

GEOEX

Ultima Thule

JOURNAL OF THE FARTHEST PLACES

For almost a decade, Don George, the beloved and award-winning Editor in Chief of GeoEx's blog, has been procuring captivating and compelling travel stories for us. He has just published The Way of Wanderlust: The Best Travel Writing of Don George, the first collection of his own articles and tales from his 58-year career as a travel writer. The inspiring essay below is adapted from the book's introduction.

The Way of Wanderlust

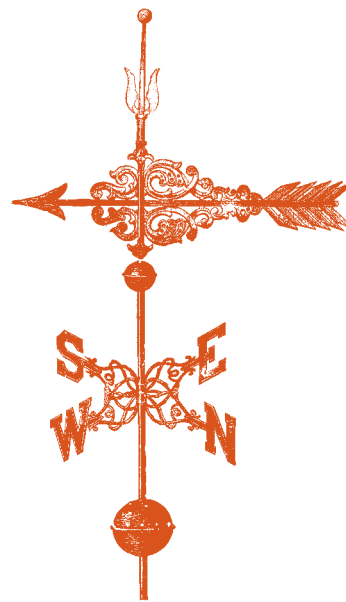
by Don George

I took my first serendipitous step on the path to becoming a travel writer the summer after I graduated from Princeton. While all my friends were preparing for graduate school, law school, business school, or medical school, or starting jobs with banks, I arranged to go to Europe for a year, first to Paris on a Summer Work Abroad internship and then to Greece on an Athens College Teaching Fellowship.

When I set off for Europe, I was thinking that year would be a brief interlude between undergraduate and graduate schools, but then, one sun-dappled June morning in Paris, the course of my life changed. As I had every morning for the previous two weeks, I took the rickety old filigreed elevator from my apartment—right on the rue de Rivoli, looking onto the Tuileries—and stepped into the street: into a sea of French. Everyone around me was speaking French, wearing French, looking French, acting French. Shrugging their shoulders and twirling their scarves and drinking their *cafés crèmes*, calling out “*Bonjour, monsieur-dame*,” and paying for *Le Monde* or *Le Nouvel Observateur* with francs and stepping importantly around me and staring straight into my eyes and subtly smiling in a way that only the French do.

Until that time I had spent most of my life in classrooms, and I was planning after that European detour to spend most of the rest of my life in classrooms. Suddenly it struck me: This was the classroom—not the musty, ivy-draped buildings in which I had spent the previous four years. This world of wide boulevards and centuries-old buildings and six-table sawdust restaurants and glasses of *vin ordinaire* and fire-eaters on street corners and poetry readings in cramped second-floor bookshops and mysterious women who smiled at me so that my heart leaped and

(continued on page 2)



◆ IN THIS ISSUE

The Way of Wanderlust [page 1]

Exploring Bhutan, Baby in Tow [page 3]

Nepal Update [page 4]

A Taste of What's New for 2016 [page 4]

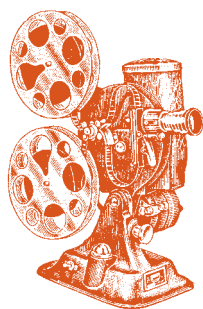
Notes [pages 4–8]

Great Books and Movies [pages 2–7]

59

SEPTEMBER

2015



GREAT BOOKS AND MOVIES

Since our urge to travel is often sparked by books and movies, we asked our staff to share the informative, evocative, or just plain great literature and films that inspired them to hit the road.

