



EXTRAORDINARY TRAVELERS CLUB - ISSUE #3

Seek Adventure in Unordinary Places...

There are the earned distances extraordinary travelers seek, points of referents beyond the aphasia of paved roads.

In the wild woodlands of the world are stands of clean, cool, well-branched, well-tended trees in which bright birds can flash and perch. And not for show, but to sing.

In new halls to sing, I would like to invite you to join me on an upcoming extraordinary exploration of the Kingdoms of Togo & Benin, and the cradle of Voodoo.

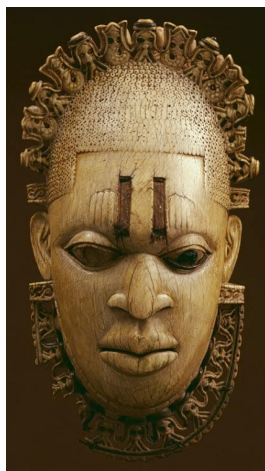


Togo & Benin Cultural Discovery Adventure with Richard Bangs - MT Sobek Arts & Spiritual Traditions of West Africa



The itinerary unfolds from Lomé to the Atakora Mountains, and includes interactions with the “magical” Taneka people, healers who wear leather loincloths and headdresses. The spirituality of the Taneka is based on the cult of nature; the grottoes and ravines that saved them during the slave trade are sacred, as is the Varun cave, a mystical place and refuge for thousands during the dark trade.

We will meet with fetish priests, shamans, and oracles, and witness the deep trances of voodoo ceremonies, wherein practitioners become “gods.” And we will step beneath galleries of the most bewitchingly supernal masks in Africa.



**Togo & Benin Cultural Adventure with
Richard Bangs - MT Sobek**

[Click for Details & to Join!](#)

Portugal Exploration - May 3-12, 2024



Explore Portugal: Lisbon, Sintra, Coimbra, Porto

Join Jack Wheeler and Rebel Holiday who have offered this exclusive exploration since 2012.

This is a wonderful exploration of the beauty, charm, and history of Portugal with a small group of 10-14 travelers. You'll be immersed in the natural scenic beauty, discover the culture and long history, while enjoying high-quality hotels, delicious food and wine. You'll see castles, palaces, fortresses, and points of interest, including the most westerly point of continental Europe.

We begin in the capital, Lisbon, to see the best sights and attractions of historic Lisbon, Cascais, and Sintra. Next, we drive along the Portuguese Riviera to the Silver Coast, and ultimately visit Porto, the second largest city and home of port.

You will enjoy full days yet with a relaxing pace to experience the energy of this beautiful country. We stay in well-located, upscale properties and dine at outstanding restaurants. Your hosts have been residing in Portugal for over a decade -- and are delighted to share it with you!

Portugal Exploration Details

May 3-12, 2024



Cabo da Roca, Portugal - Stand at the Most Westerly point of Continental Europe

Soar In the Himalayas! Oct 25 - Nov 1, 2024



Are you spontaneous?! It's a week of excitement that will blow the cobwebs out of your mind! See views that mountain climbers never get to see. No trekking.

We have two seats available for this signature expedition (Oct 21-27) and **one seat** on (Oct 27-Nov 4) for the Himalaya Helicopter Expedition.

This is an experience of a lifetime! Richard Bangs, Jack Wheeler, and Eddy Downpatrick will be leading.

We soar through the Himalayas -- the 8 highest mountains -- an extraordinary experience to stand at the top of the world.

**Himalaya Helicopter
Expedition Details
Oct 25 - Nov 1, 2024**



In the world of adventure, gender is not a limitation but a source of diversity and strength. The stories of these intrepid women adventurers continue to inspire us to break free from the confines of convention, explore the unknown, and follow our passions to the ends of the Earth. As we celebrate their achievements, let us also remember that the next generation of women adventurers is out there, ready to forge their own paths, and write the next thrilling chapter in the annals of exploration.

