

# VIRTUOSO LIFE

## THE CALL OF CHINA

Shanghai, Beijing,  
& the Yangtze River

ESSENTIAL  
INDIA

BARCELONA  
MARKETS

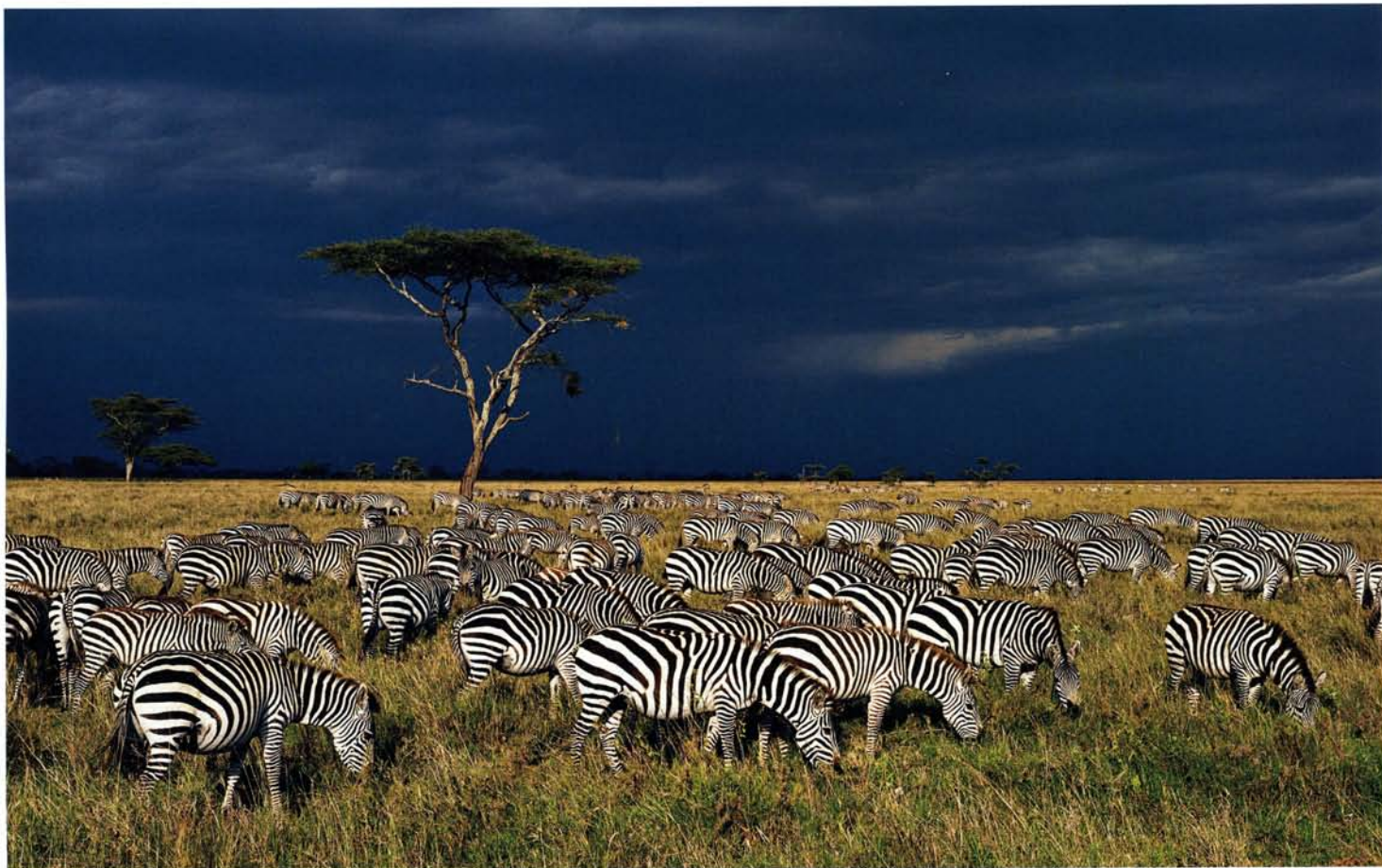
TOKYO TODAY

TANGO IN  
BUENOS AIRES



# Transformative Travel

Six trips that may change your life. BY COSTAS CHRIST



What's black and white and blue all over? This photo of the Serengeti migration.

JOHN STEINBECK SAID IT BEST IN *TRAVELS with Charley*: “We do not take a trip; a trip takes us.” Indeed, travel can take us to new horizons in ways we might never imagine.

