



13 Ultimate Wilderness Vacations



Courtesy Mombo Camp.

It's the ultimate escape: unplugging in the great outdoors at a remote retreat, with stunning natural scenes providing the perfect backdrop and larger-than-life activities entertaining the entire family from dawn to dusk. These are the 13 best destinations for ultimate wilderness vacations that offer adventure as well as luxury and serenity, with a mix of up-and-coming properties to know and our all-time favorite lodges.

Contact your Indagare Trip Designer or Indagare, if you are not yet a member, to start planning these ultimate wilderness vacations—this year and beyond. Our team can match you with the accommodations and activities that are right for you and provide information on [private villas](#), [charters](#) and more.

Best for Fly-Fishing and Horseback Riding: American West



Courtesy The Green O

From [Big Sky, Montana](#) to the [Grand Canyon](#), the [American West](#) is an iconic destination for a wilderness escape full of hiking and biking in top national parks, horseback riding at stylish dude ranches, fly-fishing on trout-filled rivers, Wild West nostalgia and patriotic fun.

Where to Stay: If you loved [Taylor River Lodge](#) or [The Ranch at Rock Creek](#), add the **The Green O**, which opened June 1 2021, to your list. This sophisticated, adults-only retreat is located in Montana’s remote Greenough township, on the southern edge of the 37,000-acre Paws Up Ranch. The property features 12 design-minded, freestanding “hauses”—including elevated tree houses, forest homes with floor-to-ceiling windows offering 180-degree views, and “Green Houses” with living garden roofs. Outside of the accommodations, entertainments include a seasonal dining concept from Executive Chef Brandon Cunningham; a serene spa, located within a collection of tents to promote immersion in nature; access to 100-plus miles of trails for hiking and riding, as well as 10 miles of the Blackfoot River for fishing and kayaking; and adventure activities like archery, ATV tours, rappelling, shooting and whitewater rafting. Plus: guests are able to explore the full expanse of Paws Up Ranch.

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Best for Unplugging: Costa Rica



An aerial view of the sunset lounge at Kasiya Papagayo, an eco retreat set on 123 acres of mountain and beach terrain in Guanacaste, Costa Rica. Photo by Brooke Day, courtesy Kasiya Papagayo.

With one of the world's strongest national environmental preservation programs (25 percent of the country is protected by the National System of Conservation Area, and the country is a leader in its plans to be completely carbon neutral), [Costa Rica](#) is an outdoor adventure-lover's Eden, made up of beach, jungle and mountain landscapes. The national motto is "Pura Vida"—which translates to a deep respect for the natural world—and life here is governed by the changes in the seasons and the turn of the tides.

Where to Stay: If you're looking to escape the hustle of daily life and reconnect with nature, you won't want to miss [Kasiya Papagayo](#), an eco-retreat in Costa Rica's Guanacaste province (one of only two places in the world that has a dry tropical forest ecosystem). Built into the forest and barely visible from afar, the resort offers direct access to pristine, practically virgin volcanic-sand beaches (where sea turtles come to lay their eggs) and rugged mountains, where secret yoga platforms are tucked away for private meditations among the trees, with views of the ocean. The property has fewer than a dozen luxury tented suites, making the experience intimate and private, and the staff promotes a meditative, serene atmosphere. If you desire solitude and silence, you will find it here. Alternatively, Kasiya's prime location allows more active guests to fill

their days with snorkeling, scuba diving, kayaking, hiking, zip lining, horseback riding and more. The retreat's low-impact approach truly delivers on its sustainability promise, protecting the local wildlife populations and giving visitors the chance to observe many species of tropical birds, monkeys, amphibians, fish and more, up-close.

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Best for Heli-Touring: Alaska & Iceland



Courtesy Tordrillo Mountain Lodge

In the words of Indagare trip designer Sasha Feldman, who scouted America's 49th state: "The single most fitting word to describe [Alaska](#) is *epic*." Few other places on earth are home to such a wide variety of dramatic landscapes. Here, travelers can heli-ski in the morning, have a picnic lunch on a glacier and salmon fish in the afternoon—plus, go mountain biking, bear-viewing, kayaking and mushroom foraging. Best of all, this ecological wonderland is raw, remote and astonishingly untouched.

