



EXTRAORDINARY TRAVELERS CLUB Dispatch

ISSUE #16 - June-July 2025

- The World's Most Interesting Island by Richard Bangs & Jack Wheeler
- Luxury Expedition with Jack Wheeler, Rebel Holiday, Richard Bangs
- Extraordinary Travelers in 2025!
- Extraordinary Traveler Profile - Bridget Crocker



The Blue Hole by Jack Wheeler

The World's Most Interesting Island: A Maltese Odyssey

By Richard Bangs and Jack Wheeler

There are places that murmur with the ghosts of time. There are places that sing with the laughter of the present. And then, there is Malta—a **sun-dappled jewel adrift in the Mediterranean, a stage where the drama of civilization has played out for over 7,000 years.** Malta doesn't simply invite you; it summons you. It's a clarion call to the curious, the seekers, the wanderers who wish to touch the pulse of history and the poetry of place.

Malta is not merely a speck on the map. It is a living palimpsest, a manuscript written and rewritten by the hands of empires and dreamers. **Long before the pyramids of Giza pierced the sky, before Stonehenge stood sentinel on the**

Salisbury Plain, the ancient Maltese were carving sanctuaries from stone with nothing but antlers and audacity. Step into the ancient temples of Ħaġar Qim and Mnajdra—older than any other free-standing structures on Earth—and you feel the hum of eternity. Here, the stones remember.



Temple of Ggantija, built almost 6,000 years ago, photo by Jack Wheeler

Malta is the island that seduced myth itself. Homer, that old spinner of tales, cast Odysseus upon these shores, held captive by the enchantress Calypso for seven languid years. And who could blame him for lingering? **Malta is more than a waypoint; it is a spell, a place that holds you fast.** When St. Paul shipwrecked here in the first century AD, he sowed seeds of faith that still blossom in every chapel and festa. Malta became a lighthouse of Christianity, standing firm through centuries of siege and storm, even repelling the Arab invaders after centuries of struggle.

But perhaps Malta's brightest hour came in 1565, when the Ottoman Empire unleashed its might upon these tiny islands. Outnumbered, outgunned, but never outwitted, the Knights of Malta—led by the indomitable Jean de Valette—turned back the tide in the Great Siege. It was a stand that changed the course of history, earning Malta the mantle of "Savior of Christianity." **Today, Valletta, the capital, rises in golden stone—a living monument to courage and conviction.**



Valetta, Malta, photo by Jack Wheeler

Malta sits at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, where the compass spins to all points, and the world's great civilizations have left their fingerprints. Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Normans, and British—all have danced upon this stage, leaving behind not ruins, but rhythms. Yet through it all, the Maltese people have forged a singular identity—devout, proud, and endlessly welcoming.

English is spoken everywhere, a gift from nearly 150 years of British rule, smoothing the path for travelers. **But it's the warmth of the people that makes Malta unforgettable.** Step into any village and you may find yourself swept into a festa—an eruption of music, fireworks, and feasting that blurs the line between guest and family.



Charming fishing port of Marsaxlokk, photo by Jack Wheeler

This November, we invite you to join Malta historians, Jack Wheeler, Rebel Holiday and veteran adventure traveler Richard Bangs for “The Magic of Malta”—an expedition through consonant meridians and the tides of time. We’ll rest in style: a spa-laced resort in storied Valletta, a palatial sanctuary in Mdina—the silent, walled city where shadows of so many stories move with reverence—and a boutique retreat with sweeping views of the archipelago’s rugged beauty.

Malta’s cuisine is a revelation: Mediterranean flavors kissed by sun and sea, paired with a crisp glass of Cisk beer or a bottle of Marsovin Grand Maître—a vintage worthy of the Knights. It’s no wonder Hollywood has fallen under Malta’s spell, filming epics like *Gladiator* and *Troy* among these ancient stones.

And for a touch of whimsy? Robert Altman’s “Popeye” movie set still clings to the coast—a playful reminder that Malta, for all its gravitas, knows how to laugh. But Malta is not a solo act. **The archipelago beckons with further mysteries. Gozo, the verdant sister island, is a realm of citadels, cathedrals, and wildflower-strewn hills.** Comino, with its crystalline Blue Lagoon, is a siren’s call to swimmers and dreamers alike.

And always, the sea—a deep cobalt mirror reflecting limestone cliffs and antique battlements, carrying the secrets of every ship that ever passed. So, let us walk where giants once trod. Let us toast with vintners and break bread with knights. Let us dive into the chronicle of the world, told in passion, carved in stone, and wrapped in Malta’s golden light. **This is not just a destination—it is an awakening.**

Join us, and together, let us uncover the world’s most interesting island.

