Travel should transform. Choose your destination wisely and then the voyage itself, the people you meet, the foods you sample, and the experiences you have will mean you've arrived in a whole new place—physically, spiritually, philosophically. This kind of travel isn't exactly relaxing, but it is more relaxation ever really that satisfaction? Our purpose here—in these pages, on this page—is to squeeze the maximum amount of joy, hilarity, challenge, and accomplishment out of our allotted time. What better way to do that than to travel to places that won't just be a change of scene, but rather, can provoke a change in you. We accumulated 10 such transformative travel experiences. Maybe it's time to get lost, and find yourself.
My Life-Changing Trip

Mike Rowe {is the star of Dirty Jobs, on the Discovery Channel.

SERVE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Long before Dirty Jobs, I hosted in-flight programming for American Airlines. In order to film segments at popular destinations, I had a special pass that allowed me to fly first class anywhere—with a plus one—for free. Unfortunately, the job ended after a few months. But I still had the pass. I presented it to the ticket agent for grins the next time I was flying. Enjoy Manhattan,” she said. And so it began. Cairo. Amsterdam. Cape Town. Sydney. I can’t recall every trip but I do remember taking adventurous women on memorable dates. During dinner, I’d say stuff like, “This Guinness would taste better in Dublin.” I was finally busted a year later. Although I’ve traveled the world. I now realize you don’t have to leave your zip code to have a life-changing experience. For instance, the hairiest Dirty Jobs segment I ever did was with the local crew working on Michigan’s “Mighty Mac” suspension bridge. It requires that you work as a team, and shoot builds courage. DO IT! Find out how you can embrace your community by working on bridges, literally and figuratively, at MikeRoweWorks.com.

Start small. Rowe recommends mowing the lawn of a soldier stationed abroad through GreenCare for Troops (projectgreencareforkids.com).

Mountains

BEEN THERE Mt. Elbert = DONE THAT Mt. Shasta = TRY THIS Mt. Rainier

Advice from Ed Viesturs, the only American to summit all 14 of the world’s peaks that top 8,000 meters (26,247 feet).

Try a fourteenner—that’s mountain climbing parlance for a 14,000-foot peak. Colorado has 52 to pick from. Mt. Elbert, just 3 hours from Denver, is easiest. 14ers.com
Next, do a 2-day climb on a peak like California’s Mt. Shasta. Hire a guide, because there will be snow and you’ll need to camp on the mountain. shastaguides.com
Then set your sights on Washington’s Mt. Rainier. Rainier Mountainliftings offers 4-day climbs during which you’ll use crampons, ropes, and an ice ax. rmiguide.com

Paddle

PADDLE THE GRAND CANYON

Tackle 200 miles of some of the most powerful white water on the planet the old-school way, in a wooden boat. Spend 13 to 18 days navigating the Colorado River through the mile-deep canyon, gazing up at 2/3 billion years’ worth of the earth’s crust on a wobbly dory that launches you off the lips of rolling rapids turns you into a gendipist, a waterman, and a more humble human being. 13 to 18 days from $4,270. evergreen.com/grandcanyon/series. Raft trips are also available.
Burn some rubber
For the truest racecar experience, skip the supercar challenges that cost thousands of dollars. Instead, hit the Bondurant Kart Racing School in Phoenix. You’ll spend the first part of your 4-hour session studying acceleration and braking strategies; then you’ll race around the track. These 200-pound rockets have six-speed transmissions and disc brakes, launch to 100 miles per hour in 6 seconds, and corner at 2.5 Gs. Why Apart from the thrill (and the sweet smell of burning rubber), you’ll learn skills that could make you a safer driver. Do it $425, bondurant.com

Master the art of grilling
Steven Raichlen, the author of Planet Barbecue teaches a 3-day barbecue course twice each summer at the five-star Broadmoor resort in Colorado Springs. To Raichlen, barbecuing is more than just an American obsession with fiery regional rivalries. It’s a global cuisine. And his syllabus reflects that—with recipes from Argentine steaks houses, Thai street carts, and Korean BBQ joints. Why After Barbecue University, everything you cook on the grill—salmon, steak, vegetables, and desserts (like pear and raspberry crumble smoked in a retron defiler)—will taste better. Do it $1,950, barbequebible.com/bbq

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TRACK A TUSKER
The Chyulu Hills of Kenya—the inspiration for Hemingway’s Green Hills of Africa—are where three national parks converge to protect lions, rhinos, elephants, buffalo, and leopards—the big five—and Masai warriors have become their conservationists and guides. Camp ya Karus, a Masai-owned lodge here, combines luxury and wilderness. Game runs in open-top jeeps ensure that you see as much wildlife as possible, while daily hikes let you feel the pulse of the land. Why A safari is a once-in-a-lifetime primal experience that connects you with an era that predates civilization.

