

GENTRY



**FACE
FORWARD**

*2021 Comes
Into Focus*

THE HEARTS & MINDS OF SILICON VALLEY

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The sand dunes of Namibia, among the largest in the world



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Julie Rodrigues Widholm is ready to make her mark on the Bay Area art scene, championing diversity and inclusion. Page 96

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As Corry Cook discovers with a look back — and ahead — at her most memorable escapes, adventure is still very much alive in 2021. Page 100

ON THE COVER

A cocktail dress by designer Vasily Vein, co-designed with Sonya Molodetskaya and modeled at the National First Responders Fund Fashion Show. Photo by Drew Altizer.

TRAVEL

SHOCK &

Heli-ski Iceland: "At Iceland's famed Deplar Farm, heli-skiing is next-level: Plunge into the deepest powder, ski the most spectacular glaciers, make fresh tracks in pristine open bowls, practice your turns in the trees and witness incredible views from the greatest heights," shares Corry Cook.

2 & AWESOME



*Adventure is
still very much
alive in 2021.*

BY CORRY COOK

Even during an insular year like 2020, boundaries of human experience still beckoned. Sir **David Attenborough's** debut on Instagram landed him a Guinness World Record for the fastest ascent to 1 million followers. It took the prolific broadcaster and naturalist only four hours and 44 minutes to dethrone the reigning queen, Jennifer Aniston. Since then, Attenborough's followers have

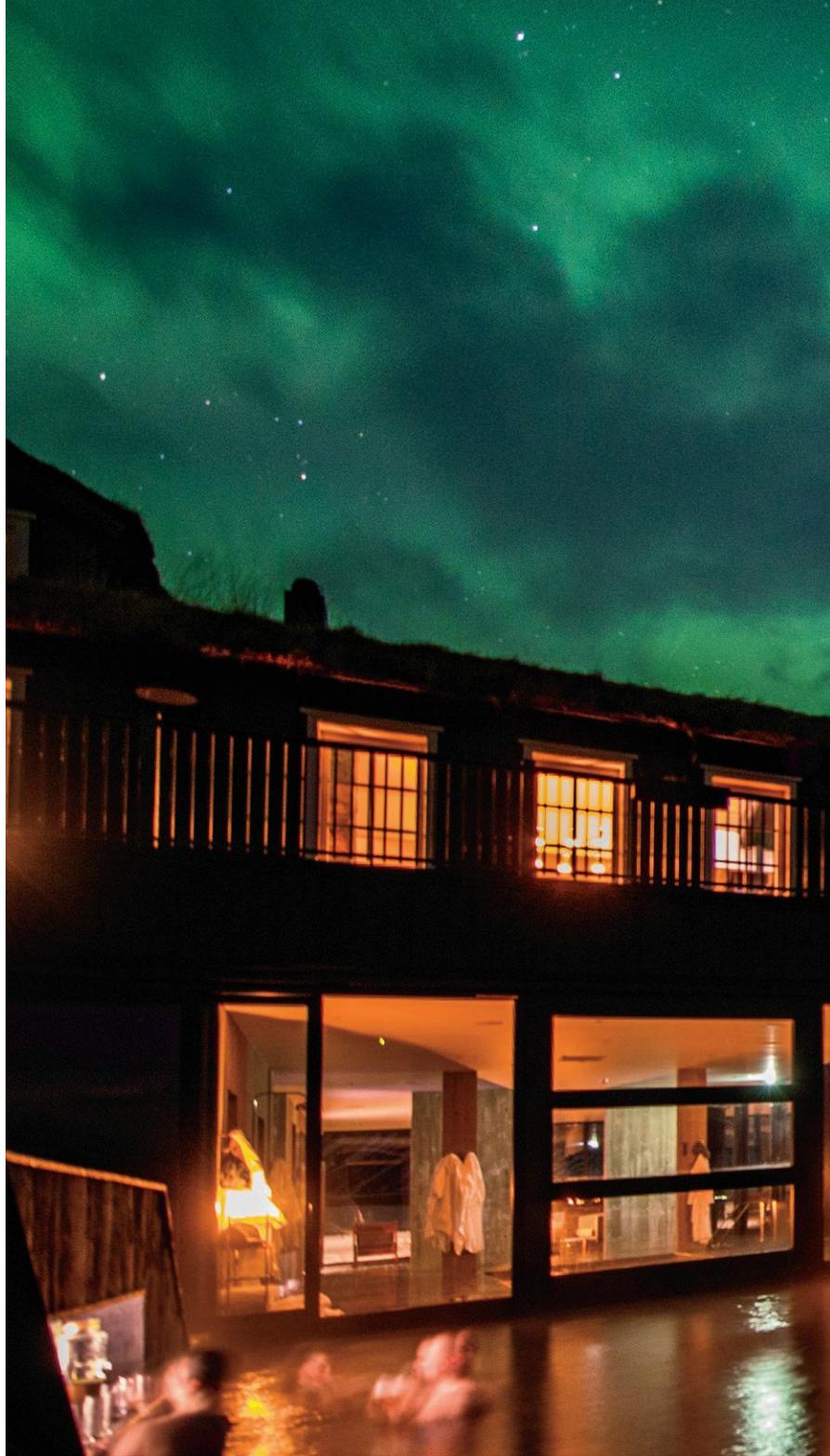
increased sixfold.

