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President's  Picks

Botswana & South Africa

14 Days



We Don't Tell Stories Better, We Tell Better Stories®



- 2016
- 2015
- 2014
- 2013
- 2012
- 2011
- 2010
- 2009



- 2013
- 2012
- 2011
- 2009
- 2007



- 2009
- 2007
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- 1999



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Welcome

"Botswana is truly the last frontier, a pristine safari destination, with a mission to protect the pinnacle of sustainable tourism. This adventure goes beyond conventional safaris, introducing facial recognition software as the means of identifying and tracking animals in the future. This is not your typical Botswana safari, which is based in the home of National Geographic's Dereck and Beverly Joubert. You end your journey in South Africa's Winelands and Cape Town."

Ashish Sanghrajka

Day By Day Itinerary

Day 1: Johannesburg, South Africa

On arrival in Johannesburg, look out for our representative. They will be holding a name-board with your surname on it. They will meet you and assist you at the airport. Known to the locals as "E'Goli" or City of Gold, Johannesburg is the pulsating heart of South Africa's industrial and commercial life where gold mining still continues. Fascinating activities in the city include cultural visits to Soweto, the Apartheid Museum or even a working diamond mine. Sterkfontein in the Cradle of Humanity World Heritage Site is well worth a visit. Arts and craft galleries abound and this is a very good place to buy diamonds. The five-star InterContinental Johannesburg O.R. Tambo Airport hotel is conveniently positioned a short walk from Domestic Arrivals. Each of the 138 rooms is decorated in luxurious African style with beige and brown



earthy tones. Each room is soundproofed with full black-out curtains. Facilities include a rooftop health and fitness center - aromatherapy massage by appointment, an indoor heated swimming pool, a complimentary hospitality lounge for early and late arrivals with shower facilities and 24-hour room service. The restaurant, Quills, offers cuisine which fuses African food concepts with flavors from around the world. Late night and a la carte dining are also

available. **Intercontinental OR Tambo International Airport Hotel - Standard Room (B)**

Day 2: Johannesburg / Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Make your way back into the terminal building to check into your scheduled flight to Victoria Falls.

On arrival at Victoria Falls airport, look out for our representative. They will be holding a name-board with your surname on it, and they will transfer you to your hotel. Victoria Falls is a dramatic scenic contrast and a change of pace from the private game reserves. The clouds of spray generated by this thunderous wall of water have resulted in a lush rain forest full of stunning wild flowers. A host of activities are centered on three separate aspects: the falls, the magnificent Zambezi River and the surrounding Zambezi National Park. For an overview of the falls, the helicopter flight is worth it. For a more thrilling fly-over, try the microlight flight above the falls and river. And, for the truly daring, bungee jumping is possible. The Zambezi River has two personalities – the wide gentle river above the falls is the perfect place for languorous sunset boat cruises or gentle canoeing, while the river below the great falls offers whitewater rafting and jet boating. Game drives and horse riding are offered in the Zambezi National Park to view



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elephant and buffalo. Visitors can also sample elephant back safaris and take part in their grooming and feeding activities at the Elephant Camp.

The Victoria Falls Hotel, known as the 'grand old lady of the falls' has the best location in town. It lies in the Victoria Falls National Park, a world heritage site, and is the closest hotel to the Victoria Falls on the Zimbabwe side. This venerable five star hotel, built in 1904 has now been completely refurbished and combines the charm of the old with the luxury of the new. Soak up the elegant Edwardian ambience as you sip cocktails on the terrace, which has a spectacular view of the 'smoke that thunders'. The hotel is set in lush tropical gardens, with lily ponds, palm trees and semi-tropical shrubs offering tranquility and seclusion. A leisurely ten-minute walk through these gardens and on the hotel's private path brings you to the Victoria Falls. As befits a five-star hotel, Victoria Falls Hotel has a choice of dining options. The opulent Livingstone Room offers fine dining, and even dancing to a live band. The Jungle Junction is much more relaxed and is justly famous for its extensive breakfast and dinner buffets with ethnic entertainment in the evenings. But perhaps the most famous is Stanley's Terrace, the rendezvous for African adventurers for over a century, which still provides the perfect setting for afternoon tea or cocktails later on whilst also drinking in the view of the Victoria Falls Bridge. Other facilities include reading in the Bulawayo room or library, relaxing by the romantic swimming pool or playing tennis on the two floodlit courts. There's a spa offering a range of treatments include the option of an alfresco massage. Golfers can enjoy 18 holes on the championship course of the nearby sister hotel, the Elephant Hills Resort, also on the Zimbabwe side of the falls.



