



Blue skies enhance eye-popping costumes at Peru's Quyllur Rit'i festival, outside Cusco.

Asia

turns out to be full of surprises, including vestiges of one of the world's oldest civilizations and parks that are home to hyenas, wolves, Asiatic lions, and more. *Immersion Journeys*: "Gujarat: The Land of Legends, Culture & Crafts," 12 days; \$5,295; www.immersionjourneys.com ◦

INDONESIA

Dives and Dragons

Snorkel among manta rays and such exotic species as clown blennies and yellow-ribbon sweetlips in the translucent waters of Komodo National Park. Home is a 98-foot-long wooden schooner, complete with a small team of marine biologists and guides, who give talks on the park's diversity. A highlight: close-up sightings of Komodo dragons. *Wilderness Travel*: "Komodo Snorkeling Expedition," 11 days; from \$5,595; www.wildernesstravel.com ◦

JAPAN

The Zen of Gardens

Cycle country roads from Kanazawa—site of Kenrokuen, one of Japan's great gardens—north to the Noto Peninsula. Along the way, visit the Sojiji Temple and gardens, scout for lacquerware at Wajima's morning market, and relax in the healing hot springs of Wakura Onsen. Bookended by stays in Kyoto and Tokyo. *Explore!*: "Kyoto and Beyond by Bike," 13 days; from \$5,440; www.exploreworldwide.com

Unexplored," 15 days; from \$4,264; www.globalbasecamps.com ◦◦

IRAN

Persian Odyssey

An ambitious itinerary spans millennia and a wide swath of the land of the Peacock Throne, from ancient palaces of the Achaemenid kings at Persepolis to the Zoroastrian Fire Temple in Yazd, where fire has been burning for 1,500 years. Tour operator founder Will Weber will join the

September departure. *Journeys International*: "Persia Past and Present," 15 days; \$5,375; www.journeysinternational.com ◦

INDIA

Snow Leopard Trek

Join ecologists, shepherds, and yak herders on a 12-day trek in the Kumaon Himalaya, where an estimated 10 percent of the world's endangered snow leopards roam. Each participant is asked to raise a minimum of \$500 for an initiative to

mitigate conflict between snow leopards and humans, such as compensation for families who lose sheep to the cats. *Hidden Places*: "Snow Leopards—Snow Mountains Fundraising Trek," 17 days; from \$3,250 (excludes fundraising); hiddenplaces.net ◦◦◦

INDIA

Land of Legends

Who knew Gujarat is the one place lions still exist in their natural habitat outside Africa? This corner of South Asia

JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA

Culture Cruise

Ply the coastal waters of Kyushu and Honshu, two of Japan's four main islands, aboard the 264-passenger *LAustral*. The itinerary packs in cultural excursions, from a visit to Naoshima island—known for its contemporary art museums, two designed by Osaka-born architect Tadao Ando—to a look at how *soju*, sake's stronger cousin, is made, at a distillery in Kagoshima.

Questions

Asia

1. In which country are you asked to help raise money as part of your trip?
2. I love cycling. What trip should I take?
3. Where has fire burned for 1,500 years?
4. What group provides books to local schools?
5. I only have 12 days of vacation. Where should I go, and how much will it cost?
6. I have \$16,640. Which two trips cost exactly that amount of money?
7. What is a synonym for expedition?
8. I want to dive and see Komodo Dragons. Where should I go?

Europe

NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM

Touring in Slow Mo'

The canals and flat terrain of the Low Countries offer ideal conditions for travel by barge and bike. As your barge floats from Amsterdam to Bruges, guides lead bike rides filled with cultural moments, such as visiting a family for homemade Dutch wafels. *VBT Bicycling and Walking Vacations: "Holland and Belgium Bike & Barge Amsterdam,"* 12 days; \$4,195 (includes airfare); www.vbt.com

for a boat ride on Lake Garda and sips of local grappa. *ExperiencePlus: "Bike Paths of Lake Garda and Veneto—Sightseer Tour,"* 8 days; \$3,650; www.experienceplus.com ◦