[Click Here for Details](#)

THE MAGIC OF MALTA
A Luxury Expedition

November 2-10, 2025

The Magic of Malta: A Luxury Expedition
November 2-10, 2025 - An Invitation

Designed and Led by Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday & Richard Bangs
for Extraordinary Traveler’s Club



Near our hotel in St. Julian's

Welcome to the world's most interesting island! You'll be absolutely astonished at 8,000 years of history – beauty, culture, great food and wine, luxury hotels and so much more is packed into this Mediterranean island nation.

You'll be amazed at how much you will see and do and experience – and how much fun you'll have, how many memories and friends you'll later treasure. After all, it's in the culture, the Maltese people have been making friends for many, many centuries.

So come with us to enjoy Malta to the hilt – and learn how Western Civilization began here thousands of years ago... and how a few centuries ago, here is where Western Civilization was saved from oblivion.

[Click Here for Details](#)

THE MAGIC OF MALTA
A Luxury Expedition

November 2-10, 2025



Our luxurious hotel resort, the Kempinski, in Gozo

**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

rebelholiday@extraordinarytravelersclub.com

We're happy to discuss!

More Featured Travel 2025 - Invites for You



PORTUGAL
Exploration



Designed & Led by Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday
Lisbon, Sintra, Cascais, Portuguese Riviera, Silver Coast & Porto
Friday, October 3 to Sunday, Oct 12, 2025



[Click for Details](#)
Portugal Exploration

October 3-12, 2025



**The Splendours
of Scotland**



*The Splendours of Scotland:
Edinburgh, the Highlands, and the Western Isles*
Designed and Led by Eddy Downpatrick
Sunday, October 5th to Tuesday, October 14th 2025



[Click for Details](#)
Splendours of Scotland

October 5-14, 2025

Extraordinary Traveler - Bridget Crocker



About Bridget Crocker

Bridget Crocker is the author of the memoir, *[The River's Daughter](#)* (now available on Amazon). A leading whitewater explorer, Crocker has guided expeditions down many of the world's greatest river canyons in Zambia, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Peru, Chile, Costa Rica, India and the western United States. Her work has been featured in *Outside*, *Westways*, *Men's Journal*, and *National Geographic Adventure* magazines among others, and she is a contributor at Patagonia, Lonely Planet Guidebooks, and The Best Women's Travel Writing. She lives with her family in Malibu, California. Visit her at www.bridgetcrocker.com or follow @bridgetcrocker.



Extraordinary Traveler Interview: Bridget Crocker

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

BC: By my junior year in high school, I'd flown roughly 70,000 miles as an unaccompanied minor, so I've always been a serious traveler. I grew up in Jackson Hole, Wyoming on the banks of the Snake River, and was very involved with cultivating survival skills through Girl Scouts and building forts in the cottonwood forest. Meanwhile, my obsession for *Choose Your Own Adventure* books and Indiana Jones films fueled my imagination. It was when I read *Riverdogs* by Richard Bangs at the age of 17 that I realized I could combine survival skills, adventure and travel into a career, and that was the moment I began working to turn my dream of becoming an international adventurer into reality.

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

BC: In my memoir, *The River's Daughter*, I write about the experience of evacuating a safety kayaker from the Zambezi River gorge after he'd come down with a debilitating case of heat exhaustion that veered into heat stroke several days into our trip. Evacuating him was a harrowing experience that involved climbing out of the gorge on a sketchy game trail—and even sketchier frayed rope—in search of a telephone or radio to signal for help in a pre-satellite-phone world. There were many challenges during this evacuation, including bypassing an armed guard and keeping the kayaker alive long enough to get medical help.

Many people are drawn to adventure travel as a way to challenge themselves and discover what they're capable of surviving. I was twenty-two years-old at the time of this evacuation, and it was extraordinary to learn at such a young age that I could truly rely on my own instincts and resiliency, even when faced with a stack of obstacles.

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

BC: Yes, many close calls like the one above, but learning to trust my instincts has been such a gift and there have been many times when the kindness of strangers has uplifted and saved me. Once on an Omo River trip, a lion ate all our food in camp while we slept, and we had nothing but a small amount of gruel left to feed our group for several days. It was grim—there wasn't enough to go around and people started fighting over the gruel. As we carried on downstream, we were welcomed into a village and treated to the most wonderful meal, then sent off with food to supplement the gruel that lasted us the remainder of the trip. Close calls have taught me to allow for grace. The powerful connection we share with each other despite cultural differences is profound.