This afternoon, you are collected from your hotel and driven to the jetty on the Zambezi River for boarding. The two-hour Zambezi River cruise is a delightful way to relax and enjoy the beauty of the river. You may see a variety of game including hippo, crocodile and elephant as well as many different bird species. The sunset cruise includes snacks, beer, wine, local spirits and soft drinks. There are great photo opportunities against often-spectacular African sunsets. **The Victoria Falls Hotel - Deluxe Stable Wing Room (B)**



Day 3: Victoria Falls Private Tour of the Falls (Zimbabwe)

This morning you enjoy an awe-inspiring, private tour of the Victoria Falls which takes the form of a walk in the natural rainforest to the dramatic chasm. A knowledgeable and informative local guide accompanies you. This is one of the most spectacular natural



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sights in the world. You have the remainder of the day at leisure and time for other optional activities available in and around Victoria Falls. **The Victoria Falls Hotel - Deluxe Stable Wing Room (B)**

Day 4: Victoria Falls / Chobe National Park, Botswana

Today you have a transfer from your hotel across the border to Chobe in Botswana and on to Ngoma Safari Lodge. The transfer takes approximately 1½-2 hours, depending on the border crossing formalities. Botswana is one of Africa's last pristine lands and offers visitors awesome scenery and prolific big game in equal measure. Most people know about the Okavango Delta, yet Botswana conjures up so many other memorable images for those lucky enough to visit: the shimmering heat rising from the vast white salt pans of the Makgadikgadi; the flight of a fish eagle as it glides over the waterways of the delta; the majestic baobab trees rising out of the Kalahari grasslands; and the elephant family coming down to the Chobe River to drink as dusk settles. An enlightened program of conservation in this stable country has meant that vast areas, one sixth of the country, remain a sanctuary for magnificent herds of game.



Chobe National Park lies in the northeast of Botswana, teeming with animals, in particular with huge herds of elephant and buffalo. Chobe's animal migrations follow an ancient pattern, only partly understood by man. However, broadly speaking, the game is drawn to the Chobe River during the dry winter season and spreads out to the open grasslands of the Savute marsh and pans during the wetter summer months.

The Chobe/Linyanti river system is known for some of the best elephant viewing in Africa in the winter months (May to October), with huge herds of up to 500 or more at the end of the dry season. Lion are common, and almost expected, with buffalo, cheetah and an amazing variety of antelope often sighted. The river is alive with crocodile and hippo and marvelous birdlife, including kingfishers and bee-eaters. Languorous sunset cruises are a specialty of the area.

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Ngoma Safari Lodge is a luxury lodge on the western border of Chobe National Park only 5 km/3 mi from the Ngoma Gate. This unique lodge is a joint community and privately-funded project in association with the Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust (CECT). It is situated far from the crowds around the Kasane Gate, offering a much more exclusive safari experience in this popular national park. The camp lies within the Chobe Forest Reserve with beautiful views over the Chobe River. All eight river-facing suites have spacious bedrooms with separate living area, en suite bathroom, inside and outside shower, overhead fans, air-conditioning, mini bar, and tea/coffee facilities. You may see the famous Chobe elephants, migrating zebra or buffalo grazing on the floodplain below your suite, depending on the season. **Ngoma Safari Lodge – Suite (B,L,D)**

Day 5: Chobe National Park

You enjoy the activities on offer by your camp that include a full-day game drive into Chobe National Park, which includes a sumptuous picnic lunch, and ends with a boat cruise on the Chobe River. Because this is within a private concession, game walks are available in the company of an armed guide. Shorter game drives are also available as well as night drives in the concession. Birding is excellent here with over 450



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species in the Chobe area. Through its socially responsible programs, the lodge aims to enrich the lives of those living within this community. From the beginning, the CECT has benefitted directly from a land lease fee and bed levy, as well as employment. **Ngoma Safari Lodge – Suite (B,L,D)**

Day 6: Chobe National Park / Selinda Reserve

You are transferred to Kasane Airport where you are met and transferred by light charter flight (seat in plane) from Kasane Airport to your game lodge in the Selinda Reserve.

