



EXTRAORDINARY TRAVELERS CLUB Dispatch

ISSUE #17 - Aug - Sep 2025

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African Sunrise - Photo Courtesy of Bing

Back to Africa: The Call of the Cradle

By Richard Bangs

I was 23 when I first set foot on the continent, chasing rivers as though they were veins of history. The Awash, whose banks held the silent bones of Lucy, 3.2 million years old, seemed to whisper the beginnings of our story. The Omo, flowing to Lake Turkana, revealed yet deeper secrets, where *Australopithecus anamensis* nudged back the clock of bipedalism to 4.2 million years. **Running these waters wasn't just adventure; it was communion with the origins of us all.**

Later, in Tanzania, I paddled the Rufiji and Kilombero, just a day's walk from Laetoli, where Mary Leakey uncovered footprints pressed into volcanic ash nearly four million years ago. Each stroke of the paddle felt like retracing those

first tentative steps upright. And in Morocco, high on Jebel Irhoud, I climbed through wind and stone near the cave that sheltered the oldest known Homo sapiens. To stand there was to stand in the doorway of humanity.

Everywhere, a sensation churned, again and again: I was home.



Lake Turkana, Photo by Richard Bangs

For Africa is not just a continent—it is the cradle. It is where we all began, and to return is to feel the resonance of belonging. The tawny savannahs and shadowed rainforests, the valleys where rivers carve time itself, the uncorrupted acreage beneath skies still crowded with stars—these are the landscapes of our shared memory. The drumbeat is the oldest clock. The night fires are the first hearth. This is a faithful place where getting lost is not a mistake but a gift—a reunion with the original Garden of Eden, where innocence once danced in the light; the very nest from which we flew. Here, we are not visitors but recovering kin.

Though decades have carved their own tributaries across my face, not infrequently I make the passage back Africa, which is, in some psychic way, my fountain of youth. **Each journey is an advent with the elemental, a reconnection with the raw wonder that civilization can sometimes obscure. If there is magic in this world—and I believe there is—I have seen its brightest embers in Africa.**

And so, the only envy I hold is for those who have not yet gone—for they have before them the unrepeatable joy of a first encounter. They have ahead of them that moment of recognition, that instant when the African landscape clicks into place like a key finding its lock, when they understand in their recesses of heart what their minds have always known: this is where we come from. **This is who we are.**

In 2026, I invite you to join us for extraordinary adventures in Kenya, Tanzania, and Morocco. To follow the rivers, climb the peaks, and walk the paths where our ancestors once walked. **To feel, as I did, the unmistakable truth: that Africa is not just where we came from. It is where we still belong.**



Photo Courtesy of Bing

The Serengeti Dream

By Jack Wheeler



All photos in this section by Jack Wheeler

Just about everyone with adventure in their soul dreams of experiencing a safari in the Serengeti of Africa. **But what is the absolute best way to do so?**

First – **you want it during the *birthing season***, late winter-early spring, where all the animals are in one place giving birth to and caring for their calves and cubs.



Imagine being on a hilltop enjoying a marvelous bush breakfast with 100,000 wildebeest on the plains below.



While the great predators decide which ones are for dinner.



You'll want a luxury private tented camp like out of the movies, with an open bar, gourmet dining and wines, a lounge area with plush sofas, a staff that warmly caters to your every need, and *no one else around for miles and miles*.



And your private tent with a king size bed, *ensuite* bathroom and shower.



Most important is what you actually see, learn, and experience amidst the greatest wildlife spectacle on earth. You learn, for example, that a group of

zebras is called a *dazzle* – because their stripes confuse or dazzle a predator from targeting any specific one of them.



You learn so much because your native guides and trackers are immensely knowledgeable about the Serengeti and all the animals living there.

Among them will be the Serengeti's original inhabitants, the *Hadza*, known to anthropologists as “*The Last of the First*,” the only people on Earth directly descended from the first *Homo sapiens* evolved in East Africa some quarter-million years ago. *These guys look serious, but they are actually very friendly and a lot of fun!*



We'll have time with people from two other tribes, the Masai and the Datoga. Then after we enjoy our private safari camp we take you to the world-famous **N'gorongoro Crater** that contains an *entire eco-system of wildlife in the crater*. We have game drives in the crater and stay at our favorite lodge on the rim with spectacular views from our rooms.

For more photos and details click the gold box below -- and see what we've put together for you!

[Click Here for Details](#)

**SERENGETI BIRTHING
SAFARI**

A Luxury Expedition

February 28 - March 10, 2026

Note: We can take a maximum of 10 travelers on this spectacular safari -- so if you might like to go, now is a good time to click the gold box for more photos and the itinerary! This one always fills up. Questions? Rebel is happy to talk with you. Feel free to email her at rebelholiday@extraordinarytravelersclub.com.