FRANCE

Wild Corsica

Trek a segment of the Grand Randonnée 20, a legendary long-distance trail that runs north-south along Corsica's granite spine. En route, reconnoiter coves and sea caves in the Gulf of Porto on a hiking/kayaking expedition fueled by local charcuterie, sheep-milk cheeses, and wine. The September departure will be led by outfitter co-owner Peter Grubb. *ROW Sea Kayak Adventures: "Compelling Corsica—Sea Kayaking and Mountain Hiking,"* 9 days; \$3,490; www.seakayakadventures.com ◦

PORTUGAL

Creature Feature

Kids and grown-ups alike partner with donkeys to walk picturesque paths in rural northeastern Portugal. Come evening, children can help brush and feed the burros, then guide them into their stables. *KE Adventure Travel: "Blazing Saddles Family Adventure,"* 8 days; from \$1,420; www.keadventure.com ◦ c

SCOTLAND

For the Birds

Can't tell a golden eagle from an osprey? Get a quick course in wildlife viewing during a week in the fauna-rich mountains of Cairngorms National Park. This lodge-based trip concentrates on how to identify bird species, from that golden eagle to a Slavonian grebe. *Speyside Wildlife: "Wildlife for Beginners,"* 8 days; \$1,015; www.speysidewildlife.co.uk ◦

Four tour destinations featured in these pages
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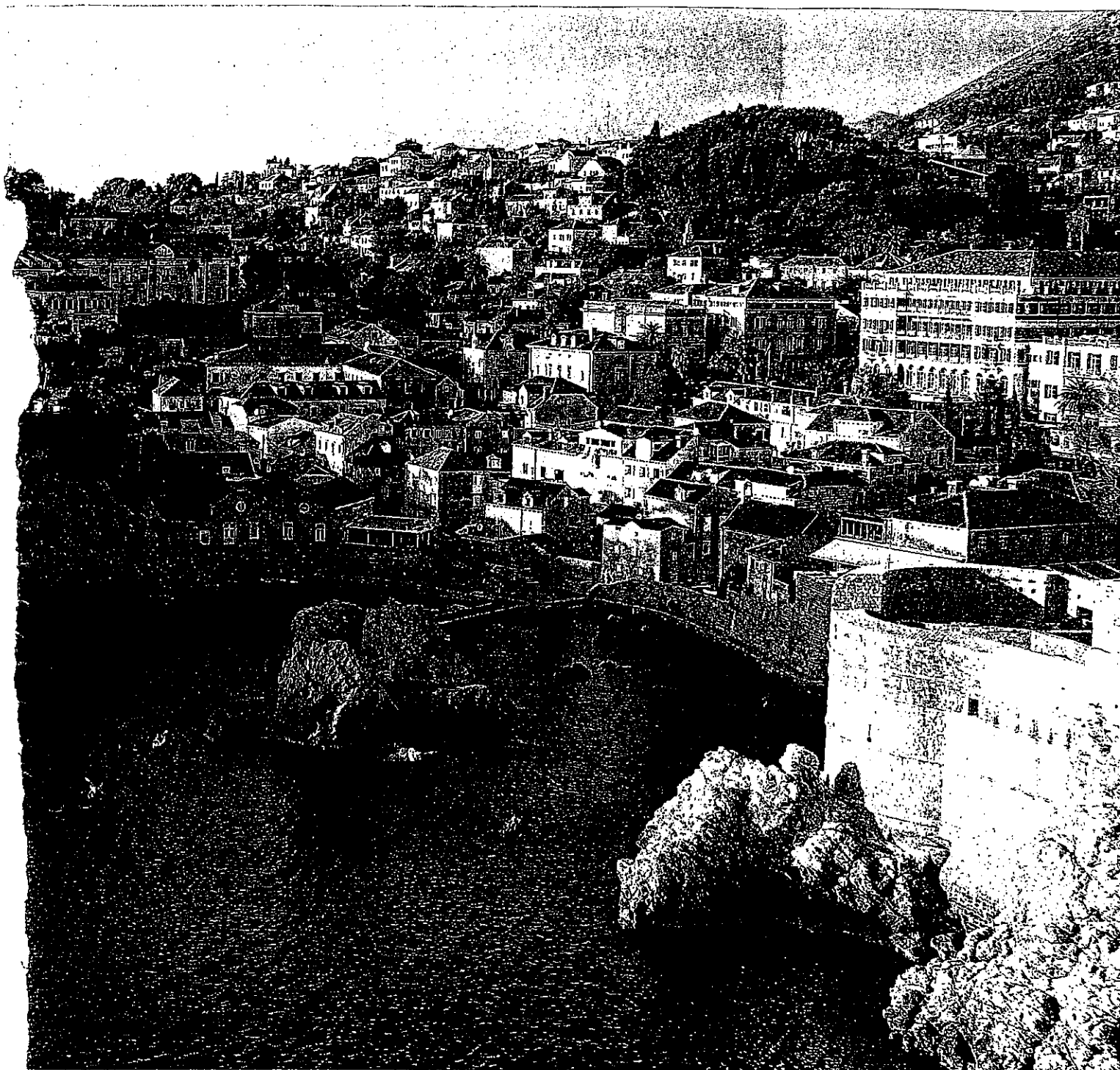


