



**Deep reflection in the great outdoors
Adventure company offers yoga, massage, a chance for self-discovery**

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After a torn ligament, nine months of healing and a bit of self-reflection, Jill Hewins has at last found her true professional calling. As the founder of Sol Journeys, a Tucson-based outdoors adventure and backpacking company, Hewins is incorporating yoga and massage therapy sessions with hiking, kayaking, backpacking, and biking expeditions. "The adventure experience creates space for a place to reflect on your life," said Hewins, who has spent about 20 years as a wilderness and outdoor-adventures guide. "It's a place where you can relax and clear your thoughts. It's about finding joy and learning self-care."

Through Sol Journeys, vacationers are accompanied by a personal outdoors and wilderness guide, a personal yoga instructor and a masseuse on trips ranging from three to 12-days.

Trips range from mountain biking excursions in Idaho to hiking in the Andes around Machu Picchu, Peru.

Clients camp and can arrange for yoga and massage sessions after hiking and biking treks. Other "adventures" can be arranged in Hawaii, New Zealand, Colorado, Utah and Death Valley.

Next year the company will focus on "retreat and renewal journeys" in Southern Arizona. Targeted at busy professionals, the trips will offer life coaching and personal-care sessions at regional bed-and-breakfast inns and local retreats. The concept for each trip, however, remains the same, Hewins said. "Sol Journeys is about bringing people together and learning new tools to enjoy the natural world and to connect with each other," she said.

Prices range from \$700 per person for a 3-day trip to Utah, to \$2,495 for a six-day journey in Hawaii.

Mary Plummer, an information-technology consultant in Palm Springs, Calif., said Sol Journeys offers people a chance to examine their inner selves while being in nature. "At the the end of the day, we'd sit in a circle and talk about our experience," said Plummer, who took a backing trip to the Paria River Valley in Utah and Arizona. "It was a really great trip to have that combined experience of

nature and to look at what's happening internally." Hewins also loves to interact with people, Plummer said. "She's a bright leader and is a natural for this kind of work. She has great ideas for bringing people together for communication," she said.

As a girl growing up in Cleveland, Hewins said outdoor activities always attracted her interests. "The mountains always seem to call to me," she said.

At 23, Hewins took a five-month, 8,200-mile bike trip across the United States and Canada as a way to spend time with a friend and to try her hand at a long bike trip.

She then moved to Seattle, where she spent 10 years working in the outdoor-adventure industry, with stints as a program director, trip planner, guide and staff trainer for various companies.

Eventually, she landed at the University of Arizona, earning a master's degree in higher education, and has lived in Tucson for nine years. "Tucson has a good mix with both mountains and desert, and an amazing climate," Hewins said. "I always tell people, it's magical when you live in the desert. I understand why people love it."

As a guide, Hewins often took campers to Hawaii and New Zealand, but noticed clients who wanted more than another outdoor adventure, she said.

"People wanted to dialogue and talk about deeper, more meaningful things in their life," she said. It got her thinking about the concept for Sol Journeys.

Then three years ago, a ligament injury sidelined Hewins for nine months. While guiding hikers in Utah, Hewins' knee locked in place, and while turning her body, she twisted her leg, tearing her ligament. "I had all of my weight on one leg, then I heard a deep crack. I knew my knee went the wrong way," she said.

After the injury, Hewins spent months with doctors and physical therapists, and after knee surgery took seven weeks learning how to walk again.

"I was at a point where I knew that I wanted to start this type of work. It gave me time to reflect and find my calling," she said.

To get the ball rolling for Sol Journeys, Hewins enrolled in classes through the Microbusiness Advancement Center of Southern Arizona, a nonprofit group dedicated to serving entrepreneurs with business-plan training, counseling and micro-loans.

After completing the program, Hewins was among business owners selected for free coaching and mentoring sessions with a local consultant. Kory Kogon, a business coach and trainer with Business Elevations LLC, 6655 N. Canyon Crest Drive, said Sol Journeys has a unique formula for success. "In Tucson, I haven't seen anything quite like Sol Journeys," said Kogon, who coached Hewins. "It's something a lot of people seem to need. It's not just another adventure company."