrote to farms in India and heard back from a handful. I marked them on a map, connecting the dots in a semi-plausible order. I figured I would just take trains and buses or do whatever one did to get from place to place. This was, I should say, pre-Google Maps. I marvel at the faith I had in my executive function back then.

My first stop was Says, Switzerland. Our work camp's task: cutting down scrawny trees in the Alps to protect a village threatened by mudslides. It was hard work, but I loved being outside and spending nights gathered around a communal table for food and cards and intrigue. I'd never been to summer camp. Now I got to have my first camp experience with other newly minted adults, all of us physically fit and far from home. Wasting no time, I acquired two pseudo-boyfriends, one from Ireland and one from Italy. They were perfect in every respect, from their thick accents to their being the right amount jealous of each other.

When that camp was over, I traveled for a week or so with a German girl I'd befriended there. We went backpacking through Vienna and Budapest on a Eurail Pass, letting our whims carry us from café to park to museum to bar. My whims soon took me back off on my own to visit that Italian boyfriend. From Naples, I boarded the overnight ferry to Cagliari, on the Italian island of Sardinia. Arriving into port bleary and disheveled the next morning, I walked off the ship, and there he was, smiling and tan and eager to show me around. A similar scene played out some weeks later in Ireland, where that boyfriend and I hitchhiked along his country's west coast.

And then, back on my own, traipsing from town to town, I was seeing the world while picking up letters from these men and others sent the old-fashioned way, to post offices in places I was passing through—just my name written on the envelope

with *"poste restante"* and the post office's address. I'd sit in parks and write back, then meet more people to run around with.

Has any human ever felt freer and more excited about life than I did then? Wherever I turned, there was a new city to explore, a \$15 hostel bed to sleep in, and a nebulous, whirlwind romance to be had. That miraculous, falling-for-someone rapture—I-like-him-does-he-like-me-oh-wow-he-does!—I had it on a loop. At times I felt like a lothario from some 1970s movie, only instead of leisure suits I wore overalls and tank tops, my henna-ed hair tied back in a knot, a too-heavy backpack on my shoulders. What I did was sort of like womanizing—a friend called it "manizing"—but there seemed to be no fallout.

From Europe, I went to Bangladesh. At first, I got crushes there too. At a welcome party for my sanitary-latrines-construction work camp, a fellow American camper slapped my arm when she caught me flirting with a local musician. "You better cut that out," she said. "This is a Muslim country." For the rest of that trip, I stayed focused on my work and on trying to remember not to drink the well water.

When that camp ended, I went to one of the toughest parts of India: Calcutta, where I volunteered at one of the toughest places, Mother Teresa's missions for the poor. Meeting and being blessed by Mother Teresa one night at vespers was thrilling, but that

part of the country felt like a gauntlet of suffering. Lying one evening on my rooftop cot at the dollar-a-night Hotel Maria, I listened on my Walkman to the mix my Italian boyfriend had made, and felt unspeakably lonely, as lonely as I've ever been. Also

I felt very, very sick. (I would later learn I'd contracted amoebic dysentery.) My friend has a saying: "Crushes are for the strong." Suddenly, I wasn't feeling so strong. The freedom that had felt so magical weeks earlier now felt burdensome.

Still, I stuck to my itinerary. It took me on a three-month trek via bus and train and rickshaw—and on foot—to almost every corner of India. I stayed in rural villages where they'd never met anyone who hadn't grown up there, much less anyone who looked like me. I saw charred bodies by the burning ghats of Varanasi. I heard the Dalai Lama speak in Himachal Pradesh. I attended temple ceremonies in Tamil Nadu. I slept on a vanilla farm in Kerala. I rode on a motorcycle through a barren landscape in Gujarat. Traveling, I slowly discovered, could be thrilling even when it wasn't sexy.

When I returned home to New York, I found it hard to tally all the ways that the round-the-world trip had changed me. Inspired by India, I chose Sanskrit as my college major. To this day, I possess an almost savant-like gift for complicated logistics. I'm still friends with a few members of that work camp crowd. But more than anything, that time abroad gave me a strange sort of secure feeling—a sense of being at home in the world.

ADA CALHOUN is the best-selling author of *St. Marks Is Dead and Wedding Toasts I'll Never Give*.

INTRODUCTION BY
ADA CALHOUN



The Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad snakes through northern Mexico's Copper Canyon.

21 WAYS TO SEE THE WORLD

REPORTED BY
JENNIFER BARGER

Walk With Penguins ANTARCTICA

At the bottom of the world, Antarctica provides a stark but stunning backdrop for encounters with up to seven different breeds of penguins, including black-capped chintraps and long-tailed gentoos. The best time to visit is mid-January, when adult penguins care for their fat, fluffy chicks in nests made of pebbles. Although you should stay at a safe distance from the penguins, many birds seem unfazed by company and waddle up close. The Antarctic Peninsula, the huge spit of land jutting north from the rest of the continent toward South America, is the focus of most cruises.