(Please note that luggage allowance is strictly 44 lbs per person in soft squashy bags including all hand luggage such as camera equipment.)



Selinda Camp is a small luxury tented camp on the banks of the eastern Selinda Spillway, a waterway that links Botswana's Okavango Delta to the Linyanti and Kwando marshes, rivers and floodplains. The shaded camp is slightly raised with glorious views over the Selinda floodplains and wide open savanna broken by attractive palm trees. It is these views, from your private decks and the main lodge, that are one of Selinda's most compelling features. Hardly a moment passes without animals in front of camp.

Each of the nine spacious tents under thatch has two comfortable twin beds and fine linen. Luxurious, flowing mosquito nets add to the romantic atmosphere of the rooms and ceiling fans cool your living space when needed. Outside, a large private verandah offers game-viewing from the comfort of your own tent. There are spacious, en suite bathrooms, with full sized stone baths and antique showers. Sliding doors allow for privacy or create for an open-air bathroom. The main living area is under cool thatch with a spacious



lounge and dining area as well as a raised outdoor dining deck for evening meals under the stars. Evenings end around the campfire, a tradition that takes you back to the stories of the day's safari, shared philosophies, laughter and African folklore. Above the wine cellar is a quiet reading area where you can enjoy the fine art selection of Beverly Joubert's images collected over the years from her work with National Geographic. Under shade, the camp's plunge pool is surrounded by lush grass and is tucked away from the main area for privacy, an ideal way to cool off on a hot afternoon.

Selinda is the domain of the big cats and game-viewing is both private and riveting. Activities at Selinda Camp are not regimented. Inevitably though your activities are driven by the best game viewing times,



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animal movements or weather. Wildlife and nature drives often start at dawn because this is the time when predators are active. You usually return mid to late morning for brunch, and head out again in the mid to late afternoon. During the siesta time, you can enjoy an elevated hide overlooking a waterway watching the passing wildlife or opt for short walks from camp with guides. **Selinda Camp – Tent (B,L,D)**



Days 7, 8 & 9: Selinda Reserve

Experience a unique once-in-a-lifetime photographic safari with David Murray, *National Geographic* and Wild Studio. These photographic workshops are available on select dates during the months of October and November at Selinda Camp. (*Please note that other dates can be arranged on request.*)

David Murray, a professional photographer and specialist in wildlife photography of the region, hosts the workshops, which provide a flexible itinerary covering a diverse range of photographic techniques. A program to be tailored around all abilities, from professionals to families, and can include smartphone photography. Each of the participating camps have their own studio fitted out with every photographer's needs. This will include charging stations and lockable areas to store your equipment as well as computers available for editing and regular image reviews hosted by the photographic specialist. The final product of the workshop will be to take home a fully edited portfolio ready for publishing. Each of our participating photographers will then have their images placed on a Wild Studio library to allow them to be shared. All vehicles have been modified to provide camera supports and beanbags. Beanbags provide the most universal solution for the majority of our photographers but we can tailor the vehicles around anyone's requirements including gimbal supports by using additional clamps.

FACIAL RECOGNITION RESEARCH PROJECT

You will participate in a unique project that uses cutting edge technology for animal conservation. Great



Plains Conservation is working with the University of Surrey, UK, on a groundbreaking wildlife monitoring facial recognition project. All photographers will be able to participate in this by gathering data while out in the field. The technology has previously been used successfully on tigers in India and the result was published in *National Geographic* magazine. This is the first time this has been attempted to include travelers in Africa. The concept is simple. You are supplied a camera with GPS capability to use, and then the images are collected and sent for scanning. The software can recognize the individual species, principally the big cats, and a

movement map using the GPS data embedded in the image is created.



