

*** ADVENTURE ***

Travel

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PADDLE THE OKEFENOKEE IN GEORGIA

SWAMPED

BY CHRISTOPHER PERCY COLLIER * GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

FOLKSTON, Ga. — It's as if we had crossed some invisible line separating human from beast. Forty-five minutes into day two of our paddle and we are surrounded by alligators.

The first one dives down within 5 feet of our canoe: eyes amber, scales weathered and black, a trail of bubbles leading straight to the bow. As we jerk our paddles up, I envision this creature — whose biting strength has been compared to the weight of a small pickup — chomping our hull to bits. Soon there are more alligators, diving under our boat, sunning themselves on muddy piles of peat, crossing in front of us within a paddle's length.

After dodging behemoth cypress trees shrouded in Spanish moss, paddling hard through thick tangles of aquatic vegetation, and sleeping on a crude wooden platform surrounded by water, we had reached the inner sanctum of the largest blackwater swamp in North America, home to an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 alligators. **OKEFENOKEE, Page M6**



GETTY IMAGES/RAYMOND K. GEHMAN, CORBIS PHOTO/FARRELL GREHAN (INSET)

Humans have navigated the Okefenokee Swamp that oozes across the Georgia-Florida border for thousands of years, alligators for millions.

BUNGEE JUMP OVER VICTORIA FALLS

A sampler of Africa's thrills

By Erik Heinrich
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

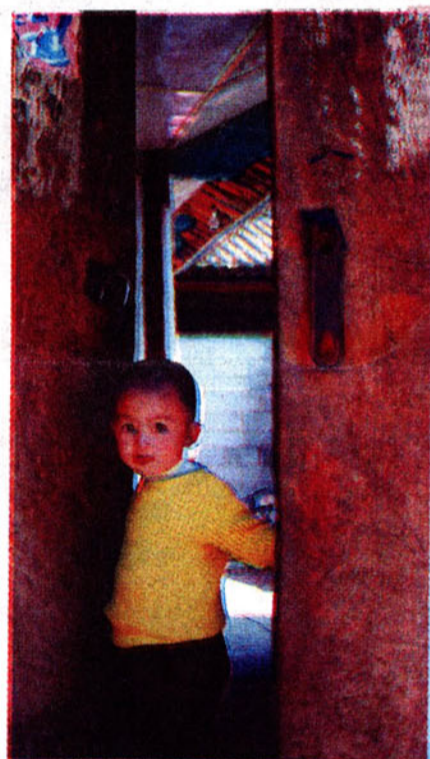
LIVINGSTONE, Zambia — "Check one!" calls out Frank Ngwenya, a sturdy dude in a blue T-shirt and with closely cropped hair whose last name means crocodile. He and Ben, both of the Vic Falls Bungi crew, attach an elastic bungee cord to my body harness. "Check two!" They close the carabiners fixed to a strap that will pull me from the jaws of death if anything goes wrong with the main connection. "Check three!" The end of the bungee cord is wrapped in padded Velcro, and now the rest is up to me.

I'm standing on the lip of a 365-foot drop in the middle of Victoria Falls Bridge, balancing on a knife's edge. On this side is safety and order. On the other awaits danger, chaos, maybe worse.

From upstream, I can hear the muted

ZAMBIA, Page M4

GO OFF THE BEATEN PATH IN CHINA



GLOBE PHOTO/PETER NOWAK

A Bai child in Guangyi, a village in the southwestern Yunnan province.

Feeling the pulse of village life

By Peter Nowak
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

GUANGYI, China — Looking at the bloodstains on the ceiling of Dr. Li's tiny, dimly lighted operating room, I quietly thank my lucky stars that I'm here as a guest, not a patient.

The good doctor is positively ebullient as he demonstrates his operating technique, in this particular case the delivering of a child. He speaks no English, so he mimes his actions. First, he maneuvers an imaginary patient onto the bed, then he huddles with his hands out in front of him like a football quarterback, indicating that he's ready for the baby to pop out. But rather than go for a long pass after the reception, Li makes a slashing motion with one hand, then gesticulates wildly toward the ceiling. It takes me a few seconds to figure it out, and Jim — my

CHINA, Page M6

Also today

FEELING CRAFTY? Paint, cane, quilt, and carve at Vermont's Fletcher Farm School. **M7**
HUNGRY? Sample ice cream, chocolate, cheese, and cider along Route 100. **M10**