

EXTRAORDINARY TRAVELERS CLUB Dispatch

ISSUE #13 - February 2025

- The Power of Empty - by Richard Bangs
- Explore Mongolia - The Best Way - Jun 16-27, 2025 - Invitation
- Best Adventures for Extraordinary Travelers in 2025!
- Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon March 28-April 9, 2025 Invitation
- Experience Portugal - May 2-11, 2025 - or- Oct 3-12,2025 Invitation
- Best of Western Ukraine - May 16-27, 2025 Invitation
- Kenya Adventure in September with Richard - Coming Soon
- Extraordinary Traveler Profile - Jules Torti

All Mongolia Photos in The Power of Empty - Courtesy Bing Images



The Power of Empty

by Richard Bangs

There is a moment, suspended between the low hum inside a plane and the infinite sky ahead, when the world beneath unfurls like a painted canvas. As I first flew over Arizona at age 18—its rust-colored canyons and long purple shadows rippling in the afternoon light—I felt an almost magnetic pull to the

open spaces below. For someone who had grown up amidst the clamor and congestion of the eastern seaboard, where cities stack atop themselves in a cacophony of sound and movement, **the spaciousness of this domain felt like a deep, restorative breath.**

Descending, I found myself immersed in a topography of jagged peaks, buttes, mesas, monuments, cathedrals and reddish rips in the skin of the earth. The sky was a sprawling vault that morphed from piercing blue to fiery orange with the arc of the sun. **The immensity of it all made me feel deliciously small—a speck within an unbroken symphony of land and light.**

It was here, marveling at the sheer scale of the Grand Canyon, that **I began to understand the profound allure of open spaces. They are antidotes to the confines of urban chaos, offering not just physical room to roam but mental clarity and the kind of freedom that ignites the internal engine of the soul.** Deserts became my initiation into a lifelong quest for the wild and unobstructed, and they long urged to experience another tract of limitless horizons and empty vistas: Mongolia.



The power of open spaces transcends geography; it lies in the way these steppes speak directly to our primal selves. Here, the skyline is a promise, a reminder that the world is vast and full of possibilities. Here is a chorus sung by winds over unfilled landscapes, by the whispers of untouched borders, and the hush of wildernesses that roll on to the ends of the earth. **Here we are enveloped in a stillness so deep, it is almost a sound.**



Mongolia is a geographical wonder, an openness that defies imagination.

The horizon offers no margins, the ground melds seamlessly with the heavens. Roads disappear, bleeding into the sand. It's a sensation both disorienting and liberating—a return to the simplicity of navigation by instinct.

It is in Mongolia's isolation that magic resides. On horseback, camelback or on foot, there is silence so shrewd it feels alive. No sirens, horns, electronic pings; just the ancient dialogue between sun and stone, air and turf.

The mutterings of the divine wind, the distant cry of an eagle, and the soft rustle of the grass underfoot become a meditative soundtrack. The people, too, reflect the spirit of this land: nomads who live in rhythm with the seasons, existence shaped by the demands of the boundless contours. Little has changed since the time of Genghis Khan. His descendants are caretakers of a province where time seems to stretch as endlessly as the earthly curve, unhurried, unconstrained.

To Answer the Call of the Open, join our extraordinary tour of Mongolia in June, 2025. **Explore Mongolia - now with 2 Dates Available!**



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

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

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

Explore Mongolia - now with 2 Dates Available:

Explore Mongolia - June 16-27, 2025

Co-led by Richard Bangs & Laura Hubber

Registration Deadline February 12th!

Click for Details

EXPLORE MONGOLIA

**Co- Led by
Richard Bangs & Laura Hubber**

June 16 - 27, 2025

Limited Space Available

Alternate Dates If Needed:

Explore Mongolia - June 3-16, 2025

Co-led by Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday

Registration Deadline February 12th!