◆ GREAT BOOKS AND MOVIES ONE

Michael Steigerwald: *The Art and Adventure of Traveling Cheaply*, by Rick Berg. *This book changed my life. It taught me that I didn't need to be rich to see the world and that traveling could be a lifestyle. Soon after reading it, I bought a one-way ticket to Europe and spent the next two years gallivanting across the globe with \$1,800, a guitar, and a backpack. Since that epic journey of discovery, I've embarked on numerous trips, some lasting as long as four years.*



For more literary travel musings, visit our blog at GeoEx.com/Blog

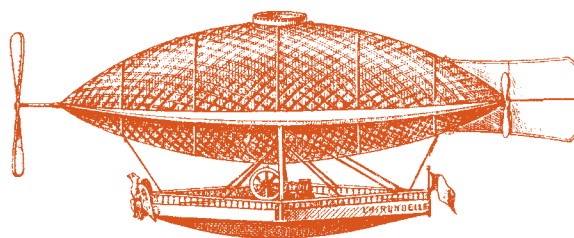
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I walked for hours restless under the plane trees by the Seine. This was the classroom.

At the end of that summer, I rode the Orient Express to Greece and settled on the campus of Athens College. In between my fellowship duties, I had uncharted expanses of free time, which I exuberantly filled with reading Plato by the Parthenon, sipping ouzo on bouzouki-bright nights in the Plaka, communing with muses among the red poppies and white columns of Corinth, and exploring the beaches of Rhodes and the ruins of Crete. Winter and spring vacations afforded the time to venture even farther, and I wandered footloose through Italy, Turkey, and Egypt, intoxicated with the newness and possibility of this unfurling world.

My wanderlust bloomed. Every moment seemed unbearably precious, every outing an exhilarating lesson in a new culture, place, and people—full of thrilling sights and smells, tastes and textures, creations and traditions, encounters and connections: a whole new world!

As the end of the school year approached and the question of what to do with my life loomed again, I found the courage to relinquish the student's hand-me-down desire to become a tweedy professor and chose instead the uncharted path of becoming a writer. I had no idea where it would lead; I just knew that I wanted to walk it, wild and wide-eyed, daring to dream. Thus began my lifelong journey as a travel writer and editor.

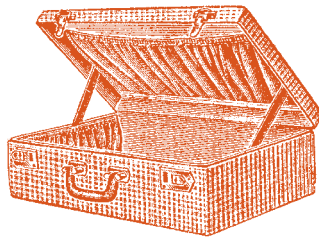


As I have learned over and over, travel teaches us about the vast and varied differences in landscape, creation, custom, and belief that enrich the global mosaic, and about the importance of each and every piece in that mosaic. Travel teaches us to embrace our vulnerability and to have faith that whatever energy we put into the world will come back to us a hundredfold. Travel teaches us to approach unfamiliar cultures and peoples with curiosity and respect and to realize that the great majority of people around the world, whatever their differences in background and belief, care for their fellow human beings. In all these ways, travel paves the pathway to global understanding, evolution, and peace.

Ultimately, I have come to think, travel teaches us about love. It teaches us that the very best we can do with our lives is to embrace the peoples, places, and cultures we meet, to live as fully as possible in every moment, every day. And it teaches us that this embrace is simultaneously a way of becoming whole and letting go. For me, that's the final meaning of our journey on this wandering road: to love, with all our mind, heart, and soul. That's the sacred truth, and goal, of our wanderlust way.



The Way of Wanderlust can be ordered through online booksellers and will be available in bookstores by September 15.



Exploring Bhutan, Baby in Tow

GeoEx's Carey Johnston, just back from a trip in Bhutan with her husband and nine-month-old son, River, sat down with us to answer some questions about their adventure. Her experience—like so many others of GeoEx travelers—dispels the myth that having kids means ditching your travel dreams.

Were you nervous about traveling with your baby? Definitely. But my husband and I agreed not to give in to fear. Everybody gets a little anxious before traveling to new places, and doubly so with a child. But once you're on the road, you just roll with things in the same way you do at home.

How did traveling with River affect your experience? I've traveled all my life, but on this trip, I saw new things through his eyes. For example, at the Divine Mad Monk's Temple in Punakha, where red-robed monks chant and play the drums, River was in total awe. Everyone would look at him and smile. We watched him watching them. It brought our experience to another level. These kinds of moments really bonded us as a family.

