

EXTRAORDINARY TRAVELERS CLUB Dispatch

ISSUE #11 - November 2024

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Richard Bangs piloting a ship of the desert. Photo by Laura Hubber

The Tyranny of Permanence

by Richard Bangs

Sitting atop a weathered camel, traversing the boundless dunes of the Libyan desert with blue-robed Tuaregs as guides, I cycled a sentiment from the late seeker/storyteller Bruce Chatwin: "We are wanderers, from the moment we emerge from the womb to the moment we return to the earth."

"The nomadic life is the only life worth living," Chatwin proclaimed. In *The Anatomy of Restlessness*, he argues the virtues of a peripatetic existence; that being stationary is a form of imprisonment, chaining us to monotony and routine. "Settlement is a perversion" and "Confinement is hell," he vouched. The steel and glass conurbations that color so much of the planet seduce with promises of convenience, innovation and opportunity. And yet they are humanity's greatest attempt to deny our nomadic nature. The orphic and ancient alternative is a life of forward momentum, of constant change, a life that calls from the sweeping savannahs of Africa to open plains of Mongolia.

Nomadism finds meaning in movement, in the act of perpetual journeying. It's in our blood, a legacy etched into our very being.

In many ways, nomadism is the antidote to the maze of modernity, where the clock's ticking controls lives. A city, with its rigid boundaries and reliance on systems of constraint, can be a cage, trapping inhabitants in a loop of work, consumption, and sleep. In contrast, the nomadic lifestyle offers liberation. As Chatwin wrote, "The nomad is the person who knows how to make sense of life, who understands that the earth is something to be traveled across, not to be settled upon." Nomads interpret the land as something malleable, something that cannot be owned, only experienced. "The nomad is a rebel, refusing to be tied down."

Chatwin marveled at the skill of nomads, observing how their constant movement allowed them not just to survive, but to thrive in habitats inhospitable to others. The genius of the nomad lies not just in the ability to adapt, but in the acknowledgment of the temporality of life. To be a nomad is to embrace the transience of existence—there are no forever homes, no lasting possessions, only the telluric beat of footfalls, the momentary music of rustled grass or scattered sand.



The Hadza in the Serengeti hunt and live entirely as nomads. Photo by Rebel Holiday

For the first decade of [Sobek](#), uber-guide Jim Slade had no home address, only a broken Ford Econoline van parked at Angels Camp, California, eventually towed away. He was always on the move, always connected to the turnings of the world in a more direct, unmediated way. Today septuagenarian John Yost, my friend since High School, is almost perpetually on a raft, a different continent every month, continuing a life richly-lived and unbound.

In younger years, I, too, was a restless rafter and hiker. Whenever I pushed my boat into the currents to begin an expedition or tightened my pack for a trek into the high provinces, I felt a release from the handcuffs of material possessions and societal expectations. Waking up each morning to a different horizon, I found myself shedding the burdens of the past and embracing the uncertainties of the future. It was a chance to live in the moment, to savor the simple pleasures of passage. There was solace in the rhythm of the wind, the whisper of flowing water, and the distant cry of a migratory bird.



Rebel Holiday with a Himba woman in Namibia Photo by Jack Wheeler.

The African continent hosts a mosaic of nomadic peoples—the Fulani herders of West Africa, the Himba of The Skeleton Coast, and the Maasai of East Africa. These groups have lived for centuries on the move, following ancient patterns dictated by the needs of their livestock and the seasonal shifts of their domains.

The Maasai, for example, have long moved between the dry plains of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania, seeking out the lush grasslands during the rainy season and retreating when the rains are scarce. Their way of life is not just about survival, but about a deep spiritual connection to the plateaus and meadows. In contrast to the 56.2% of the world's population who root in cities, the Maasai experience an acroamatic sense of space and community—an appreciation that comes from the ground beneath their feet and the endless cycle of encampment and decampment.