ALEX ROBINSON/JAI/CORBIS

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Europe

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Africa

NAMIBIA

Pedal Power

Cycling along the Swakop River and in Skeleton Coast National Park are just two options on this Namib biking itinerary. Highlights include seeing the sun rise over the Sossusvlei sand dunes and visiting a Himba village. *H&I Adventures: "Mountain Biking*

Safari in Namibia," 12 days; \$3,910 (plus \$544 for bike rental); www.mountainbikeworldwide.com

MALAWI

Giving Forward

Spend five days in the village of Njobvu, where you'll help build, farm, and teach. You'll stay in thatch-roofed huts and dine on traditional food in this sustainable community. A visit to adjacent Liwonde National

Park features sightings of elephants, rhinos, and hippos.

Elevate Destinations: "Malawi Service and Safari," 9 days; \$2,500; elevatedestinations.com
 ○○○○

SUDAN

The Other Pyramids

Although this nation just south of Egypt remains off most travelers' radar, word is spreading about Sudan's rich

cultural patrimony, including temples, painted tombs, and more pyramids than Egypt. *Mountain Travel Sobek: "Ancient Kingdoms of Sudan," 12 days; from \$4,995; www.mtsobek.com* ○

TANZANIA

Stalking in the Serengeti

Serengeti National Park has granted veteran outfitter Mark Thornton Safaris permission to lead walking safaris in its

interior. The result: this multi-day trek through backcountry known for its savanna—and sightings of big cats. Digs are walk-in tents furnished with comfy cots. *Mark Thornton Safaris: "The Great Serengeti Traverse," 11 days; \$9,990; www.thorntonsafaris.com* ○○

KENYA, TANZANIA
Go for the Joe

Most visitors to Africa come to see animals, but this look at Kenya and Tanzania is through the filter of coffee, which has helped shape the modern history of both lands. Taste fair-trade roasts, meet the crew at Kenya's Nyeri Coffee Estate, and bed down at local lodges, including Arusha Coffee Lodge. Between tastings, take game drives in nearby parks to spot leopards and lions. *Micato Safaris: "Sourcing the Perfect Cup: A Coffee Connoisseur's Tour," 11 days; \$19,550; www.micato.com* ○●

ZAMBIA

This Park Is Made for Walks

Explore a remote region of South Luangwa National Park, which is considered one of Africa's great wildlife sanctuaries, as you look for animals—hippos, buffalo, elephants, lions—on foot with this seasoned operator. *Robin Pope Safaris: "Mobile Walking Safari," 8 days; \$4,345; www.robinpopesafaris.net*

MOZAMBIQUE

Wild Archipelago

Discover the subtropical Quirimbas Archipelago aboard a dhow, snorkeling pristine reefs and lounging on white-sand beaches. Retire to mobile eco-camps on uninhabited islands to sleep under starry skies. Wind up with a visit to the once prosperous trading center of Ibo Island, with its ancient forts and pirate lore. *CW Safaris: "Ibo Island Dhow Safari," 8 days; \$3,498; www.countrywalkers.com* ○○

