



EXTRAORDINARY TRAVELERS CLUB Dispatch

ISSUE #21 - February - March 2026

- Fellowship of ETC & Time with Extraordinary Travelers - by Richard Bangs
- New River Rafting with Richard!
- Invitations & Calendar for Extraordinary Travelers - 2026
- Extraordinary Traveler Profile - Eugene Buchanan
- Extraordinary Traveler Bookshelf - Yampa Yearnings



Richard Bangs (front) and Sobek co-founder, John Yost (center back) in 1972

The Fellowship of Extraordinary Travelers

by Richard Bangs

There is a fellowship you don't apply to, no membership card, no dues, no secret handshake. And yet, if you travel long enough, far enough, and sideways enough, you discover you belong to it. Or perhaps it discovers you.

Has this happened to you?

I was crouched in the backseat of a Suzuki hatchback taxi, inching down a narrow side street in Kathmandu, exhaust and incense braided in the air. Through the dusty window I saw a familiar gait—someone ducking into a backpacking shop with the easy confidence of a man who knows exactly how much he doesn't need. I shouted, the taxi lurched, and there, improbably, was my high-school friend and Sobek co-founder John Yost. We hugged on the sidewalk, laughing like fools, having not seen each other since I'd moved to Redmond months earlier.

“What are you doing here?” I asked. “Eight billion people in the world,” he said. “What are the chances?” It turns out the odds are not that dear.

John, of course, is a member in great standing of the awesome community of extraordinary travelers—a loose, global tribe of people wired for curiosity, allergic to the obvious, and perpetually drawn beyond the tidemarks of the known. Once you're part of this vertical society of questers, these collisions stop feeling random. They feel inevitable.

I've unexpectedly run into friends in Kigali, Naypyidaw, Makassar, and other dots on the map that don't make glossy magazine covers. **Places where travel isn't about checking boxes but asking questions.** Places that require you to slow down, to listen, to recalibrate your assumptions. **Off-the-beaten-track destinations are not about bragging rights; they are about bandwidth—expanding your capacity to understand how vast and inventive the human story really is.**



Extraordinary Travelers on a Mongolian picnic - 2025

Community matters deeply to those who love discovery. **Not the curated kind, but the kind earned through dust, delay, discomfort, and delight.** In remote

places, travelers lean on one another—not just for logistics, but for perspective. You trade notes, stories, warnings, wonder. **You recognize each other not by accents or passports, but by posture: the way someone looks at a horizon, or asks a second question when the first answer doesn't quite satisfy.**

Meaningful travel, for this tribe, is not about escape. It's about engagement. It's about choosing journeys that resonate with shared values: curiosity over comfort, understanding over entertainment, humility over conquest. These are travels that connect you—not just to places, but to people who have also chosen to step outside the obvious and see what's really there.



Richard took Daryl Hannah to Rwanda to open a cistern. Extraordinary Travelers get involved.

Which is how, some years ago, I found myself in Nairobi, stopping into the Hilton for a cheeseburger. I was mid-chomp into the watery ground meat when I looked up and saw a familiar face—a very glamorous face—with an aquiline nose, striking blonde hair, and a camera draped around her neck. She asked if she might sit with me, as I was the only Westerner in sight. Of course.

Then I recognized her: Candice Bergen.

She told me she was thinking of switching careers, hoping to become a professional photographer. She was on assignment for a women's magazine to shoot Jane Goodall and her chimps. Acting, she confided, had become unfulfilling. The last couple of films had taken a toll. Finally, she asked if she was making the right decision.

I considered this carefully and counseled her honestly: she probably would never make it as an actress, and her prospects as a photographer were much

brighter.

“Thanks,” she said, flashing that great white smile, and off she went to pursue her destiny.

And that, in the end, is why this quiet miracle of extraordinary travelers matters so much: wherever curiosity outweighs caution and meaning outruns comfort, you will find your people—asking better questions, coloring the far edges of the map, choosing the longer road, and reminding one another that the world is not only vast and beautiful, but still endlessly worth engaging, together.