Hot Tip: Learn how to photograph penguins and icebergs on Nat Geo Expeditions' Journey to Antarctica. natgeoexpeditions.com/explore

Ride Through a Grand Canyon COPPER CANYON, MEXICO

From the dazzling Sea of Cortez in the Pacific to the lofty Sierra Madre, the Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad (El Chepe for short) crosses 39 bridges and passes through 88 tunnels, surrounded by vertical rocks and copper-colored walls. The railroad was built to ferry gold prospectors into the ore-rich Sierra Madre and took more than a century to complete. Nowadays the

attraction is the route itself, through the largely unspoiled expanses of the mighty Copper Canyon.

Hot Tip: In Chihuahua, visit the National Museum of the Revolution in the former home of movement leader Pancho Villa.

Snorkel the Great Barrier Reef AUSTRALIA

Despite coral bleaching caused by climate change, the Great Barrier Reef remains one of the globe's natural wonders and an underwater paradise. Comprising nearly 3,000 separate reefs and more than 900 tropical islands, it stretches farther than the distance between Boston

BLAINE HARRINGTON III (CANYON); PREVIOUS PAGES: MIKHAIL VOROBYEV (ANTARCTICA)



YADID LEVY (COLUMNS), DEN-BELITSKY/GETTY IMAGES (BOATS), PETER SVOBODA (CHURCH), CORY RICHARDS/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CREATIVE (ELEPHANTS)

Wonder lands (clockwise from top left): the Garden Tomb at the ancient city of Petra, a highlight of the King's Highway in Jordan; boats lined up like crayons off the Mediterranean coast of southwestern Turkey; the village of Santa Maddalena, Italy, embraced by the jagged Dolomites; African elephants finding haven in the Okavango Delta, Botswana.

and Miami. Snorkeling, scuba diving, kayaks, or glass-bottom boats get you up close to more than 600 species of coral, vibrant clown fish, and timid reef sharks.
Hot Tip: Several outfitters provide pickup at 4 a.m. to view sunrise over the reef and the Atherton Tablelands via hot-air balloon.

Trace Biblical Routes
KING'S HIGHWAY, JORDAN
 Roman armies, biblical figures, and medieval crusaders all traveled this great Middle Eastern trade route, which ranges from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea. Drive Jordan's section from Amman to Petra, and you'll trace the dramatic, khaki-hued rock formations of the barren Rift Valley for some 230 winding miles, passing by derelict castles and temples plus Mount Nebo, where Moses is said to have seen the Promised Land.
Hot Tip: The ancient city of Petra is best explored during three-times-a-week candlelit night tours.

Go on Safari
OKAVANGO DELTA, BOTSWANA
 Botswana's Chobe National Park harbors more elephants than just about any other game park in Africa, along with massive herds of buffalo, zebra, and antelope. Watch them on hiking safaris or via traditional game-watching vehicles, or explore the golden grass-lined Okavango Delta by *mokoro* (dugout canoe). Bunk at the Zarafa Camp, a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World, in the Selinda Reserve, where you might hear lions roar outside your tent.
Hot Tip: Ogle ancient rock paintings at Tsodilo Hills, a UNESCO World Heritage site at the northwestern edge of the Okavango.

Sail the Mediterranean
TURKEY'S TURQUOISE COAST
 Skip the megayacht-clogged ports of the French Riviera, and instead skirt the shoreline of Turkey's idyllic Lycian peninsula in a two-masted gulet. Boats like these have plied the Mediterranean for centuries. Aboard the medium-size craft—typically 49 to 82 feet long—you'll spot relics of civilizations spanning more than 4,000 years. Most gulets travel from Fethiye eastward along the coast to Kekova, calling at small

ports and anchoring overnight in isolated coves.
Hot Tip: Off the north coast of Kekova, you can spot sunken ruins of the Hellenistic city of Apollonia.

Climb the Alps
THE DOLOMITES
 Driving the Great Dolomite Road, you'll curve and climb through a fantastical southern spur of the Alps. The nature of the dolomitic limestone gives the region its magic—over thousands of years, erosion has carved it into sawtooth ridges, pinnacles, and gorges that change color with the light.
Hot Tip: Stop for a bite or the night at Cortina's Rifugio Sciocattoli, a family-run inn with mountain vistas and house-made blueberry pasta.