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Dereck Joubert, CEO of Great Plains Conservation, and his wife, Beverly Joubert, are not only co-founders of the company, they are also acclaimed wildlife filmmakers and National Geographic Explorers-in-Residence, who have created awarding winning films in the Great Plains reserves, many before the camps were even built. They have made 25 films for National Geographic, including 'The Last Lions,' which has reached over 350 million people so far. During your stay, you might be lucky enough to encounter some of the characters from their films, including Ma Di Tau from The Last Lions, who has since become an ambassador for lions and their conservation, worldwide. Beverly Joubert has also specialized in wildlife photography for nearly 30 years, with images in a dozen or more National Geographic magazines, 10 books and thousands of articles around the world. Great Plains is the perfect location for capturing remarkable animal behavior and the untamed natural beauty of Africa's wilderness. **Selinda Camp – Tent (B,L,D)**

Day 10: Selinda Reserve / Cape Town, South Africa

Today you are transferred by light charter flight (seat in plane) from your game lodge to Maun Airport, where you connect on your scheduled flight to Cape Town. On arrival at Cape Town Airport, a representative welcomes you in the Arrivals Hall, and transfers you by road, about an hour, to your Winelands hotel. The Winelands region is an area of exquisite beauty with rocky mountains overlooking green vineyards; oak avenues leading to elegant Cape Dutch wine estates and some of the most charming towns and villages in South Africa. The main pleasure of this region is the enjoyment of the good life: appreciating the wine and the superb architecture, enjoying long, lazy meals in one of the many excellent restaurants, browsing in shops and galleries or taking scenic drives or walks in the surrounding mountains. Explore the oak-lined streets of Stellenbosch, a bustling university town; enjoy the rural charm of the Huguenot settlement of Franschhoek or meander along a wine route. Your home for the next two nights, Le Quartier Français offers a warm ambience in Cape Provencal style in the heart of the pretty village of Franschhoek with easy access to boutiques, cafes and galleries of the village. The auberge is set around a colorful garden with a central swimming pool. The 15 rooms and 6 suites are spacious and stylishly furnished with modern fittings, refreshing colors and vivid hand-painted fabrics. All have air-conditioning, underfloor heating, fireplaces, extra-large beds, Egyptian cotton linen, bathrooms with separate shower and bath and large sitting areas. Widely known for its excellent cuisine, Le Quartier is a great base for 'foodies'. It offers two restaurants: the exciting Tasting Room restaurant with five- or nine-course tasting menus, and the casual Ici Restaurant. Another charming feature is The Screening Room cinema seating 35 people. This property is a Relais et Chateaux member. **Le Quartier Français – Grande Room (B)**



Day 11: Cape Winelands

Today you enjoy a private tour of the Cape Winelands for a leisurely exploration of the historic towns of Stellenbosch, Paarl and Franschhoek as well as wine tasting at local wine estates. The majestic scenery of the winelands is unparalleled so even if you don't drink wine, the countryside and history make it well worth the visit. A combination of the favorable effects of the two major ocean – the Pacific and the Atlantic – currents meeting off the Cape makes the climate in the area perfect for the acres of vineyards. The stunning backdrop of the mountains, the tree-lined streets and the white gabled Cape Dutch homesteads all blend in tranquil harmony. The exact wine estates to be visited will vary for each private tour as everyone has their own preferences in wine. Your guide will discuss all the options with you and select the best wine estates



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to visit. The tastings will include high quality (and often award-winning) red and white wines. Head out this morning to one of the wine estates. Experience the rich historical and architectural traditions of the region. After a tour through the cellars, sample some of the local wines as well as perhaps a cheese tasting. Visit the picturesque village of Franschhoek, set in a beautiful valley surrounded by mountains. Enjoy some of its many interesting shops and boutiques and visit a second wine estate for more wine tasting. **Le Quartier Français – Grande Room (B,L)**

