



EXTRAORDINARY TRAVELERS CLUB - ISSUE #2

Wander often... wonder always!

[The Extraordinary Travelers Club](#) is, as it sounds, **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.



Back to Explore the Euphrates River & Mesopotamia...

I once sailed in a raft down the Euphrates River in Turkey but had to abandon the journey when we approached the ancient kingdom of Corduene, now part of the Kurdistan region.

Ever since I cut my teeth as a river guide on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon I have wanted to see and experience its Mesopotamian equivalent, the spectacular Rawandiz Canyon in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Now, at last, it is possible, safely and wrapped in the cradle of civilization.



Yes, in October 2023, Richard is leading an exclusive exploration of Iraqi Kurdistan. We'll visit some of the earliest citadels, sacred monasteries, and holy villages including Erbil, capital of Kurdistan Region; the Yazidi village of Lalish; and the 4th-century St Matthew's Monastery.

We'll journey through untouristed regions and scratch the inscrutabilities - and bathe in the warmth - of the local people. While hiking, kayaking, and caving, we'll immerse in Kurdistan's implausible landscapes and unspoiled beauty. **Come join us this October in an epic quest to turn the original stones of enlightenment.**

October / November 2020

IRAQI KURDISTAN ADVENTURE WITH RICHARD BANGS

**Iraqi Kurdistan Details
MT Sobek**

The 50th Anniversary of Sobek

The 50th anniversary of Sobek brings you a series of special rafting adventures in honor of the many first descents the Sobek team made. Richard Bangs loves the rivers as always! *(on the right, holding the oar)*



Join an Epic River Adventure!

Join an epic anniversary adventure down the Middle Fork of the Salmon in Idaho; Cataract Canyon in Utah, the Zaskar in Ladkha, India; the Zambezi in Zambia, and others. Details below:

**River Rafting & Kayaking
Tours
MT Sobek**

Himalaya Helicopter Expeditions - Fall 2023



Soar in the Himalayas & Land at Basecamps

Jack Wheeler invented Himalaya Helicopter Expedition in 2016 - with rave reviews since.

Mission: Fly to the peaks and land at base camps of all 8 Nepal Himalayas mountains over 8,000m/26,000ft helicopter, piloted by world-class mountain rescue pilots. In one week.

When the Himalayan giants remain snow-clad and the sky is sparkling clear with conditions for fabulous photography are pristine, you see and experience: **Everest, Lhotse, Cho Oyo, Makalu, Kanchenjunga, Manaslu, Annapurna, and Dhaulagiri.**

NOTE: No trekking, no special skills or physical abilities are needed, just normal good health. Yet, you'll experience what no trekker on the ground can.) Co-led by Eddy Downpatrick and Richard Bangs.

Be there! October 21-28, 2024, Kathmandu to Kathmandu.

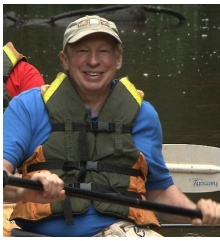
Himalaya Helicopter Details

Oct 21-28, 2023



Extraordinary Traveler - Richard Bangs

Richard Bangs has been coined "*the father of modern adventure travel,*" a title he makes sure to correctly attribute to the forefathers who came long before him. His adventures have taken him around the globe for more than 50 years. He was recently named one of the 100 Great Explorers of the last 100 years by Explorersweb: [100 Great Explorers of the Last 100 Years » Explorersweb](#)



Extraordinary Traveler Profile

Richard Bangs

July 2024, Scotland

Q. What does it mean to you to be called “the father of modern adventure travel?”

RB: It really should be the “bastard child of adventure travel.” The real fathers are the mythopoeists a generation before me. Once a province of the improbable, “adventure travel” was something seen in the pages of *National Geographic*, not available to the average Jane or Joe. The only adventure travel on Main Street was when a well-planned vacation went wrong. Then the likes of Edmund Hillary, Tensing Norgay, Jacques Cousteau, Thor Heyerdahl, even more recently Jack Wheeler and others of that ilk changed it all by showing it was possible, accessible, and with enough passion, practice and will, it could be undertaken, and relished. I was a beneficiary of these pioneers, and enjoyed the confluence of airline deregulation, political borders smoking away, and a period of relative affluence which allowed a new generation to seek and delight in adventure travel. I started [Sobek](#) at this magical intersection, and, with alacrity, began to chronicle our explorations. What a magnificent ride it has been.

