

Summer 2026

TRAVEL & ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

REJECT AVERAGE

For *Experience Collectors*

DEVIL'S POOL

Swimming The Edge
Of Victoria Falls

**Invitation Creates
Motivation**

Plan First, Ask Questions Later

THE ULTIMATE RV ROAD TRIP

23,000 Miles, 6 Months, All 48 States

***CATCHING
DINOSAURS***

*The Fishing Experience You
Never Even Knew Existed*

10
BEST
**UP-CLOSE ANIMAL
ENCOUNTERS**



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From the Editor

What's The Business Model?

That was the number one question I got after the winter edition landed in people's hands. And I understand why. Starting a print magazine in 2026 is not what anyone would call a savvy business move. But the response went beyond anything I expected. Watching people pick it up, flip through it, feel it... there was something immediate and real in their reaction. You could see it on their faces. That moment confirmed something I had been chasing. People are hungry for something tangible.

So when people ask about the business plan, my answer is simple. I don't have one. And that's the truth. It costs about ten dollars to print and five dollars to ship. Selling it for fifteen is not a 'business model'. I've had companies offer to buy ad space that weren't the right fit, and ones that would have been perfect never responded to my email. That's the media business. I'm not chasing it.

I spend a significant part of my professional life advising companies on how to maximize revenue and increase profit. Applying that thinking to Reject Average has never interested me in the slightest. Because that's not what this group, this magazine, this lifestyle is to me. This is something that gives me purpose. Something that lets me share experiences with more people than I ever thought possible (200,000+). Yes I could just do a digital version, yes I could focus on social media, but that's kind of average if you ask me. I'm not comfortable with average. I am comfortable letting the magazine evolve at its own pace. Most people have something in their life where the numbers don't add up on paper but the return is undeniable. For me, this is that.

Don't worry about the business model. Just enjoy the magazine.

Brant Pinvidic, Editor-In-Chief
brant@rejectaverage.com

REJECT AVERAGE
TRAVEL & ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

CONTACT US:

General Inquiries:
Info@rejectaverage.com

Advertising:
sales@rejectaverage.com

Media Inquiries:
media@rejectaverage.com

Managing Editor:
Megan Boshoff
megan@rejectaverage.com

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Brant on the edge of Victoria Falls in the Devil's Pool. On the border of Zimbabwe and Zambia. Photo: Mantal, Victoria Falls guide.



By Brent Pinvidic



2. The Mission

This is my personal favorite and the one I come back to most. You pick a destination within reach, book a hotel or an Airbnb for Saturday night, and then you make the journey itself the adventure. The road trip is the classic version.

Off-roading to your destination is one of the best versions. Kayaking in. Biking in. Whatever turns the getting there into something you are going to talk about at dinner when you arrive. The key is building it like a real mission. Far enough that there is a needed lunch stop and something specific to do along the way. A moment of arrival that feels genuinely earned.

When you pull in after a day of actually getting somewhere, everything is better. Dinner is better. The conversation is better. Sleep is better. You did something real.

The next day you make your way back and the whole thing collapses into a single weekend that felt like four days. That compression of experience is what I am always chasing, and this format delivers it more reliably than almost anything else I have found.

3. The Rental Equipment

Here is the one that removes every excuse from the equation entirely. You do not need to own gear to have an extraordinary weekend. You never did. You can rent a Harley Davidson, a camper van, a jet ski, an RV, a Jeep, a kayak, a full camping setup, backpacking gear, bikes, a pontoon boat. Companies like RVShare, Outdoorsy, GetMyBoat, and RentMeFun exist specifically to hand you the keys to something extraordinary for 48 hours without asking you to store it, maintain it, or think about it for the other 363 days of the year.

Here is why renting works so well as a weekend strategy. The rental window creates a container and that container creates commitment. You have the thing for two days, that fact alone forces you to go use it. There is no procrastinating when the clock is running. You rent the RV, you load it Friday night, and suddenly the weekend has shape and purpose it did not have an hour ago.

You commit first and then you fill in the experience around it. The rental does not just give you access. It gives you momentum. And momentum is what turns a forgettable weekend into something you are still talking about a year later.

TRAVEL ADVICE

Weekend: MAXING

The weekend warrior never went away. It just got an upgrade.

At some point the phrase weekend warrior became a mild insult. A way of describing someone who played at adventure rather than lived it. The implication was always that real adventurers didn't confine themselves to a two day window. Real adventurers went big, went long, went all in. I want to retire that thinking permanently.

Because today, with how accessible travel has become and how much information is at your fingertips, the weekend might be the single most underutilized opportunity most people have.

Not the vacation.
Not the yearly retreat.
The weekend.

The thing that shows up 52 times a year and disappears without most people ever asking more from it. I started asking more from it. This year I did **sixteen weekends** in a row of what I now call **weekend maxing**. Jet skiing, off-roading, a museum trip to New York, a Grand Prix race, rock climbing, whitewater rafting, a golf tournament, and a dozen other things that most people have to plan an entire event around.

Every single one happened between Friday evening and Sunday night. Every single one left me coming home thinking I cannot believe that was only two days. That feeling is what I live for. That is the target.

That is what **weekend maxing** actually means.

Most people don't have a weekend problem. They have a default problem. They fall into the same patterns, the same routines, the same passive activities that don't leave a mark.

Monday comes around and there is nothing to show for it. No story. No memory. Just another weekend that burned off like fog.

Weekend maxing is the deliberate decision to stop letting that happen. It is not about doing something extreme. It is about doing something intentional. Treating those two days like they actually matter, because in the context of our lives, they do.

There are four ways I do it consistently:

1. The Explore

Open Google Flights. Draw an imaginary circle three hours from where you live and start looking at everything inside it. Not just the obvious cities. Everything.

Pick somewhere you have never spent real time and book a Friday evening departure with a Sunday afternoon return.

The structure does the work.

You finish your week, get on a plane, land somewhere new, and wake up Saturday morning with two full days ahead of you and zero obligations pulling you back.

Different energy. Different streets. Different food. A completely different frame around your weekend. Then you are home Sunday evening, reset, and genuinely be ready for Monday in a way that hanging around the house never produces.

It feels like a full trip. Because it is one. It just happens to fit inside a weekend.



4. The Collected Experience

Sometimes the weekend does not need a destination or a rental or a flight. It needs one specific experience you have been saying you want to do and keep not doing. Horseback riding on the beach. Hiking a trail you have seen in photos for years. A cooking class in a city two hours away. A surf lesson. A guided climb. A hot air balloon at sunrise. One extraordinary thing that, if you just committed to it, would make the entire weekend worth doing. If you need inspiration, open Instagram and start scrolling. Within minutes you will have seen hundreds of experiences that made you think I want to do that. Pick one. That reaction is the invitation. All you have to do is go with it. This is the simplest form of weekend maxing and sometimes the most powerful. You find the activity first, you book it, and then the weekend builds itself around it. The drive there becomes part of the day. The meal after becomes the celebration. The hotel the night before becomes the anticipation. One anchor experience can completely max out your weekend

The mistake most people make is waiting to feel inspired before they book something. Book first. The inspiration follows immediately. Here is what I know after sixteen consecutive weekends of doing this deliberately. The goal is to come back Monday with a story. Not a photograph of somewhere you stood. Not a check mark on a list. A story. Something that when someone asks how your weekend was, you have to think about where to start because there is so much to say. For most people, this weekend will be nothing worth remembering. Not because nothing was available to them, but because they didn't decide to make it count. The world is full of extraordinary things within three hours of wherever you are sitting right now. A flight, a road, a rental, a single activity, and a decision is all it takes to get to any of them. Pick a weekend. Plan it. Max it. Come back with something worth telling. That is the whole game.

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7 Days In SWITZERLAND

Switzerland feels like you're in a real-life postcard. Old villages beneath towering cliffs, waterfalls falling into the valley floor and snow still resting on the peaks even as summer moves through the mountains.

It is a place that looks even more magical than you thought it would, that is, if you plan your trip properly. Ditch the ordinary and explore the old-world charm of Lauterbrunnen in the summer.

01 ARRIVAL IN ZURICH

Begin in Zurich, Switzerland's largest city and a natural entry point into the country. Spend your first day settling in and exploring the old town, where narrow streets, historic buildings, and cafés sit alongside high-end boutiques and modern design.

Indulge in an exquisite traditional Swiss fondue dinner at an upscale local restaurant, where the ambiance and service create an unforgettable gourmet experience. It's simple, social, and deeply rooted in Swiss culture. Bread, cheese, and conversation. A fitting introduction to the country. For something different, consider staying in one of Zurich's more design-forward boutique properties. The city has a number of highly creative, art-driven hotels that lean into bold themes and unconventional interiors, offering a stay that feels more like an experience than accommodation.

Our top pick is the **No.1 Art B&B** hotel in Zurich.

02 LAUTERBRUNNEN, THE VALLEY OF WATERFALLS

From Zurich, travel into the Bernese Oberland toward Lauterbrunnen. When the city disappears and is replaced by towering cliffs, open valleys, and waterfalls that seem to fall directly from the sky, you know you're in the right place. Lauterbrunnen is often described as a real-life postcard, and it lives up to it.



05 GRINDELWALD

From Mürren, make your way to Grindelwald for a day trip. This is another iconic alpine destination, but with a slightly different energy. While Lauterbrunnen provides a tranquil retreat, Grindelwald is a bit busier and has a livelier atmosphere.

Take the gondola up into the mountains and walk along one of the elevated viewpoints overlooking the valley. For something memorable, ride the mountain carts down the slopes. It is fast, simple, and unexpectedly fun, giving you a different way to move through the landscape. Grindelwald offers a vibrant mix of adventure and enjoyment, providing a memorable experience in its own right.

06 PIZ GLORIA

Take in the views from Piz Gloria, the revolving restaurant atop Schilthorn mountain, made famous as a hideout in James Bond: On Her Majesty's Secret Service. Explore the small James

Bond exhibition on the lower floor while enjoying 360-degree alpine views. To get there, take the cable car from Lauterbrunnen to Grütschalp, the train to Mürren, then the Schilthorn cable car to the summit. The full trip takes about 45–50 minutes, each stage offering incredible scenery. Spend time on the observation deck or enjoy a meal at the restaurant before heading back down to Lauterbrunnen for the night.

07 RETURN TO ZURICH

Slowly make your way back to Zurich. If time allows before departure, spend a final few hours in the city. Walk along the lake, revisit the old town, or sit down for a slow meal as you remember what it felt like to step into a real-life fairytale, before heading back to reality.

Get the full itinerary



Seven days in the Swiss Alps is just enough time to figure out the hype (and the price) is completely justified. From dropping your bags in an edgy Zurich art hotel to chasing pure adrenaline 2,000 feet above the valley floor on the Via Ferrata, this is how you do Switzerland when you refuse to settle for the standard tourist loop. It's the ultimate collision of heart-pounding thrills and effortless, old-world luxury. You'll head out with a camera full of impossible shots, a serious dopamine hangover, and the kind of epic stories that make everyone else's vacation look, well, totally average.

03 EXPLORING THE VILLAGE

Staying in a chalet within the valley is a must. Waking up to sheer rock walls and waterfalls outside your window changes the entire experience. Spend your time exploring this quaint little town full of cute shops and restaurants on foot. One of the standout experiences just past the town, is the canyon trail, a pathway built along the river that winds through narrow rock formations and rushing water. Lauterbrunnen effortlessly envelops you in a sense of tranquility and indulgence, inviting you to slow down and savor the luxurious serenity of its breathtaking surroundings.

04 MÜRREN AND THE VIA FERRATA

This one is for the thrill-seekers. If you're scared of heights this is not the activity for you, because when you head up to the mountain village of Mürren, you will find the Via Ferrata. The Via Ferrata here is widely regarded as one of the most exhilarating and breathtaking adventures on the planet.

Imagine yourself suspended high above the valley, clinging to a sheer cliff face as the route unfolds for several hours of heart-pounding thrills. Each step pushes you across dizzyingly narrow ledges, metal rungs bolted into the rock, and exposed traverses where adrenaline floods your senses and the scenery is nothing short of spectacular. At certain points, you are perched more than 2,000 feet above the valley floor, with nothing but air beneath your boots, an experience that will make your heart race and your palms sweat, as the staggering drop below reminds you just how small you actually are.

While it may not require technical climbing skills, the Via Ferrata challenges you physically and tests your mental grit. The route features swaying suspension bridges that sway beneath your feet, daring sections that cut right through cascading waterfalls, and long stretches where the exposure is as exhilarating as it is unforgettable.

Every moment is a rush, expect your pulse to quicken as you conquer each daring segment. The ultimate reward is perspective: both visual and mental. Few adventures immerse you so completely in the wild grandeur of the landscape, leaving you with unforgettable memories and a profound sense of accomplishment.

Allocate about four hours for the full adrenaline-fueled adventure, and be sure to set out early to catch the mountain at its most dramatic and to stay ahead of any unpredictable weather.



Prepare for *JOY*

Science says you are happiest *before* your vacation. Here is how to capture that mindset and upgrade your experience.

By Brant Privette

There is a study that found people are happiest not during their vacation but before it. In the anticipation phase, when they are planning, picturing, and imagining what is coming, dopamine levels rise and happiness peaks. Most people read that and think it is a little sad. I read it and thought: that is the most useful piece of travel psychology I have ever encountered. Because it tells you exactly where the opportunity is. The reason the actual trip sometimes disappoints is not bad luck, it's that most people visualize their vacation without preparing for it. They picture the perfect hotel room, the sunset dinner, the adventure going exactly as planned, and then they show up and judge every moment on its individual merits. Food was disappointing, point off. View was incredible, point on. Bags were delayed, point off. If you are lucky the points balance in your favor.

*Transform the visualization into preparation.
Because once you do, the small negative things lose their power
and the big joyous moments start to stand out.*

But a few things go wrong in a row and suddenly the joy starts draining out of a trip you waited months for.

**Visualization creates expectation.
Preparation creates experience.**

That distinction is everything. Visualization is passive. You picture something good and hope it shows up. Preparation is active. You commit to the experience before it starts. You decide in advance that you are going

to have an exceptional time. That single shift changes what your brain does with everything that follows. I learned this watching my kids at the world's largest water park in Wisconsin during our 48 state RV trip. Largest by square footage, which meant enormous amounts of walking, almost no seating, hours long lines, and wall to wall crowds. For me, categorically one of my nightmare scenarios. But my kids had been talking about this stop for weeks and they had made a decision, consciously or not, that they

were going to love it. And they did. On the walk back to the car I listened to them in front of me, teenagers who will complain about anything, recounting the day like it had been extraordinary. The problems that ruined my day never touched them. Their commitment to joy was stronger than any of it. Years later I took the family to Dollywood. I am not a theme park person, but we love Dolly Parton, and this time I did what my kids had done instinctively. Before we went in, we sat in the hotel room and made a decision together. We are going to have the time of our lives today. The park was packed. We barely got on any rides. The food was exactly what you would expect. But we had a genuinely great time. Because we had committed to it before we walked through the gate. That is what I now call **The Joy Bias**. If you have ever heard of confirmation bias, the principle that your brain finds evidence for

whatever it already believes, joy bias works the same way. When you commit to finding joy in an experience, your brain goes looking for it. You notice what is going right. You file the good moments as confirmation. The things that are less than ideal lose their power to derail you, because your brain is simply not weighted toward them. It is the same reason that when you are thinking about buying a certain car you suddenly see that car everywhere. Your brain finds what it is primed to find. Prime it for joy and that is what it surfaces. Anyone who has ever traveled with me knows the one thing I do not tolerate is someone robbing me of joy. Not because I am unrealistic about imperfection but because I have decided that no lost bag, no delayed flight, no mediocre restaurant is going to take the thing I came for. I even do this on work trips. On the way to the airport I tell myself I

am going to have a great flight. I cannot wait to have that time alone on the plane. And sure enough my brain goes to work confirming exactly that. The science gave us the insight. Anticipation is where happiness peaks. So stop letting that energy sit in passive visualization and put it to work. Before your next trip, your next adventure, your next weekend away, make the decision. Commit to it out loud. Tell the people you are going with. **Prime everyone for the experience you have already decided you are going to have.** Transform the visualization into preparation. Because once you do, the small things lose their power and the big moments start to stand out. By design, not by chance.

