

STYLE + DESIGN 2015

MEN'S JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 2015 Vol. 24, No. 7

56 PERFECT THINGS

TECH, TOOLS, TOYS & THE HOTTEST NEW GEAR



SPECIAL REPORT

THE DEADLY THRILL OF BASE JUMPING

A GUIDE TO HIGH-END DENIM



The Ford GT: An American-made supercar


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Guided Trips for Adventure Travelers

A new type of custom tour helps you master even the most far-flung journeys. by **BERNE BROUDY**

FANTASIZING ABOUT A ROAD TRIP across Patagonia but need an expert to plan your route? Hoping to bike from winery to winery in Napa and want a private tour of a few cellars? New self-guided custom trips — general itineraries that are designed by guide companies, then customized for individuals or families traveling on their own — are making ambitious trips easier and cheaper than ever before. You get to explore by yourself but have the peace of mind that comes with booking through a company, including emergency assistance. “Busy schedules make travel precious,” says Jennifer Deacon of Quench Trip Design. “A trip curated for you lets you avoid mistakes about where to go, what to do, and how to get there.” Here are four of the best new tours and the companies behind them.



The Trans-Siberian Railway: the world's most epic over-land journey

RIDE THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

It's the world's longest railroad and a journey that takes in everything from the Siberian forest to the unbroken steppes of Mongolia. Trans-Siberian Travel will book all your tickets — the journey from Moscow to Beijing is a series of rides rather than a continuous one — and will set you up with B&B-like homestays when you're not sleeping on the train. By day, watch the taiga float past your window. At night you can explore cities such as Irkutsk, where artists and intellectuals banished during the Decembrist revolt set up a booming cultural center around their hand-carved wooden houses. Just make sure to set aside three days for hiking along the shores of Lake Baikal, the world's deepest lake. **THE DETAILS:** 17-day tours from Moscow to Beijing, from \$2,160. Summer is the time to go. trans-siberian.travel



After 12 days of motorcycling through Ecuador, you'll earn bragging rights for a year.

TOUR ECUADOR BY MOTORCYCLE

Ecuador has everything from snowcapped volcanoes to Amazonian rain forest and tropical ocean, with hundreds of miles of road in between — and the best way to explore it all might be by motorcycle. With Freedom Bike Rental's tour, you'll get a dual-sport bike, a handpicked itinerary, and a GPS to help you find your way. Riding on a mix of pavement and dirt tracks, you'll cruise past banana plantations, local markets, and the ancient Incan solar temple in Ingapirca, known as Ecuador's Machu Picchu. Plus, Freedom will be there for you should any problem arise. “We managed to wear through a front tire in eight days,” says Keith Matteson of Newport, Oregon. “But Freedom gave us the GPS coordinates of a bike shop in town, and we were back on the road in an hour.” After 1,600 miles on the bike, you'll have a year's worth of stories. **THE DETAILS:** 12-day tours offered year-round, from \$2,750. freedombikerental.com



Spain's cities get the attention, but its rural side is just as enticing.

HIKE THE PILGRIM'S PATH IN NORTHERN SPAIN

The Camino de Santiago, a 500-mile pilgrimage route from the Pyrenees, on the French border, to the shrine at Santiago de Compostela, 30 miles from the Atlantic coast, is a must-do for backpackers looking to see Spain's pastoral side. “Witnessing the swinging incense pendulum in the cathedral is a highly spiritual experience,” says guide Diego Martín, “even if you're not religious.” Country Walkers' trek lets you hit all the highlights, from Basque mountain villages to an 11th-century monastery. They'll transport your gear and, at the end of each day, give you a ride to your hotel. Customize your trip by adding a night in Burgos, the gastronomic hub near La Rioja, famous for its easy-drinking tempranillos. **THE DETAILS:** Nine-day treks offered May through October, from \$3,198. countrywalkers.com (continued on page 27)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: GETTY IMAGES; RON ALBERS; TOM RAYNER