Special Invitation - Rafting with Richard in March



Laura & I secured a departure to raft the San Juan River—one of the most spectacular canyon corridors in the Americas, and a personal favorite of mine. The San Juan is a living gallery of soaring sandstone walls, hidden ruins, and desert light that shifts like a benediction across the water.

I invite you to share in the wonders of this remarkable river journey.

Sun, March 29 – Fri, April 3, 2026 (deadline very soon!)

Roundtrip from Moab -- and only \$1895/person.

Am so looking forward to sharing the Slickrock with you!

Richard

Trip Details & Highlights

- Dates: Sunday, March 29 – Friday, April 3, 2026
- Trip: Roundtrip from Moab, Utah
- Duration: 4 days/3 nights on river (6 days/5 nights total with pre/post-hotels)
- Pricing: \$1,895 per person | \$40 single supplement
- The Water: Class II rapids; 27 river miles
- Boat Options: Oar raft, inflatable kayak, stand-up paddleboard
- Experience: Explore the edge of Bears Ears National Monument, discover ancient petroglyphs and cliff dwellings, and marvel at the dramatic Goosenecks.

•Operated in partnership with our team at OARS

Contact Ellie to Register or Questions: elliesmith@mtsobek.com

Links for Adventure Details

[Itinerary - San Juan River Rafting Adventure with Richard Bangs](#)

[Travel Details - San Juan River Rafting Adventure with Richard Bangs](#)



Richard (second row) and Laura on the right.

Featured Invitation of 2026 - Explore Mongolia

Below Richard Bangs, Jack Wheeler, our Kazakh eagle hunter, and Eddy Downpatrick -- all inviting you to join our next expedition June 18-30, 2026.



Calendar for Extraordinary Travelers - 2026

Invitations to Join Us

June 18 to 30, 2026 - Exploring Mongolia



EXPLORING MONGOLIA

*An Adventurous Luxury Expedition
Designed by Jack Wheeler
June 18 to June 30, 2026*



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

There is vast emptiness is of extraordinary beauty and diversity, while the people you meet are marvelously welcoming and hospitable. To see this enormous country is a tall order, but we have a strategy. We supplement scheduled flights with **private chartered Cessna Grand Caravan planes** landing on remote airstrips, to be met by our Land Cruisers to take us to extraordinary places and meet people other travelers don't see. This is a unique, luxury exploration of Mongolia -- your dream of Exploring Mongolia come true.

Note: **We can take only 3 more couples on this spectacular trip.** If you want to go, click the gold box for photos and the itinerary! This one always fills up. **Questions?** Email Rebel holiday@wheelerexpeditions.com

Click Here for Details

EXPLORING MONGOLIA
A Luxury Expedition

June 18 - 30, 2026

**June 5-14, 2026 - Atlantic Paradises: Beautiful
Madeira & Azores Islands**



ATLANTIC PARADISES

Led by Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday

Madeira & Azores Islands

June 5-14, 2026



WHEELER-WINDSOR
EXPEDITIONS

Atlantic Paradises is an exploration on which **you will see and discover magically beautiful places in the Portuguese Islands of Madeira and 3 of the Azores Islands.** You'll have both energizing and relaxing experiences. We stay in wonderful hotels, enjoy delicious local food and wine, and learn from our outstanding guides on tours and activities.

Imagine swimming with dolphins, watching whales in the wild, and exploring tropical gardens. You'll learn local customs from friendly Portuguese locals. Atlantic Paradises is unique in what we experience, how we experience it, and in value. It brings you a life-memorable and pleasurable experience!