Board the Ultimate Train Ride
RUSSIA
 Crossing more than 5,000 miles, the Trans-Siberian Railway is the world's longest, boasting multiple routes around Russia and Asia. Its newest and most exciting line (finished in 1956) takes a week to travel between Moscow and Beijing. After looping around Siberia's crystal clear Lake Baikal (the world's deepest and oldest), you'll glide through wooded mountains, past the ger-dotted plains of Mongolia, and across the flaming red sands of the Gobi. Choices in the dining car might switch from borscht and blini to duck as the train crosses borders.
Hot Tip: Reserve a bunk in a communal car (*platzkart*) or more expensive sleeper cabin, or book a Nat Geo Expeditions trip aboard the *Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian*.

Scale the Great Wall
CHINA
 Built more than 2,000 years ago to keep out invaders from the north, the Great Wall runs like a monumental backbone across China. For long stretches it sprawls in extravagant decay, battered by time and weather. The Jinshanling to Simatai section, northeast of Beijing—rocky underfoot and largely unchanged since the 16th century—offers a glorious trek above rolling forests. East of Simatai the wall is 200 years older and more dilapidated and dramatic, climbing steep ridges



Like the spine of a dragon, the Jinshanling section of the Great Wall stretches 6.5 hilly miles in China's Hebei Province. Watchtowers punctuate its length.



THE STARS OF JAPANESE KABUKI THEATER BECOME HOUSEHOLD NAMES, ESPECIALLY THE MEN WHO PLAY THE WOMEN'S ROLES.

Although the professional Kabuki stages in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka retain the tradition of all-male performers, amateur Kabuki theaters in towns throughout Japan rely on women and child players as well. These local actors (left) portray roles from warriors to maidens.

HIROSHI WATANABE (KABUKI PLAYERS); PREVIOUS PAGES: DMITRY MOISEENKO/WWW.AIRPANO.COM (GREAT WALL)

and plunging into valleys. The wall's tallest point is Watching Beijing Tower, reached via the Sky Bridge. **Hot Tip:** Sleep in modern style at the Commune by the Great Wall, a collection of villas and suites designed by top Asian architects.

Circle the Globe

SAMOA TO THE SERENGETI

Become a modern-day Magellan and circumnavigate the easy way on National Geographic's Around the World by Private Jet journeys. Expert photographers, writers, and cultural guides lead the way. natgeoexpeditions.com/explore **Hot Tip:** Region-specific private-jet journeys explore African safari lands, Pacific island chains, and Asia's temples and towns.

Applaud Kabuki Theater

JAPAN

Sword-wielding samurai, thwarted love affairs, and bloody betrayals make Japanese Kabuki performances as dramatic and compelling as Shakespearean plays or Spanish telenovelas. Its stars become household names, especially the *onnagata*, men who play the women's roles. Racy, often historic tales are performed, sometimes punctuated with dance and the haunting, plangent notes of the shamisen, a three-string lute. **Hot Tip:** Look for shows at Osaka's Shochikuza Kabuki Theater, a converted 1923 movie palace. Pick up an English program or audio guide beforehand for interpretation.

Horse Trek the Andes

CHILE, PERU, ECUADOR

Extending roughly 4,500 miles from Venezuela to Tierra del Fuego, the Andes are the world's longest mountain range. Dirt paths skirting the mountains prove particularly suited to horseback trekking, with dozens of outfitters operating in Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador. One path crosses grasslands in the Ecuadorian highlands; another follows an old smugglers' route from Chile through the Patagonian Andes into Argentina, passing mountain lakes along the way. If you're lucky, you may spot llamas, cougars, chinchillas, or condors. **Hot Tip:** For a cosmic experience, stay at Elqui Domos, in Chile, which features astronomy tours, cabins

with detachable roofs, and an outdoor deck with telescopes.

Be Dazzled by the Pyramids

EGYPT

The sands of Egypt shift around ancient monuments that capture the imagination as few others do. The Great Pyramids of Giza, built circa 2550 B.C., never cease to amaze with their vastness and history. Descend 300 feet through a 3.5-foot-wide passage into the heart of the only surviving wonder of the ancient world. **Hot Tip:** Stay at the Mena House Oberoi, a 19th-century hunting lodge converted into a hotel with grand pyramid views.

Drink Argentine Wine at the Source

MENDOZA, ARGENTINA

Lush Malbec red wine provides a complex, berry-forward foil to Argentina's trademark fire-grilled *parrilla* meats. Its richness comes from Mendoza's mineral-laden soil, warm days, and cool nights. Taste its complexity and mystique at wineries south of this Old World city in western Argentina, where renowned bottles come from producers such as Achaval-Ferrer, Dominio del Plata, and Bodegas Salentein. Many wineries also run restaurants where you can wine and dine among the vines. **Hot Tip:** Maipú's Museo del Vino San Felipe displays antique wine-presses and jumbo wooden barrels.

