

ADVANTAGE

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EMBRAER QUARTERLY
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TRAVEL FOR HUMANITY

Driven by a love of nature, animals and culture, travelers are seeking new ways to derive enjoyment, satisfaction and meaning from their travel experiences

Travel that gives back is not new. For the last 60 years, organizations like the Peace Corps have helped adventurous souls focus their desire to help in meaningful ways worldwide. Since then, many travel companies have incorporated various forms of volunteerism into their offerings and itineraries.

These experiences have evolved into travel philanthropy; instead of focusing on charity or service, travelers are provided access to unique and culturally immersive experiences.

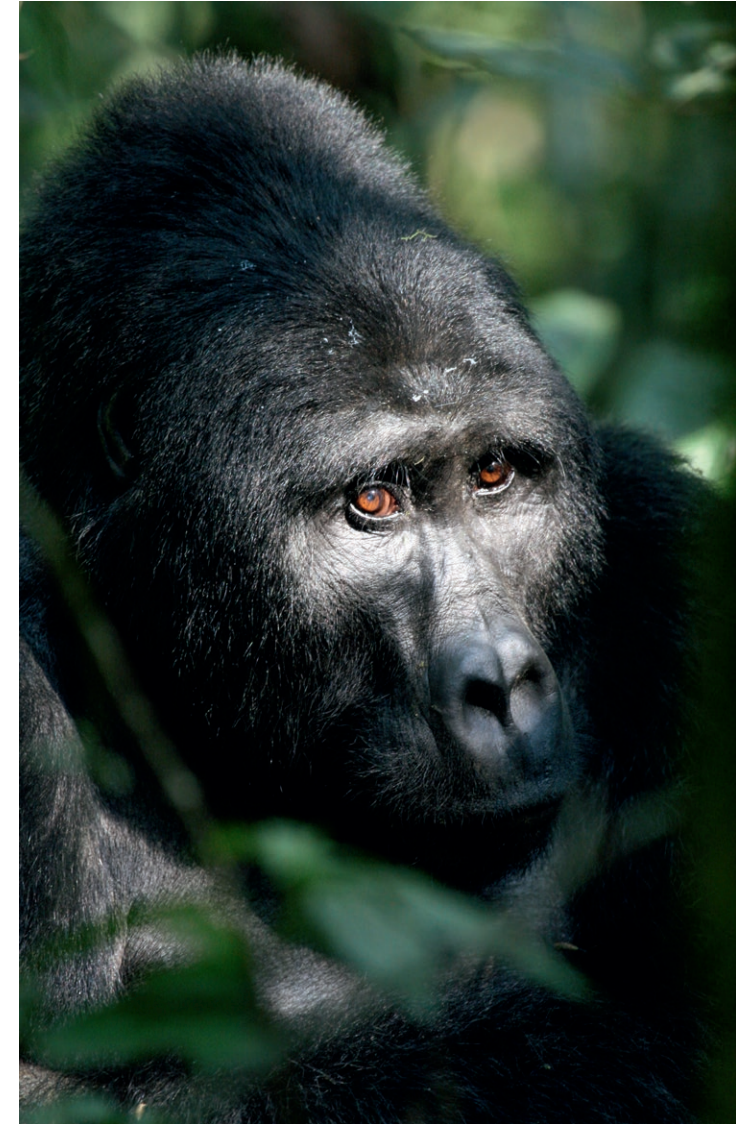
Philanthropic travel allows travelers to engage with, learn from and be a partner with people and programs committed to positive change in their communities. More intimate than planting a tree or sending a donation, these journeys can bring positive transformation to both the traveler and the destination.

With this travel evolution, we now know that despite the best intentions, we can actually do a great deal of harm when we inject money and influence into a delicate ecosystem that involves regional complexities we couldn't understand looking from the outside in. At large, the biggest challenge is to ensure funding has a clear impact and goes where it is supposed to go, where the people and destination truly benefit from the exchange and where the visitor comes out more knowledgeable about solutions being applied to important local issues.

“Striking the right balance between tourism, indigenous communities and wildlife conservation is crucial.”

Among the many vital issues to be aware of is the proliferation of conservation refugees. All over the world, millions of people continue to be displaced from their ancestral homelands in the name of conservation. This hollow-hearted practice is a missed opportunity to learn authentic, sustainable practices and gain knowledge from indigenous people that have lived in harmony with flora and fauna in their environment for thousands of years.