Massai traditional vertical jumping contest shows endurance. Photo by Jack Wheeler

In the cosmic steppes of Mongolia nomadic life has been The Way since first crossings. For the Mongolian herders, the cadence of the seasons dictates schedules. Each spring and fall, they move their ger and livestock from one pasture to the next, in search of the best grazing acreage. Unlike urban patrons, bound to timetables and tabs, desensitized to their environment, Mongolian nomads live in sync with the natural world. Their movements are dictated not by clocks, but by the migration of animals, the growth cycles of grass, and the ebb and flow of weather patterns.

Mongolian nomadism is a testament to the resilience of human adaptability. The land is harsh, unforgiving even, yet the Mongol people have thrived by learning to move with it. Nomads understand the delicate balance between survival and respect for the soil. Their understanding, passed down through generations, teaches us that it is not the fixed structure of cities that provides stability, but the ability to move with the latitudes, to flow with the pulse and tempo of nature.



Jackson Holiday Wheeler, age 10, Mongol nomads in Mongolia. Photo by Jack Wheeler

In *The Songlines*, Chatwin posits that our sedentary lifestyle is a recent development in the grand timeline of human history. Recurrent roving is a rejection of the idea that we can control everything around us, that we can build monuments to permanence.

The nomads of Mongolia and Africa have long known that life's true beauty lies in transit, in the constant tide of Creation. In Chatwin's observations of Aboriginal culture he pointed to something fundamental: the act of walking, of moving through landscapes, isn't just transportation—it's conversation. It's a dialogue with the earth that anchored lives have largely forgotten. The Mongolian nomads don't just traverse their terrain; they read it like a living text, decoding its subtle shifts and messages in ways that no satellite weather forecast could replicate.

Perhaps the lesson of the nomad is one of humility. **The Maasai, the Mongols and all other nomadic peoples have found a kind of understanding that transcends the walls of the city. It is a recognition that while we may have nested for a spell, the journey is never really over. There is always more to see, more to discover, more to experience.** The universe is, after all, too vast to stay in one place forever.

In this moment of global upheaval, as humankind becomes ever more connected, and yet ever more siloed and chambered, the nomadic spirit offers an exhilarating reminder—of the freedom of velocity, the importance of drawing power from the surly bonds, and the thrill of embracing the unknown.

Nomadism is not merely a romantic notion; it has tangible benefits. Movement stimulates the mind, fosters creativity and critical thinking. It allows us to engage with diverse cultures, broadening perspectives and empathy. As I look back on my own meanderings, I realize the act of traveling, of being in motion, has been my greatest educator and guide.



Richard Bangs with nomadic friends. Photo by Chris Sharpe

Humans are inherently migratory beings, hardwired for ambulation and exploration. So, as we rush through the shadows of skyscrapers, tethered to

screens and pavement, we might do well to remember the wisdom of the wanderers, who have known all along that the true joy of life is not in the destination, but in the journey itself.

Every step teaches the same lesson: realms reveal themselves to those who move through it. It is a good thing to pack a little lighter, to hold plans a little looser, to remember that homes can be carried on backs and in hearts as well as built from stone. Let us walk the meridians, not as tourists, but as pilgrims, seeking meaning, purpose, and a deeper connection with ourselves and the wild tracks of the world.

If you might be keen to explore the merits of nomadism, please join us this June for a very special adventure across Mongolia by private plane, in a trip designed by legendary travel pioneer Jack Wheeler. Laura Hubber and I will be co-leading and would love to share these paths less traveled with you.

-- Richard

Click below for details:

Click for Details
EXPLORE MONGOLIA
June 16 - 27, 2025



Exploring Mongolia - June 16 - 27, 2025

Co-led by Richard Bangs & Laura Hubber

Expedition Designed by Jack Wheeler for Extraordinary Travelers

Exploring Mongolia is the dream of anyone with an adventurous spirit.

It is not easy to do just overland unless you have 4-6 weeks. Mongolia is enormous – 2½ times the size of Texas and it's mostly empty. Outside of the capital of Ulaan Bataar and a few towns, the population density is 3 people per square mile, most all of whom are nomads.

That emptiness is of extraordinary beauty and diversity, while the people you meet are marvelously welcoming and hospitable. We will stay at times nearby, learn about their lives and customs. See how they herd, hunt, and ride camels over the sand dunes.

