

Forbes

TRANSPARENT EYEBALL

EDITED BY JOSHUA LEVINE / "TO SEE A WORLD IN A GRAIN OF SAND ..."

Club Dead

BY JUSTIN DOEBELE



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AH, VACATION! Balmy breezes, ice-cold margaritas, compliant snipers. Snipers? Yep. The newest kick for jaded tourists who have hit all the world's hot spots is to hit the world's *really* hot spots. The idea behind what some are calling terror travel or extreme tourism is basically to take the U.S. State Department's travel advisory warning list and make an itinerary out of it. Bosnia, Rwanda and Afghanistan are, of course, the London, Paris and Rome for those with two weeks paid and a hearty death wish, but the more ambitious can find land mines aplenty off the beaten path.

In 1995 the Russian government, always hard up for cash, started arranging trips into Chechnya that included military air transport, armed escorts and all the vodka you could drink. Cost: \$4,000 per head, plus \$300 for bribes at checkpoints. This tidbit comes from what is currently the hottest book in the travel business. It's the new Fielding guide titled *The World's Most Dangerous Places*, written and personally researched by Fielding's 42-year-old president, Robert Young Pelton. The book is a runaway hit, having become Fielding's fastest-

selling guidebook. It is now in its third edition and has sold over 80,000 copies. Its Web site gets 30,000 hits a week. Pelton is currently mulling six television offers. "I'm Hollywood's darling," he says.

Dangerous Places is a fund of useful information, from the best kidnap insurance (Chubb) to southern Lebanon's best war reports (the SLA radio station). *DP*—as the guide has come to be known—even has its own logo, a happy-go-lucky skull wearing dark sunglasses, appearing on T shirts, stickers and baseball caps (don't try to buy one; they're sold out).

What kinds of folks are you likely to meet over a grenade and a cold one in downtown Monrovia? There's British sanitation worker John McBride, 52, whose nickname is Mad Mac. In January Mad Mac spent a few days in Rwanda and Uganda, where local thugs with large machetes tried to break into his hotel room at night, stopped only by the steel bars across the windows and doors. "I travel for the sheer danger of it," says McBride, who fully expects to get stuck with a return-trip ticket one of these days.