Click for Details

EXPLORE MONGOLIA

**Co-led by
Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday**

June 3 - 16, 2025
Limited Space Available





Questions? Reach out to us:

richardbangs@extraordinarytravelersclub.com

or

rebelholiday@extraordinarytravelersclub.com

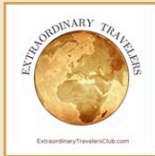
We're happy to discuss!



Best Travel 2025 - Invites for You



EXPLORE
BHUTAN



BHUTAN: LAND OF THE THUNDER DRAGON

Designed by Jack Wheeler

Co-Led by Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday

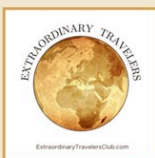
March 28 to April 9, 2025



Click for Details
Bhutan March 28-April 9, 2025



PORTUGAL
Exploration



Designed and Co-Led by
Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday

May 2-11, 2025



Click for Details
Portugal May 2-11, 2025

[Click for Details](#)
Portugal October 3-12, 2025



WESTERN UKRAINE EXPEDITION

*Led by Richard Bangs and Rebel Holiday
and Sasha Vosk, Ukraine Expert*

May 15 to 27, 2025



[Click for Details](#)
Ukraine May 15 to 27, 2025

Take a Walk on the Wild Side in Kenya

by Richard Bangs

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 discharges 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.

September 2025—pricing and dates to follow!



Extraordinary Traveler - Jules Torti



Jules Torti writes about the best things in life—birds, beaches, beer, burgers and books (in no particular order). She is a former magazine editor-in-chief, the author of five books and an unofficial sunsetologist. Jules lives with her wife, Kim, on the 45th parallel in Lion’s Head, Ontario—halfway between the North Pole and better yet, the equator! She writes about their microadventures and affection for quirky hotels and strange pizzas at “[Jules is Out of Office](#)” on Substack. Jules Torti’s latest memoir, [Trips That Went South: From Point A to B\(eaware\)](#) is available on Amazon, Indigo and Apple Books or your favourite local indie shop!

Extraordinary Traveler Interview: Jules Torti

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

JT: By the age six I was already hardwired for adventure with my dog on my heels. We’d head to the punky pond behind our house with a makeshift fishing net fashioned out of a wire hanger and a pair of my grandmother’s nylons. I’d document the return of the spring peepers with my cassette recorder and mark the shells of painted turtles with nail polish to track them. One day I fancied myself to be an ornithologist just like Roger Tory Peterson and have my very own bird guide.

It was in my Nan’s library that I was introduced to Dian Fossey, Jane Goodall and Birute Galdikas. Her *National Geographic* collection was my rainy day ticket

to the Galapagos Islands, the Virungas, Gombe and Borneo. My mother, grandmother and I were part of the local nature club and though I was the youngest by seven decades, I was sparked by the members' amateur slideshows on Botswana's Okavango Delta and their photos of the eider migrations from Ellesmere and Baffin Island. There was a frisson that I can directly attribute to those meetings and local bird counts that I tagged along on.

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

JT: I've been lucky to see the Galapagos Islands twice (why do trips have to be once-in-a-lifetime?) and the blue-footed boobies were the basis of every elementary school project I did. It was the first adventure that made me realize that you really can make dreams come true—and then you can update your list and add more.

In October (2024), my wife and I spent three weeks in western Madagascar. Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park was truly a pinch-me moment. Naturally, we were eager to see the mouse lemurs and sifakas synonymous with Madagascar. The micro and macro world that presented itself each day in the lethal limestone spikes and along the chocolate Tsiribihina river was nearly overwhelming. We saw two barn owls tucked into the pocket of a riverside cliff, such a rare treat! I won't say that I loved our 'shortcut' through the fish eye-entrances and bellies of Tsingy's sandstone caves but they definitely cranked up my heart rate as did the jangly suspension bridges that connect sections of the trail. It could have been the cortisol racing through my system as I was stung by 14 wasps all at once just before entering the caves. It was an endemic species of wasp at least!