THE JOY BIAS

When you commit to finding joy in an experience, your brain goes looking for it.



*A great trip is rarely the result of perfect circumstances.
Prepare and commit to the joyous experience you have
already decided you are going to have*



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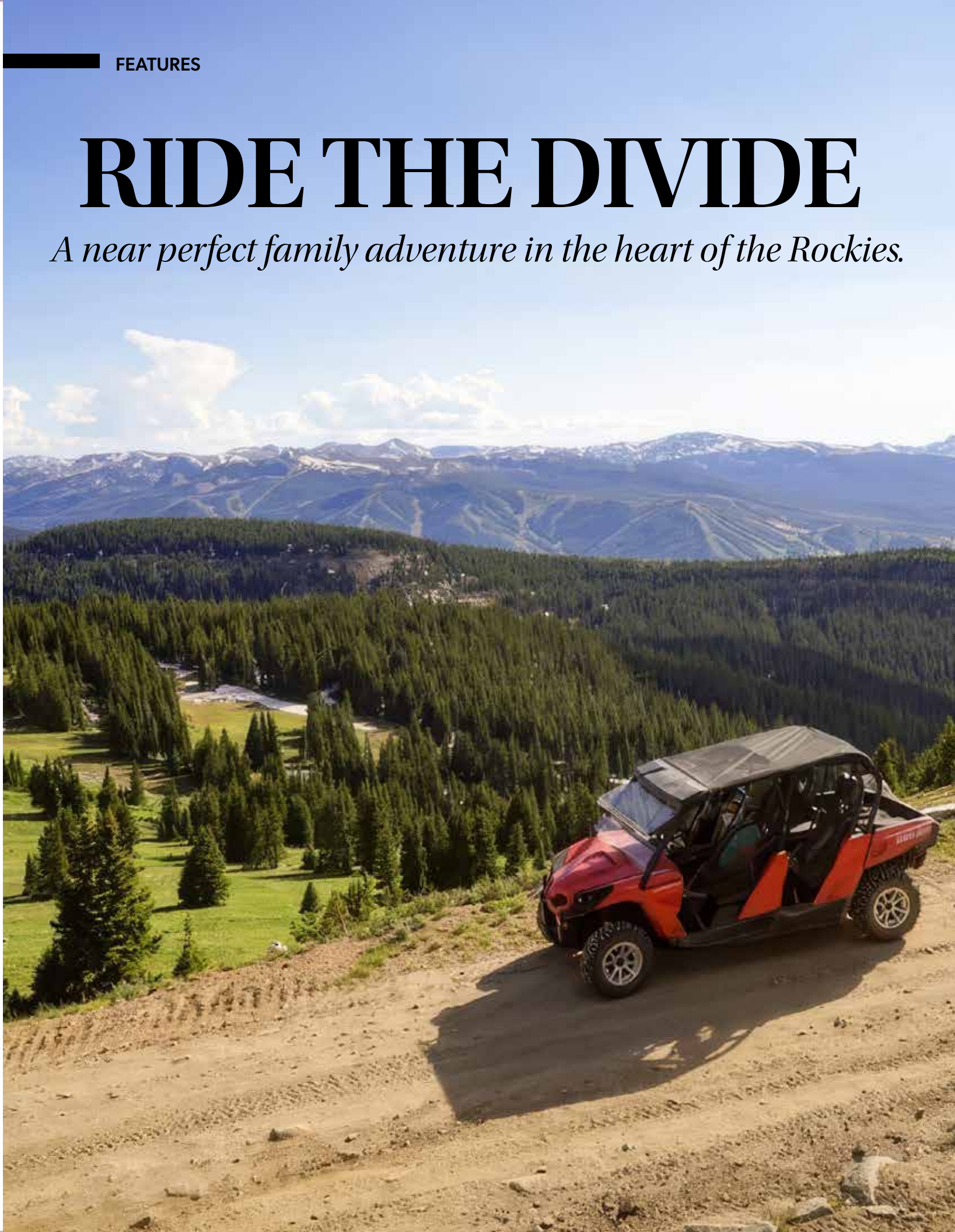
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FEATURES

RIDE THE DIVIDE

A near perfect family adventure in the heart of the Rockies.



After nearly two decades of dragging three kids to adventures across all fifty states and now more than seventy countries, I have a pretty clear sense of what actually works for families and what just looks like it should. The gap between those two things is wider than most people expect. I have shown up to plenty of experiences that were technically open to kids and watched the whole thing quietly fall apart because nobody had actually thought it through. So when I find something that is genuinely built for families, not just tolerant of them, I put that on my list.

One of the most consistent questions I get when I send out an invite is some version of, are kids welcome? Is this a couples trip? How young is too young? I understand exactly why it keeps coming up. Parents have been burned. They have shown up to things that required skills nobody mentioned, or spent the whole day managing anxiety instead of actually enjoying themselves. That experience leaves a mark. So they ask before they commit. My answer for this one is simple. Yes. Bring everyone.

Grand Adventures in Winter Park, Colorado runs a fully guided off road tour to the top of the Continental Divide in Can-Am Maverick side by sides, and it is about as close to a perfect family adventure as I have found anywhere. The machines are the kind of vehicle that makes you excited just looking at them standing still. Bold, capable, purpose built for terrain like this. And yet if you can drive a car, you can drive one of these. Grand Adventures has refined this route thousands of times and the whole experience is engineered so that the thrill is fully accessible, not reserved for people with off road experience or serious technical skills.

You gear up, get a quick briefing, and go. That is it.

The route climbs 15 miles up the historic Corona Pass road through the Arapaho National Forest, gaining elevation as you wind through forests, over rocks, and across trails with just enough complexity to feel genuinely adventurous without ever tipping into stressful.

The guides set the pace and know every inch of the terrain. You are never navigating, never second guessing, never wondering if the next section is beyond what your family can handle. And that containment is not a limitation. For a parent, it is everything. It is what finally allows you to stop managing the experience and just be inside it with your kids.

That combination of accomplishment and shared experience is exactly what I am always chasing when I design adventures for people

As you climb, the views start to open up in a way that builds perfectly. The Fraser Valley drops away behind you. The Rockies stretch out in every direction.

You pass the historic Moffat Railroad trestle, a remnant from when trains actually crossed these mountains at nearly 12,000 feet, and the guides bring that history alive at every stop. There are multiple places to get out, explore, take pictures, and let the moment sink in.

And then you reach the top.

Standing on the Continental Divide at the summit of Corona Pass is one of those views that earns its reputation. Almost 360 degrees of Colorado spread out around you, and you got there in a machine you drove yourself, through real terrain, as a family. That combination of accomplishment and shared experience is exactly what I am always chasing when I design adventures for people, and this delivers every single time.

What I have learned after all these years of doing this with kids is that the best family experiences share one quality. They give parents permission to enjoy themselves.

Not just tolerate the activity while keeping one eye on everyone else, but actually be present in it. This does that. From the moment you gear up in the parking lot to the moment you crest the Divide and everyone climbs out into that view, you are in it together. The smiles start before you leave and they do not stop.

Grand Adventures is one of my favorite operators anywhere in the world for exactly this reason. They understand that the best adventure is the one that works for everyone in your group, not just the most experienced person or the most fearless kid. They have built something here that hits every mark.

Winter Park is roughly 90 minutes from Denver. Book at grandadventures.com or call 970.726.9247. Tell them Reject Average sent you.

R



FAVE SCORE		
Category	Score	Notes
Fun	8.1	Great trails and great machines. Follow the leader makes it a more relaxed vibe.
Adventure	9.2	Riding through the trees and beyond them all the way to the top feels epic.
Value	9.8	Hard to beat the all-in price for the car if you're riding with family.
Ease	9.8	You start right in town, no friction.
Total	9.2	Consider this a must do in Colorado

Summer In *Oslo, Norway*

The City That Makes Leisure
An Important Part of Everyday Life

Norway was country number five on our 52 Countries in 52 Weeks adventure, and if there's one thing Norwegians have figured out better than almost anyone else on earth, it's how to enjoy themselves outdoors in the summer. Not occasionally. Constantly. Every single summer afternoon, without fail, these people are outside doing something. If the sun is shining, Norwegians are in the water, mountains, on bikes or boats, basically enjoying every ounce of summer they get.

We based ourselves in Oslo, right on the waterfront, and it immediately became clear that the harbor isn't just part of the city, it is the city. People swim here before work, after work, during lunch, probably during meetings. Everywhere you look there are paddle boards, kayaks, floating saunas, people jumping into the beautiful clean water with big wide smiles.

The best part of the trip was my wife Juliana flying in and officially joining the adventure. Which was perfect timing because Oslo feels like one of those cities best experienced with someone else. It has this incredibly social energy to it. Everybody's outside. Everybody's active. Everybody somehow looks refreshed all the time. Honestly, I almost got tired just observing the locals.

We spent hours around the harbor swimming, jumping off docks, kayaking, and fully embracing Oslo's waterfront culture. The water is clean enough to swim in right in the middle of the city, which feels illegal if you grew up anywhere else. One minute you're surrounded by modern architecture and restaurants, the next minute you're diving into the fjord with locals who make this their daily ritual.

By Brant Pinvidic



Then came one of the highlights of the entire Norway experience: the famous floating sauna boats. And yes, they are exactly as incredible as they sound.

You rent your own private sauna barge and slowly drift out into the fjords while sitting inside a beautifully designed Scandinavian sauna that looks like it belongs in an architecture magazine. Every few minutes somebody jumps into the crisp water, screams with joy and shock, climbs back into the sauna, warms up, and immediately decides doing it again is all they want to all day long. Sauna. Swim. Sauna. Swim. Repeat until you effectively become Norwegian. It's one of those experiences that sounds gimmicky until you actually do it. Then suddenly you understand why the Nordic countries are consistently ranked among the happiest people in the world.

They've built entire cultures around doing difficult things followed by intense periods of joy-maxing. Honestly, it's genius.



From there we headed to SNØ, which may be one of the most absurdly impressive indoor ski facilities I’ve ever seen. Calling it an “indoor ski slope” doesn’t remotely prepare you for what this place actually is. It’s enormous. The runs are long, the terrain park is legitimate, and somehow the entire experience feels closer to a real mountain than a warehouse filled with fake snow. Brianna and I tried these Nova skis while we were there and had an absolute blast. The whole place feels futuristic in the best possible way. One minute you’re in a modern Scandinavian city by the harbor, the next minute you’re skiing indoors like you accidentally walked into the future of winter sports.

Then it was back outside because apparently Norwegians refuse to spend too much time indoors under any circumstance. We made our way to Oslo Summer Park, a huge outdoor climbing and obstacle park built into the forested hills above the city. Rope bridges, climbing walls, zip lines, elevated obstacle courses, all suspended high enough to give you a mild heart attack. It was harder than expected. Much harder.

At one point I was watching children fly through obstacles with the confidence of Navy SEALs while fully grown adults hung from ropes reevaluating their core strength and upper body mobility. Humbling experience. Beautiful setting. Highly recommend. What surprised me most about Norway wasn’t the scenery, although it’s obviously stunning. It was the lifestyle.

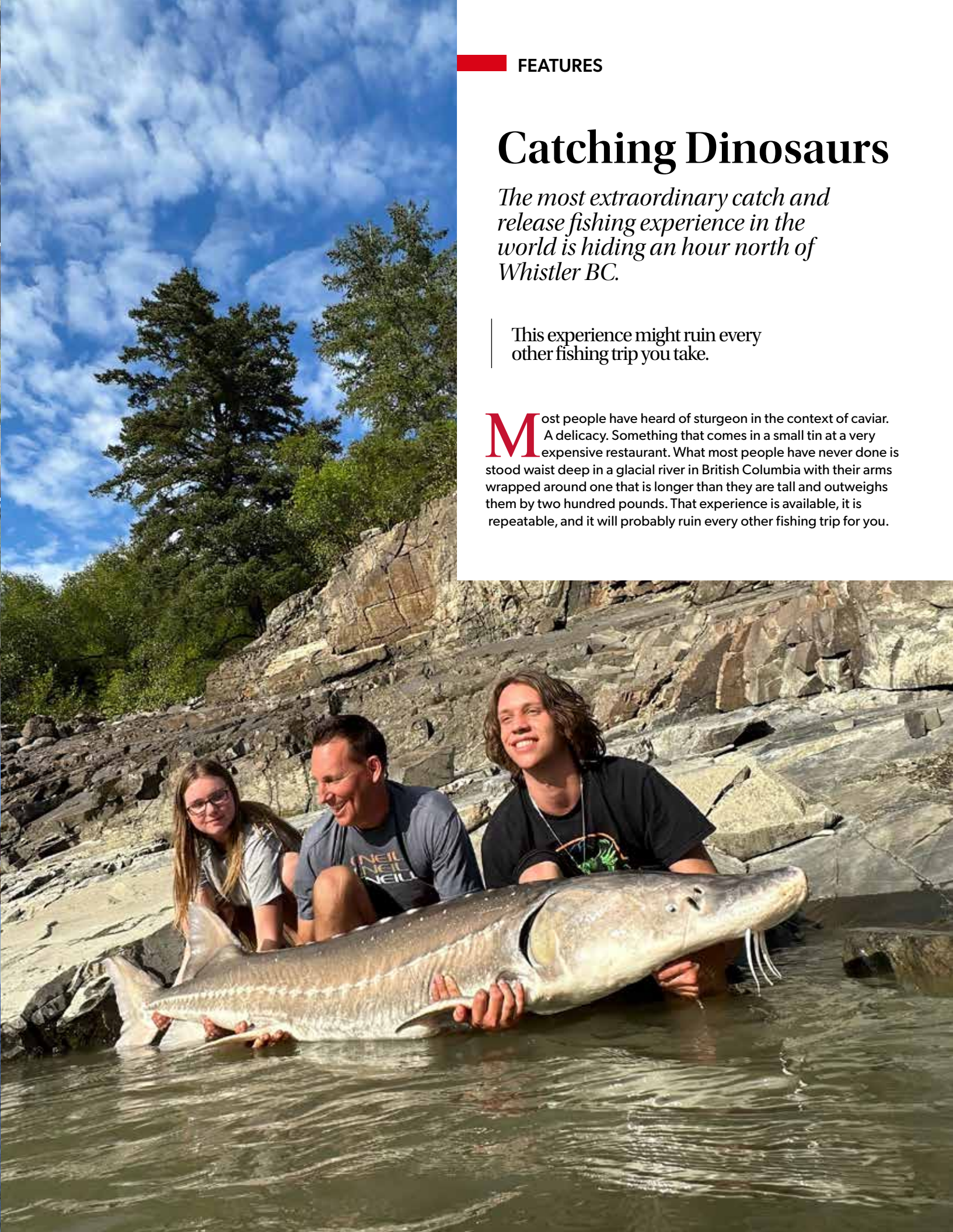
The entire country feels engineered around quality of life and outdoor movement. Nobody seems in a rush, yet everybody’s constantly doing something active. Swimming. Hiking. Skiing. Kayaking. Climbing. Sauna-ing, if that’s a word now. And somehow they make all of it look effortless. Oslo especially feels underrated compared to other European capitals. It’s clean, modern, social, and deeply connected to nature without sacrificing city energy. You can spend the morning skiing indoors, the afternoon kayaking through the harbor, and the evening floating through the fjords in a sauna while watching the sunset. That’s a real day here.

