



Summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro, Mike Dawson photo.

Choose your own ADVENTURE

Travel destinations near and far to get your adrenaline pumping

by Christie Judson

Whether you're a true-blue adventure hound or simply looking for an exciting summer vacation that "gets you off the tour bus and out of the resort," Laura Main, a manager at The Adventure Travel Company, says 2011 offers an array of options for adventurous fun seekers of all types and tastes.

"Adventure travel isn't about demographics," said Main. "It's a mindset. We've seen a major shift to all kinds of adventure travel for all age groups and

lifestyles. Our clients span an incredibly wide range – all with different definitions of 'adventure.'"

For some, she says, an adventure may mean taking a year off to travel the world and "hitting as many destinations as possible." For others, it may include taking the family to an exotic locale, volunteering abroad, trekking to the top of a mountain, soaking up a new culture or knocking a long anticipated trip off their "bucket list."

"Either way, we're finding that Canadians

are seeking more meaningful travel experiences that take them off the beaten path for a more authentic adventure. Though, like anything else, there are good ones and bad ones, and certain itineraries (are) better suited to certain needs and preferences than others."

So, when it comes to deciding which one is right for you, Main suggests start by thinking about where you want to go and what you want to do.

"Planning ahead can often secure you a

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better deal and (offer) more routing options... and for some destinations, booking ahead may be necessary. For example, in order to trek the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, you need a permit and there are only a certain number of these allotted at any given time."

Since many adventure travel destinations require complex itineraries that include international flights and domestic connections, Main also recommends talking to an adventure travel expert – particularly someone who will take the time to get to know you and learn about your needs, wants and budget.

"The most important thing is to make sure your trip is booked through a reputable company," she warns. "Many adventure travel options take travellers to remote international locations where regulations and customer service standards may not meet ours here in Canada. Booking through a reputable travel agency in Canada will ensure that you're protected and (that) the local operators and suppliers you'll be travelling with meet your standards for service and safety."

continued



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Photo courtesy Monashee Adventure Tours

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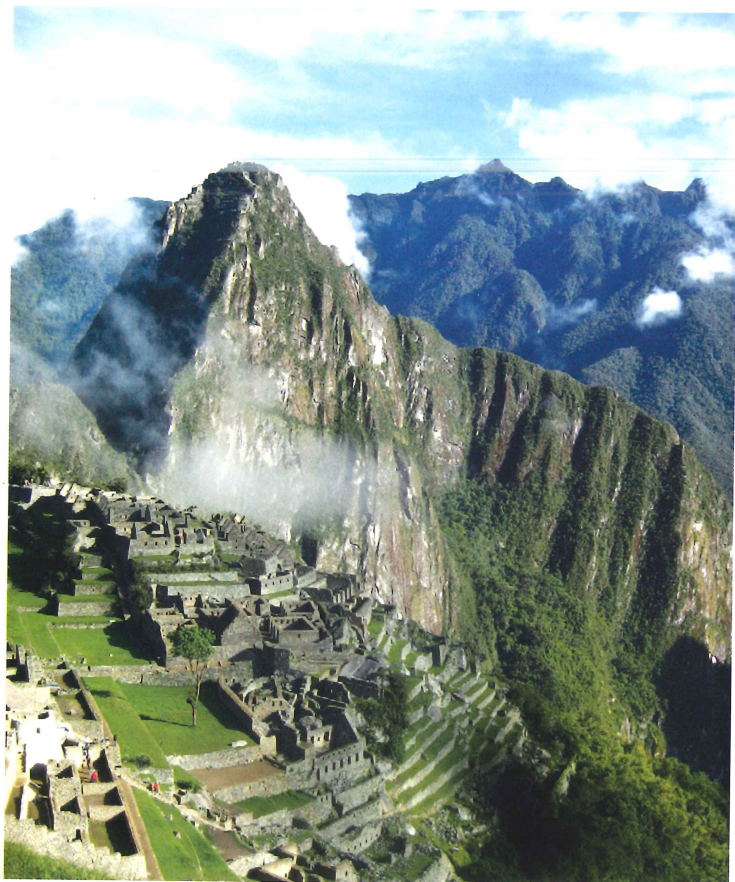
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Machu Picchu, Peru, Lacey Devitte photo

There are small group tours to almost any destination you can imagine...

As a custom trip-planning specialist, Main acknowledges she has been privy to some "pretty unique" bookings, including a family volcano-climbing expedition to Indonesia, a 50th birthday celebration atop Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro and a whirlwind backpacking trip for a retired single dad. But with so many available options, she reminds people to do their homework.

"You can check out our website for some great ideas to get you started," she suggests. "Browse our regional guides, our agent picks and our top 10 lists for inspiration. (We) also hold travel talks every few weeks on various destinations. Our adventure specialists share their stories, pictures and advice."

When it comes to adventure travel safety, Main advises there are potential medical and safety concerns associated with any type of travel and exploration.

However, she says people shouldn't – "within reason" – let it deter them from getting out there and experiencing the wonders of the world.

"With the adventure market opening up so much, there are small group tours to almost any destination you can imagine – each partaking in an equally large number of different activities," said Main. "Be aware, use common sense and always trust your instincts." ⓘ

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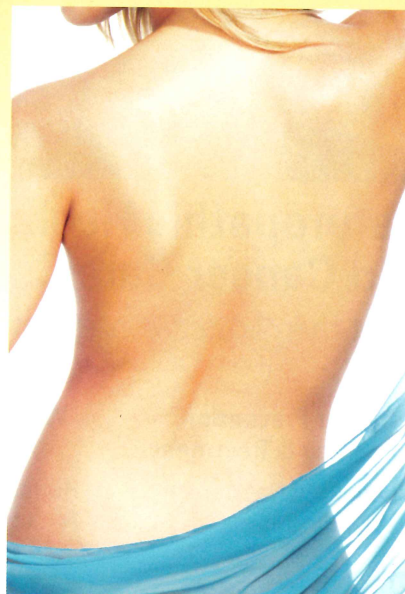
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