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

JT: In the gin-clarity that hindsight permits, there have been a few (wait, are my parents reading this?). A hairy cab ride in Alexandria, Egypt taught us early on to *never* put our bags in the trunk of a taxi. The driver was aggressive in his attempts to demand more money for the ride—and because our luggage was in his trunk we had to concede but not without a verbal battle.

In Croatia, my wife and I were following the Camino Krk route, a not-yet-popular 150 km circular loop around Krk island. It was poorly marked and more akin to hiking through a quarry or meteorite blast due to the relentless karst landscape. If it wasn't the karst, we were climbing over the excavations of wild boar rooting or tripping over collapsed *mrgari* walls (old dry stone sheep pens).

On the last day of the Krk loop, the switchback ascent from Baška totally frayed our nerves. The exposure was overwhelming, both of us were struggling to keep our packs from pulling us backwards. Worse, if one of us had fallen, it was

impossible to decide (even still) whether continuing forward or backtracking for help was best. Aside from two German bikers we'd chatted with on the second day, we hadn't seen anyone on the trail. Kim and I realized that we were a bit naive in our decisions as nobody knew where we were—we had no phone with us. No map. Silently, as we crawled our way up the incline, we were both agonizing over how dangerous the situation was—both of us were on the verge of tears from fear.

When we finally plateaued and were out of the rolling rock and steep pitch that threatened every step, we opened cans of warm beer (it wasn't even 10 a.m.) to settle ourselves with a bunch of ragged sheep. We spent the rest of the day searching for Camino markers in an area that is known as The Valley of the Moon. We did feel like we were in outer space—it was a mentally exhausting journey. After our previous experience walking for 34 days on the Camino Frances, our expectations were radically different from the scavenger hunt we found ourselves in as we were lost every single day on the Camino Krk at some point.



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

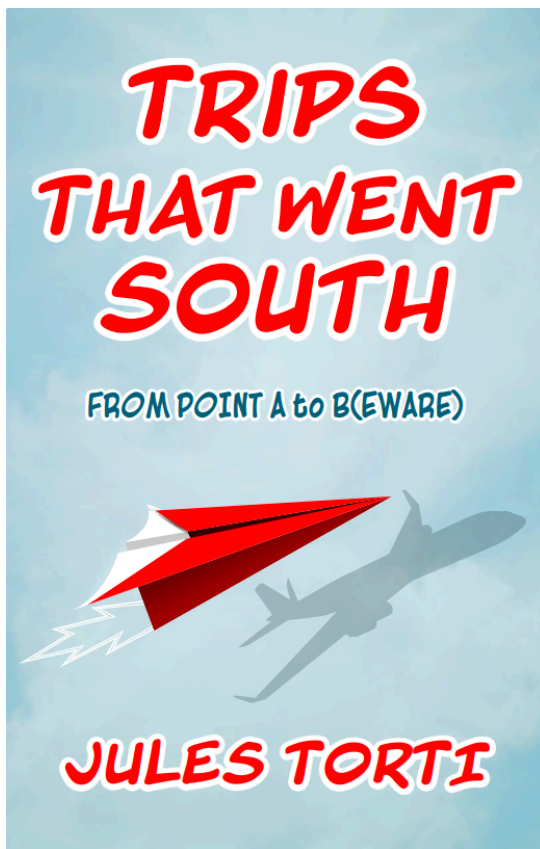
JT: Fifteen years ago I enrolled in a magazine writing course at a west coast college. The instructor suggested marrying our interests when it came to writing. At the time, I was feeling very anchored and restless with my non-creative career as a massage therapist. I had read and admired so much about Dr. Jane Goodall's life but becoming a primatologist at age 35 seemed unattainable, simply for the years of schooling involved. That same frisson I felt in those nature club meetings I attended as a kid flickered. What if I could *write* about primates instead?