How did the Bhutanese react to you? River was a huge hit, a natural icebreaker. "Come, come," they would say gently, arms outstretched. They'd call "Riva" in a singsong voice. He would respond in his way, and then they'd whisk him off. They had a knack for being with children. We were able to enjoy many of our meals while someone played with him.

How did the trip impact River? He engaged with so many new people. I think he got more behind-the-scenes experiences than we did! He would crawl around everywhere, and nobody would mind. Nothing was off limits to him. He met and played with other babies. Since we've been back, he's been less fearful of others.

How should a family choose a travel destination? Basically, any place that you would be comfortable going makes sense for your family. Bhutan has few health risks, and its Buddhist roots make it a gentle country. China and Japan are also excellent choices (children are revered all over Asia). I'd recommend steering clear of very high elevations, especially if the kids are pre-verbal; you want your child to be able to tell you if he or she doesn't feel well. You also may want to avoid rural areas with a risk of malaria. GeoEx's experts are a great resource in weighing the considerations and finding the right trip for you.

What will you change for your next trip with River? We were in such good hands on this trip. Next time, I will sit back and relax a bit more.



To hear more tips from Carey and to find out what's possible for family travel, visit GeoEx.com/Family

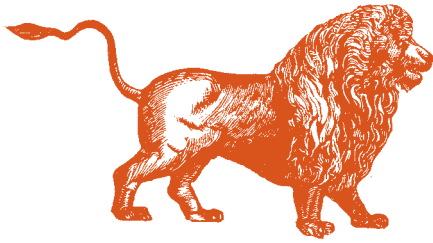


The arrival of the 2016 catalog is imminent. Request yours (also available as an app) at GeoEx.com/Catalog

◆ GREAT BOOKS AND MOVIES TWO
Natalie Crow: *The documentary 180° South, which traces the 1968 journey of Yvon Chouinard and Doug Tompkins to Patagonia, made me very excited to visit the new Patagonia National Park.* And Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits, one of my all-time favorite books, inspired me to explore all of Chile.*

◆ GREAT BOOKS AND MOVIES THREE
Urs Hofmann: *The Way of the World, a book by Nicolas Bouvier about his journey overland from Geneva to the Khyber Pass, reinforced my urge to travel NOW! It describes times and places that are forever lost, a reminder that the world is changing fast and that many places that are accessible and worth a trip now may be gone tomorrow.*





◆ GREAT BOOKS
AND MOVIES FOUR

Jessica Silber: *If it weren't for seeing The Lion King at a tender age, I would never have moved to Tanzania when I was 22. I loved the idea of a people-free ecosystem that was ruled entirely by animals, both adorable and diabolical. Mostly, I wanted to grow up to be Nala, the fierce lioness love interest.*

◆ GREAT BOOKS
AND MOVIES FIVE

Vassi Koutsaftis: *I'm partial to funny books about misadventures in travel, like Tim Cahill's Road Fever, about his 15,000-mile, 25-and-a-half-day drive from Tierra del Fuego to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. That story inspired me to drive a Volkswagen from Paris to Sicily, and then across North Africa to Morocco — with a few hair-raising moments along the way.*

◆ GREAT BOOKS
AND MOVIES SIX

Sara Barbieri: *Where the Indus Is Young, by Dervla Murphy. I devoured this travelogue after falling in love with the Hunza Valley. It fueled my enchantment with the region. Read it and be transported to the far northeast corner of Pakistan — better yet, go there yourself.*

Nepal Update

We've been keeping close tabs on the situation in Nepal since April's devastating earthquake. Our in-country friends and associates report that life in Kathmandu and many other areas is returning to normal, and that tourism is coming back — great news, since tourism is key to Nepal's recovery. Hotels in Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Chitwan are up and running, and most trekking trails (apart from those in the Langtang, Manaslu, and Gorkha regions) were minimally affected. In the Everest region, the Sherpas have been rebuilding and repairing homes, monuments, and lodges, aiming to have everything ready for the fall season. The Annapurna region, virtually untouched and as stunning as ever, is already welcoming travelers (if you'd like to be one, see below for a little inspiration).

