



TRAVEL+LEISURE

# THE A-LIST

THE 161 TOP TRAVEL AGENTS

In the hands of an expert, a simple vacation can become a life-changing journey: an unforgettable adventure; a soul-restoring retreat; an education unmatched in any classroom. For our 12th annual look at the best advisers in the business, we asked these travel pros to share their latest discoveries and insider tips from around the world. Wherever your travels take you—from cruising in Antarctica to a walking safari in Zambia—we have the agent for you.

EDITED BY AMY FARLEY

REPORTED BY STIRLING KELSO



The terrace café at Monteverdi, a hilltop retreat in Tuscany's Val d'Orcia (see Judy Nussbaum).



# SUPER-AGENTS

Meet the travel industry's power brokers: a dozen experts with unparalleled experience and a peerless ability to discern what you want from your next trip.

## Priscilla Alexander ✓

**Known for** Her ability to expertly pair clients with one of her hundreds of employees, but she does more than manage. Alexander loves talking to travelers—both long-standing and potential clients—about the details of their trips. She's also constantly on the road, often taking detours from business trips to visit up-and-coming destinations. After a recent visit to Argentina, she spent three days in Rio de Janeiro to check in on the pre-Olympics progress; on her way back from an Amazon cruise, she stopped in Panama City. "It's important to be an active participant in the industry you're promoting," she says. "Wanderlust has never left me."  
**Trend watch** "Everything old is new again," Alexander says. Europe bookings are the strongest she has seen in years, and not only to Italy and other popular Western European countries: Eastern Europe—especially Croatia, Montenegro, and Hungary—are resurgent among luxury travelers.  
**Contact** *Protravel International, New York City; 212/651-2101; priscilla@protravelinc.com.*

## Maita Barrenechea

**Known for** Her local expertise and hands-on approach to travel management throughout Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. "I believe it takes discernment as much as contacts," Barrenechea says. "I can open doors, but more importantly, I understand what door to open for every traveler." Barrenechea has done more than follow regional travel trends in her 29-year career, she has shaped them—through supporting hotel and estancia openings, promoting responsible travel, and working with organizations that preserve cultural treasures.

**Trend watch** Uruguay continues to grow in popularity. Travelers are planning trips to hotels, such as Playa Vik and Bahia Vik in José Ignacio, more than a year out. The coastal area of Carmelo, known for its vineyards and polo fields, is also getting more attention, with new boutique inns such as Finca y Granja Narbona and Posada Campotinto.

**Contact** *Maíto, Buenos Aires; 54-11/6760-4060; maita@maito.com.ar.*

## Jack S. Ezon ✓

**Known for** Ezon is adept at planning bespoke trips, but has made his name by organizing dozens of global celebrations each year. His little black book of event contacts, from the best florists in Rome to choice wedding photographers in the South of France, gives him his competitive edge, as does a team of dedicated party planners that includes a romance concierge for honeymoons and anniversaries. Ezon is also an expert on Gen-Y and Gen-X vacationers, a fast-growing segment of the travel market. Though these younger travelers traditionally like to be heavily involved in trip planning, he notes a growing number are handing the reins entirely over to his team: "Even the Millennials are burned out on the DIY model."

**Trend watch** Clients are willing to splurge when access is a concern, Ezon notes, but they're still looking for good values, especially during the shoulder season. "They have no qualms pushing for the best price they can get."  
**Contact** *Ovation Vacations, New York City; 212/329-7267; jezion@ovationtravel.com.*

## Lisa Lindblad

**Known for** Bringing an intellectual approach to travel planning, attributed sometimes to

her interest in anthropology. Lindblad works closely with experts on the ground, piecing together complex, highly personalized itineraries that may include historian-led walking tours, shopping in souks, and Masai-guided safaris. "When I plan a trip, I consider the whole story—the *raison d'être* for going somewhere—as I develop each individual day," Lindblad explains.

**Trend watch** An increasing number of single travelers, both male and female, are planning entire journeys around their interests and passions. Lindblad just arranged a monthlong, golf-focused trip to New Zealand for a male client, and a global food adventure for a woman on a three-month sabbatical.

**Contact** *Lisa Lindblad Travel Design, New York City; 212/876-2554; lisa@lisalindblad.com.*

## Mary Ann Ramsey ✓

**Known for** A deep commitment to extensive on-the-ground research. Ramsey travels to up-and-coming and in-demand destinations throughout the year. In each place, she makes a point of staying in multiple hotels, taking numerous guided tours, and experiencing excursions from several operators to find options that best match the interests and personalities of her clients. She also documents their long-term dream trips (she calls herself "the travel equivalent of a financial planner") and reports back on destinations that make their bucket lists.

**Trend watch** Ramsey thinks that wildlife-focused expedition cruising is still in its infancy and will gather even more interest in the coming years.