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?

BC: I admire Robyn Davidson, author of the memoir *Tracks*, who traversed the Australian outback with a camel and dog to explore the depth of her interior landscape. I'd love to sit down and speak with Sacajawea, the Lemhi Shoshone woman who guided the Lewis & Clark expedition, most of it while pregnant or with her infant son tied to her back. I am deeply curious why she didn't leave the expedition and rejoin her family when they encountered her tribe near the Salmon River in Idaho from where she had been kidnapped years before.

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

BC: For me, a mindset of curiosity is essential to extraordinary travel. What can I learn about the culture, wildlife and landscape of a place? Curiosity fosters greater connection and intimacy in relationships, and I see travel as a powerful way to build relationships with people, cultures and nature.

Q: What characteristics do you like to find in your travel companions?

BC: Kindness, curiosity, respect and someone who is committed to being teachable and flexible. Also, the courage to try new or uncomfortable things is so important to progressing in your development as a traveler.

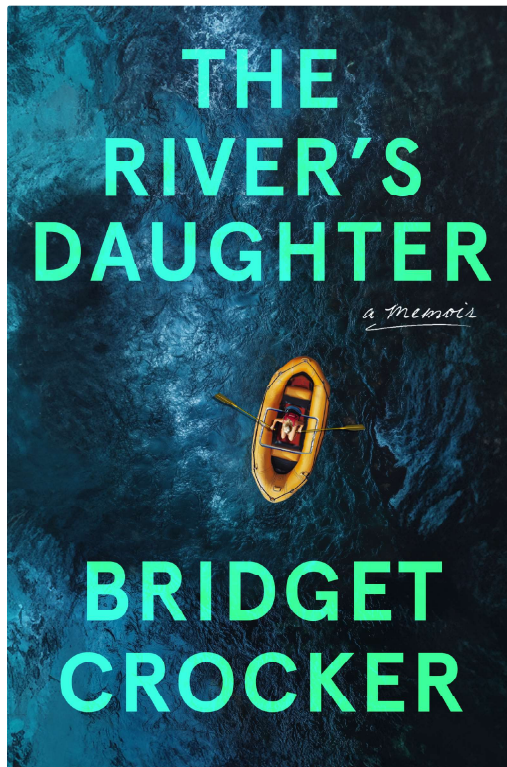
Q: What is something you dream of doing – or a place that you dream of exploring?

BC: My father is from Maine and I have spent time there visiting family but I have never rafted the incredible whitewater there—the Penobscot, Kennebec and Dead Rivers. That is something I dream of doing in the near future. I've always dreamed of running Macal River through the Mayan Mountains of Belize, but unfortunately, the best whitewater was submerged several years ago when a dam was built. Now my dream is for the dam to be removed so the Macal River is free-flowing once again.

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

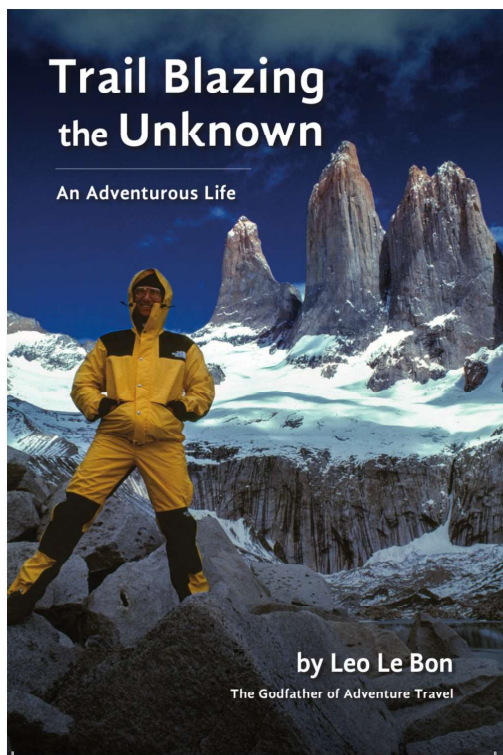
BC: Invest in your own ingenuity, rather than gear. Like Yvon Chouinard, legendary explorer and founder of Patagonia, said, “The more you know, the less you need.” Also, your wealth is in your relationships, so invest in those heavily. I have such a wonderful network of friends all over the world, whom I cherish. Cultivate kindness and don't be afraid to ask for help or learn new ways of doing things. Pride is the antithesis of connection, where humility opens the door to lasting community, which is the ultimate boon.