Email Rebel: holiday@wheelerexpeditions.com

[Click for Photos & Details](#)

**ATLANTIC PARADISES:
Madeira & Azores Islands**

June 5-14, 2026

Sep 11-30, 2026 - The 5 Stans of Central Asia



*The 5 Stans of Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan,
Tajikistan & Turkmenistan*

Friday, September 11 to Wednesday, September 30, 2026



**WHEELER-WINDSOR
EXPEDITIONS**

The 5 Stans of Central Asia - Central Asia. These words evoke the ultimate in remote, exotic, and unknown wonders. **Find the ancient cities along the Silk Road still in all their splendor, reminiscent of the days of Marco Polo.** We'll meet descendants of ancient peoples and learn about centuries of fascinating history. **The natural wonders abound:** the Mountains of Heaven, stunning mountain lakes "Seven Pearls of Shing" and extraordinary scenic beauty.

Just imagine exploring these exotic countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Each is different and fascinating in its own way. Most all world travelers dream of visiting these countries, few have the chance to so. What's more, those few that do rarely experience the coolest places in each. That's what we do on this exotic expedition. Join us!

Email Rebel: holiday@wheelerexpditiions.com

[Click for Details & Photos](#)

The 5 "Stans" of CENTRAL ASIA

Oct 20-31, 2026 - Kenya Walking Safari with Richard Bangs



Kenya Walking Safari with Richard Bangs

Designed and Led by Richard Bangs
October 20 to 31, 2026

MT SOBEEK ADVENTURE



So, take a walk on the wild side with Richard Bangs 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.

Contact Nicole Russo at MT Sobek NicoleRusso@MTSobek.com

+1 510 594 6041 *or* +1 800 974 0300

[Click for Details & Photos](#)

KENYA WALKING SAFARI with Richard Bangs

October 20-31, 2026

October 23-30, 2026 - Himalaya Helicopter



HIMALAYA HELICOPTER EXPEDITION

Friday, October 23 – 30, 2026

Kathmandu, Nepal to Kathmandu, Nepal

All photos taken by Jack Wheeler



WHEELER-WINDSOR
EXPEDITIONS

You get to soar in the highest peaks in the Himalayas on this world-class expedition designed by Jack Wheeler, dubbed the "real life Indiana Jones" by the Wall Street Journal. **In only one week, our goal is to reach these 8 incredible mountains – Everest, Lhotse, Cho Oyu, Makalu, Kanchenjunga, Manaslu, Annapurna, and Dhaulagiri.** Seeing and experiencing these mountains in this way is an ultimate Himalayan experience.

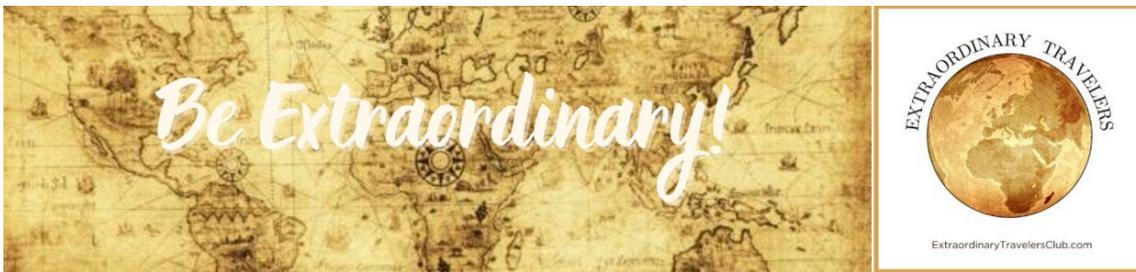
No trekking whatsoever. **Instead we're flying in the AS350 B3, the most advanced, high-altitude helicopters in the world.** The expedition group will be a maximum of 8 members. Now, since 2016, Wheeler Expeditions has led this extraordinary and exclusive expedition, featured in the Robb Report. **This is arguably the greatest adventure that you can have in one-week on the planet today.**

Email Rebel: holiday@wheelerexpditiions.com

Click for Details & Photos

HIMALAYA HELICOPTER

October 23 - 30, 2026



Venture Out! Be As Extraordinary As You Are!