Do it From $600 a night, meausi.com

Build a playground
I went to Sao Paolo, Brazil, for an Adidas development camp two summers ago, and every morning on our drive to the gym, we passed miles of favelas, or shantytowns. The shacks lacked water and electricity. Knowing that the local kids grow up in this kind of poverty but do their best to enjoy life challenged me to help children everywhere. I work for a charity, A Better Tomorrow, and I’m also involved with KaBoom!, a domestic nonprofit group that builds playgrounds in underserved communities. I’ve helped build playgrounds in New Orleans, Washington D.C., and Charlotte, and in Shreveport, Louisiana, my hometown. I want children to believe that they can accomplish anything regardless of their situation—and hopefully a smile on a playground can help.

Do it Select “Build a playground” at kaboom.org. You can either join one of 800-plus existing projects or start your own playground project by organizing fund-raisers, scheduling workdays, and downloading detailed building instructions for swings, slides, picnic tables, and more.
Kayak with blue whales
The world's largest mammal can reach lengths of 100 feet (think three school buses) and weigh in at 200 tons—more than an entire herd of elephants. Hundreds of these leviathans winter in the Sea of Cortez, at a preserve off Baja Mexico called Loreto Islands Bay Marine Park. It's the only place in the world where you're likely to be able to paddle with them. Why? Sailing up to a submarine-size blue in your 17-foot Sea Quest Expeditions kayak will remind you of your place in the pecking order. Do it $1,000 for 6 days, sea-quest-kayak.com

Make pinot noir
Think you know wine? Wait till you're standing among the vines at a Russian River Valley winery with a harvesting knife in your hand. Every September, the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission and Sonoma County Vintners join up with Relish Culinary Adventures to sponsor the 3-day Sonoma County Grape Camp. You'll learn the entire winemaking process, from picking to crushing to blending, and go on tastings throughout the region. Why? Anyone can make beer. You'll gain a deeper insight into the art and science of what makes a great wine. Do it $1,750 per person per couple, sonomagrapecamp.com

Climb a redwood
The 1,500-year-old, 300-foot-tall redwoods of California's Humboldt County scarp the sky. But for conservation reasons, climbing them is illegal except by organized canopy tour. With North Coast Adventure Centers, you'll shimmy up seven stories before spending the next 2 to 3 hours taking in an eagle's-eye view of Redwood Park by zipline. Why? It's fun, and you'll contemplate your own humble existence in the shadows of these giants that witnessed Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's arrival in 1542. Do it $65, northcoastadventurecenters.com

CAMP ON A VOLCANO
The mountain might rumble, hiss, and spew fiery boulders at any time, your shoes will probably melt, and you can roast a marshmallow at the 8,373-foot summit of Guatemala's Volcan Pacaya. Most hikers do this trip in a day, but if you camp overnight on the volcano, you'll hear the lava roll through the forest crunching vegetation, and see it light up the night sky without another traveler in sight. Why? Where else can you walk up to globs of 2,000°F–plus liquid and see inside the earth's core? Do it $70 for 2 days, oxexpeditions.com

My Life-Changing Trip
Sebastian Junger

SEE THE FACE OF COURAGE
I did five 1-month trips to Afghanistan to live with a platoon of American soldiers and film them over the course of a year. I wanted to understand courage. I was at a remote outpost in the Korengal Valley. I'd never been emotionally close to a couple of dozen guys, but by trip three, I was a civilian member of the platoon. One day we were on patrol in a Humvee when an improvised explosive device (IED) went off under the engine block. The Humvee caught on fire and filled with smoke. Nobody was physically hurt, but if the IED had gone off a quarter of a second later, it would have really messed us up. That evening, I had intense, bad dreams. People don't like to say it, but war is exciting. And that's what I was used to. But the IED made me have these somewhat irrational anger responses, and I started to understand how killing works. I don't want to kill anybody, but I felt that impulse come up. I also realized that for these guys the group bond had become more important than their concern for themselves. It's been going on since groups of young men were told to kill animals that could kill them—mastodons, bears, whatever. And psychologically the only way to do that is to do it with other men who you are confident will risk their lives to pull you out of the fire, if it comes to that. DO IT. To test your courage, go to survival school; see the next page.

