

GOOD SH*T

Where Dream Trips Don't Come Cheap

240
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Why You Should Care



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BY CHRISTINE CIARMELLO

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What's the next hot spot in travel? Some say Perth, Australia; others might guess the Catskills, New York. Philippe Brown, the erudite owner of bespoke travel planner [Brown + Hudson](#), is betting on ... *nowhere*. Huh? The London-based travel outfitter offers a travel plan called Nowhere is a Place — travelers actually *do* go somewhere, but that somewhere is unknown to them until departure.

The idea is to “make the outcome the objective,” says Brown, who *guarantees* the outcome. “People tend to travel because they want something that isn't present where they are,” he adds, explaining travel as a form of therapy (with travel planner as psychoanalyst). Want to escape to a fantasy world? Then maybe it's a James Bond trip for a wannabe spy. Want to feed your inner thrill-seeker? Visit the world's extremes, from the Mariana Trench to Mount Everest.

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For travel focused on achieving enlightenment, there's a huge downer for those who aren't in the 1 percent: the

cost. The fee is \$1,500 for planning, then a \$30,000-per-person trip minimum — to manage the expectation that what Brown + Hudson does takes time and creativity, Brown says. This is not Expedia. This is a \$400-per-hour shrink. Or a Hollywood movie. Once hired, the team in Notting Hill in London starts researching and tapping worldly connections to concoct a trip choreographed with the precision of a film director. “If there isn’t suitable accommodation for a client, we build it,” Brown explains, citing Vietnam’s Central Highlands as an example of a five-starless frontier.

This super pricey service isn’t accessible for, well, almost everyone. But even within the 1 percent, control freaks may not like the “nowhere” aspect, says Susan Moynihan, a former wedding-magazine editor who plans romance trips at [The Honeymoonist](#). “The person has to be comfortable with the planner’s choices,” she says. Thank goodness for that guarantee! Still, it’s worth noting that sometimes personal services trickle down to the merely bourgeois — think, for instance, how the prices of concierge physicians have decreased in recent years. And with excursions culled based on personality or brand gaining traction, it’s possible that such services might be more accessible, some day.

For now, anything is possible for those with cash. For Russian clients who wanted to absorb the wonders of the world, for example, Brown handpicked places, arranging one trip per month for a year — to gems like South Africa’s Cango Caves and Madikwe Game Reserve, Norway’s Northern Lights and Indonesia’s Wayag Island archipelago. “For the children of the top 1 percent, nothing is out of the question,” Brown says. A Scottish couple took a nine-month sabbatical to give their children a worldly education: They traversed

continents with hands-on activities and tutors in various countries.

Jen Murphy, deputy editor of *Afar*, loves the surprise element of the “nowhere” travel plan, which allows for a “bit of serendipity.” But guaranteeing an outcome seems a reach, she says.

Maybe, but what would be the outcome if instead of going to school, your kids could go to Egypt to meet Mark Lehner, the world’s leading Egyptologist, or travel to Britain to discuss writing with J.K. Rowling. Or attend Barcelona’s Camp Nou to practice football skills with Lionel Messi or travel to Antarctica’s Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station to see the changes in polar ice caps. Well, if you have a million-dollar trust fund laying around, maybe your family can find out.

240
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