Day 12: Cape Town & Table Mountain

You are collected from Franschhoek and transferred to Cape Town for a half-day tour of the city. Cape Town is one of the most beautifully situated cities in the world. Cradled by Table Mountain, it has immense



charm and historical interest whilst its unique cultural blend; part African, part European and part Asian, makes for a cosmopolitan dining experience. Begin with a visit to Table Mountain. Take the cable car for a panoramic view of the whole of the Cape Peninsula. There is time for a short walk at the summit to admire the incredible

scenery. *Note that the cable car tickets are paid by you directly as the ascent is weather dependent.* Then, travel into the city where you first see the Castle of Good Hope, the original fort of Cape Town built in 1652 and now painstakingly restored. From there you continue to the historic center of Cape Town with its many 18th-century buildings where there is time to visit two of Cape Town's museums. You may like to enjoy a stroll through the Company Gardens past the Parliament buildings. Finally, you explore the picturesque Malay quarter, a historic sector of the city with original Malay buildings and narrow streets. Return to your hotel with the remainder of the day is at leisure. You may want to meander through the wonderful Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. Browse through the vibrant Greenmarket Square, take a boat trip to Robben Island or simply relax on the beach. When you want to range further, the Cape Peninsula offers one of the finest coastal drives in Africa to the Cape of Good Hope. Here you might see whales breaching just off the bay or quirky African penguins on Boulder's beach. The trendy Atlantic Ocean villages of Camps Bay, Clifton and Bantry Bay bring out the Mediterranean aspect of the city. Spectacular views of the Ocean, dramatic crimson sunsets, palm trees swaying against white sandy beaches and alfresco pavement dining are very much the norm, and yet you're only a ten-minute drive from the city. The southern suburbs of Newlands and Constantia reflect yet another side of Cape Town, reminiscent of its gracious colonial past. Majestic oak trees and endless swathes of roses and blue agapanthus are set against the forested slopes of Table Mountain. Here you can enjoy gentle woodland strolls. Cape Town is fifteen minutes away by car and beaches are only ten minutes away.

The charm of Cape Town is partly explained by Table Mountain, which breaks up the city into distinct areas, each with its own character and, indeed, its own weather! The city bowl basks in the dramatic shadow of the mountain, with its characteristic 'tablecloth' of mist rolling over the edge. The fashionable waterfront



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is ideal for visitors who enjoy city life with plenty of restaurants, cafes and clubs within walking distance of your hotel, The One & Only Cape Town is situated in the V&A Waterfront marina with views over the



yacht marina and Table Mountain. The hotel has a cosmopolitan urban design with lots of African textures and artworks. The spacious marina rooms have African wood furniture, sumptuous bathrooms and large balconies. All the amenities you would expect from a deluxe five-star hotel are there, as well as extras such as flat-screen TV, Bose surround sound audio

system, espresso machines, iPod docking stations and complimentary Wi-Fi access. The spa island has a large swimming pool with a pool bar and pool restaurant for light meals. A yoga pavilion, gym and kinesiology training rooms complete the facilities. Dining is a memorable occasion at the hotel with a choice between The Restaurant at One & Only and Nobu by Japanese master chef Nobuyuki Matsuhisa. The One & Only is home to a superb collection of modern African artworks, some of which can be purchased at the Goodman Art Gallery on the mezzanine floor. **One & Only Cape Town – Premier Marina Table Mountain Room (B)**

Day 13: Cape Town Photographic Tour

Explore your photographer side during this full-day program that begins early, sometimes as early as 5:00am to take advantage of the morning light. Alternatively, in the winter months only, you can start later and finish later for some sunset shots. The tour consultant will be on hand to advise what is feasible during the time available. The tour is typically called 'chasing the sun' and a route and itinerary will be decided to maximize the light and photographic opportunities, while trying to avoid crowds as much as possible to give a more authentic experience. This tour is suitable for photographers of all experience levels from beginners to seasoned pros. The photo guide will be on hand to show these less experienced clients some photographic techniques to suite their current level of understanding thus enabling them to take better pictures and thoroughly enjoy the day. The guide uses various teaching aids to enable this and take the clients to places where they can put their new skills to practice. During this tour you can use your own equipment or you will be provided with a camera. Please note: *The photo guide is also*





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knowledgeable about all of the major camera brands and is able to offer advice on how you can use your own cameras should you want to use your own equipment. You will receive a complimentary 8GB SD memory card to take with you containing your images. Your tour concludes with the return to the hotel.
One & Only Cape Town – Premier Marina Table Mountain Room (B,L)