Serendipitously, the Jane Goodall Institute in Entebbe, Uganda, was seeking a volunteer to create a book on the totems of Uganda based on submissions from local students and Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots members. It was a four-month stint and (due to my high levels of enthusiasm) I finished the project in weeks. I carried on and illustrated a colouring book on the primates of Uganda and later, an edition for the Dian Fossey Foundation.

For every young and ambitious traveler, I'd say there's *always* a means and opportunity to get somewhere. Volunteering is a profound way to experience a place in an income-neutral way. Admittedly, I wasn't even sure where Uganda was on the map at the time but I was able to combine my loves and see East Africa in a totally unexpected way. A few months after being in Uganda, I met a woman who was co-director of a chimpanzee sanctuary in Lubumbashi, DRC. I spent two months at Jeunes Animaux Confisqués au Katanga caring for over 20 rescued chimps.

Be curious, always, and the rest falls neatly into place.

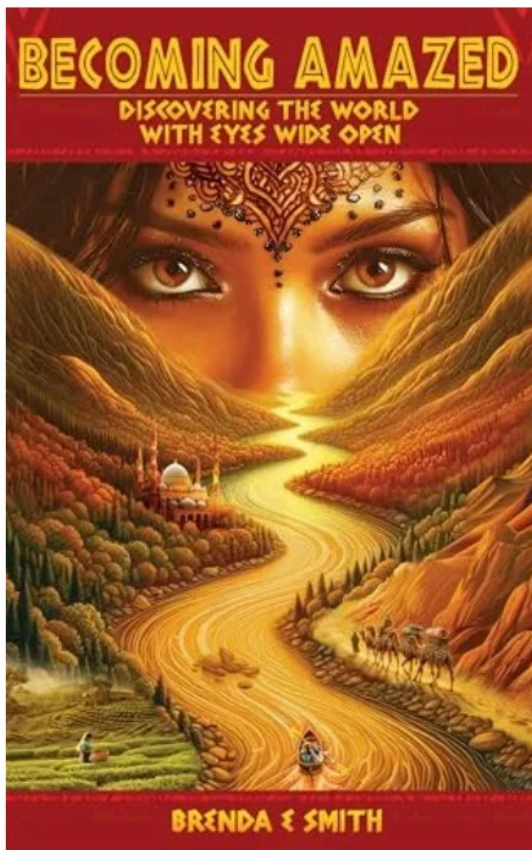
Extraordinary Travelers' Bookshelf



TRIPS THAT WENT SOUTH: FROM POINT A to B(EWARE)

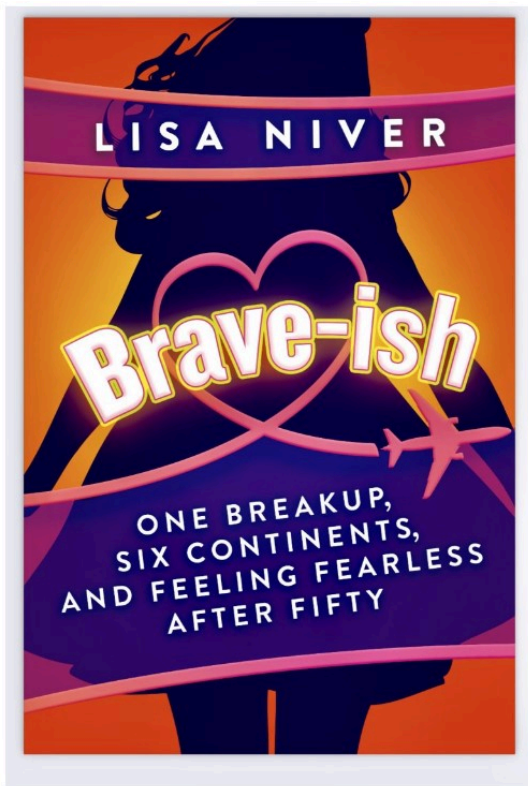
By Jules Torti

What reviewers say: "Brenda's stories transported me to places I've never been. She has the ability to make me feel as if I am with her on her adventures. Even her more serious stories are uplifting because Brenda finds a way to make the best of difficult and - at times- heartbreaking situations. The places she has been to and the people she has met (and loved!) are amazing. I was amazed. You will be too!"



