

THE BIG STORY

## We came from Africa...



**Recent findings from National Geographic's Genographic Project herald a new age for exploration: travelling back in time to find out what migratory paths our ancestors took out of the cradle of civilisation and into the modern world**

A series of 7,500-year-old human bones unearthed in Germany have revealed the first detailed genetic history of modern Europe. National Geographic Genographic Project researchers worked with several international universities to extract and examine DNA from these prehistoric skeletons to paint a picture of the maternal genetic lineages carried by up to 45% of today's Europeans.

This has enabled scientists to track the dramatic population changes that have taken place in Europe over thousands of years. The surprise find? The enduring genetic markers of the first pan-European culture were suddenly replaced around 4,500 years ago. The hunt is now on to find out what caused this seismic shift.

This is just one of the many studies being carried out by the Genograph Project, a seven-year global research initiative aiming to shine a light on humankind's journey across the planet over 60,000 years. More than 500,000 participants from over 130 countries have contributed to the project, from the prime minister of Kazakhstan to the supposed ancestors of Vlad the Impaler. [genographic.nationalgeographic.com](http://genographic.nationalgeographic.com)

### NAT GEO: DNA ANCESTRY KIT

The society has devised a DNA Ancestry Kit for use by organisations and individuals. Its custom-built genotyping chip tests 150,000 DNA markers, specifically selected to provide information on ancestral migratory paths. Each kit costs \$199 (£128).

### TRAVELLER'S CHECKS TAKING BABY MILK ON THE PLANE

Flying with babies can be stressful but the aviation industry is flexible when it comes to helping you feed your infant.

**Bottle it:** Restrictions on taking liquids on board don't apply to baby milk. Take what you need in hand luggage, including expressed breast milk, formula or cow's milk, plus boiled water in a baby bottle.



**Winning formula:** You may be made to taste formula milk at security, so carry it in a baby bottle. However, many airports offer a reserve-and-collect service, meaning your chosen brand is waiting for you airside.

**Warm-up:** They may not sterilise, but most airlines will heat water, bottles or milk on long-haul flights.

## Work it



### I'M A... CONSERVATION EXPEDITION LEADER

**Matthias Hammer**, founder of Biosphere Expeditions

#### Where have you travelled with your job?

All over the world where there's conservation work to be done. This may be to Siberia for snow leopard research, to the deserts of Arabia in search of oryx, to Africa for big cats and elephants, to the coral reefs of the Caribbean, Maldives, Malaysia and Oman, or to the Azores and the Hebrides for whales and dolphins.

#### What's an 'average' day like?

There's no such thing and that's the beauty of it. One day I may be in the mountains of Slovakia, trying to capture wolves and lynx on camera; the next I may be back at my desk in the UK. Then sweating it out in the jungle in search of jaguars and primates in the Amazon, or diving to survey reef life in the Maldives.

#### What's the most challenging aspect of your work?

When wildlife and humans come into conflict, it's usually nature that loses out. Reversing that can be frustrating. The key is to create benefits for humans and nature.

#### What's your favourite part?

It's a lot of work to set up an expedition, but when everything is finally in place and we set off in our boats, canoes, 4WDs or whatever, then this is a moment of real joy. And I'd be lying if I said I didn't appreciate the travelling, although I'm acutely aware of my huge carbon footprint.

#### What led you to your current job?

The Attenborough-equivalents in my native Germany, TV biologists Grzimek and Sielmann, had a profound influence on me. [biosphere-expeditions.org](http://biosphere-expeditions.org)