Day 14: Cape Town / Depart

Today you are collected by your guide for a private transfer to Cape Town Airport. This transfer will take approximately 30 minutes depending on traffic. **(B)**

End of Travel Arrangements



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Included In The Tour Cost:

- Daily accommodations as shown in the itinerary & all hotel taxes and service charges;
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B = Breakfast), (L = Lunch), (D = Dinner);
- All hotel / airport transfers as indicated;
- Transportation in mini buses and/or various safari vehicles;
- All sightseeing, game viewing, entrance fees and park fees as indicated in the itinerary;
- Comprehensive assortment of pre-tour planning materials and amenities
- Big Five's 24-hour White Glove Service® guest assistance
- A complimentary one-year membership to the nonprofit One More Generation, includes the adoption of an endangered species in one of the areas of special concern (www.bigfive.com/omg)

Not Included In The Tour Cost:

Scheduled flights unless specifically mentioned; travel insurance; fuel surcharges; visas if required (see further notes below); items of a personal nature, meals not specified, gratuities; specific drinks not included (please see the lodge inclusions for what drinks are included, if any); surcharge for early/late pickups for transfers between 9:00pm and 6:00am

Per Diem

Land price, per person, double occupancy: *From US\$1200 per person per day. Internal air (Johannesburg-Victoria Falls & Maun-Cape Town) additional.*



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Big Five Edge

- **900 + Hours:** You are working with one of the most experienced groups of individuals in our industry. Big Five Destination Specialists receive *900+ hours of on-site and in-office on product training annually*, and are part of a diverse team assembled from 11 countries over 5 continents speaking a combined 10 different languages. With an average of 20 years' experience in the travel industry, our Destination Specialists answer 8 out of 10 questions immediately based on their personal experiences.
- **24 Hours a Day:** Every guest receives complimentary enrollment in our *24-hour White Glove Service® guest assistance* program. A team of specialists using proprietary software to track your progress is available 365 days from anywhere in the world. WGS® starts two weeks before your departure to help with anything from concierge services to travel emergencies. We proactively call every guest from North America to check in and assist with requests such as checking local weather; dealing with lost luggage or cancelled flights; or even the rare medical emergency. In the last 18 months, we have proactively reached out by telephone to our guests on tour to welcome them or assist with a specific requests almost 1,500 times... and counting.
- **Ahead of the Crowds:** Our Destination Specialists combine creativity with their impressive knowledge. As a result, we are on average two years or more ahead of the pack when it comes to *new and innovative travel ideas*. We focus on lesser known unique touring activities and emerging concepts that are not yet mainstream. We forge paths and take risks few others are willing to because we are committed to the principles of authenticity and sustainability. Most tour companies rely on an in-country counterpart for product ideas. At Big Five, we don't wait for anyone else. In 30 of our 44 destinations, and counting, we pioneered the itineraries and activities that are well ahead of current trends, and have taught our ground team, who actually live in those countries. We invest in our team, constantly sending them out to find new experiences that most overseas companies are unaware of because they rarely leave their home territories.
- **Booking in North America vs Booking Overseas:** Before you work directly with a company overseas, look closely to insure you are comparing apples, and not grapes to kumquats. What appears to be a \$1,000 price difference, actually is almost at par when you add in all the "extra fees" overseas companies put in their fine print. We don't charge merchant fees for using a credit card, most overseas companies will charge you 3% or more to pay by credit card. Your Big Five journey comes with complimentary enrollment in our 24-hour White Glove Service® guest assistance program up to 2 weeks before your departure; something no overseas company has the ability or capacity to do. We usually have more inclusions with fewer "optional" activities. You are backed by a comprehensive liability coverage plan that was written and is operated in North America. Booking overseas leaves you in the hands of the liability coverage that is written and operated in the country you are visiting, following local rules and guidelines, which may not be known to you. Make sure your apples are really apples – *otherwise it might cost you more than just money*.
- **Sustainability:** We believe in a sustainable future for all. Big Five has been consistently recognized as *a leader in the sustainable travel*, receiving accolades for our work to help change the world through travel. Big Five has also been honored by an internationally recognized travel network as the only company to twice receive an award for *Sustainable Leadership* after being judged against nearly 100 other companies by two separate independent panels.