To address this issue, Praveen Moman, Founder of Volcanoes Safaris, purchased 10 acres of land in the nearby town of Kisoro, Uganda, to create a permanent village for the indigenous Batwa and their families. Previously a self-sufficient community, they were exiled from their home and thrust into the modern world with no resources, land or education in the name of saving the endangered mountain gorillas and creating the Mgahinga National Park. “The Batwa have lived for millennia in the forests, co-existing with the gorillas. In seeking to create more protected areas for wildlife, we must ensure that local people are also provided for, moved to new lands and given support to acquire new skills,” explained Moman. In addition to an agricultural area for growing crops and a vocational center to learn new skills, the houses in the village settlement were built following the Batwa’s sustainable traditions and culture, using volcanic stone, mud and water to form the core of the design.



Left Page: Every Volcanoes Safaris lodge exemplifies a sophisticated low-impact Afro-shabby-chic ethos using artifacts and textures that reflect the culture of the Great Lakes of Africa

Right page (top): Wildlife treks through the old-growth forests in Uganda and Rwanda provide glimpses of endangered mountain gorillas, rare golden monkeys and tree-climbing lions

Right page (bottom): Empowering local staff at all levels of management through extensive training programs is a key aspect of Volcanoes’ philosophy

WORDS: Jennifer Davis, IMAGES (left page) © Gael Ruboneka Vande Weghe, (right page) Courtesy of Volcanoes Safaris

As an award-winning luxury lodge and recognized leader in great ape tourism, part of its ethos involves supporting and preserving the rich culture of its local communities. For example, the Mount Gahinga Lodge includes a Heritage Site where the Batwa can demonstrate how they used to live, hunt and collect resources from the forest. “Striking the right balance between tourism, indigenous communities and wildlife conservation is crucial. We achieve this by building small eco-friendly lodges in a style sympathetic to local aesthetics and supporting responsible practices in relation to gorilla and chimp viewing. We are also staffed largely by locals who are empowered to manage the resort through training programs that teach hospitality, management and nature guiding,” added Moman. In addition to stunning accommodations in Rwanda and Uganda along the Albertine Rift and providing close encounters with rare animals in their natural habitat, Volcanoes Safaris upholds respectful relationships with their neighbors, who have ultimately become the cornerstone of their success.

Another way to give back and travel more consciously is to avoid visiting specific destinations. More people are traveling than ever before, but the concentration is on a very short list of destinations. When a small city of 50,000 residents experience 30 million visitors annually, it can negatively affect the attributes that made the destination worth visiting in the first place.

In Peru, there is a push to diversify tourism away from Machu Picchu, which became so overcrowded that the government created a timed-entry system to control the 5,000 daily visitors. The solution is to steer visitors towards another lesser-known area of the Great Inca Trail known as the Qhapaq Ñan. An extraordinary feat of preindustrial engineering, this 19,000-mile trade route between Colombia and Argentina links the snow-capped Andes to the coast, running through rainforests, valleys and deserts.



Above: The Great Inca Trail is part of the Qhapaq Ñan road network, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that stretches across six countries from Colombia to Argentina

Left: By promoting equitable travel practices, SA Expeditions aims to alleviate the pressure on more heavily visited sites like Machu Picchu

Right: Nick Stanziano, Co-founder and CEO of SA Expeditions, sees ecotourism as the best way to combat the rapid deterioration of this historic trade route



EMBRAER TIP

Not in a hurry? The Praetor 500’s long range cruise speed not only maximizes its range, but fuel efficiency as well. Travel greener at the expense of only a few extra minutes in-flight.



IMAGES © SA Expeditions

Nick Stanziano, the Lima-based Co-founder and CEO of SA Expeditions, has collaborated with local groups to develop a multi-day trek along the Great Inca Trail from Castillo to Huanuco Pampa with a support team of cooks, mountain guides and llama handlers to manage the journey. “Our approach to developing inclusive tourism initiatives involves securing buy-in from local stakeholders from the onset. We prioritize building a supply chain that provides a dignified way to make an honest living for all involved. We make a point to champion regional stewards of the land by supporting micro-entrepreneurs and hiring residents for things like camp support and llama husbandry, so local guides and herders gain marketable experience for working with other responsible tour outfitters,” said Stanziano.

SA Expeditions offers distinct high-altitude, long-distance treks along the Great Inca Trail. Their routes cover some pretty extreme terrain over distances longer than the classic Inca

Trail to Machu Picchu—this means at least average fitness levels are essential. A passion for conservation, cultural exchange and world history will make the experience even more impactful. While all expeditions are ultimately customizable, those who secure space on the limited-availability group trek in June 2023 will spend quality time with John Leivers, a legendary explorer and key member of the original Great Inca Trail exploration team, most famous for being the guide in the book: “Turn Right at Machu Picchu.”

Complexity will always reside at the core of any philanthropic endeavor, travel or otherwise, which is why it is crucial to consider every aspect of the work being done and any long-term impacts that might occur. We have the knowledge, creativity and technology to solve our issues without creating worse problems in other areas. By recognizing the inherent value in everyone’s story, we can learn and grow towards a more balanced world rooted in our shared humanity. ◀