

**MacGillivray
Freeman's** **Into
America's
WILD**

PRODUCTION NOTES

A MacGillivray Freeman film produced in association with Brand USA

Presented by Expedia and United Airlines

www.intoamericaswild.com

About the Production

“In the wildest places we can still find that connection we all need.”

-- John Herrington, pioneering Native American astronaut

We live in an age of wizardly machines—so why do we still hunger for that heart-charging awe that can only be found out in the raw elements, under the electric sun or a cool blanket of stars? The soulful new adventure from MacGillivray Freeman Films (MFF) for exhibition in IMAX[®] and giant-screen theaters —narrated by Oscar[®]-winning icon Morgan Freeman—takes on that vital question. The film’s answer becomes a larger-than-life love story about the transformational allure of wild places across the whole span of the USA.

From the hunt for hidden wilderness gems to the fun to be found in local city parks, *Into America’s Wild* is more than just a ride into an amazement-worthy assortment of North American landscapes. It is also a vital exploration into how being outdoors can spark peak experiences—and how those peak experiences have changed and inspired diverse American lives, starting with the very first people to commune with this land.

From rugged coast to mystifying desert, from soaring forest to buzzing city, *Into America’s Wild* reveals the unbreakable human-nature bond in action. A Native American astronaut’s mind is awe-struck when he spies our earth on a daring mission aboard the International Space Station. On a storied hiking trail, a young woman feeling lost finds a passion that takes her forward at lightning speed. In South Carolina, deaf kids take a walk in the woods in a way they never imagined. Clinging to a Utah hillside, scientists discover one of the world’s largest organisms, a golden-hued grove of aspens all connected at the root, revealing the power of unity.

These are just some of the unforgettable moments in a film wall-to-wall with natural treasures, both far-flung and right in our backyards. But while the visuals are as breathtaking as ever, some of the film’s wildest moments are its most human.

This comes to the fore through the film’s intriguing pair of guides. Each has a deep relationship with nature: groundbreaking Native American astronaut John Herrington has seen earth from afar and up-close; and Alaskan bush pilot and youth advocate Ariel Tweto has learned how connecting to the land can save people. Their journey spreads eastward from the Northwest’s “Kelp Highway” to the lush Appalachian Trail--and from zipline thrills to candid reflections. But always in their minds is that driving question: what is it about untamed places that fires our curiosity, cleanses our spirits, sparks new ideas and so often brings us together?

Says director Greg MacGillivray: “John and Ariel are the perfect touchstones for this story because they are both able to express so beautifully how nature invites us to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We set out to show North America’s infinite beauty, but the film became even more about the magic that nature can work on every one of us. Every American trail can be the spark for someone to fall in love with nature. Every trail can be the place where today’s kids learn how to be tomorrow’s trailblazers and guardians of nature.”

Deeper Into The American Wild

Helping people fall in love—or fall more deeply in love—with the many facets of the natural world has long been the spur for Greg MacGillivray’s award-winning filmmaking career. It’s the reason he has been producing and directing documentary films for exhibition in IMAX and giant screen theaters for four decades, beckoning audiences into a succession of “join-with-us” adventures. Greg and his team of close-knit family and friends have literally traversed the globe in every direction—from ocean deep to Mt. Everest heights—to bring back images that leave people wanting to know, see and understand more.

Yet *Into America’s Wild* is the first MacGillivray Freeman Films (MFF) feature to directly ask the question: why do outdoor journeys, big or small, local or way out there, have the potential to be so life-changing? The result is a film that may be MFF’s most jam-packed with the widest range of stunning locales. It is also one of the company’s most heartfelt and personal quests for how wilderness touches our souls.

It all started when MFF and their partner Brand USA started thinking about a follow-up to their acclaimed hit *National Parks Adventure*, which was the highest grossing documentary of 2016. The initial idea was to explore the endless trove of North American natural treasures beyond the glory of the National Parks. That led to a theme of how trails and trailblazers have left their mark across the breadth and history of the nation.

But as the filmmaking process started—and the MFF team got to know the film’s lead characters John Herrington, Ariel Tweto and Jennifer Pharr Davis more—things began to evolve.

“It happens quite often to us that we start with one idea and end up following another. It’s quite literally the opposite of how you would develop a big Hollywood feature film, where they generally follow the old adage ‘if it’s not on the page, it’s not on the stage,’” Greg explains. “For us, there is nothing on the page written in stone. Things are constantly in a state of flux and change, because we go out and respond to whatever is happening in the moment.”

In this case, what happened is that they kept meeting people whose lives had, much like their own, been utterly altered by wild places. “We started out with the aim of having Ariel Tweto, who we were very enthusiastic about as a character, go hunting for North America’s natural gems, looking for unique trails and meeting American trailblazers. But we realized we were really making a film about *why* people go down new trails in the first place and the very specific idea that the unique natural resources of this nation impact us in some magical ways.”

Unit production manager Meghan MacGillivray, Greg’s daughter, notes this theme hit close to home. “American trails and trailblazers are still a part of the film,” she points out. “But when we cast John and Ariel, we discovered they both share this incredible passion for teaching people about the power of nature and that really resonated with our own lives and work.”

Meghan says the timing also felt right for this story. “I think a lot of us are also looking at the world right now and realizing it’s becoming harder and harder to put down the smart phone and get out there. And that is having effects on us that we don’t see. There is a lot of

science that supports the idea that when we spend too much time inside or in cities we really miss something essential to our psyches. We're healthier and happier when we spend time in nature."

Indeed, a number of recent studies have demonstrated that one of the best ways to lessen stress, boost your cognition and lift your spirits is getting outdoors. A 2015 study published by the National Academy of Science found that a simple 90-minute walk outside actually altered brain activity, calming the prefrontal cortex, where whirling thoughts can churn. Another recent study found that Outward Bound students did 50% better on creative problem-solving tasks after spending just three days in nature. And Dutch scientists discovered that people who live near green spaces have lower rates of 15 chronic diseases, ranging from diabetes to migraine.

A big influence for the MFF team came from a writer who has been exploring these bigger questions of why nature seems to be both a physiological and psychological requirement to be at our best: Richard Louv, author of the bestseller *Last Child In The Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder*. Greg's wife, Barbara MacGillivray, who is the film's head researcher, had Richard, who served as a consultant on the film, posit that direct exposure to nature's wonders is absolutely central to positive human development.

A big influence for the MFF team came from a writer who has been exploring these bigger questions of why nature seems to be both a physiological and psychological requirement to be at our best: Richard Louv, author of the bestseller *Last Child In The Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder*. His work had made a big impression on the head researcher for the film, Barbara MacGillivray who is also Greg's wife, when she read it as a practicing clinical psychologist in 2005. In the book, Louv coined the term "Nature Deficit Disorder" to describe what he saw as an emerging disconnection with nature. He theorized that when we spend too much time indoors, we start to think of nature as something foreign and separate from our own lives, and that has consequences for our health and well-being.

"Richard immediately connected with the themes we were trying to develop cinematically and was able to elaborate on them in his sensitive, articulate manner," said Barbara, who brought him in as a lead consultant on the film. "He helped us develop the idea that immersion in nature's wonders is absolutely central to positive human development and functioning. He stressed that nature is our home, and we are an integral part of it. In his words, 'Disconnection from nature is, in fact, a separation from ourselves.'"

The film's screenwriter and editor Steve Judson also resonated with Richard's concepts, which he used while developing the storytelling in the film. "With John, Ariel and Jennifer, we introduce you to people who think of wild places as their main home and we show how they gain incredible insight, inspiration and just simple happiness from that. That became the heart and purpose of the story."

Greg notes that while the scientific research on this topic is still new and expanding, *Into America's Wild* is intended as a high-spirited celebration of *adding* nature to life, not a lament for the distractions of our spectacularly technological world. "Our film is not about something missing. Instead the film is all about *creating* more fun and togetherness just from going outside,

no matter who or where you are. Hopefully, you get a chance to experience for yourself all the joys that nature gives us: that solace, that spiritual fullness, that creative inspiration and that unmistakable thrill of feeling fully alive,” he says.

