

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION

 NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

ADVENTURE

nationalgeographic.com/adventure

DREAM IT. PLAN IT. DO IT.

**SEBASTIAN
JUNGER**
Back in
Afghanistan

**THE
MYSTERY
OF EVERETT
RUESS:
SOLVED**
By David
Roberts

**CATCHING
UP WITH:**
Aron Ralston
The Whale
Warriors Crew
Tanya Streeeter
Mark Burnett
Bob Ballard

PLUS
More Amazing
Survivors
Shaman
Therapy
& One
Killer Croc

10TH

ANNIVERSARY

A DECADE OF Adventure

**50
BEST
AMERICAN
ADVENTURES**

KAYAKING
THE NA PALI COAST

BIKING THE
CONTINENTAL
DIVIDE

HIKING THE
SIERRA

RAFTING
THE GREEN RIVER

SURFING THE
LOST COAST

TREKKING
OLYMPIC
NATIONAL PARK

CLIMBING
AMERICA'S
EVEREST

KITING THE KEYS

AND DOZENS
MORE



APRIL/MAY 2009

\$4.99US \$6.99CAN



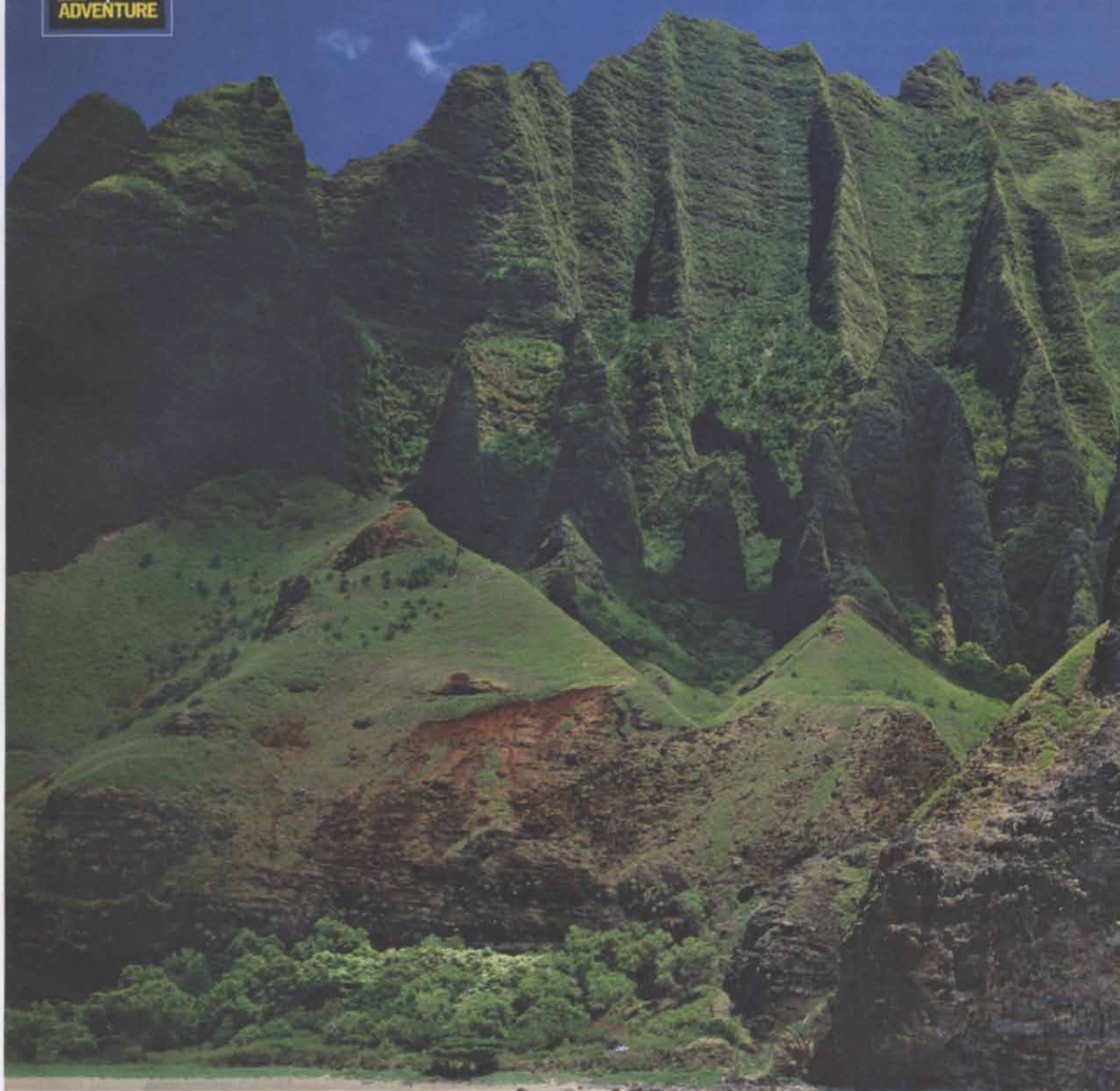
**SPRING '09
BUYER'S GUIDE**
TECH • GEAR • UPGRADES