By the time we wrapped our stay, we completely understood the Norwegian obsession with outdoor living. The city invites you into it. It pulls you outside. It makes leisure feel productive somehow.

And honestly, after a few days in Oslo, jumping into the fjord waterways as a daily routine started to feel strangely reasonable.

That may be the most Norwegian sentence I’ve ever written.

RU



FEATURES

Catching Dinosaurs

The most extraordinary catch and release fishing experience in the world is hiding an hour north of Whistler BC.

This experience might ruin every other fishing trip you take.

Most people have heard of sturgeon in the context of caviar. A delicacy. Something that comes in a small tin at a very expensive restaurant. What most people have never done is stood waist deep in a glacial river in British Columbia with their arms wrapped around one that is longer than they are tall and outweighs them by two hundred pounds. That experience is available, it is repeatable, and it will probably ruin every other fishing trip for you.



An hour north of Whistler, past the ski town energy and up into wilder terrain, sits a small community called Lillooet on the banks of the Fraser River, one of the largest and most powerful rivers in Canada. The Fraser is home to white sturgeon, one of the oldest species of fish on the planet.

These things look exactly like what they are: living dinosaurs. No teeth. No spines. Just an ancient, armored, prehistoric creature that can grow over eight feet long and push 400 pounds. They have been doing exactly what they do for longer than most species have existed, and somehow they ended up in a river you can reach by lunchtime from one of the most famous ski towns in the world.

The operation is run by Sea-To-Sky Fishing Adventures, owned and operated by Geoff Kyle, who you may recognize as my favorite snowbike guide in Whistler. Geoff's summer season business is equally extraordinary.

Twenty plus years on the Fraser. A 24 foot aluminum jet boat. And access to spots on this river that he will not show you on a map.

Here is how the day works. You load up on the jet boat in Lillooet and blast upriver through canyons and rapids, which is already worth the trip on its own. Geoff wedges the boat up against the rocky shoreline, sets the heavy rods baited with salmon roe into the deep current, and then the waiting begins.

Giant weights, massive rods, and your eyes locked onto the rod tips as they bounce and wiggle with the current. You are watching for one specific movement. A yank. A sturgeon feeding is not dramatic from above the surface. They are bottom feeders with enormous vacuum mouths and they simply cruise along the riverbed inhaling whatever they find. But when that rod tip pulls, everything changes.

Geoff Kyle screaming "fish on!" is one of the great sounds in outdoor adventure. He moves like a fire alarm went off. He yanks the rod, sets the hook, and hands it to you. And then you understand what you are dealing with.

A 300 pound fish in a river running at thousands of cubic feet per second is not something you are prepared for the first time. The reel screams. The rod bends in half. The sturgeon turns into the current and the combined force nearly takes you over the rail. Geoff is simultaneously unwedging the boat, firing the jets, and chasing the line downriver at full speed because if that spool runs out, the fish is gone. I have had fights that lasted over an hour and covered eight miles of river. I have also lost big ones when we could not move fast enough. Both experiences are unforgettable for different reasons.

When you finally win, when the sturgeon tires and lets you bring it close, Geoff hops into the water and physically guides it to the shallows. And here is the thing about sturgeon that nobody tells you. They have no natural predators. Nothing in nature threatens them. So when they reach the shore they simply stop. They concede. They sit in the shallows with a kind of prehistoric calm while you climb in next to them and take the most ridiculous photo of your life. I have brought people out on this boat who were outweighed and outsize by their catch. I watched my two youngest kids pass a rod back and forth for nearly 70 minutes, both of them holding on together, before finally wading in to lift that fish. It is one of the coolest things I have ever witnessed as a parent.

Then you do it again. And again. A full day on the Fraser runs six to fifteen fish depending on conditions. The rhythm becomes addictive: cold beer, rod tips, conversation, then complete chaos, then back to cold beer.

Somewhere in the middle of it all, Geoff fires up the barbecue mounted right on the jet boat. His partner Adventures in Catering prepares an unreal spread, and suddenly you are on a remote river in the British Columbia wilderness, rods in the water, food on the grill, cold drink in hand, with one of the most spectacular landscapes on earth all around you. It is hard to think of a better day.

Geoff is serious about conservation and so is the entire community on the Fraser. Every sturgeon is tagged and tracked. These fish are protected for good reason and the catch and release ethic is absolute. You are there to experience them, photograph them, and let them go back to doing what they have been doing for millions of years. There are only a handful of places in the world where you can fish for sturgeon legally.

This is my number one, without hesitation. If you fish, or even if you think you might like to, this is a day that will reset your benchmark for what an incredible outdoor experience actually feels like. Catching a fish is one thing. Catching a dinosaur is something else entirely. Reject Average will be running a full week long sturgeon fishing derby on the Fraser at the end of August. If you want in, reach out at brant@rejectaverage.com.





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Top 10 *Animal Encounters* Worth Having

From someone who has spent a lifetime with animals and can tell the difference.

I have been an animal rescuer and advocate for most of my life. I have spent enough time around animals, domestic and wild, captive and free, to develop a pretty clear sense of something most people cannot see from the outside. Whether an animal is thriving in its environment or just enduring it. Whether an interaction is genuinely good for them or simply tolerated. Animals communicate that clearly once you know what you are looking at. That changes how I approach this entire category of travel.

Most of the encounters I've done, involve animals living in fully wild settings. Others involve animals that are not, and I want to be honest about that. Not every animal can or should be returned to the wild. Sometimes the best possible life for an animal is one that looks different from what nature intended, and the right facility, the right program, and the right level of human care genuinely gives them something better than the alternative. I have seen that too, and I respect it.

What every experience on this list shares is the same thing. The animals are celebrated. Their well being drives every decision. And when you are there, you can feel it in how they move, how they engage, and how they carry themselves. If you love animals and you want encounters you can feel as good about as you feel in the moment, these are my ten.

01 GORILLA TREKKING, RWANDA

You hike into the jungle, and then you see them. A gorilla family, wild and completely free, moving through their world with zero interest in impressing you. The trek to get there is real, the immersion is complete, and the moment you lock eyes with a mountain gorilla, something shifts that I genuinely cannot explain.

I have done this multiple times and I still don't have the right words for it. Spiritual is the closest I've come.

This is the pinnacle of animal encounters on the planet, and very few people will ever get to experience it.

volcanoessafaris.com

By Brant Pinvidic

02 JET SKI WITH DOLPHINS CATALINA ISLAND, CALIFORNIA

They choose you. That's what makes it different. You cannot go find dolphins. They find you, and they decide whether you're worth their time.

When a pack of wild dolphins shows up to your jet ski in the open water off Catalina, they are there because they want to be.

At that speed, at that proximity, with that water clarity, you can see their eyes looking back at you. I have done this trip more than fifty times and seen dolphins every single time. It never gets old.

jetski2catalina.com

03 WALKING WITH ELEPHANTS ZIMBABWE

They let you in. That's the part that stays with you. These are wild elephants. Not trained, not performing, not restrained. They have simply chosen, on their own schedule, to allow people near them once a day. You walk beside them, feed them, touch them. They are so large that you register as completely harmless to them, and that dynamic creates something genuinely moving.

I am particular about elephant encounters because so many are exploitative. This one is not. This is the only elephant experience I would recommend without hesitation.

victoria-falls-safari-collection.com



04 SWIMMING WITH MANATEES CRYSTAL RIVER, FLORIDA

One of the most surprising animal encounters in the world. People underestimate this one until they are floating six inches from a thousand-pound sea cow that has absolutely no concern about your presence.

Crystal River is where hundreds of manatees gather, and you simply grab a snorkel and join them. They surface for air every few minutes, move slowly, and treat you like furniture in the best possible way.

Our kids were completely captivated. It is quiet, beautiful, and unlike anything else on this list.

05 NO CAGE SHARK DIVING FIJI

The most intense underwater experience I have ever had. I dove with sharks in nearly a dozen different environments around the world, including great whites off Guadalupe Island.

This is still the one. You scuba dive to one hundred feet, the sharks are fed nearby, and suddenly there are hundreds of them, massive, circling, brushing past you on all sides. It is almost overwhelming in the best possible way. Two dives, zero cages, full immersion.

I could not recommend this more clearly.

fijisharkdive.com



06 WALKING WITH CHEETAHS ZIMBABWE

Cheetahs carry the same reputation as lions and leopards, and that reputation is wrong. They are the most cat-like of all the big cats, right down to the purring.

In Zimbabwe you can walk beside wild cheetahs who genuinely enjoy being in your proximity. You sit next to them, and feel them lean into you the way a house cat does when it's decided you're acceptable.

The speed and power you know they possess makes the gentleness even more striking. You spend the entire time grinning. elecheetahexperience.com

07 WILD HORSES SALT RIVER, ARIZONA

This one catches everyone off guard. The Salt River is already a popular spot for kayaking and floating, but most people have no idea that hundreds of wild horses roam its banks. As you paddle downstream they appear along the shoreline, drinking, cooling off, watching you with the calm authority of animals that have nothing to fear. You can paddle right alongside them.

Having owned horses myself I understand the difference between a domesticated horse and a wild one, and the wild horse has a majesty that is genuinely hard to describe. Unexpected, and absolutely worth it.



08 SWIMMING WITH WHALE SHARKS CEBU, PHILIPPINES

Controversial. Worth doing. Here is how to do it right. There is a lot of debate about this one, and I was skeptical. What I found is that the whale sharks are entirely unbothered.

They show up at the same time every day for concentrated feeding, which means they get a full day's worth of plankton in a fraction of the time, risk, and effort. That is the most important thing to a whale shark. The tourists splashing around them are an irrelevant detail.

Skip the snorkel surface experience because the crowds make it chaotic. Do the beginner scuba option instead. Going under and looking up at something that large and that calm in open water is spectacular.

09 SAFARI THE SERENGETI, TANZANIA

There is a reason this is the one everyone talks about. As someone who has done multiple safaris across Africa, the Serengeti is still the standard. The scale of wildlife here is unmatched. Giraffes, hippos, leopards, lions, wildebeest crossing in the hundreds of thousands. The reason it became iconic is the same reason it remains iconic: nothing else delivers this concentration of extraordinary animals in their natural state. Book a private guided version.

We had lions climb onto our vehicle to investigate us. That does not happen everywhere.

10 DOG SLEDDING BIG LAKE, ALASKA

Watch what an animal looks like when it's doing exactly what it was built to do. Dog sledding being on this list surprises people, and I understand why. What changes your mind immediately is watching those dogs the moment the sled starts moving.

They are not working. They are thriving. The joy is visible and unmistakable, and being pulled through some of the most pristine winter scenery Alaska has to offer. That energy surrounds you and is something I did not expect to affect me the way it did. The team at Happy Trails Kennel, Iditarod champions among them, run the experience at the highest possible level. Don't miss it.





INVITATION CREATES MOTIVATION

Invitation Creates MOTIVATION

Stop waiting to feel ready.
The invite is the source of
momentum.

Everyone wants to do more. Travel more. Try new things. Spend time with great people. Have better stories. That part is universal. The problem is where those things tend to live in most people's lives, pushed into very specific windows.

A vacation week. A long weekend. A special occasion. Adventure becomes something scheduled. Contained. A break from life instead of part of it. And that framing is what quietly kills it.

The moment that experiences become separate from your life, they become rare by design. They require time off, coordination, the right circumstances to line up. So they get delayed. Postponed. Talked about more than they are actually lived.

What most people end up with are one or two great weeks a year, surrounded by fifty weeks of routine. That is not a motivation problem. It is a structure problem. Most people are waiting to feel ready. Waiting to feel inspired. Waiting for the moment when everything lines up and the trip finally gets booked. But motivation is unreliable. It comes and goes, and when it doesn't show up, nothing moves

The shift happens when you stop waiting for motivation and start creating it. And the fastest way to do that is simple:

Create an invitation.

This is the foundation of everything we do at Reject Average. Not because it sounds good, but because it works. I figured this out years ago, almost by accident. I was watching some guys unload jet skis off a truck and had a thought that stopped me cold: I've been saying I want to do this for ten years. I'd been on vacation, the kids were young, the timing was never right. I'd been waiting. And standing there watching someone else live the thing I kept talking about, I realized I had been doing an awful lot of waiting for something I actually, desperately wanted to do. So I stopped waiting. I went online, found a jet ski rental, and booked five machines. I didn't have five people confirmed. I didn't wait. **I booked them first.** Then I sent an email. Nothing elaborate, just a time, a place, a plan. Saturday, be here, we're riding to the island, lunch, back by three. Simple. Five people said yes immediately.

That first run changed everything. Not because of the jet skis, though the jet skis were incredible, but because of what I understood about how people actually work. Nobody was sitting at home thinking they didn't want to go on a great adventure. They were just waiting for someone to make it real. I made it real. That was all it took.

The next weekend I did it again with a different group. Then I started going through my entire list of 'things I want to do someday'. Dune buggies in the sand... done. Sent an email. Four friends, time of our lives. Then I saw a group of people RVing, circled up around a campfire, and I thought: I want that. I didn't have friends with RVs. So I went online, rented four of them, and sent another email. Next thing I know we're in Alabama Hills under a sky full of stars, and I'm looking around thinking: none of this exists without the email. I even rented a movie theater, invited everyone I knew, and watched The Princess Bride with a room full of people I love. No epic adventure required. Just someone willing to do the work of making it happen.



That's when I understood what was actually going on. **It was never about the activity. It was about removing friction.** People don't struggle with desire. They struggle with activation. They want to do things, they just don't want to organize them. Planning, coordinating, committing... those are the real barriers. Most people won't take those steps on their own. But remove that burden and the decision becomes simple. Yes or no. Give someone a clear invitation and you eliminate everything in between.

Someday is where good ideas go to stall. It feels like movement, but it isn't. It's a placeholder. An invitation forces clarity: here's what we're doing, here's when, are you in? That clarity creates momentum. And momentum is what allows experiences to move out of the vacation category and into your actual life. The moment you send an invitation you are no longer thinking about doing something. You are doing it. There is a date. There is a plan. There are people expecting it to happen. You have crossed the line most people never cross.

Standing there watching someone else live the thing I kept talking about, I realized I had been doing an awful lot of waiting for something I actually, desperately wanted to do. So I stopped waiting.



This is where people tend to over complicate it. They think they need a bigger idea. Something unique, elaborate, or once in a lifetime. They don't. The early invitations that built this entire community were simple. Jet skiing. Off-roading. Renting RVs. Hiking and camping. Things people already wanted to do. They just weren't doing them. **The power is not in the idea. The power is in the invitation.**

If you look at any group of people who consistently do interesting things, there is always someone creating invitations. A group chat. A standing plan. An email that goes out every few weeks. Someone is always taking the step to turn an idea into something real. Most people are waiting for that person. You can be that person.

It doesn't require scale. It doesn't require expertise or a platform or a club. It requires a decision. Pick something you want to do. Spend twenty minutes putting it together. Set a date. Make it clear. Send it out. Bowling, horseback riding, a hike, a day trip, a dinner somewhere you've been meaning to try. It doesn't matter what it is. What matters is that it exists as a real opportunity, not just a good idea floating in your head. Then let people respond. You will be surprised how many are ready to say yes. They've just been waiting for someone to ask.

I guarantee you this: commit to sending one invitation a month for the next year, and you will do more interesting things in that year than you did in the last five combined.

