 NATIONAL
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Win a Trip to the Galápagos



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TRAVELER

ALL TRAVEL, ALL THE TIME | May-June 2010

50 Tours OF A LIFETIME

5th Annual

Great Guided Travel: FROM CULTURE TO CUTTING EDGE

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D.C. Rising

A new energy has swept away the capital's cliché image to reveal a city of style and surprise

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KENYA PASSAGE

Adventure at nightfall

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Thousand Islands of Summer

Escape to a place ruled by echoes of a simpler time

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Smart Traveler

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- PARIS COOKING CLASSES
- WINE & BODEGAS IN ARGENTINA
- WALKING SANTA MONICA
- IN PORT: BERMUDA



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Sail into a Snug Harbor

IN CONTRAST TO the 3,000-plus-passenger behemoths that dominate the seas, expeditionary vessels carry only a few hundred passengers. Excursions off the boat are typically included in the price. And while the quarters are comfortable, you'll have to do without rock-climbing walls, casinos, or 24-hour dining. These nimble boats can navigate waterways that larger ships can't access, opening up new destinations while treading gently on ports.

ARGENTINA & CHILE

To the End of the Earth

The treacherous passage around Cape Horn has long struck fear in the hearts of the saltiest sailors. The expeditionary ships *Via Australis*, *Mare Australis*, and the *Stella Australis* (launching later this year) take between 130 and 210 passengers there in style—with picture windows in each cabin and a full complement of South American wines (included in the price). Ships sail from Ushuaia, Argentina, to Punta Arenas, Chile. You'll listen to talks by staff lecturers as you sail close to blue-hued glaciers and cruise through the Beagle Channel, famously visited by Charles Darwin before he headed to the Galápagos Islands. At Magdalena Island gregarious Magellanic penguins—the largest colony in southern Patagonia—will greet

you. **Cruceros Australis:** "Ushuaia to Punta Arenas," 3 days, from \$840; www.australis.com. **V**

ICELAND

Ethereal Iceland

As *Le Boreal* plies Iceland's coastal waters, you'll discover the eerie rocks that rise from the ocean at Djúpálónssandur, visit Lake Myvatn with its nearby geothermal fields full of bubbling mud pots, boiling springs and fumaroles; and explore remote Surtsey Island, formed by an underwater eruption in the 1960s. Launched this May, the 264-passenger vessel was built using "clean-ship" standards that include an advanced positioning system that keeps it in the same offshore location without having to drop anchor, preventing damage to seabeds. **Tauck:** "Iceland: Land of Fire and Ice," 8 days, \$5,790; www.tauck.com. **N**

SCOTLAND

Scotland by Sea

Join National Geographic experts aboard the 48-passenger *M.V. Lord of the Glens* as it sails around the islands and through the lochs and inland waterways of the Highlands. Explore Culloden battlefield, where the French-supported Jacobite forces were brutally defeated by the British in 1746, crushing Bonnie Prince Charlie's bid for the throne. Kayak the murky waters of Loch Ness, alleged lair of the world's most storied sea monster. And walk among the haunting Cuillin peaks in the Isle of Skye. Expert commentary and local delights await back at the ship each evening, including whisky tastings and live Scottish music. **National Geographic Expeditions/Lindblad:** "Scotland's Highlands and Islands," 9 days, from \$5,990; www.nationalgeographicexpeditions.com.

INDIA

Meet the People

Connecting with the local people is a key component of this cultural odyssey through South India's Deccan Plateau and Malabar Coast. Join a Kodava family in a visit to their ancestral home in the coffee country of Coorg; meet with some of the 10,000 Tibetans in the Buddhist enclave of Bylakuppe; and stay in a private home in Tellicherry, where you'll sample Moplah delicacies whipped up by the host. **Geographic Expeditions:** "Secrets of the Deccan and Malabar—Karnataka to Kerala, India," 14 days, from \$7,295; www.geoex.com.

ECUADOR

Galápagos and Beyond

With its colonial capital of Quito, the Amazon region, the Galápagos islands, and indigenous villages, Ecuador is worthy of several trips, but this one is a great start. You'll cruise down the Napo River, a tributary of the mighty Amazon, aboard the 30-passenger *Manatee Explorer*; head up the Pan-American Highway to bargain at the textile market of Otavalo; explore the Galápagos from your base at the Finch Bay Eco Hotel on Santa Cruz Island. Wind up with a stint in historic Quito, the first city in the world to be declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

Adventure Associates: "Family Encounters in the Middle of the World: Galápagos Islands, Amazon Rainforest and Quito City," 12 days, \$2,588 (\$1,942 for children); www.adventure-associates.com. **N F V**