Golf BEEN THERE Chambers Bay • DONE THAT Old Head • TRY THIS Barnbougle Dunes
Advice from Chris Santella, the author of Fifty More Places to Play Golf Before You Die
Carved along Puget Sound, Chambers Bay public course has gaping bunkers, mountainous fairway humps, and elevated tees that will give you vertigo. chambersbaygolf.com
Ireland's Old Head perch on 300-foot cliffs with demanding pars and a gallery of seagulls to screech comments. oldhead.com
Tasmania's Barnbougle Dunes features undulating fairways, tassels of beach grass, and wide ocean vistas. barnbougedunes.com.au
**Men's Health**

Circulation: 1866231
DMA: Philadelphia, PA
City: Emmaus

**My Life-Changing Trip**

**Carter Roberts**

If the president of the World Wildlife Fund

**Pursue Your Karma**

I traveled to Bhutan in the spring of 2010 to help officially open Wangkhang Centennial Park, in the heart of the Himalayas. There are fogs in the lowlands, snow storms among the peaks, and hide-and-seek with the sun as oak leaves. Before leaving for Wangkhang, I was more than a little anxious to climb to the top of 13,000-foot Chomolhari. My aim was to spot a Himalayan moose, a rare phenomenon.

Pariyup, I looked down and saw hundreds of people crossing the valley below. My guides explained that once a year, the largest, rarest Bud-dhists 10,000 babies were not, I thought, a few hours. If you saw this top- pery, you were 6 months old. Green puppies were not, I thought, next to the temple that had been up it was glowing from across the valley. Pursued of our negative karma and with a little help, we continued on up the forest. And there was the most incredible sight, the most incredible sight, the most incredible sight, the most incredible sight.

**Fly across the waves**

Reliable 15 to 25 mph winds rifle the shallows of Cape Hatteras National Seashore, which stretches for more than 70 miles on North Carolina’s narrow Outer Banks, making it the ideal beach to learn to kitesurf. The sport, which is a hybrid of surfing, skateboarding, snowboarding, and kiting, has a steep learning curve, but beginners typically start skimming across the water in 3 days. And on the off-chance of a windless day, you can always learn to paddleboard. Why this is the closest feeling to surfing I’ve ever seen. Do it Real Watersports offers courses and rents kites, boards, and harnesses for $50 a day: realwatersports.com

**Canyon the Maine Woods**

A working canoe trip on the Allagash River becomes a classic wilderness expedition since Thoreau did it in 1846–1847 for his book *A Voyage to Maine Woods*. A roughly 100-mile stretch in the state’s northern tip is still untamed and now protected. It starts at Chaleur Bay, meanders through thick pine forests, descends a 9-mile stretch of Class III rapids, and emerges at Allagash Village. Why? The rhythm of the river and the sounds of the forest will return your patience. Be it in a guided, Reserve homes ($310/day) and the grounds and provisions for camping. Cooled, $3,200. For other options, see: mainecanotours.com

**My Life-Changing Trip**

**John Varvatos**

is the founder of the menswear brand John Varvatos.

**FIND YOUR GROOVE**

In 1978 I jumped into my red Camaro Z28 with a buddy and we drove 13 hours from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to New York City to see the Ramones play at CBGB. This was before MTV or YouTube, so I’d never seen the Ramones perform live and in person. It sounded like the songs were up to 100 percent faster from the album. But I wasn’t just the music—it was the look of the Ramones. They were from the Bronx, they wanted to be thought of as revolutionaries. My day 1978 with the CBGB has converted CBGB into a cultural center that sells vintage vinyl as well as clothes. Bands play the first Thursday of every month. johnvarvatos.com/jvs-funhouse
Graduate from fitness boot camp
Imagine a week on a tropical beach that leaves you trimmer and fitter yet still feels like a vacation. Southern California-based West Point graduate and international fitness champion Sonki Hong takes his fitness boot camp methods—which combine everything from gymnastics and beach running to body-weight drills and martial arts—to Waikiki Beach in the spring and Maui in the fall for 7 days each. You’ll also be kayaking, swimming, surfing, snorkeling, and scarfing ultrafresh sashimi. Why: Training fades wash in and out, but the discipline and fitness techniques you pick up in Hawaii will help you stay lean your whole life. Do it $2,250, sonkifitness.com

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Trek the Himalayas
Hike the 100-mile trail around the 26,245-foot summit that is Annapurna, and do the way’s highest, by eating and staying at bed-and-breakfasts in Nepalese villages. Going without a guide lets you set your own schedule, so you can spend an extra day or two in Breathless peaks. Why: Two reasons. First, large segments of the circuit are expected to be turned into roads in the next couple of years, adding unwanted company to the climbs up 13,000-foot pinnacles and polluting the pristine Himalayan views. Second, every time you look in the mirror afterward, you’ll see the grey who trekked Annapurna without a guide. Do it For details on trip and route planning, pick up the guide of Nepal hiking guidebooks, Trekking in the Annapurna Region, by Bryan Thomas (HRA, 4th edition).