Where to Stay: The Alaskan backcountry is a destination that all outdoor enthusiasts should have on their bucket list—and [Tordrillo Mountain Lodge](#) has access to some of the region's finest heli-skiing terrain. Located on Lake Judd, the resort's luxurious one- and two-bedroom standalone cabins foster a cozy, secluded feel, while still being close to the action. Tordrillo Mountain Lodge is all about one-of-a-kind tours, and the concierge team will help customize each visitor's activity schedule with a multitude of

excursions (like whitewater rafting, river kayaking, glacier trekking, wakeboarding and wake surfing on a Mastercraft wake-setting boat and much more!). The property's heli-skiing experience is like no other, with world-class guides to seek out the best runs, terrain rich with pristine powder fields and a personal helicopter to whisk you away to meet your private chef for dinner after your day on the slopes. Plus, for an experience like no other, the lodge can arrange their "Kings and Corn" experience, which allows guests to summer heli-ski during the day, before embarking on a salmon fishing adventure at night. —*Sydney Lapin*

Plus: Nestled in one million acres of state-protected forests on Finger Lake, [Winterlake Lodge](#) is an intimate, tranquil property with simple but comfortable cabins and an enthusiastic staff, who guide activities like heli-skiing, bear viewing, dog sledding and glacier hiking. Meanwhile, further north, those seeking an über-remote experience will be dazzled by [Sheldon Chalet](#), accessible only by helicopter. Built on the only private concession in the mountains of Denali National Park, the Chalet offers unparalleled access to the summit of Denali (and incredible views). Due to the remote location, there's no access to cell service or WiFi—allowing guests to fully immerse themselves in the property's elevated cuisine, fascinating history and life-changing exploration of the dramatic glaciers, including ice-cave spelunking, flying through the canyons via helicopter and visiting a hidden Mastodon (mammoth) boneyard.

[Iceland](#) is a must-visit for its pristine landscapes and top-notch adventure activities such as glacier trekking, volcano hiking, horseback riding, fjord cruising and mountain glamping. This extraordinary island offers otherworldly terrain that is ripe for expeditions, and it is one of the best places to view the Northern Lights, especially from September to April.

Where to Stay: A former sheep farm converted into a luxe experiential hotel, [Deplar Farm](#) exists in a Narnia-like wonderland on Iceland's Troll Peninsula. The 13-room property offers a once-in-a-lifetime experience with world-class wilderness guides, summit-to-sea heli-skiing, salmon fly-fishing and countless other activities.

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Best for Hiking: Chilean Patagonia



The view from Tierra Patagonia. Photo by Al Argueta.

[Chilean Patagonia](#) is famous for its bright-blue glacial lakes, plentiful wildlife and snow-capped peaks, so it's no surprise that the destination tops the list for most outdoor junkies—but the excursions, which range from trekking to fly-fishing and horseback riding on a working *estancia*, are varied enough to please travelers of all ages and interests.

Where to Stay: Only 25 minutes from Torres del Paine National Park, [Tierra Patagonia](#) offers luxurious yet environmentally-conscious rooms with stunning views of the Massif (mountain range) from every window. The property's private concession stretches to the picture-perfect Lake Sarmiento and is home to pumas, condors and guanacos, and guests can visit nearby *estancias* for scenic horseback rides. For a more remote experience, travelers should not miss the [Awasi](#) property, located on a private concession further north.

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Best for Desert Exploration: Namibia & Morocco



Hiking the sand dunes of Namibia. Courtesy Indagare.

[Namibia](#) has one of the lowest population densities in the world, and if it weren't for the occasional herd of elephants, a traveler here might think she was on Mars. Often described as Africa's final frontier, the landscape consists mostly of desert, sand dunes and huge open spaces—ideal for hiking, driving ATVs, hot air ballooning and tracking big game like lions, rhinos, cheetahs and giraffes.