Greg continues, “One of the most rewarding aspects about this production for me personally was the chance to work closely with my family on a film whose topic has been so key to our family life for the past 30 years—the lure and importance of nature. With Shaun as producer, Meghan as production manager and my wife Barbara as head of research and principal still photographer, we were all back together on one film. For me, it was heavenly.”

Producer Shaun MacGillivray, Greg’s son, hopes to be able to share that thrill with wide-ranging audiences. “We all have those special places that fill us up. For me, when I’m at my favorite surf break, watching the setting sun, I feel totally immersed in life and that feeling can’t be replaced by anything else,” he reflects. “We’re meant to be part of nature, it’s in our DNA. It’s a big subject for a film, but it gave us a chance to take audiences on a different kind of trip.”

Steve notes that human beings only recently moved into concrete-lined cities; deep down, our hearts still belong to soil and sky. “We might think waking up inside a high-rise building with a smart phone is normal, but it’s extremely new,” he points out. “Our ancient wilder side still speaks to us, though. There’s something very pure about our instincts for the wild, and I think that’s one reason why Greg loved this theme. There are parts of the film where we just invite the audience to be enveloped in nature and remember what that’s like. That taps into something that goes beyond even the stunning imagery we love to bring audiences. Hopefully, it reminds you that nature isn’t just pretty. It’s a real need we have, and wild places are where we can restore ourselves.”

Meet John Herrington: Astronaut, Hero, Fun-Loving Regular Guy

There is perhaps no wilder adventure for any human being than to head into the vast unknowns of space. But for astronaut John Herrington, the rarified experience of leaving earth in the space shuttle Endeavour and walking in space—one granted to very few people to date—only made him more devoted to this planet we all share. As one of the guides for *Into America’s Wild*, Herrington brings a POV that is wholly unique. His demanding experiences are unlike those of most other human beings, yet he comes across with the easy-going charm and open-hearted laughter of a friendly neighbor.

John broke the mold of the astronaut from the beginning. Born in Wetumka, Oklahoma, into the Chickasaw Nation, John moved around a lot as a kid, and didn’t immediately see his stellar career path—or any clear path at all, other than that he always wanted to learn to fly. He had an unsuccessful first brush with college, and even dropped out for a time, joining a survey team in Colorado. It was there though, working outdoors, that John discovered a transforming passion for math, science and especially problem-solving, a quality that would come to underpin all his accomplishments. Ultimately, with the encouragement of key people in his life, John returned to school fired up by a purpose. Soon after, he joined the Navy, where he entered the

highly competitive aviation program. In 1996, John was selected as an astronaut candidate, but even he could not have known he would be chosen for the 2002 Space Shuttle Endeavour's STS-113 Mission. He was to become the first enrolled member of a Native American tribe to walk in space, performing three high-stakes spacewalks and spending nearly 20 hours outside the shuttle.

Since retiring from NASA in 2005, Herrington has started one new chapter after another. He rode his bicycle over 4,000 miles coast to coast to meet with kids and promote excitement for math and science. He's given inspirational talks to thousands of Native American students and earned a doctorate in education from the University of Idaho in 2014. On top of that he has continually advocated for the natural world, which is how he came to the attention of MFF.

What really struck the MFF team about Herrington was not only that he's walked in space, or just that he's a leader in the Native American community. It was how he comes across as a humble, ordinary guy who has accomplished one of America's most extraordinary dreams.

"John doesn't seem to wear the mantle of an astronaut because he's so unusually down-to-earth," observes Steve Judson. "His persona is casual and affable, and you can sense as soon as you talk to him how much he loves to engage with people. His story is also so wonderfully relatable because you might think he was always this brilliant, brave astronaut. But then you find he's someone who almost lost his way and found the means to turn his life around. He was a kid who was always good at fixing things—he was always tinkering with bikes and cars—but he didn't know what to do with that. Fortunately, it led him eventually to math and engineering, which in turn led him to NASA, where he proved to have the quality they most seek: to be able to improvise and fly by the seat of your pants."

Adds Meghan MacGillivray: "John has led a one-of-a-kind life and we found that his story is meaningful to all kinds of different people. He understands resilience, so when he talks about how he went from a college dropout to discovering math and science, about how his life changed in space, about how important his heritage is and about how much being close to the land means to him, it all feels completely authentic. That authenticity resonates with everyone."

Much as John has done amazing things in his life, he never even imagined taking part in an IMAX film. The call for him came out of the blue, but he was intrigued right away. "It was something that never crossed my mind," John admits with his trademark spirited laugh. "When I was at NASA, I did see some of my friends in an IMAX movie about the International Space Station, which was a lot of fun, but it certainly never occurred to me that I would be in one."

The first call from MFF came in 2018, shortly after John's wife Margo passed away due to colon cancer. "They didn't know that my wife had recently passed away, but at the time I saw the invitation as a chance to focus on something positive. I really liked the idea of going around the country seeing places I've never seen before, working with this company that is like a big family, and talking to people about the wonders of the wilderness," John says. "And it turned out to be a really great time. I had a ball making this movie."

An even bigger draw for John was the chance to reach a wider audience with the film's message about why exploring the outdoors hones qualities essential to lighting up other big

dreams. “I want kids to be excited by the idea that there is always something new that you can get out and experience,” he says. “I grew up in the outdoors but no matter where you grow up, everyone has a yearning to find that thing that will spark your soul and make your life feel more complete. That’s why space excites people: it’s the lure of the unknown.”

From drinking in the wonder of all the “dark, unlit spaces” he saw across our planet from the perspective of space to traversing the country on his bike, John has thought a lot about his own relationship with nature. “For me, being in nature gives you a really deep appreciation of the world that our ancestors lived in all the time and it makes you that much more interested in preserving that for the future, as well,” he says. “I’m always reminded that we only have this one opportunity to protect the most beautiful and culturally significant places—there are no second chances. Also, getting outdoors is not just about the beauty. It’s about all the people you meet along the way who add richness to the tapestry of life. I think this film really touches on that balance in a very thoughtful way.”

John notes that it doesn’t matter if you live in a city or in a remote rural area—it’s the spirit of wanting to see, do and feel more that counts. “Getting out and exploring can happen anywhere you live so long as you are motivated. Hopefully, people will look at me, Ariel and Jennifer in this movie and see us as people you can identify with. Then, maybe you will think: if they did these fun and amazing things, why not me?”

Meet Ariel Tweto: Bush Pilot, TV Star, Community Advocate, Unstoppable Force

Alaskan pilot, Reality TV star and youth advocate Ariel Tweto is the embodiment of how a life in the wild can raise your spirits. Ariel seems to barely be able to contain her gusto for every part of life, tricky parts and all. She devotes her seemingly boundless energy to getting as much out of each day as she can—and equally to helping others, especially indigenous youth, see their limitless potential.

Most people know Ariel from her starring role on the hit show *Flying Wild Alaska*, which followed the unconventional Tweto family of intrepid pilots and their journeys into the harshest Alaskan wilderness. Unwaveringly optimistic with a buoyant sense of humor, even in perilous situations, Ariel quickly developed a major following. She has gone on to star in several short films and TV shows.

But even more so, Ariel has taken advantage of her fame and spitfire persona to give back. She runs her own non-profit, Popping Bubbles, which aims at reaching kids in remote communities to “help pop the bubbles that prevent them from living happy and healthy lives.”

For Ariel, a big part of getting isolated kids to feel more connected is inviting them to explore the natural world. She explains, “I’ve come to see that the more curious you are about anything, the more you want to go out and live. A big part of what Popping Bubbles is trying to

do is just to get kids excited about waking up in the morning. So, exposing them to absolutely *everything*—whether it’s music, food and art or rock climbing and mountain biking—helps them to find out what gets them personally excited. You have to be exposed to all kinds of things to find out what you love most, so that’s why it’s important to get out there and try new things.”