Q. How did you go beyond the “safety net” and overcome the fear of following your passions?

RB: There are a lot of reasons to never to go beyond the comfort zone and as a result passions are often rejected in favor of what might be perceived as stability. It’s too easy to succumb to the low hum of ordinariness; the drone of stability....you are most alive when you can imagine your own demise....risk is the flame of the evolution of consciousness....I would rather die trying something new than live a long life of mediocrity.

Q. What would you tell the next generation as they explore how to pursue meaningful work?

RB: Pursue your passion....it is the only way.

Q. You have been exploring rivers for much of your career (first descents of the Yangtze in China, the Zambezi in Southern Africa and 35 others)- what first turned you on to adventure river travel in the first place?

RB: I bought a canoe while in high school, and paddled (and capsized) the rivers of the Eastern Seaboard, from the Potomac to the Shenandoah, the Cheat to the Youghogheny, the New to the Chattooga...then, when 18, I became a guide on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, and that spun the axis of my identity to “guidedom.” It was reading about a failed British attempt to raft the Blue Nile in 1968 that set up eyes to the Omo River in Ethiopia, believing I could make a first descent. With a ragtag team of friends, we did. And our currents still flow mightily today.

Q. What is your role in promoting Eco-tourism and who are some of the relevant organizations you are involved with?

RB: The tension will always exist between the short-term economics of extraction and the long view of sustainability; I’d like to think emotional currency is part of the

equation, and hope I can bring a voice to wildlife and wild places, a song of romance that comes with knowing and embracing...I'm a sucker for any organization that works to sanctuary our wildness...I was president of Outward Bound; several of my books were published by the Sierra Club; I have boarded on International Rivers Network, Four Corners School of Outdoor Education, and now CREST, the Center for Responsible Travel.

Q. What inspires you?

RB: Travel is the only thing that approximates the wonder of childhood, where every corner turned is new, and every sight and sensation is fresh....travel reignites the internal combustion engine of the soul....I love finding new light, turning over new stones; falling into new holes...I love getting lost.

Q. Out of all your achievements in your long career, what are you most proud of and why?

RB: Boy, there is a primal fission that is felt when you climb a peak or run a rapid....and as transcendental as that can be solo; it is even more apothecic when shared....that's what makes me proud...sharing these places and the feelings they evoke.

Q. You've been a pioneer in the travel industry for over 50 years. What have been the "keys" to your success?

RB: I think "keys" and "success" may be wrong constructs, as I am not sure if there is any device that if replicated will unlock the cabinets of wonder; nor do I think pursuing a measure of achievement is necessarily a sage path. I might venture to say that the better trail is pursuing your personal passions, and stepping on the cobblestones of understanding. I set out quite young, with few resources, to experience the world with a vengeance, a never-ending hunt for unwinding the unknowingness that always pricks at me. I found early on that chronicling these experiences gave me a double hit of enjoyment and enlightenment....I would experience the experience, and then sit down to distill it all and hopefully reach some deeper meaning and joy. That continues to this day.

The Value of Dangerous Exploration - Editorial



The Titan disaster was a tragic event that shook the world to its core. The loss of life and the devastation caused by the failed expedition cannot be overlooked or dismissed. However, in the midst of grief and tragedy, it is important to remember the profound significance of exploration and the lessons it teaches us as a species.

