

First Person } *Eric Flamholtz, PhD '69, Globetrotter*

Around the World in 24 Days

Life-changing experiences occur every day. They can be joyful or tragic. Mundane or extraordinary. There are life-changing experiences that sneak up on us. And there are those we pursue with a passion.

Last October I pursued one of my own in the form of a 24-day expedition organized by National Geographic. The voyage took me from Samoa to Cairns, Australia; from Cambodia to the Sichuan Province of China; from Tibet to Agra, India; and from Cairo to the marketplace of Marrakech, Morocco. I visited Easter Island and the Serengeti Plain; I saw the Taj Mahal and the Sphinx. I feel as though I literally went around the world in 24 days. And though I was never chased or captured by bandits (a la Indiana Jones), I will never forget what can only be described as the journey of a lifetime.

I walked with aboriginal guides in the Australian rain forest and learned to throw a spear. I climbed the 500-plus steps of the Potala Palace at Lhasa, Tibet, the former residence of the Dalai Lama. I visited the tombs of Luxor at night and heard the whispers of thousands of years of history.

In Tanzania I did a game drive in the Serengeti and saw a herd of wildebeest so large it defied counting. Signs warned we were intruders in lands inhabited by wild animals and the lodge was not responsible for our possible deaths. We heard the cries of the bush in the night and saw evidence of elephants roaming through camp. Baboons watched us

from behind trees as we scanned the path for poisonous snakes. At night we were escorted to our tents by guards armed only with their wits and a flashlight as well as valuable advice: If you see lions, don't run. Ever! Make yourself as large as possible and try to scare them. (If all else fails, warn them about the fierce Michigan Wolverines who will come back to avenge you!)

I walked the narrow streets of Marrakech with a guide in front and a guard with a concealed weapon in the rear. I saw the snake charmers, smelled the indescribable fragrance of the souk, and walked past shops of every product and description: meats, coffees, perfumes, pots and pans, rugs — the original shopping mall!

I marveled at Machu Picchu bathed in clouds and mist, and wondered how this place was built and by whom. I photographed the giant Moai statues of Easter Island at midnight — truly magical and not of this world. I watched the sun rise over the Taj Mahal and saw it change before my very eyes as the light transformed its surface.

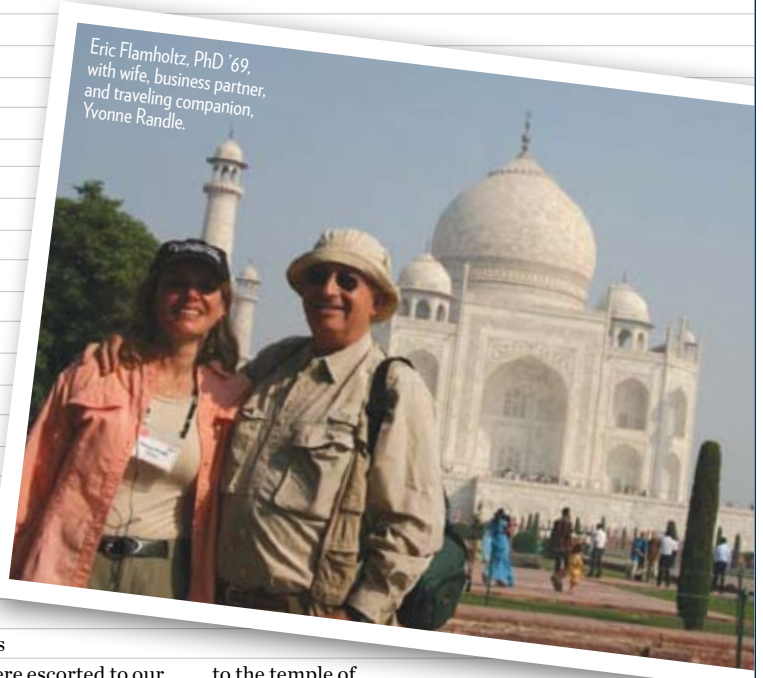
In Cambodia I was transfixed by beautiful dancers, exquisitely costumed and moving with breathtaking subtlety and grace. Then I took an elephant ride

to the temple of Angkor Wat. In Samoa I visited the home of Robert Louis Stevenson, where I saw an amazing portrait of the writer that would suggest Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde were well-known to him.

Throughout I heard brilliant lectures about the history, art, customs, architecture, and religions of the places we visited from local guides and two professors who accompanied us. It was a "traveling university" to be sure. During one delayed flight we enjoyed an impromptu presentation about T.E. Lawrence, which provided valuable insights into the current problems in the Middle East.

There was more, so much more. Delightful memories and surprises still linger in my mind. I smiled every day of the trip, recognizing how extraordinary this life-changing adventure truly was. ✪

Eric Flamholtz is a professor emeritus at UCLA Anderson School of Management and president of Management Systems Consulting Corp. in Los Angeles. He is an expert on transitioning entrepreneurial ventures into professionally managed firms. As *Dividend* went to press he was off to the Amazon and the Galapagos Islands.



Eric Flamholtz, PhD '69, with wife, business partner, and traveling companion, Yvonne Randle.