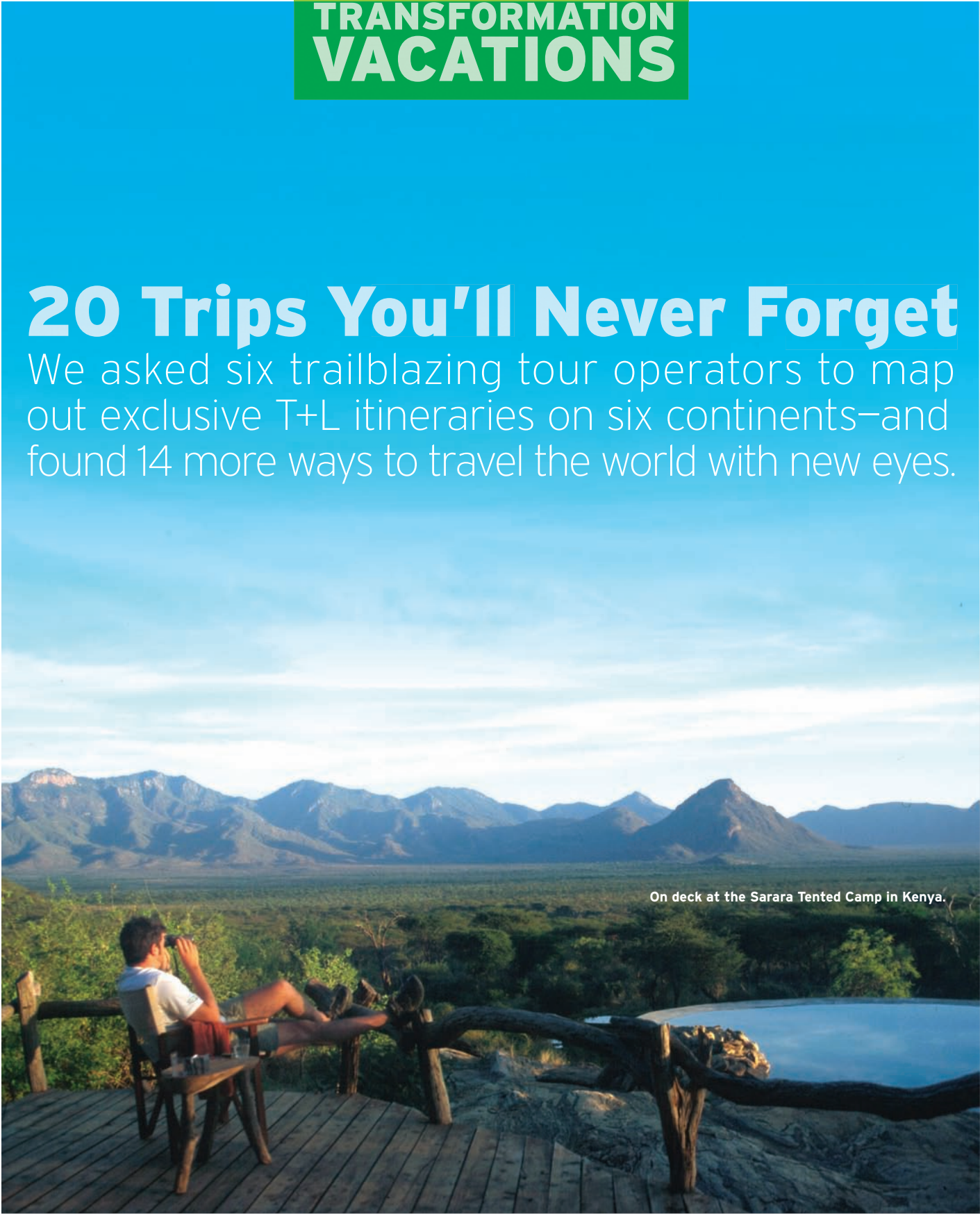


20 Trips You'll Never Forget

We asked six trailblazing tour operators to map out exclusive T+L itineraries on six continents—and found 14 more ways to travel the world with new eyes.



On deck at the Sarara Tented Camp in Kenya.

GALÁPAGOS & PERU | NEW ZEALAND | YELLOWSTONE | SOUTHEAST ASIA | KENYA | BURGUNDY

EDITED BY ALICE GORDON AND CLARA O. SEDLAK. REPORTED BY STIRLING KELSO, BREE SPOSATO, AND JENNIFER WELBEL

1 | Galápagos and Peru with Abercrombie & Kent (7-14 days)

Islands and Incans Below, clockwise from top left: Rugs in the Pisac Market; the Incan citadel of Machu Picchu; a Sally Lightfoot crab on Santiago Island, in the Galápagos; trekking through the islands; Pinnacle Rock at Bartolome Island; a land iguana. Center: The eco-friendly *Eclipse*.

