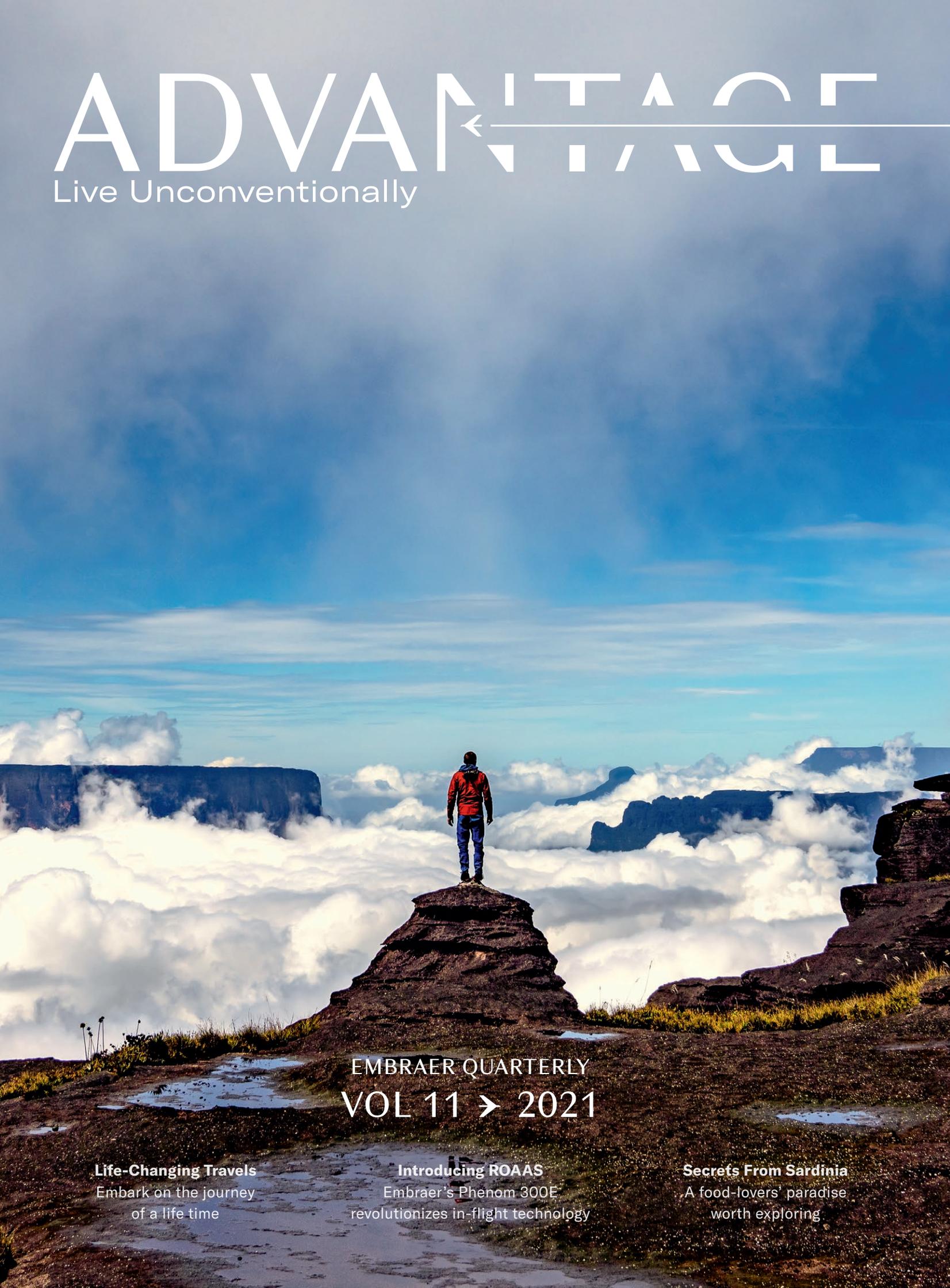


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MAKING IT ABOUT THE JOURNEY

From swimming with humpback whales in Iceland to searching for dinosaur fossils in Mongolia, there has been a shift in the travel industry as travelers seek meaning, purpose and personal fulfillment

WORDS Lauren Ho, IMAGE © Roger Hyde

Dulabab creates unique adventures such as rappelling down Mount Roraima's dizzying, sheer vertical cliffs in Guyana



EMBRAER TIP

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The future of the travel industry is certainly a hot topic at the moment. From increased safety and hygiene to forecasts for a surge in private villa rentals, local trips or more outdoor experiences, post-COVID predictions are coming in thick and fast, most notably with a demand for secluded, life-changing travel high on the list. In other words, to travel with meaning and purpose.