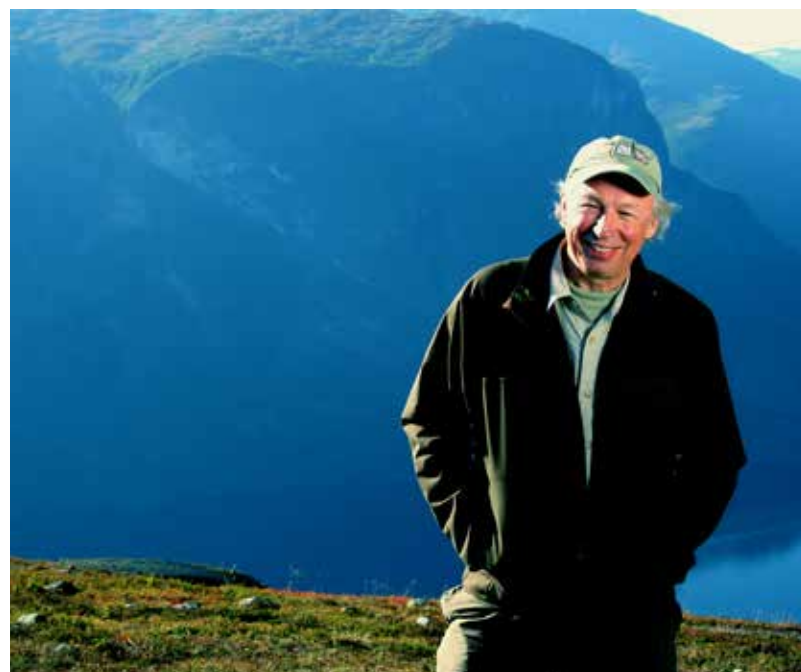
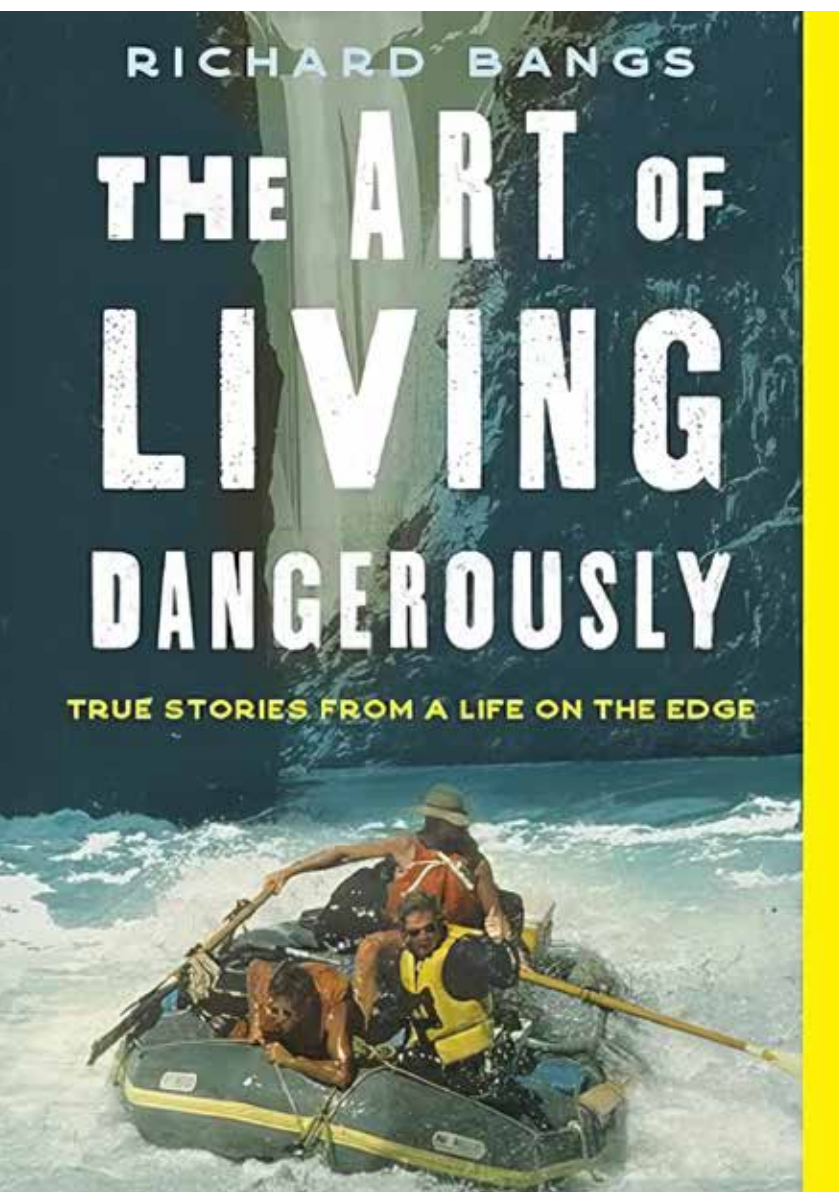
That's not motivation talk. That's just what happens when you stop waiting and start inviting.

Invitation creates motivation. Not the other way around. So stop waiting for the next perfect window. Stop pushing everything into a future trip or a better season or a time when life settles down.

Build it into your life now. Pick something. Create the invitation. Send it.

That is how you start collecting experiences instead of just talking about them.





GO TO SOMEPLACE *You've never been*

By Richard Bangs

Once a year, go
someplace you've
never been before.

It's a divine piece of guidance, often attributed to the Dalai Lama, and one I've tried to live by since my teens. There's a particular kind of magic that awakens when we step beyond the perimeter of the familiar, a childlike wonder that arises with every new horizon, every foreign scent, every untraveled path. My own compass, it seems, was magnetized early.

In 1973 I picked up a book, *Eyelids of Morning: The Mingled Destinies of Crocodiles and Men*, by Alistair Graham, with more than 200 haunting photographs by Peter Beard. It was a graphic account of an expedition to Lake Rudolf (now Lake Turkana) in Kenya, the terminus of the Omo River that coils like an ancient serpent from the Ethiopian highlands. I fell headlong into the imagery of the book, as though it had thrown open a portal to a dimension geographically distant and hypnotic in its otherness. I vowed to go. A few weeks later, with barely more than a notion and a map, I was rowing a raft down the Omo River, a first descent. That trip became the foundational offering of the adventure travel company I co-founded, Sobek, built on the principle of venturing into the uncharted and inviting travelers to taste the adrenaline of fast waters and the serenity of untouched wilderness.

For three weeks we navigated the untried flows of the Omo. We read the river's moods through the blades of our oars, dodged hundreds of hippos and crocodiles, forged friendships with Mursi tribespeople, and passed through a world largely unbroken by time. But a rather inconvenient lack of sustenance towards the end forced us to exit the river just short of the Kenya border and the blue-green saline waters of Turkana. It was a journey unfinished in geography, but not in spirit. The call of the lake so powerfully painted in Beard's photography remained just out of reach, a tantalizing ellipsis at the end of that OG adventure. It was, more importantly, the first chapter in a lifelong philosophy: go where you haven't gone, even, perhaps especially, if it scares you.

Why is this important? Because the unfamiliar reshapes us. Each new place is a mirror, not just of another culture, climate, or cuisine, but of ourselves. How we react, adapt, and evolve in the face of difference. When we go someplace new, we momentarily shred the scripts of our daily lives and become explorers again, not just of the outer world, but of the inner terrain that often lies dormant in the starch of the commonplace. I've seen it happen time and again, in myself and in those I've guided.

There's a moment when the eyes widen, the breath slows, and the face relaxes into wonder.

The petty concerns of daily life, the bills, the office politics, the social media scroll, fall away, replaced by an acute awareness of the present moment. Studies have shown that novel experiences trigger the release of dopamine, improving mood while enhancing learning capacity and creativity.

Going someplace you've never been doesn't always require an expedition down a remote African river. It can be a sunlit alleyway in Porto where the soulful notes of fado drift from an open window. It can be the windswept steppe of Kazakhstan or the quiet majesty of Bhutan, where prayer flags flutter like whispers across Himalayan ridges.

The destination matters less than the disruption, the cracking open of the personal snow globe to let the real world, and your real self, spill out. New places inject the soul with stories. Each journey becomes a thread in the patchwork quilt of a well-lived life.

And over time, you look back not on a life of neatly folded calendars and emails

answered, but on moments: the time you slept under Savannah stars; the minute you witnessed the unblinking eyes of a crocodile rise from the African currents; the afternoon you shared mint tea with a Tajikistani herder who spoke no English, and yet spoke volumes.

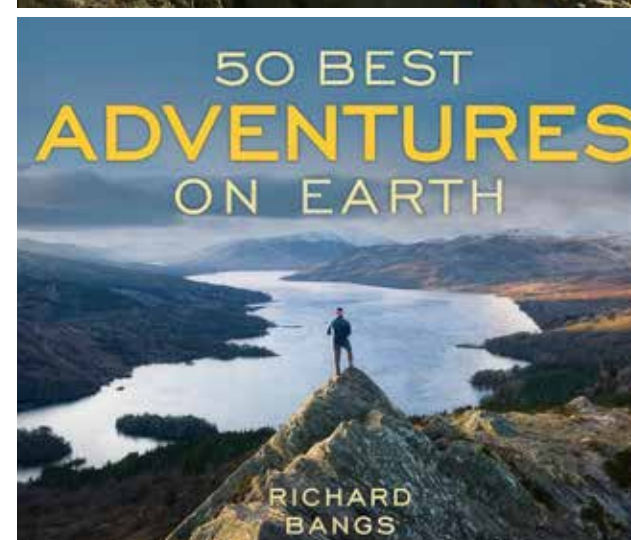
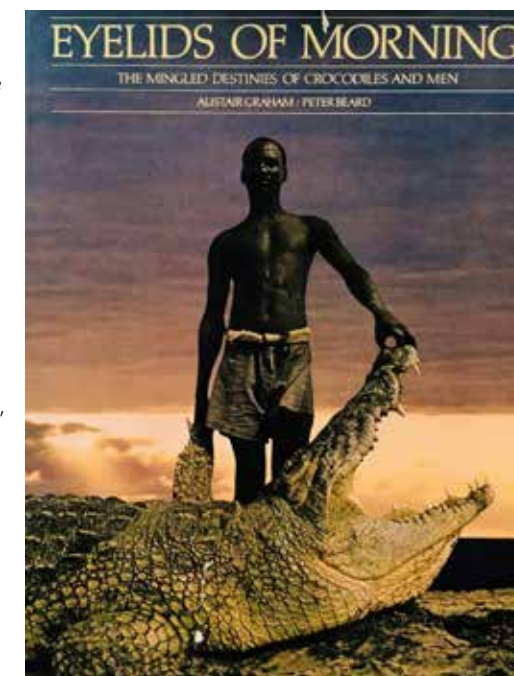
So, once a year, go someplace you've never been. Mark your calendar not with deadlines, but with departures.

I follow that formula, and am going forth to visit Lake Turkana this fall on a customized Kenya walking safari, finally completing the Omo journey I began so long ago. If you can, come join us.

Life isn't meant to be a static exercise. It's meant to be a dynamic dance with the unknown.

Go forth with open eyes and a big heart, and allow the world to write its story upon you.

Visit www.richardbangs.com for more...



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There is a moment, somewhere between Split and the island of Hvar, where you cut the engine and just drift. The water beneath you is this impossible shade of blue, so clear you can see the bottom from thirty feet up, and the coastline ahead of you is a medieval stone city that has been standing since the Roman Empire. You are floating in water that looks like the Caribbean, looking at architecture that makes Europe's most famous cities feel new. And you got here on a catamaran you rented for less than a hotel suite in Monaco.

That is Croatia. And most people still haven't figured it out.



The Dalmatian Coast is one of those places that does something to you the moment you arrive. Over a thousand islands scattered across the Adriatic, most of them barely touched, connected by water so warm and so clear it genuinely doesn't feel like it belongs in Europe. Sailing between them on a catamaran is one of the most naturally spectacular experiences I've had anywhere in the world, and I've been to a lot of places that were supposed to be spectacular. What makes it completely unique is the combination. You are not choosing between natural beauty and cultural depth. You get both, back to back, sometimes simultaneously. You anchor in a hidden cove in the morning, swim off the back of the boat in water you can see thirty feet through, then sail an hour to Dubrovnik and walk the city walls that have

been standing since the 13th century. You stop at Korčula, a tiny walled island city that Marco Polo was supposedly born in, have lunch at a restaurant that's been in someone's family for generations, then sail back out into open water as the sun drops behind the mountains. There is nowhere else on earth where a single day looks like that. And then there's the cost, which is where Croatia quietly destroys every comparable destination.



Charter a catamaran on the French Riviera and you are looking at numbers that make your eyes water before you've left the dock. Greece has gotten expensive fast, especially the headline islands. The Caribbean is beautiful but by the time you've flown there, stocked the boat, and covered the marina fees, the trip is a serious investment. Croatia is different.

A quality crewed catamaran for a week, split between six or eight people, comes in at a fraction of what the same experience costs almost anywhere else.

The marinas are affordable, the food and wine on the islands are genuinely inexpensive, and the quality of all of it is exceptional. You are not getting a budget version of a sailing trip. You are getting one of the best sailing trips available on the planet, at a price that doesn't require you to justify it for six months.

The practical reality is simple. You fly into Split or Dubrovnik, both well connected from most major European hubs and increasingly easy to reach from the US. You charter your boat, crewed if you want someone else handling the sailing,

bareboat if your group has the experience. Then you spend a week moving at whatever pace you want, island to island, anchoring where you feel like it, eating fresh seafood in towns that tourists haven't completely overrun yet.

Croatia is in that window right now where the secret is out but the experience hasn't been ruined by it. The water is still that color. The old cities still feel like old cities. The marinas still have room. Get there before the math changes.



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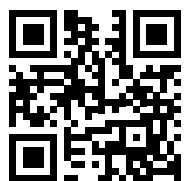


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Traveler PROFILE



Brad Chiet

CALIFORNIA
Executive Member

Editor's Note

Brad spent five years earning an engineering degree, landed a job at a major aerospace and defense contractor, and then walked away from all of it to become a music composer.

He has continued saying yes to things that don't quite make sense ever since.

A Reject Average member for 5+ years, Brad brings the same leap-of-faith mentality to adventure that he brought to his career.

He doesn't always know where he's going.
He's learned that's usually the point.



Member Q&A

Up close with
Brad Chiet
an Experience Collector

You left a successful engineering career to become a composer. How does that decision connect to how you approach adventure?

It took me nearly a year to make that decision, and another seven years before I was making a living at it. What I learned is that the hardest part of any challenge is just making the decision to do it. Once I understood that, it changed how I approached everything. The fear is always the biggest obstacle. Once you get past that, you become almost unstoppable.

What was your first Reject Average experience?

Brant called me out of nowhere during COVID. Everybody was locking down and spraying their groceries with Lysol, and he's telling me about a jet ski adventure in Catalina. I figured there was a simple jetski rental. Normal. There was no normal to be found. Just ten jet skis, across the open ocean for a beach cookout, on a deserted part of the island where nobody would find us. It was one of the best days I'd had in years. When I walked back into the hotel in Long Beach afterward, everyone looked at me funny. I had forgotten to put my mask on. My whole mindset had shifted on that brief trip. I had completely lost track of the fact that there was a pandemic.

Was there a specific experience that changed how you think about fear?

Arizona. We were ziplining across a mountain range. Not between hills. A mountain range. The cable was attached to what looked like a metal pole drilled loosely into the ground. There was no way I was going across it. Some of the guys went first. You feel the pressure. Eventually I thought, my kids are grown, they'll probably be okay without me. I did it. I was terrified to a level I hadn't experienced before. Then we immediately did a mountain climb. Brant put me first probably thinking I'd be slower. I was still running on adrenaline and basically ran up the mountain. The lesson stuck. Things I might have overthought or feared before just don't stop me anymore. That shift has shown up in my work, my relationships, my business decisions.

"The lesson stuck. Things I might have overthought or feared before just don't stop me anymore.

That shift has shown up in my work, my relationships, my business decisions."

You've talked about making new friends as an adult being nearly impossible. How has Reject Average changed that?

About ten years ago my youngest told me I had no new friends of my own. Family friends. Old friends. But no new friends. For most men past a certain age, that's hard to argue with. I actually invented a fake friend named Ericsson Robertson and sent myself holiday cards from him. It became a running joke because my kid thought it was hilarious. Funny, but it did have some stinging truth.