This is your dream of Exploring Mongolia come true. How can we do it in just 11 days? By private charter plane to see remote wonders, land cruisers, even camel-back over sand dunes of the Gobi.

Explore Mongolia with Richard Bangs & Jack Wheeler June 16-27, 2025

Limited Space on planes - Registration Open Now



These are the gers (yurts) of the local Mongols and their herds grazing. We stay in some fancier ones...





Click for Details

EXPLORE MONGOLIA

June 16 - 27, 2025

Co-Led by Richard Bangs, Laura Hubber, Jack Wheeler

This is only a tiny glimpse of what you'll see and do – for so much more with a full itinerary and *lots* more pictures, click on the gold box:

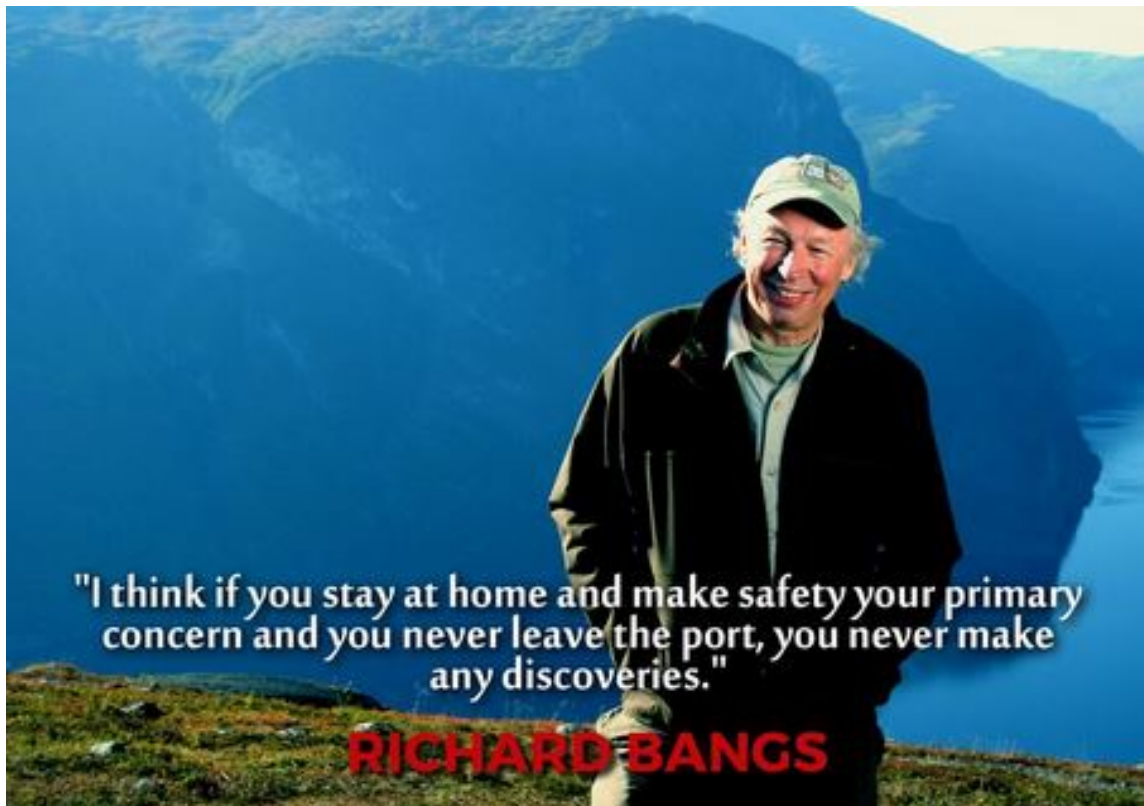
You'll learn how they hunt with eagles. Those inclined can



Ready for a camel ride at sunset? Hop on - there's a photo to send home.



Footsteps in the Sand. Photo by Richard Bangs.