But, even before the pandemic highlighted this newfound desire to travel for fulfillment, transformative journeys were already on the rise, as globetrotters increasingly sought epic off-the-grid moments in far-flung destinations like camping in the Gobi Desert or trekking across Alaska. In fact, in 2017, travel media company Skift reported that more than half the travelers they surveyed placed increasing importance on this type of travel, stating they are seeking an “experience of the world that goes deep—one that changes them in ways they may not even be aware of.”

Tom Marchant, co-founder of Black Tomato, a leading luxury travel company that specializes in creating exceptional tailor-made experiences, said: “We believe that more travelers want to travel purposefully and for fulfillment rather than packing in sights for the sake of it. In turn, these experiences and these encounters become transformative and, in fact, life-changing.”

Known for its truly bespoke, one-of-a-kind experiences such as *Blink*, which gives travelers a chance to design their own temporary accommodation in the world’s most private and untouched locations—like chic safari-style tents overlooking the Mekong River or lunar-like bubbles on the Bolivian Altiplano—Black Tomato is clearly at the forefront of this growing trend, with Marchant noting that the company’s travel specialists are not just destination experts, but also part therapist. “Finding what motivates our clients, what drives them forward, what inspires them, this is the start,” he shared. “We make the impossible possible.” Indeed, this year, the agency has pulled out all



Founders of London-based company Untold Story Travel Mark Allvey and Chris Brunning agree: “People are looking for a deeper connection with the places they go and the people they encounter. We have seen a shift from the more passive approach to travel to something much more immersive. More than ever, clients can see the value of acquiring genuine ‘take-home’ values that they can adapt to their everyday lives.” The duo is going above and beyond, offering epic life-enhancing journeys such as flying over the Himalayas in a glider, swimming with sperm whales in Dominica, or eyeballing those elusive northern lights from your own private lodge in the Arctic. The company also teams up with inspiring experts and storytellers not involved in travel: “An example is our Desert Island experience, whereby a group of clients are ‘marooned’ on a remote island in Tonga, Panama or the Philippines. They learn vital wilderness survival skills from an ex-military expert, and then put these into practice during a real-life Castaway experience.”

Of course, the beauty of this shift towards fulfillment and self-actualization is that there is no one transformative travel experience. For a personal journey, the ultimate experience is very much up to the individual. So, whether you hop aboard a private plane to Mongolia in search of dinosaur fossils with Dulabab, take part in hands-on research-based conservation projects in Costa Rica with Black Tomato, or journey with Untold Story Travel to the world’s “Blue Zones” to find out what makes them the healthiest and happiest places on the planet, there is no doubt that now, more than ever, personal growth and genuine life-changing journeys are key to many travel experiences. ◀

the stops, researching and designing a world-first itinerary that includes swimming with humpback whales beneath the midnight sun in Iceland. “Time off is precious, and travel experiences have the ability to be truly profound,” explained Marchant. “This looks different to each person, but it ultimately starts with the question we ask clients from the outset: how do you want travel to make you feel?”

Roger Hyde, owner of Dulabab, a travel company that creates pioneering, inspirational adventures, believes a journey can “positively transform someone’s internal emotional environment, their interpersonal and family relationships, and indeed the external environment in which they are traveling for the better.” In short, this means working closely with a client to create and deliver out-of-this-world experiences. From helicoptering to the top of Mount Roraima in Guyana and rappelling down its dizzying, sheer vertical cliffs with a professional rock climber to a personalized bespoke tour of Bolivia that can include making your own raft for a jungle river descent, hiking to the summit of volcanoes, abseiling down gorges, getting up close with bubbling volcanic geysers and mountain biking through canyons, Hyde stated: “Travelers are seeking to deepen a cultural awareness. This can be in art or wine, adventure activities to expand their comfort zones in the guidance of world-class experts, or religious or secular spiritual desires to learn and grow philosophically with a shaman deep in the jungle.”

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IMAGES (left page) © Simon Rainer, (above) © Black Tomato, (right page) © Roger Hyde



Left page
Untold Story Travel offers life-enhancing journeys such as flying over the Himalayas in a glider

Above
Black Tomato designed a world-first itinerary that includes swimming with humpback whales beneath the midnight sun in Iceland

Right page
Dulabab creates personalized bespoke tours that can include mountain biking through canyons in Chile