Then Reject Average came along and solved the problem for real. The people on these trips have had success, failure, setbacks, and extraordinary life experiences. Their bios are intimidating. In person they're just regular people who aren't afraid to push it. The adventures are great, but what stays with me are the conversations and the things we learn from each other.





What's the experience you talk about most?

Africa. We averaged three safaris a day, on top of everything else. Visiting the gorillas was unlike anything I can describe. No cages, no restraints. A few guys with guns standing behind us just in case, though at that point you're probably already having a bad day. Victoria Falls was one I was genuinely nervous about going into. You hang over the edge of a waterfall held by two guys gripping your feet. That turned out to be one of the most unbelievable moments of my life.

What surprised you on the trip?

It wasn't the wildlife. We visited a school for young women who had been pushed out by their families after becoming pregnant. Teenage girls with nowhere to go. The school takes them in, teaches them skills, helps them find a path back. One evening a former student came by just to say hello to Brant. She had resisted the vocational program because what she really wanted was an education. The school supported that. She went back to school. Her dream is to become a doctor. In that part of the world, for a young woman in her circumstances, I'm not sure that's something you're even allowed to think. But you could feel it in her. She wasn't hopeful about it. She was certain.

What hit me was the ripple. Helping one person doesn't just change her life.

It changes every life she will eventually help.

How do you personally define adventure?

Adventure is giving yourself permission to jump in, go with the flow, and see where things lead. There are so many things in life that are planned, calculated, rehearsed, and practiced. Adventure is the opposite of all that. For me it's a form of creative expression and freedom that most people never allow themselves.

What's your ideal Reject Average experience?

It starts the same way every time. I get a notice from Brant. I show up at the airport. And I enjoy the ride from there.



THERE'S A GROUP FOR THAT:
UNLOCKING JOY THROUGH ACTIVITY-BASED COMMUNITY IMMERSION

**EXPERIENCE CENTRIC COMMUNITIES ARE A SHORTCUT
TO JOY THAT MOST PEOPLE NEVER THINK TO USE**

**You Don't Have to Love NASCAR To Have
The Time Of Your Life At A NASCAR Event**

Of all the invitations I send out across the year, one gets the most pushback. More than shark diving. More than snowbiking in the backcountry. More than trips that require a passport and a serious commitment of time and money. The one that makes people hesitate every single time is **NASCAR infield camping**. And every single time, the people who say yes come back saying it was one of the best weekends of their year. Here is how it works. At select tracks on the NASCAR circuit, the infield of the race course itself is converted into a massive RV campground. People arrive on Wednesday. By the time the race weekend hits, you have thousands of RVs packed inside the track, creating a temporary city built entirely around one idea: being there together. People set up elaborate campsites. Full outdoor kitchens. Living rooms with couches and string lights and flags flying everywhere. They spend four days walking around, meeting strangers, sharing food, trading drinks, telling stories, and fully leaning into the experience.

I am not a NASCAR fan. I want to be upfront about that. I got access to an infield spot, which is genuinely rare, and I went because I thought it was worth understanding what this world actually was. What I found was not a race. It was one of the most welcoming, generous, and genuinely fun communities I have ever been dropped into anywhere in the world. My daughter agrees. She is also not a NASCAR fan. She could probably name one driver if pressed. And yet it is her favorite event of the year, without hesitation.

Her reasoning is simple. You could show up to the NASCAR infield with no food, no water, and nowhere to stay, and you would still have an incredible weekend. People would feed you. Hand you a drink. Invite you in. Find you a place to sit and a place to belong. She is right. I watched it happen over and over across four days inside Charlotte Motor Speedway with over 100,000 people around us. Not one person in our group had a favorite driver. Not one of us had any real passion for the sport itself. And yet when I ask people about that weekend, they light up every time. That first experience cracked something open for me, and I have been thinking about it ever since. Once I saw it there, I started noticing it everywhere.

I took my kids to the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota. If you are not familiar, Sturgis is the largest motorcycle rally in the world, half a million bikers descending on a small town in the Black Hills for ten days every August. Leather, chrome, loud pipes, and a culture that from the outside looks like it has a very specific membership requirement. I could not have felt less qualified to walk through the gate. What we found was one of the most welcoming, completely disarming communities I have ever stepped into. Nobody cared that we didn't ride. People stopped us constantly, asked where we were from, told stories, and made us feel like we had been coming for years. My kids still talk about it.

I have seen the same thing in the off road community, where strangers share equipment and dig each other out without being asked. In climbing communities where people coach each other up routes they have no personal stake in. I went to the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii. Triathlons are about as far from my personal interest as anything I can imagine, three activities I have zero desire to do combined into one miserable sounding package. And yet it was one of the coolest weekends I can remember. Even Burning Man, which on paper sounds like a version of hell to me, becomes something that transcends all of it for the people inside. Because everyone there has chosen to be part of the same thing.

Shared intention creates immediate camaraderie.

Here is what I have worked out from all of it. When people are inside something they love, surrounded by others who love it, they are operating at a completely different level. More open, more generous, more alive. You are not meeting them on a random Tuesday in the middle of their routine. You are meeting them in a highlight moment. And people in a highlight moment are exceptional versions of themselves. That energy is contagious, and you do not need to be a member of the community to absorb every bit of it. You just need to show up.



Briana and I have made this a deliberate practice when we travel. Before we go anywhere we look up what is happening locally. Not the tourist attractions. Not the standard list. We look for gatherings. Competitions. Festivals. Anything that signals a group of people coming together around something they care about. And then we go. Not because we love the specific thing at the center of it, but because we know the people will be worth finding. This is the shift that changes everything.

**Stop trying to find better destinations.
Start finding better environments.**

A field or a beach or a racetrack full of people aligned around something they love creates an energy that is almost impossible to manufacture any other way. You do not need to join the community. You do not need to understand it or become one of them. You just need to step into it and stay curious.

So here is the invitation. Do not wait for a Reject Average trip to test this. Find something happening near you this weekend. A beach volleyball tournament. A car show. A local cycling event. A collectors fair. Show up with no agenda and see what happens.

And if an infield camping invite ever comes through your inbox from us, do not think about it. Do not ask about the drivers or the race or whether you will understand what is happening on the track. Just say yes.

THROUGH YOUR LENS:

FAVORITE PHOTOS FROM THE REJECT AVERAGE COMMUNITY



Credit: Nino
Caption: Volcán de Fuego erupting in Guatemala

CAPTURED

One of my favorite parts of publishing this magazine is swapping travel stories with passionate travel enthusiasts. With more than 200,000 readers, subscribers, and members in the Reject Average community, I asked a simple question: What is your favorite travel photo?

The response was overwhelming. Thousands of images arrived from every corner of the world.

To be honest, it was harder to organize than I expected, but it was worth every minute. I know what happened to those that sent me a picture. They opened their phones, dug through old folders, and revisited some of their favorite memories. Adventures that happened years ago suddenly came rushing back. I love the idea that thousands of people spent a few moments reliving joy while searching for the one photo that best represented an experience they never wanted to forget.

The following pages are just a small sample of the incredible images submitted by our community. I hope they inspire you to plan your next adventure, and maybe remind you of a few great memories of your own.

What would you send if you had to choose?

Send it to me at brant@rejectaverage.com.
I'd love to see where you've been.

—Brant Pinvidic



Credit: Jeffrey Saad
Caption: Cliff jumper captured along the Hawaiian coast.



Credit: Michael Torres
Caption: A perfect mirror reflection across the flooded salt flats in Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia.



Credit: Ethan Mercer
Caption: Hot air balloons, Myanmar.



Credit: John Aitken
Caption: Sunrise at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India.



Credit: Hannah Reed
Caption: Wild Mustangs roaming the beaches of the Outer Banks



Credit: Daniel Foster
Caption: The Darvaza Gas Crater burns continuously in the Karakum Desert, Turkmenistan.

FAVORITE PHOTOS



Credit: Jason Carbone
Caption: Niagara Falls



Credit: Kahless P.
Caption: Desolation Sound Canada



Credit: MB Kelly
Caption: Tiger's Nest Monastery in Bhutan



Credit: Jessica Lane
Caption: Kayaking among floating icebergs in Prince William Sound, Alaska.



Credit: Lauren Pierce
Caption: Ha Long Bay, Vietnam.



Credit: K Sutherland
Caption: Machu Picchu morning.



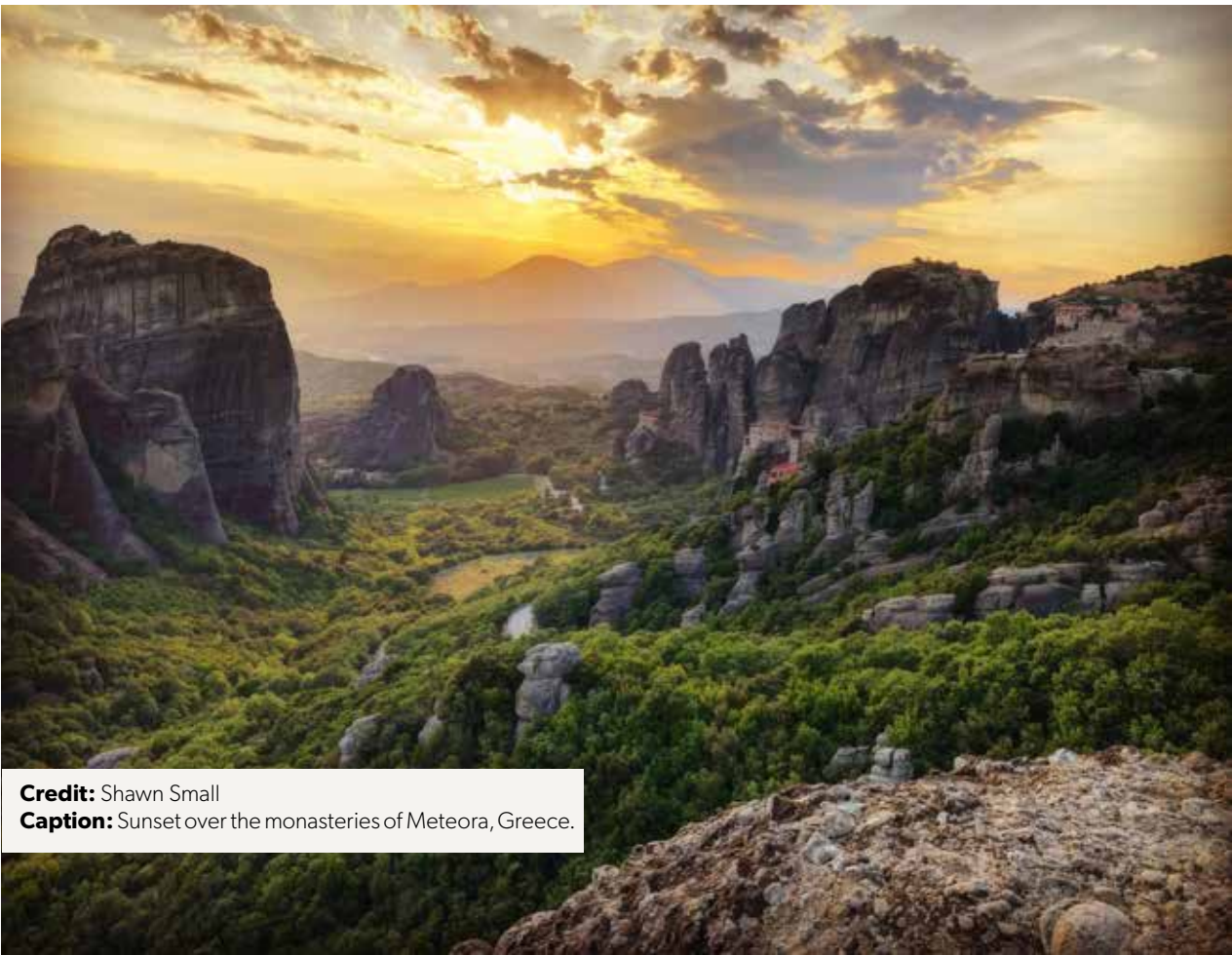
Credit: Marcus Bennett
Caption: A camel caravan crossing the dunes of the Sahara.



Credit: Jeff Butler
Caption: Daughter under rainbow, Cultus Lake Oregon



Credit: David P
Caption: Exploring a blue ice cave Vatnajökull Glacier, Iceland.



Credit: Shawn Small
Caption: Sunset over the monasteries of Meteora, Greece.



Credit: Tyler Morgan
Caption: Morning light filtering through the towering redwoods of Northern California.



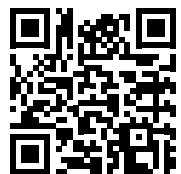
Credit: Meagan Hildebrandt
Caption: Evening street scene in Lisbon, Portugal.



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THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF *ENJOYMENT*

A CATCHPHRASE THAT
BECAME A PHILOSOPHY,
AND THEN A PURPOSE.



I started realizing that travel and adventure didn't have to be the reward for real life. They could be part of real life

I have been using that phrase for almost a decade. The relentless pursuit of enjoyment. Anyone who knows me would say it fits. But what it actually means has changed more than I expected over the years, and I think the evolution is worth talking about. In the beginning, it was a reaction. At the height of my career in television and entertainment, life was intense. Long hours, constant pressure, and if you live in Los Angeles, even getting across town feels like work. When I first started Reject Average, it was a small executive group, just a handful of people trying to break that pattern by doing more interesting things outside. Getting into the mountains. Getting on the water. Getting out of the city and into something that actually felt alive. Back then the relentless pursuit of enjoyment was a target. Something I was reaching toward. And the thing I was reaching toward looked a lot like what most people imagine retirement to be, a life where you wake up and do the things you actually want to do. That idea is deeply ingrained in how people think. Work for decades, build security, and then one day you get to enjoy it. The problem is that version of life rarely plays out the way people expect.

For some, by the time they get there, the body and mind have moved on and the things they dreamed of doing are no longer things they can actually do. A week in the Dolomites, a sailing trip through Croatia, riding horses in Iceland, those things require a version of you that doesn't wait fifty years. For others, they have spent so long building a life around work that when it's gone, they lose their sense of purpose entirely. I knew early on I didn't want either outcome. So the goal became simple. Move that version of life forward. Don't wait for some distant point in the future. Build it into the present. Those early years were some of the most rewarding of my life. It felt like discovering a dimension that had always been there but that I had never looked directly at. I started realizing that travel and adventure didn't have to be the reward for real life. They could be part of real life. In 2019 I took groups of people on nearly forty different adventures in a single year, from snowbiking in Whistler to shark diving and everything in between. At that point it had stopped being something I did occasionally. It was what I was doing. It was life.



*Happiness is an equation.
Happiness equals joy applied over time.*



Then something unexpected happened. My original goal had been to take the intensity and focus I brought to my professional life and apply it to my personal life. To show up for adventure the way I showed up for work. What I didn't expect was that it would run in both directions. The joy I was finding out in the world started flowing back into my work. That curiosity, the enthusiasm, the sense of possibility, it came with me everywhere. And that is when I realized that work life balance is one of the great myths. It's a phrase designed to make you more productive, not happier. What actually works is harmony. Not in some abstract sense, but practically. You find a way to live with a certain energy and you bring it to everything. The same presence you bring to a boardroom, you bring to a trail in Patagonia or a boat in the Adriatic. The same intentionality you bring to an adventure, you bring back to your desk on Monday. I saw this clearly when I worked with a professional sports organization on high performance. The athletes who were truly elite brought the same intensity to practice that they brought to games, because the brain gets comfortable with what you repeat. The goal was helping them understand that same drive belonged in every part of their life, as husbands, as fathers, as friends, not just on the court. Now the relentless pursuit of enjoyment has taken another turn entirely. For me, it's become about sharing it.