ALGERIA

Hidden North Africa

Venture into a country largely untouched by tourism, from the white-washed capital of Algiers—with its ancient Casbah and fanciful Ottoman architecture—to the World Heritage site of Djemila, one of the best preserved Roman sites in North Africa, to the oases and sculpted sandscapes of the Sahara. *Wild Frontiers: "Algeria Colours," 9 days; \$3,032; www.wildfrontierstravel.com* ●

SOUTH AFRICA

Outward Bound

With dozens of mountain ranges and hundreds of miles of coastline, South Africa is an outdoor enthusiast's dream. This adventure weaves in hikes in the Drakensberg Mountains, kayaking to a penguin colony, and a safari in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve. *REI Adventures: "South Africa Ultimate Adventure & Safari," 11 days; from \$7,199 for members; www.rei.com/adventures*



National Geographic Traveler
50 Tours of a Lifetime
May 2015

Questions

Africa

1. What country would I visit if I wanted to learn about pirates?
2. I have exactly \$11,544 dollars. What two trips could I go on?
3. You want to have a working vacation where you can help the local people. Which country should you visit?
4. List four countries you could visit if you wanted to go on a safari.
5. I hate sleeping in tents. Which country should I avoid?
6. I would love to see the sun rise over sand dunes. Which country should I visit?
7. Coffee is my favorite thing to drink in the morning. Where should I go for coffee tastings?
8. What would my total vacation cost be if I wanted to go to Malawi and Mozambique? Which trip would you pick? Why?

Europe

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Four destinations featured in these pages
[nationalgeographic.com/travel/tours](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/tours).



ALEX ROBINSON/JAICORBIS



A visitor skips down sand in Brazil's Ilencois Maranhenses National Park, a rare landscape of dunes and lagoons.

expanses of Greenland's west coast, tracking wildlife—foxes, narwhals, polar bears—and uses such survival skills as building an igloo. Glamping on ice this isn't; most of your nights will be spent in basic canvas tents. **WANT Expeditions:** "Greenland Traditional Dogsled Expedition," 9 days; \$6,749; www.wantexpeditions.com

caves of Demänovská. The trip begins in the museum-filled town of Szentendre, Hungary, and ends in Poland's medieval city of Krakow. **Freewheeling Adventures:** "Budapest to Krakow Walk," 8 days; \$3,365; \$2,275 self-guided; www.freewheeling.ca

SWEDEN

Wolves in Winter

Strap on snowshoes or cross-country skis and head into the taiga forest of central Sweden with naturalist Anders Stahl, who will teach you how to interpret wolf tracks and howls (are many wolves in the pack, are they hunting?). Your base: the Green Hotel, on Lake Siljan, where staff honor the local heritage by wearing traditional dress. **Naturetrek:** "Wolf Tracking in Winter," 5 days; \$1,585; www.naturetrek.co.uk

DENMARK

Mastering Arctic Ways

Enter the world of Greenland's Inuit people, whose way of life is being challenged by modern times. Each guest partners with an Inuit hunter, who helms a dogsled across the icy

REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

Holy Spirits

Monks at the ancient Alaverdi Monastery still ferment wine the way their order has for a millennium, in earthenware vessels buried in the ground. Taste the fruits of their labor on a culinary odyssey led by Max Johnson, the travel outfitter's founder, whose passion for this unsung corner of the planet is contagious. **Great Canadian Travel Company:** "Georgia's Food, Wine & Culture," 10 days; \$3,280; greatcanadiantravel.com

HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA, POLAND

Trails Made for Walking

A series of ten-mile hikes on the trail system that traverses Slovakia's peaks and valleys takes you from the medieval mining town of Banská Štiavnica to the limestone

BIKE TRIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Ten years ago, most guided bike trips were geared to serious enthusiasts, the sort who think nothing of riding hard down to dusk. These days, just-for-fun cyclists have a menu of options: Eager to tap into a broader market, outfitters have dreamed up ways to go easier on our quads while offering more chances to experience local landscapes and cultures.