Ariel’s innate ability to communicate with people at such a heart-felt level was a huge draw for the MFF team. “Ariel has twice as much energy as any other human being and she’s a completely positive force,” Greg describes. “She’s quite smart but then she’s also just wildly spontaneous, which is really fun to be around.”

Greg continues: “We tried to capture how infectious her spirit can be in person in the film. But it was also important for us to show that Ariel is devoted to a serious purpose to her life right now. In keeping with who she is, her way of coming at this big issue of isolation and loneliness is by being super upbeat and optimistic. She shows others that curiosity about the world can be a huge motivator and source of happiness.”

For Ariel, the chance to star in an IMAX film was the fulfilment of a dream. “When I got the call about this film, I flipped out!” Ariel remembers. “I come from a small village in Alaska and no one ever dreams of something like this happening. It was so exciting. I flew out to Laguna to meet the MacGillivray Freeman team and we all got along so well—and then the next thing I knew I was traveling across the country, learning about the most stunning places and meeting so many amazing people.”

Ariel continues: “I am so grateful for this opportunity. I’m a big dreamer and a big dream of mine has always been to share what I love most, which is being outdoors, so this film checked off all my boxes.”

The chance to share on-screen what nature has meant to her personally meant a lot to Ariel. “Nature is inseparable from who I am; nature is my church. And I think being out there really does make you a better, calmer, more effective person. You never go on a hike or go outside to play and come back from that feeling worse,” she points out.

She hopes people will be inspired by *Into America’s Wild* to bring a little more passion and spirit to their outings. “I think to fully appreciate the planet and all its wonders you kind of have to actually get dirty, you have get out into the soil or deep into the water or high up on a cliff— you have to be touching it for it all to start to make sense,” she explains. “That’s part of what I love about this film. It lets you not just see amazing coastlines and mountains and forests; you also get a sense of what it’s like to feel the power of the most gorgeous or historic of places with all your senses.”

While Ariel is a big advocate for using social media to reach out to people who need contact, she also believes in knowing the limits of the digital life. “I do know a lot of people who are constantly on their phones! I think technology is great for connecting with people and that’s something I truly appreciate about it. But I like to say that if you’re constantly playing games on your phone where you are pretending to be characters who are climbing and flying and jumping off trees, you can actually *be* that character yourself outdoors,” Ariel says. “You don’t

have to pretend. Technology can help you learn about nature, and can help you connect with others, but you still have to get out there and smell the flowers yourself to get the full effect of it. And once you get out there, I think you start to really care about the planet in a different way.”

The filming really came to life as the camera captured Ariel and John becoming more than fellow guides on this trip, as their bond became that of lifelong friends. “It was so fun to play Ariel’s energy off against John,” Greg notes. “They’re so different in their personas—Ariel is such a powerhouse and John is so grounded—yet you can feel how much they like one another and mean to each other.”

Ariel recalls that she felt instantly able to be herself around John. “I first met John in Buffalo, New York and even before he was introduced to me, he came up and started asking me questions about what I was writing in my journal. From that moment, I just loved him,” she remembers. “He is so open and easy to talk to but then he’s also so incredibly smart. You’d think an astronaut would be really buttoned up and intimidating, but not John. He has a kid-like vibe to him and during the production, he was always playing and dancing around. He knows a lot about the world, but he also knows how to have a good time. Another thing about him is that he has a big, genuine heart and he really cares about indigenous communities, which is something that inspired me personally. He’s encouraged me to use my voice for things that really matter, and he’s become a mentor to me in that way.”

By the end of production, Ariel says that John felt like a long-lost brother. “I can talk to him about almost anything, even relationships!” she laughs.

Meet Jennifer Pharr Davis: Record Breaking Hiker, Inspirational Speaker, Honest Mom

As John and Ariel make their way towards the East Coast, they cross paths with a woman for whom a trail led to an entirely new life. This is Jennifer Pharr Davis, the renowned thru-hiker who in 2011 set a sizzling world speed record for hiking the 2,608-mile Appalachian Trail in just 46 days, averaging a hard-to-fathom 47 miles per day. Jennifer might sound super-human, but the wonder of her story is that she’s the opposite—she’s an openly warm and genuine person who is unusually candid about her own vulnerabilities and self-doubts.

She tells the story in the film of how she first hiked the AT, the longest hiking-only trail in the world, traversing from Georgia to Maine, following the Great Smoky Mountains. On that first hike, she was only 21, and unsure what she wanted from life. By the time she reached the end, she knew in her heart that the wilderness would become the linchpin of her future. Since then, Jennifer has hiked well more than 16,000 miles. She has shared the lessons she took from the trail in numerous books, talks, and via her own hiking company, Blue Ridge Hiking Company.

For the MFF team, what set Jennifer apart was her ability to speak so honestly and compellingly about how a walk in the woods can change your perspective as a person and also as a parent. “Jennifer is an example of someone who found a completely renewed sense of

confidence and a fresh direction in life through nature. We all felt the story of how she went from someone who was at a crossroads and didn't know what she was looking for to becoming a world record-setting thru-hiker was one of the coolest we'd heard," says Greg.

"Once we got to know her better, one of the fun little things we discovered is that Jennifer is 6 feet tall and with her long legs, she hikes about 50% faster than any other human. We learned from personal experience, that it's almost impossible for anyone, even other athletes, to keep up with her!" Greg notes. "But before she started hiking, she found her height kind of awkward and she even felt physically inadequate, because she felt she didn't look like the women she saw in magazines or on television. It was only when she started hiking, she began to see her long legs as a source of strength and skill. Hiking allowed her to discover who she really was. It clarified her values and now she's taking her kids out there to learn those same values."

Impressive as Jennifer's hiking skills are, it was what happened when she started telling stories—everyone on the crew was riveted to her, sometimes moved to tears—that made it clear she had to be a major character in the film. Says cinematographer Brad Ohlund: "All you have to do is put a mic on Jennifer and she will carry the scene because she has such an intimate and passionate way of talking about nature that brings it home to you."

For producer Shaun MacGillivray, Jennifer's candid account of feeling mounting anxiety when she took her daughter hiking in what turned out to be a rainstorm is an emotional high point of the film. "When Jennifer talks about bringing her baby on the trail in the rain and how worried she was that she was being a bad parent, only to realize her daughter was just laughing and smiling, it's something *every* parent can relate to," he says. "It's a good reminder that kids are far more open to the fun of natural experiences than we sometimes think."

Jennifer saw taking part in *Into America's Wild* as a fresh opportunity to reach out to people, an impulse she has had ever since her very first thru-hike. "At first, after I hiked the AT, I didn't think I was going to have to change my life that much," she recalls. "But increasingly, I felt called not just to explore the bounds of what was possible for me, which required a lot of commitment, but even more so to help take other people into the wild. My inspiration has come from nature for so long, it was really important to me to share that. Finding the trail allowed me to more deeply appreciate both solitude and relationships."

She had her trepidations about appearing in an IMAX film, but the MFF team won her over right away. "What really got me was their warmth and also their high level of integrity, communication and professionalism. Working with them is truly like working with a big family, except they are more functional than most large families! We had such a great time together, because we all share not only love for the outdoors and a commitment to preservation but a desire to do what we love most and have a lot of fun while we do it."

Just as the crew was compelled by Jennifer's hiking speeds and humanity, she was awed by their endurance and creativity. "I realized along the way that the people who have to carry those clunky IMAX cameras are really the true athletes!" she laughs. "I truly found it amazing to watch the MacGillivray Freeman team at work. You had people in trees and holding ropes and on belays to get all the best angles. Their technical skills are amazing and yet somehow,

they know exactly how to never be intrusive, so you still feel like you're in the wilderness even when you're surrounded by all this big equipment.

