Chris’ Favourite Places:

Chris’ personal picks from places in the world that he has visited.

Top 10 Beaches

**Seychelles**: Like sparkling emeralds on blue velvet, these lush granite mountains in the Indian Ocean each have their own set of dramatic beaches, often backed with lush palms and studded with huge rounded granite boulders.

**California Beaches**: There’s every kind of beach on California’s 1,350 km of ever changing coastline: from beaches where everyone wants to be seen, to beaches where there’s no-one in sight, California has it all.

**Provo, Turks and Caicos**: Grace Bay Beach on the island of Providenciales – or Provo to its many devotees – is 20 kilometers of beautiful, fine white sand edging spectacular clear, turquoise water and pristine coral reefs.

**Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**: Possibly the most famous beach in the world, Copacabana does not disappoint. These golden sands in the glamorous south zone of Rio de Janeiro offer surfing, swimming and diving plus sand volleyball or a barefoot soccer game…and of course: beautiful people watching!

**Pembrokeshire, Wales**: The Pembrokeshire Coastal Path in south west Wales links many wonderful beaches, but my favourite is Marloes Sands, a truly impressive and expansive beach with amazing rock formations.

**Wineglass Bay, Tasmania**: This is a stunning beach located in Freycinet National Park, on the east coast of Tasmania. From a viewpoint high above, you can marvel at a perfect curve of the whitest sand imaginable, fringed by azure water and lush green forest.

**French Polynesia**: So difficult to choose between the famed black volcanic sand at Mahina Beach on Tahiti, or the coral sand of Temae Beach on Moorea, but ultimately my vote goes to any of the numerous tiny, powder-beached ‘motus’ that dot the tropical lagoons of many islands in this part of the Pacific Ocean.

**The Gambia**: I spent my honeymoon on these palm-shaded beaches of this tiny West African river nation, where long strands of dazzling sands shimmer in the tropical heat and then glow as the sun sets over the Atlantic Ocean.

**Thailand Beaches**: The islands (100’s) and coastlines (it has 3) of Thailand boast so many beautiful beaches that you can find whatever your heart desires: solitude, glitz, soft adventure, culture, coral reefs and dramatic landscapes.

**Antigua**: A small Caribbean island but one that fits an amazing 365 beaches into its crinkled coastline – one for each day of the year…So you can find the perfect one for you. Try Hawksbill. I haven’t seen them all yet, but I’m working on it!
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Top 10 Islands

Grenada: A gem of an island in the southern Caribbean, this lush yet petite corner of tropical paradise is a heady mix of old plantations, dramatic mountains, perfect beaches and the most picturesque capital town imaginable.

Moorea, Polynesia: In the South Pacific, though technically a part of France, this Gauguin-esque island towers dramatically above a turquoise lagoon in an archetypical tropical island paradise.

Fregate, Seychelles: This tiny island is a part of the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean; it has just one get-away-from-it-all plantation house resort, and fauna and flora that are unique to this verdant speck in the ocean.

South Island, New Zealand: Difficult to choose between North and South Island, but the South has my vote because of its monumentally impressive scenery which includes great glacial mountains and misty fjords.

Cheung Chau, Hong Kong: Just 10km south of teeming Hong Kong Island, this small island is adrift in another time, with traditional temples, ancient rock carvings and fascinating alleys lined with mysterious shops.

Madeira, Portugal: A garden adrift in the Atlantic, this is a botanists’ and hikers’ paradise. Its lush green countryside is watered by irrigation channels called Levadas, that also serve as unique hiking trails. Its dramatic coastline inspired the painter in Winston Churchill.

Newfoundland, Canada: Everything they say about Newfoundlanders is true! They are the most hospitable people on the planet and justifiably proud of this spectacular island, which is the 15th biggest in the world. It has everything from fjords to mountains and whales to icebergs!

Herschel, Yukon: One of the wildest, most starkly beautiful places I have seen on this planet, Herschel Island lies in the Beaufort Sea just off the Yukon coast; it teams with Arctic wildlife and may become Canada’s next UNESCO site.

Iceland: Land of Vikings, glaciers, waterfalls, volcanoes, thermal pools, ancient sagas and a unique modern culture – now is the time to visit this mid-Atlantic island nation as their currency has crashed and it’s now excellent value!

Caladesi, Florida: If you wish to escape the hustle and bustle of Florida’s glitzy resorts, this Gulf Coast State Park is the perfect getaway; accessible only by boat, its white beaches and trail-veined woods are a sanctuary of peace.
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Top 10 Adventures

Climbing Kilimanjaro, Tanzania: Watching dawn break over the plains from Africa’s highest point makes the exertions of the week-long trek fully worthwhile. Go quickly as the snows of Kilimanjaro are melting...