Every article, every trip, every invitation I put out into the world is driven

by the same thing. If I can point someone toward more joy, show them what is possible, drag them a little closer to the version of life they actually want, that is what gets me up in the morning. Someone told me recently that the phrase seemed a little superficial. That *relentless* didn't quite fit. So I explained my definition of happiness, which I genuinely believe is one of the most useful things I have ever worked out...

Happiness is an equation

Happiness = Joy Applied Over Time

That is why people feel so intensely alive when they travel, because you are compressing enormous amounts of joy into a short window. That week in Japan, that road trip down the Amalfi Coast, that morning you watched the sun come up over Wadi Rum from the back of a camel... you look back and think, I was so happy. Of course you were. You were experiencing more joy per hour than most people get in a month. The mistake is thinking that only counts on vacation. It doesn't have to be. If you increase the joy you experience day to day, you increase your overall happiness. It becomes your baseline, not something you visit occasionally.



That is what the relentless pursuit of enjoyment really means.
It is not about chasing extremes or living on a plane.
It is about being intentional with how you live.
Choosing more moments that matter more consistently.
Not just a great trip, a great life.
And that does not happen by accident.
It happens when you decide to pursue it.



The Reject Average *Calendar of* Adventures

Some of what's upcoming for
members in 2026

One of the defining elements of Reject Average is access. These are not theoretical trips or partner highlights. Each experience listed below is personally led by Brant Pinvidic and has been vetted through years of hands on travel and execution. Membership is free to join. Full itineraries sent out weekly. Executive Membership is by invitation / application only. Trips are open to members unless otherwise noted. Space is limited by design. To receive invitations, visit RejectAverage.com and get on the list.

Iceland Ring Road Expedition

*July | 24 total spots
All Members*

Seven to ten days circumnavigating Iceland with private guides. Waterfalls, glaciers, volcanic landscapes, and remote regions define the route.

This is one of the most complete and seamless ways to experience Iceland in a single journey.

Oslo Summer Experience

*July | limited spots
Executive Members*

Summer transforms Oslo into one of Europe's most vibrant outdoor cities. Long days, waterfront living, and a distinctly local pace.

This experience focuses on leadership, connection, and lifestyle, with accommodations in the city center.

Mount Kilimanjaro with Sean Swarner

*July | 10 spots
All Members*

A private ascent led in partnership with legendary explorer Sean Swarner. Preparation, intention, and leadership are central to the experience.

Designed as a once in a lifetime climb executed at the highest level.

Whitewater Adventure Center, North Carolina

*August | 16 total spots
All Members*

Three days of private guided access to one of the most dynamic adventure parks in the world.

Rafting, kayaking, climbing, and constant activity define the experience. Pure play, expertly run.

Vietnam Immersion Tour

*October | 8 total spots
All Members*

Seven days beginning in Hanoi. This experience blends food exploration, countryside travel, river adventures, and cultural immersion.

Vietnam consistently ranks among the best value destinations in the world, delivering exceptional hospitality, history, and cuisine. The itinerary focuses on depth rather than highlights.

Ultimate Golf Week

*November | 8 total spots
Executive Members*

Seven rounds, seven courses, seven cities, seven days.

Flights, rounds, and logistics included. A long-planned experience combining elite golf with travel and connection.

Scuba Diving with Sharks, Fiji

*November | 8 total spots
Executive Members*

Seven days focused on open water shark diving with no cages.

Often described as one of the most intense and transformative scuba experiences available anywhere in the world.

Middle East Executive Tour

*December | Limited spots
Executive Members*

Ten days across Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates.

Direct access to business leaders, culture, and regions rarely experienced firsthand.

Helicopter Sturgeon Fishing, Whistler BC

*August | 16 total spots
Executive Members*

You just read about it, it's the ultimate fishing experience. Picked up in a helicopter downtown Vancouver.

Fish Salmon in the remote Indian river, then over to the Fraser for the dinosaurs.

Streamsong Golf Tournament Bowling Green Florida

*September | 24 spots
All Members*

4 night – 5 day – ultra-all-inclusive golf experience at the legendary Streamsong Resort.

2 player best ball format. 4 different courses and 5-star food, drink, and accommodations.

South Korea Cultural Immersion

*September | 8 spots
All Members*

A blend of tradition, modern culture, food, and access beyond standard tourism.

South Korea consistently surprises travelers with its depth, energy, and hospitality.

Kelly Slater Surf Ranch California

*October | 12 total spots
Executive Members*

The most exclusive private surf ranch booked entirely for Reject Average executive members.

This all-inclusive experience is a rare invite-only opportunity to experience the greatest surf resort in the world.

Stuart Beach Executive Retreat

*December | 16 total spots
Executive Members*

Two beachfront homes in one of the most refined beach destinations in the United States.

A leadership focused retreat designed to close the year with intention, reflection, and connection.

Rwanda Gorilla Trek and Africa Safari

*January | 8 total spots
Executive Members*

The top adventure on the list. The most incredible experiences and custom Africa safari opportunities.

Get the big 5, top 12 and mountain gorillas in one trip.





All 48 *The Ultimate* RV Road Trip

In March of 2021, my family made a decision that felt massive at the time and obvious in hindsight. We were going to leave our life behind for six months, buy a 45 foot fifth wheel, and drive across the United States to all 48 contiguous states. We were not RV people. We had done the occasional weekend, but nothing that suggested this was a natural next step. What pushed us out the door was simple. California was locked down, the kids were not going back to school anytime soon, and sitting still in a version of life that felt increasingly small was not something I was willing to accept.

So instead of waiting it out, we opted in.

We built a mission around it. All 48 states. Six months. A goal with shape and purpose. More importantly, something my kids could be part of. This wasn't just travel. It was a commitment.



We left Los Angeles on March 1st in a 45 foot fifth wheel pulled by a Freightliner sport chassis, a truck built for ranchers and long hauls, with air brakes and the kind of towing capacity that makes something that large feel surprisingly manageable. I want to say a word about that truck because everyone who ever heard about this trip asked about it first. I did the research, concluded it was the safest and most practical option available without requiring a CDL license, and it was one of the best decisions of the whole adventure. What could have been stressful became effortless. And that set the tone for everything that followed.

Our rules were simple. Never drive more than five hours in a single stretch. Stay roughly three days in each location. We were not racing. We were living. Some states required more time, Texas alone stretched into four or five stops, but the principle held throughout. Every stop had the same framework: find what the place is known for and go do it, eat the food it is famous for, and most importantly, sit down for dinner with someone local. That last part became the heartbeat of the entire trip. The route took us through Nevada and Arizona, across New Mexico and Texas, down to Florida, up through Tennessee and Kentucky, along the East Coast to Maine, back

through the Midwest, up through the Dakotas, and down through Utah, Idaho, and Montana before finally pointing home. We pulled back into our driveway on September 1st, exactly six months to the day.

What We Actually Learned

The first thing that hit us was how little you actually need. Going from a large home in Los Angeles to roughly 400 square feet should have felt restrictive. It felt efficient. Most of what you own never gets touched. Life became simpler, more focused, and honestly more enjoyable. That lesson has stayed with me in every extended trip since.

The second realization was about community. The RV world is one of the most welcoming environments I have ever been part of. People compare rigs, trade tips, offer help without being asked. One of the most memorable moments of the entire trip happened in Texas, where we crossed paths with a large African American RV caravan, hundreds of people traveling together, organizing trips, building friendships around a shared love of the road. The number of things we had in common was staggering. I remember thinking the world needs so much more of this.

The third thing I noticed was something I did not expect. Recreation is the actual backbone of this country. Everywhere we went, people were outside, fishing, grilling, gathering, doing things together. It clarified something for me that living in Los Angeles had obscured. In most of the country, work is part of the day but what people actually care about fills everything else. They prioritize doing things. One of the best illustrations of this is mini golf. There is a course in almost every town in America. Not because mini golf is extraordinary but because it is accessible. It gives people something to go do tonight, with the people they love, without a lot of planning.

People are not looking for better ideas. They are looking for simpler ones.

I also learned that distance changes your relationships far less than you expect. Most communication already happens by text, phone, and email. The number of people you actually see in person in any given week is smaller than you think. Being on the road for six months clarified which relationships mattered most, and not a single one suffered for it.

The People You Meet

Early in the trip, just two days in, we met Todd and Sheila in Las Vegas. They had just sold everything and committed to full-time RV life. My kids connected with them immediately and we followed each other's journeys from that point forward. What started as an experiment for them grew into a full lifestyle and career, a YouTube channel, events they called RV Huddles, and eventually a brand new rig and a life built entirely around showing people what this world looks like. Watching that unfold in real time was one of the most inspiring things about the whole experience. goswitchitup.com

Connectivity was non negotiable for us and I want to be direct about this because it is the number one concern people raise. The infrastructure is already out there. A company called Mobile Must Have outfitted our rig with everything we needed and in six months on the road I never once had a connection problem. In several places I had better signal than I do at home in Los Angeles.

Why You Should Do This

When people ask how we did 52 countries in 52 weeks, my answer is always the same. Because I did this first. Six months across America taught me how to live on the road, how to find the best of every place quickly, how to keep moving without it feeling like chaos. It was the blueprint for everything that followed.

Here is the other thing I want you to take away from all of this. People are better than you think. If you consume the world through screens it feels divided and loud and negative. But when you get out into it, when you sit across from people and share meals and have real conversations, you find that almost everyone is focused on living their lives, taking care of the people they love, and finding more ways to enjoy the time they have. That was true in every single state we visited. Every single one.

My daughter's 18th birthday fell just after we got home. For her gift, I reached out to every single person we had met along the way across those six months and asked them to send her a birthday video. The guide in Pigeon Forge. The stereo repair guy in Orlando. The golf caddie in Washington. The double amputee we met in Washington state. Every single person responded. Every one of them made a personal video for a girl they had spent maybe a few hours with, months earlier, on the road.

I edited them all together and watched her watch it, and I can tell you honestly it was one of the most proud and overwhelming moments of my life. That is what real human connection looks like. Not a follower count. Not a like. A stranger who remembered your kid and took five minutes to make her feel seen on her birthday. That is what this country actually is, and you will never find it sitting still.

Rent an RV for a weekend. Try it. Go somewhere you have never been. The RV community is one of the friendliest you will ever find and platforms like Outdoorsy and RVShare make it easier than ever to get started. I have met very few people who tried it and did not love it. Because once you start, it is very hard to go back to the idea that life is something you take a break from. It becomes something you build.





The Route We Took:

Planning and plotting the route across the country was a bit of a complex logistic puzzle. We ended up moving every three days and covered more than 20k miles over the 6 months. We got all 48 contiguous states and did more than 200 adventure activities along the way. Reach out if you want details on the RV parks, adventures, or any other info that could help you plan your RV adventure.

- Las Vegas, Nevada
- Lake Havasu, Arizona
- Phoenix, Arizona
- Sedona, Arizona
- Holbrook, Arizona
- Albuquerque, New Mexico
- White Sands, New Mexico
- El Paso, Texas
- Fort Davis, Texas
- Fort Stockton, Texas
- San Antonio, Texas
- Port Aransas, Texas
- Galveston, Texas
- Holly Beach, Louisiana
- New Orleans, Louisiana
- Biloxi, Mississippi
- Fairhope, Alabama
- Destin, Florida
- Perry, Florida
- Tampa, Florida
- Naples, Florida
- Key Largo, Florida
- Parkland, Florida
- Port St. Lucie, Florida
- Orlando, Florida
- Savannah, Georgia
- Columbia, South Carolina
- Charlotte, North Carolina
- Knoxville, Tennessee
- Winchester, Tennessee
- Nashville, Tennessee
- Lexington, Kentucky
- Glen Jean, West Virginia
- Gordonsville, Virginia
- Washington, D.C.
- Quakertown, Pennsylvania
- West Creek, New Jersey
- Manhattan, New York
- New Haven, Connecticut
- Providence, Rhode Island
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Old Orchard Beach, Maine
- Henniker, New Hampshire
- Woodford, Vermont
- Niagara Falls, New York
- Cleveland, Ohio
- Ann Arbor, Michigan
- Indianapolis, Indiana
- East St. Louis, Illinois
- Branson, Missouri
- Eureka Springs, Arkansas
- Grand Lake, Oklahoma
- Kansas City, Kansas
- Omaha, Nebraska
- Okoboji, Iowa
- Oakdale, Wisconsin
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Wahpeton, North Dakota
- Milner, South Dakota
- Rapid City, South Dakota
- Guernsey, Wyoming
- Boulder, Colorado
- Grand Junction, Colorado
- Heber, Utah
- Idaho Falls, Idaho
- Big Sky, Montana
- Missoula, Montana
- Medical Lake, Washington
- Boardman, Oregon
- Bend, Oregon
- Mount Shasta, California
- Lodi, California
- Pismo Beach, California
- Santa Clarita, California

So You Want To SAFARI

PRACTICAL ADVICE BEFORE BOOKING ONE OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE AND POTENTIALLY LIFE CHANGING ADVENTURES ON EARTH.

It is hard to find a person who does not have an African safari somewhere near the top of their bucket list. Not just travelers. Everyone. It sits in the imagination in a specific way, built up over years of documentaries, photographs, and stories from people who came back changed. And when people finally reach a point where they can afford it, it is almost always one of the most substantial trips of their lives. Which means getting it right matters enormously.

Because safari in Africa is also a very big business. It's a thriving, globally marketed, heavily sold industry subject to the same forces as any other. Sometimes, the salesmanship, upselling, and folklore doesn't always match reality. Knowing how to navigate all that is the difference between a trip that lives up to everything you imagined and one that costs a fortune and leaves you wondering what you missed.

If you simplify it, there are really two questions you need to answer before booking anything.

**Will I get the kind of animal encounters I have been dreaming about?
Will it actually be worth the money I am spending?**

The good news is both answers can be yes. But only if you approach it the right way. After doing every major animal encounter available on the continent, across multiple countries and more experiences than I can count, here is what I actually know.



PROXIMITY BEATS EVERYTHING

The first question most people ask when planning a safari is where. Open plains or private reserve. Tanzania, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana or South Africa? Completely wild or game reserve? Before I tell people where they should go, I have to know what they actually value and expect out of the experience.

I have done a safari in the Serengeti, which is the definition of open, pure, untouched wilderness. And I have done a safari at a private game reserve in South Africa that is, technically, fenced. Here is what I can tell you.

Seeing cheetahs hunting on the Serengeti from half a mile away, which is genuinely wild, was not nearly as powerful as watching big cats eat and move and crawl around my jeep from five feet. That proximity, that intimacy with the animal, is what changes you. That is the story you tell for the rest of your life.

Are you comfortable driving hours between sightings or do you want non-stop action? There is no wrong answer here. Some people genuinely value the open expanse of pure wilderness more than the individual animal encounters, and that is completely valid.

But be honest with yourself about what you are actually after before you spend the money. If it's up-close animal encounters with the Big 5 or Top 12 are your priority, don't leave it to chance. Be specific about what your goals are, then choose your safari based on your animal expectations, not the pretty brochure or view from the room.

The safari industry has a significant gap between what you pay and what you actually get.

This one surprises people and it is probably the most valuable thing I can share.

PRICE DOES NOT ALWAYS BUY A BETTER EXPERIENCE.

I have friends who stayed at the most expensive lodges for a gorilla trek in Rwanda. They described personalized service, traditional dancers greeting them on arrival, staff taking their boots and cleaning them. It sounded extraordinary.

What they didn't know is that the dancers travel between resorts. The boots and gaiters are standard issue everywhere. The gorilla trek itself, the guide, the experience, the hour with the family, the emotional weight of it, is essentially identical regardless of where you stay.