**Contact** *Betty Maclean Travel, Naples, Fla.; 239/513-0333; maryann@bettymacleantravel.com.*

## Guy Rubin

**Known for** Being one of the most sought-after tour operators in China for luxury travel, a field that has changed dramatically in the 16 years that he's been in the industry. Rubin exhaustively researches new openings—the Banyan Tree Shanghai; the Mandarin Orientals in Guangzhou and Shanghai—and cultivates local contacts that lead to insider experiences: a helicopter ride from Beijing to the Great Wall, instruction in the game of *weiqi*, or

a private calligraphy lesson.  
**Trend watch** Rubin predicts growth in travel to Hangzhou thanks to its preserved cultural heritage, natural beauty, and stellar Aman and Four Seasons properties.

**Contact** *Imperial Tours, Beijing; 888/888-1970; guy@imperialtours.net.*

## Anne Morgan Scully ✓

**Known for** Bringing the right people together when they travel. Scully introduces her clients to artists, chefs, historians, and architects (depending on their interests) to deepen the impact of each journey. "You have to design a trip based on who the client is, not simply the destination." She is also mindful of places that offer great value, acknowledging that even the most affluent travelers appreciate this.

**Trend watch** More travelers are looking for villa rentals in Europe, especially in France. "There are incredible properties in wine regions that are still close to major cities," Scully says. "Having a private house is also an ideal setup for families."

**Contact** *McCabe World Travel, McLean, Va.; 703/762-5055; anne@mccabeworld.com.*

## Pallavi Shah

**Known for** Believing that a vacation begins the moment you start planning it. Shah brings travelers into the trip-development process to make them feel invested in the experience and to give them final approval of every last detail. Once her clients depart, she checks in on them personally and through ground operators to make sure each hotel, tour, and restaurant is to their liking.

**Trend watch** In India, where Shah maintains a second residence, she's noticed a growing number of requests for "journeys that touch the soul," as she puts it. That could mean attending the World Sufi Spirit Festival, in Jodhpur, or indulging in ancient ayurvedic treatments at a mountainside wellness resort.

**Contact** *Our Personal Guest, New York City; 646/284-2454; opgnny@ourpersonalguest.com.*

## Jim Strong ✓ & Nancy Strong

**Known for** Around-the-clock availability, discerning taste, and attention to detail—honed from the close industry contacts that both mother and son have cultivated, as well as their own extensive experience on the road. Everything they book has been thoroughly vetted: Jim spends nearly half the year previewing hotels, yachts, and tours worldwide. They have also created a multimedia brand around Jim's Craving for Travel books. An off-Broadway play inspired by the series is in the works.

**Trend watch** The Strong's are seeing a renewed interest in U.S.-based travel among clients who have time constraints or don't want to deal with international flights. Napa Valley, in particular, is reemerging as the destination of choice for people who want to stay a little closer to home.

**Contact** *Strong Travel Services, Dallas; 214/361-0027; jim@strongtravel.com, nstrong@strongtravel.com.*

## Valerie Ann Wilson

**Known for** Being a passionate and outspoken force within the industry, thanks to her 30-plus years of experience. She sits on half a dozen travel advisory boards and has published two books. Her top-notch agency (now under the leadership of Wilson and her daughters, Jennifer Wilson-Buttigieg and Kimberly Wilson Wetty, also on the A-List) keeps hiring and growing its client base. She's particularly excited to be recruiting a new generation of agents: "We seek out young people who have a passion for travel and customer service," she says. "It's an opportunity for us to mentor and get them involved in a terrific, long-lasting career."

**Trend watch** Once-in-a-lifetime trips keep pushing geographic and experiential boundaries. Right now Wilson's agency is working on a South Pole exploration, a handful of around-the-world trips by private jet, and a 21-day itinerary that hits every major safari country in Africa.

**Contact** *Valerie Wilson Travel, New York City; 212/532-3400; valeriew@vwvti.com.*

## Joel A. Zack

**Known for** An in-depth understanding of his areas of expertise, which include Portugal, Morocco, South Africa, Spain, and Turkey, and for keeping a close watch on the evolving mindset and expectations of American travelers. His network of friends and connections has led to a growing roster of special experiences—kicking around a soccer ball with kids in a small South African township; an after-hours tour of the Alhambra—that are not easily matched.

**Trend watch** Zack is seeing more travelers heading to Portugal for its food and wine. "The best new restaurant is Bel Canto, in Lisbon. We have arranged private dinners with the chef, José Avillez."

**Contact** *Heritage Tours Private Travel, New York City; 800/378-4555; joel@htprivatetravel.com.*



The garden at Monaci delle Terre Nere, in eastern Sicily (see Andrea Sertoli).



