

Virtuoso Traveler

EXPECT THE WORLD

AUGUST | SEPTEMBER 2017

FRESH
TAKES
ON OUR
FAVORITE
PLACES

Hawaii

ESCAPE THE CROWDS
ON LANAI

Scotland

SET OUT ON A
WILDERNESS SAFARI

Mexico

DISCOVER BAJA'S
WINE COUNTRY

SEASIDE
SANCTUARY:
HOTEL
SANTA
CATERINA'S
BEACH CLUB

Italy's Southern Charms

SIP SICILY'S FINEST, TOUR PUGLIA'S
WHITEWASHED HILL TOWNS &
KICK BACK ON THE **AMALFI COAST**



Into Africa

Ken and Maddy Dychtwald make a heartfelt connection with Kenya.

As told to David Hochman



The Dychtwalds on safari and (below) Ken and Maddy renewing their wedding vows.

village, the older Masai are called “elders,” but the younger people are referred to as “junior elders.” It’s an acceptance of the turning wheel. We’re young and then we’re old, whether we’re a tree or an animal or a person. We’re alive and then not alive. That’s the way of life on the savanna, and it forces you to appreciate what’s here in all its glory.

We definitely appreciated each other as a family and bonded like never before. First of all, we got remarried – we do it every year. We’ve done it in the French West Indies, at Versailles, at the Chapel of Love in Vegas. Micato knew we wanted a wedding. One day, the four of us, our guide, and a Masai tracker drove out to a Masai village. We got out of our Jeep, and four or five elders appeared. Before we knew it, they covered us in gorgeous traditional garb. Maddy got a crown. The entire village converged on us with everyone singing and hopping, and the wedding dance began. Our kids were just cracking up, which got us laughing. We laughed harder

To be honest, Africa wasn’t at the top of our must-see list. We still have active careers, so it’s hard to get away. Ken doesn’t love adventure travel. Maddy hates bugs. We enjoy our luxuries. But friends had come back with incredible photos from a safari, and we thought, “Let’s do this.”

Our adult children took some convincing. Zak, our 26-year-old, liked the idea, but would have loved it if we didn’t come along. He’s an independent globe-trotter. Our daughter, Casey, who’s 29, wanted to know if there would be good shopping. The concept of being off Instagram traumatized her.

Something changed for all of us after Maddy’s mom passed away, followed six months

later by Ken’s mom. It was this feeling of, if not now, when? At our age, and our kids’ ages, we may never take a vacation without their partners in the mix, and really go off the grid.

We got a recommendation to go with Micato Safaris and were assured they’d keep us comfortable and safe. In unfamiliar situations, whether walking through a village at night or going up in hot-air balloons, we never felt in danger. That opens up a world of possibilities – it’s like being a child in wonder mode again.

The profound sense of peace surprised us. Here we were in a field with scores of giraffes, thousands of zebras, mighty lions napping not far from baby rhinos nursing, and elephants in the distance. It

was collaboration and simple coexistence, sharing land and light and water and resources. Everything is interconnected in a very precise way. It really kind of knocks you out!

You’re displaced from your usual coordinates and your senses come alive. In a Masai



KEN DYCHTWALD

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than we ever had in our lives.

On the last day of the trip, Micato took us to visit the AmericaShare orphanage in Nairobi’s Mukuru slum. After all we’d been through as a family that week and a half, we felt relaxed, as if we’d been cleansed. Then, suddenly, we were in an intense metropolis staring into the eyes of destitute people. But the more we talked to these children and women, the more we realized that the orphanage and school were an oasis. People left behind by ill parents and poverty are getting

a second chance. Some of our guides had been through the program, and we met other young people who are now medical students or engineers.

Our daughter just sat down and started to cry. It touched us all so profoundly: Our kids decided to sponsor two children, and we sponsored eight more. Over the next few years, and perhaps decades, we plan to stay connected with them and stay connected to Africa in ways we never imagined. A deep part of all of us is anchored there now. **VT**



After a surprise breakfast picnic (with the omelet chef) in the Lewa reserve.