-Richard Bangs

Extraordinary Traveler - Rebel Holiday

Rebel Holiday was born with an adventurous spirit and destined to live up to the name on her birth certificate. Always independent and curious, her explorations ramped up when she met Jack Wheeler, a professional adventurer. She is a co-founder of Extraordinary Travelers Club. She has explored 87 countries, speaks English, Portuguese, and Spanish fluently, and has lived abroad for 15 years, now based in Portugal. A partner at Wheeler-Windsor Expeditions, she loves sharing her passion for people, cultures, arts, nature, and harmony in our extraordinary world.



Extraordinary Traveler Profile

Rebel Holiday

September 2024, Central Asia

Q. What are the elements of an extraordinary travel experience?

RH: An extraordinary or magical place to explore, a good plan with enough flexibility, elements of the unknown, resourceful companions with open minds, free-spirits, cheerful attitudes, a sense of adventure, people who eat most everything!

Q: What's one of the most suspenseful experiences you've had?

RH: In fall of 1991, Jack Wheeler and I were invited to Georgia by President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, just weeks after the country declared independence. The Soviet Union was on the brink of collapse and wanted to take Georgia back. By the time we arrived the Soviets had moved into Tbilisi, the capital, and the President was holed up in a television station. Meanwhile, Jack and I stepped past sandbags blocking government buildings filled with KGB secret police. Soviet soldiers strode past with machine guns, occasionally giving us the stink-eye as if thinking, "Who are you and what are you doing here?" We ignored them and went on to enjoy the extraordinary country as it beat back the Soviets, who still today occupy 20% of Georgian lands.

Q. Can you share a personal extraordinary travel experience?

RH: Enchanted by my husband Jack Wheeler’s photos of Peru, I often mentioned how much I wanted to explore it. He’d sigh, “That will only be *after* they oust the Sendero Luminoso, (“Shining Light”) – the narco-communist guerillas terrorizing the Peruvian people.

In the Fall of 1992, Jack announced, “They’re gone! Peru has *finally* gotten rid of those evil Sendero Luminoso – we’re going!” We took eight travelers on a 3-week exploration by private plane, boat, jeep, and horseback to little known corners of Peru. Everywhere the local people were amazed to see us -- possibly the only foreigners in the country! (My fluent Spanish came in handy.)

We set out to find a little-known ancient city near the top of a mountain 10,000 ft high in the Andes, called Chachapoyas (“Cloud Warriors”). We drove for hours in jeeps to a semi-abandoned hacienda where we were given dinner and slept. The next day we continued by jeep until we were stopped by a racing river. The only way to cross was for each of us to sit on a small wooden plank and be hand-pulled across the river with a metal cable.



On the other side, we mounted horses and rode to the top of the mountain on a narrow path until we finally arrived, feeling like Hiram Bingham discovering Machu Pichu.



Then we got to explore the ancient lost city of Cuelap -- with only a few archeologists excavating. We passed by villagers in native costumes celebrating festivals, explored Machu Pichu alone at dawn, flew low over the Nazca lines, and headed toward Iquitos, a small town on the Amazon River.



A memorable part of the adventure was a four-day trip in a small houseboat on the Amazon to find the *Mayorunas*, a remote indigenous tribe referred to as the “Cat People” by National Geographic due to their custom of piercing around their noses to hold fine reeds that looked like cat whiskers.

While waiting to board the houseboat for this journey, I overheard one crew asking another in Spanish if he had packed the short-wave radio. When the other guy replied he “wasn’t sure where it was” I told them in Spanish they had better find it and get it on the boat. They did.

Our boat, “Pachacutec,” was captained by a fiery, colorful character, [Felipe Lettersten](#), a Peruvian-born Swedish sculptor who primarily used the boat for his foundation, *Hijos de Nuestra Tierra*, “Sons of Our Land.” His mission was to preserve the Amazon rainforest and protect the people in danger of losing their culture and homelands.

Felipe had traveled throughout the Americas seeking indigenous tribes and making life-sized bronze sculptures that captured their physical characteristics and cultures. This was no small feat as he had to convince the chief to persuade several tribesmen and women to stand perfectly still for hours with straws in their noses to breathe -- while he threw plaster at them, let it dry and then cracked off plaster for casts to make the bronze sculptures. As an artist myself, I was mesmerized by his five hauntingly human bronze statues on the boat. When I learned he had hundreds more in a private garden at his home in Lima, the capital, I vowed to visit.



