

# GEOEX

## *Ultima Thule*

JOURNAL OF THE FARTHEST PLACES

### *Alchemy of the Word and the World*

by Don George

My earliest world-wanderings were undertaken through others' words. On the magic carpet of my mother's voice, I was transported to Narnia by C. S. Lewis, the Sahara and beyond by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and Great Places by Dr. Seuss. In high school and college I journeyed to Greece with John Fowles, Venice with Thomas Mann, France with Marcel Proust, Vietnam with Graham Greene, India with E. M. Forster, and Africa with Joseph Conrad.

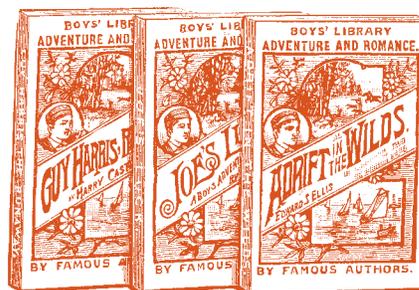
When I managed to actually travel abroad myself, on a summer program in Paris between my junior and senior years in college, I underlined the addresses Ernest Hemingway mentioned in *A Moveable Feast* and reverently retraced his steps, piling up saucers at the Closerie des Lilas, gazing in awe at his apartment at 74 rue de Cardinal Lemoine and at Gertrude Stein's storied salon at 27 rue de Fleurus. When I graduated and moved to Athens for a yearlong teaching fellowship, my guidebooks to the soul of the country were Nikos Kazantzakis's *Zorba the Greek* and Henry Miller's *The Colossus of Maroussi*.

Throughout my life I have found that literature and travel interweave in all phases of the sojourning cycle, from inspiration and planning to execution and reminiscence. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* propelled me toward the Côte d'Azur long before I ever thought of working in Paris, and when I ventured to an utterly unknown Japan on a two-year postgraduate fellowship, Lafcadio Hearn's classic *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* became a comforting counselor who led me gently into the heart of the land.

Most recently I sallied off to Namibia for a one-week tour of nature reserves and tribal conservancies. In preparation, I read Rick Bass's excellent *The Black Rhino of Namibia*, and his words resonated in my head and heart one unforgettable morning when, with the earth scraping underfoot and an ancient energy crackling in the air, we tracked a rhino in the wild.

Sometimes a book is at once reminiscence and revelation. In April I led a group of intrepid and impassioned travelers through Kyoto and Shikoku, Japan. Beforehand I re-immersed myself in Pico Iyer's enthralling and insightful *The Lady and the Monk*, the account of a year in Kyoto. I first read the book when it was published in 1991. In 2013, with two more decades of Japan experience behind me, I reveled even more deeply in its lessons; at the same time, on this new trip, I found myself attending ever more

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# 55

AUGUST

2013

ART AND  
ARCHITECTURAL  
MARVELS

*Our planet holds astonishing landscapes and fascinating cultures, inspiring incredible works of art and architecture. We asked our staff to recall their favorite spot for arts of all kinds, and though they argued that choosing just one was impossible, most complied.*

◆ ART AND  
ARCHITECTURAL  
MARVELS ONE

Kristin Zibell: *The 12th-century churches of Lalibela, Ethiopia. They're exquisitely carved from rock and have paintings of the Christian Orthodox church covering their interiors.*

◆ ART AND  
ARCHITECTURAL  
MARVELS TWO

Carey Johnston: *I was mesmerized by the Zeugma Mosaic Museum in Gaziantep, Turkey. The incredible detail of its masterpieces provides an indelible insight into life over 2,000 years ago.*



*The 2014 GeoEx catalog is due to arrive in mailboxes soon. You can download the iPad app from [GeoEx.com/Catalog](http://GeoEx.com/Catalog).*

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keenly to the silences and shadows that, as Pico had shown me, punctuate life in Japan.

Sometimes a book casts unexpected illuminations. In her charming memoir of studying Mandarin while residing in Shanghai and Beijing, *Dreaming in Chinese*, Deborah Fallows beautifully illustrates how a word can unlock the character of a place: *Rènao*, Fallows explains, means “noisy and exciting in a pleasant way.” “At a *rènao* restaurant in China,” she writes, “diners squeeze around too-small tables that are squeezed into too-small spaces. They toast, drink, tell stories, pass food, hop from their seats to drink to each other, sing, laugh, eat. Servers bustle from table to table, bringing more and more dishes, opening more and more bottles. Diners call after servers, servers run faster. The measure of a great evening is the hotter and noisier the better.” In a few sentences, I’ve been transported halfway around the planet—and I’ve also gained a deeper appreciation of a particularly *rènao* place I love in San Francisco’s Chinatown.