Take A Walk on The Wild Side - October 20-31, 2026

by Richard Bangs



Photo Courtesy of MT Sobek

Fifty-two years ago, I made the first descent of the Omo River in Ethiopia, a watershed expedition that launched Sobek and introduced adventure travel to the world. We ended our trip short of the Kenya border, where the Omo disgorges into Lake Turkana, the world's largest permanent desert lake, an ancient tributary to the Nile.

Now, after five decades, I am returning to finish that expedition and see and touch the alkaline waters of Turkana, which some claim is the “Cradle of Man,” where the earliest hominids were unearthed. The Lake is now threatened by the construction of the Gilgel Gibe III Dam in Ethiopia, which could dry up the legendary lake, so this may be the last time to experience.

So, take a walk on the wild side with me in the remote corners of Kenya.

This safari includes incredible wildlife encounters, moderate walking with various tribes as guides, and deeper explorations of Nairobi National Park, the Mathews Range, Lake Turkana, Laikipia, and the legendary Masai Mara.

October 20-31, 2026 -- here's the link with details:

<https://20008055.hs-sites.com/trip-interest-request-kenya-walking-and-wildlife-safari-with-richard-bangs>

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Photo Courtesy of MT Sobek

**The moment is fleeting. The time is now.
Come join us on an Extraordinary Travel Experience. *Carpe Diem!***



Questions? Reach out to us:

richardbangs@extraordinarytravelersclub.com
or

We're happy to discuss!

Extraordinary Traveler - Anne Taylor Hartzell



About Anne Taylor Hartzell

Anne Taylor Hartzell, author, leadership brand strategist and podcast host (a.k.a. @HipTravelMama) is encouraging readers to reframe fear and choose adventure with the release of her new book, [*All Who Wander: A Guide to Finding Your Path in Seasons of Change*](#). Written for midlife explorers, new graduates, career changers, new parents, empty nesters, and business leaders navigating uncertainty, *All Who Wander* offers a timely invitation to choose adventure over fear in seasons of change. “Choosing adventure doesn’t require a plane ticket—it starts wherever you are,” says Anne Taylor Hartzell. Celebrate those brave choices—big or small—that move us forward and invite us to share how we’re choosing adventure over fear.” She most loves traveling with her family, pictured below.



Extraordinary Traveler Interview: Anne Taylor Hartzell

Q: How old were you when you began to dream of and imagine extraordinary adventures?

ATH: I was four or five years old when we took our first family trip to California. Growing up in the Pacific Northwest, I remember how different everything felt—the air was warmer, the sky brighter, and the palm trees stretched impossibly high. That trip sparked a sense of wonder and curiosity that never left me.

As a kid, I would escape into books and play *Carmen Sandiego*, a video game about a globe-trotting detective. I dreamed of becoming just like her, traveling the world, solving mysteries, and chasing adventure in faraway places.

Q: What is one of the more extraordinary travel experiences that you have had?

ATH: Our family has had incredible travel experiences through my blog, Hip Travel Mama, but one trip in college truly sparked my love of travel. As a senior in college, I had never left North America when my husband and I had the opportunity to live and work in Hong Kong, building the first website for the Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce after the 1997 handover. On weekends, we explored mainland China and nearby islands. I was instantly hooked—drawn to the freedom, curiosity, and openness that travel awakened in me.

Q: Have you had a close call while traveling, and if so, did it motivate a re-assessment or change in behavior?

ATH: As a mom of two, I tend to play it safe when we travel, but one close call stands out. Our youngest daughter came down with severe food poisoning the day we were set to travel from southern Italy to Paris, then back to Seattle. It was a stressful situation, but I was incredibly grateful we had splurged on private transportation to the airport—it made all the difference in a very stressful situation. That experience reaffirmed for me that some upgrades, especially when traveling with kids, are worth every penny for peace of mind and safety.

Q: Who are extraordinary travelers whom you admire? If you could sit down and speak with any extraordinary traveler, living or dead, who would it be?

ATH: Anthony Bourdain. I share this story in Chapter 1 of my book *All Who Wander*. I had the chance to meet him once on a book tour in Seattle, and my husband, kids, and I still rewatch episodes of *No Reservations*. I've long admired Bourdain's storytelling—raw, real,

and rooted in the belief that food and travel connect us to the world. He had my dream job traveling the globe, sharing meals and stories with strangers, and reminding us of our shared humanity.

Q: What mindset do you adopt, or have naturally, when you venture into the world?