WHY WE LOVE IT There's a level of exclusive access and environmental respect we've come to rely on from Abercrombie & Kent, but this trip exceeds even our expectations. For T+L they've dreamed up a Galápagos tour timed to commemorate Charles Darwin's 200th birthday and the 150-year anniversary of *The Origin of Species*—and tapped his great-great-grandson, Randal Keynes, to lead the way. In Peru, your guides will include an expert investigating Incan environmental practices, and you'll see art and textiles through the discerning eyes of locals who have amassed an impressive collection.

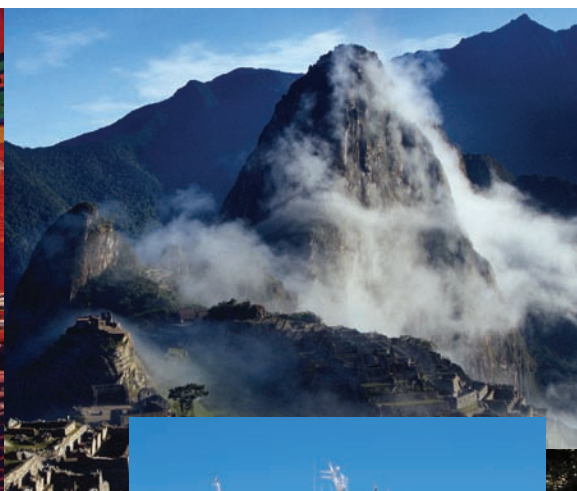
WHERE IT GOES After two days in Quito, you'll board a 48-passenger cruise ship for seven days in the Galápagos. The Peru leg (seven more days) loops from Lima to Cuzco and the Sacred Valley, then back to Lima.

WHAT YOU'LL DO A tour of Quito's colonial architecture zeroes in on Independence Square, the Archbishop's Palace, and El Sagrario Church. Galápagos island-hopping begins on Santa Cruz, where sea turtles nest, then continues on to the red volcanic Rábida Island and its sea lion colonies and Galápagos hawks; La Cumbre Volcano, home to rare island species like flightless

cormorants and Galápagos snakes; Black Turtle Cove and its saltwater inlets and mangrove swamps, accessible only by *panga* (motorized fishing boat); Isabela Island, for blue-footed boobies and marine iguanas; and back to Santa Cruz for a private tour of the Charles Darwin Research Station and a seat at the inauguration festivities for its new Darwin Facility. Peru highlights: the famous weekly art and crafts market in the colonial village of Pisac, in the Sacred Valley; lunch with the Lambarri-Orihuela family at their Huayocari Hacienda, where you'll see their renowned colonial- and folk-art holdings; a tour of Machu Picchu with archaeologist Alfredo Mormontoy; and a last stop in the Incan capital of Cuzco, with a side trip to the nearby Sacsayhuaman ruins—a fortress built of massive stones weighing up to 125 tons and pieced seamlessly together.

WHERE YOU'LL STAY The 210-foot-long eco-friendly *Eclipse* in the Galápagos; in Peru, at Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel in the forest below the citadel, and Cuzco's La Casona Hotel, a restored colonial mansion.

THE DETAILS T+L Transformation Vacation by Abercrombie & Kent; October 23–November 7, 2009, for both legs of trip. 800/554-7016; abercrombieandkent.com; Galápagos, \$7,325 per person, plus a \$1,500 donation to the Charles Darwin Foundation; Peru: \$7,723 per person (also available at other times of the year).



2 | New Zealand with Mountain Travel Sobek (14 days)

Kiwi Pride Below, clockwise from top left: The prow of a traditional Maori canoe; a Hapuku Lodge tree house; Wilderness Lodge Arthur's Pass; a room in the lodge; a Maori man in traditional costume; Kaikoura Peninsula on the South Island. Center: A war canoe in a Maori holiday celebration, left; diving for Whale Watch Kaikoura.