Attenborough's message to experience and care for the earth and its inhabitants continues to resonate with generations of avid fans. "It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement," says Attenborough in a much-repeated quote. "It is the greatest source of visual beauty, the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living."

Many of us are craving the great outdoors, wide-open spaces and the chance to reconnect with nature. But nature makes no promises, no guarantees. Not everyone will experience all that it has to offer — and that very fact makes it so thrilling. As COVID-19 continues to evolve into the new year, these elite luxury and adventure specialists are among those monitoring the situation and enhancing their state-of-the-art health and safety protocols. The best of the best are doing so without compromising commitments to protecting visitors, animals and the planet.

The dedicated professionals who deliver my top picks for electrifying adventures for the new year continue to create new ways to make our jaws drop, keep our bodies safe and put our minds at ease. Although I traveled to all of these destinations in a pre-COVID world, each curated experience is exclusive, remote (as in secluded, not *virtual*) and improved for 2021: Heli-skiing in Europe, hot air ballooning in Africa, swimming with sharks in French Polynesia and tracking pumas in South America. And all are primed and ready to delight when the moment is right.

"Excitement," as Attenborough says, only begins to cover it.



Test All Limits in Iceland

Heli-ski, float in a saltwater tank, swim under the northern lights

Iceland is mysterious, magnetic and unlike anywhere else on earth. The Nordic island delivers no shortage of stunning views and places to enjoy the vast, raw landscapes and miracles of nature — including epic northern lights sightings. One adventure tribe takes the land of freezing ice and fiery skies to the next level.

In 2021, heli-skiing at Eleven Experience's Deplar Farm



Swim under the northern lights:
“One crystal clear night in Deplar Farm’s geothermally heated indoor-outdoor pool, our group of revelers was almost delirious with anticipation,” Cook recalls. “Suddenly, my first aurora borealis sighting: a luminous pale glow expanded and soon, the skies over the mountains began to move, like a shimmering green curtain rippling in the wind.”

PREVIOUS AND ABOVE:
ELEVEN EXPERIENCE

will continue to be red hot, an unforgettable experience for Iceland adrenaline seekers. Put simply: endless vertical. Tackling untracked heli-ski descents on Iceland’s Arctic maritime snowpack is for both the hard charger and the smooth cruiser. With more than 1,500 square miles of territory to ski, the area has a wide variety of terrain (think wide-open bowls, steep couloirs and long runs). The Land of the Midnight Sun provides extended daylight hours so you can make sea-to-summit runs even after dinner.

Able to sleep 26 and available for full buyout in 2021, Deplar Farm’s otherworldly nature and private experiences give guests a unique advantage when it comes to physical distancing, as do snowmobiling on glaciers, riding Icelandic horses on the beach, fat biking groomed trails and soaking in the geothermal pool. A one-hour float in one of the farm’s two I-sopod Epsom salt float tanks is so calming that you might not know where the water ends and your body begins. elevenexperience.com



Shipwreck Lodge: "If you're looking for a unique and dramatic stay where only the boldest explorers dare to tread, a stay at Namibia's Shipwreck Lodge is an absolute must," Cook says. "Soulful and calming, the lodge fuels the senses and provides a plush place to relax and reflect after jaw-dropping action in Skeleton Coast National Park."