She was gratified that the crew welcomed her to be 100% herself. "Nothing was fabricated or glamourized. I didn't even have to wear makeup. That made me feel so comfortable," Jennifer comments. "Their whole approach is authentic so it's right up my alley."

Jennifer was especially happy she was asked to talk in the film about parenting and wilderness. Back in her record-setting days, she was focused on personal achievement, but when raising a family became her priority, her approach to hiking changed. She learned to take things more slowly and with more care, which only deepened her love of the outdoors. She hopes other moms and dads will see that taking their kids outdoors doesn't have to be anything extreme.

"Our culture has built up a lot of big fears about wilderness, but then when you look at the biggest issues that are actually threatening kids today, they are obesity, depression, isolation and attention disorders. Going outside helps kids with all of those things. It's a fantastic way to build confidence and feel sound in your body," Jennifer says. "But there's no one way for families to take part in the natural world."

She continues: "You don't have to do anything that feels intimidating. There's a lot to be said for education and I encourage people to take classes to learn how to be safe in the wilderness. But the rewards of going into the wild are much, much greater than the risks—and I know first-hand what the risks are. For me as a parent, it's about putting risk into perspective and also remembering that kids appreciate many things we don't always see."

Jennifer also speaks openly in the film about how being outside can bolster self-esteem and provide a place where social judgements and needing to conform to fit in simply evaporate.

"I think a lot of our insecurities in life—not just for women but for everyone—come from the constant message that there are ideals of beauty and perfection that we're not living up to, even though we are just being ourselves," she observes. "There's all this noise and judgement and comparisons that can make us feel so anxious and unsure of ourselves. That's why I never truly felt beautiful until I started hiking. It was the first time I felt connected to everything and that connection gave me confidence I didn't know I had. It didn't matter if my hair was dirty; what mattered is that I felt so at peace. There's a real sense of empowerment that comes from exploring your abilities and capabilities as well as your values, outdoors. It helps you to hear your own voice and stay true to it."

Sailing Down The Kelp Highway

While many North American travelogues move from east to west, following in the footsteps of the first pioneers hailing from Europe, *Into America's Wild* reverses direction. The MFF team loved the idea of starting in the coastal Pacific Northwest, where it is now believed the very first peoples to populate this nation arrived as intrepid sailors in reed boats.

Historians once theorized that the first peoples of North America walked across a land bridge between Russia and Alaska. But new evidence has convinced many that the first settlers came not by land, but by sea, hugging the coastline of the Pacific Rim in fragile, hand-woven boats, approximately 16,000 years ago. As these seafaring newcomers made their way down the Pacific Coast of North America, they found themselves in a cornucopia rife with waters full of fish, marine mammals, and sea plants—now dubbed the Kelp Highway.

In order to help audiences to imagine the arrival of native peoples via this fertile Kelp Highway, the MFF team undertook a major recreation sequence that opens *Into America's Wild*. The shoot took place at the shockingly little-known Samuel Boardman Scenic Corridor, a 12-mile-long state park in Southwestern Oregon that is an exquisite oasis unto itself.

Long-time MFF cinematographer Brad Ohlund, who would need several additional hands to count all the superlative places he's visited, ranks Samuel Boardman way up there on his list of favorite places anywhere.

"I don't think any of us expected it to be quite so stunning and dramatic," Brad confesses. "The funny thing is that a lot of people are completely unaware of this area. It does involve an 800-foot hike down to the beach, which was a little challenging while schlepping all our heavy gear, but we're used to it and it was so worth it to be in that environment. I'd have to say it is one of the most impressive locations I've ever been and it's always exciting when you discover somewhere new that can take your breath away. That's one of the big purposes of our films: to find these places most people don't even know about and let you experience it like you're there."

On the beach at Samuel Boardman, a crack team created a time machine effect, transporting everyone back many thousands of years to a time when the continental United States was yet to be inhabited. "Our production designers, Libby Woolems and Phil Clark, did amazing work on the props and costumes," says Brad. "They designed and oversaw the construction of our own sea-worthy reed canoes after researching the designs that anthropologists suggested. It looked absolutely amazing, especially given that we don't have the luxury of a big feature film budget."

Ariel Tweto found there was a lot to contemplate while kayaking the same waters as her very distant ancestors. But it was a bit further up the Oregon coast that she found one of her new favorite spots of all time: the resort town of Hood River, with its alternately pastoral and volcanic geography amid berry farms and vineyards on the Columbia River Gorge. Here, she discovered one of Hood River's biggest claims to fame: the westerly winds and swirling currents for some serious, world-class kiteboarding.

This unexpectedly acrobatic water sport is not for the faint of heart, but Ariel was game to give it a go, and found herself falling madly in love. A few abbreviated lessons by pro kiteboarders Fred Hope and Jason Slezak could not keep Ariel from repeatedly crashing into the river, but that only increased her determination...and her joy at finally finding hang time.

"I grew up in a windy place—my village name, Unalakleet, literally means 'where the east wind blows'—but learning to kiteboard totally shifted my viewpoint on wind," Ariel says. "I

really sucked at kiteboarding at first, but I also loved that, because it meant I had to work so hard to get better at it!”

The MFF team got a glimpse into Ariel’s iron will as she tried over and over to find that elusive flow that kite surfers experience. But it also made for some fun and relatable footage. “Ariel got kind of beat up out there, but you can’t keep her down for very long,” muses Brad. “And when she finally found success it made for a great emotional grab. It shows you how the willingness to try anything and keep laughing while you’re learning can pay off richly.”

Sacagawea On The Trail

One of the many impactful characters encountered in *Into America’s Wild* lived over two centuries ago: Sacagawea, the young Shoshone woman whose profound understanding of the wilderness became the stuff of American legend, when she helped guide Lewis and Clark’s expedition through the Northwest. Kidnapped at age 12 and forced to marry the fur trapper Toussaint Charbonneau, Sacagawea accompanied her husband on the mission that kicked off in St. Louis, MO. But even though *he* was supposed to be the expert, it was *her* extraordinary intelligence and savvy about the natural world that became the key to the group’s survival.

Though far too little is still known about Sacagawea’s full life, and the overall legacy of Lewis & Clark is complicated, Sacagawea has been revered by many as a symbol of women’s leadership and Native American knowledge. For Ariel Tweto, it was intriguing to think about following in her footsteps. Her imagination got a boost as the MFF team undertook an elaborate recreation of the moment in 1802 when the Lewis and Clark Expedition crossed the Continental Divide.

“It’s a scene that takes you back to a time when life was full of unknowns,” says the film’s screenwriter and editor Steve Judson. “It was also a way for us to pay homage to the Native American connection to nature and how key that was for the history of the entire nation. It was really important to us to honor that.”

Adds Shaun MacGillivray: “Sacagawea fits in with a lot of the themes of our film: she was a trailblazer, she had a vital connection with the earth in keeping with her Native heritage, and she’s an icon of women’s achievements in the outdoors.”

Carrying off large-scale historical recreations is nearly the opposite filmmaking challenge from the usual in-the-moment MFF shoot. Explains Meghan MacGillivray: “It takes a lot of logistics—and a lot of people—to do a historical recreation. It’s a very different kind of shooting for us since we’re more used to capturing things on the fly. For this shoot we had designers, costumers, horses and 30 people on an intricate set in Molas Lake in the San Juan mountains of Colorado, and also in the middle of the snow.”

“But we went all out,” Meghan continues, “and I think it shows in the footage. We had two amazing art directors who created a detailed, authentic set that really transports you back to

those times. And the actress we cast as Sacagawea so embodied her capability that it really comes across.”

Ariel sums up her biggest takeaway from watching Sacagawea brought to life in the re-creation: “Native women are so strong!”