On the fund-raising front, many of you have supported relief efforts by donating to the GeoEx Foundation, and we're grateful. Your dollars have been sent to the American Himalayan Foundation, Save the Children, and the Global Fund for Women, all organizations that have been doing outstanding work in Nepal for decades. They have distributed relief packages (including food, tents, and blankets), built shelters, set up learning centers, provided medical attention, and taught self-defense classes for women. Their organizations are focusing on the mid- and long-term recovery of the country. If you'd like to support their efforts, please visit GeoEx.com/Nepal

A Taste of What's New for 2016

GeoEx is always sussing out fresh, creative, and authentic travel experiences. Our 2016 catalog — landing in mailboxes shortly — announces our latest work. Here's a preview: *Tribal Crossroads of India and Myanmar* explores fascinating cultures in Nagaland and the Chin State, featuring the Hornbill Festival and crossing a remote border open for the first time in 75 years. *Southern Tanzania's Wildlife Frontier* ventures far off the typical safari track into sprawling savannahs and lush wooded hills to encounter hippos, buffalos, elephants, big cats, and chimpanzees. *Rivers and Jungles of Borneo* transports us deep into the rain forests, mountains, and cave systems of Malaysian Borneo to meet rescued orangutans and watch for birds, bats, beetles, butterflies, proboscis monkeys, and even clouded leopards.

Notes

AMONG MOUNTAINS AND SPIRIT IN NEPAL

If you've been tempted by our *Everest and the Annapurnas* journey, now is a great time to go: you can realize your Himalaya dreams while supporting Nepal's recovery. On this customizable trip (offered in the spring and fall), days are spent hiking in the glow of the highest peaks on earth and nights pass at soothing, spectacularly sited mountain lodges. In addition to savoring snowcapped peaks and dramatic river gorges, we get a firsthand look at everyday life.

Our cultural encounters start in Kathmandu, where we're led through a beguiling complex of modern buildings and ancient temples among street merchants, holy men, and businesspeople worshipping at little shrines. Just south of the city bustle in Patan, we see Durbar Square, one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites damaged by the earthquake, being lovingly restored by artists and craftsmen. Traveling west to Ghandruk for our Annapurna rambles, we can observe and engage with women weaving traditional Nepalese rugs. Moving on to the Everest region, we follow a challenging path to Namche Bazaar, a historical trading center with Tibet. Here we may swap stories with other travelers in inviting teahouses, wander through the busy market, and embark on a hike that reveals rousing views of Mount Everest and Ama Dablam. Whether culture is high on your list, or you seek quiet moments in a mountain paradise, Michael Steigerwald is the one to call about crafting your Nepal journey.

NEW DATES FOR ANCIENT JAPAN:
PICTURE-PERFECT AS MAPLES TURN

Journey Through Ancient Japan has been so in demand that we've lined up two new departures, this time in the fall (November 23–December 4, 2015, and November 21–December 2, 2016) with Vassi Koutsaftis, one of our most revered trip leaders. Vassi can't wait to return, both to share Japan's cultural richness and to feed his love affair with photography. He tells us he's particularly eager to capture "the Japanese maples as their leaves shimmer into red, bronze, and gold, whether at Saiho-ji (also known as the moss garden, a dreamy spot) or the serene and secluded Iya Valley. And, of course, there are always the brilliantly hued kimonos to admire!"