CUBA

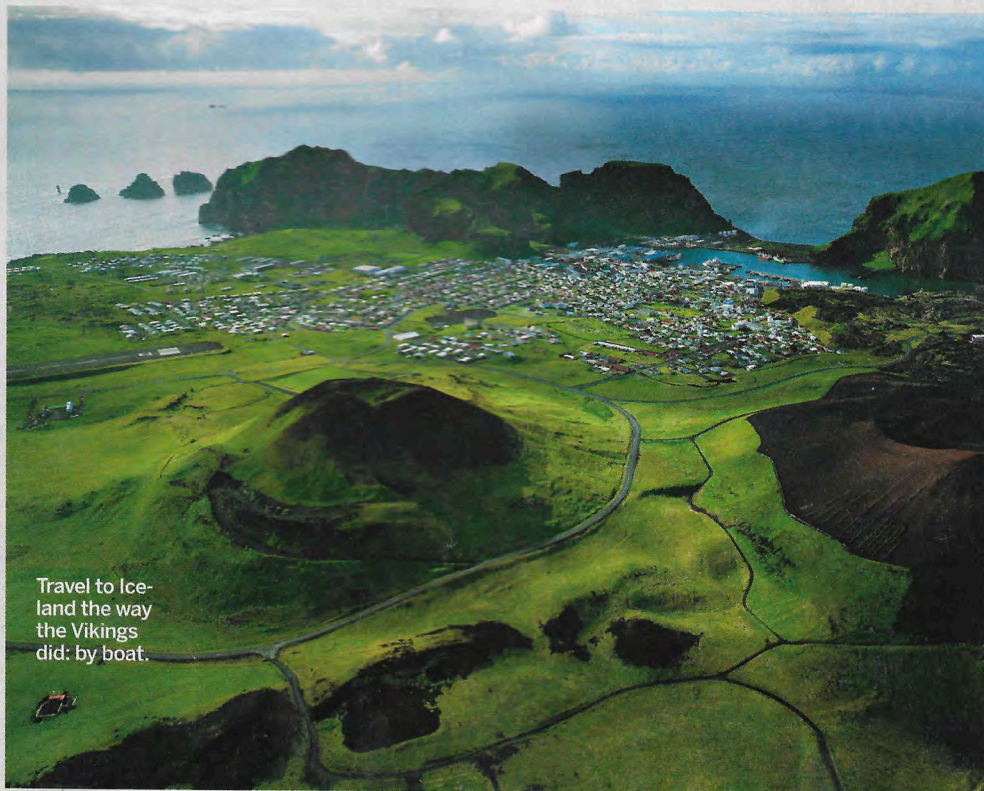
Time Warp

It may become a whole lot easier to travel to Cuba in the future, but here's a chance to experience the island in all of its time-warped glory. The travel arm of this nonprofit human rights organization has been leading educational tours here for more than 20 years. Find out how the country became a model for sustainability and celebrate New Year's Eve in Havana. **Global Exchange Reality Tours:** "Sustainable Cuba," 10 days, \$2,550, including roundtrip airfare from Cancún, Mexico; www.globalexchange.org. **V**

LAOS

Remote Rivers

It's only a matter of time before Laos's Champasak Province—think dramatic waterfalls, temple ruins that predate Angkor Wat, welcoming hill tribes, and a handful of new chic hotels—is hyped as the next travel hot spot in Asia. For now, the only Amer-



Travel to Iceland the way the Vikings did: by boat.

The Piedmont region of Italy features small towns such as Barolo. In Laos's Luang Prabang (below), founded in the seventh century, Buddhist monks collect alms.



icans you're likely to encounter are the ones in your own party on this private trip through the country. Stays include Sala Phae, a compound of six floating bungalows on the Mekong River, and Kingfisher Eco-lodge, a small family-run nature retreat that donates a percentage of its revenue to a local primary school, where travelers are encouraged to help the schoolchildren practice their English. **Remote Lands:** "Undiscovered Southern Laos," 7 days, \$3,500; www.remotelands.com. **N**

JAPAN

Where the Wild Things Are Japan usually conjures up images of the frenzy of Tokyo or the Zen of Kyoto, but there's a wilder side to the Land of the Rising Sun that few travelers ever experience. From the thousands of hooded and white-naped cranes that flock to the island of Kyushu to the playful Japanese macaques, or snow monkeys, in the mountains of Nagano, the country is full of natural splendor—best seen in the quiet of winter. **Natural Habitat Adventures:** "Wild Japan," 13 days, \$8,495; www.nathab.com.

