

Condé Nast Traveler

APRIL 2021

**CALIFORNIA'S
TRUE NORTH**

**THE CHARMS OF
COASTAL KENYA**

**SAIL AWAY TO
CROATIA**

find yourself

All About Taking a Heritage Trip

+ Why You Need a Travel Specialist

yes, they can

We've long looked to our network of trusted travel specialists to take us to the far corners of the earth. These are the pros who assemble many of the elaborate itineraries that appear in this magazine, and since the dawn of the pandemic, their up-to-the-minute insights on shifting safety protocols have made them even more essential. If you don't rely on them yet, now is the time to start. Which is why the 2021 edition of *Condé Nast Traveler's* Top Travel Specialists comprises more members than ever before (for the full list, visit cntraveler.com/travel-specialists). On the pages that follow, we give you all the reasons you need to book a trip with a travel specialist this year and share some of the best experiences our experts have ever put together—not just to show the scope and prowess of their work, but also to remind you of all the adventures ahead after a long year of staying close to home.



A free diver gets a closer look at a manta ray in the Maldives

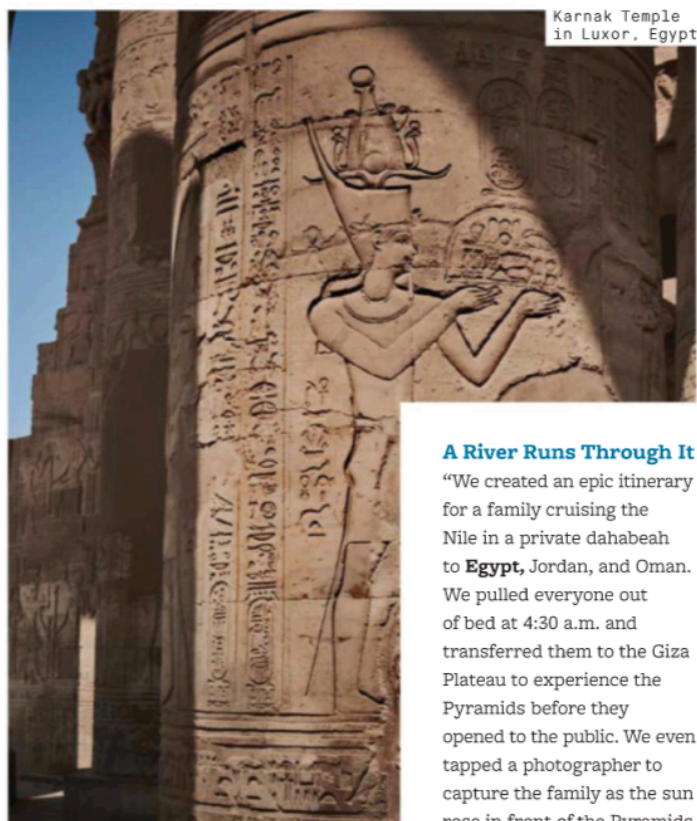
"We sent a drone up in Raa Atoll in the Maldives to look for manta rays. When we found one, we summoned our client from his villa onto an awaiting boat so he could snorkel alongside them."

—LINDSEY WALLACE, LINARA TRAVEL

A SMALL VICTORY IN 2020

"Our client decided to go to the Serengeti for the wildebeest migration. Because he was arriving in just two weeks, we knew exactly where the animals would be, and he experienced it all with no one else around."

—ELIZABETH GORDON, EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEYS



Karnak Temple
in Luxor, Egypt

A River Runs Through It

"We created an epic itinerary for a family cruising the Nile in a private dahabeah to **Egypt**, Jordan, and Oman. We pulled everyone out of bed at 4:30 a.m. and transferred them to the Giza Plateau to experience the Pyramids before they opened to the public. We even tapped a photographer to capture the family as the sun rose in front of the Pyramids and the Sphinx. They went on a private tour of the Grand Egyptian Museum with archaeologists and an Egyptologist, and had an after-hours tour of the Valley of the Kings where they accessed King Tutankhamen's tomb. It's hard to overstate the sheer magnificence of sailing in a glorious dahabeah. It's really the trip of a lifetime." TOM MARCHANT,

BLACK TOMATO

day we arranged for the more hardy members of the group to swim between two tectonic plates in the crystal clear waters of the Silfra fissure. We then deconstructed the entire camp and left the glacier without a trace of anyone having been there."

MARK ALLVEY, UNTOLD
STORY TRAVEL

The Story Behind Our Stories

Our authority in the travel world is only as airtight as the sources we rely on. Before anybody boards a plane to report a story, we've already had numerous conversations with a travel specialist. Most begin with us sniffing around an idea: Is anyone going to Samoa? What's new in Rome? Are we nuts to think about driving from San Diego to Cabo? At the nascent stages of story development, specialists are our sounding boards. They gut-check what is doable and what should stay a fantasy. They put places and people on our radar that we then put on yours.

Equally crucial is the real-time, on-the-ground support they provide when we're stitching together complex itineraries. From our office in New York City, it would have been impossible to pull off what became our September/October 2018 cover story on Guizhou, an autonomous, hard to reach—and even harder to navigate—region in southern China by ourselves. Gerald Hatherly of Abercrombie & Kent booked in-country travel arrangements for our writer and photographer and provided top-tier guides who were able to get them the access they needed to tell the story they were chasing. Catherine Heald of Remote Lands led us through Japan's Ōu Mountains for a ski piece in our November 2018 issue that ended up being as much about hidden hot springs and ancient Shinto shrines as it was a quest for epic powder. We're still not sure how Marc Télió from Entrée Destinations got our writer to Arctic Watch Wilderness Lodge on extremely short notice for an April 2019 feature. Located 500 miles north of the Arctic Circle, and only open six weeks out of the year, weather permitting, it's one of the most isolated and toughest-to-book retreats on the planet. And in February 2020, right before the pandemic hit, Behzad Larry from Voygr Expeditions led our writer on a trek through the foothills of the Himalayas in hopes of spotting one of the elusive snow leopards in India's Hemis National Park. Though the experience felt like a search for "40-ish needles in a very big, high, cold haystack," she ended up seeing several, including a mother and her cubs.

As we begin exploring a fundamentally shifted world, following our travel specialists' advice and lead will be even more essential. This new reality has inspired us to relaunch Iconic Itineraries, a recurring feature that ran in our magazine from 2007 to 2013. Beginning later this year, we'll work closely with a specialist to craft a custom itinerary that will be available to readers to book or customize further. It's a win for everyone: We get to tell a great story, you get to turn it into your own trip, and we all discover new ways to get back out there.