Indeed, anyone taking our November trip will probably find it difficult to put away the camera, especially with Vassi's expert guidance. From Kyoto's Philosopher's Path (with its hidden temples) to outdoor, autumn-kissed *onsens* (hot springs) and the cliffs and crashing waves at Cape Ashizuri on Shikoku Island, we'll find scene after scene that cries out to be savored and snapped. Even our meals—their artful presentations as dazzling as their delicious, bright flavors—are likely to be documented.

Sara Barbieri is at the ready to fill you in on all trip details. If your heart is set on the spring edition of this journey, led by travel writer Don George, ask about the April 18–29, 2016, departure.

CUBA IN THE MOMENT

As Cuba steps into a new era, signs of a sea change are starting to emerge. Our team on the ground in this fantastically colorful nation reports that "hotel construction is under way, the US embassy has reopened, new tapas bars and restaurants are popping up, infrastructure improvements are beginning to be addressed, and Carnival now has a permit to send cruise ships to Havana as early as May 2016." It's an exciting and bittersweet time—and a momentous moment to visit.

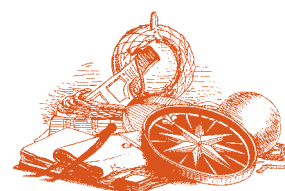
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◆ GREAT BOOKS
AND MOVIES SEVEN
Tina Liadis: *The jaw-dropping scenery of the Guilin/Yangshuo area in The Painted Veil, based on the novel by W. Somerset Maugham, would make anyone want to go to China. And the Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel's spirited scenes of Jaipur left me wanting to return to India.*

◆ GREAT BOOKS
AND MOVIES EIGHT
Alice Howell: *Lawrence of Arabia: I love the desert, and the movie's sweeping shots of dunes and exploding trains—as singularly epic as the tale as a whole—captured my imagination. I realized my dream of going to Wadi Rum last December. My mother and I dined with a nomadic Bedouin family, saw their well, met their goats, and drank tea and coffee with them. It was magical.*



◆ GREAT BOOKS AND MOVIES NINE
 Scott Montgomery: Among the Believers by Nobel laureate V. S. Naipaul. When I read it in 1981, I hadn't spent much time in the Islamic world. After reading this book, I made a beeline for Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Because of events in Iran, I wasn't able to visit in the early 1980s, but finally made it a few years ago — it was well worth the wait.



◆ GREAT BOOKS AND MOVIES TEN
 Story Kirshman: I've been dreaming of Africa for almost 20 years, after falling in love with the movie Out of Africa. The cinematography and music depicted an overwhelmingly beautiful place, wild with freedom, that filled me with wanderlust. As a new member of GeoEx, I am often asked where I would like to travel, and my answer is always Kenya.

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Between GeoEx's in-house experts and our in-the-know associates in Cuba, we're continually updating our *Connecting with Cuba's Living History* itinerary with the most current and meaningful ways to experience the new Cuba. Lately, the contemporary art scene has been exploding. Artists are opening amazing studios, such as the 3/31 Art Space, a collective located within a gorgeous historic home. Though it is not open to the public, we've arranged for an exclusive visit to see the photographs, landscape drawings, and watercolors of Adrian Fernández, Frank Mujica, and Alex Hernández. More importantly, we get to talk with the three creators about their advantages (the government has afforded more freedoms to artists over the last two decades), their challenges (having to bring supplies from overseas, for example), and their visions for the country's future.

We'll also swap perspectives with other insightful Cubans, from musicians to shop owners, and enjoy intimate exchanges that larger groups — or those without our 10-plus years operating in the country — simply can't offer. If you'd like to be a part of it, reserve your space soon on a 2015 departure (November 28–December 5, December 19–26, and December 26–January 2) or a 2016 trip (January through April) by contacting Jenine Cohen or Natalie Crow.