A book with a great sense of place—be it memoir, reportage, or fiction—enacts a journey: introducing us to new landscapes, cultures, and characters; scents, textures, and tastes; traditions, conflicts, and dreams. Such literature can also, as with the best journeys, teach us about the boundlessness of the world—and of ourselves. For me, the book that exemplifies this is Peter Matthiessen’s masterful *The Snow Leopard*. In that riveting account of a Himalayan expedition, Matthiessen weaves threads of knowledge and musing about Nepal and the Himalaya, Buddhism, and human hopes and despairs. He instructs us about the region and the religion, but he also teaches us about the limits and limitlessness of human aspiration and the precious fragility of human connection. He reminds us that we are only as big as the dreams we dare—and as testament to its life-changing power, his odyssey ultimately inspired me to leave an extremely secure, cossetting existence in Japan for an extremely insecure and intimidating unknown future in the United States.

So the alchemy of the word and the world enriches our inner and outer adventures, wherever we may be, on the planet and on the great pathway of life.



## *Recce Becomes Wanderlust*

When GeoEx decided to create an online literary travel magazine some five years ago, we carefully chose the name Recce. A primarily British slang term for “reconnaissance” or “reconnoiter,” Recce was perfect in meaning for our editorial venture, whose goal was “to explore a place to get to know it better.” Since then, however, we’ve watched the word befuddle many, in both pronunciation and sense. As a result, in the coming months our beloved literary magazine-blog Recce will re-emerge as Wanderlust, an equally resonant name that *Webster’s* defines as “strong or unconquerable longing for or impulse toward wandering.” As ever, that unconquerable longing will inspire and infuse a robust combination of articles, interviews, slide shows, and book excerpts, all celebrating travel. We look forward to sharing our Wanderlust with you at [GeoEx.com/Blog](http://GeoEx.com/Blog).

## New Trips and Twists for 2014

GeoEx is always sussing out fresh, creative, and authentic travel experiences, whether it's a new off-the-radar destination to discover or different ways to explore more familiar far-flung locales. Our 2014 catalog—landing in your mailbox shortly—announces our latest trips and twists. Here's a preview: *Trek into Central Bhutan* takes an insider's look at the Dragon Kingdom's hidden valleys and villages alongside our friend who grew up among them. *Unexpected Oman* reveals exquisite Islamic architecture, soaring sand dunes, verdant mountains, picture-perfect oases, and nesting sea turtles. *Untamed Patagonia* revels in one of the planet's least visited and most spectacular corners, hiking through peerless mountain landscapes of the Aysen region and crossing a lonely border outpost on foot. *Edens of Indonesia* sails through captivating islands and cultures, delving into turquoise waters, tea plantations, active volcanoes, welcoming villages, and the realm of Komodo dragons.

### Top Travel Specialists

*Condé Nast Traveler* recently announced their 2013 Top Travel Specialists list, and we are proud to note that four of our destination experts were recognized for their expertise—more than any other company. Congratulations to Brent Olson (Bhutan), Vassi Koutsaftis (Tibet), Kate Doty (Uncharted Places), and Adam Vaught (Cuba). Read more about our specialists at [GeoEx.com/GeoExpertise](http://GeoEx.com/GeoExpertise).

### Events Update

We're in the throes of organizing several fall events, all on the West Coast. And while we don't want to spill the beans too early, we can share that one in November will feature Dr. Robert Thurman, professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, to benefit Tibet House, an organization dedicated to preserving Tibet's unique culture. We're also looking forward to an inspiring affair with the boundary-pushing organization No Barriers. We hope to see you at one—or all—of these occasions. Please stay tuned to [GeoEx.com/Events](http://GeoEx.com/Events) for details.

### Notes

#### TEMPTED BY TURKEY OR PERSIA?

Our Turkey and Persia trips are filling quickly, so if you're tempted, we suggest booking now. With speedy work, you may still be able to join our October 4–16 *Eastern Turkey* journey (featuring Mount Nemrut and Şanlıurfa mosques, hammams, and caravanserais) or our October 19–November 1 *Tribute to Turkey* trip (which includes Istanbul, Ephesus, Cappadocia, and Ankara). Our *Treasures of Persia* (ranging from Tehran to Persepolis and Esfahan to Tabriz) is sold out for the fall but has space left on our April 14–May 2 departure. And our May 6–27 *Silk Road: Xian to Rome* epic (touching on China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Turkey, and Italy) has just a couple spots available. Stacey Sullivan is happy to tell you more.

#### ◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS THREE

George Doubleday: *Cynthia and I found these places quite amazing: the whole complex of Petra, Jordan; the Meenakshi Amman Temple at Madurai in the Tamil Nadu state of India; Borobudur, a 9th-century Mahayana Buddhist temple in central Java, Indonesia; and Cappadocia, Turkey. And for modern architecture: Dubai and Shanghai.*



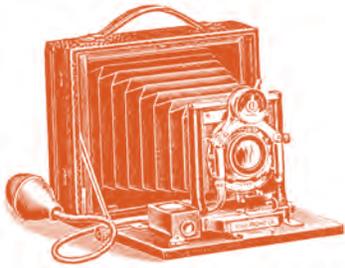
#### ◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS FOUR

Alice Howell: *Instituto Inbotim in Brazil. It's the world's largest open-air museum, complete with botanical gardens that showcase Brazil's astounding horticulture. Walking and golf carting through it is like being Alice in Art Wonderland.*

## INTRODUCING MYSTICAL WEST AFRICA

### ◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS FIVE

Jean-Paul Tennant: *Having seen the castles of Europe but never the dzongs of Bhutan, I was stunned. They are formidable, functional, and beautiful. Not only do they embody a fascinating history (no one talked about this in World History class) but they are still alive with active monasteries and gorgeous storytelling art that brings Buddhism to life.*



### ◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS SIX

Scott Montgomery: *Iran! Esfahan has some of the most incredible Islamic architecture in the world, with stunning blue mosaic tiles adorning the sensational buildings around Imam Square. And with Persian art's rich heritage, Iran offers ample opportunities to see gorgeous miniatures, pottery, and, of course, magnificent rugs.*

If you're a fan of seriously off-the-radar travel destinations—and especially if you've seen some of Africa and want to delve deeper—you're likely to be intrigued by our newest small-group Scheduled Trip to the beguiling continent. *Mystical West Africa: Traditions, Voodoo, and Craft* journeys overland through Benin, Togo, and Ghana, introducing tribal cultures and time-honored traditions, revealing Gold Coast history, and dallying in markets awash in kente cloth, trade beads, and warm smiles.

"It's a fascinating, little-visited part of the world," says our chief Africa enthusiast, Starla Estrada, "and perhaps most exciting is that we've arranged for our travelers to attend three distinctive ceremonies rarely experienced by foreigners." In Abomey we'll watch the shape-shifting Egun mask dance, a traditional celebration of south Benin's Fon and Yoruba people; we'll soak up hypnotic rhythms of drums and chants during a voodoo ritual at a small Benin village; and we'll see the festive Ashanti way to honor the dead.

The 13-day journey begins in Benin's coastal city of Cotonou. After a good look around, we boat across Lake Nokwe to the isolated stilt fishing village of Ganvie and get a taste of Tofinou life. Then north to Abomey, whose Royal Palace was constructed with clay and slave blood, a testament to a heart-wrenching past. We gain a different perspective from a Yoruba *griot* (storyteller), then stretch further in Ouidah, the spiritual capital of voodoo. Crossing into tiny Togo, we wander Lomé's crumbling colonial quarter and browse wonderful art and fetish markets. Continuing into Ghana, we learn about bead making from skilled Krobo people, meet batik artisans in Kumasi, explore Ashanti craft villages, and lose ourselves in West Africa's largest open-air market. After a couple days exploring seaside Elmina, where a castle (built for the slave trade) overlooks a tranquil harbor, we head to Accra via Kakum National Park. Finally, in the capital, we behold artistically carved coffins, deepen our understanding of African history, and enjoy Ghana's best beach. Call Starla for more information (departures: October 5–17, November 16–28, and February 8–20).

### TO THE HEART, IN THREE PARTS: VIETNAM, LAOS, AND CAMBODIA

Early Hindu and Chinese cultural and artistic influences are steeped, layers deep, into the soul of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. They are the very reason the countries became collectively known as Indochina. Our specialist Tina Liadis would shake her head at the idea of visiting one without seeing the others. "You would be missing a piece of the puzzle." That's why she carefully crafted our 16-day *Heart of Indochina* (November 16–December 1) to delve into all three, exploring culture and nature, and in true GeoEx fashion, making sure we're privy to unique local experiences. For example, in Hoi An, we wander the central market with a resident chef who then gives us a hands-on cooking lesson. And in Hanoi, we spend time with an Indochina art expert who piques our curiosity with the magic we were missing.

