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Current Issue
April/May 2009
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NATIONAL PARKS



Most Beautiful Places
We've found the most beautiful places in the parks and located them for you with GPS coordinates.

ROAD-TRIPPING RUSSIA



6,000 Miles to Moscow
A look at globalization gone wild along the newly opened Trans-Siberian Highway.

ADVENTURE TOWNS



Best Places to Live
See our top 50 adventure towns.

SURVIVAL STORIES



How to Survive (Almost) Anything
Award-winning writer Laurence Gonzales looks at the psychology of survival.

Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth

Published: February 2009

- ADVERTISEMENT -



The Adventure Ratings 2009: Now Live!

A comprehensive ranking of the world's top outfitters—surveyed, sorted, and scored.

By Costas Christ and Claire Martin

For the second time in as many years, we've conducted an unprecedented survey of adventure travel companies, based on the idea that a traveler's most important decision is not always where to go but who to go with. For the 2009 edition, we spoke to more guide services—and their clients—than ever before (248 in all). We contacted companies that lead 85,000 people a year and those that cater to a hundred. We surveyed paddling outfitters, trekking guides, safari specialists, and the ones that do it all. We evaluated companies that will take you places you've only dreamed of (the Tibetan Plateau, the Serengeti on foot) and those that specialize in your own backyard (the Grand Canyon, the Grand Tetons).

And after asking them the tough questions (Have you tested your risk management strategies? Are your guides trained to "leave no trace"?), we scored each one using criteria synonymous with National Geographic—environmental awareness, reliable service, local knowledge. Because in a time when travel dollars are stretched, it's essential that an outfitter deliver the trip of a lifetime, the first time. These are the world's leading travel specialists. Each offers a unique way to explore the planet. The only question now is: Who will you go with? **See top companies in each category, as published in the magazine >>**

THE ADVENTURE RATINGS ONLINE UPDATE FOR 2009

We've created the ultimate trip-planning tool: a comprehensive listing the world's 200 top-ranking outfitters—complete with comments from readers like you—that's searchable by destination, activity, price, and scores. **Start your search >>**

HOW WE DID IT: THE METHODOLOGY

Using National Geographic ADVENTURE's global outfitter database and with assistance from Sustainable Travel International, The Adventure Travel Trade Association, The International Ecotourism Society, and other travel and tourism organizations, we reached out to hundreds of tour companies around the world. The outfitters were asked to complete a comprehensive, 30-question survey. Each survey was scored from 1-100 in each of the following categories: Education, Sustainability, Quality of Service, and Spirit of Adventure. Researchers then randomly interviewed client references for every company based on the same categories and generated a fifth score, also between 1 and 100. Each outfitter's overall score represents the average of these five scores. A team of ADVENTURE editors and travel experts then vetted those with overall scores of 85 and above. From this pool of candidates, we identified the best adventure travel companies, which are profiled here.

[Back to Search Results](#)



Overall Score **93.83**

Rating Criteria Scores

Overall	93.83
Quality of Service	90.50
Sustainability	93.50
Spirit of Adventure	93.00
Education	95.50
Client Satisfaction	96.67

Price **\$\$\$**

Outfitter's Primary Activity
Voluntourism

- Outfitter's Other Activities**
- Nature and Wildlife
 - Biking/Cycling
 - Cultural Encounters
 - Hiking/Trekking
 - Voluntourism

Pacific Discovery



Founded in 2001, Pacific Discovery offers adventure samplers in Australia, New Zealand, Peru, and Southeast Asia. Trips are personalized and focus on cultural immersion with activities like homestays and volunteering with conservation groups. Trips range from two weeks to two months and hit the country's highlights. For example, in Australia, its guides venture to Uluru (Ayers Rock), the Great Barrier Reef and Sydney's beaches. The Southeast Asia itinerary includes Cambodia's Angkor Wat temples and Thailand's island of Ko Samui.

Signature Trip: Tale of the Dragon; trekking, boat cruising, cycling; 18 days; Vietnam

New in 2009

Name:	New Zealand Conservation Tour
Destination:	New Zealand
Duration:	14 days
Price:	\$3,100

Website

www.pacificdiscovery.org

Countries Visited

Asia:	Bhutan, China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Thailand, Vietnam
Latin America:	Ecuador, Peru
Oceania:	Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea

Photograph courtesy of Pacific Discovery



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FEATURED OUTFITTERS



Gamewatchers Safaris
Gamewatchers' private wildlife conservancies offer respite from the crowds.



Wide Open Baja
Drive the famous Baja peninsula.



Ecuador Tours
The M/V Galapagos Explorer II provides comfort...



REI Adventures
A co-op known for its quality outdoor gear, REI also offers clients the chance to put

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