

Carry On

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Explorer Richard Wiese on His New Adventure Show

By Brooke Porter | [Outdoor Adventure](#), [Adventure Travel](#), [Television](#), [Q+A](#) | [Comments](#)



By the age of 11, the average kid has learned how to climb a jungle gym. But not Richard Wiese. That was the age when the former [Explorers Club](#) president climbed [Mt. Kilimanjaro](#) for the first time—and he’s done it 15 more times since. The Emmy Award-winning journalist/adventurer/field scientist has also cross-country skied to the North Pole, tagged jaguars in the Yucatan jungles, and was a member of the largest medical expedition ever conducted on Mt. Everest. But his latest undertaking is as the host of the aptly named [Born to Explore](#), a new syndicated ABC travel program that highlights cultures from around the world, including Aboriginals in Western [Australia](#), Batwa pygmies in [Uganda](#), and Mayans in [Belize](#).



Q: What makes *Born to Explore* different from other adventure shows?

A: “The mandate of the show is “People, places, planet,” and we’re trying to take time to learn more about the people. I’m finding that indigenous cultures, once you listen to them, usually have an interesting message.



I also find there’s magic in the world—not in pulling a rabbit out of the hat, but things I can’t explain. I remember I was in [North Carolina](#) filming red wolves, and we were in this beautiful farm field, and I look over and there’s this bear watching the sunset. He stood there for 10 minutes. There are so many moments like that that still occur in nature, things that happen that aren’t on the itinerary—and that’s something we’re hoping to capture more of.”



Q: In the next episode, you head to Uganda to go gorilla tracking. What did you learn from that experience?

A: “The Uganda story fits so perfectly with the show’s mandate. I initially wanted to go to Uganda because everyone says that one of the most life altering experiences is sitting near a mountain gorilla and looking it straight in the eyes. They’re so closely related to us from a DNA standpoint that you can’t help but feel like you’re looking at a cousin who’s looking right back at you.



What made the experience more memorable is that the gorillas are close to a village of a vanishing group of people, the Batwa pygmies. They're 4 feet tall; they're able to walk through the jungles and forests silently; and they live completely off the land. The people from [Sanctuary Gorilla Forest Camp](#) arranged a hike to the village, where I was greeted by one of the village elders who is in his 80s. He proceeded to spring up a mountain and climb a tree that had honey on the top of it, a machete in one hand and a pot in the other. He had these chiseled abs, and I thought, 'When I'm 80, I hope I can take my shirt off like that.' They had a great sense of humor, always smiling, bowing to each other a lot. It was one of the most wonderful days I've had in my life."

Q: What can viewers look forward to in future episodes?

A: “An episode on [Iceland](#) will be airing. We’re planning a trip to [Morocco](#), and we filmed in Belize in a Mayan village. Just to show you my ignorance, I didn't know there were holy Mayan villages until I got there; I thought they had integrated into other villages. We are also planning a trip [Botswana](#), to do an episode on orphaned elephants.”

Q: What’s it like being referred to as the “real Indiana Jones”?

A: “There actually was a real Indiana Jones. His name was Roy Chapman Andrews, and he was president of the Explorers Club and the [American Museum of Natural History](#). He smuggled fossil dinosaur eggs out of Mongolia. I certainly couldn’t hold a candle to that guy for sure.”

Q: Can you recommend a couple of trip ideas in the U.S. for beginner adventure travelers?

A: “I would go to the [Florida Everglades](#) and rent a canoe. There are trails that go through the everglades, and you can camp out. What I like about that adventure is you have really great wildlife, but you’re only an hour from the Miami airport, and it’s really cheap.

And even though people think it’s cliché, I think the [Grand Canyon](#) is one of the most beautiful places on Earth. The adventure can go from just getting out of your car and looking at a vista to hiking its canyons.”

Born to Explore airs Saturday mornings on ABC.