WHY WE LOVE IT This adventure-travel company slips clients into new destinations as noninvasively and inventively as they can—in small groups led by local guides at out-of-the-ordinary sights. For T+L, 40-year-old Mountain Travel Sobek has crafted an itinerary steeped in the 1,000-year-old cultural traditions and folklore of New Zealand's first inhabitants—the Maori tribe. Maori guides are called upon throughout the journey, whether you're hiking the grassy battlegrounds of Ruapekapeka, scene of the last conflict between British and Maori forces in the 1846 Northern War, or group-paddling a war canoe down hidden tribal waterways.

WHERE IT GOES From ancient settlements at the tip of the volcanic North Island to beaches, rivers, and glaciers, then all the way down to the peak-rimmed tourist center of Queenstown, on the South Island's Lake Wakatipu.

WHAT YOU'LL DO Sit on Tokerau Beach (North Island) to watch tribesman Hekeneukumai Ngaiwi Puhipi Busby Kaumatua demonstrate how to make a traditional ocean

canoe; detour north to Cape Reinga, the last stop made by Maori spirits of the dead on their way to the afterlife; and hike nearby through the lush Waipoa Forest to see Tane Mahuta, one of the world's largest remaining ancient kauri trees, whose girth rivals that of America's sequoia (45 feet). On the South Island, you'll sail with the Maori-owned Whale Watch Kaikoura to see sperm whales up close; hike alongside the Arahura River, where you can stop to search for greenstone, a jade, found only on the South Island, that is sacred to the tribe for its symbolic role in peace agreements; and trek across the Franz Josef glacier with an expert on global warming's impact on the region.

WHERE YOU'LL STAY Highlights include two hotels with extensive green practices: the Hapuku Lodge, whose recycled-timber tree houses are 30 feet aboveground in a grove of native manukas (valued by the Maori for their flowers' medicinal properties), and the Wilderness Lodge Arthur's Pass, a sheep farm with 20-plus miles of nature trails. Guided and self-guided hikes take you through beech forest and past cascading water, and may include sightings of bellbirds and rare orange-fronted parakeets.

THE DETAILS *T+L Transformation Vacation by Mountain Travel Sobek; March 23–April 5, 2009; November 5–18, 2009. 510/594-6000; mtsobek.com; \$7,500 per person.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NEIL RABINOWITZ/CORBIS; HUSSEIN BURRA/COURTESY OF HAPUKU LODGE; COURTESY OF WILDERNESS LODGES OF NEW ZEALAND; (2); RALPH TALMONT/AGE FOTOSTOCK; COURTESY OF WHALE WATCH KAIKOURA. CENTER: ARNO GASTLEIGER/AGE FOTOSTOCK; COURTESY OF WHALE WATCH KAIKOURA.





3 | Greater Yellowstone with Off the Beaten Path (7-10 days)

Range Roving

Clockwise from top left: The Golden Eagle suite balcony at the Lodge at Sun Ranch; horses at J Bar L Ranch; the Yellowstone River at sunrise; Old Faithful and a bison, in Yellowstone National Park; trail riding on Sun Ranch; at Hotel Terra, in Jackson Hole; Jackson Lake, in Grand Teton National Park.

WHY WE LOVE IT Off the Beaten Path's strong relationships with area travel experts—the pioneering environmental activism of owners Bill and Pam Bryan and Cory Lawrence—mean that you'll meet the best veteran tour guides in Yellowstone National Park, check in to the finest green hotels, and hook up with exclusive adventure operators. Responsible outfitters including Wildlife Expeditions, Hole Hiking Travel Experience Co., Barker-Ewing River Trips, and O.A.R.S. will customize your outings—and escort you to their secret stomping grounds for fishing, hiking, rafting, and more.

WHERE IT GOES This wilderness- and wildlife-focused trip begins in Bozeman, Montana; continues south to ranch land near tiny Cameron; leads you through the backcountry of Yellowstone National Park; and finishes up in Tetons-ringed Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

WHAT YOU'LL DO Take your pick of more activities than you can handle in three days at the sustainably managed Lodge at Sun Ranch, including horseback riding, bird-watching (look skyward for ferruginous hawks and long-billed curlews, two of 126 species on the property),

and rafting or canoeing on nearby rivers. A hybrid car transports you to Yellowstone to explore the park with such expert naturalists as Mike Bryers, whose favorite spots after 27 years on the job are the thermal pools scattered throughout the 3,472 square miles of the park. ("They're almost scenes from another planet," he says.) You'll also have the chance to ride the rapids down the Snake River; hike family-friendly trails in the foothills of Wyoming's Gros Ventre Mountains; trek into Horseshoe Canyon and spend the night—or up the camping ante with a two-night kayaking, rafting, and fly-fishing trip on Jackson Lake. And come equipped for a safari-like trip to spy on the region's impressive elk, grizzly, and wolf populations.