Serengeti Luxury Birthing Safari - March 8-19

Co-led by Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday

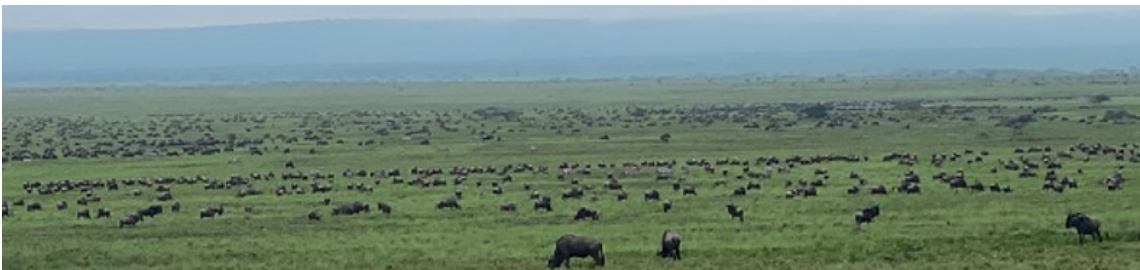
for Extraordinary Travelers



Experiencing a safari in the Serengeti of Africa is a classic experience and this is an optimal way to do it. We love the birthing season in early spring, where all the animals are in one place giving birth to and caring for their calves and cubs. The weather at this time is just about perfect in the South Serengeti.



Imagine being on a hilltop enjoying a marvelous bush breakfast with 200,000 wildebeest on the plains below.





While we're having lunch, the predators are also on the lookout for their next meal. The lions are waiting, the cheetah is hunting here...



The nomadic Hadzabe hunting with bows and arrows in small bands of 12-15 people. When they manage to get an animal, they stay for a few days until they've eaten it, then continue on. We became friends with these Hadza and you will too!



At the end of the day we'll be happy to return to our private tented camp to enjoy our sundowner, followed by a delicious meal and open bar. The point is that you get to RELAX. Below is the dining and lounging tent. Our individual tents that we sleep in are ensuite with a private bathroom and shower in each. The perfect days are followed with delightful evenings for all.



We hope you will join us for this very special experience. Whether you are a first-timer or a veteran safari lover -- you will enjoy every day, leave with new friends, special photos, and best of all memories of a lifetime.

Click for Details

**Serengeti Luxury
BIRTHING SAFARI**

March 8-19, 2025

Join Richard Bangs Live - Online Dec 12th

Thursday, December 12, 2024

11AM-12PM PST

A promotional poster for an Adventure Travel Webinar. The background is a dark blue sky with a faint image of a river and a boat. In the top right corner is a circular logo with a mountain range and wavy lines below it. On the right side is a portrait of Richard Bangs, a man with a friendly expression, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a tan baseball cap. The text on the left is in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the text is a yellow button with the words 'REGISTER NOW' in black. Underneath the button is the website URL 'www.mtsobek.com/events' in white. At the bottom right, there is a dark red banner with white text.

**ADVENTURE
TRAVEL
WEBINAR**

WITH RICHARD BANGS

**THURSDAY
12 DECEMBER
11AM PST**

REGISTER NOW

www.mtsobek.com/events

Richard Bangs is the father of modern adventure travel and Co-Founder of MT Sobek. Named one of the 100 greatest explorers of the last 100 years!

You are invited!

Richard Bangs is a pioneering adventurer, a top explorer of the last 100 years, co-founder of MT Sobek, and an acclaimed author. Hear Richard's story on what inspired his passion for adventure and what "living dangerously" means to him. His adventures, from pioneering rafting expeditions to exploring uncharted destinations, will capture your imagination.

Find out how you can apply his insights on courage, resilience, the rewards of stepping out of one's comfort zone...and much more!

Register: Just click on the image above or the gold button below!

**Click to Register for
Richard Bangs' Webinar**

Dec 12, 2024

11AM to 12PM PST

2PM to 3PM EST

7PM to 8PM GMT

Extraordinary Traveler - Lisa Niver



Lisa Niver is an award-winning travel expert who has explored 102 countries on six continents. This University of Pennsylvania graduate sailed across the seas for seven years with Princess Cruises, Royal Caribbean, and Renaissance Cruises and spent three years backpacking across Asia. Discover her articles in publications from AARP: The Magazine and AAA Explorer to WIRED and Wharton Magazine, as well as her site WeSaidGoTravel.