Felipe was also our cook and I quickly learned to stay out of his kitchen – as he shouted and waved his knife around when I offered to help! We all had a blast, talking laughing, relaxing, reading, and sleeping in our hammocks on an open deck at night.

After several days on the water, the Amazon River narrowed, and we took a small tributary lined with monkeys jumping through the trees. (Talk about remote -- I was glad we had that short-wave radio.)

One morning, the boat stopped 100 feet from the riverbank and after a while a small canoe approached paddled by a man guiding a woman and young girl. Wondering what they wanted as the woman climbed aboard carrying the girl, I gestured to sit down for some cookies and tea. Soon the little girl pointed quizzically at my red fingernails. I brought out my make-up bag to show her my red nail polish. The girl pointed to her own fingernails, so I non-verbally asked her mother, who seemed to consent. As I was painting the girl's nails, the mom dug into my makeup bag, found my red lipstick, and proceeded to joyfully streak her face – and then my face in red! I noticed she had piercing holes on her face and realized that she was a Mayoruna.



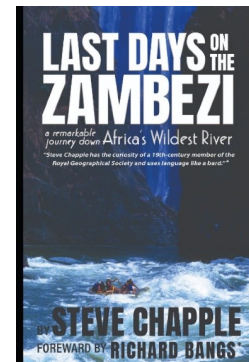
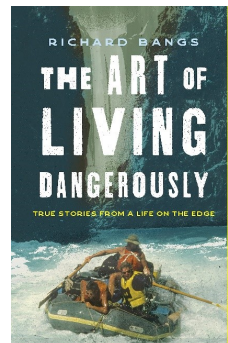
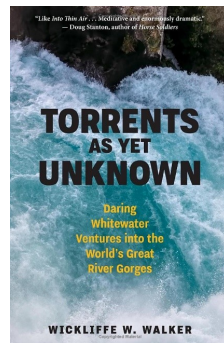
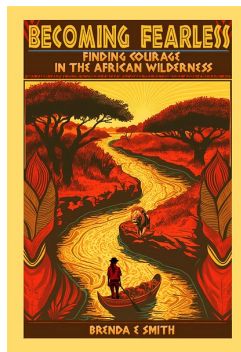
We went ashore and the woman disappeared into the village. There were small one-room houses built on stilts to avoid flooding. We climbed a ladder to look inside one house to find it empty for a few rolled-up mats.

In the village we saw no adults, but a group of children followed me and was inspired to play a game. I had them sit in a circle and walked around touching each one's head saying "Pato, pato, pato, pato – finally calling out "Gallina!" (Spanish for Duck, Duck, Duck, Duck...Chicken!) I beckoned for that child to chase me and ran around sliding into his place. They loved it.

We returned with only the ongoing drama of Felipe in the kitchen waving his knife and hitting the sauce... and upon our arrival in Lima, Felipe invited us to his home for a party and to see his many bronze statues. I so wanted to see those figurines, but regretfully had to fly out. As our plane was climbing to altitude, the pilot announced in Spanish that we were having mechanical difficulties and would have to return to the airport and would leave the next day. I looked at Jack and said, "The party! The statues! We can go!" And, so we did. It was magical, and an extraordinary travel experience.

Extraordinary Travelers Bookshelf

Four thrilling new books celebrating Sobek's 50th anniversary available now. Just click the image and be swept away by sailors who fell from grace with the stream.