Into The Steep: Nature’s Southwestern Masterpieces

After the lush Pacific Northwest, John and Ariel found themselves road tripping through a vastly different kind of landscape: the red rock canyons and surrealistic pinnacles of the Southwest. Here, where nature has carved out landscapes as imposing and emotionally stark as masterworks of sculpture, they have encounters that are both spiritually and literally uplifting.

In Moab, Utah, renowned worldwide as the ultimate hub for Southwestern adventure travel and multisport activities, Ariel flies through crimson canyons and slickrock trails on a mountain bike. Then, she and John link up with Miranda Oakley, an accomplished wall climber and rock-climbing teacher, who moves as fluidly over stone as a dancer moves across a stage.

The MFF team could not resist capturing Miranda in action, ascending some of the iconic sandstone spires that make the Moab area so breathtaking. After taking John and Ariel up the cracks and grooves of accessible Wilson’s Arch, Miranda took the crew to a more challenging area known as the Fisher Towers. Here, she ventured onto the fittingly named Ancient Art—a route that makes its way via chimney, crack and slab climbing up a stunning burnt-red, corkscrewing spike that seems to defy the laws of gravity. The reward is a truly unique summit barely big enough for one person to balance upon.

“It became one of my favorite visuals in the film,” says Greg MacGillivray of the Ancient Art sequence. “You can’t believe that this improbable rock formation even could exist, let alone that it is solid enough to remain standing for so long, and even strong enough to have people climbing on it. It gives you that sense of awe and mystery that very special places do.”

Adds Shaun MacGillivray, “We were able to shoot some incredible aerial shots of Miranda, which gave us some of those IMAX ‘wow’ moments we are always in search of.”

More IMAX moments came as the team took a detour to attend the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, an annual event that fills the crystalline skies over New Mexico with more than 500 hot air balloons of every imaginable shape and size. Here, John and Ariel, no strangers to the pleasures and perspectives of flight, especially enjoyed the sheer exhilaration of riding the wind.

Meanwhile, Brad Ohlund was in cinematographer’s heaven. “I’d seen plenty of photographs of the world’s largest balloon festival before,” he notes. “But no matter how many photos you’ve seen, nothing matches the experience of being there. There are so many clever, hilarious and beautiful balloon designs and the crowds are just having a blast. It’s definitely built for IMAX photography.”

Nevertheless, there is always an element of unpredictability in ballooning, which the team experienced when the balloon holding John, Ariel and Brad had a bit of a crash landing, tipping over as it overshot the mark. Brad says it was more amusing than frightening. “We bounced a few times and wound up with everyone on top of each other, laughing,” he recalls.

Perhaps the most stirring location in the Southwest for the entire cast and crew was Arizona’s Canyon de Chelly National Monument inside the Navajo Nation. Here, a serpentine sandstone canyon lined with fiery-colored rock formations, ponderosa pines and archeological ruins holds varied treasures. One of those treasures is a man named Shaun Martin, a Navajo trail runner and educator whose story of resilience and tapping into his deep connection to the canyon would come to inspire both John and Ariel.

Shaun is the founder of the Canyon de Chelly Ultramarathon, a yearly 34-mile run that has become more a cosmological rite of passage and ceremony of healing than a mere endurance race. If it tests runners’ souls as much as their lungs and legs, it’s because it was designed that way.

Like many Navajo, Shaun was raised to believe running is one of the best ways to celebrate life even amid hardship. He was taught as a child that he should wake up and run towards the east, where the creator is busy spinning the new day into existence. Shaun loved running so much that he started coaching young runners at Chinle High School, the largest high school in the Navajo Nation. But after that program was shut down, Shaun fell into despair, and nearly lost everything. It was the canyon itself, he says, that redeemed him, and a run with an entire herd of wild horses that altered his path. Now, he not only oversees the popular ultramarathon—where runners talk of feeling spirits dancing with them in the canyons—he’s back at Chinle High nurturing a new generation of Navajo youth.

“Shaun Martin is another very inspirational character,” says Meghan MacGillivray. “As soon as we read his story, we thought wow, this could be a feature film. And then we went out there to meet him and we were even more excited because talking to Shaun is mesmerizing. He’s a great storyteller, not just entertaining but he has so much depth that you could listen to him forever. You can see that the Canyon De Chelly Ultramarathon is so much more than a race to him. It’s all about connecting people to this ancient, sacred land. To Shaun, the people who enter the race are not runners, they’re his brothers and sisters.”

One of the production’s biggest challenges lay in simulating Shaun Martin’s transformative encounter when a pack of wild horses seemed to invite him to run at their center, to be part of their world. “We really wanted to capture the essence of Shaun and he’s very passionate when he talks about how profound this moment was for him,” explains Brad.

Still, no one was quite sure how to pull it off with an IMAX camera crew. Shaun Martin knew the general area where a band of wild horses might be found. But there still was no guarantee they would cooperate. “We knew this was probably our one chance to get a shot of Shaun running with authentic wild horses,” Brad recalls. “So basically, we set up our equipment as quietly as we could, kind of hidden in the bushes, and when the horse came around the corner,

we had Shaun just jump into the scene to see if they would start running with him. We had no idea what they would do, but we ended up getting a good shot. Sometimes these things have a mysterious way of working out.”

Colorado Country: Durango, Mesa Verde and Royal Gorge

In Colorado lies another North American adventure mecca: the storied region known as the Four Corners, so named because it encompasses the overlapping borders where Colorado meets Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. The area is overrunning with outdoor opportunities and stacked with eye-catching landscapes, hiking trails, ruins and the largest concentration of National Parks and National Monuments in the entire USA.

The MFF cast and crew took advantage of the region’s splendor to sample a bit of everything. In Durango, they climbed aboard the famed Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. This vintage coal-fired, steam-powered train passes through a route first opened up in 1882 to transport silver and gold ore from local mines—taking wild hairpin curves through the peaks and rivers of the San Juan Mountains. Today, people ride the route for the sheer thrill of it, something that the MFF team was determined to capture as only IMAX cameras can.

“The shots on the narrow-gauge train were some of our most exciting,” says Meghan MacGillivray. “We had a camera rigged to slide out ten feet from the side of the train, so it could get really close to the rocks and trees zooming by, and then they had to pull it back just in time. It’s the kind of thing we love to do to give audiences that feeling of adventure.”

Ariel Tweto recalls that sometimes “the train would swing so near to the rocks and trees, it looked like the camera was about to hit them! It should be a lot of fun for the audience.”

Colorado also brought the chance for John and Ariel to visit a site of great historical importance and personal meaning to them: Mesa Verde National Park, where the Ancestral Pueblo people made their home in intricate cliff dwellings from the 6th to the 12th Century, before their culture mysteriously disappeared. More than 500 archeological sites invite visitors to engage with the first people to live in this part of the country, to climb ladders into their carved-out homes, to gaze upon the rock art they left as part of their legacy and maybe even start to imagine how teeming with life these cliffs were at one time.

“Mesa Verde for me is one of the film’s most powerful locations,” says Steve Judson. “When you see the Ancestral Pueblo structures up close, it’s remarkably easy to imagine families living there 1,000 years ago. It’s one of those places that has a wonderful way of bringing a whole phase of the nation’s history closer to us today.”

Ariel found her heart stirred by the visit, writing on her website at the time that as she visited this former home to people she considers her ancient ancestors, it spurred her to “want to show Native kids where they come from and make them proud of their roots.”

Moving deeper into Colorado, John and Ariel had one of their most adrenaline-pumping experiences of the trip at Royal Gorge Bridge & Park, a stunning 960-foot deep Arkansas River canyon spanned by a 1,260-foot bridge near Colorado Springs. There are plenty of ways to take

in the gorgeous scenery and fascinating history of the area via foot, car and gondola. But for those who crave a dose of adrenaline with their beauty, Royal Gorge features America's highest zipline, hanging 1,200 feet over the yawning canyon, as well as a "skycoaster", which offers a 50-foot, bungee-like, swinging freefall. Naturally, the MFF team were gung-ho to try both.

