



BEYOND BASIC

Five ways to explore the wide and wonderful world of sustainable travel now. BY COSTAS CHRIST

TODAY, TAKING A SUSTAINABLE holiday comes in as many forms as a traveler's imagination can conjure, from dining on farm-to-fork fare in treehouse-style villas at Thailand's Six Senses Yao Noi to photographing thriving wildlife on 250,000 acres of formerly denuded farmland that's now Tswalu Kalahari, one of South Africa's top private nature reserves. The following travel experiences share a common bond: They protect threatened habitats, support cultural heritage, and improve local livelihoods – and also make for great vacations.

A snow leopard in Mongolia and (right) bird-watching in Machu Picchu.

Snow Leopard Quest

Among the world's critically endangered big cats,

snow leopards are so rare that finding a paw print in the wild is considered an important discovery. This year, Mongolia's government signed off on the creation of a new nature reserve – Tost Tosonbumba. Located in South Gobi, in a region considered prime snow leopard habitat, the reserve will connect two other conservation areas to establish one of the largest protected snow leopard landscapes on the planet. To celebrate this milestone, **Nomadic Expeditions**, which supports snow leopard research with funding and equipment, will offer big-cat lovers a chance to track – and possibly spot – these mysterious felines. Field biologists will lead the 11-night trip, which includes a stay at Nomadic's Three Camel Lodge in the Gobi Desert,

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along with private camping in traditional Mongolian *gers* (yurts) and chef-prepared meals. All proceeds benefit the Snow Leopard Conservation Foundation. *Departure: October 9, 2017; from \$9,995.*

Habitat Heroes

Starting in September, South Africa's UNESCO-designated Cape Floral Region bursts into a brilliant display of south-of-the-equator springtime, showcasing the world's greatest concentration of plant species – more than are found in the Amazon rain forest – and carpeting the rugged terrain with rainbows of color. Centuries-old homestead **Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve and Wellness Retreat** protects 18,532 acres of this biodiversity-rich habitat – home to endangered wildlife such as the Cape Mountain zebra. The lodge also cares for archaeological treasures found on-site, in the form of 130 ancient San rock-art paintings, some dating back as far as 10,000 years. Any of the 17 lavish rooms – or the owners' private villa – provides a perfect

A Cape Mountain zebra stops and smells the flowers around Bushmans Kloof.



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base camp for daily outings, with evenings spent sipping the Cape's renowned vintages under starlit skies. *Doubles from \$665, including breakfast daily and a private picnic for two.*

Bay Area Rebirth

For more than a century, Fort Baker, overlooking San Francisco Bay, hummed with U.S. military activity until the last soldiers left in 2000. Recognizing an opportunity to turn the former military grounds and barracks into a beacon of peace and sustainability, several Marin County locals formed a partnership with the U.S. National Park Service to open **Cavallo Point - The Lodge at the Golden Gate**. They reused original building materials to maintain historical character and reduce construction waste, carefully restored native flora, and transformed former officers' quarters into green living suites. Guests can bike through the surrounding 80,000 acres of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, take in vistas of the Golden Gate Bridge from a kayak, and learn how to prepare and sample the Bay Area's bounty at the on-site cooking school. The 142-room lodge also supports community projects such as The Conscious Kitchen, which teaches local teens about sustainable living, healthy eating, and gardening. *Doubles from \$399, including breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit.*

Flower Power in Peru

Over the past half-century, the rush for tourism dollars from waves of visitors eager to see Machu Picchu's ruins meant the



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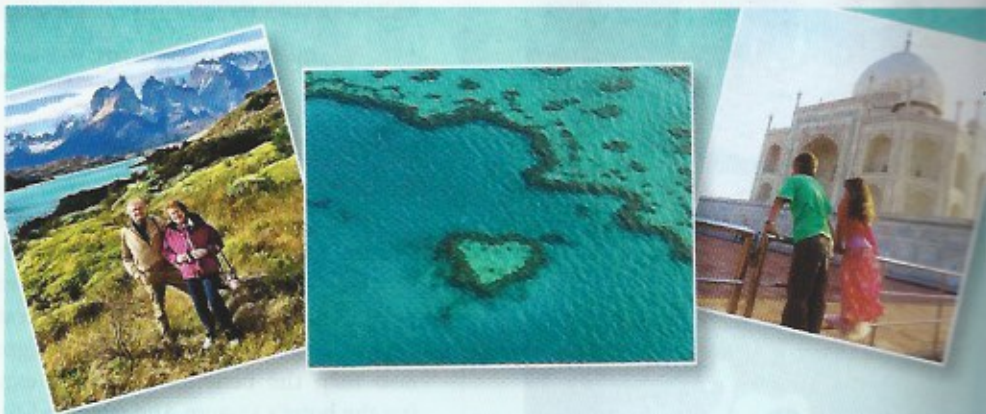
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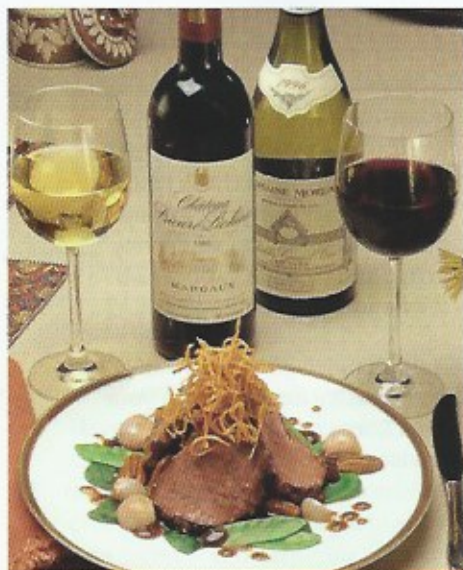


