



**TRAVEL TITANS:**  
Calmeyer (left) and Mitchell in the Paley Center for Media.

# Leading the Charge

TWO POWERFUL CEOS TEAM UP TO ELEVATE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN TOURISM

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People attach so much importance to what hotel they stay in, or what activities to do when they travel,” says Deborah Calmeyer, the founder and CEO of boutique luxury travel firm Roar Africa. “But if you don’t meet the right people, you just won’t know the country the way that you could.” Calmeyer, for one, knows all the right people. The 11th generation South African started Roar Africa in 2005 after relocating to Manhattan, where she noticed a serious void in knowledgeable African tourism. So Calmeyer began enlisting her capacious personal network to give clients unprecedented experiences,

like umpiring a national cricket match, or meeting the Mandela family. Calmeyer’s approach to luxury travel has attracted influential clientele, thanks in no small part to Pat Mitchell, one of the media’s most legendary glass-ceiling-breakers. Mitchell—the first woman to produce and host her own nationally syndicated television program, the first female CEO and president of PBS and most recently the executive vice chairman of the Paley Center for Media—was not looking for your average daiquiris-on-the-beach vacation when she enlisted Calmeyer. She wanted a getaway that would wake her up to the world—have her breathing deeply and scribbling notes on napkins. Mitchell has since taken six trips with Roar Africa, often bringing high-profile friends, including diplomats, journalists, heads of TV networks and even Robert Redford, who told her the journey was one of the most transformative experiences he’d ever had.

Mitchell’s most memorable trip marked the occasion of her 70th birthday, which she celebrated with about 30 friends from around the world. The journey began with an Edwardian-era sleeper train from Cape Town to Pretoria. Her group included Chinese power couple Bruno Wu, a media mogul, and Yang Lan, a ubiquitous TV personality known as the “Oprah of China.” “Bruno and Lan arrived with three or four phones and iPads. Bruno would be like, ‘Hang on, I’m just buying Jackie Chan’s franchise!’” Calmeyer recalls. “But by the end of that trip, all of the devices were gone. Lan was on Bruno’s lap, and he was kissing her. It was like everyone fell in love again.”

The success of these expeditions inspired Mitchell and Calmeyer to join forces: They’ve recently launched a series of trips called Learning Safaris for an illustrious collective of their friends and acquaintances, though they’re open to other guests as well. The itineraries will be a mix of five-star luxury and less-expected excursions, like wildlife tracking, visiting the home of world-famous sculptor Dylan Lewis and traveling to the SA College for Tourism—which annually trains 90 young women from poor rural areas in the art of hospitality. “We’ve had presidents of networks come who have the influence to tell a different story about Africa,” says Mitchell, “and that’s part of what Deb and I want to make sure happens.” ●

## THE BUCKET LIST

Five of Mexico City’s most exclusive, life-altering offerings

### 1. ATTEND A MOLECULAR DINNER PARTY

*Pujol, Polanco*  
Chef Enrique Olvera’s world-renowned restaurant boasts a private upstairs dining room with an open kitchen. Watch the chef make molecular magic: husked baby corn smoked inside a gourd with powdered *chicatana* ants, coffee and *costeño* chile mayonnaise.  
[PUJOL.COM.MX](http://PUJOL.COM.MX)

### 2. SOAR ABOVE RUINS IN A HOT-AIR BALLOON

*Teotihuacan, Mexico*  
Watch the sun rise above the astonishing archaeological remains of the Teotihuacan Pyramids, followed by a lavish champagne breakfast.  
[ADVENTUREHUNTERS.MEXICO.COM](http://ADVENTUREHUNTERS.MEXICO.COM)

### 3. TREAT YOURSELF TO A SHOPPING CONCIERGE

*St. Regis, Paseo de la Reforma*  
Stock up on the city’s toniest designer frocks without ever leaving your suite, thanks to a discerning personal shopper. After assessing the guest’s taste, stylist Marco Corral will return with a closetful of Louis Vuitton and Carolina Herrera.  
[STREGIS.COM/MEXICOCITY](http://STREGIS.COM/MEXICOCITY)

### 4. INDULGE IN INDIGENOUS HEALING

*Los Alcobas, Polanco*  
The Aurora Spa at Los Alcobas hotel specializes in Mexican healing rituals and indigenous-inspired treatments. A Skin Soufflé Wrap incorporates Mexican tree bark, which is believed to stimulate collagen production.  
[LASALCOBAS.COM](http://LASALCOBAS.COM)

### 5. EXPLORE A BILLIONAIRE’S ART COLLECTION

*Museo Soumaya, Plaza Carso*  
Business magnate Carlos Slim’s glittering Museo Soumaya holds invite-only events like dinner parties and private concerts.  
[SOUMAYA.COM.MX](http://SOUMAYA.COM.MX)

—ANNE RODERIQUE-JONES