**WORLD'S
SCARIEST
JOB**

**SOUTH AFRICA:
THE ROAD TRIP**



X
TEN
YEARS
of
ADVENTURE



No. 13

Hawaii's Na Pali Coast has our vote for best-weekend kayaking trip in the country. To nominate your favorite, visit ngadventure.com.



50

BEST
AMERICAN
ADVENTURES

These days in particular, it's good to live in the adventure capital of the world. When dollars are stretched and time is short, our own spectacular backyard has never looked better.

SELECTED, WRITTEN, AND RANKED BY
JIM GORMAN, ROBERT EARLE HOWELLS,
AND THE EDITORS

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK GAMBA

No. 26 TO No. 50

feet tall, but as it crowns a talus slope, you're nearly a thousand feet above the desert floor and the Colorado River, your 360-degree view dominated by the LaSalle Mountains on the southwestern horizon. *Moab Desert Adventures; moabdesertadventures.com*

22. Fight Wildfires *Nationwide*

The right to fight on the front lines of the country's most dangerous blazes with a hotshot crew doesn't come easy. Bust your hump in guard school, then spend a couple of bone-wearying summers proving your mettle. If a hotshot supe thinks you can cut it, you might tuck away 30 grand in a season and save some trees in the process. *USDA Fire & Aviation Management; www.fs.fed.us/fire/people/employment*

23. Hike the Roan Highlands *Tennessee*

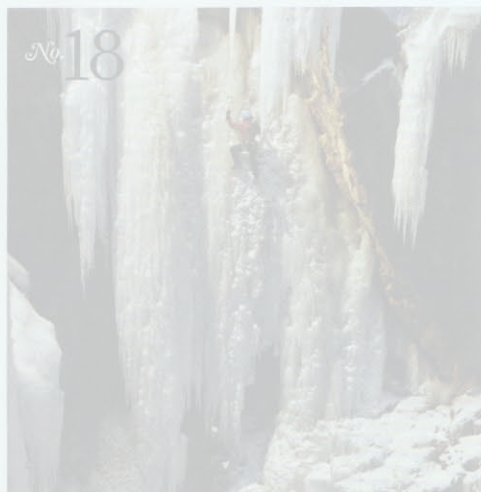
Surprise: The finest mountain scenery to be found on the southern half of the Appalachian Trail isn't in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It's north along the Tennessee-North Carolina border in the Roan Highlands. On the 48-mile section between the Nolichucky River and U.S. 19E, the AT rarely dips below tree line. *Appalachian Trail Conservancy; appalachiantrail.org*

24. Run the TransRockies *Colorado*

The TransRockies six-day stage race from Buena Vista to Beaver Creek is the most spectacular and difficult trail run in the country. For pros, there's a purse (\$20K). For the rest of us, there's a boast-worthy vacation: 113 miles and 18,000 feet of elevation gain, all above 7,500 feet amid grandiose ruggedness. *Gore-Tex TransRockies Run; August 23-28; transrockies.com*

25. Hike the Traverse *New Hampshire*

The high-flying transect of the Presidential Range should be on every hiker's short list. Much of the 24-mile route cruises above timberline in the tundra zone, tagging 11 peaks along the way, including Mount Washington. On clear days, expect views that can stretch from the Atlantic Ocean into Canada. Three conveniently spaced huts ease the way. *Appalachian Mountain Club; outdoors.org/lodging/huts*



26. Hike the Colorado Trail *Colorado*

If trekking 485 miles is not an option, focus on the trail's best: 68 miles between San Luis Pass and Molas Pass. *coloradotrailbiking.com*

27. Snowkite Camas Valley *Idaho*

The hundred square miles of peaks and valleys near Soldier Mountain Ranch may be the country's best terrain park. *soldiermountainranch.com*

28. Hike the Winds *Wyoming*

For Wyoming's highest mountains and best climbing, hike five days and 42 miles from the Big Sandy Trailhead into Wind River solitude.

29. Bike the Death Ride *California*

The country's most demanding road race: 129 miles and 15,000 feet of elevation gain. No wonder it's called the "Death Ride." *deathride.com*

30. Hike Glacier Peak *Washington*

The Pac Northwest's wilderness gem: a four-day backpacking loop around Glacier Peak, 10,541 feet of rock ribs and glaciers.

