Nervous in Nepal
Our Trek Into the Maoist Zone

The Coolest Kayak Camp in America

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure

ADVENTURE

DREAM IT. PLAN IT. DO IT.

National Parks Special 2005

The Best G… 7 Su… …ks …dges

World Class

LODGES + ESCAPES

(Where Next)

EcoTrips

(ADVENTURES THAT GIVE BACK)

PLACENCIA, BELIZE
WHAT: Swimming with whale sharks
DAYS: Five to six
OUTFITTER: Tourist Adventure
AMENITIES: Roughing it
PRICE TAG: $1,200 for five days
BOOK IT: www.touristadventure.com

WHY GO: Growing up to 60 feet in length, the whale shark is among the most elusive fishes in the sea. Scientists have no idea how long they live, where they reproduce, or how many exist. Yet each June, around the full moon, between 30 and 60 of these mysterious creatures mass off the coast of Placencia, Belize, as part of the Western Hemisphere's most predictable congregation of whale sharks. This spring, the town of Placencia joined forces with local conservation group Friends of Nature to create a sustainable tourism plan. Now you can scuba dive or snorkel within feet of gentle, plankton-eating giants, content in the knowledge that the dollars you spend will help fund a marine reserve and provide economic benefits to the local community.

NEED TO KNOW: Pick up your scuba dive with shark view…

Base Camps

(PLUSH PADS NEAR THE ACTION)

AMAZON, PERU
WHAT: Exploring the Amazon Basin
DAYS: Five to six
OUTFITTER: Inkaterrá Reserva Amazónica
AMENITIES: High-end
PRICE TAG: $295 for two nights
BOOK IT: www.inkaterra.com

Easy

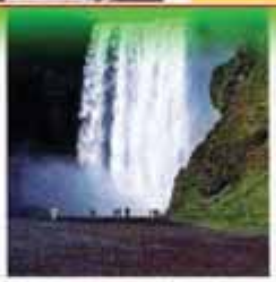
WHY GO: In June, Peru's Reserva Amazónica begins offering guided excursions along the longest canopy walk in the Peruvian Amazon. A hundred feet up from the rain forest floor, guests will stroll at eye level with treetop toucans and swinging tamarin monkeys along nearly a quarter mile of observation decks. There's no better way to see the virgin rain forest, and no place you can spend so long immersed in it. But perhaps what's best about Amazónica is that, after visiting with canopy denizens, you'll retreat to your own private cabana on the Madre de Dios River, complete with swaying hammock on the porch out front. Rest up. Tomorrow's mission: to practice your blowgunning on the jungle survival skills trek.

NEED TO KNOW: Reserve yourself one of the resort's three Amazónica suites: Tucked inside the same type of stilted thatch-roof cabanas as the rest of the lodge's accommodations, these cushy retreats feature electricity and all the solar-heated water you'll need to rinse off a day's worth of rain forest grime. In the communal dining area, made entirely of native timber, guests feast like chieftains on fresh mangoes, exotic star fruits, and a traditional Peruvian dish called *juane*—chicken wrapped in banana leaves.

SUMMER… For Adventur… Grads and D… Riding …gh Tide …nada's Fundy

JUNE/JULY 2005

$3.95US $5.95CAN



SOUTHWEST ICELAND

WHAT: Hiking, kayaking, touring
DAYS: Nine
OUTFITTER: REI Adventures
AMENITIES: Comfortable
PRICE TAG: $3,000
BOOK IT: www.reiadventures.com

Moderate

Hot

Cool

NEED TO KNOW: Pack a pair of eyeshades to help you sleep at night. Most of the time, you'll be grateful for summer's near-constant daylight, but after long, active days you'll want a good night's rest to be short in places like the Landmannalaugar region—a showcase of Iceland's magnetic volatility with thermal pools, lava fields, emerald lakes, and belching craters. ▲

—Reported and written by Costas Christ, Jeff Gongwer, and Mary Anne Potts