Push Boundaries in Namibia

Search for rare wildlife, sleep inside a wreck, soar above the world's oldest desert

Remote and fascinating, Namibia is a country that takes you farther off the grid than you might have thought possible. Here, social distancing is already the norm, as life thrives in barren rock, sand and landscapes of infinite vastness.

Days begin long before dawn when pursuing epic wildlife sightings with Natural World Safaris in Namibia. First up are the desert-adapted elephants, digging deep beneath the sand for the last vestiges of water. Then, making use of the wells left behind by the pachyderms are giraffes, lions, cheetahs and baboons — perhaps even a brown hyena or two existing alongside snakes and lizards and insects in a brilliant kaleidoscope of colors.

Ready for full buyouts in 2021, the Shipwreck Lodge is the sole luxury property inside Namibia's Skeleton Coast National Park and a favorite of Natural World Safaris' most elite clients. In this raw, rugged and impossibly remote area of the country, the lodge and its 10 "shipwreck-style" cabins are made of local and sustainably sourced materials, each cabin spaced along the sand dunes like the relics of the ancient ships that dot the coastline. In between epic wildlife encounters, ride in a hot air balloon above the world's oldest desert, see ancient rock art on huge granite boulders, climb the world's largest sand dunes, or beachcomb for whale bones and debris from centuries of shipwrecks. naturalworldsafaris.com



Float above: "The roar of the balloon's fire began before dawn, and soon after we were floating silently over one of the 'reddest' landscapes on the African continent, with some of the highest sand dunes in the world," Cook says. "After a silky-smooth landing in the middle of nowhere, our Champagne breakfast was out of this world."

PHOTOS BY SHAWN VAN EEDEN (LEFT); NAMIB SKY BALLOON SAFARIS (ABOVE); NATURAL WORLD SAFARIS (RIGHT)



Search for wildlife: “Natural World Safaris had me shivering with excitement,” Cook remembers of her Namibia adventure. “Just a few meters away, two cheetah were lounging, fresh from a kill: teeth razor-sharp and bright pink tongues stained with blood, each brilliant black spot and tearstained face amplified in a way no photograph could ever truly capture. Namibia had stolen my heart.”



Swim with sharks: “With my bum on the side of the boat and toes dangling in the crystal-clear blue water below, vague fear at the idea of swimming with sharks had quickly evolved into borderline paralysis at the sight of dorsal fins above and below in the surface in every direction,” Cook recalls. “‘Oh, come on,’ my husband teased from below. ‘What happened to that *I am woman hear me roar* attitude you had just a few minutes ago?’ He was right: After five glorious days in French Polynesia, my body felt replenished and my soul, supercharged.”



Melt Into Legendary French Polynesia

Swim with sharks, experience conservation, sink your toes into pristine sand

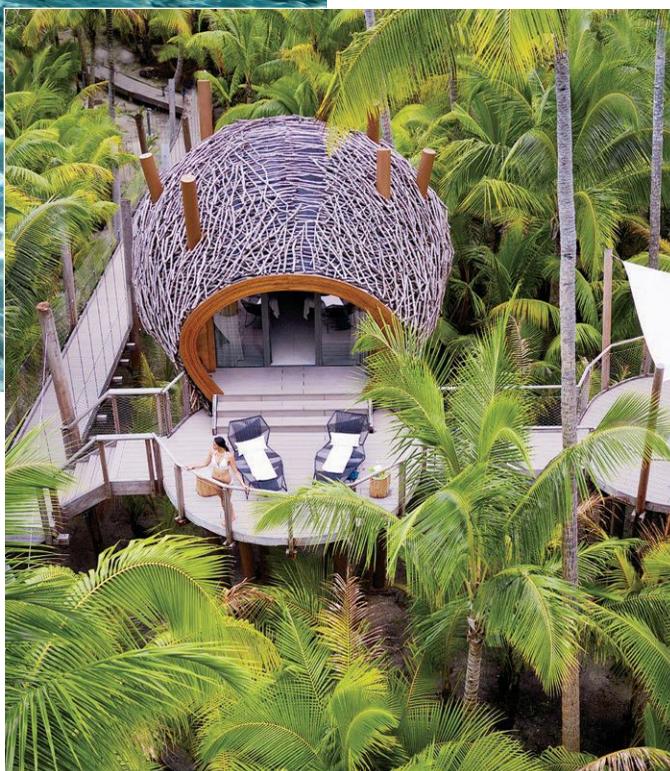
Of the 350 species of sharks known worldwide, 20 of them can be observed in French Polynesia's five archipelagos, making it a perfect place for an extraordinary encounter. As the world's largest shark sanctuary, the country has long been a model for shark conservation, with no signs of stopping in 2021. Slipping into the water alongside these majestic predators delivers awe and adrenaline.