Extraordinary Travelers' Bookshelf



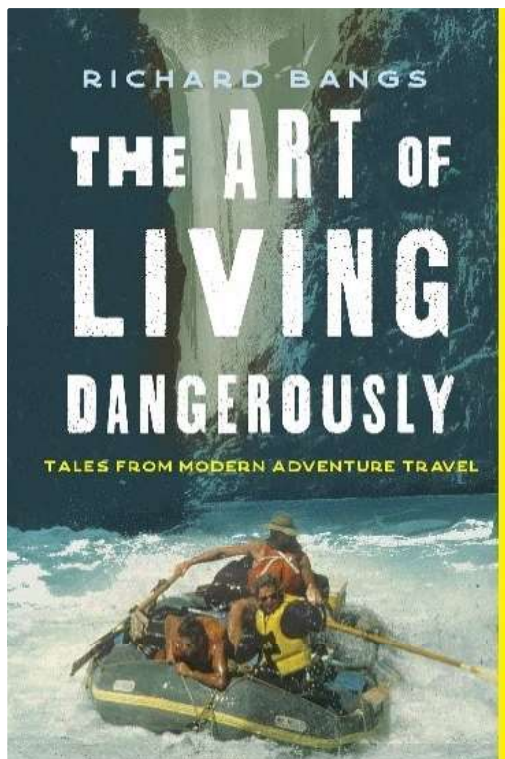
The River's Daughter, A Memoir by Bridget Crocker

About the book: On the river, Bridget learned to read the natural world around her and came to know the language of rivers. One of the few female guides on the Snake River, she then traveled to the Zambezi River in Africa, some of the most dangerous whitewater in the world, where she faced death and learned to conquer her fears—both on the water and off. The river taught her how to overcome years of betrayals and abuse, to trust herself, and, finally, how to help heal her family from generational cycles of trauma and poverty. A beautifully rendered memoir of a woman coming into her own, *The River's Daughter* opens us to the possibilities of transformation through nature.



Trail Blazing the Unknown by Leo Le Bon

About the book: This is a photo adventure book covering the author's 50 plus years of exploring the most remote parts of the earth, including the North Pole, Mt Everest, Patagonia wildlands, Tibet, Kenya wildlife, Alaska, The Inca Trail, Antarctica, the Karakoram and K2, the circumnavigation of Lake Titicaca by kayak, and the Himalayan mountains.



The Art of Living Dangerously by Richard Bangs

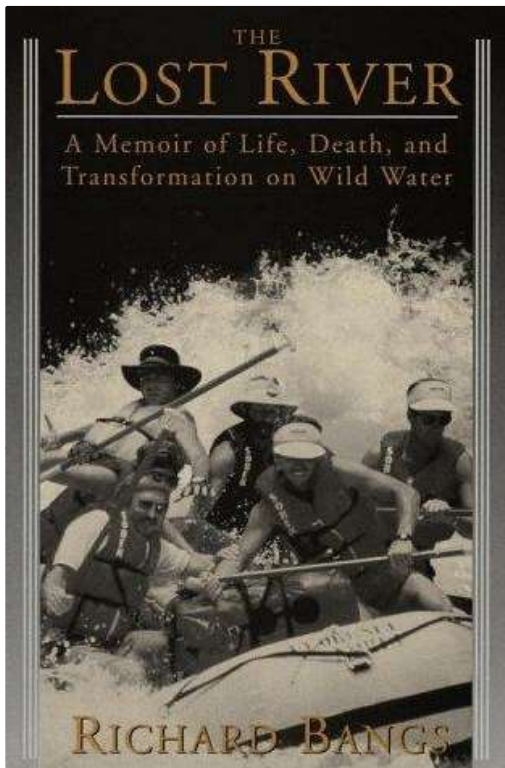
Be swept away by these awesome and implausible tales from Richard's 50 years of insanely great explorations.

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](https://www.extraordinarytravelersclub.com/etc-newsletter-issues).

Prior ETC Dispatch Issues:

<https://www.extraordinarytravelersclub.com/etc-newsletter-issues>

Upcoming Club Expeditions:

<https://extraordinarytravelersclub.com/extraordinaryexpeditions>

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

2598 E Sunrise Blvd Suite 2104, 33304, Fort Lauderdale, FL

This email was sent to {{contact.EMAIL}}
You've received it because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

[View in browser](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)