ATH: Choose Adventure! It's about reconnecting to what matters most, stepping outside your comfort zone, staying open to possibility, and creating meaningful connections along the way.

Q: What characteristics do you choose in your traveling companions?

ATH: My favorite travel companions are my husband and two daughters. We love to explore new places through food and how we organize our trips. I handle the travel planning, and my husband scouts out the best local restaurants. Our adventures usually revolve around active outdoor adventures and immersive food experiences. Some of our most memorable meals we've had come from wandering down a side street and stumbling into a tiny local spot. There's something magical about the connection that happens over a shared meal when you travel.

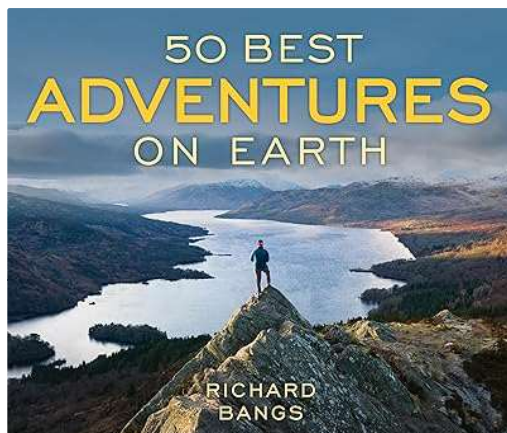
Q: As a veteran explorer and extraordinary traveler, any advice for a young traveler just setting out?

ATH: Choose adventure! If I could offer one piece of advice to a younger traveler, it would be this: adventure doesn't have to mean adrenaline-chasing adventures like skydiving or cliff jumping. I used to think that's what choosing adventure looked like, but I've learned that real adventure is deeply personal.

For me, it's about wandering. Exploring unfamiliar streets, getting a little lost, striking up conversations with strangers, and letting curiosity lead the way. Wandering invites you to slow down, stay open, and step outside your comfort zone. It teaches you to take thoughtful risks, trust the journey, and embrace whatever unfolds.

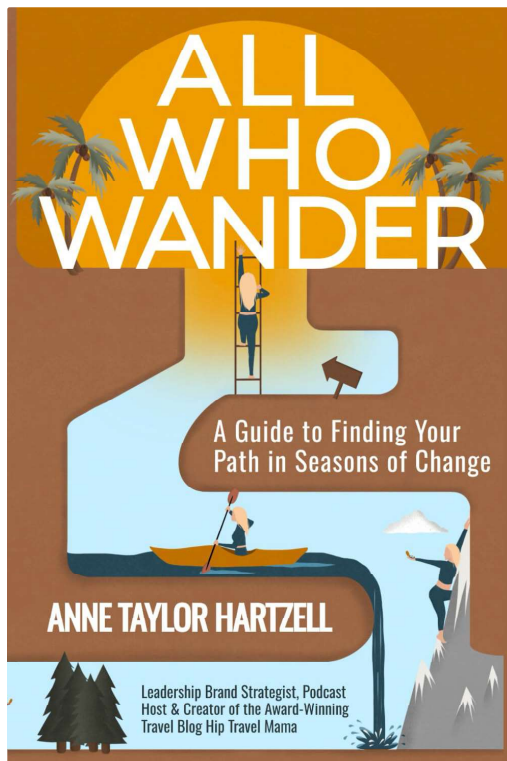
Travel also expands our perspective and deepens our empathy. And in a world where uncertainty is becoming the norm and feels more divided than ever, we need more people who wander with open eyes and open hearts.

Extraordinary Travelers' Bookshelf



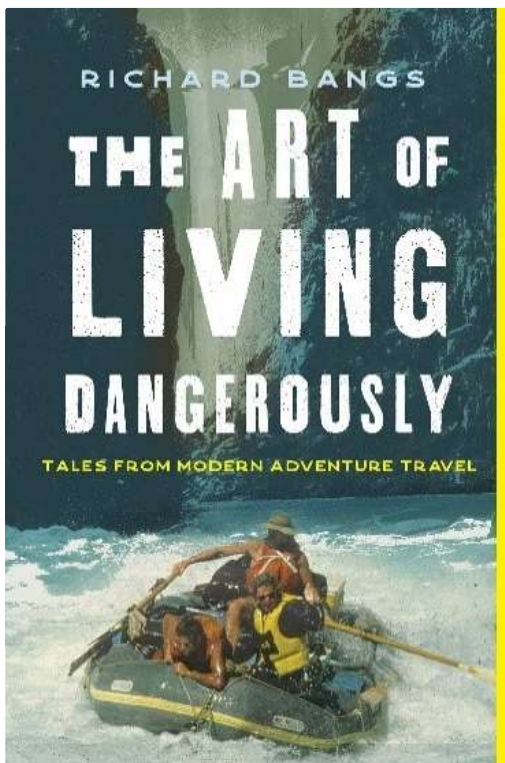
50 Best Adventures on Earth
by Richard Bangs