The ziplining was a natural must-do for the IMAX cameras. Says Brad Ohlund: "The fun part was putting cameraman Rob Walker up there using the Movi-Pro device [a gimbal-mounted camera stabilization system], because we were able to get some shots that really give you the feeling of zipping down the line with John and Ariel."

This however also led to a unique complication. Once they were all harnessed into the zipline, there arose a concern that Rob Walker's legs might be seen in a shot, which meant he had to wear John's pants and shoes.

"That was one of the more unusual and unexpected experiences of the trip," laughs John, "I never expected to be taking my pants off on a zip-line."

Riding the skycoaster was a bit dicier for Ariel, who warned John that much as she loves high-flying, she tends to get vertigo and even motion sickness on steep falls. She did almost lose her lunch, but in typically upbeat fashion, Ariel says it was all worth it. "You can't beat the views of the gorge you get hanging above it," she muses. "There's nothing quite like being high above the earth and seeing things from that fresh perspective."

Encountering Pando: The Trembling Giant

Some of North America's most astonishing wild gems fly incognito under the radar. That's the case with the highly unique tree colony known as Pando in the Fishlake National Forest of Southern Utah, which became a favorite location for many of the production's members. What looks like an ordinary, if brilliantly golden, grove of quaking aspens turns out to be a living being of truly epic dimensions. Pando is actually all one organism, one of the oldest, largest and heaviest alive on our earth right now.

Not only is Pando connected by a massive, singular underground root system, each one of the aspen shoots seen above ground shares the same DNA. First discovered by researcher Burton V. Barnes in 1968, the organism was dubbed Pando, Latin for "I spread out," in 1992 by researcher Michael Grant.

The MFF team consulted both on screen and off with ecologist Paul Rogers, a Utah State University researcher who has been studying the grove closely and has dedicated himself to preserving its fragile life. Rogers explained to the team how Pando's 47,000 shoots all came from a single tiny seed, leaving them in awe. Says Ariel: "It just echoes everything indigenous people have always understand: if you look deep enough, everything is connected."

Steve Judson has pondered why Pando inspires love among so many. "I think Pando resonates with people in part because it reminds you there's a whole hidden, unseen dimension in

nature that is as amazing as the part that we see,” he says. “You or I could drive by this grove 100 times and never suspect it is so extraordinary. Your mind would never think that a whole mountainside of aspen is actually just one tree. So, it’s fun to give people that awareness that nature is full of wonderful surprises.”

Much as Pando is a mind-blowing concept, it’s still an aspen grove full of relative stillness—meaning the challenge was shooting it in a way that might feel dynamic while keeping some of its mystery intact.

Greg MacGillivray explains: “One way we were able to create something special around Pando is by capturing it through the eyes of Paul Rogers, whose passion for trying to understand and protect it is really moving. And then we really emphasized that striking bright yellow color. That is something people come from all the world to see in the US: the stunning, shifting fall colors, which we have more of here than anywhere else.”

Adds Brad Ohlund: “We discussed some pretty complex VFX to show you what’s happening below Pando, but we felt that would take us out of the wild and it was better to just portray it as any visitor would see it. I think that was a good decision. Pando is truly stunning as it is. When you’re there it’s cool just to take it in and appreciate that things that look like individuals can actually all be connected. That’s a big part of what the film is about.”

A Walk To Remember: Experiencing Nature In Unique Ways

Heading south, John and Ariel met up with another young community leader who is utilizing the pleasures of the natural world to reach others: Emma Faye Rudkin. Like John and Ariel, Emma travels the country sharing the story of her remarkable life, in her case as a deaf community leader and a former Miss San Antonio who has broken through barriers. She too has been drawn to the outdoors since she was a child. But Emma’s focus is on opening up greater access to all people.

Emma particularly enjoys taking deaf children into the wilderness. She notes that their senses are alive to things others never even notice. Still, she also is always looking for different ways for the deaf community to experience even more dimensions of life outside. In the film, she demonstrates a high-tech one of these as she takes a group on a walk through the botanical beauty of Cypress Gardens in South Carolina. But this walk is unlike any other. On this walk, the sounds of nature are being transmitted through vibrating backpacks and headphones that allow soundwaves to be absorbed by the body. These portable tactile sound systems allow anyone to “feel” the ambient sounds around them and can add fresh nuances to an already rich natural experience.

For the MFF crew, the walk was an emotional highlight of the film. It opened up an opportunity to contemplate how nature is perceived by different kinds of people. But it was also just a chance to see kids in the midst of sheer exhilaration, their curiosity sparked.

“It’s my favorite scene in terms of sheer emotion and storytelling,” says Greg MacGillivray. “Emma is such a fantastic young woman, continually coming up with great ideas for how to improve the lives of people in the deaf community and there’s just such joy in that sequence with the faces of these kids lighting up.”

For Megan MacGillivray, the sequence is a portrait in leadership. “Emma is so enthusiastic and so capable, kids really look up to her and they think if she can do it, I can do it,” she says. “It was a profound experience to watch her being such a calming, encouraging inspiration. It just comes naturally to her.”

Urban Wilds: Green Belts, Public Parks And Open Spaces

The MFF team is always gung-ho about heading into far-flung corners of the earth where few have been. But their company headquarters, albeit steps from the beach, is located just outside the massive metropolis of Los Angeles, and they’re well aware many members of their audience are city dwellers. That’s why it was important to the team for *Into America’s Wild* to talk about places ripe for the exploring closer to home. Today cities of all sizes are consciously designing, cultivating and protecting green belts, public parks and open areas that don’t have defined uses, thus inviting spontaneous play and an organic feeling of community.

From Chicago’s Millennium Park to San Antonio’s River Walk, residents of urban environments have many options to break away from the concrete and tech of modern life. More and more communities are discovering such spaces are not only welcome for the visual beauty they add. They also offer an array of cultural, environmental and economic benefits, including a healthier, more creatively and cooperatively inspired citizenry.

The notion that natural spaces can enrich our cities in the same way that National Parks and Monuments enhance American life on a larger scale was one that spoke to everyone involved in the production. Says Jennifer Pharr Davis: “I feel like this movie is for kids and adults who live anywhere, who are urban or rural. Nearly two-thirds of the world’s population lives in cities now so that’s where most people who go outdoors are living.”

She continues: “There are natural places everywhere. Parks and preserves are often nearby. A hike doesn’t have to be up a giant mountain or dangerous precipice. A great hike can also be on a beach or through a park. It doesn’t have to be at high speed, it can be strolling through a green space with your kids. I think the big message of the film is that in order to see what makes America so unique all you need to do is just get out and see America wherever you are. Whether you’re in a local park or on a long trail, once you’re outdoors you’ll be exposed to so many different people, sights and experiences that it will have a real impact on your life.”

Barbara MacGillivray points out that the work started by Richard Louv with his books and founding the Children and Nature Network has inspired groups in more than 75 countries to work on bringing green space and gardens into cities and schools. “It’s important to remember that even in the density and concrete infrastructure of the city, you can still connect with nature,” she says. “You can still find trees and gardens and the peacefulness that nature brings us. We are

now learning just how important this is to our own functioning as human beings belonging in nature. You can find green spaces in cities like New York City and Chicago, and there are people working to create even more green space in our urban infrastructure.”

Wild For It

After exploring the breadth of North America via train, plane, kayak, kiteboard, bike, zipline, hot air balloon, climbing rope, hiking boots, running shoes and city sneakers, John and Ariel were left contemplating all they saw and felt along the way. Though both say the journey had an epic quality, it was also filled with smaller personal moments that will stick with them.

As the MFF team packed up to return to Laguna Beach, where they would start the arduous process of shaping and re-shaping the film’s story in the editing—the phase of filmmaking requiring the most sheer endurance—John and Ariel returned to their respective homes. Still, they continue to think about what it means to touch the wild in your everyday life and how to share that with others in need of some positivity and uplift.