ITALY

Piedmont Pleasures

Bookended by October's annual truffle market in Alba and the Salone del Gusto in Turin, a bi-annual fair put on by Slow Food

(the global movement founded in nearby Bra to preserve cultural cuisine), this food and wine tour through Italy's Piedmont showcases the region's bounty—Barolo and Barbaresco wine, truffles, hazelnuts, and mountain cheeses—and introduces you to the artisans behind it. The tour is led by company co-founder and Piedmont native Claudio Bisio. **La Dolce Vita Wine Tours:** "Slow Food Festa," 6 days, \$2,995; www.dolcetours.com.

SOUTH AFRICA

Bike the Vineyards

With its rolling farmland, coastal vistas, and soaring mountains, South Africa's Western Cape is

choice cycling country. On this loop from Cape Town through wine country you'll pedal some 20 miles a day, stopping to sample the region's much-lauded Semillon and Pinotage. Recover each night at elegant lodgings such as Le Quartier Français in the Franschoek Valley, where one of the country's top chefs, Margot Janse, presides over the kitchen. In the township of Zwelitshe, local students (to whom the outfitter lends bikes to use and maintain) will lead you on an insider tour to meet residents of this poor but vibrant area. **Butterfield & Robison:** "South Africa Biking," 8 days, \$6,995; www.butterfield.com.