About the book: From scaling untouched Himalayan peaks to navigating pristine Amazon rapids, *50 Best Adventures on Earth* is your ultimate guide to the planet's most extraordinary experiences, handpicked by legendary explorer Richard Bangs. Transform your travel dreams into reality with this definitive guide from the founder of Sobek Expeditions, who has led over 35 first river descents across six continents.



All Who Wander
by Anne Taylor Hartzell

About the book: Designed as a "Guide to Finding Your Path in Seasons of Change," Anne Taylor Hartzell, emphasizes that adventure begins wherever you are. She is a podcast host and leadership brand strategist. "This book was born out of a season of change in my own life, and it's for anyone standing at the edge of what's next. Choosing adventure means reframing fear, stepping outside your comfort zone, and doing the next brave thing. She is the host of award-winning, "All Who Wander" podcast.



The Art of Living Dangerously by Richard Bangs

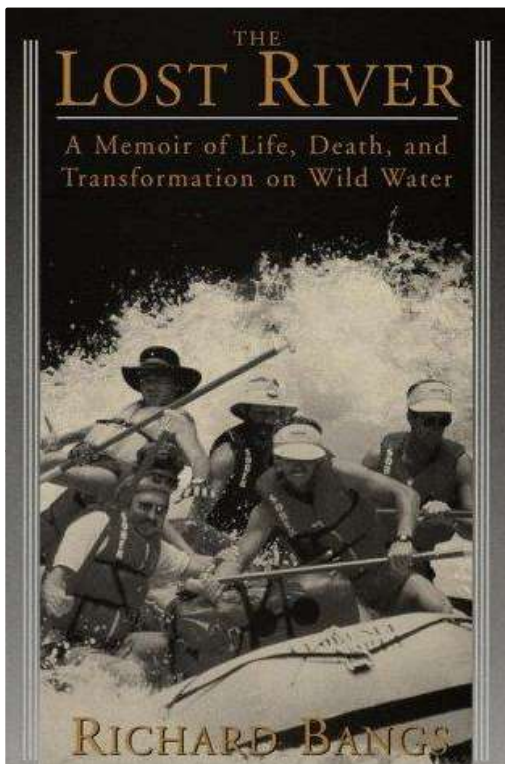
Be swept away by these awesome and implausible tales from Richard's 50 years of insanely great explorations.

What 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.](#)



The Lost River: A Memoir of Life, Death, and Transformation on Wild Water by Richard Bangs

Finally, now available in Kindle.

What reviewers say:

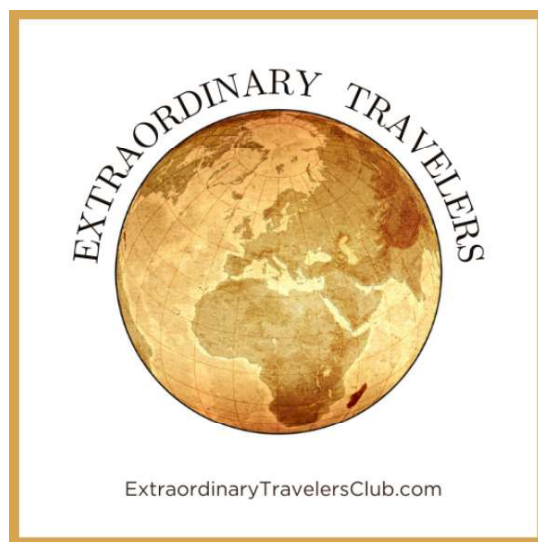
"It is not only a wonderful adventure story...it is also an intensely personal self examination by Mr. Bangs. This is one of the great adventure stories of all time, but for me, it also served as a "self help" book. You'll be amazed and entertained by a fabulous story while going through your own internal exam at the same time.."

[The Lost River: A Memoir of Life, Death, and Transformation on Wild Water](#)

Yes, Let's Go There!



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



Extraordinary Travelers Club



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.

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

Prior ETC Dispatch Issues:

Upcoming Club Expeditions:

Your comments are welcome, email:

richardbangs@extraordinarytravelersclub.com

Share with us your Extraordinary Travel experiences!

Connect with Richard Bangs



Special Thanks To Our Fellow Travel Pioneers...



Extraordinary Travelers Club

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