On her award-winning global podcast, [Make Your Own Map](#), Niver has interviewed Deepak Chopra, Olympic medalists, and numerous bestselling authors, and as a journalist has been invited to both the Oscars and the United Nations. For her print and digital stories as well as her television segments, she

has been [awarded](#) five Southern California Journalism Awards and three National Arts and Entertainment Journalism Awards and been a finalist thirty-one times.

Named a #3 travel influencer for 2024, Niver talks travel on broadcast television at KTLA TV Los Angeles, her [YouTube channel](#) with over 2 million views, and [in her award-winning memoir, *Brave-ish: One Breakup, Six Continents and Feeling Fearless After Fifty*](#).

Extraordinary Traveler Profile

Lisa Niver

November 2024

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

LN: When I was twelve, my mom tucked a book about Darwin's adventures in the Galapagos inside my trunk for summer camp. All summer I imagined him discovering new species. In 2019, I finally saw the blue-footed boobies with my own eyes when I sailed with EcoVentura Galapagos. I was thrilled to also see red-footed boobies and the Nazca boobies with their gray-feet and orange beaks.

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

LN: One of the best adventures I ever had was an 11-day journey by van in Mongolia. When we booked it in Ulaanbaatar after traveling for two days overland from China by overnight bus and train, I was told we were going to the vast expanse of nothingness. I asked, "How will I know when I get there?" They said, "You will know." By the middle of the first day, we were long gone from roads of any kind, electricity and anything resembling civilization. I loved every minute of the trip but especially walking up the dunes of the Gobi desert and finding a few small purple flowers. It is amazing to find life and beauty in the most seemingly desolate places.

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

LN: After working on board cruise ships for seven years and backpacking in Asia for three, I have had many close calls while traveling. A few memorable ones were being in a hurricane during my contract on Rhapsody of the Seas and the solution was to head to Trinidad and Tobago which was not one of our ports that season. The crew were thrilled for somewhere new!

When I was on safari in Tanzania with Abercrombie and Kent and Sanctuary Retreats, which was the 100th country I visited, our jeep was stopped near several elephants. Somehow oddly when I changed the battery in my camera, the SD card with all my photos jumped out of the camera and onto the ground next to our vehicle. I started to get out to pick it up. My guide said very calmly and extremely seriously, “Lisa, sit down NOW. When it is safe, I will retrieve it.”

Mostly I have learned that when you are traveling, you need to always pack your common sense. Planes will be late or get canceled. Sometimes the food won't be so great. When I was in Kathmandu, they only had power 12 hours a day so we made sure to have flashlights and candles. Once when I was teaching science at Brawerman Elementary School in Los Angeles, the power went out. My students and I opened the blinds and eventually the lights came back on. I have learned that when you travel you always need to use the “F” word which of course is FLEXIBLE!

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?

LN: I have been so fortunate to meet and travel with some of the most incredible travelers. Without the care and mentorship of some of the travel greats, I would not have a travel book or a vibrant travel YouTube channel.

Lisa Napoli, author of *Radio Shangri-la: What I Learned in Bhutan, the Happiest Kingdom on Earth* <https://amzn.to/4hHjsh7> , introduced me to Richard Bangs who agreed to be the key note speaker for the Los Angeles 2011 Meet Plan Go event. When I emailed Richard that I was starting a travel writing competition on my site, We Said Go Travel, he said, “I will be the judge!” I published over 2500 writers from 75 countries across 13 competitions. Having a famous judge gave my brand new contest credibility! Richard has always offered me opportunities including bringing me as co-host for his Orbitz Web series Quest for Adventure to both Puerto Rico and Bermuda!

Patricia Schultz has also been an amazing mentor to me and because of her I have spoken many times at the Travel and Adventure Shows across the USA in New York City, Dallas, Chicago and Los Angeles. I first met her with Richard Bangs in Los Angeles at a JNTO event.

Photo: Lisa Niver with Patricia Schultz, Richard Bangs and Andy Bender, 2016.