**Women In Adventure:
Women Pioneering International Rivers for Sobek, 1978-1996
by Butch Carber**



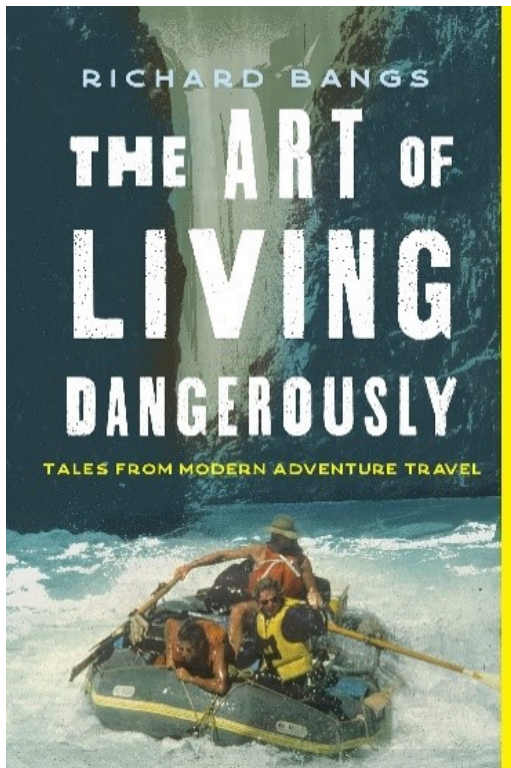
In 2023, Sobek celebrates 50 years of international rafting, with decades of exploratories and first descents on six of the seven continents. In many ways, those early international expeditions were very different than river trips today: remote departures, often with extreme whitewater requiring active participation in your own rescue; no GPS; no Sat phones, only signal mirrors; no self-bailers, only bucket boats; no large supermarkets, mainly farmers markets and individual stores with dry and canned goods; block ice was almost non-existent; wood for replacement oars or tables was hand hewn; and propane tanks, if available, were large and cumbersome, with fittings often not compatible to US stoves.

In the early days, it was the Boys' Club.

In 1972, Title IX was passed by the US Congress, mandating that educational institutions provide equal opportunity to men and women in athletic programs. Prior to this federal legislation, recreation was male dominated; opportunities for women were minimal. Women's participation in sports was only 8 percent, but within a decade, participation rose to 53 percent. Title IX, like any far-reaching, socially-changing legislation, required a change in mindset, a change not always quick in acceptance. As with any social change, it is so important for young people to see someone who looks like them, and to picture themselves in those roles: Serena Williams, Georgie White, Billie Jean King, Mia Hamm, Danica Patrick, Julie Krone, and Cheryl Miller, to name a few.

In the early years of Sobek, most of the exploratories were in Africa, and were led by men. Today we want our river community to reflect the diversity, equity, and inclusion of all Americans.

To read the full article on these extraordinary women of Sobek, click [Women in Adventure](#)



November Release:

**The Art of Living Dangerously
by Richard Bangs**

Pre-order your copy at Amazon or Barnes & Noble now to read these awesome and implausible tales from Richard's 50 years of insanely great explorations.

What early reviewers say:

Thom Beers, creator of *The Deadliest Catch*, says ***“Richard Bangs is the epitome of living life to the fullest. Danger is and has always been his comfort zone.”***

Paul Maritz, conservationist, tech investor, former senior exec at Microsoft and VMware says, ***“Richard tells great stories, some of them true.”***

[The Art of Living Dangerously](#).



Jack Wheeler and Richard Bangs reaching for the stars. (photo by Jasper Bangs)

Connect with Richard Bangs



Join us in the [The Extraordinary Travelers Club](#).

Your comments are welcome, email richardbangs@extraordinarytravelersclub.com

Share with us your Extraordinary Travel experiences: email to
RichardBangs@ExtraordinaryTravelersClub.com



Richard Bangs
Founder



Jack Wheeler
Founder



Eddy Downpatrick
Founder



Rebel Holiday
Founder

The Extraordinary Travelers Club is a celebration of extraordinary travels and those who pioneer and partake. Each month we offer commentary, interviews and opportunities to explore our remarkable world, to turn unturned corners and breathe rarefied air. This is a club for the bold, the curious, and those who seek exceptional experiences in the hidden scapes and the back of beyond. There is no membership fee; just the currency of curiosity. We invite you to be a part of this wayfaring League, a community within which to share the insights, codes and secrets with like-minded travelers from around the globe.

Special Thanks To Our Fellow Travel Pioneers...



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