The trip begins in Ho Chi Minh City, where we sweetly ogle the contrasts of posh restaurants sharing sidewalks with roadside noodle stalls, and elegant French colonial boulevards with roughhousing schoolchildren. Moving to the port city of Hoi An, we see the Vietnam of centuries

past—old wooden houses, bridges, and fields—as if frozen in time. After time in Hanoi and Hue, we drive to Halong Bay and board a deluxe cruise boat to sail across sapphire waters among hundreds of stunning karsts. We visit islands and caves, and when the weather is right, we can swim, snorkel, or kayak.

Continuing to less-frequented Laos, which Tina calls “old Asia preserved,” we soak up peaceful landscapes and revel in the legendary hospitality of the resilient Lao people. We end in Cambodia, starting with the ruins of Angkor, one of the world’s greatest architectural achievements and which Rose Macaulay describes in her marvelous *Pleasures of Ruins*: “All is now fantastic and ambushed with ghosts; the erroneous opinions of archaeologists twitter among the ruins like bats.” Tina is the one to call for further insight on this trip and on these forever-plaited countries.

#### A FEAST OF CULTURE AND FOLIAGE

“Japan is entered; the event is marked, as when one enters a Shinto shrine by passing beneath the *torii* gateway. There is an outside; then, there is an inside. And once inside—inside the shrine, inside Japan—the experience begins with a new awareness, a way of looking, a way of seeing.” We’re keen to share this experience so beautifully described in this passage by author Donald Richie, and our *Japan: A Cultural Feast* is a sensational entrée into his adopted homeland. Best of all, there are still spaces left on the November 3–14 departure, when the fall colors make an already visually stunning realm even more so.

Carey Johnston, our Japan guru, explains: “We’ve timed the trip to coincide with the autumn foliage. It is a great itinerary for first-timers to Japan as it touches on the highlights: cosmopolitan Tokyo, scenic Hakone, the Alps town of Takayama, and traditional Kyoto.” Along the way we have time for quiet cultural experiences, from tea ceremonies to lessons in calligraphy, sushi making, and *wagashi* crafting.

Upon alighting in Tokyo, we spend three days exploring the city sights, including the Meiji Shrine, Tokyo Tower, Hamarikyū Gardens, and the gargantuan fish market. It doesn’t take long to appreciate Japan’s talent for integrating its proud, ancient culture with its equally fervent embrace of the modern. From Tokyo we travel by train into the mountains to Hakone, where we luxuriate in *onsens* (hot springs), walk contemplatively in the acclaimed Outdoor Sculpture Garden, boat across lovely Lake Ashi, and visit the Owakudani Crater, hoping for a view of glorious Fuji. Next it’s on to the charming Japan Alps town of Takayama, wandering its old streets and dropping into woodworking shops. We end in Kyoto, cradle of Japan’s traditional arts and crafts, and home to the country’s most beautiful temples, shrines, palaces, villas, and gardens. It’s worth noting that we’ve just lowered the price, due to the US dollar’s strengthening against the yen. Call Carey to learn more.

#### “HAVE GONE TO PATAGONIA”

Bruce Chatwin sent these words by telegram to his employer in England upon landing in Patagonia for the first time. Just four words—so simple, yet dripping with life-changing implication—severed his ties with the *Sunday Times Magazine* in the mid-1970s and launched him on six months of discovery that culminated in his award-winning book,

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For more literary travel musings, visit our blog at [GeoEx.com/Blog](http://GeoEx.com/Blog).

#### ◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS SEVEN

Adam Vaught: *The city of Havana is like one huge living museum whose curator walked out and never looked back. Evidence of its former grandeur can easily be found, but 50 years of neglect have taken their toll and left the city in a unique state of tragic beauty.*

#### ◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS EIGHT

Michael Steigerwald: *One of the most interesting architectural wonders I've visited is the underground city of Derinkuyu in the Cappadocia region of central Turkey. Between the 5th and 10th centuries BCE, the troglodyte dwellings sheltered up to 20,000 people, along with their livestock and food stores.*





To reach the travel wizards noted here, please call 888-733-9019.

◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS NINE

Sabrina Middleton: *I loved the State Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Russia. Partially housed in the former Winter Palace of Peter, it's an epic museum with three million works of art from around the world. Best of all, my in-country colleague arranged early admission for me, so I had the place to myself before the heaps of tourists arrived.*

◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS TEN

Urs Hofmann: *Naqsh-e Jaban Square (or Imam Square) is one of the world's most beautiful and architecturally amazing sites. I recommend appreciating it from the terrace of the Qeyserieh Tea House, glass of tea in hand, along with some delicious sweets (and possibly a Qalyan).*



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*In Patagonia.* He's not the only person to be spirited away by the wild, mountainous landscapes straddling the Argentina-Chile border. Our Janko Gorse is another.

Janko chucked a successful accounting career in Buenos Aires to follow his bliss south. He has been leading trips in Patagonia for GeoEx since 1988, sharing with us his particular southern Patagonia expertise. (He's completed all the Andean crossings from the Puna to Tierra del Fuego.) GeoEx travelers consistently rave about him. Denise D., for example, wrote: "Janko was nothing short of AMAZING! He was helpful, accommodating, engaging, funny, nice—a wonderful guide and a great person." He has few rivals when it comes to passion for Patagonia, and we're delighted he'll be leading our upcoming *Into Patagonia* trips (November 3–12, January 19–28, and February 9–18).

This ten-day adventure, bookended by time in compelling Buenos Aires, whisks us to the immense Patagonian Steppes, to icy Lago Argentino, and to the stunning, spiky Cerro Fitz Roy, one of the earth's most technically daunting peaks. We rest up from our day hikes and relish Patagonia-inspired pampering in uniquely superb lodges, including the sublime and gloriously isolated Estancia Cristina, an old wilderness ranch set against lushly glaciated mountains. If you've got another four days (and we sincerely hope you do), you can add time in the scenic masterpiece of Torres del Paine. Call Natalie Crow for details. Incidentally, she notes that November travelers benefit from early-season pricing and fewer tourists.

NEW YEAR'S IN THE ARCTIC:  
FIREWORKS BY MOTHER NATURE

When asked what is special about this December's *New Year's Northern Lights Rail Journey* (December 28–January 6), our man Urs Hofmann replied with his typical dry wit and flair for understatement: "Other than the fact that travelers will experience St. Petersburg and Moscow decorated for Russian Christmas—in the middle of winter, with no tourists—and that they'll celebrate New Year's aboard the lovely Golden Eagle and see the Northern Lights (fingers crossed) way up in the Arctic . . . I can't think of anything noteworthy." You get the idea: If you're looking for a truly extraordinary and highly unusual way to ring in 2014, this is the trip for you.

This ten-day train journey to the planet's far northerly reaches kicks off in St. Petersburg, wraps up in Moscow, and explores charming villages in between—all alight with holiday festivities, which more than make up for the missing daylight this time of year. We'll wander streets bright with the spirit and traditions of Rozdestvo and take in palaces, onion-domed churches, and possibly a ballet. We'll revel in Christmas markets, a choral performance by monks, and a sleigh ride. And yes, we'll bid farewell to 2013 with a gala dinner, complete with caviar and music, in the Golden Eagle's elegantly appointed dining car, and welcome in 2014 with a champagne toast on the Arctic Circle. The onboard guest astronomer will speak about the aurora borealis, which we'll have excellent chances of seeing. Urs is the one to call.

EVER-ENCHANTING INDIA

Indira Gandhi explains a good approach: "If you wish to know something about India, you must empty your mind of all preconceived no-

tions. . . . India is different and, exasperating as it may seem, would like to remain so. This is the secret of India, the acceptance of life in all its fullness, the good and the evil.” We’ve been enchanted by India’s color and complexity for decades, and we’re fond of introducing our travelers to the country’s richness. A good place to start: *From Taj to Tiger*. This time-tested, 16-day trip reveals the best of northern India from Varanasi to Jaipur along with pulse-quickenning wildlife encounters—possibly a Royal Bengal tiger in Ranthambore National Park—and exquisite places to stay, like the luxurious tented Oberoi Vanyavilas.