Becoming Amazed: Discovering the World With Eyes wide Open by Brenda E. Smith

What reviewers say: "Brenda's stories transported me to places I've never been. She has the ability to make me feel as if I am with her on her adventures. Even her more serious stories are uplifting because Brenda finds a way to make the best of difficult and - at times- heartbreaking situations. The places she has been to and the people she has met (and loved!) are amazing. I was amazed. You will be too!"

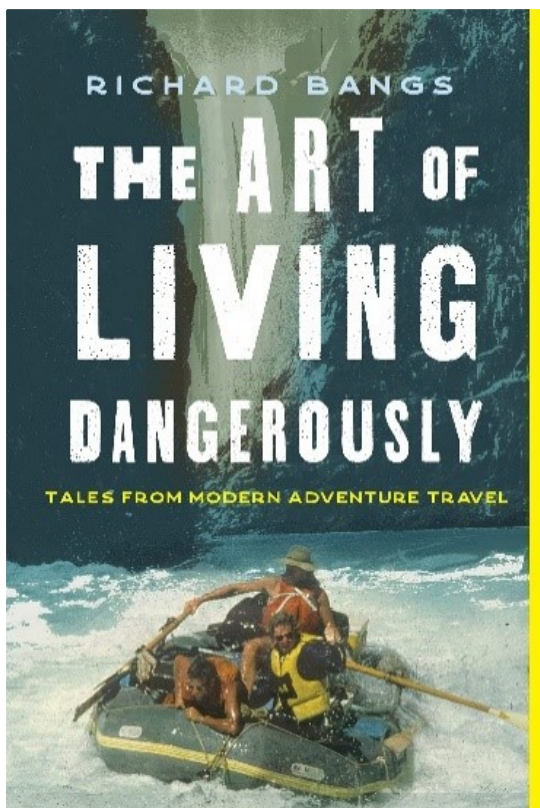


Bravish by Lisa Niver

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

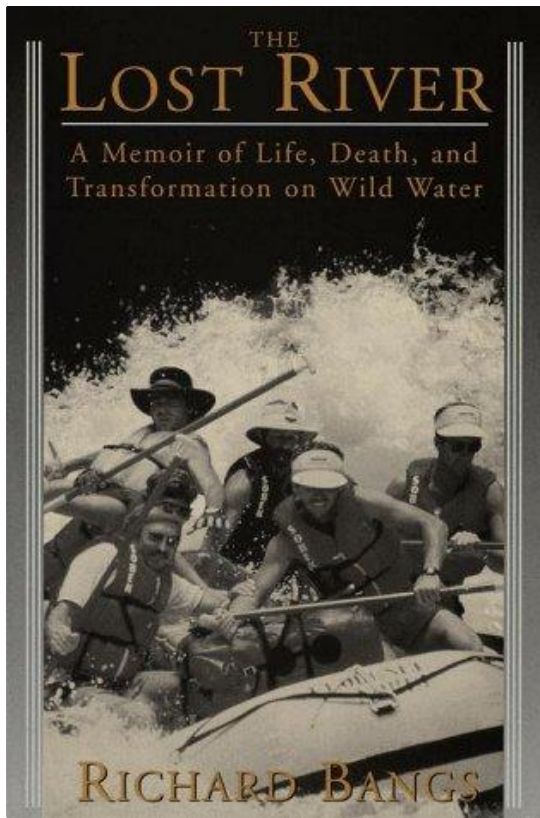
Be swept away by these awesome and implausible tales from Richard's 50 years of insanely great explorations.

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](#)

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:

<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](#)