ISRAEL

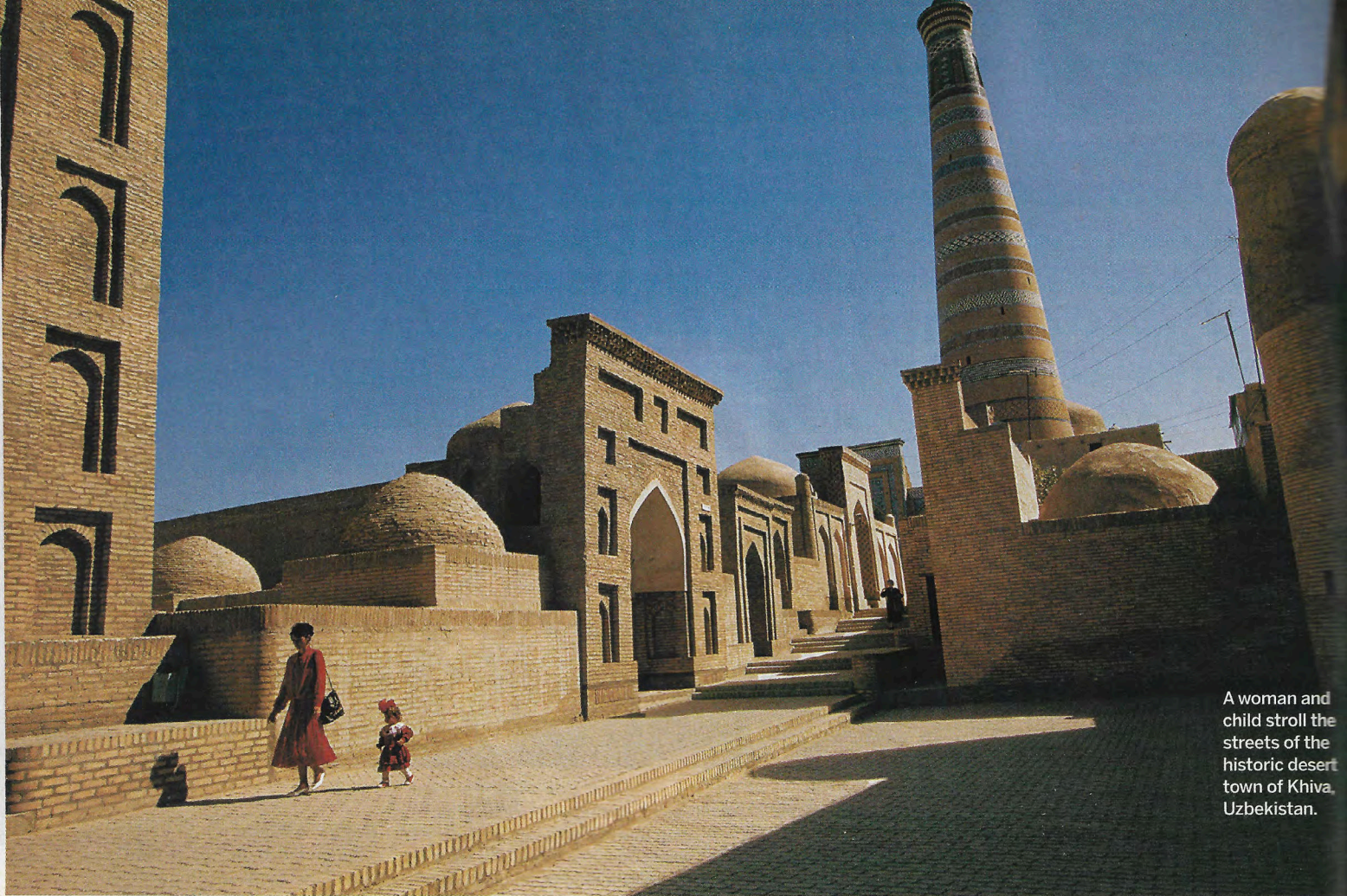
Nexus of History

Though much tourism to Israel remains dominated by religious pilgrims, more travelers are exploring the country's numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites, varied geography, and culture-packed cities. Here is the consummate private itinerary that brings it all together, from Jerusalem's ancient Western Wall to the



Consider buying trip insurance on the non-refundable portions of your trip. Also find out what your health insurance covers abroad. You may need a policy to cover any gaps.

KAOS03/SIME-4/CORNIERS IMAGES (UPPER), JAY TINDALL/REMOTELANDS (LOWER)



A woman and child stroll the streets of the historic desert town of Khiva, Uzbekistan.

therapeutic waters of the Dead Sea to the Bauhaus architecture of Tel Aviv. **Artisans of Leisure:** “*Essence of Israel*,” 9 days, \$7,700; www.artisansofleisure.com.

CENTRAL AMERICA
Maya, Then and Now

From Big Falls, Belize, to Copán, Honduras, this unique itinerary traces the trade route of the ancient Maya’s most precious commodity—jade. Along the way you’re invited into the communities of the Mopan, Q’eqchi’, and Chorti Maya, with stops at little-visited archaeological sites, as well as kayaking, snorkeling, cave-swimming, and hiking. **Mesoamerican Ecotourism Alliance:** “*Jade Route of the Ancient Maya*,” 9 days, \$2,850; www.travelwithmea.org.

RWANDA & UGANDA
Track Mountain Gorillas

View some of the remaining 700 mountain gorillas on this safari to three different parks: Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, and Mgahinga and

Bwindi in Uganda. The outfitter worked closely with governments here to develop responsible tourism in the aftermath of regional conflicts, including training locals to become guides. **Volcanoes Safaris:** “*Gorillas in the Virungas and Bwindi—Rwanda and Uganda*,” 8 days, \$4,926; www.volcanoessafaris.com.

THAILAND
Asia on Two Wheels

More than motorized modes of transportation, bikes allow travelers to participate in the everyday life of a place, especially in Thailand, where biking is popular and the people welcoming. Cyclists on this circuit in the countryside around Chiang Mai are sometimes invited into schools to give impromptu English lessons, attend weddings and funerals, and learn to prepare traditional Thai fare. **Pedalers Pub & Grille:** “*Thailand Bike Tours—Northern Highlights*,” 7 days, \$1,495, plus \$130 for bike rental; www.pedalerspubandgrille.com. **M**

CENTRAL ASIA
Meet the Stans

Guided by veteran Asia explorer Roger Williams, this epic journey wends from Urumqi, China,



When comparing two similar itineraries, look at inclusions, exclusions, and value-added services.

to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, along the legendary Silk Road. Travel amid the towering peaks of the Karakorum Mountains, stopping at far-flung outposts, such as Pakistan’s isolated Hunza Valley. Portions of the old road here jut out from cliffs on cantilevered logs wedged into the cracks of rock. At the desert oasis of Kashgar, famous for its Sunday market, traders still haggle over everything from spices to rugs to camels. **Wilderness Travel:** “*The Great Game—The Silk Road through the Pamirs & Karakorum*

Mountains,” 26 days, from \$10,995; www.wildernesstravel.com. **N**

EGYPT
Into the Western Desert

You’ve seen the Pyramids and cruised the Nile; now check out the other Egypt on this overland expedition into the Western Desert. Led by veteran desert guide Diaa Shawki Michail, you’ll camp in mobile tents, exploring the striking scenery of this harsh environment, such as rock carvings that are thousands of years old and Daliesque white chalk formations that rise out of the desert sand like huge mushrooms. **Abercrombie & Kent:** “*Egypt—Traces of Lost Civilizations*,” 11 days, \$5,975; www.abercrombiekent.com.

ITALY
Pompeii Revealed

You don’t have to be an archaeology buff to be fascinated by the stories of Pompeii. In the most popular of this specialty operator’s offerings, archaeologist guides provide access to the ruins away from the crowds and frame them in the context of the year A.D. 79, when Vesuvius erupted and all life in the area came to an abrupt halt. The trip culminates

DAVID SANDOLT/FOCUS