Gallivaging across the grasslands of South Dakota, Montana, and Idaho with a Lakota Sioux horse expert gives you a window into modern and ancient Native American life. You’ll ride among herds of buffalo, see a wolf-recovery refuge, and visit the site of Custer’s Last Stand and the Crazy Horse memorial. Why: It’s the history lesson you never really had, and a way to connect with our indigenous culture and Hall of Fame. Do it $4,800 for 14 days, spirit-trails.com

My Life-Changing Trip
Donovan Webster is an adventure writer who has set foot in 110 countries. His latest book is Meeting the Family One Man’s Journey through His Human Ancestry.

TRAVE YOUR ROOTS
For my new book I had my DNA tested and then went to live with people around the planet with whom I share specific gene markers. These pieces of evidence can exist only through a common ancestor. I was literally in search of myself. The trip began in Tanzania with my relatives, the click-taking Hottentot tribe. We tracked a warthog, killed it with a handmade bow and arrow, and ate its head in an open field. It was strangely satisfying, making me rethink the supermarchet meat counter and reminding me that a deeper connection to food probably means more respect for it, too. From there I was on to Lebanon, Uzbekistan, and Turkey. The next in South Africa, home to more heroes, is the Basque people. There’s a culture at war with itself—over Spanish national control versus Basque autonomy. It’s an eternal battle that still burns in each of us, the conflict between devouring colossal über-meat versus the freedom to make your own life. Don’t believe me? Think about the next time you’re in your office not being your job. Then make plans to find yourself. DO IT Trace your lineage through the Demographic Project, which provides DNA testing showing how your genes traveled around the world. Across history. $150, geneticmaps.org

Advice from Mark Oldman, the author of Oldman’s Brave New World of Wine
Stellar cabernet and pinot noir make California’s Napa Valley the primo U.S. wine region. Don’t miss: the Hess Collection, Joseph Phelps, and Schramsberg. napavintners.com Love pinot noir and chardonnay? Go to the temple for these varietals, Burgundy, France. Don’t miss: Joseph Drouhin, Bouchard, Perc et Fils, and Domaine Faiveley. burgundy-wines.fr Stellenbosch, South Africa, grows compelling cabernet and chenin blanc. Don’t miss: Rustenberg, Boekenhoutskloof, and Thlema Mountain. stellenboschtourism.co.za
dance

THE SAMBA AT RIO'S CARNIVAL

Most travelers simply watch at Carnival, which is actually a giant samba contest, but you can participate and groove your way through the streets surrounded by half-naked glamasions in feather headdresses. First, choose a samba school—Salgueiro is in a safe neighborhood and won in 2008. Then plan to arrive several days before the event to practice your moves, haze on Ipanema beach, and sip caipirinhas. Why Every time you hit the dance floor in the future, it will be with a surer step. Do it Rio Carnival arranges flights, school entry, and lodging in funky hotels in the southern part of Rio. rio-carnival.net

PEDAL INTO COPPER CANYON

Moab meets the Grand Canyon 200 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico border, in the state of Chihuahua. The Copper Canyon is 20 red-rock canyons plunging nearly 10,000 feet to a web of rivers. The network of singletrack trails are courtesy of the Tarahumara Indians, long-distance runners who have been pounding the dirt here for centuries. Why Riding to the bottom of the canyon and all the way back up tests your mettle and your quads, and instills a sense of awe for geological phenomena. Do it $2,700 for 8 days, westernspirit.com

My Life-Changing Trip

Bear Grylls

It is star of Worst Case Scenario on Discovery Channel.

CLIMB YOUR EVEREST

It was 7:22 a.m. on May 26, 1998. The sun was rising over Tibet. It was –35°F, and I was standing on top of Mt. Everest. Four climbers had lost their lives during the ascent, but finally two of us from the summit team were able to reach the roof of the world. You can see the curvature of the earth. It was a personal pinnacle that reminded me that life is precious, but also that life is for living. DO IT Grylls trained for 6 years for the climb. Pick a physical challenge you want to accomplish and start training. For mountain ideas, see page 140.

My Life-Changing Trip

Louie Psihoyos

is the Academy Award–winning director of The Cove.

BEFRIEND PLANKTON

My seminal trip was the first story I photographed for National Geographic, in 1981. It was about trash. I went to the Philippines, India, Egypt, Thailand, and Sri Lanka—I saw the world through trash. I produce pictures not because they’re pretty, but because of their social message. Every time I step out the door now, I’m on a mission to save the oceans. The biggest problem facing the oceans is acidification due to the burning of fossil fuels. Plankton, which is the basis of all ocean life, has a thin carbon shell and has difficulty forming in an acidic environment. This should concern you because two out of every three breaths you take you owe to plankton. They generate far more oxygen than land-based plants do. DO IT For tips on how to take action, visit Oceanic Preservation Society (cosociety.org) or make the plunge on Oceanic Society Expedition. cosociety.org