So come—step off the well-worn path. In 2026, join us for something that **shimmers with the spirit of real adventure**. Walk Kenya's wild tracks with Richard and new friends. Or explore the stunning Atlantic Paradises, or Mongolia with Jack Wheeler and Rebel Holiday, or join one of the many soul-stirring journeys offered by [MT Sobek](#).

There's a peculiar alchemy that happens when shedding the weight of everyday obligations and pointing toward an unmapped quadrant. **When you push through the undergrowth and leave the marked signs behind, when you taste the metallic flavor of genuine risk, you're not just passing time. You're stoking the fire that keeps us human.** You're reasserting what it means to play, to want, to be utterly present in the narrow space between nothing and everything.

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!

Extraordinary Traveler - Eugene Buchanan



About Eugene Buchanan

About Eugene Buchanan: Writing about the outdoors for nearly 40 years, from covering the X Games for ESPN.com to working for NBC at the Beijing Olympics, Eugene Buchanan's work has appeared in such publications as the *New York Times*, *Outside*, *Men's Journal*, *Sports Afield*, *Popular Mechanics*, *National Geographic Adventure*, and more.

As the former editor-in-chief of *Paddler* magazine, founder of PaddlingLife.com, and author of five books, his adventures have taken him from Africa and the Amazon's headwaters to Siberia, but his heart remains with the Yampa. A member of New York's prestigious Explorer's Club, he's also a former ski patrol and river guide, bringing both technical expertise and a deep emotional connection to this critical conservation story. The book promises to increase awareness for readers' own backyard rivers through Buchanan's 30-year relationship with his beloved Yampa in Steamboat Springs.

His books (www.eugenebuchanan.com) include *Brothers on the Bashkaus*, *Outdoor Parents*, *Outdoor Kids* (winner, Living Now Book Awards), *Ultimate Canoe & Kayak Adventures*, *Comrades on the Colca*, and *Tales from a Mountain Town*.

Extraordinary Traveler Interview: Eugene Buchanan

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

EB: Pretty young, probably elementary school. I grew up in Boulder, Colorado, at the base of the Flatirons and would always run around exploring, climbing, hiking in the foothills. In high school I took an Outward Bound course, which opened up my eyes to mountaineering and backpacking more, and I spent my college summers guiding rafts in Alaska and Colorado, which is also when I took up kayaking. That's probably when I first started realizing there were rivers and mountains all over the world to explore.

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

EB: In the early 1990s, some friends and I won the Shipton/Tilman grant from W. L. Gore and Associates to go run a river in Siberia. It the first time the grant had ever awarded been for a river expedition—in the past they had always gone to climbing and mountaineering expeditions.

While we had originally planned to run a river called the Kalar, our plans got sidetracked when our contacts in Moscow kind of fell through the cracks and we encountered a whitewater team of ten Latvians asking us to abandon our plans for the Kalar and join them on a "real" river.

We soon found ourselves on a 26-day trip on the Bashkaus, one of Siberia's most remote and treacherous Class V rivers, using completely homemade equipment—including rafts made from old germ-warfare suits and truck tarps, spending three days at the put-in chopping down trees to make frames for the rafts, and wearing homemade lifejackets stitched together from soccer balls and wine bladders.

In route, we dealt with language barriers, epic portages, armed horsemen and rapids lined with memorials to those who died on the river. But we bonded as brothers and a team with the common mission to survive, putting aside all our cultural differences, which were vast. I ended up writing a book about it called "Brothers on the Bashkaus."



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

EB: I've had a few over the years. One came in South America with a team of Polish explorers on a first descent down the Cruz del Condor section of Peru's Colca Canyon, the deepest gorge in the world. Once down there, we discovered that a rival Polish team had put in before us, hoping to beat us to the takeout.

So, I found myself in sort of a Polish race to the bottom of the earth, causing us to move faster than was prudent through some of the terrain, whether it was rappelling down cliffs or running whitewater, which was faster than portaging if you did it safely and successfully. And I was the only kayaker along, which put me in a few precarious situations as there often wasn't a whole lot of safety set up for me.