# EUROPE

## CENTRAL EUROPE

### Nathalie Nagy

**Insider clout** A part-time resident of Budapest, Nagy travels frequently throughout the region. In Vienna, she can coordinate private visits to the heritage brand Lobmeyr's glass boutique and *Werkstatt* (workshop), where artisans handcraft the city's iconic etched and painted glasswork.  
**Years as agent** 17.  
**Other specialty** Mexico.  
**Contact** *Protravel International, New York City; 212/409-9562; nathalie.nagy@protravelinc.com.*

## WESTERN EUROPE

### Anne Morgan Scully ✓

*See Super-Agents.*

### Jim Strong ✓ & Nancy Strong

*See Super-Agents.*

## FRANCE

### Murielle Blanchard

**Discovery** Blanchard, a French native, recently found an old-fashioned toy store, Miniatures Bois, in the lovely Burgundian village of Bonnay. Owners and artists Maryse and Joël Dedianne create tiny music boxes, dollhouse furniture, and farm animals out of delicately carved wood.

**Years as agent** 30.

**Other specialty** Spain.

**Contact** *Black Pearl Luxury Services, Salt Lake City; 801/483-6533; murielle@blackpearlservices.com.*

## Bob Preston

**New favorite** The Auberge du Jeu de Paume, just 20 minutes from Charles de Gaulle International Airport, backs onto the stunning Château de Chantilly, one of France's most beautiful properties. The 92-room resort has equestrian programs; one of its restaurants, La Table du Connétable, was awarded a Michelin star; and its spa has pampering wine-based treatments.

**Years as agent** 7.

**Other specialty** Italy.

**Contact** *EuroPanache, Paris*; 888/600-6777; bob.preston@europanache.com.

## Yaron Yarimi

**Excited about** Paris's Puces de St.-Ouen flea market, now home to Philippe Starck's Ma Cocotte, a trendy cafeteria-style restaurant. The large dining room overlooks an open kitchen where classic Parisian dishes are prepared; Yarimi encourages clients to head to the terraces beside the second-floor cocktail lounge for a view of the shoppers below.

**Years as agent** 25.

**Other specialty** Italy.

**Contact** *Frosch, New York City*; 212/784-0391; yaron.yarimi@frosch.com.

## GERMANY

## Virginia Giordano ★

**New favorite** Berlin's 80-room Das Stue hotel, housed in the circa-1930's former Danish Embassy. Its lobby and common spaces—by turns playful and austere—were decorated by Spanish interior designer Patricia Urquiola. Don't miss Stue Bar, where tapas and cocktails are served in grand rooms that face the Tiergarten, Berlin's answer to Central Park.

**Years as agent** 19.

**Contact** *Culture Trip, Berlin*; 49-30/305-3890; info@culturetrip.de.

## Elisabeth Landry

**Top tip** It is a German tradition to meet friends for coffee and cake in the afternoon. In Munich, you'll find the best pastries and a lively atmosphere at Kaffee Richard and Kaffee Glockenspiel, both located near New Town Hall. Forget about calories and "order the Black

Forest torte," Landry says.

**Years as agent** 34.

**Other specialty** Italy.

**Contact** *Century Travel, Atlanta*; 404/324-4013; elisabeth@centurytv.com.

## GREECE

## Mina Agnos

**Excited about** The Funky Gourmet restaurant, in Athens, which offers creative, modern takes on Greek classics (lamb *youvetsi*; *horiatiki* salad). Dishes are beautifully presented and served with high-design utensils. Wine pairings often include Greek bottles.

**Years as agent** 12.

**Other specialties** Italy and Egypt.

**Contact** *Travelive, Bloomfield, N.J.*; 888/377-5483; mina@travelive.com.

## Kelly Shea

**New favorite** The Amanzoe, Amanresorts' first property in Greece. Surrounded by olive groves on the Peloponnese, the 38 freestanding pavilion rooms have private pools and Aegean Sea views. "The hotel is also close to many of the area's key archaeological sites—Epidaurus, Mycenae, and ancient Corinth, among others," Shea says.

**Years as agent** 26.

**Other specialty** Turkey.

**Contact** *Kelly Shea Travels, Carmel, Ind.*; 317/805-5770; kelly@kellysheatravels.com.

## Christos Stergiou

**Special booking** A look at Greek culture, past and present, that included private tours of ancient sites and lesser-known museums, gallery-hopping with a Greek art expert, a traditional Cretan dinner in the Old Town of Rethymnon, and a discussion of the origins of the Greek fiscal crisis over dinner with Stergiou himself, a Stanford-trained financial expert.