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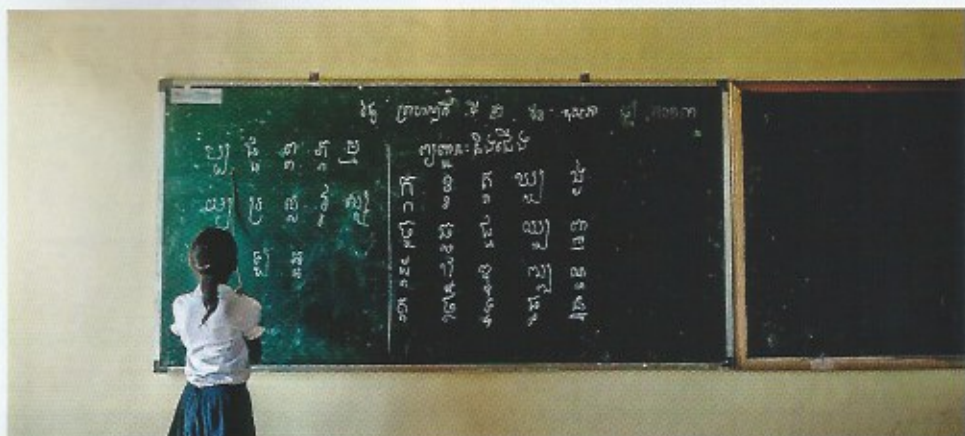
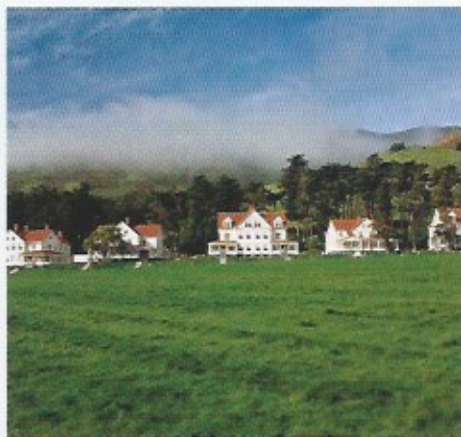
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Clockwise from top left: Wild orchids at Inkaterra, San Francisco's Cavallo Point, and a Cambodian classroom funded by Song Saa's charitable endeavors.

sanctuary's natural heritage received scant attention – and area flora and fauna spiraled into decline. Enter **Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel**, an 81-room lodge with a mission: Create a sustainable tourism model that protects and restores nature, rather than tramples it. Today, Inkaterra's guests also reap the benefits, including exploring the hotel's 12-acre Andean cloud-forest grounds on footpaths leading to 372 types of wild orchids, and opportunities to spot some of the 214 bird species and 111 kinds of butterflies that can also be found on the property. Nearby, guests can visit Inkaterra's Andean Bear Rescue Center, which is working to protect and replenish this endangered species in Machu Picchu's wilds. *Doubles from \$548, including breakfast and dinner daily and a massage once during stay.*

Cambodian Community

It comes as no surprise to veteran travelers

that some of the world's most picturesque places are also home to rural villagers struggling to fulfill basic needs. This was the reality Melita and Rory Hunter, the owners of **Song Saa Private Island**, discovered when they first saw the shimmering beauty of Koh Rong Archipelago while on their honeymoon in Cambodia in 2005. They set out to create a sustainable resort that would help improve local livelihoods. Forging a partnership with local fishermen to source the lodge's seafood menu (in the process, establishing Cambodia's first marine reserve), they also work with nearby villagers to supply fresh produce for the 27-room resort, and created a fund for community health and education. At the heart of Song Saa is a superlative guest experience – snorkeling in crystal lagoons and candlelit dinners, for instance – that also leaves the world a better place. *Doubles from \$1,037, including breakfast daily, a bottle of Champagne, and one massage per person. VI.*