

# National Geographic Traveler Magazine Announces 2014 Travelers of the Year Honorees

October 9, 2014



WASHINGTON (Oct. 9, 2014)—National Geographic Traveler magazine today announced the 2014 Travelers of the Year honorees, who are individuals, families or small groups who explore the world with passion and purpose and have an exceptional and inspiring story to tell. The 10 honorees are profiled in the November issue of National Geographic Traveler, on newsstands Oct. 21, and online at <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/travelers-of-the-year/>. From now through Oct. 25, readers may vote online for the People's Choice Traveler of the Year award.

This year's honorees, who were nominated online and selected by National Geographic Traveler editors, include a couple who dedicated at least one day each week to volunteering while traveling in 24 countries over 16 months; a former teacher who runs an organization that encourages travelers to use extra suitcase space to deliver supplies to in-need regions; a family of 11, including five special needs children, who are traveling the world; a high school student with Asperger's syndrome who has taken 11 solo trips; and a couple who sold all of their possessions and now backpack around the world, volunteering and housesitting.

George Stone, National Geographic Traveler magazine editor at large, who led the Travelers of the Year project and wrote the article about the honorees in the November issue, said, "Our story highlights the amazing diversity of people exploring the world, the surprising motivations behind their travels and their unique approaches to reaching their destinations. We're interested in what people learn from their travels, how it changes them, what they discover about themselves and the world, and what they can tell us about the power of travel to transform their lives. We love travel tales that somehow make the world seem bigger (more magnificent and enriching) and smaller (more tangible and meaningful) at the same time."

The 2014 Travelers of the Year are:

- **Heather Finnecey**, who set out to discover and photo-document what life is like for women in the Middle East through powerful photography that unveils the dreams and struggles of the women she met while traveling in countries such as Lebanon, Kuwait and Afghanistan;
- **Joe Foley**, a high school student with Asperger's syndrome who has taken 11 solo international trips in the past two years, including to Iceland, Finland and Japan;
- **The Gilbert Family (father Drew, mother Christine, son Cole and daughter Stella)**, who have proven the benefits of traveling with children throughout their two-year "experiment in language learning" in Mexico and 2,500-mile bike ride across Europe;
- **Greg Gross**, a retired journalist who aims to inspire other African Americans to travel through his blog "I'm Black and I Travel," which shares black travel experiences, tackles the fears of inexperienced travelers and celebrates the diversity and discovery that travel brings;
- **Dalene and Peter Heck**, who, in 2009, sold all of their possessions to travel the world with just their backpacks and have since volunteered in Bolivia, studied history in Turkey and housesat in Honduras and British Columbia;
- **The Inion Family (father Brent, mother Stacey-Jean and nine children)**, who have been on an international journey since 2007 as the parents share the world with their children, five of whom have special needs, including blindness, quadriplegia and cerebral palsy;
- **Melinda MacInnis**, a former English teacher whose trip to Swaziland in southern Africa evolved into traveling the globe to film a largely self-funded documentary about the crisis of rhino poaching and the conservation and global security issues that stem from it;
- **Rebecca Rothney**, who founded an aid organization that encourages travelers to use extra luggage space to deliver supplies, such as books and medical tools, to community-based programs around the world;
- **Tambra Raye Stevenson**, a nutritionist and culinary historian who has turned her faith in the healing power of heritage food into a tool for cultural exchange by starting a Washington, D.C.-based learning community through which she teaches about the connection between recipes, travel and family lore;
- **Liz Zipse and Kip Patrick**, who spent 16 months traveling 30,000 miles in 24 countries while volunteering at least one day each week, blogging about it along the way and sharing tips on how travelers can include volunteerism on their own trips.

#### About National Geographic Travel

National Geographic Travel is the travel arm of the National Geographic Society, one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations, founded in 1888. National Geographic Travel creates, discovers and showcases meaningful and engaging travel experiences through [National Geographic Traveler magazine](#); National Geographic Expeditions; travel books; maps; apps; digital travel content; the [Adventure website](#); and travel photography programs. National Geographic Traveler (eight issues per year) is the world's most widely read travel magazine and has 16 international editions. It is available by subscription, on newsstands in the United States and Canada, and digitally for tablets. [National Geographic Expeditions](#), the travel program of the Society, offers a variety of unique travel experiences led by top experts to more than 60 destinations across all seven continents. Travel opportunities include family and student expeditions, active adventures, private jet trips and voyages on the six expedition ships in the National Geographic-Lindblad fleet, as well as photography workshops, expeditions and seminars. The [National Geographic Travel digital group](#) offers inspiring and authoritative digital travel and adventure content such as trip ideas, photo galleries, blogs and apps. National Geographic Travel Books bring readers curated travel advice and inspiration. Follow National Geographic Travel on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).