"We designed itineraries so that many routes are on biking paths," says Maria Elena Price, co-owner of **Experience Plus** (opposite), which has rolled out a Sightseer series for bicycling at a relaxed pace. "We also offer plenty of optional activities that don't involve cycling." **VBT Bicycling and Walking Vacations** expanded its offerings to include a Holland Bike & Barge trip (opposite), with no more than four hours of biking daily on mostly flat terrain. And **Butterfield & Robinson** (above) is among the outfitters introducing electric bikes, which provide a boost of power for climbs—saving your quad energies for non-bike sights.

KEY: ● VALUE ○ FAMILY ● VOLUNTEER ● CHALLENGE ● NEW ○ PRIVATE

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Central & South America

ARGENTINA

Click and Sip

Andean foothills studded with vineyards and colorful rock formations: Argentina's northwest corner is a shutterbug's dream. Bone up on photo skills—lighting, framing—with local photographer Ossian Lindholm. Along the way, sample wines made with the area's Torrontes grapes.

Ciclismo Classico: "Argentina Vision and Vine," 9 days; \$5,300; www.ciclismoclassico.com

PERU

High on the Andes

Stops at World Heritage sites Machu Picchu and Cusco pair with a pilgrimage to Quyllur Rit'i, a festival filled with music, trance dancing, and "spirits" in bear costumes.

Aspiring Adventures: "Quyllur Rit'i Trip," 14 days; \$3,675; www.aspiringadventures.com

BELIZE

Diving to Make a Difference

Plunge into Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve, a World Heritage site of exceptional biodiversity near Ambergris Caye, to monitor its population of invasive lionfish with a U.K.-based conservation group. Participants dive to collect data (advanced diving certification required), study lionfish by dissecting them, and learn all about reef ecology.

Blue Ventures Expeditions: "Lionfish Dive," 7 or 16 days; \$943, \$2,122; www.blueventures.org

COSTA RICA

Teach While Touring

This teaching gig can span two weeks or 24. Lend a hand with lessons at a local school while brushing up on your español and living the *pura vida* near Manuel Antonio National Park, a preserve along Costa Rica's Pacific coast.

Global Vision International: "Volunteer With Children in Costa Rica," 14 days; \$1,790; www.gviusa.com

COLOMBIA

Town and Country

Experience the remarkable variety of this nation's natural landscapes while mountain biking from the high Andes to the tropics, stopping in such cultural gems as the colonial town of Barichara and an organic coffee hacienda near Bucaramanga.

Colombia Adventure: "Bogotá to Santander Biking Adventure," 6 days; \$3,000; www.colombia-adventure.com

BRAZIL

Shore Thing

The overlooked northeast side of Brazil has it all, from the archipelago of Fernando de Noronha, a World Heritage site, to colonial architecture in the city of São Luís de Maranhão. Includes a two-day trek in lagoon-filled Lençóis Maranhenses National Park.

Adventure Life: "Undiscovered Brazil," 13 days; \$3,275; www.adventure-life.com

ECUADOR

Naturally Inclined

Single out birdcalls and spot monkeys and tropical frogs as local guides lead you in kayaks through Yasuni National Park, believed to be the most biodiverse place on Earth.

Tofino Expeditions: "Amazon Kayaking Trip," 9 days; \$4,390; www.tofino.com

Contributing editor MARGARET LOFTUS last reported on four lesser-known U.S. national parks in our April 2015 issue.

Answer Key- 50 Trips of a Lifetime

Africa

1. Mozambique
2. Zambia and South Africa (Outward Bound)
3. Malawi- Giving Forward
4. Zambia, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania / *South Africa*
5. Mozambique
6. Namibia
7. Kenya
8. \$5998

Asia

1. India- Snow Leopard Trek
2. The Zen Gardens
3. Iran
4. Brother Mouse
5. India- Land of Legends, 5295.00
6. Japan and Russia
7. Trip / *Adventure*
8. Indonesia

Europe

1. Cairngorms National Park
2. The Green Hotel
3. Scenic, Trail, country or rustic
4. Budapest to Krakow
5. \$4260
6. ~~\$20,798~~ 478