

**PETER GREENBERG**

*Travel Editor for NBC's Today Show*

***The Complete***

**Travel  
Detective  
Bible**



*The Consummate Insider* Tells You  
**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**  
in an INCREASINGLY COMPLEX WORLD

**Foundation.** Send a \$50 check made out to "Toys for Tots Foundation" to Major Bill Grein, Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, P.O. Box 1947, Marine Corps Base, Quantico, VA 22134.

WorldPerks members can also donate miles to Northwest's **KidCares** program. Created in 1999, the program provides travel to children 18 and under (plus one adult) who are unable to receive the needed medical treatment in their home area. The KidCares program accepts mileage donations only, no monetary donations. 800-328-2881, [www.nwa.com](http://www.nwa.com)

You can participate by donating your unused frequent flier miles to the **Make-A-Wish Foundation**. The foundation uses about a billion miles a year to help make the wishes of seriously ill children come true. 800-722-9474, [www.wish.org](http://www.wish.org)

## **Responsible Tour Companies**

**World Wildlife Fund:** This is one of the largest conservation organizations and hosts wildlife-watching tours throughout the world. An 8-day cruise to Alaska on a 64-passenger ship travels along the southeast coast: View humpback whales, hike through forests with naturalists, and watch bald eagles along Glacier Bay National Park; starts at \$4,840. A trip to watch the polar bears in Canada travels along the bears' migratory path for 6 or 7 days; about \$3,700. 202-293-4800, [www.worldwildlife.org/travel](http://www.worldwildlife.org/travel)

**Across the Divide:** The UK-based company specializes in planning charity fund-raising expeditions. For example, you can hike across Greenland, trek through Peru, or climb Kilimanjaro while sponsorships help raise money for causes like cancer research or fighting poverty in Africa. 44-0-1460-30456, [www.acrossthedivide.com](http://www.acrossthedivide.com)

**Hills of Africa:** The North Carolina-based company arranges tours throughout South Africa, working solely with lodges, safaris, and other institutions that have received a stamp of approval from Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa. A 12-night tour that includes Cape Town, Mozambique, and a safari begins at about \$6,000, and a family-oriented trip combining Johannesburg, Botswana, and a safari is about \$4,500 for adults and \$3,500 for children. 877-845-4802, [www.hillsofafrica.com](http://www.hillsofafrica.com)

**Intrepid Travel:** Winner of the UK's 2006 Responsible Tourism Award, the Australia-based company offers soft-adventure tours worldwide, with a focus on "responsible travel." This involves using public transportation,

staying with local families, patronizing small locally owned establishments, and educating locals on sustainable tourism practices. 866-847-8192, [www.intrepidtravel.com](http://www.intrepidtravel.com)

**Responsible Travel:** This online portal has waged a campaign against mass tourism, those large-scale packaged tours that tend to leave locals out of the picture. For example, in an all-inclusive holiday, most of your money goes to the tour operator in your home country, the air carrier, insurance, and commissions, leaving very little for the hotel and even less for the hotel staff. Through this site, you can contact prescreened-holiday companies that function in a responsible manner by working closely with local operators and employees—includes adventure tours, budget travel, safaris, and volunteer vacations. 44-0-1273-600030, [www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com)

### **Fair-Trade Tourism**

This is one area that has been overlooked far too long in the responsible-travel surge. And I think it's one of the most important. Fair-trade tourism attempts to maximize the benefits of tourism for the local destination. This usually means hiring local employees, providing fair wages and benefits to those employees, providing training for career advancement, using locally produced resources such as food and textiles, and putting the money earned through local tourism back into the community. It sounds simple enough; however, fair-trade tourism can be difficult to execute. Lodge operators, tour guides, and expedition operators must find a way to engage in fair trade, while still turning enough profit to sustain their business.

For less-developed countries, it can be difficult to promote tourism as a viable resource without exploiting their local people, land, and culture. According to Tourism Concern, a London-based organization that is campaigning for ethical and fairly traded tourism, several nations are under scrutiny for the mistreatment of their tourism employees for the sake of promoting the industry. The Sun, Sea, Sand, and Sweatshops campaign is raising awareness of the appalling working conditions in various highly visited destinations; in resort areas like Cancún and the Maya Riviera, average salaries rarely go above \$4 a day, while apartment rental for a local worker can cost \$150 a month. In the Maldives, Tourism Concern has launched a Lost in Paradise campaign: The idyllic environment belies the fact that nearly half of the population is living on just over \$1 a day, while amenities like fresh fruit and vegetables go directly to the tourist destinations (a recent

study found that more than 30 percent of Maldivian children under 5 are suffering from malnutrition).

And these injustices aren't only taking place in tropical resorts. While it may be inspiring to hear those triumphant stories of people conquering the Himalayas, we forget about the porters who also have to scale the mountains—while carrying all the equipment. Those hardy climbers aren't immune to conditions like frostbite and altitude sickness. In the Himalayas, the traditional Sherpa is usually from a high-altitude area, but many porters are farmers from lowland areas and are unaccustomed to mountain conditions.

In June 2002, South Africa initiated Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA), the very first “trademark” in the fair-trade movement. Various South African tourism establishments, including game parks, lodges, and adventure tours, have since been accredited with the FTTSA stamp, meaning that these places fulfill the criteria of fair wages and working conditions (e.g., hiring local workers, using local resources, maintaining safe working conditions and practices, protecting young workers, conserving the environment, and establishing reliable services to visitors). For responsible travelers, this can make it easier to identify those businesses that practice fair-trade tourism.

And now that the FTTSA has taken a stand, hopefully the word is spreading to make it even easier for you to plan your own fair-trade tour. For example, Hills of Africa is one of the first in the United States to associate solely with FTTSA-accredited institutions.

**Klippe Rivier Country House** in South Africa is an example of how to execute fair trade in tourism. They not only hire locals to work in the guesthouse but also give every employee an interest-free loan to purchase a home—while working out individualized payment plans on those loans. The way it works is that travelers pay rates that are based upon a first-world travel experience, but business operation costs are third world. Employees make what is considered a fair wage there, but it's not at first-world standards—so the guesthouse absorbs the difference on these loans. [www.klipperivier.com](http://www.klipperivier.com)

For a complete list of FTTSA-approved businesses, visit the organization's Web site at [www.fairtourismza.org.za](http://www.fairtourismza.org.za).

## Fair-Trade Shopping

If it's not the right time to plan a trip abroad, you can still support local communities by shopping in American stores that sell fair-trade products. What