

# The Sabbatical Solution

**A SURPRISING NUMBER OF EXECUTIVES ARE NOW TAKING LONGER BREAKS AND TRAVELING THE GLOBE.**

By Renee Morad

» Christophe Convent, a Belgian publishing professional, has taken many vacations, but none quite like the one he did two years ago. It involved spending time with his 24-year-old daughter, who wanted to see Africa with him. And they went all out, covering, to name just a few places, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Kivu, Namibia, and South Africa. Total time: nine weeks.

It might surprise many glued-to-their-desks employees that some people take their time off—and then some. In fact, according to a report by the Society for Human Resource Management, some 5 percent of employees surveyed took a paid sabbatical in 2017, and 12 percent more took an unpaid sabbatical. Some firms even specialize in it: Convent’s trip was arranged by the Cape Town–based sabbatical travel company Timeless Africa Safaris. “The experience completely changed my daughter’s and my life,” Convent says. “It also helped me a lot to plan for the next 15 years to come.”

With summer not that far off, we decided to check in with the firms that are arranging these extended trips, which run the gamut from specialized solo experiences to group programs with other professionals.

## Timeless Africa Safaris

**BASED IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

The tour operator’s sabbatical specialists plan journeys that span from a month to two years. It all depends on the client’s needs and desires. The trips range from unwinding and relaxing close to nature to tracking gorillas, sleeping in the Kalahari Desert’s salt pans, or training for a marathon with a Kenyan runner.

Convent, who is 61, says he plans to return to Africa within a year to check on a charity that he started while he was there. Apparently, he isn’t done, saying he hopes to go on another sabbatical to check off a few more bucket list items, like hiking mountains in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. “Next time, I’d like to bring my son,” he says.

## Original Travel

**BASED IN LONDON, UK**

This travel agency offers a three-month sabbatical in Peru that takes travelers on a voyage from Machu Picchu and the Peruvian Amazon to the hurried cities of Lima and Arequipa. The trip includes an opportunity to volunteer in the Sacred Valley. The company also offers a sabbatical where travelers can explore archipelagos and majestic fjords during a 42-day expedition around Norway and Sweden.



## Laterallife

**BASED IN LONDON, UK**

This agency specializes in completely tailor-made sabbaticals. Destinations cover the globe, though some of the more popular spots have been in Australia, South America, Africa, and India. The firm specializes in sabbaticals for law professionals, as well as career-break sabbaticals for those who want to take time to travel and reflect before making their next professional leap. Options range from partaking in a physical challenge, like cycling across Costa Rica, to mixing volunteering with a luxury experience.

## Remote Year

**BASED IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

For travelers interested in taking a sabbatical with a group of other professionals, Remote Year offers a variety of experiences, from a four-month Shanti sabbatical in Asia to a one-year journey throughout Latin America, Asia, Europe, and Africa. The program allows travelers to work remotely throughout their time abroad. The caveat: travelers must apply and be selected to participate in the program. More than 1,000 people from 40 countries have participated since the company was founded in 2014. ▀

