

MY WOW MOMENT

Virtuoso Life staff members recall how making a difference made their trip.



Lives changed in (from left) Indonesia, the Maldives, and Kenya.

“Indonesia’s **Nihi Sumba** resort has changed life for the Sumbanese, who live in some of the most impoverished conditions in the world. The resort’s Sumba Foundation aims to alleviate poverty and eradicate malaria by providing locals with access to clean water, education, and health care. At a local village, we met a group of kids – all recipients of the foundation’s education initiatives – who stole my heart with their smiles. We bought crafts from the villagers – another chance to help support the local economy. Later, at the spa, my masseuse praised Nihi for not only providing her with a job, but also for teaching English to her and 500 other staff members. I left paradise with the biggest sense of gratitude – thankful for time with my family, as well as for what the resort and its guests have given back to the locals in this unforgettable place.” – *Melanie Fowler, design director*

“Close encounters with sharks, turtles, and schooling fish among the Maldives’ coral formations instill a deep appreciation for the building blocks of ocean life: reefs. On a dive trip to the Ari Atoll and Baa Atoll, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, it was great to help secure a brighter future for marine life through Reefscapers’ partnership with the **Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru**. After opting to sponsor a coral frame, I got to attach live coral fragments

to the metal dome, which on-staff marine biologists planted along the resort’s reef. Twice-yearly photo updates let me follow its growth.” – *Justin Paul, senior editor*

“Our family safari in Kenya ten years ago changed our lives. We traveled with **Micato Safaris**, and through its charitable arm, AmericaShare, we spent the last day of our trip at the Harambee Community Centre, with children from Kenya’s Mukuru slum. Our kids joined them, playing soccer, serving lunch, and handing out food for them to take back to their families. It was a tremendous experience that impacted us far more than them. But most importantly, we met Felix, the boy we sponsor through Micato’s AmericaShare program. He was an adorable 6-year-old, with a wide grin and huge dark eyes. He spoke very little English, but managed to tell us how much it meant to him that our family sponsored his boarding-school education. We fell in love. We’ve traded letters and photos with him for the past decade, watching in amazement as he took command of the English language, learned other subjects, and grew into a healthy, happy young man. My son is now 18, and for years he’s referred to Felix as his brother. Our family has booked a return trip this fall, and the highlight of the safari will be the time we get to spend with Felix.” – *Terrie Hansen, senior vice president, marketing VI*