THE CAPTIVATING CULTURES OF WEST AFRICA

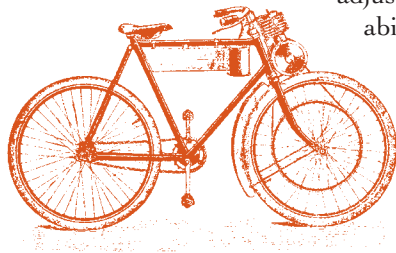
While the diversity of West Africa's sights — from the stilt homes of Ganvie and the lively discotheques and palm-lined boulevards of Lomé to Ashanti craft villages and the lush green canopy of Ghana's Kakum National Park, buzzing with hornbills and Diana monkeys — makes the mind soar, it's the region's time-honored traditions that have both challenged and enlightened many a worldview. These intriguing practices, celebrations, and rituals are the beating heart of our *Mystical West Africa* journey (January 8–20 and September 29–October 11, 2016).

Over the years our Africa experts have nurtured relationships with village elders and voodoo priests in Benin, Togo, and Ghana, earning us invitations to happenings far removed from the most acute traveler's radar. We attend private sit-ins with tribal kings, riveting ceremonies, and vibrant festivities, joining locals at their height of expression. Recent GeoEx traveler Cindy U.'s experience moved her so much that she e-mailed us from the road to share her excitement. "We've already packed two weeks' worth of adventure into just four days," she wrote. "In a remote Togo village, we watched a voodoo ceremony. People were drumming and dancing, and three women went into trances. Eventually I began dancing along with some of the women and they couldn't stop grinning, seeing this foreigner dancing along with them." If you're ready to immerse yourself in the customs and culture of this fascinating region, Jessica Silber is the one to call.



THRILLING FAMILY ADVENTURES AWAIT IN PATAGONIA

After decades of sharing Patagonia's breathtaking glacier-fed lakes, towering snowy peaks, and wild grasslands with our travelers, we decided it was high time to design a new GeoEx Family Adventure in this splendid part of the world. *Patagonia Family Journey* dives into several of Argentina's most glorious corners with a wide array of active explorations, all adjustable to your family's interests and abilities. You may find yourselves mountain biking in the Lake District one day, donning crampons to cross the awe-inspiring Perito Moreno Glacier the next, and later horseback riding at a historic estancia that is accessible only by boat.



There are also chances for sailing, hiking, and kayaking, always at your pace and in the care of expert guides. "The itinerary is completely customizable," says Natalie Crow, the trip's creator, "so if you'd rather experience the towering Andes from an Alpine-style chocolate shop in Bariloche—perched along Lake Nahuel Huapi's crystalline waters—instead of from atop a cool mountain, you can. We're also happy add a visit to Torres del Paine National Park in Chile if you'd like to hike or ride among its stupendous granite spires."

Planning ahead for the December holidays, Natalie has reserved space for a family of four at the trip's atmospheric lodges—luxurious yet family friendly and magnificently set. If you'd like to go then (December 20, 2015–January 2, 2016) or some other time between November and March, drop her a line.

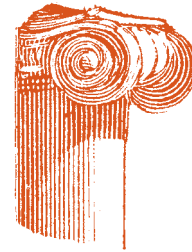
NEW WAYS TO BREAK THE ICE IN THE ARCTIC

Intrepid travelers who dream of exploring the Arctic are likely to be interested in GeoEx's new *Extreme Arctic Voyages*, four hardy cruises that can be taken individually or as part of a semi- or complete circumnavigation of the Arctic Circle in 18 to 75 days. The vessel is the legendary *Kapitan Khebnikov*, a powerful Russian icebreaker adept at navigating unpredictable conditions and equipped with Zodiacs and helicopters for sensational off-boat excursions.