I realized how remote we were and had to really assess the ramifications of getting hurt down there and how life-threatening that could be. One guy sprained his ankle pretty bad, which reminded us all of that; luckily it wasn't broken and he could get by. I ended up writing a book on that trip as well called "Comrades on the Colca," if for no other reason than because it makes for a nice sequel title to "Brothers on the Bashkaus."

Another time came when we were exploring a bunch of rivers in Colombia and we had a guy drown on a first descent of the Rio Negro. He was the manager of a local rafting company and myself and two other kayakers had to give chase after their raft flipped ahead of us. That caused me to take a couple steps back and realize the stakes at play from being so remote.

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?

EB: I've always had a thing for Shackleton. I still remember reading "Endurance" as a kid and being mesmerized by his leadership and how they all survived such an ordeal. It was such a sufferfest, and I've thought about what they endured whenever I've found myself in compromising situations, which pale by comparison. I'd love to sit down with him and ask him all about it.

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

EB: Being open to whatever comes your way and going with the flow. I also try to not be so serious about things all the time. Of course, when you have to you have to. But a lot of times just making the best of a situation and joking about it a little bit can make hardships a little more fun.

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

EB: That same ability to be spontaneous and adapt. You can't plan everything out to a T so sometimes you have to ad lib a little and make the best decisions you can with whatever information is available. And also a genuine feeling of being good-natured and easy going about things, especially when things might not be going exactly according to plan. A little humor can get you through a lot of tough times...

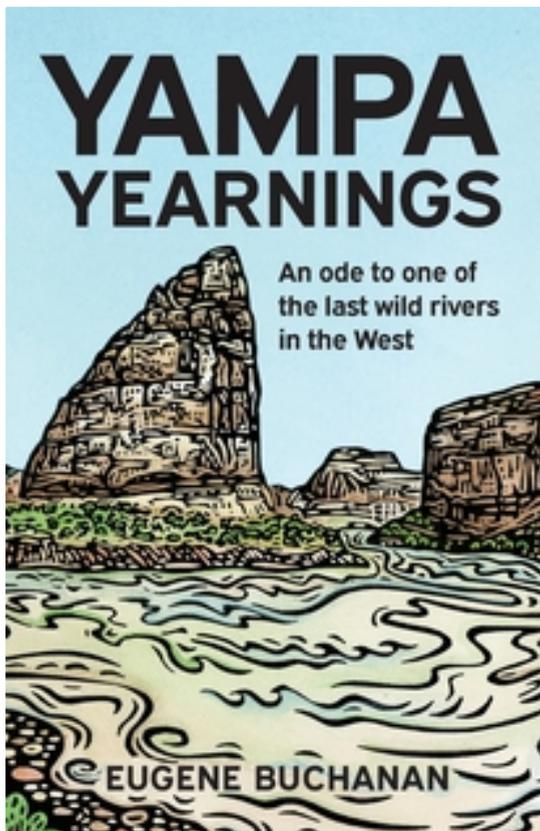
Q: What is something you dream of doing – or a place that you dream of exploring?

EB: I'd like to get down to Antarctica sometime; it's the only continent I haven't been on. I've been close, to Punta Arenas in southern Chilean Patagonia, but that's still a long ways away. I'd also like to hop on a sailboat to go ski the fiords of Norway sometime.

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

EB: The main thing is to just go. If you have the time, money and desire, do it and make it happen. Life gets busy so when you have an open window, don't waste it.

