

# “Relevant expansion is critical”: Tourcan Vacations launches new niche departments and social responsibility program

By Cindy Sosroutomo

**TORONTO** — As a former would-be nun, you would never guess that Linda Khanna is a hardcore biker. But she is, with motorcycling jaunts through North America and Alaska under her belt, and now she’s encouraging other women to hit the open road in search of adventure.

The best way to do this, she says, is to join her on one of four inaugural tours in 2019 with Women of the World Travel, a brand new specialized department of Tourcan Vacations launching this fall. Linda is heading up the department after 40-plus years in the travel industry and an entire lifetime of adventure that has taken her to 123 countries.

“I thought of a niche market for me and realized there’s a real need in the industry,” she tells Travelweek. “I saw so many women who either had husbands who didn’t like to travel, or they’re single and were afraid to travel on their own, or they’re LGBTQ but didn’t want to go on a specific LGBTQ tour. That’s when I decided to launch a small-group, women’s-only, non-judgmental travel company.”

Led by a passion and strong curiosity for travel, Linda will personally lead Women of the World Travel’s first four tours next year, namely in Peru, Morocco, Thailand and Ireland. Additional shorter tours to places like Picton, Ontario and Niagara-on-the-Lake will be



On the Cover: Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia / pg. 3 credit: James Cowie and Linda Khanna

announced in the coming months “to get women, who are unable to travel on big tours, excited about travel,” she says.

Each of the bigger tours will include 10-20 women and combine soft adventure elements (ie. camel safari and tented accommodation in Morocco) with activities that women “typically want to do”, like cooking classes and health and wellness activities. But in an effort to check off all boxes on a client’s wish list, Women of the World Travel also incorporates special components (ie. using a 25-seater coach for small groups of 10-15 women), authentic cultural experiences that Linda calls “Wow factors”, like mud baths and horse-drawn carriage rides, as well as

a strong focus on sustainable and responsible tourism.

This is where Enriching Lives, Tourcan’s new social responsibility program, comes into play. Although the not-for-profit has been up and running since last year, Tourcan is only now marketing it to coincide with the launch of Women of the World Travel and another one of its specialized departments, Photo TourTrekkers. Together, backed by the 30-plus years of experience that Tourcan Vacations brings to the table, the three entities are well positioned to be a one-stop shop for travel agents.

“These new departments add to Tourcan’s appeal since it now has specific markets of small groups that

can be sold through the travel agency distribution channel," added Linda. "We anticipate a lot of cross-over clients between Tourcan, Women of the World Travel and Photo TourTrekkers. We see a strong element of camaraderie and professionalism with our travel agent partners that I've always been very proud of. We know and have always valued the importance of the travel industry and pay top commissions on all tours."

Although Enriching Lives doesn't offer tours, it gives clients who book a Tourcan, Women of the World Travel or Photo TourTrekkers tour the chance to visit one of its projects in the destination that they're visiting. Sometimes it's built into their itinerary, while other times it's offered as a separate option. Projects vary from delivering basic necessities like toothbrushes and blankets to a Tanzanian village, to visiting an orphanage in Morocco and interacting with the children.

There are no costs involved when participating in an Enriching Lives project. Clients are simply asked to take items along with them that are needed by local communities, which vary depending on the project.

As for Photo TourTrekkers, which is being managed by professional photographer James Cowie, it's been around for 10 years but only recently joined the Tourcan family in 2017. Like Women of the World Travel it will cater to groups (from 10-30 pax), but while Linda's tours are exclusively for women, Cowie's are open to "anyone who can hold up their phone and take a picture," says Khanna. With no skill level required, Photo TourTrekkers will offer 19 tours in 2019 to such exotic destinations as Borneo, Uganda and the Galapagos, plus a few smaller local trips to places like Port Dover, Ontario.

Of course, being able to specialize in such niche markets (not to mention appeal to travellers interested in giving

back through Enriching Lives) gives Tourcan a leg up in a sea of other tour companies. "Relevant expansion is critical", says Phillip Solomon, General Manager at Tourcan Vacations, who also notes that the new departments perfectly align with the company's vision.



Linda Khanna

"It's our destination knowledge and proven experience that sets us apart in this highly competitive marketplace. Through customized, small tours, we create experiences our guests can't experience anywhere else, and for this reason we've seen our Photo TourTrekkers tours sell out 100%," he says.

Solomon, who adds that Women of the World Travel is slowly following the same uphill trajectory as Photo TourTrekkers, says that going niche is what "makes us shine". But there's also something to be said for Tourcan's stellar reputation for customer service and off-the-beaten-path approach to its itineraries.

Says Linda, "We break away from the cookie-cutter type of itineraries, which often results in activities that bring large crowds and long lines with them. I do want my guests to experience the top attractions but I try to pick travel periods when the crowds are less and the weather is still good."

Linda references such unique experiences as meeting master chef Nooror Somany Steppe in Thailand and visiting an old hammam in Morocco as just a few examples of how Women of the World Travel will differentiate itself.

And then there's Linda herself, who is undeniably an asset in her own right.

Knowing from experience what works and what doesn't when it comes to group travel, Linda will supervise her guests during check-in, personally survey their rooms to ensure all is in order, do bottled-water runs for her groups, work with restaurants to sort out dietary restrictions, and assist with requests should there be a language barrier with suppliers and clients.

This level of service isn't done on a whim; it's born from over four decades working at large travel companies where Khanna honed her skills and zeroed in on what clients need and want. Her extensive career includes 14 years at Carlson Wagonlit, eight years as a Business Solutions Manager at Travel Leaders when it was still Vacation.com, four years at Skyservice Airlines in a senior role for Travel Services, and most recently a six-month stint at TPI as Regional Sales Manager.

In short, there is no one better equipped to lead groups of intrepid women on far-flung adventures around the world.

"Connecting with others who share my passion for the great outdoors and active activities is my greatest joy," she says, adding that there's no better time than the present to launch a women-only tour division in the travel industry. "Women are now giving permission to themselves and saying it's okay to leave their families to travel. And at the end of the day, I've found that women really have each other's backs."

To contact Linda directly, email [linda@tourcanvacations.com](mailto:linda@tourcanvacations.com). For more information go to [WomenOfTheWorldTravel.net](http://WomenOfTheWorldTravel.net), [PhotoTourTrekkers.com](http://PhotoTourTrekkers.com), and [tourcanvacations.com](http://tourcanvacations.com).



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