Over the years we in this Club have pushed boundaries and ventured into uncharted waters and territories. It is through exploration that we expand our comprehension of the world and ourselves. The human spirit is driven by an insatiable curiosity, an innate desire to seek out the unknown and uncover the mysteries that lie beyond our comfort zones.

Exploration is proof of our noble restlessness and inability to accept stasis. It is a testament to our ability to adapt, to overcome obstacles of all sizes, and to learn from our mistakes. The Titan disaster serves as a painful reminder of the hazards involved in exploration, but it should not deter us from pursuing our natural drive to put together the puzzle pieces of understanding.

In the wake of tragedy, it is easy to condemn the pursuit of exploration, especially when it is associated with great wealth and privilege. However, we must not let the actions or misfortunes of a few tarnish the fundamental value of exploration. Wealth and privilege may open doors to grander expeditions and uncharted territories, but the rewards of exploration are not limited to the elite.

With risk comes rewards, and it is through these risks that we evolve our consciousness and gain vital learnings. Every step into the unknown brings new insights, new perspectives, and new ways of thinking. We expand our knowledge, challenge our assumptions, and develop a deeper appreciation for the world around us.

Exploration is not a luxury reserved for the wealthy. It is a human endeavor that transcends boundaries and socioeconomic differences. From the earliest nomads wandering across vast landscapes to the modern-day space missions, exploration has always been an integral part of our existence. It is an expression of our innate curiosity and our unyielding spirit.

To condemn exploration in the wake of tragedy is to deny our nature as explorers. It is to stifle the very essence of what makes us human. We must learn from the blunders and catastrophes that occur along the way, but we should never lose sight of the transformative power of exploration.

In pushing the boundaries, we discover new frontiers, both external and internal. We confront our limitations and expand our horizons. We gain a deeper understanding of our place in the universe and our interconnectedness with all living beings.

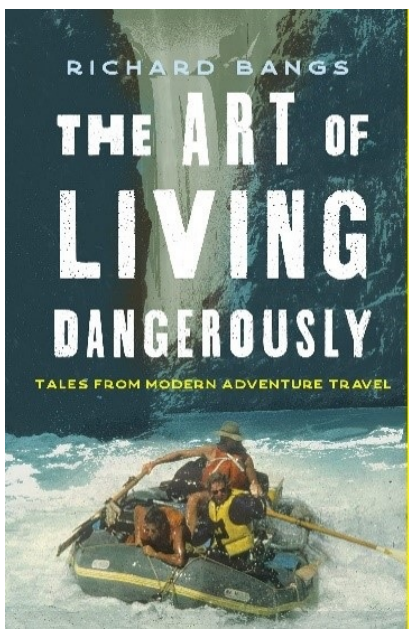
Exploration is not without its risks, but it is precisely these risks that fuel our growth and progress as sentient beings. We owe it to ourselves and future generations to embrace the spirit of exploration, to push the boundaries of what is known, and to honor the memory of those who have paid the ultimate price in the pursuit of knowledge and truth.

Let us not condemn exploration, but rather celebrate it as a validation of curiosity, resilience, and the insuppressible spirit of adventure that defines us as travelers through the mortal coil. Let us learn from our mistakes and tragedies, and let us continue to push the boundaries, for it is in doing so that we evolve, both individually and collectively.

Richard Bangs

**The Art of Living
Dangerously
by Richard Bangs**

Pre-order your copy at Amazon or Barnes & Noble now to read these awesome and implausible tales from Richard's 50 years of insanely great explorations.



What early 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](#)



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

Connect with Richard Bangs



Join us in the [The Extraordinary Travelers Club](#).
Your comments are welcome, email
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Richard Bangs
Founder



Jack Wheeler
Founder



Eddy Downpatrick
Founder



Rebel Holiday
Founder

Special Thanks To Our Fellow Travel Pioneers...



Extraordinary Travelers Club

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