Extraordinary Travelers' Bookshelf

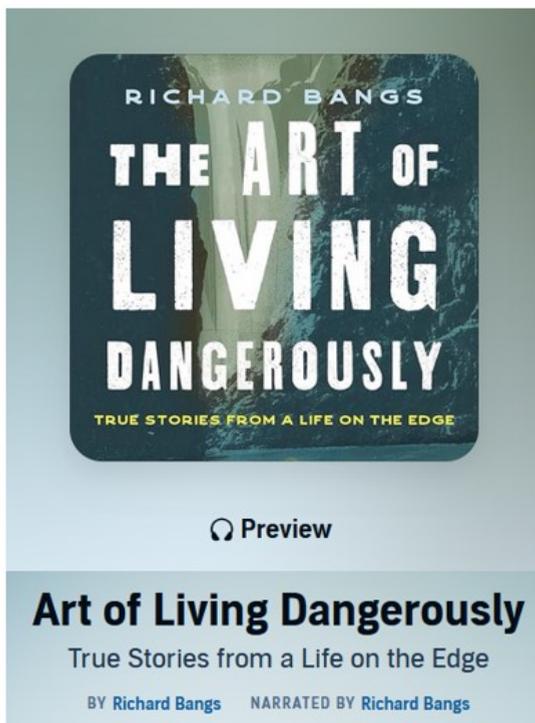


YAMPA Yearnings

An ode to one of the last wild rivers in the West

by Eugene Buchanan

YAMPA Yearnings by award-winning author Eugene Buchanan heralds northwest Colorado's Yampa River, the last remaining free-flowing tributary to the Colorado River Basin that still retains its natural hydrograph. The book promises to increase awareness for the reader's backyard rivers through Buchanan's 30-year relationship with his beloved Yampa in Steamboat Springs. Click the book image to get your copy!



NEW Audio Book!

Read by the Author:

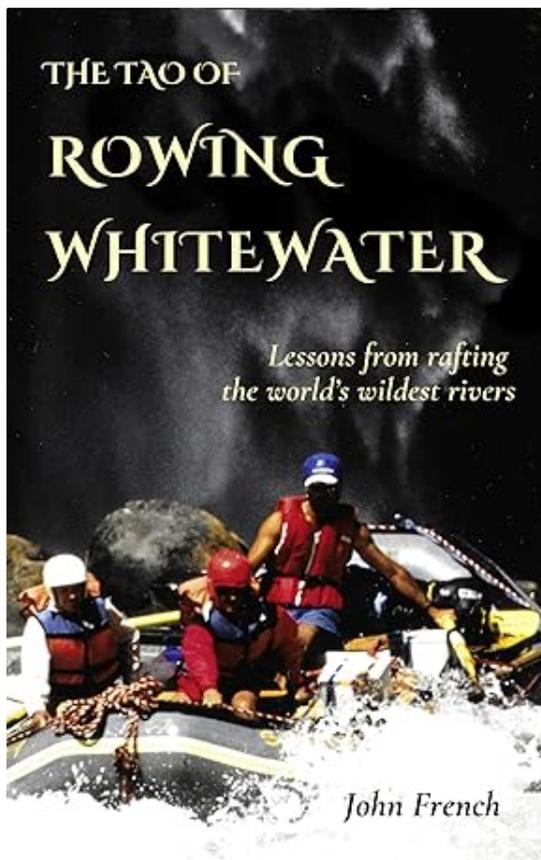
Richard Bangs

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.*"

[*Art of Living Dangerously Audiobook by Richard Bangs*](#)