Where to Stay: One of Namibia's newest luxury properties, **The Nest at Sossus**, is unlike any other safari lodge in Africa, thanks to its intimate size and unique design. Modeled after the labyrinthine nest of the desert's "Sociable Weaver" bird, The Nest is a private villa-style property that accommodates a group of up to eight guests. Just a 45-minute drive from the gate of the protected Sossusvlei pan, The Nest offers exclusive access for game walks and drives with expert guides, a private pool, scenic flights and hot air balloon tours, a private butler and a gourmet chef. In between activities, you can soak in the modern interiors and lounge spaces of the villa, as well as the outdoor art installations, valley views and wildlife-attracting watering holes that surround the entire property.

Meanwhile, the wind-swept desert of [Morocco](#) draws in visitors who are enchanted by the romance, adventure and culture of this captivating destination. To experience magical Morocco to the fullest, travelers should step out of the main cities and into the

expanses of such deserts as Skoura and Agafay, which offer a seemingly endless playground of rippling sand dunes. Nights here are spent stargazing with Bedouin guides, and days are filled with exploration by foot, camel or 4×4. —*Sydney Lapin*

Where to Stay: Tucked away in the remote desert oasis of Skoura lies the hidden gem [Dar Ahlam](#), or the “House of Dreams.” This special property provides an ideal respite for cultural immersion and astonishing Moroccan landscapes. What was once an ancient kasbah was restored to a 14-room hideaway, secluded by palm groves and almond trees, that overlooks the Atlas Mountains. The staff consists of locals who are eager to share their passion for Morocco, and who seamlessly orchestrate personalized adventures and experiences. Standout experiences include trekking into the Valley of Roses and participating in traditional tea ceremonies with 12th-century Berber villages. Dar Ahlam allows its visitors to properly unwind without the distractions of everyday life—with pampering perks like candle-lit massages at the hammam or soaking in the elegant beauty of supper under the stars. —*Sydney Lapin*

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Best for Wildlife Viewing: Botswana, Zimbabwe & Rwanda



Leopard in Botswana. Photo by Ried Stelly.

The ultimate destination for a picture-perfect safari, the Eastern and Southern regions of Africa are home to some of the most spectacular wildlife viewing, and countries like Botswana and Rwanda, in particular, have set the example for other nations as models for sustainable development. These countries' low-volume, low-impact approach to tourism has resulted in some of the most exclusive luxury camps in Africa, with a real sense of remoteness in their lack of fences within vast private concessions.

Where to Stay: In the Okavango Delta—one the [Botswana's](#) most lush regions and an essential stop for any itinerary—Wilderness Safaris [Mombo](#) offers an unparalleled experience in the country's Moremi Game Reserve, which is celebrated for its excellent animal-viewing and birding. Reopened after an extensive renovation in January 2018, Wilderness Safaris Mombo Camp continues to be a statement property focused on design and conservation. The eight spacious, enchanting tents are carefully designed with canopied beds, large copper tubs and porch decks featuring plunge pools, swing beds and loungers; plus, tents are 100-percent solar-powered. Wilderness Safaris Mombo draws repeat visitors thanks to its extremely accommodating and friendly staff, who can help arrange such experiences as a couple's massage on a private porch with panoramic views over the floodplain. —*Sydney Lapin*

Where to Stay: Featuring some of the most extravagant accommodations in all of Africa, [Singita Pamushana](#), in [Zimbabwe](#), is a luxury safari lodge that goes above and beyond to provide a warm welcome. Remotely located on the 130,000-acre Malilangwe Reserve, it is no surprise that the lodge is home to breathtaking views and an abundant range of big game. The design of the property's main lodge and eight freestanding suites (plus one incredible five-bedroom villa) channels a sense of grandeur tempered by earthiness; intricate tribal tile work in the bathrooms, African art and a curated selection of books in the rooms make the villas feel more like private homes than hotel rooms. The lodge's expert guides and rangers meet with guests on arrival to review preferred activities (game drives, walking safaris and visiting the local village to learn about community development) and set up individual schedules. —*Sydney Lapin*

