



(TRAVEL) AGENT FOR CHANGE

Growing up in a well-heeled family in New York and Paris, Dominique Callimanopulos spent most of her childhood traveling in what she calls “the restraints of privilege.” “My dad had a yacht and we’d go to Caribbean islands,” she says. “The other side of the tracks was always more interesting to me than what was happening in my own family.” Her family privilege, however, enabled her to pursue her dream jobs, most of which have involved traveling the world. At Wesleyan University, she studied the impact of tourism in the Seychelles. She once spent a year

globetrotting with Dr. John Mack, the Harvard alien-abduction expert. Later, she got a degree in clinical psychology and began working with nonprofit organizations at home and abroad.

In 2004, she imagined a new kind of social entrepreneurship with the flexibility to travel and room for taking care of her daughter and two sons. Now her three-year-old travel company, Elevate Destinations, customizes trips to Africa, South East Asia, India, and South America with the purpose of rehabilitating the less privileged areas her clients are visiting. Whether it’s a honeymoon to Lamu or a family safari in Kenya, 5 percent of the cost

is donated to a local nonprofit developing the area. “The mission is travel that gives back,” she says. “You can choose the level of involvement, but the bottom line is that your trip will benefit a nonprofit organization in the country.”

Callimanopulos’ most involved trips are “donor trips,” where six to 20 people visit the projects in which they’ve invested. (She’s currently partnering with KickStart which is bringing irrigation, building, and farming technologies to African villages.) “It’s inventive,” she says. “I can put together any trip, market it, and then go out and see what I created.”
—Rachel Lehmann-Haupt