The answer can be so unique to each person, but all of the film’s participants agree they each have their own “magic place” that lights up their souls, where they can find instant joy, peace, sometimes even redemption, when it’s needed.

For Ariel Tweto, there is no wild place quite like home. “For me, my one most special spot in the wild is definitely our family cabin in Alaska. You have to take a plane to get there, and it’s just so peaceful. It’s near a river so you can go fishing or crabbing and my mom always cooks really good food. You can see bear eating salmon and moose walking through the willows and birds everywhere. It’s my little piece of paradise,” she concludes.

John Herrington’s special sanctuary could be his Idaho home—or it could be anywhere, even the middle of nowhere. “I’m lucky to live in the Idaho mountains, where I can hike all day and not see anyone. It’s easy here to find that spot where you can be by yourself or with friends and all you hear is the river running and birds singing,” John says. “But honestly, I feel it could be anywhere that gets into your soul. I found that out when I was riding my bike—just pedaling into sprinklers on a hot day, no matter where you were, could be a transforming moment.”

For Jennifer Pharr Davis, the location that calls to her spirit most right now is the very same one that changed her life years ago. “For me it will always be the AT,” she offers. “Just the fact that there’s this wild corridor on the East Coast within an hour of NYC and 60 miles from Washington DC, where you can completely escape the noise and pressure and competitiveness of those worlds is a beautiful thing that inspires me.”

Greg and Barbara MacGillivray also have a favorite oasis, not far from where Greg and the editing team put the finishing touches on *Into America’s Wild*. “Just in front of our home, where Meghan and Shaun grew up, is our nature refuge: a surfing, skin-diving, stand-up paddleboarding mecca that has been a Marine Protected Area for the past seven years,” says Greg. “Schools of fish now flourish, the ever-vigilant Garibaldi watch over their special territory and

dolphins leap from the waves they share with surfers.” The positive changes seen over the years the MPA has been in place inspires and reinforces the conservation efforts and messaging the MacGillivray family puts into each of their IMAX films. They have experienced how nature is our home, and by enjoying and protecting nature, we are protecting ourselves.

Greg adds that it’s not always where you go so much as who accompanies you on the trip and what that means to you. “No matter where I go, what always makes a fantastic place even more special is being able to share the experience with others, with friends and family. That’s the one quality of being out there in nature I cherish the most.”

[TALENT AND FILMMAKER BIOS FOLLOW]

ABOUT THE CAST

JOHN B. HERRINGTON is the first member of a federally recognized tribe (Chickasaw) to travel to space. His historic mission to the International Space Station (ISS) was the culmination of years of experience and training— and it provided Herrington with a unique perspective that he enjoys sharing with audiences worldwide.

After a successful career as an astronaut, he ventured into the commercial space arena and eventually found a new passion. Following a 4,300-mile bicycle ride across the United States, Herrington returned to university and earned a doctorate in Education. With humility and humor, John shares his stories of challenge, leadership, motivation, and mentorship with diverse audiences of all ages and occupations. His multimedia presentations inspire and entertain, and challenge people to seek out the best in themselves and in service to others.

ARIEL TWETO is an accomplished private pilot, public speaker and TV personality who gained worldwide fame following her appearance in the hit reality series *Flying Wild Alaska*, which follows her family’s life in Alaska. Born and raised in Alaska, she is the president and founding member of Popping Bubbles, a non-profit organization dedicated to suicide prevention and helping people from rural communities overcome the barriers that prevent them from living happy and successful lives.

JENNIFER PHARR DAVIS is a hiker, author, speaker, and National Geographic Adventurer of the Year who has covered over 14,000 miles of long-distance trails on six different continents. In 2011, she covered the 2,185-mile Appalachian Trail in forty-six days, eleven hours, and twenty minutes, maintaining a remarkable average of forty-seven miles per day. By doing this, she claimed the overall (male or female) fastest known time on the “A.T.” and became the first woman to set the mark.

She is the founder and owner of Blue Ridge Hiking Company, a guiding service that strives “to make the wilderness accessible and enjoyable” for hikers of all ages, genders, and ability levels. She is a strong proponent for women receiving the support they need to excel in the outdoors and workplace. Jennifer has authored seven books, including her first book, *Becoming Odyssea*, and her critically acclaimed adventure narrative, *The Pursuit of Endurance*. To learn more about Jennifer you can visit www.jenniferpharrdavis.com

ABOUT THE NARRATOR

Academy Award winning actor **MORGAN FREEMAN** is one of the most recognizable figures in American cinema. His works are among the most critically and commercially successful films of all time. Freeman ranks 2nd among worldwide top-grossing actors of all time, with his films having earned over \$4 billion in cumulative ticket sales. Whether a role requires an air of gravitas, a playful smile, twinkle of the eye, or a world-weary, yet insightful soul, Freeman's ability to delve into the core of a character and infuse it with a quiet dignity has resulted in some of the most memorable cinematic characters committed to film.

He previously narrated *America's Musical Journey* for MacGillivray Freeman Films.

In 2005 Freeman won the Best Supporting Actor Academy Award for his role in *Million Dollar Baby*. Freeman also received an Academy Award nomination in 1987 for Best Supporting Actor for *Street Smart*, in 1994 for Best Actor for *The Shawshank Redemption*, and in 2010 for Best Actor for *Invictus*. He also won the Golden Globe for Best Actor for his performance in *Driving Miss Daisy* in 1990.

Freeman was honored with the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award this year, recognizing his career achievement and humanitarian accomplishments. Freeman was honored with the Cecil B. DeMille Award at the 2011 Golden Globe Awards. That same year, Freeman received the 39th AFI Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2000, Freeman received the coveted Kennedy Center Honor for his distinguished acting and was honored with the Hollywood Actor Award from the Hollywood Film Festival.

In 2010, Freeman won the National Board of Review Award for Best Actor for his performance as Nelson Mandela in *Invictus*. In addition to his Academy Award nomination for Best Actor, he also received a Golden Globe nomination and a Broadcast Critics Association nomination. The picture was produced by Revelations Entertainment, the company he co-founded in 1996 with Lori McCreary with a mission to produce films that reveal truth. Since its inception, Revelations has continued to be the frontrunner in the field of digital technology.

Revelations' features include *5 Flights Up*, starring Freeman, *Invictus*, *The Code*, *The Magic of Belle Isle*, *Levity*, *Under Suspicion*, *Mutiny*, *Bopha!*, *Along Came a Spider*, *Feast of Love*, *10 Items or Less*, *Maiden Heist* and the Peabody Award winning ESPN 30 For 30 documentary, *The 16th Man*.

Freeman is an executive producer with McCreary on the Revelations Entertainment series *Madam Secretary* for CBS, starring Téa Leoni, and currently in its fourth season.

Freeman hosted and was an executive producer for the Revelations Entertainment, three-time Emmy nominated series *Through the Wormhole with Morgan Freeman*, which recently completed its seventh season for Science Channel. Also through Revelations, he hosted the Emmy nominated event series *The Story of God with Morgan Freeman* on the National Geographic Channel, which completed its second season. Through Revelations, he also hosts *The Story of Us with Morgan Freeman*, on the National Geographic Channel.

Most recently, Freeman starred in *Angel Has Fallen*, *The Nutcracker and the Four Realms*, *Just Getting Started*, *Going In Style*, *Ben-Hur*, *Now You See Me 2* *London Has Fallen*, *Ted 2*, *Last Knights*, *Lucy*, *Dolphin Tale 2*, *Transcendence*, *The Lego Movie*, *Last Vegas*, *Now You See Me*, *Oblivion*, *Olympus Has Fallen* and *The Dark Knight Rises*.

Freeman recently narrated the documentary *The C-Word*, IMAX documentary *Island of Lemurs: Madagascar*, Science Channel's *Stem Cell Universe with Stephen Hawking* and history documentary *We the People*. Past narrations include two Academy Award-winning documentaries, *The Long Way Home* and *The March of The Penguins*.