In my case, 31 years ago I went on a safari to Tanzania. While camping on the Serengeti plains, I poked my head out of the tent at sunrise and witnessed more than a million wildebeests fanned as far as I could see. Nothing could have prepared me for such a sight – the largest land migration left on earth – and it changed everything. I ended up staying in East Africa for a decade, learned the local language, and worked with Dr. Richard Leakey organizing community-based ecotourism. Travel compels us to shake away the familiar and discover something new, both in the world and in

ourselves. Here are six trips that are more than meaningful – they may even be life-changing.

## TANZANIA

### The Greatest Show on Earth

The primal migration of some 2 million wildebeests, gazelles, and zebras across the Serengeti is the single most dramatic wildlife spectacle on the planet. To **witness the migration at its best**, you need to travel on nature's terms, moving with the herds as they search for water and pasture. Africa specialists **&Beyond** will show you the Serengeti as it should be experienced: comfortable, intimate, and up close from mobile tented camps on the migration route. The goal is not just to see the plain, but to understand the circle of life that

begins with the wildebeests and sustains such predators as lions, leopards, and hyenas, along with a host of smaller species from golden jackals to dung beetles. *Departures: Year-round; customized trips from \$660 per day.*

**DOING GOOD:** &Beyond's conservationists helped create the new Serengeti National Park management plan, and the company also supports local community health projects in the western Serengeti.

INDIA

**Home of the Dalai Lama**

For centuries, traveling in India has been considered a sojourn of the body, mind, and spirit. So it's no surprise the Dalai Lama chose that country as the spiritual headquarters of the Tibetan government in exile. Few places, and even fewer living human beings, have the ability to inspire personal transformation and positive change. A pilgrimage to Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama resides and teaches, can do both. **Remote Lands** will custom-design a seven-day visit to this mystical town nestled beneath Himalayan peaks and, on special request, **seek a private audience** for you with His Holiness. Itineraries feature visits to temples, monasteries, and village markets and a meeting with senior Tibetan

monks at the Temple of the Oracle. Individual meditation instruction for peace of mind and well-being is also part of the journey. *Departures: Year-round; from \$8,050.*

**DOING GOOD:** Remote Lands donates \$150 per person, per day from the trip to the Tibetan Children's Village in Dharamsala, which helps care for destitute Tibetan refugee children.

ANTARCTICA

**The Least Explored Continent**

Antarctica may be the closest we can get to experiencing a different planet. A place where the sun rises in the fall and sets in March – one long day and night each year – it is our least explored continent, as well as our highest, driest, and, yes, our coldest too. As far as scientists know, no native peoples have ever lived there. This sense of the unknown and the chance to see rare adaptive wildlife, including emperor penguins, make travel to Antarctica a remarkable experience. **Abercrombie & Kent** was among the first tour operators to venture there 20 years ago; as part of that anniversary, its 14-day philanthropic tour on the eco-friendly *Le Boreal* includes a **meeting with scientists** at the Palmer research station to better understand this fragile habitat. *Departures: December 7, 2011 and 2012; from \$12,065.*



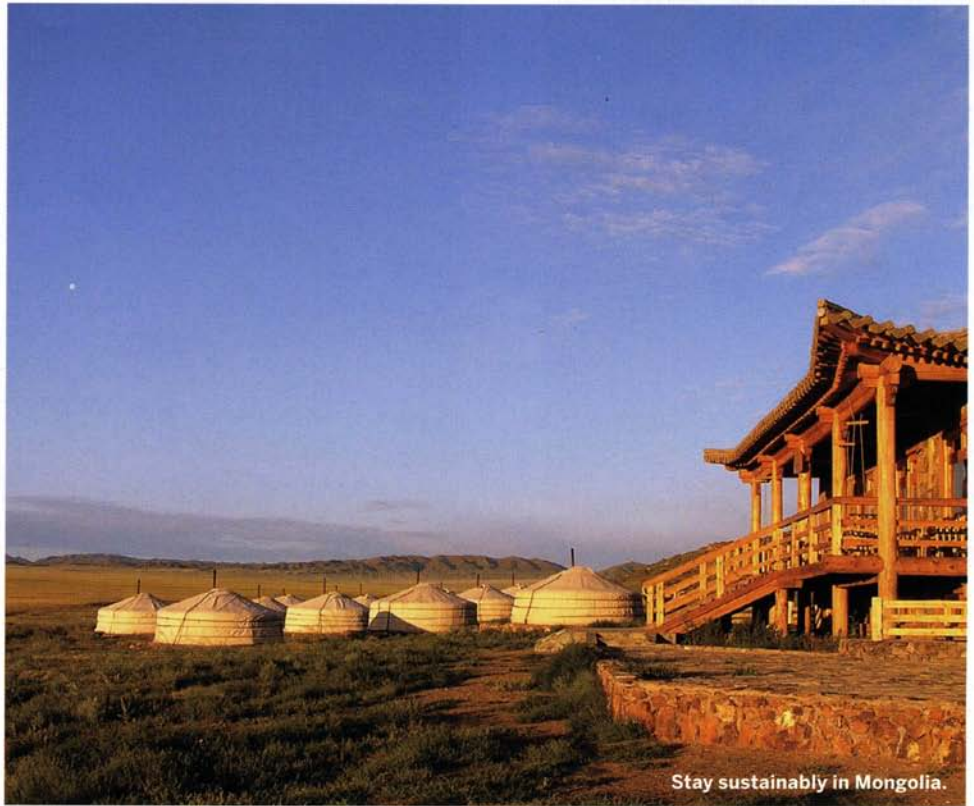
Cool change from the ordinary: Exploring Antarctica.