Where to Stay: Overlooking Lake Rwanyakazinga in [Rwanda](#), Wilderness Safaris [Magashi Camp](#)'s six tented suites offer the best of both worlds, with land- and water-based safaric within a private concession of [Akagera National Park](#). Here, guests have exclusive access to the park and the chance to experience the thrill of gorilla-trekking alongside the adventure of a traditional safari. Magashi even offers night game drives, ideal for viewing the high local population of nocturnal leopards. For experiences even further off the beaten path, [Bisate](#)—located in Volcanoes National Park—is a spectacular eco-lodge from Wilderness Safaris. A series of spherical fiber-thatched pods with domed roof, the six sophisticated forest villas were built into an eroded volcanic cone, with floor-to ceiling windows displaying knock-out views of nearby volcanoes. In

addition to gorilla-trekking, Wilderness Safaris Bisate hosts hiking to see the famous golden monkey, as well as local village visits, birding walks and the chance to participate in Bisate's forest rehabilitation program. After a long day of trekking, the incredible culinary program will not disappoint. —*Sydney Lapin*

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Best for Glamping: Canada



A helicopter excursion in Canada. Courtesy Nimmo Bay.

Massive and complex, [Canada](#)'s sprawling swaths of scenic wilderness offer travelers a host of idyllic summer retreats, where the focus is on hiking, fishing and soaking in your surroundings.

Where to Stay: [Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge](#) was a pioneer in the “glamping” movement and is still one of its best practitioners. Located in the heart of the [Pacific Northwest](#), this tented camp provides a unique wilderness experience with sublime food and service in a gorgeous, rugged setting. Where Clayoquot really shines is in its excursions, which are all led by the fun, young staff guides; nothing is outsourced. For an even more private experience, [Nimmo Bay](#) is set on the shores of a secluded bay off

of British Columbia, with only nine cabins. This elegantly appointed, intimate wilderness lodge has been family-run for more than three decades. While some guests come for such outdoor adventures as kayaking through the Broughton archipelago or cruising around in a boat to observe the abundant wildlife, the property's real specialty is its highly regarded heli-fishing program.

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Best for Exploration at Sea: Antarctica



A penguin at Mikkelson Harbor. Photo by Colin Heinrich, courtesy Indagare.

In the words of Indagare Impact Manager Colin Heinrich, who scouted in Antarctica in 2020: “Glaciers tumbled into the ocean from the tops of the most pristine mountains I have ever seen. Icebergs sat unmoving in water so clear and deep that their bellies were visible for dozens of feet down until they disappeared into the darkness.” Such are the icy visions that await the most intrepid travelers who travel to the ends of the earth to explore the White Continent. In addition to zodiac adventures across the arctic seas—where explorers can search for seals, penguins and polar bears—a boat trip to Antarctica aboard one of Indagare's preferred expedition yachts provides a first-hand look at how vulnerable, and essential, this wild landscape is.

Where to Stay: Visit Antarctica like never before possible aboard the brand-new Quark

Expeditions *Ultramarine* expedition yacht. You'll have the chance to sail aboard a state-of-the-art polar-travel vessel (equipped with two twin-engine helicopters and a variety of sustainability features), which offers a robust portfolio of adventure activities and luxurious, modern suites, breathtaking public spaces and more outdoor wildlife-viewing spaces than any other expedition ship of its size (plus, there's even a jogging track that runs the full circumference of the vessel!).

This November, you can join Indagare Founder Melissa Biggs Bradley on our very first Insider Journey to the continent, aboard the *Ultramarine*, in the company of biologists, glaciologists and historians, who will provide essential context regarding Antarctica's wildlife and ecology. You can travel in good conscience, knowing that your entire trip has been set up as a carbon-neutral expedition, designed by our team with special care to reduce unnecessary energy waste. Additionally, a portion of the trip's cost will go towards supporting Indagare's conservation and environmental initiatives to protect vulnerable environments like Antarctica all around the world. Click [here](#) to learn more and sign up.