Other credits include *Dolphin's Tale*, *Born to be Wild 3D*, *The Dark Knight*, *The Bucket List*, *Glory*, *Clean and Sober*, *Lean on Me*, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *Unforgiven*, *Se7en*, *Kiss the Girls*, *Amistad*, *Deep Impact*, *Nurse Betty*, *The Sum of All Fears*, *Bruce Almighty*, *Nurse Betty*, *Coriolanus*, *Attica*, *Brubaker*, *Eyewitness*, *Death of a Prophet*, and *Along Came a Spider*.

After beginning his acting career on the off-Broadway stage, Freeman segued into television. Many people grew up watching him on the long-running Children's Television Workshop classic *The Electric Company*, where he played the ironic Easy Reader among several recurring characters. Looking for his next challenge, he set his sights on both Broadway and the silver screen simultaneously and quickly began to fill his resume with memorable performances.

In 1978 Freeman won a Drama Desk Award for his role as Zeke in *The Mighty Gents*. He also received a Tony Nomination for Best Performance by a Featured Actor.

His stage work continued to earn him accolades and awards, including Obie Awards in 1980, 1984 and 1987 and a second Drama Desk Nomination in 1987 for the role of Hoke Colburn, which he created for the Alfred Uhry play *Driving Miss Daisy* and reprised in the 1989 movie of the same name.

In his spare time, Freeman loves the freedom of both sea and sky; he is a long-time sailor and has earned a private pilot's license. He also has a love for the blues and seeks to keep it in the forefront through his Ground Zero club in Clarksville, Mississippi, the birthplace of the blues. In 1973 he co-founded the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop, now in its 37th season. The workshop seeks to serve successful playwrights of the new millennium. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Earth Biofuels, a company whose mission is to promote the use of clean-burning fuels. He also supports Artists for a New South Africa and the Campaign for Female Education.

Freeman has been named on the Forbes *Most Trustworthy Celebrities* list each of the five times it has been published since 2006.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

GREG MACGILLIVRAY (Director) is a giant-screen documentary filmmaker who has produced and directed many of the most successful films shown in IMAX® theatres, including the box-office hit *Everest* and the Academy Award®-nominated films *The Living Sea* and *Dolphins*. His 2012 film, *To The Arctic*, received the Best Film of the Year award from the Giant Screen Cinema Association, and he most recently directed *National Parks Adventure*, *Dream Big* and *America's Musical Journey*. With 38 giant-screen films to his credit, MacGillivray has shot more 70mm film than anyone in cinema history—more than two million feet. He is the first documentary filmmaker to reach the \$1 billion benchmark in worldwide ticket sales.

An ardent ocean conservationist, MacGillivray and his wife Barbara founded the One World One Ocean Foundation, a non-profit public charity devoted to ocean science education through giant-screen films and companion programming.

SHAUN MACGILLIVRAY (Producer) is President of MacGillivray Freeman Films and Managing Director of the company's One World One Ocean Campaign, a multi-year, multi-platform ocean media initiative aimed at inspiring greater public awareness about the world's oceans.

Producer of the award-winning 3D giant-screen films *America's Musical Journey*, *Dream Big*, *National Parks Adventure*, *Humpback Whales*, *Journey To The South Pacific*, *To The Arctic* and *Grand Canyon Adventure*, MacGillivray is also producing the company's forthcoming film *Return To Everest*. The son of Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker Greg MacGillivray, Shaun grew up on film locations all around the world.

MEGHAN MACGILLIVRAY (Unit Production Manager) grew up in Laguna Beach surrounded by the ocean and a film legacy. Daughter to Greg and Barbara MacGillivray, she was able to hone her filmmaking skills from an early age, interning at MacGillivray Freeman Films during the summers and traveling with the film crew to worldwide locations. Realizing that her passions lied deep-rooted in the family business, Meghan pursued an educational path to further her creative abilities and value as an MFF team member, receiving a BA in English and Literature from UC Santa Barbara and a Masters in English from Chapman University.

Although she has worked extensively on numerous MFF projects in a variety of roles, she has served as Unit Production Manager on MFF's acclaimed films *Humpback Whales*, *Journey to the South Pacific*, *National Parks Adventure*, *Dream Big*, *America's Musical Journey*, and *Into America's Wild*. When she's not working, Meghan enjoys spending time with her husband and two small sons, whom she hopes to give the same incredible experience she had growing up in the world of giant-screen filmmaking.

STEPHEN JUDSON (Screenwriter/Editor) has directed five films for IMAX® theatres, including most recently *The Alps* and *Journey into Amazing Caves*. He served as a producer,

director, writer and editor on the giant-screen blockbuster *Everest*. Since 1982, Judson has edited all but two of MacGillivray Freeman's giant-screen films, making him the most experienced editor in the giant-screen field. He has written or co-written many MFF films, including the Oscar®-nominated *Dolphins*. He also serves as the company's Vice President for Production and Post-Production. Before joining the MacGillivray Freeman team, Judson worked as a writer/director/editor in Hollywood, including long stints at ABC and Universal Studios. A graduate of Yale University with an M.A. from the USC cinema school, Judson is a member of the Writer's Guild of America, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

BRAD OHLUND (Director of Photography) has worked in the giant-screen industry for 25 years. His projects with MacGillivray Freeman Films include the giant-screen films *Dolphins*, *Adventures in Wild California*, *Journey Into Amazing Caves*, *Coral Reef Adventure*, *Mystery of the Nile*, *Greece: Secrets of the Past*, *Hurricane on the Bayou*, *Grand Canyon Adventure*, *Arabia*, *To The Arctic*, *Journey To The South Pacific*, *Humpback Whales*, *National Parks Adventure*, *Dream Big* and *America's Musical Journey*.

After attending Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California, Ohlund began his career with the classic film *To Fly!* Since then, his broad and varied assignments have included filming underwater reefs in the South Pacific and primitive tribes in New Guinea and Borneo. He has filmed from a plane through the eye of a hurricane and captured the fury of an approaching tornado with an IMAX camera.

BARBARA MACGILLIVRAY (Director of Research) met Greg MacGillivray in the 9th grade – she sold tickets for his first surfing film – and making films together has always been a part of their lives together. Over the years, she has worked in multiple roles in the production and post-production of MFF's films, bringing their two children, Meghan and Shaun, along with them whenever possible on film shoots. With a PhD in Clinical Psychology, Barbara also worked for 30 years in Children, Youth Services for the Orange County Health Care Agency as a licensed clinical psychologist. She is now the Director of Research at MFF where she plays an instrumental role in helping to develop the company's films. She is also the company's principal still photographer while on location.

ROB WALKER (Cameraman) Rob, a south Orange County native and self-described adrenaline junky, began his career in giant screen filmmaking for MacGillivray Freeman Films in 1992. Rob has been involved in countless MFF projects from location to post-production. His varied workload has taken him from behind the editing machines to being launched off an aircraft carrier, rappelling into caves, climbing some of the highest peaks in Northern California, mountain biking with Marla Streb, rafting down the Nile River and hiking the rims of volcanoes in Greece. Known as the "McGyver" of MacGillivray, one of the most important things Rob does is maintain the camera department and keep all the gear running smoothly. Rob spends his free time with his family—he's been married to his high school sweetheart for 22 years and they have two teenage children.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

MACGILLIVRAY FREEMAN FILMS

MacGillivray Freeman Films is the world's foremost independent producer and distributor of giant-screen 70mm films with 45 films for IMAX and giant-screen theatres to its credit. Throughout the company's 50-year history, its films have won numerous international awards including two Academy Award® nominations and three films inducted into the IMAX Hall of Fame. MacGillivray Freeman's films are known for their artistry and celebration of science and the natural world. It is the first documentary film company to reach the one-billion-dollar benchmark for worldwide box office. For more information about the company, visit www.macgillivrayfreemanfilms.com.

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