

Precious Journeys

ΠΡΕCIOUS JOURNEYS

by Big Five Tours & Expeditions

Travel Pulse

Big Five Hits Family Travel Market with Precious Journeys

TOUR OPERATOR | DAVID COGSWELL | MARCH 30, 2015

Ashish Sanghrajka, president of the family-owned Big Five Tours and Expeditions and father of two young children, realized through experience that travel with young children can be quite challenging.

“I have two young kids, so I know how much planning is required for international travel with family along for the ride,” said Sanghrajka.

Looking at the market for family-friendly tours, Sanghrajka felt he had come upon an underserved market. There seemed to be far too few opportunities “for families to enjoy authentic journeys that welcome children as a vital part of the travel experience, providing them with real-world experience.”

That discovery started a process that led to the creation of a new series of tour products from Big Five, a series of international travel programs called Precious Journeys designed for families with children ages 5 through 11.

“We weighed a wide range of considerations and issues to assure that each Precious Journey stands out in the adventure travel industry while being fun, adventurous, educational, instructional and safe from start to finish,” said Sanghrajka.

According to Sanghrajka, the idea for the new series of tours actually originated with one of the company’s travel agent partners.

“The idea was born in her office,” said Sanghrajka. “Then from there, it was built with the advice of a clinical child psychologist. Finally it was tested on my kids and their friends, specifically my son who is 8 and has been to Egypt, Costa Rica, and India with me. It was actually really good to see where he got bored and where his attention was retained. Most importantly it was his engagement level.”

Big Five didn’t want to come out of the process with something that tacked on a few activities that are “almost tolerant of the child,” said Sanghrajka.

Rather, the company wanted something that was, at its core, authentically built for young people.

“We wanted activities where the child is taking the family on a tour, where the activities are advanced enough for the whole family to enjoy,” said Sanghrajka. “The end result is not just a great experience. It would be an awakening where the exposure the child gets opens the imagination to choosing something like marine biology or archaeology as a career path as they get older. This is about introducing the next generation to the front line of the sustainability revolution.”

The core of the product concept is the inclusion of educational experiences in culturally rich places in South America, India and Africa.

The programs are designed to take subjects such as geology, zoology and archaeology from the sterile classroom environment and put them in the vivid and compelling settings of international travel, demonstrating how fascinating the subjects really are in the real world.

The series is rolling out with four programs.

Ecuador: From Machalilla to Zuleta is a 10-day trip that focuses on anthropology and archaeology as it travels through Machalilla National Park and on marine biology at Isla de La Plata, a wildlife sanctuary. It also includes visits with local artists, craftsmen and farmers and hikes, bike trips and horseback rides.

India: Saving Tigers digs into the ecosystems of India and studies the problems of sustainability in the land of the world's largest cat, the tiger. It includes safari game drives tracking tigers, deer and bison.

Other programs in the series include **Kenya: Kids, Cats and a Treehouse** and Costa Rica and Nicaragua: Tarzan Swings, Aero Bunks and Monkey Bridges.

Sanghrajka does not expect the series to grow very much in the number of programs.

"Each program has to meet strict requirements to be considered part of this collection so we don't anticipate there to be a lot of programs here," said Sanghrajka. "Additionally the activities are so unique that places one has stereotyped as family friendly actually don't meet these requirements. The main reason is because there is nothing different in the activities beyond the style of accommodations. That contrasts with this collection where the entire journey down to the special access and the activities are designed with education in mind for the child and the family."

Link: Travel Pulse Big Five article: <http://www.travelpulse.com/news/tour-operators/big-five-hits-family-travel-market-with-precious-journeys.html?u=EA18531E-55F1-46E4-9FD0-199180690B62>



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