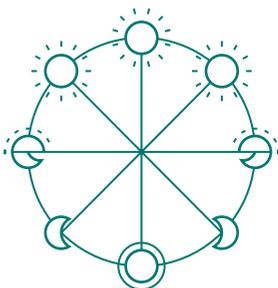




# Compass

Quarterly





*Transporting body, mind, and spirit in a single excursion*

**Epic Road**

Let's be honest: Anyone with WiFi can plan a vacation. But when friends Mark Lakin and Marc Chafian ditched corporate gigs in philanthropy and investment management to launch luxury travel outfitter Epic Road, the plan was to sell perspective, not just posh hotel rooms.

Lakin and Chafian knew from their own experiences that the most transformative trips were intimate, immersive, and gave back in some way. "I don't think any honeymooners ever said, 'Let's go strap satellite collars on big cats in South Africa,'" says Lakin (below left). "But that's the moment that'll define what that trip meant to them."

The duo created Epic Road to provide that type of off-the-grid, out-of-the-ordinary travel to seekers of adventure, authenticity, and meaning. Calling on connections Lakin built through his nonprofit past, the team opens doors that would otherwise remain closed to tourists.

On their excursions, high-threadcount sheets, five-star accommodations, and *Wine Spectator*-approved bottles are bolstered by such life-altering, verge-of-extinction experiences as snorkeling with bowhead whales in Canada, riding alongside Kazakh horsemen in Mongolia, or hiking glaciers with a Norwegian climate-change scientist.

"My relationships have made possible a 10-on-10 soccer match between clients and a Malawian tribe and tea at the home of a master bamboo weaver in Kyoto," says Lakin.

All trips are private, and no two are the same — not necessarily because they wouldn't repeat a journey, but because "things are always changing, if you're really

listening," says Lakin. Most critically, all are reviewed in advance by on-staff scouts. "We don't sell anything that we don't experience and love personally," says Lakin, who's hit five continents himself since last December.

*"Often, luxury is a feeling — of being alone, of being in total awe. We make that happen."*

They take a similarly critical eye towards hiring, seeking scouts with a curious worldview and heightened attention to detail: Does the hotel staff take note of food restrictions without being reminded? Are layovers hassle-free? Clients come mostly from urban centers — New York, LA, and Miami are top markets, aided by a partnership with Soho House that includes a lecture series and group trips—and all itineraries start with an old-fashioned phone call.

After that, Epic Road works with on-the-ground operators, who'll serve as local contacts, to build and refine the schedule based on the client's budget. (All expenses are handled in advance, which means no waiting around for the check — ever.) Destinations span the globe; Africa, Asia, and the Arctic are well-trod territories, and they're introducing itineraries in South America later this year.

"We look at luxury a little differently," says scout Kelsey Bent (below right). "Often, luxury is a feeling — of being alone, of being in total awe. We make that happen." — AG



Photo by Mark Lakin courtesy of Epic Road

Founded 2011  
 Headquarters NYC's West Village  
 Countries scouted 134  
 Miles flown by founders and scouts since launch 500,000+