Just 30 miles north of Tahiti, the breathtakingly Tetiaroa, a private atoll of the Society Islands, has always been a

stunning place of seclusion and tranquility — first for Tahitian royalty and, later, for **Marlon Brando**, who chose to acquire it for his personal sanctuary. In the 1970s, the actor dreamed of a luxurious hideaway as key to funding a “university of the sea” on the atoll that would educate others about the many facets of this jewel. The result? The Brando — a paradise featuring 36 exclusive villas across a dozen idyllic islets surrounding a sparkling lagoon.

By original design, social distancing and seclusion naturally reign. An eco-elegant mecca available for full buyout in 2021, The Brando continues to set the eco-luxe standard with a minimal footprint and a maximum commitment to the stunning environment and wildlife in every direction. Sink your toes into The Brando's sacred sand and experience a variety of nature tours including hands-on work in progress to protect sea turtles, study shark ecology and tackle ocean acidification. thebrando.com

Eco-stays: “It has been said that Marlon Brando spent hours trying to perfect his architectural renders of the bungalows that he dreamed of building on Tetiaroa,” wrote Cook for the December 2019 issue of *Centry*. “The idea of using bamboo, coconut wood, and all local sources of building materials was essential. His intent was to honor and respect the land.”



PHOTOS BY MIRANDA TILLINGHAST (ABOVE); THE BRANDO (RIGHT AND ABOVE)

Walk the Line in Chilean Patagonia

Hike glaciers, track pumas, dive into a cold plunge

Adventurers from all corners of the globe are drawn to Patagonia, complete with turquoise waters, glaciers and mesmerizing granite horns. The award-winning architects of the 50-room *explora Patagonia*, set within a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Chile's Torres del Paine National Park, envisioned a long building painted to blend with its surroundings of mainly white snow and ice. The result makes for a most luxurious base to flirt with the line between danger and excitement in the magnetic region. Endless days of wonder here mean awe-inspiring treks with an occasional massage or wicked cold plunge to supercharge the body.

Rivaling any big cat safari around the world, Quasar Expeditions — one of South America's most celebrated adventure specialists — provides guests at *explora Patagonia* with up-close and personal encounters with the majestic puma population in Patagonia. Better yet, in 2021 they will continue to provide a rare opportunity to shadow one of their renowned puma tracking teams within Torres del Paine National Park. Walking in an expert puma tracker's shoes for even a moment is an inspiring reminder of the fragility of these majestic creatures and the greater struggle to protect big cats. explora.com, quasarex.com **G**



Track pumas: "In addition to pre-dawn alarm settings, shadowing one of Quasar Expeditions' renowned puma tracking teams demands laser focus, physical intensity, infinite patience and unconditional love for a wild animal that could very well kill you," Cook says. "I couldn't wait."



Hike glaciers: "Explora Patagonia's world-class guides helped me understand that true adventure isn't always neat and tidy, so with their help I embraced the unpredictable, the unexpected and, hell, even the accidental," says Cook. "Together we conquered advanced treks I never thought possible."





PHOTOS BY LUCY BURKE (ABOVE, LEFT);
QUASAR EXPEDITIONS (LEFT);
EXPLORA PATAGONIA (ABOVE)

Epic lodges: “Anchored like a white ship on the shores of turquoise Lake Pehoe, explora Patagonia’s unique location sets travelers literally in the middle of Torres del Paine National Park,” wrote Cook in the October 2019 issue of *Centry*. At the end of a big day of puma tracking, an open-air Jacuzzi tub awaited.