

Passion Points: Giving Back



Courtesy of Elevate Destinations

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Philanthropists typically support charitable organizations by making contributions from home, but a growing number are incorporating an altruistic element into their voyages abroad. Oprah Winfrey's travels to South Africa inspired her to empower young women and found her Leadership Academy for Girls. Bono's time in Africa spurred him to create DATA, a nonprofit that works for debt relief on the continent. And Richard Branson's international escapades motivated him to endow the Branson School for Entrepreneurship at a South African university, encouraging young Africans to fulfill their leadership potential.

In a recent FastCompany.com survey, 76 percent of those polled said they would consider taking a philanthropic holiday. As demand for such trips has grown, an increasing number of companies have sprung up to accommodate travelers who want to combine doing good with feeling good on their vacations.

"Tourism that doesn't give back doesn't make sense to me," says Dominique Callimanopulos, explaining why she founded her two-year-old, Boston-based company, **Elevate Destinations** (617-661-0203; www.elevatedestinations.com). Focusing on environmental protection and community improvement, the boutique travel agency specializes in creating trips and one-of-a-kind itineraries for high-end clients with a conscience. It has organized family safaris in Africa for nonprofit groups such as Direct Relief International and is now offering some itineraries on a regular schedule. One of these is Ultimate Renewal in Brazil, which takes clients to a lodge near Paraty, south of Rio, where they follow a spa/boot-camp program, with daily yoga and activities like surfing, hiking and kayaking (and frequent massages), and whose proceeds benefit the Guarani tribe. Now, that's a special experience—or as Callimanopulos puts it, "travel that matters."

Have you added a philanthropic component to one of your trips? We'd love to hear about your experience. Send us a note to postcards@indagare.com.

Christine Egan 05/30/2007

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