The variable is the accommodation, not the encounter. This is true across most of Africa. The price can be two to ten times higher between operators and lodges with nearly identical wildlife experiences to offer. Knowing where the money actually changes the encounter versus where it simply buys ambient luxury is the most important research you can do.

THINK OF BOOKING AFRICA LIKE BUILDING A HOUSE.



You can hire every trade separately, save money, and manage all the coordination yourself.



Or you can hire a general contractor who handles everything and charges for that service. Most tour operators are exactly that. They take your requirements and assemble the individual pieces, guides, vehicles, lodges, transfers, into a complete experience.



If you dislike planning, hate surprises, and want someone else handling the logistics, that service is absolutely worth the premium.



If you are willing to do the work, booking the pieces directly can save you a significant amount of money with no reduction in the actual experience. I have done it both ways.



BOTH WORK.
JUST KNOW WHICH ONE YOU ARE BEFORE YOU START.

THE GREAT MIGRATION IS OVERRATED.

There. I said it.

The wildebeest crossing has been mythologized to the point where people plan entire safaris around being in one specific place at one specific time, competing with hundreds of other vehicles for the same view. I have been.

I have also had wildlife moments in quieter, far less famous locations that were infinitely more personal and profound.

The more customized and less traveled your route, the better your experience tends to be. The famous tentpole events are priced at a premium precisely because demand is so high. Moving away from them and toward less marketed experiences is almost always the right call for anyone who wants something real rather than something to check off.

WHAT A GREAT SAFARI ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

My most recent trip was twelve days across three countries and it covered more extraordinary ground than anything I had done before. We started in Rwanda for the gorilla trek and golden monkey experience, staying at a spectacular all inclusive lodge with incredible food, culture, and our guide Emmanuel leading a private trek for our group of eight. There is simply no better way to see those animals. From there we flew to South Africa and a private game reserve for up close encounters with elephants, giraffe, rhino, and lions with private guides and exceptional facilities. Then on to Zimbabwe and Victoria Falls, where we walked with and fed wild elephants, did a night game drive that included crocodiles and hippos, an infrared drive to observe nocturnal behavior, a morning with cheetahs who, for the record, purr like enormous house cats, painted dogs running wild, and a culture conservation experience that was genuinely extraordinary.

Twelve days. Every major animal on the continent. Big five plus every other significant species. And the total cost for our group was roughly one third of what a comparable itinerary would have run through a traditional tour operator. Because we built it piece by piece with people we trusted. A great safari will change you. That part of the folklore is completely true. The landscape, the animals, the scale of it, the stillness of an African morning in the bush, there is nothing that compares. But it is a significant investment and it deserves serious thought before you book.

Quality of encounter over quantity of animals. Proximity over prestige. Honest self assessment about what you actually value. Careful consideration of where the money changes the experience and where it simply changes the thread count on your sheets. And a willingness to look beyond the famous routes toward something more personal. Do those things and you will come back with a trip that earns its place among the best of your life. Scan the QR code or visit rejectaverage.com for direct links to every operator, lodge, and contact I trust on the continent. These are the people I use and recommend personally, not paid partnerships. Just the best people I know for the job.





TOP GEAR

Travel and Adventure Gadgets I Will Not Leave Home Without

the Essentials

Over the last few years, I've spent an unreasonable amount of time living out of backpacks, dragging gear through airports, throwing it into boats, jeeps, snowstorms, deserts, and hotel rooms across dozens of countries. And somewhere along the way, I realized most travel gear falls into two categories. Stuff that looks cool online but is useless in the real world, and stuff that works brilliantly. These are the rare pieces that survived the chaos. Some made life easier. Some prevented expensive mistakes. Some earned permanent space in my bag simply because they solved problems before I even realized I had them. None of these are sponsored picks. They are just the items I kept reaching for over and over again.



GRAYL Transport EXP 25L Backpack

I've gone through a stupid number of backpacks over the years and most of them fail for the same reason. They're either too tactical-looking for normal travel, or too clean and minimalist to survive real adventure. The GRAYL Transport somehow manages to sit right in the middle. It works in airports, on road trips, hiking days, and even thrown into the back of a Land Cruiser somewhere in Iceland. The organization is fantastic, the materials feel bombproof, and the water-resistant zippers have already saved my gear more than once.

HOVERAir X1 Pro Max

This thing honestly feels slightly futuristic. It's basically a flying camera drone for people who do not want to deal with the usual drone nonsense. No giant case, no complicated setup, no standing in a field pretending to be an FAA specialist. You pull it out, press a button, and suddenly you have cinematic moving footage following you through mountains, cities, beaches, or hikes. For solo travelers especially, this might be one of the coolest travel gadgets I've used in years.



Tropicfeel All-Terrain HDry Shoes

These became my "I only packed one pair of shoes" travel shoe. Waterproof enough for bad weather, breathable enough for hot cities, and lightweight enough that your feet are not screaming after 20,000 steps through airports, markets, or old European streets. Most travel shoes try too hard to look technical. These actually look good enough to wear to dinner without looking like you're about to summit Everest.



Under Armour Yard Dual Mirror Sunglasses

Most performance sunglasses either look amazing and feel terrible, or feel great and make you look like the terminator. These somehow avoid both problems. Super lightweight, comfortable enough for all-day wear, and durable enough to survive being shoved into backpacks, cup holders, and jacket pockets constantly. They also hide jetlag exceptionally well, which deserves recognition.

Berghaus Ridge Seeker Gore-Tex Jacket

There are rain jackets you buy for emergencies, and then there are the ones that become part of every trip. This is the second category. Iceland, Norway, South Korea, random sideways rain in London, this thing handled all of it. Lightweight, clean, properly waterproof, this sets the standard for all waterproof jackets.



Coolibar Emmet Convertible Ear Flap Hat

I know exactly how this sounds. I judged it too. Then I spent long days in brutal sun conditions and suddenly became emotionally attached to a hat with ear flaps. The reality is this thing works ridiculously well. Lightweight, breathable, surprisingly comfortable, and excellent for fishing, boating, desert travel, or anywhere the sun feels personally aggressive.



GoPro HERO14 Black

Action cameras are one of those things you do not realize you need until the exact moment you need one. Glacier hikes, snowmobiles, cliff jumps, motorcycles, boats, surf days, ziplining, there are certain experiences your phone just cannot survive properly. The stabilization on the new GoPro is absurd and the footage somehow makes average adventures look cinematic.

See all these and more in the Reject Average Amazon Store!



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PEDALING WAS ALWAYS THE PROBLEM

How downhill mountain biking completely changed my relationship with cycling

As someone who has spent the last thirty years chasing outdoor adventure, there was always one category that never fully clicked for me. Cycling.

I wanted to love it. I respected the people who did it. I understood the appeal, exploring trails, riding through forests, covering ground under your own power. But every time I tried to embrace mountain biking or long trail rides, I ran into the same problem. Pedaling. More specifically, endless uphill pedaling.

Traditional cycling always felt like taking prolonged, unpleasant exercise and trying to wrap fun around it. I enjoy physical exercise, but I prefer intensity, not endurance suffering. I'm a weight trainer, not a treadmill runner. I like explosive bursts, not extended cardio punishment. And no matter how beautiful the scenery was, eventually the joy got buried underneath the grind. Every trail that started with promise ended with me wondering why I was doing this to myself. That was until I discovered downhill mountain biking. Boom. Problem solved.

You load your bike onto the chairlift, ride to the top of the mountain, and spend the rest of the day riding down. No exhausting climb back up.

No conserving energy for the return slog. Just flow, speed, scenery, skill, and momentum. The first time I tried it, it felt like an unlocking event. It unlocked the joy of biking. Instead of focusing on suffering, I was focused on movement. Instead of staring at the ground trying to survive another climb, I was looking around. The scenery became part of the experience again. The trails became playful instead of punishing. And what surprised me most was that downhill riding is still wildly physical.

Your arms burn. Your legs work. Your core gets hammered. Your reaction time and balance are constantly engaged. But it's demanding in the same way skiing is demanding, not in the repetitive endurance way that traditional cycling becomes. Cross-country skiing and downhill skiing are completely different sports. People absolutely love cross-country skiing. Good for them. Truly. But I am not one of those people. Downhill skiing feels dynamic, free. Gravity becomes part of the fun instead of something you are constantly fighting against.

Whistler in British Columbia has become the world capital of downhill mountain biking, transforming ski lifts and mountain infrastructure into elaborate summer trail systems with nearly 5,000 vertical feet of lift-served descent across more than 120 trails.

Mammoth Mountain in California may actually be more fun in summer than winter now, depending on who you ask. Wide open volcanic terrain, massive high-alpine descents, and a terrain variety that feels almost cinematic. More and more ski mountains across the world are converting every season:

Winter Park, Deer Valley, Keystone, Crested Butte, Mt. Bachelor in Oregon, are some of the best of the best. The winter infrastructure that already exists, the lifts, the trails, the base operations, turns out to be a perfect delivery system for summer adventure.

The technology of the bikes has evolved to match. Modern downhill bikes are extraordinary. Massive suspension systems, hydraulic brakes, oversized tires, and geometry designed specifically for stability and control make these machines feel more like precision adventure equipment than bicycles. They absorb terrain in ways that completely change your confidence on the trail. And the sport scales beautifully. You do not need to be a Red Bull athlete throwing yourself off cliffs to enjoy it. That's the misconception. Professional downhill clips make it look terrifying, but the reality for most people is far more approachable. My kids ride these trails. Families ride them. Beginners ride them. There are groomed flow trails that feel more like a roller coaster through the forest than an extreme sport.

That said, the risk is real, and worth naming directly.

I've brought friends on trips who overestimated their abilities and paid for it with stitches or a few miserable days nursing bruised body parts.

The key is respecting your actual skill level, choosing the right trails, and understanding that confidence and competence are not always the same thing. The right gear matters too: pads, a proper helmet, and a bike that fits the terrain you're riding. Get those things right and the experience becomes one of the most rewarding outdoor activities you can find. One of the best examples of this isn't even at a ski resort. The Route of the Hiawatha, on the Idaho and Montana border, is a converted Milwaukee Railroad trail that descends gently for fifteen miles through ten tunnels, over seven sky-high trestles, and across some of the most striking mountain scenery in the American West. It's not a ski park.

There's no drop-in adrenaline. The grade is gentle and the pace is completely your own. You start at the top, spend a few hours riding downhill through history and landscape, and a shuttle brings you back up at the end. That's it.

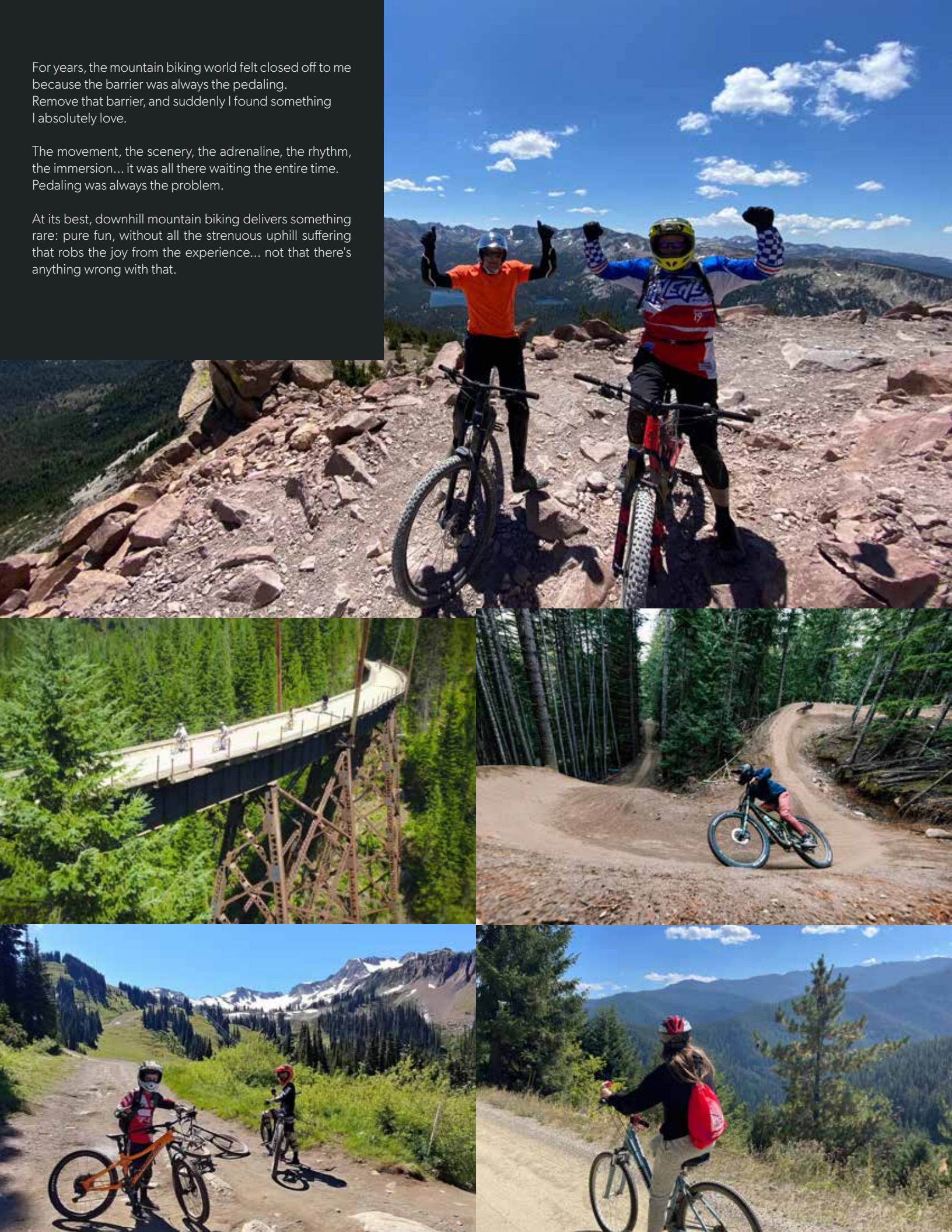
All joy, zero suffering, open to everyone. As I've gotten older, I've become far more aware of the role friction plays in adventure. I still love physically demanding experiences, but only when the difficulty adds to the joy instead of subtracting from it. What downhill biking taught me is that sometimes you don't dislike the activity itself. You dislike the version you've been handed.



For years, the mountain biking world felt closed off to me because the barrier was always the pedaling. Remove that barrier, and suddenly I found something I absolutely love.

The movement, the scenery, the adrenaline, the rhythm, the immersion... it was all there waiting the entire time. Pedaling was always the problem.

At its best, downhill mountain biking delivers something rare: pure fun, without all the strenuous uphill suffering that robs the joy from the experience... not that there's anything wrong with that.