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Best for Cultural Immersion: Southeast Asia



Safari-style dining at Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle. Photo by Ken Seet, courtesy Four

[Thailand](#) and [Cambodia](#) stand apart from other wilderness vacation destinations in that their cultural offerings are just as rich as their outdoor adventure opportunities, making either country the perfect choice for a getaway that combines a few days of city touring with nature immersion.

Where to Stay: Guests at the [Four Seasons Golden Triangle Tented Camp](#) get to play 'mahout,' or elephant minder, while residing in one of 15 tricked-out tents that overlook Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle, where [Thailand](#) meets [Myanmar](#) and [Laos](#).

Accommodations are chic and dining is fantastic, as are the Mekong River safaris and myriad opportunities to observe elephants, making it a dream come true for animal lovers. In southern Cambodia, [Shinta Mani Wild](#) camp is located on 400 acres of previously threatened wilderness, with 15 luxury tents and exceptional off-the-beaten-path nature experiences. The Shinta Mani group worked with the Wildlife Alliance to protect land that had frequent illegal logging to create this truly unique resort. On-property, days are spent immersing oneself in the local habitat, whether boating, kayaking, fly-fishing or joining the Wildlife Alliance anti-poaching rangers on their morning surveys (this varies in excitement; some may have a pleasant hike, while others may find wild animals rescued from traps). Other popular activities include cliff jumping at the hotel's beautiful waterfall and unwinding with spa treatments.

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Best for Far-Flung Adventure: New Zealand



A view over lake and snow of Minaret Station in New Zealand. Courtesy Minaret Station.

Whether you picture *Lord of the Rings* characters in front of soaring mountains or lounging by the fire in a cozy lodge, New Zealand is one of those rare places where reality surpasses fantasy. The beauty of the landscapes and the breadth of experiences are simply unmatched.

Where to Stay: One of [New Zealand](#)'s most epic wilderness experiences is set on 65,000 spectacular acres of private farmland in the middle of the remote Fiordland. Accessible only by helicopter, the intimate, family-run [Minaret Station](#) takes advantage of its secluded location and rugged beauty. Visitors can stay in one of four luxurious alpine-style chalets at the resort and explore by foot, boat, helicopter, ski or ATV.

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Best for a Jungle Escape: Brazil



Photo by Peter Schlesinger, courtesy Indagare.

[South America's largest country](#) has myriad opportunities for wilderness exploration. Much of this, of course, is in the Amazon rainforest. But other areas, including the vast marshlands of the Pantanal, provide critical habitat to thousands of species, including the endangered (and elusive) jaguar as well as scores of species of endemic tropical birdlife. —*Peter Schlesinger*

Where to Stay: In the Amazon, Indagare recommends **Anavilhanas Jungle Lodge** and **Cristalino Lodge**. These two properties, on different tributaries of the great river, both offer full immersion into the jungle. Anavilhanas, north of Manaus, gives guests prime access to a massive swathe of the rainforest, including one of the world's largest river archipelagos. Over the course of their multi-day itineraries here, guests have opportunities to see pink and gray dolphins and other wildlife on full- or half-day boat tours, go on jungle walks and swim in the river—as well as the lodge's pool overlooking the islands. To the south, activities at Cristalino emphasize walking through the jungle on the reservation's 22 miles of trails, reachable by riverboat. Birders from around the world flock (no pun intended) here to see some of the nearly 600 bird species that live amongst its trees, such as toucans, macaw, parrots, parakeets and birds of paradise. And in the Pantanal, Refugio Ecologico Caiman is a private reserve with a just-renovated hacienda and two buyout-only lodges, each with wetlands-facing pools. The Refugio is one of the world's best places to see jaguars: Onçafari, Brazil's leading jaguar protection organization, has its headquarters here, and guests on Onçafari's research

excursions have a 98 percent chance of seeing the elusive cats. Also on view at Caiman: massive hyacinth macaws, anteaters and capybaras.—*Peter Schlesinger*

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- Elizabeth Harvey on April 8, 2022

