

 NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

TORONTO: WHERE
THE LOCALS GO

TRAVELER

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MAY 2013

Tours of a Lifetime

2013
8th
Annual
GUIDE



50
of the
World's
Best
Guided
Trips

PLUS: HAMBURG | ATHENS | HONOLULU | AMSTERDAM





The colonial city of Salvador, in Brazil.

BRAZIL

Trifecta Trek

This unusual walking-focused itinerary spans three distinct parts of Brazil: the Royal Route, which connected the gold mines of the interior to the coast during Portuguese rule; colonial Salvador, coined “the capital of happiness,” thanks to its laid-back residents and lively carnival; and the otherworldly cliffs, monoliths, and caves of Chapada Diamantina National Park.

Country Walkers: “Brazil: Royal Route, Salvador, and Chapada Diamantina,” 11 days; \$6,498; www.countrywalkers.com **N P**

NICARAGUA

For the Birds

For all the buzz touting it as the next Costa Rica, Nicaragua has yet to attract mainstream tourists in droves. But this itinerary shows off its potential as a nature nirvana, with visits to five wildlife reserves, including Selva Negra (a combination organic farm, eco-lodge, and

bird-friendly coffee estate).

Bonus: Birders have a shot at spotting and cataloging any new species to help create the country’s first bird book.

International Expeditions:

“Nicaragua: Land of Lakes and Volcanoes,” 9 days;

\$3,398; www.ietravel.com **N**

ECUADOR

Homestay in the Amazon

The term “cultural immersion” pops up a lot on travel company websites, but here’s the real deal. Spend four days living with a Quichua family in the Amazon jungle, where you’ll learn how to identify medicinal plants; make chicha, a fermented drink from cassava; and participate in a shaman healing ceremony. **G Adventures:** “Ecuador Jungle Local Living,” 7 days; \$499; www.gadventures.com **N G**

Contributing editor MARGARET LOFTUS has reported and written “Tours of a Lifetime” for the past eight years.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Our own National Geographic Expeditions specializes in creating trips—from Antarctica to Yellowstone—many developed and led by the Society’s researchers and explorers.

BELIZE

Reefs to Ruins

With 180 miles of coastline, the second longest barrier reef in the world, virgin rain forests, and Maya ruins crammed into a country roughly the size of New Jersey, Belize is an undersize country with oversize natural gifts. Here’s an itinerary that lets you experience it all. **National Geographic Adventures:** “Belize: Reefs, Rain Forests, and Ruins,” 10 days; \$4,195; www.nationalgeographicadventures.com

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, VENEZUELA, GUYANA, SURINAME, FRENCH GUIANA, BRAZIL, URUGUAY, ARGENTINA

South American Odyssey

Starting in Trinidad and skirting the eastern coastline of South America to Buenos Aires, this grand expedition on the 148-passenger *National Geographic Explorer*—a celebration of the National Geographic Society’s 125th anniversary—focuses on the region’s cultural heritage as well as flora and fauna. An army of experts (including Explorer-in-Residence Wade Davis and conservation biologist Thomas Lovejoy) is onboard to answer your questions. **National Geographic Expeditions:** “Epic South America,” 38 days; \$34,730; www.nationalgeographicexpeditions.com **N C**