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

LN: When people ask me about starting a blog or becoming a travel writer, my advice is:

You can have an adventure in your own backyard. You do not have to travel far to find something new to do. Drive home from work on a different street. It is good for your brain and you might discover a new restaurant that has Thai food and after you try a new dish, you think about traveling there or studying a language at a local college or on a free app. Follow your interests.

Small steps lead to BIG changes. You do not need to book an around the world flight for 6 months to get started. One year, I decided I would go to one museum a month in Los Angeles. I go to museums when I travel to new places but do not always make it a priority at home. It was the best choice. I planned in advance. I searched for the best exhibits. I learned which ones had a free once a month on Saturday or were open late nights on Thursday. It led to so many great opportunities. Start small.

Start for FREE. People often tell me they are going to buy hosting and pay for a logo and one million other costs to get started for their book/blog/trip. I started We Said Go Travel for free on blogger. When you write more, you can change

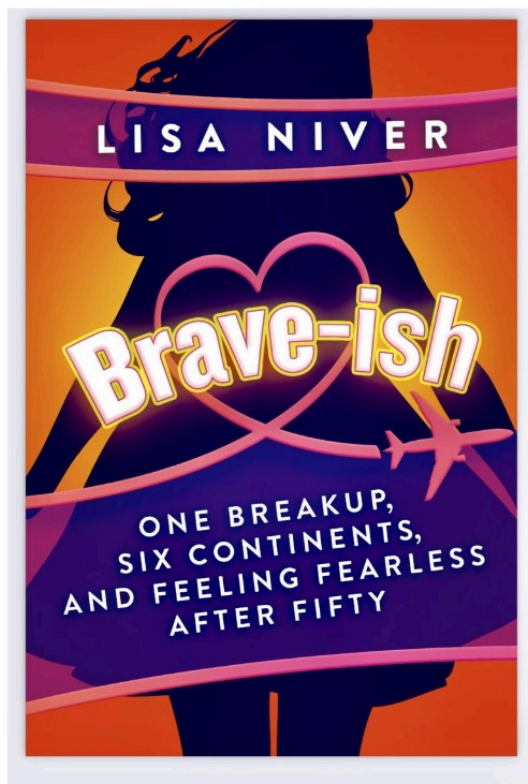
the url, buy hosting, get a logo. In the beginning, the most important thing is to just START and be consistent. Remember, Fall down 7, Get up 8!

For the first 100 who use the coupon, Lisa offers a gift of a complimentary class on UDEMY called Travel Writer 101. Here is the coupon:

<https://www.udemy.com/course/travelwriter101/?couponCode=6BEBEC7852100B92103B>

Learn all about her class at <https://lisaniver.com/class/> Feel free to contact Lisa on social media if you have questions about her class, book, podcast or if you need another complimentary link for my class. Link: <https://lisaniver.com/class/>

Extraordinary Travelers' Bookshelf



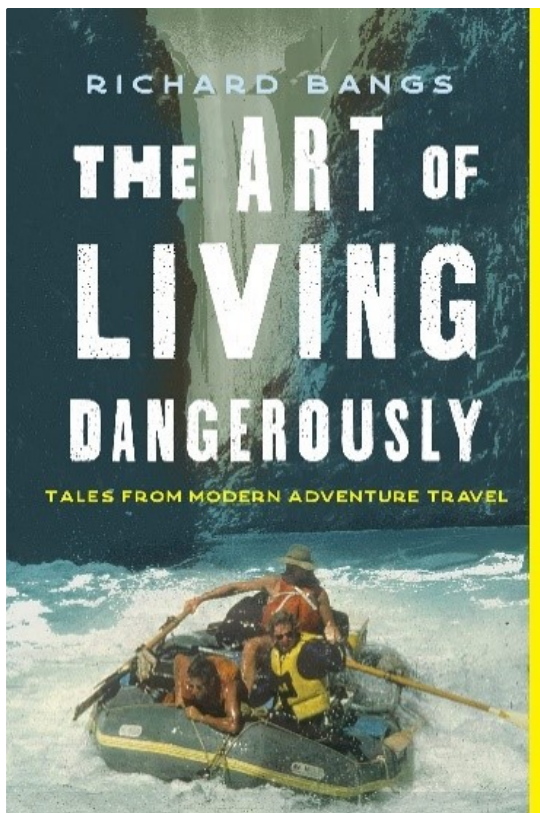
Bravish

by Lisa Niver

Lisa's charming and heartfelt adventures will captivate and inspire.

