



On the Move

Action-packed sightseeing in the world's most engaging eco-systems.

By Jayme Otto

Learn more about how to minimize your travel impact in critical wildlife habitats. We asked Reefs to Rockies founder and wildlife biologist Sheridan Samano to share wisdom gleaned from more than six years' experience as a wilderness guide and planner. Read more at: womensadventuremagazine.com/web-exclusives

A herd of elephants tromping across the Serengeti resembles a symphony. There's a grace in their movement and rhythm in their synchronicity; they are a living, moving concert. But there's something even more magical about animal migrations—they stir a sense of direction from deep inside our own psyche. It's as if, witnessing such mass movement, we can't help but be honest about where we've come from, and where we're headed. We start to ask the tough questions about our own path, an inquiry that can lead to the realization that we need to move on, or out, or try a different course, or hold steady on the current one. Add one of these mega migration trips to your bucket list, and see where it takes you.

Monarch Butterflies, Mexico

In the fall, as many as 300 million monarchs set flight on a 3,000-mile journey from the northeastern U.S. and Canada to milder wintering grounds in the volcanic mountains of central Mexico. During peak monarch activity—from mid-January to mid-March—is when you'll see thousands alight onto a single tree, bending its branches with their weight, painting the entire tree orange, from trunk to bough. Five butterfly sanctuaries in central Mexico offer viewing opportunities, where you're as likely to see a monarch-covered tree as you are to become a perch for one of the fluttering insects yourself.

Getting there: For a fun three-day weekend, fly into Mexico City, about a 3-hour drive (rent a car or take a bus) to the tiny village of Angangueo, home to two of the largest sanctuaries. Spend one day hiking the 140,000-acre El Rosario Reserve. Overnight at the rustic Posada Don Bruno in Angangueo, and spend the next day exploring the Sierra Chincua Sanctuary by horseback. learner.org/north/monarch/

The Great Migration, Tanzania

Every summer, hundreds of thousands of elephants, rhinos, zebras, wildebeest, and gazelles, along with their predators (lions, leopards, cheetahs, and hyenas), traverse the Serengeti plain in search of food and water. The best time to witness this epic movement is June to October, but Tanzania's early season starts in May and still serves up big game—plus countless birds and primates—before hordes of tourists take their turn. A traditional safari is the best way to see the action, so long as you're on the lookout for an outfitter that promotes conservation and local community interests. You're not likely to completely avoid the use of a jeep, but should be able to find a trip that includes ample exploration by foot.

Getting there: Reefs to Rockies is a U.S.-based travel-planning firm with a handful of African safari adventures. Each itinerary is fully customizable, and your cost includes a donation to a local on-the-ground conservation organization. reefstorockies.com

Southern Right Whales, Patagonia

By the time they migrate north from their Antarctic feeding grounds to give birth in lagoons off Argentina's Peninsula Valdes, the Southern Right Whale may measure a whopping 60 feet in length. These grey giants are so dependent on the temperate, sheltered waters of the Golfo San Jose, located between the peninsula and the Patagonian mainland, that it's been protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1996. The best way to view the whales and their calves is by kayak mid-September through early December, when some of the 20-foot calves are playful, innocent, and likely to approach. You may hear them before you see them: baby Rights have a distinctive goat-like call, while adults are laid back, slow-moving floaters trumpeting water from their blowholes.

Getting there: Women-owned Sea Kayak Adventures works with a local outfitter on the Peninsula Valdes who has secured special permission to camp at a private beach on the lagoon. That means whale-watching right from your tent door, and no other groups to compete with while out on the water. Sea Kayak Adventures also includes a day trip to another area of the peninsula to view penguin colonies. seakayadventures.com

Polar Bears, Canada

Between October and November, Churchill (pop. 923), in Canada's northern province of Manitoba, houses more polar bears than humans. The small coastal town is a gathering point for bears during their migration along the coast of the Hudson Bay—where they wait for winter's deep freeze to allow ocean-top hunting. It's safest to view the bears from inside a "tundra buggy" with a guided tour, in which you'll see young males play fighting and mothers with cubs. But there are also plenty of trails where you can hike out into the arctic tundra, along the coast, or venture into the treeline of the Canadian Shield's vast boreal forest. Along with plenty of polar bears, expect to encounter caribou, arctic fox, and Arctic birds, such as snowy owl and gyrfalcon.

Getting there: There are no roads from Churchill leading to the rest of Canada, but there are six daily flights from Winnipeg and plenty of places to stay, ranging from hotels and bed and breakfasts to remote eco-lodges accessed by helicopter. Due to the high bear activity, the city of Churchill recommends visitors hike with a guide and utilize the tundra buggy tours, all which can be arranged upon arrival.

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