**DOING GOOD:** A&K will donate scientific monitoring equipment, purchased with a portion of the trip's proceeds, to the Palmer Station during your visit, to be used for climate change research.

#### MONGOLIA

### **A Nomadic Expedition**

One of the last unspoiled travel destinations in Asia, Mongolia remains mostly a land of yurts (known locally as *gers*) and nomadic herders who travel on horseback across the largest unfenced grasslands in the world. Villagers may still leave a plate of food on the table when they go out, an age-old nomadic custom, in case a hungry wayfarer passes through. On its 13-day tour, **Cox & Kings** takes you deep into Mongolia's cultural and natural heritage, including attending the morning chants at Gandan Monastery (where monks hid ancient relics during the Stalinist occupation) and searching for *takhi*, the world's **last remaining species of wild horse**. Wooden carts pulled by yaks remain a



Stay sustainably in Mongolia.



Calling all citizen astronauts: Virgin Galactic prepares for takeoff.

primary mode of transport for villagers at Lake Hövsgöl on the Siberian border, where you will hike through wildflower meadows beneath 10,000-foot mountain peaks and bed down in a *ger* camp, the way locals have for centuries. *Departures: Any day from June through September 2012; from \$5,580.*

**DOING GOOD:** The trip includes two nights at the Gobi Desert's Three Camel Lodge, a model of environmental and cultural sustainability, hand-built by traditional Mongol craftsmen.

MEXICO

**The Aquarium of the World**

After traveling the seven seas, legendary explorer Jacques Cousteau laid anchor in the Sea of Cortés and was so stunned by its sheer abundance of marine life, he dubbed it the "aquarium of the world." Today, a new generation of biologists calls the Sea of Cortés a "marine biodiversity hot spot" – one of the top ten places on earth where nutrient-rich waters support enormous populations of fish, dolphins, whales, seabirds, and corals. **American Safari Cruises** introduces ecotourists to this unique water world during a seven-day journey on a 22-passenger **private yacht with onboard naturalists** and an array of activities, including sea kayaking and snorkeling. Two of its 2012 trips welcome families with children, who love

spotting blue whales – the world's largest living creature. *Departures: Multiple dates from November through April 2012; from \$3,995.*

**DOING GOOD:** American Safari Cruises provides fresh potable water during the trip to subsistence families living on Isla Coyote, the most remote village in the Sea of Cortés.

SUBORBITAL SPACE

**Breaking Free of Borders**

The handful of astronauts who have left the bonds of Earth to venture into space describe a moment when they peered back at our blue planet floating in a quiet, dark universe and were overwhelmed with a profound feeling of interconnectedness. Looking at Earth from a distance seems to bring the realization that we are bound together by a common humanity, and international borders, along with passports to move between them, seem rather silly. Such is the **transformative power of space travel** – and we are getting closer to it with each passing month. In the next few years, Richard Branson's **Virgin Galactic** will lift off from Spaceport America with the first group of citizens turned astronauts. *Departure: To be announced; from \$200,000.*

**DOING GOOD:** Virgin Galactic's calculations show that the carbon emissions from going into space will be approximately 0.8 ton per passenger – less than a one-way flight from London to New York. VI

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