Epic Northeast Passage takes us from Anchorage to the Russian port town of Anadyr, then over "the top" of Russia to Norway's Svalbard Archipelago, introducing us to indigenous Chukchi peoples and the Severnaya Zemlya (earth's last undiscovered archipelago), and seeking out polar bears on Franz Josef Land. We sail around much of Greenland from Longyearbyen, Norway, as *Extreme Greenland* reveals such astonishing scenery as massive floating icebergs and steep-walled fjords. On the *Best of the Canadian High Arctic*, we traverse icy waters from Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, to Nunavut, Canada, stopping to experience Inuit culture, marvel at luminous glaciers and ancient forests, and visit the charismatic villages of Sisimiut and Uummannaq. Finally, *Ultimate Northwest Passage* journeys along one of the world's most fabled sea routes from Nunavut, Canada, to Chukotka, Russia. The voyages depart between July and September, and Urs Hofmann is happy to make the arrangements.

◆ GREAT BOOKS AND MOVIES ELEVEN

Linda de la Torre: *The book that inspired me to travel was The Alchemist. It empowered me to dream and reminded me to always live in the moment. My favorite quote is, "If you can concentrate always on the present, you'll be a happy man. . . . Life will be a party for you, a grand festival, because life is the moment we're living right now."*



◆ GREAT BOOKS AND MOVIES TWELVE

Jesse Knight: *I was so inspired by Paul Theroux's stories about traipsing through the Balkans, Turkey, and north Africa in The Pillars of Hercules that my two-week trip in Spain became a six-month overland odyssey from Spain to Egypt. I stopped at many of the very places detailed in Theroux's wonderful book.*



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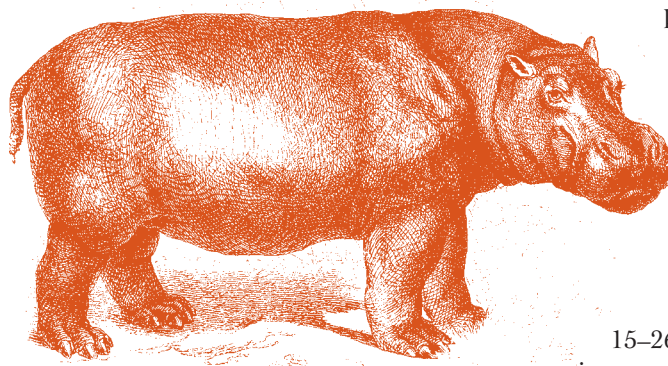
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**UNEXPECTED BOTSWANA:
THE GREEN KALAHARI**

The Okavango Delta is one of Africa's last great wildernesses, an intricate network of marshlands and riverbeds that overflows annually, drawing wildlife in droves. But it's the greater Kalahari Desert, in which the delta resides, that truly springs to life during Botswana's green season, a time with delightfully fewer visitors of the *Homo sapiens* persuasion. From November through May, this vast savannah, known more for its inhospitable shrub-dotted sands, transforms into a wondrous garden of tall grasslands, flowering cactuses bursting with color, and swampy salt pans where herds of springbok and red hartebeest quench their thirst. During this nurturing (and thrilling) season, these ungulates give birth, in turn attracting big cats that have their own mouths to feed.



The green season edition of *The Miraculous Delta: Botswana's Okavango* (November 18–29, 2015, and April 15–26, 2016) is specially designed to showcase this astounding transformation of the Kalahari. We'll seek out grazing rhinos camouflaged in cloaks of dense brush and leopards lounging in the shade of flourishing acacia trees, and we'll walk with a shaman of the San Bushmen—southern Africa's oldest inhabitants—through an ancient riverbed, learning how to track warthog. We'll also spend ample time savoring the wonders of more remote regions of the Okavango, spotting cavorting hippos during open-air game drives, watching for elephants and giraffes along papyrus-lined waterways that we ply by *mokoro*, and spending nights at en-suite camps designed to withstand the occasional rains. To find out more or reserve your space, give Jessica Silber a ring.



If you'd like more information on any of the trips mentioned in this newsletter, please visit us at GeoEx.com/UT or call us at 888-733-9019. And if you haven't received our beautiful catalog and would like to, please write or call, and we'll have one winging your way immediately.