Climbing Kinabalu, Borneo: From dripping jungle you ascend through mysterious cloud forest to bare rock faces and Alpine tundra to the highest peak of S.E. Asia – experiencing almost every terrestrial eco-system.

Climbing Nevado de Colima, Mexico: A few hours drive from the lazy Pacific beach resorts of central Mexico, you can climb this dormant volcano in a day to stand in the snow watching the twin peak of not-so-dormant Volcan de Colima belching sulphurous smoke.

HeliHiking, Kluane National Park, Yukon, Canada: Rising vertically from the stunning blue waters of Kluane Lake, swooping amidst the glacial stacks of Canada’s longest glacier and a momentary touch down on a rocky peak.........the curtain opener to a thrilling hike down via a close encounter with a grizzly bear!

Black Water Rafting, Waitomo, New Zealand: Combine caving, wetsuits, large rubber rings and underground rivers and you have an absurd adventure called black water rafting, in which you float in inflatable tubes down an underground stream in total darkness, illuminated only by glow worms up in the cavern roof.

Ice Canyons, Canmore, Alberta, Canada: In summer these canyons are inaccessible glacial torrents, but in winter you can ice walk into the depths, even more memorable by the light of a full moon and flashlight.

Bungee, Sky Tower, Auckland, New Zealand: The perfect antidote to jet-lag – right after the long Toronto to Auckland flight I stepped off the edge of New Zealand’s Sky Tower, the Southern Hemisphere’s tallest tower. So clad in harness and hope I experienced the world’s highest bungee jump and my biggest adrenalin rush.

Walking Safari, Sabi Sabi, South Africa: Favourite of my many safari experiences: walking through the game-laden African bush of one of South Africa’s premier private game reserves, trusting our native guides to keep us safe, yet in close contact with the animals – truly magnificent!

Trekking, Himalayas: There is nothing like hiking in the Himalayas to put you in your place! My trek through the Helambu region of Nepal without guide or tent was perhaps my most foolhardy, memorable and rewarding of my adventure travels – save for the one below...

Travelling with small children: Travels around the world with our two boys has been richly rewarding for all of us. Now teenagers, they have travelled to over 40 countries and every trip has been its own adventure!
Chris’ Favourite Places:
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Top 10 Fun Places

Orlando, Florida: The Theme Park Centre of the Universe, there’s one for every day of the week with everything from Disney’s unique “imagineering” to Universal Orlando’s tributes to popular culture and Seaworld’s incredible animal experiences.

Branson, Missouri: Entertainment is the name of the game in this city of over 100 Stage Shows – every one is good clean family fun that you could take your Granny to see....

Las Vegas, Nevada: There is nowhere on the planet where it is quite so true that “anything goes”. So it’s just as well that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!

Queenstown, New Zealand: This is where the fine art of bungy jumping was invented. Dedicated to soft adventure of all kinds including skydiving, bungy jumping, jetboating, canyon swinging, whitewater rafting, parapenting, heli-skiing...

Legoland, Denmark: The original and still the best – this is every little kid’s dream... and some big kids too. If it can be built with lego bricks it is here – as well as thrill rides galore.

Santa Claus trip, Lapland: Taking a wide-eyed 4 year old to a land where the sun creeps over the horizon for just an hour to illuminate Santa Claus, sleigh, reindeer and Xmas presents – is a very special experience for kids and parents alike.

Club Med Sandpiper, Florida: Of all the Club Med Resorts, this is perhaps their most successful family resort with the most fun Kids Club I or my kids have ever encountered. Circus school is a must!

Rotorua, New Zealand: The soft adventure capital of North Island, NZ, this is the place to do all kinds of crazy things; my favourite: zorbing – career down a hillside inside a giant transparent plastic ball!

Banff, Alberta – snowbiking: One of the most hilarious and ridiculous afternoons I have ever spent was sitting on a tricycle on skiis, hurtling down the slopes in Sunshine Village. Two words: try it!

Xel-Ha, Mexico: This eco-park on the Mayan Riviera has something for everyone – it’s a natural aquarium, water park, ancient Mayan site, soft adventure playground and more...all set in a verdant jungle.
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Machu Picchu, Peru: One of the “New Seven Wonders” of the world, this mysterious Incan citadel straddles a mountain ridge nearly 8,000 feet above sea level….. and it’s simply breath-taking.

Petra, Jordan: I rode into the “Rose Red city, half as old as time” on horseback with my baby son swaddled around me, feeling as if I had entered the pages of the Bible – timelessly magical.

Karnak, Egypt: Three and a half thousand years of history resonate in this temple complex on the banks of the Nile. It’s the largest ancient religious site in the world and brings to life names like Seti and Ramesses.

Coba, Yucatan, Mexico: Not the best known of Mexico’s Mayan cities, but for me it is the most wonderful as it is still largely covered by jungle with pyramids towering over the green carpet below.