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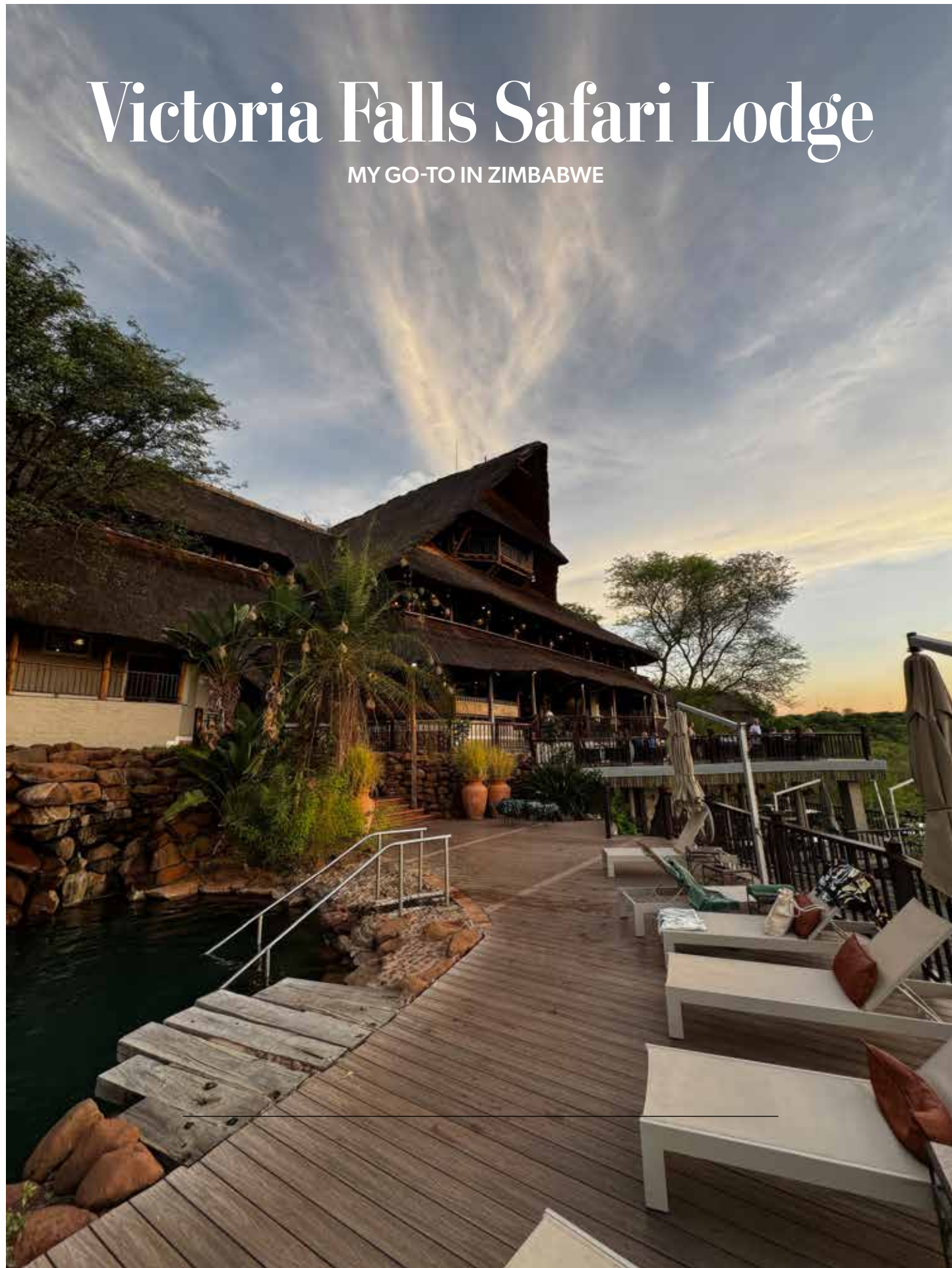
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Victoria Falls Safari Lodge

MY GO-TO IN ZIMBABWE



Every time I return to Zimbabwe, I find myself drawn to Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. It is where the bush comes alive around you, where every visit feels immersive and effortless. From the central waterhole, elephants, buffalo, kudu, and a multitude of bird species appear throughout the day, creating a private wildlife theater that can be enjoyed from almost every corner of the lodge.

Accommodation balances comfort with connection to the natural surroundings. The waterhole facing rooms have these incredible private balconies overlooking the bush. Watching wildlife from your own balcony is a win in my book, and every time I visit it never loses its charm.

The lodge is pretty-much buzzing with energy at all times. Its central area is a hub of elegance and energy. The award-winning MaKuwa-Kuwa Restaurant serves refined cuisine framed by sweeping views of the waterhole. The Buffalo Bar and Vulture Deck are perfect for sundowners, while a dip in the two-tiered swimming pool offers the perfect ending to your day.

The Boma: Dinner & Drum Show delivers an immersive cultural experience that blends traditional cuisine with vibrant music and storytelling. This is a pure mix of music, food, and fun. And we haven't even started on the activities yet!

Some lodges are just a place to crash after a game drive. Here, the lodge is the safari: an unscripted, front-row seat to the raw African bush.

By Megan Boshoff



VICTORIA FALLS SAFARI LODGE

We didn't fly all the way to Zimbabwe to observe from a safe distance and luckily, the lodge is practically built for adventure with their numerous activities available.

True adventure requires stepping right up to the edge, which is exactly what we did at the Devil's Pool at the top of the highest waterfall in the world, Victoria Falls. Slipping into the current of the Zambezi River and swimming straight to the lip of a massive, roaring drop is the kind of heart-in-your-throat thrill that instantly separates the participants from the spectators. Peering over the edge of the massive waterfall, with nothing but a slick rock wall between you and the abyss, is a pure shot of adrenaline. It sets the tone for an itinerary built entirely around rejecting the ordinary.

Once we were back on solid ground, our focus shifted from heights to raw proximity. You can sit in a standard vehicle and look through a massive zoom lens, or you can get dirt on your boots and walk alongside apex predators. The cheetah walk stripped away all the usual barriers, delivering an unfiltered, ground-level connection with the bush that you simply cannot script.

We followed that up with a profoundly humbling elephant encounter. Standing eye-to-eye with these massive, intelligent giants redefines how you interact with the wild, turning a standard safari into a deeply personal exchange.

After that, we posted up on the viewing deck for the Vulture Culture experience, watching as hundreds of scavengers swooped in for a chaotic feeding frenzy. From there, we headed out into the deep bush on a private game drive, letting the rugged beauty of the Zambezi National Park unfold around us and got some epic rhino sightings.

We capped off our time in Zimbabwe on a luxury river cruise, trading the dust of the trail for a serene float down the river. Gliding smoothly along the Zambezi as the sun sank below the horizon, watching hippos surface in the fading golden light, was the perfect end to our trip. It was the perfect collision of wild, high-stakes adventure and refined elegance: exactly how this continent is meant to be experienced.

Every sunrise and sunset over the waterhole is a reminder of why this lodge remains at the center of every visit. Victoria Falls Safari Lodge is where luxury, adventure, and wildlife converge, a place I return to again and again.





By Brant Pinvidic

SOUTH KOREA

Underrated: SOUTH KOREA

Ancient palaces, futuristic cities, world-class food, and a level of style and energy that makes Seoul one of the most underrated destinations in the world.



South Korea might be one of the most underrated countries on the planet. Which is strange considering it somehow combines ancient palaces, futuristic architecture, world-class food, cutting-edge fashion, hyper-efficient cities, mountain landscapes, and a level of cleanliness that honestly starts to feel suspicious after a few days.

Timeless Homes

Country number 35 on our 52 Countries in 52 Weeks adventure dropped us into Seoul, where I immediately had to abandon the family and fly to Los Angeles for a work event. Excellent parenting timing on my part. Meanwhile, the kids checked into our traditional Korean hanok and apparently spent the next several hours walking around saying “wow” every few minutes. It truly was awe inspiring.

These historic Korean homes have a soul to them. Wooden beams, paper sliding doors, stone courtyards, tiny gardens tucked into impossibly dense neighborhoods. Seoul does this incredibly well. One minute you are surrounded by glass skyscrapers and neon signs, the next you are standing inside a centuries-old courtyard hearing only the wind moving through bamboo. The second I got back from LA, we went straight into full Seoul mode. The city has an energy unlike anywhere else we visited. Everything feels fast, polished, and unbelievably intentional. Fashion stores look like art galleries. Cafés feel designed for architectural magazines. Even convenience stores somehow look cooler in Korea. And then there’s the food.

MUST-TRY FOOD

Korean BBQ spots spill smoke and laughter into alleyways late into the night. Tiny market stalls somehow serve meals better than expensive restaurants back home. We hit one of Seoul’s famous street food markets where you buy tokens and wander from vendor to vendor eating whatever smells impossible to resist. Which is basically everything.

Dumplings. Korean fried chicken. Skewers. Fresh noodles. Hotteok pancakes. Grilled meats. Things bubbling, sizzling, steaming, frying. Entire streets dedicated to food. Entire buildings dedicated to food. It feels like the city collectively decided calories are someone else’s problem.



The fashion scene surprised me just as much. Seoul is wildly style-conscious without feeling pretentious. Some districts feel like giant open-air trend labs where luxury fashion, streetwear, cafés, pop-ups, skincare brands, and experimental retail all collide together. Even the architecture feels futuristic. Buildings look more like spaceships that have landed directly in the middle of the city.

Then came Gyeongbokgung Palace, which honestly stopped me in my tracks. Massive gates, endless courtyards, detailed rooftops, quiet gardens, mountains rising behind the palace walls. It may genuinely be one of the most visually impressive places we visited during the entire year.

At one point we heard massive cheering echoing through the streets and naturally followed the noise because apparently that’s what we do now.

We suddenly found ourselves in the middle of what appeared to be a political rally, an independence celebration, or possibly both simultaneously.

There were hundreds of thousands of people filling the streets waving flags, chanting, smiling, taking photos, and somehow despite the sheer size of the crowd, there was not a single piece of trash on the ground.

I have seen operating rooms less organized than this protest.



SOUTH KOREA

The Border

The DMZ is one of the most surreal places we visited all year. The drive north from Seoul slowly shifts from modern city life to military checkpoints, guarded roads, and heavily monitored zones as you approach one of the most tense borders in the world.

You can only visit through guided tours, which is normally not my thing, but this one was absolutely worth it. Standing at observation points looking into North Korea while hearing stories of tunnels, ceasefires, and decades of conflict feels strangely fascinating and unsettling at the same time.

And then, because this is South Korea, somehow there are cafés, gift shops, and organized tour buses that feel natural operating beside one of the world’s most heavily militarized borders. The contrast is hard to wrap your head around.

Why South Korea Surprised Me

What surprised me most about South Korea was how seamlessly everything coexists. Ancient traditions beside futuristic technology. Quiet temples beside massive LED billboards. Historic hanoks beside luxury flagship stores. Somehow it all works together.

There is something magical about mixing the traditional Asian charm with the quirky pop-culture atmosphere.





The World's Best Airbnbs South Korea

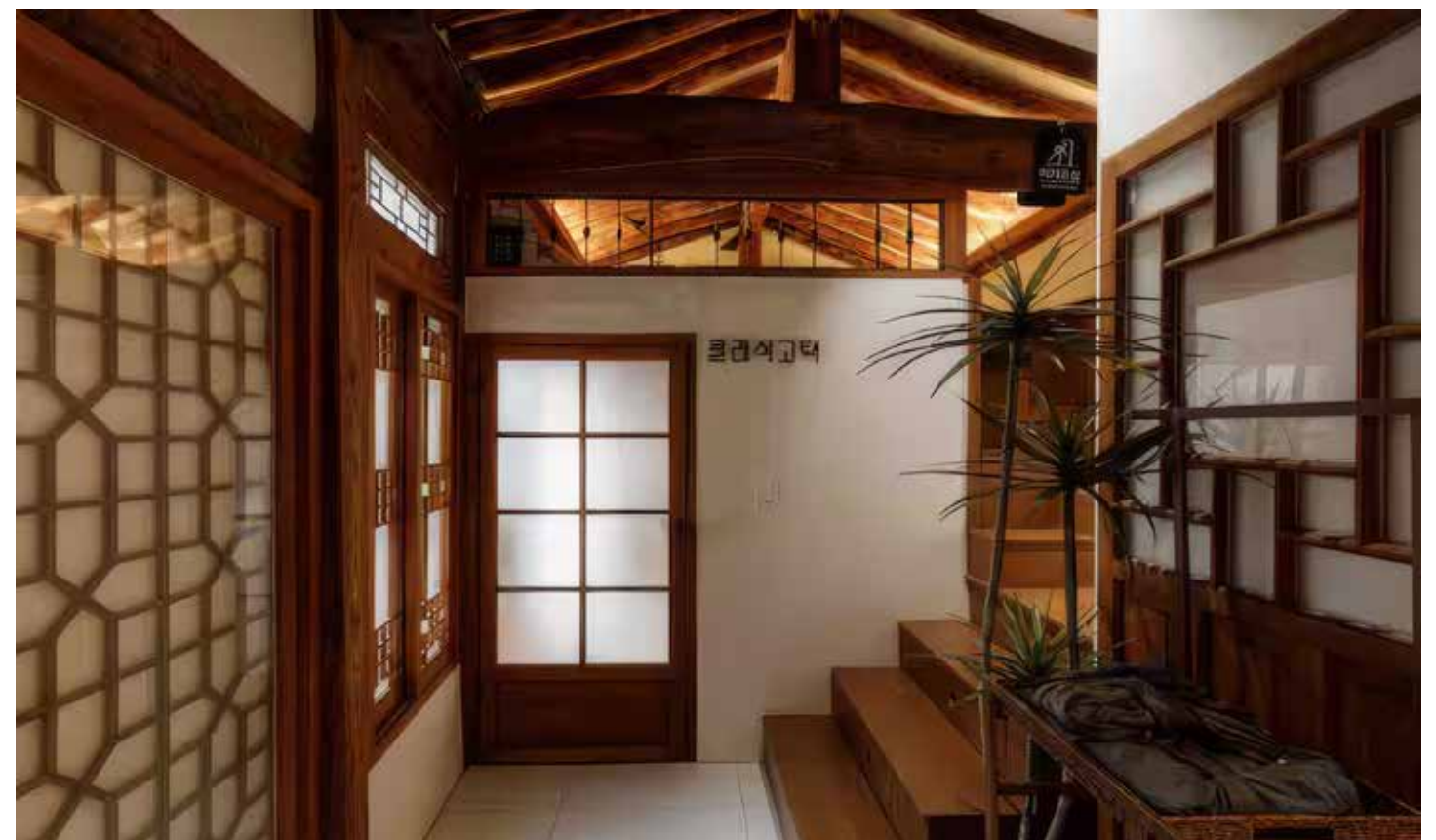
By Megan Boshoff

The Classic Hanok in Seoul: History You Can Stay In

Some stays leave a mark long after you've left. For me, that was the Classic-Gotaek in Seochoon, Seoul. A Gotaek is a hanok over a hundred years old, and this one carries every bit of its history in its walls, floors, and beams. You can feel the lives that passed through here, the centuries of tradition preserved in its quiet courtyards and elegant timber. You don't find Airbnbs with this kind of soul and history every day.

We had the entire property to ourselves, a private hanok with a serene courtyard and an outdoor jacuzzi. Every detail: the sliding doors, wooden floors and traditional décor, reminds you that you're in a space that has lived and breathed Seoul's culture for generations.

The residence harmoniously integrates traditional elements with contemporary amenities. The kitchen and dining areas are fully equipped, and amenities like a Marshall speaker, mini projector, and luxury toiletries elevate the stay without diluting the hanok's character. Stepping outside, you're just minutes from Gyeongbokgung Palace and Tongin Market, yet returning here feels like stepping back in time. The Classic-Gotaek is much more than a place to sleep, it's a place to experience history, tradition, and the rare soul of a home that has seen more than most of us ever will.





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Travel has a way of introducing you to opportunities you were never actively searching for. A lodge someone mentions over dinner. A flight deal buried three pages deep online. A small expedition company doing something far more interesting than the larger operators around them. After a year of constantly moving, I've realized some of the best experiences rarely come through traditional advertising. They come through conversations, detours, and paying attention. Over the past several months, I've collected a running list of experiences, hotels, routes, adventures, and travel deals that stood out.

Some because the value was shockingly good. Others because the experience itself felt far beyond what you'd expect for the price. A few simply stayed with me long after the trip ended. This section is a collection of those finds. Not sponsored placements. Not paid recommendations. Just travel opportunities that crossed my path and felt worth sharing with people who value experiences as much as destinations. Some are luxurious. Some are adventurous. Some are simply smart ways to experience incredible places without overspending. Either way, every one of them earned its place here.



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THE ADVENTURE PEOPLE



By Megan Roshoff



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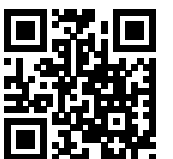


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