WHERE YOU'LL STAY Options include the eco-sophisticated Lodge at Sun Ranch; one of Yellowstone's historic park lodges (all of which are undergoing major greening by parent company Xanterra properties); J Bar L Ranch, in the sweeping Centennial Valley; and the LEED-certified Hotel Terra, in Jackson Hole. (Set aside time for a massage or a thermal soak with 100 percent organic products at the hotel's Chill Spa.)

THE DETAILS *T+L Transformation Vacation by Off the Beaten Path*, available on request; 800/445-2995; offthebeatenpath.com; estimated at \$375 per person per day.



4 | Southeast Asia with Elevate Destinations (16 days)

Asian Offerings Clockwise from top left: Wat Xieng Thong, in Luang Prabang, Laos; Buddhas in Luang Prabang; a Chiang Mai market; Bangkok's Royal Palace; Nam Khan River, in Laos; traditional jasmine-coil offerings in Thailand; the old town in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

WHY WE LOVE IT For travelers who still associate Southeast Asia with the Vietnam War, Elevate Destinations shows a rarely seen side of Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, placing the conflict on the continuum of an ancient culture. The guiding notion of this T+L trip is to mix and mingle tours of breathtaking temples, like Angkor Wat, with experiences of daily life in villages that keep such temples alive. Dominique Callimanopulos founded her three-year-old company after seeing the world as a student and young professional revealed a disconnect between travelers and the places they are inspired to go. A portion of the trip's cost goes to on-the-ground projects.

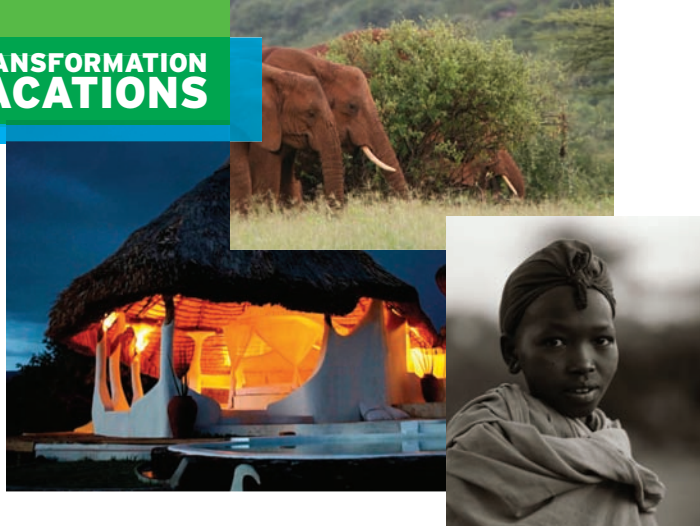
WHERE IT GOES Thailand: from Bangkok to the temple cities of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai; Laos: Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the village of Pak Beng; Cambodia: Siem Reap, site of Angkor Wat.

WHAT YOU'LL DO Learn traditional Thai dancing; visit a rarely mounted exhibit of indigenous crafts sponsored by Queen Sirikit's foundation; take an ecotour of a "community forest" in Chiang Mai where tea and coffee crops have replaced illegal logging; and indulge in a traditional Thai massage. Cruise the Mekong River toward

Luang Prabang, Laos, stopping to watch a hill tribe pickle rice into whiskey, and sample (or purchase) the results. Ride a *tuk-tuk* to Luang Prabang's temples, including Wat Xieng Thong, known for its magnificent tree-of-life mosaic, and Wat Mai Suwannaphumaham, with its five-tier roof; stop for a quick dip below the Kuang Si waterfall on the way to the Language Project Library, and in a nearby village, receive a blessing from elders in a traditional Baci ceremony. In Cambodia, visit Angkor Wat, then watch local fishermen ply the waters of Tonle Sap, Southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake. More highlights: a hike to Kbal Spean, where 900-year-old intricate carvings in and around the Kbal Spean river depict Hindu deities; and an on-site conversation with the founder of the Cambodia Land Mine Museum, which educates villagers on land mine awareness and accident prevention.

WHERE YOU'LL STAY Our favorite stops include the colonial-era Mandarin Oriental Bangkok on the Chao Phraya river; the Luang Say Lodge, in Pak Beng, elevated on stilts for 180-degree views of the Mekong River Valley; and Maison Souvannaphoum, in Luang Prabang, once home to Laotian royalty.