What reviewers say:

“This was an inspirational memoir of a woman's journey from a very low place in her life to finding her own inner strength and going on the most amazing adventures. It is easy to lose our way and as she points out is never too late to re-center ourselves. I really admire her strength, determination and grit. It also shows that even the strongest have self crippling doubt that can prevent us from living our best lives.” *Liz Taylor*



The Art of Living Dangerously by Richard Bangs

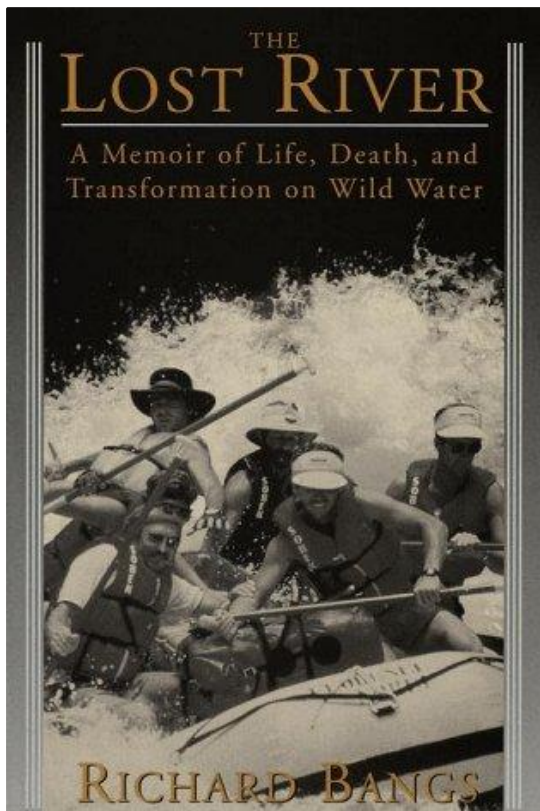
Be swept away by these awesome and implausible tales from Richard's 50 years of insanely great explorations.

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](#)



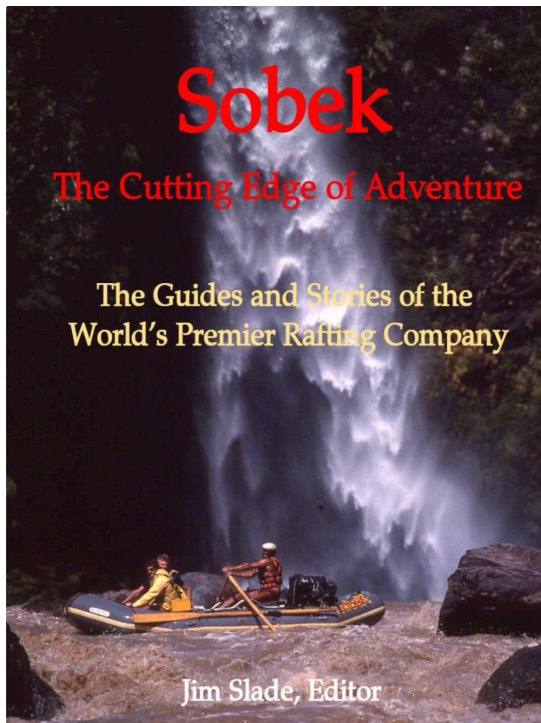
The Lost River: A Memoir of Life, Death, and Transformation on Wild Water by Richard Bangs

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](#)



Sobek: The Cutting Edge of Adventure

Jim Slade, Editor

More than a century after Major Powell completed the first descent of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, a great many of the world's rivers had still never been run. The guides of Sobek set out to change that and made more than 100 first descents of rivers around the world, many of which became classic. Meet the guides and hear their stories from the cutting edge of adventure. Forward by Richard Bangs.

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).

Prior ETC Dispatch Issues:

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

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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