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SEEKING ADVENTURE

SCOTT BRILLS COMBINES TRAVEL AND PHILANTHROPY WHILE EXPLORING THE GLOBE

Scott Brills has mapped out quite the adventurous life. The Farmington Hills native has dubbed himself an “adventure capitalist,” a term that is prominently displayed on his website, scottbrills.com.

He’s put his money where his mouth is, too, traveling to approximately 80 countries by the ripe age of 32, starting a safari business in Tanzania and doing some truly memorable things to raise awareness and funds for charity.

How many people, after all, can say they’ve made a wild rickshaw run through India? Or have gotten behind the wheel of a Geo Metro to drive it from Detroit to New Jersey, ship it to London, and then continue the drive to Mongolia? To further complicate the journey, the pint-sized car broke down close to the Chinese border in Tajikistan, but he made it to his destination nonetheless, including hitchhiking parts of that last long leg of a truly monumental trek – and all for charity.

In this case, Brills took on the challenge as a result of his involvement with West Bloomfield Rotary, which he joined in 2008, and various Rotary clubs that sponsored

the building of a kindergarten in Mongolia.

Besides the Geo Metro trip, he’s a regular globetrotter, trekking through Asia, Africa and Antarctica, and plenty of destinations in between. His first real travel experience was a school trip to China when he was 13, and it sowed the seeds for a lifelong love of traveling, particularly throughout Asia. “I love the food and the history of Japan, and I love the culture,” he says. That love and his fluency in the language led him to start a now-shuttered consulting firm in Japan that worked with small hotel chains and restaurants doing business in the United States.

He’ll often set up camp in a place like Thailand during the cold season. “I love skipping winter,” he says. And he’ll work and travel from there since the cost of living is low and traveling from there is more affordable.

Blending his love of adventure and travel, he’s founded a safari company, too, called Pamoja Safaris, in Tanzania with business partner and friend Josh Siligaki, a native Masai tribesman and seasoned safari guide who knows the terrain well. Brills was inspired to

start Pamoja, which means “together” in Swahili, after visiting Tanzania in 2010 when he safari’d in Serengeti National Park, traveled to Zanzibar, and summited Mount Kilimanjaro. It wasn’t Brills’ first business – he’s been an entrepreneur since high school, working in web design and development for many years – but he admits he was tired of that, and as a result started the safari company in 2011.

Brills runs the business and promotion side of the company from wherever he is on the globe, and Siligaki runs it from their base in East Africa, also part of the African Great Lakes region. Operating Pamoja combines Brills’ four loves: travel, philanthropy, entrepreneurship and animals. “I try to combine my love of adventure and giving back,” he says.

Pamoja definitely fits the adventurous side of life. Guests pay to fly in to Tanzania, and Pamoja’s people take care of the rest, carting guests to luxury lodges with meals included, plus guided tours via Land Cruisers. “Basically you chase animals with your camera,” Brills says.

Guests can opt for trips to climb and explore Kilimanjaro, visit white sand beaches,

see the savannah, and spot countless animals, including cape buffalo, lions, leopards, rhinos, elephants, zebras, giraffes, cheetahs, crocodiles and exotic birds. "Basically, every animal you saw in *The Lion King*," Brills says.


Tanzania has several gigantic national parks, including Serengeti National Park, which is 5,700 square miles, and a visit there brings opportunities to see rare and exotic animals and landscapes that vary from open woodlands, the grassy Serengeti plains and swampland. Pamoja also takes visitors to see Tarangire National Park and the Ngorongoro Crater Conservation Area. Some of the terrain is so extensive it can take 10 hours to drive through, Brills says. "We pride ourselves on making it a trip of a lifetime," he adds.

Being in Africa brings Brills back to his interest in charity, too. "I feel very lucky and feel it's my duty to give back, to bring attention to causes," he says. He's driven through Africa, all the way south to Capetown to donate clothing to children and raise funds to build a school at Awassa Orphanage in Ethiopia.

In India, he's helped raise awareness

and funds for clean water through driving an auto-rickshaw more than 5,000 miles throughout the country. He joined Troy-based A Vision for Clean Water in 2010, which works to help people worldwide secure safe, clean water. His travels have only made him more determined to do good in this world, he says. "You can't help but be affected," he says of his experiences seeing poverty and the issues people face around the world.

Brills admits he dreams of visiting all 193 nations recognized by the United Nations, though for now he'll stick to his goal of 100 by age 35. Soon he'll be traveling in Europe, spending time along the Mediterranean. He'd also like to make the 16,000-mile trans-American drive from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego in Argentina. And of course, make plenty of stops along the way. "I've always wanted to go and see Carnivale in Brazil," he says.

When he's not on the road, Brills will make the trip back home to Michigan and be anything but bored. "It's nice to see friends and family, to visit with people and catch up. I enjoy coming back home."  — Heidi Bitsoli



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