THE DETAILS T+L Transformation Vacation by Elevate Destinations, available on request; 617/661-0203; elevatedestinations.com; \$9,000 per person (excluding airfare, travel insurance, and personal expenses).



5 | Safari in Kenya with Journeys by Design (11 days)

Out of Africa

Above, clockwise from left: A bedroom at Shompole Lodge; grazing elephants at Tassia; a Samburu herdsman.

Wining and Riding

Below, clockwise from left: Abbaye de la Bussière; the medieval hospital in Beaune; a cyclist in Burgundy.

WHY WE LOVE IT The U.K.'s Journeys by Design, a leader in custom African travel, has a stellar reputation as a responsible luxury-tour operator. Its close work with tribal communities makes travel rewarding for tourists and indigenous peoples alike—Masai and Samburu villages and guides are integral to this trip. The company sets aside a portion of revenues for local charities, renewable energy projects, and their own conservation and development projects in the areas they visit.

WHERE IT GOES From the border of Tanzania to the big-game-rich Great Rift Valley; north to the semi-arid Laikipia Plateau; and up to the Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust in the Matthews Range.

WHAT YOU'LL DO Three days in, you'll be riding camelback and walking through vast plains and tribal villages. The eight remaining days are yours to fill as you'd like. Highlights: moonlit bush dinners timed to catch wildlife at a watering hole; a picnic on Ol Lolokwe Mountain, believed by the Masai to be the residence of the gods; a hike through the forested Matthews Range, where leopards and thousands of once-threatened elephants roam; and a visit to the "singing wells," to see a human chain of Samburu warriors descend into wells as deep as 32 feet, chanting ancient songs as they hand up vessels of water for their cattle.

WHERE YOU'LL STAY In an open-air room with a private plunge pool at the eco-minded Shompole Lodge, a Masai-style room with stone walls and earthen ceilings at Tassia Lodge, and a luxury tent both en route to the Matthews Range and at the community-owned Sarara Tented Camp in the Namunyak Trust. Optional while there: a starry campout on wide sand *luggas* (dry riverbeds).

THE DETAILS *T+L Transformation Vacation by Journeys by Design*, available on request; 212/568-7639; journeysbydesign.com; \$8,333 per person (excluding airfare).

6 | Biking in Burgundy with Butterfield & Robinson (6 days)

WHY WE LOVE IT Butterfield & Robinson sets the standard for customized biking trips, and here brings you close to a culture intimately tied to the land. Thanks to Beaune being the company's European headquarters, you'll get unusually special access to an area that's a longtime B&R favorite.

WHERE IT GOES From Dijon, on a B&R custom-designed hybrid or racing bike adjusted for you, you'll cycle to the village of Chambolle-Musigny and its 370 vineyard acres of Pinot Noir; then follow the Côte d'Or, a limestone escarpment stretching to the river Dheune, to the medieval city of Beaune; and head into the Ouche Valley—hilly enough to create thirst, and thick with wineries to slake it—before going back to Dijon.

WHAT YOU'LL DO Covering 25 miles each day, this trip is doable at your own pace. Stops are mostly about wine: you'll tour wine caves with Domaine des Epeneaux owner and biodynamic-viticulture advocate Benjamin Leroux; visit the Grand Cru vineyard Le Montrachet; ride to the 12th-century castle of Chateaufort; and picnic at Les Jardins de Barbirey, a private garden laid out in the early 1800's. A walk through Beaune's Old Town with historian Chantal Leroux pauses at shops stocking local L'Époisses cheese and truffle of Burgundy. Final touch: a lunch at a biofarm, Ferme de la Ruchotte, for a meal featuring locally grown vegetables and organic cheeses.

WHERE YOU'LL STAY At the 18th-century Château André Ziltener; the historic Hôtel Le Cep, with views of Beaune's Old Town; and a 12th-century monastery turned luxe country hotel, the Abbaye de la Bussière.

THE DETAILS *T+L Transformation Vacation by Butterfield & Robinson*; May 31–June 5, 2009; 800/678-1147; butterfield.com; \$5,795, with a single supplement of \$800.



TOP, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF JOURNEYS BY DESIGN; WWW.EYEPHOTOGRAPHICWORKSHOPS.COM (2). BOTTOM, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF ABBAYE DE LA BUSSIÈRE; PAUL ALMAYCORBIS; COURTESY OF BUTTERFIELD & ROBINSON © KEN KOCHEY



From left: On camelback at Egypt's famous Pyramids; a tribesman in Papua New Guinea; volunteers comparing Toms shoes; Portofino, in Italy's Cinque Terre.

