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TRAVEL

TO

GOA
ISTANBUL
SÃO PAULO
ROME
TULUM
COPENHAGEN

ESCAPE
to the
BAHAMAS
with
INDIA HICKS

+

**POP OF COLOR
FORWARD FASHION**



Developing nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America often are characterized by depressed economies, weak social structures, high crime rates, and a dependence on international aid but they are also home to natural wonders and architectural landmarks.

Considering potential risk factors, is the decision to travel with your children to third-world countries selfless or selfish?



Taking a child to a developing country is one of the best educational gifts parents can provide. There is no substitute for real life exposure and experiences in a destination that enables parents and children to digest and process information in a memorable and impactful way.

We just got back from a trip to the Amazon Basin in Peru with conservation-minded Aqua Expeditions.

Our daily itinerary involved exploring different aspects of this remote wilderness that produces about 20 percent of the earth's oxygen.

On our trip we visited a river village accessible only by water and inhabited by families living in thatched huts who lead radically different lives than we do in our San Francisco suburb. Despite the language barrier, we shared smiles and laughter. The value of this connection for each and every one of us? Priceless.

Sharing this basic human connection and learning that people are people—irrespective of what they look like or where they live in the world—is magic and the foundation for lifelong compassion. Add in the conservation lessons where we witnessed firsthand how precious the rain forest is for our planet and what happens when it's chopped down, and you have a trip of a lifetime.

We were on an exceptionally appointed and managed riverboat, which dramatically reduced the risk factor. Are there safety guarantees? No. But we felt as secure in the hands of our qualified guides as we would on a journey into the backcountry of the United States.

Images and lessons from the Amazon will be seared in our son's mind forever. A textbook cannot replicate hearing, feeling, smelling, touching, and seeing such a destination. Is it worth the risk? No question whatsoever.

Amie O'Shaughnessy is the managing editor of CiaoBambino.com, an award-winning global travel planning resource for families featuring hotel reviews and a comprehensive travel blog filled with tips, news, and narratives related to traveling with kids of all ages.

I was born in a so-called "third-world country." The Congo.

But, in truth, no country is Third World—it's an antiquated term. We are part of a global community, reliant in ways we never quite understand, and are either thriving or struggling. But we depend on each other.

Third World is some derogatory, judgmental notion from the dark ages of Colonial rule. And just as I don't want my children to form absolute opinions of their fellows, I don't want them to form judgments about entire countries. The "Third-World countries" of yesterday—Burma, Cuba, the East Block, even Brazil—are emerging as major cultural and economic powers today. Such countries aren't inanimate objects; they are composed of millions of individuals.

So here is what we must tell our children: You must travel the world to understand it. A passport is the new diploma. Don't accept the dogma of today; instead, understand that the world is changing and labeling countries is fruitless.

We are entering a new age of exploration, imagination, and transformation. Different perspectives, cultures, and landscapes, and are all part of that—and critical to how our kids develop and experience the world. As adults who have children in our lives, it is critical that we teach them to accept the world as it is. Not judge and certainly not presume to change how others think and act.

So let's take one place I love: India. Twenty years ago, Americans regarded it as backward, alien and inaccessible. Today, it is one of the most exciting and enriching places on the planet. I liken it to the magazine I edit. Once upon a time it was in black and white. Now it is an explosion of color and sensory riches.

The world is changing. Our kids intuit and accept that. Their friends in school are Iranian and Turkish and Haitian. It's our task to put any prejudices aside and let our kids embrace the new world of understanding. Forget the idea of Third World. There is only One World.

Keith Bellows was named editor in chief of National Geographic Traveler magazine in 1998 and made a vice president of the National Geographic Society in 2000. He co-authored The Canuck Book and is now writing 100 Places That Will Change Your Child's Life, part of a program he is developing to encourage parents, corporations and schools to view travel as a critical learning tool.



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