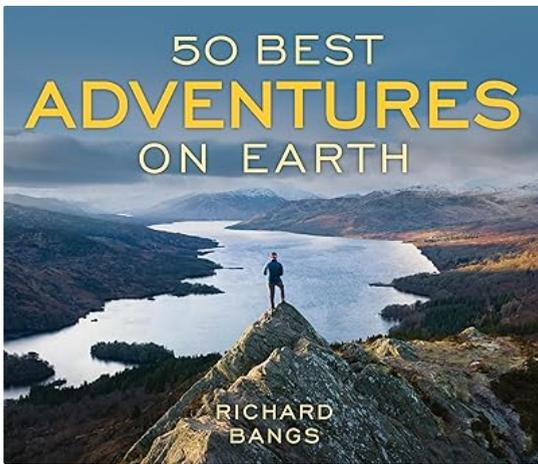
The Tao of Rowing Whitewater

**Lessons from rafting the world's
wildest rivers**

by John French

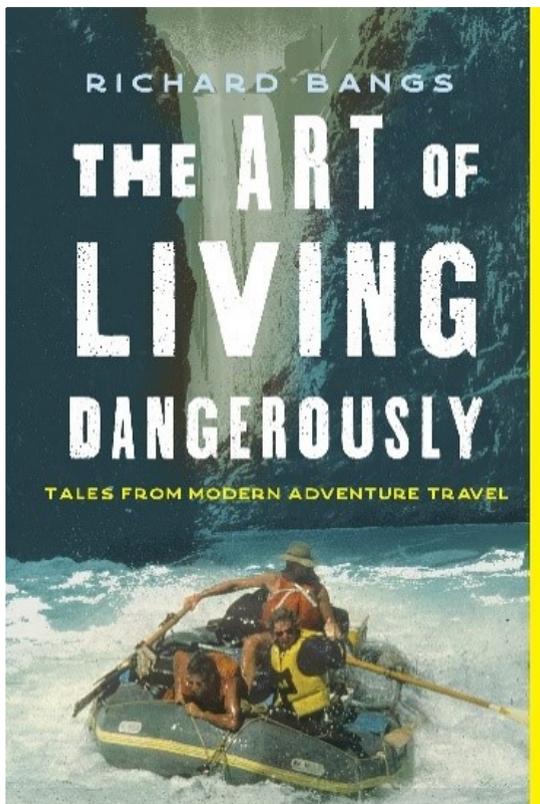
About the book: In an intriguing mix of memoir and philosophy, a veteran guide shares what he learned from navigating the world's most challenging rivers. By blending the art of running rapids with the practice of Tai Chi, he found techniques for rowing whitewater with grace while remaining calm amidst chaos.

River runners need instinct and skill to meet the demands of split-second timing and adrenaline pumping fear. This book offers lessons for the novice that take years to learn. Shore-bound readers will experience the thrill of a wild and exotic sport, as well as anyone seeking to push boundaries to live life at full capacity.



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.



The Art of Living Dangerously by Richard Bangs

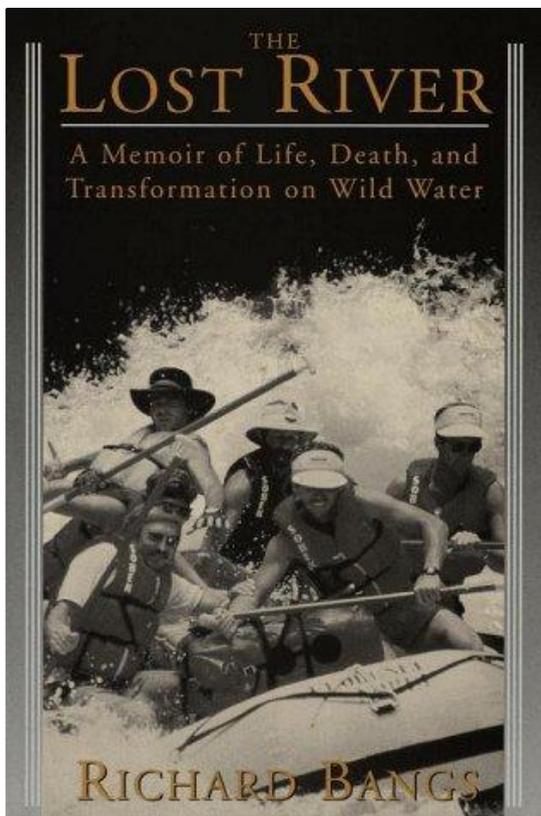
Be swept away by these awesome and implausible tales from Richard's 50 years of insanely great explorations.

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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)

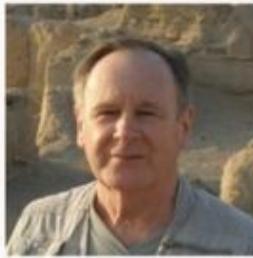
Write in and tell us where YOU want us to take you!



Extraordinary Travelers Club



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.

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

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