Our eyes feel gluttonous in Delhi, gobbling up the sights, as we wind by rickshaw through the lively Chandni Chowk bazaar. Later we see the sunrise over the Taj Mahal and slow down for a moment in the masterful 10th-century Chandela temples at Khajuraho, which UNESCO calls “among the greatest masterpieces of Indian art.” We go deeper into the less-visited Rajasthan countryside, lingering in traditional villages and feeling tickled to spot sloth bears and langur monkeys on an afternoon game drive. In the ancient town of Narlai, we join locals to celebrate the enthusiastically fêted Diwali, the annual Festival of Lights, watching the town light up with *diyas* (oil lamps) and firecrackers. That’s if we’re there in the fall; in the spring, our time in Narlai is timed with another much-anticipated festival, Holi. Ring Simon Krejcik for more on this titillating and comfortable journey (departures: October 22–November 6 and March 5–20).

#### WAVES AND WILDLIFE FOR A WINTER HOLIDAY

While there is something nice (and nostalgic) about hunkering down at home for the winter holidays, we at GeoEx gravitate toward taking our celebrations on the road, especially to warmer climates with sights and activities to please our diverse array of traveling companions. For this reason, the Galápagos Islands and Costa Rica rank high on our Greatest Places to Spend the December Holidays list. Spaces fill up quickly, so we recommend planning early.

“It’s a special time of year in the otherworldly archipelago,” says our Galápagos celebrant, Natalie Crow. Foliage explodes, baby giant tortoises hatch, land birds nest, and temperatures are ideal for snorkeling, beach walks, and al fresco meals. And she’s lined up two exclusive, eight-day journeys (December 22–29 and December 26–January 2) based from the marvelous Galápagos Safari Camp, modeled after Africa’s very best tented camps. We’ll do plenty of island visiting and communing with wonderfully curious wildlife, swim and kayak to our hearts’ content, and get a guided tour of Quito to boot. (Of course, if you’d rather spend your nights at sea, we can help there, too, arranging cruises by 48-passenger ship or 16-passenger charter yacht.) Natalie is happy to tell you more—ask her about the somersaulting sea lions.

Costa Rica, another treasure-house of flora, fauna, and geologic wonders, is also well suited to travel in late December. It’s “the world’s best natural playground,” according to our chief Latin America expert and former Costa Rica resident, Jennine Cohen. She’s choreographed itineraries to this verdant, pacific country with river rafting, hiking, kayaking, birding, mountain biking, sailing, zip-lining, and more. She loves planning Custom Trips here as well, introducing travelers to such out-of-the-way wildlife extravaganzas as the Osa Peninsula. She delights in

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◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS ELEVEN  
Jennine Cohen: *Rio de Janeiro! The Museu de Arte do Rio (just opened in March), the Museum of Modern Art, and the Niterói Contemporary Art Museum—the building alone, designed by Oscar Niemeyer, is worth a trip.*



◆ ART AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS TWELVE  
Sara Barbieri: *The State Art Museum of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, a.k.a. the Igor Savitsky Museum. Its inspiring collection, hidden in the very uninspiring town of Nukus, Uzbekistan, is the second-largest collection of Russian avant-garde art, hanging, ironically, alongside its Socialist Realism comrades. The museum has been aptly called “Le Louvre des Steppes.”*



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**MYANMAR AT THE MOMENT**

We've long sung the praises of Myanmar—its topographic loveliness, its calm and strong people, its gracious culture—and we're pleased to help travelers navigate this newly opening country. "So much is shifting," says Asia aficionado Sara Barbieri, "finding your way isn't easy." With a still-developing infrastructure, quality hotel space is tough to find, using credit cards and ATMs is rarely an option, and finding special, out-of-the-way experiences is challenging. Sara's new Custom Trip, *Many Faces of Myanmar*, addresses all these issues in spades.

In 15 memorable days, we venture from urban centers to remote hamlets, embracing traditions and contemplating the changes at hand. We take an unusually thorough look at Yangon, spending three nights there among its gilded temples and sidewalk tea shops, really getting a feel for the place and people. Flying to temperate Kengtung, we hike to unfrequented villages, meeting Akha and An locals as they go about such typical tasks as sautéing bamboo worms and distilling corn. A couple days at unmissable Inle Lake introduce us to mesmerizing floating gardens and Burmese cooking techniques before we head to Pa-O settlements and the oft-overlooked Kakku ruins, a feast of ancient stupas and Buddhist carvings. We stroll in the former British hill station of Kalaw and hang out with friendly elephants nearby. Then to Bagan, where we dally at the Plain of Temples, enjoy private boat outings on the Irrawaddy, and make the unusual excursion to Pokkoku to learn about weaving and cheroot making. Sara is happy to plan your trip (offered October to March).



FOUNDING MEMBER  
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