Persepolis, Iran: The pillars and palaces of Darius and Xerxes’ great capital of the Persian Empire stand stark against azure desert skies – still impressive after two and a half thousand years!

Hadrian’s Wall, UK: Defining the division between Scots and English, this remarkably preserved, 117 Km long border fortification is the most important monument built by the Romans in Britain.

Ephesus, Turkey: To wander around these extensive ruins in Southern Turkey is to drift back in time to the Byzantine Empire, back to the Roman glories and thence to the splendours of the Ancient Greek civilization……..

Fatehpur Sikri, India: This UNESCO World Heritage site in Northern India was the capital of Emperor Akbar’s Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century and is the most amazingly preserved fort I have ever seen.

Roman Colosseum, Italy: Of all the many fascinating remnants of Ancient Rome in the modern city, this is the most impressive. Almost two thousand years old, this amphitheatre once seated 50,000 for gladiatorial games.

Bamyan, Afghanistan: When I visited this fabled stop on the old Silk Road in the 1970’s the monumental statues of standing Buddhas carved into a cliff were awe-inspiring. They were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001 but there is international commitment to rebuild them.
Chris’ Favourite Places:
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Top 10 Wild Places

**Canadian Arctic:** Larger than Western Europe, this land of islands and waterways is full of Northern Wonders from glacier and fjord to whales and native culture that remains close to the land.

**Lake Titicaca – Bolivia:** In the Andes is South America’s largest lake and the world’s highest navigable lake at 12,500ft. The intense blue contrasts with the browns of the surrounding hillsides and shimmering white snows on the distant 20,000ft peaks.

**Mongolia:** This huge country, locked between China and Russia, is the least populated nation in the world. Mountains, desert and vast steppes are on a breathtaking scale.

**Hindu Kush – Afghanistan:** Unbroken and unrelenting grandeur of arid mountain ranges, bright green valleys and the startlingly blue lakes of Band-e Amir - these remain indelible in my memory.

**Safari - East Africa:** To watch the mass migration of 1.5 million Wildebeest across the Serengeti Plains is to experience a primeval thrill like no other, Safari and see!

**Uluru (Ayers Rock) - Australia:** Mystical and other-worldly, this huge sandstone monolith rises over 1000 ft from the surrounding flat plain. It’s iconic, sacred to the Aboriginal peoples and positively ethereal at sunset.

**Pantanal - South Brazil:** The largest wetlands in the world, this is a far better place to see wildlife than Amazonia to the north. It’s wild, it’s little known and it’s exotic.

**Dasht-e Kavir – Iran:** The Great Salt Desert in the heart of the Iranian Plateau is an extreme environment, scorching by day, freezing by night and mighty in its huge emptiness.

**Nepal:** Trekking amongst the highest peaks in the world, from lush foothills to sweeping glaciers. If you love mountains, you will love Nepal.

**Borneo - Malaysia:** The third largest island in the world has lush jungle, deserted beaches and mountain trekking to 4000m. It’s also the best place to view Orangutan apes.
Chris’ Favourite Places:
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Top 10 Hidden Gems

Kefalonia - Greece: Of all of the many Greek Islands I have visited, this is my favourite. It’s the largest Ionian island, its quiet, relaxed, unspoiled and quintessentially Greek.

Corsica - France: A wonderful mixture of French good living and spectacular scenery, this island hideaway is truly a Mediterranean gem. Very special!

Kashmir - India: An exotic, little visited mountain Shangri-La in the northwest of India. Political troubles cannot detract from the unique experience of staying on a Victorian Houseboat floating on a lake with Himalayan peaks reflected in the water.

Tasmania - Australia: This island state is a world apart. Its weird and wonderful wildlife includes the Tasmanian Devil and Fairy Penguins in an ecological wonderland.

Pittsburgh - USA: Who knew? Steel City has metamorphosed into a funky, active, green, fun, scenic destination with some of the best museums and cultural attractions in the US.

Lamu - Kenya: The oldest town in Kenya envelopes you in history and Swahili culture. Time slows to walking pace here; enjoy beaches on the Indian Ocean and rich local hospitality.

Pokhara - Nepal: The area around this city in western Nepal is full of grand natural attractions: Phewa Lake, the Annapurna Range, great river gorges and spectacular waterfalls.

Copacabana - Bolivia: A world removed from its popular namesake in Brazil, this unique small town nestles on a bay on Lake Titicaca close to the sacred islands of the Incas.

Northamptonshire - UK: My home county, so forgive my partisanship! This is not on any highlights tour of the UK but its green, rolling, hedgerow veined countryside is studded with honey-stoned historic villages.

Riga - Latvia: Capital of Latvia on the Baltic coast, this fascinating city has retained so much of its history and architecture that it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.