31. Tree-Climb Chilkat *Alaska*

Ascend 250-foot-tall spruces smack in the middle of the world's highest concentration of bald eagles. *alaskamountainguides.com*

32. Ski Tuckerman Ravine *New Hampshire*

Nail the 55-degree headwall at "Tucks" for bragging rights and a cheer from carnage-hungry spectators (March to June).

33. Cave an Island *Puerto Rico*

The country's best caving is offshore. Ride the wild Tanamá River through Puerto Rico's limestone core. *expedicionespalenque.com*

34. Climb Granite Peak *Montana*

Rivaled only by Denali, Hood, and Rainier for challenge, 12,799-foot Granite Peak is the contiguous U.S.'s premier wilderness summit.

35. Kiteboard the Keys *Florida*

"Flats" surrounding low mangrove-rimmed islands near Key West make for the country's best kiting conditions. *thekitehouse.com*

36. Raft the Green River *Utah*

One of the most dramatic short runs in the U.S.: four days of Class III through Dinosaur National Monument's Gates of Lodore.

37. Climb Red River Gorge *Kentucky*

Sport climbing's motherlode, the gorge has 1,892 routes and 145 distinct sandstone crags.

38. Raft the Gauley River *West Virginia*

A 26-mile-long torrent of a hundred rapids. Raft the expert-only Upper on day one, then take on the Lower. *class-vi.com*

39. Bike the Maah Daah Hey *North Dakota*

Ninety-six (soon to be 176) miles of singletrack in the same Badlands that toughened Teddy Roosevelt. *dakotacyclery.com*

40. Hike the Bob Marshall *Montana*

Trek the Swan Range inside Flathead National Forest for the best of Montana: bear grass blooms, pothole lakes, and giant vistas.

41. Paddle Santa Cruz Island *California*

Kayak directly into the world's largest sea caves—more than a hundred pierce the 300-foot cliffs. *islandpackers.com*

42. Hike the Muliwai Trail *Hawaii*

The state's toughest hike is also its most rewarding: 18 miles linking valleys and a lonely black-sand beach on the Big Island. *hawaiiitrails.org*

43. Dogsled the Boundary Waters *Minnesota*

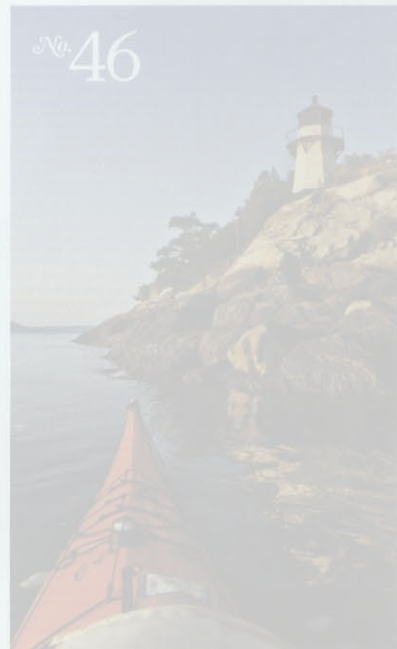
Learn to drive a team over five days in the biggest wilderness east of the Rockies—i.e., Will Steger's backyard. *dogsledding.com*

44. Ride Monument Valley *Arizona*

The Southwest's most iconic journey: a week on horseback through the Navajo Nation's sacred sites. *ridingtours.com*

45. Hike the Salmon *Idaho*

When low water sends 10,000 river rats home, hike the 70-mile Middle Fork Trail through the largest wilderness in the lower 48. *mtsobek.com*



46. Kayak the Maine Island Trail *Maine*

The East's top kayaking destination: 4,600 islands, 375 miles of trail. Spend two open-water days between Stonington and Merchant Row.

47. Paddle the Everglades *Florida*

Our rarest ecosystem is also the most threatened. See it in short order: Guides will drop you halfway down the 99-mile Wilderness Waterway.

48. Fly-Fish the Pecos *New Mexico*

There's a magical stretch of the Pecos along Route 63. Don't fish there. Hike away from the hip waders and into Pecos Canyon.

49. Sail the Manitous *Michigan*

For first-time captains, sailing out of Traverse City is straightforward, though the scenery—Caribbean waters, deserted islands—can be disorienting. *bbyc.com*

50. Four-Wheel the Steens *Oregon*

The 4x4 Steens Mountain Backcountry Byway traverses an encyclopedia of geographies: marshes, alpine highlands, and salt pans. ▲