14 More Transforming Trips

● U.S. & CANADA

High Arctic with Geographic Expeditions

What and Where Spend 14 days aboard the *Akademik Ioffe*, which sails from Ottawa to Bylot Island. **Why We Love It** Polar bears and walrus. 800/777-8183; geoex.com; from \$4,890 per person; August 2–15 and 13–26, 2009.

New Orleans with the Sierra Club

What and Where Restore a neighborhood devastated by Hurricane Katrina (which one will be decided the week before the trip). **Why We Love It** You can still help. 415/977-5522; outings.sierraclub.org; from \$785 per person; fall 2009, call for specific dates.

Hawaii with Field Guides

What and Where Immersion bird-watching on three islands. **Why We Love It** Ornithologists guide you to species like the rare Oahu elepaio, then put you up in three- and four-star hotels. 800/728-4953; fieldguides.com; \$4,375 per person; March 14–24, 2009.

● MEXICO, CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

Oaxaca and Puebla with CUESA

What and Where A cuisine-rich tour with visits to heritage-food farms and markets overflowing with produce, flowers, and crafts. **Why We Love It** Oaxacan black mole is made under your nose, and you get to take home the recipe. 415/291-3276; cuesa.org; \$2,499 per person; February 28–March 8, 2009.

Best of Honduras with MesoAmerica Travel

What and Where Cover the country with visits to a major crafts market, three national parks, a botanical garden, and the Mayan ruins of Copan. **Why We Love It** For the flora and fauna of it all. 504/557-8447; mesoamerica-travel.com; \$1,598 for two people; available year-round.

Argentina with Toms Tours

What and Where Work and play in Buenos Aires, Misiones, and Iguazú with Toms founder Blake Mycoskie or his team while handing out

supercool casual shoes to barefoot kids. **Why We Love It** Every pair sold provides one child with new shoes. 800/975-8667; tomsshoes.com; \$1,800; call for departure dates.

● EUROPE

Czech Republic with Earthwatch

What and Where Channel your inner scientist in the Jizera Mountains to study air pollution and acid rain's effect on the watershed. **Why We Love It** Because it's better than Brita. 800/776-0188; earthwatch.org; \$2,746 per person; May 30–June 13, June 20–July 4, and July 11–25, 2009.

Cinque Terre with Country Walkers

What and Where Smudge your carbon footprint in Italy with a week's walk in the "Five Lands" of coastal Liguria. **Why We Love It** It takes your breath away. 800/464-9255; countrywalkers.com; \$3,648 per person; May–October.

Greece with Global Volunteers

What and Where Teach conversational English to

local children. **Why We Love It** Eight hours a day volunteering, 24 hours a day on a Greek island. 800/487-1074; globalvolunteers.org; from \$2,795 per person; program offered year-round.

● ASIA

Ultimate Gobi with Nomadic Expeditions

What and Where A trip through the legendary Mongolian desert on camelback. **Why We Love It** It's the best seat in the house. 800/998-6634; nomadicexpeditions.com; \$3,273 per person; May 27–June 8, August 12–24, 2009.

The Great Wall of China with RAW Travel

What and Where Venture along a part of the wall most tour groups never reach. **Why We Love It** For the math: the trip costs only \$402 if you first raise \$4,480 for charity. 61-3/9597-0210; rawtravel.com; \$1,792 per person; May 16–26 and September 12–22, 2009.

Papua New Guinea with Asia Transpacific Journeys

What and Where Attend Tumbuna Sing-Sing, the astonishing annual song-and-dance "challenge"

among tribes wearing their proudest costumes and performing their most mesmerizing chants. **Why We Love It** It's the only one on earth. 800/642-2742; asiatranspacific.com; \$7,395 per person; May 14–28, 2009.

● AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST

Egyptian Journey with G.A.P Adventures

What and Where Walk (and drive) like an Egyptian from Cairo to Aswan for historic structures, teeming bazaars, and majestic temples. **Why We Love It** The Nile, the Pyramids, the Sphinx! 800/708-7761; gapadventures.com; \$1,045 per person; year-round.

Cameroon with Global Vision International

What and Where Help conduct forest surveys designed to save the endangered Cross River gorilla. **Why We Love It** They're all in the family. 888/653-6028; gvi.co.uk; \$1,765 per person; January 10–24 and April 7–21, 2009.

—COMPILED BY JENNIFER WELBEL