Follow in Ansel Adams's Footsteps

YOSEMITE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

During the 40 years he lived in the Yosemite Valley, Ansel Adams hiked around the park with some 100 pounds of photography gear. The epic black-and-white images of the American West he captured here are infused with the innate power of these landscapes. Though fires ravaged some of the park's groves and grounds this past summer, you can still follow in his footsteps to explore the magnificence of places bearing evocative names such as Cathedral Spires and Unicorn Peak. You'll want to snap some of your own images of Adams's prize subject, El Capitan, the world's largest individual granite rock.



The granite peaks, serene meadows, and dramatic cataracts of Yosemite National Park have inspired generations of artists and photographers, including Ansel Adams.



DENNIS GALANTE PHOTO INC./GETTY IMAGES (SHEPHERD); TESSA BUNNEY/GETTY IMAGES (EGGS); DZIEWUL (CHURCH); ROBERT DZIEWULSKI/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (FRESCO)

Romanian marvels (clockwise from top left): a shepherd in the Carpathian Mountains wearing a traditional sheepskin coat; decorated eggs popular at Easter time in Bucovina; Sucevita, one of Bucovina's famed painted monasteries, with the largest number of painted images; the fresco enlivening the interior dome at Sucevita.

Hot Tip: The Ansel Adams Gallery in Yosemite Valley offers photography workshops and guided hikes.

Wonder at Religious Frescoes

MOLDAVIA, ROMANIA

Their walls alive with scenes of biblical and historical events, the painted monasteries of Bucovina in the Carpathian Mountains of northeastern Romania resemble the pages of jumbo illuminated manuscripts. There are some 15 monasteries in the region, but most people visit Voronet, Humor, Moldovita, and Sucevita, drawn by the exquisite frescoes on exterior and interior walls. These UNESCO World Heritage-listed treasures mostly date from the 16th century and were built partly to inspire the illiterate Orthodox Christian population as it faced conquest by the Ottoman Turks.

Hot Tip: Get a glimpse of monastery life with Sucevita's collection of ecclesiastical silverware, books, and illuminated manuscripts.

Bike Copenhagen

DENMARK

In a city where more than a third of all journeys are by bike, multiple companies give tours on two wheels. Using either traditional or electric cycles, visitors pedal past contemporary architecture to local design shops or hop on food-centric jaunts led by local guides. "Good urban planning, an underlying 'Nordic trust,' and a flat terrain make Copenhagen an ideal city to bike in," says South Dakota transplant Sam Sandvig Hosman. "I recommend the Green Path, a relaxing ride through the upper neighborhoods of the city."

Hot Tip: Built in 2014, Copenhagen's Bicycle Snake Bridge crisscrosses the harbor and offers views of the city's modern buildings.

Hike Remote Snowfields

BRITISH COLUMBIA

It would take days of trekking to reach the distant peaks and glacial valleys of British Columbia's Cariboo Range. But take a heli-hiking trip with outfitter CMH, and you'll overnight in a comfy mountain lodge, then be zipped away by chopper to far-off-the-beaten-trail hiking. Guides, gear,

and lunch are part of the experience, available early July through mid-September.

Hot Tip: Take the path to Ghost Lake for huckleberry picking and vistas of the lake's two waterfalls.

Plunge Into a Gorge

CRETE

One of Europe's most dramatic day hikes descends into Samariá Gorge, which slices through western Crete from a high plateau to a pebbled beach some 4,000 feet below. The vertiginous route takes five to seven hours, past sweet-scented pine and cypress forests, a ruined village, and finally through the Iron Gates, where the soaring walls of the ravine are a mere 11 feet apart.

Hot Tip: At the end of the trek, have a dip in the clear, warm Libyan Sea at the village of Agia Roumeli.

Sample an Indian Feast

GOA, INDIA

Portuguese sailors, British potentates, and Indian populations all made their mark on the cuisine and culture of this tropical west coast haven. Diverse dishes include spicy prawn *balchão* (a pickled curry) and some of India's only beef and pork dishes. Fish, coconut, and peppers also figure in the mix, and meals are often finished by *bebinca*, an egg, layered crepe dessert with a twist of nutmeg.

Hot Tip: In Old Goa, the former Portuguese capital in India, try a cocktail mixed with *feni*, a spirit distilled from coconuts or cashews.

Sip America's Native Spirit

KENTUCKY

At any of the state's distilleries, the air is filled with the caramel and vanilla scents of aging bourbon. Explore America's "native spirit" on the Bourbon Trail, a self-guided distillery driving (or bicycling) tour in and around Louisville. Among the newest operations: Rabbit Hole, with its glass-walled tasting room and city views.

Hot Tip: At Jason Cohen's Louisville workshop, bourbon barrel staves get repurposed as rustic-chic bar carts, stools, and chandeliers.

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