**Years as agent** 9.

**Other specialties** Turkey and Italy.

**Contact** *TrueGreece, Maroussi, Greece*; 800/817-7098; christos@truegreece.com.

## Petros Zissimos

**New favorite** Alta Mare by Andronis, an affordable boutique

property in Oia, Santorini. Nine suites (and 14 more on the way) have white Cycladic-style interiors and polished-concrete pools with cliffside Mediterranean views.

**Years as agent** 10.

**Other specialty** Turkey.

**Contact** *Hellenic Holidays, New York City*; 212/944-8288; pzissimos@hellenicholidays.com.

## IRELAND

## Carol Cornell

**Insider clout** With more than 40 trips to Ireland under her belt, Cornell knows how to put amateur genealogists and ancestor-seekers in touch with historians, church members who keep grave records, and pub owners whose establishments have historic family ties. "I also set up dinners with locals, so travelers can couple discoveries from the past with an understanding of Ireland's present," Cornell says.

**Years as agent** 30.

**Other specialty** Italy.

**Contact** *Covington Travel, Fort Wayne, Ind.*; 260/432-5995; carolc@covingtontravelinc.com.

## ITALY

## Filippo Curinga ★

**Special booking** Curinga arranged a dinner—accompanied by a live orchestra—at the feet of Michelangelo's *David* in the Accademia Gallery in Florence, which was opened after-hours exclusively for his clients.

**Years as agent** 17.

**Contact** *IDI Travel, Venice*; 39-041/593-6299; filippo@iditravel.com.

## Joyce Falcone

**Top tip** Falcone, cofounder of a Slow Food chapter in her hometown of Aspen, tells Italy-bound clients to look for the *chiocciola* (snail) emblem that Slow Food restaurants often place on their doors or entryways to signify their commitment to regional produce and recipes.

**Years as agent** 17.

**Other specialty** Sicily.

**Contact** *Joyce Falcone—The Italian Concierge, Aspen, Colo.*; 970/544-3799; info@italianconciierge.com.

## Emily FitzRoy

**Special booking** For a client's 75th birthday, FitzRoy arranged to

airlift a grand piano via helicopter from Naples to the lawn of the J.K. Place Capri hotel. The payoff: a surprise performance by one of the leading sopranos from Venice's Teatro La Fenice. The show culminated in a fireworks display over the Bay of Marina Grande.

**Years as agent** 16.

**Contact** *Bellini Travel, London*; 44-20/7602-7602; emily@bellinitravel.com.

## Andrea Grisdale

**New favorite** Grisdale loves the Palazzo Victoria, in Verona—the sister hotel to Il Salviatino, in Fiesole—for its location (a two-minute walk to Juliet's balcony), service, and architecture. The hotel was built over the archaeological remains of a 2,000-year-old Roman villa, and cleverly combines original parquet floors and frescoes with sleek contemporary touches (flat-screen televisions; heated towel racks).

**Years as agent** 23.

**Contact** *IC Bellagio, Bellagio, Italy*; 39-031/952-059; andrea@icbellagio.com.

## Uri Harash ★

**Excited about** A resident of Rome, Harash likes the city's new Gran Meliá hotel for the different perspective it offers travelers. Not only does it have an outdoor pool (rare in Rome), but it's set in Gianicolo, "a lesser-known, but locally loved neighborhood," he says. While in the area, don't miss the fresh seafood at Assunta Madre.

**Years as agent** 15.

**Contact** *Perfetto Traveler, Rome*; 39-392/129-6543; uri@perfettotraveler.com.

## Deborah Hyte

**Discovery** The Castello di Ama in Tuscany, located in the Chianti Hills. The family-owned property has a private gallery, so you can sip their excellent Sangiovese while checking out the rotating exhibitions of works by contemporary artists.

**Years as agent** 33.

**Other specialty** Western Europe. **Contact** *Alltour International, Los Angeles*; 888/495-0066; deborah.hyte@alltour.com.

## Colleen Lamont

**Insider clout** Lamont introduces clients to an enologist in Tuscany

who will blend wines to their specifications, create bottles with personalized labels, and send cases back home. While at the vineyard, travelers may also experience a traditional Tuscan lunch with wine pairings.

**Years as agent** 34.  
**Other specialty** Small-ship cruises.

**Contact** *Journeys Peak Travel, Portland, Ore.*; 866/297-1058; clamont@peaktravel.com.

## Judy Nussbaum

**New favorite** The villa and hotel complex of Monteverdi, in the village of Castiglioncello del Trinoro in Tuscany. Its range of options, from stylish hotel rooms to a restored six-bedroom house, can comfortably accommodate both couples and families.

**Years as agent** 32.  
**Other specialties** France and cruises.

**Contact** *Unique Travel of Palm Beach, Delray Beach, Fla.*; 561/495-5775; judyn@uniquetrav.com.

## Andrea Sertoli

**Discovery** The eight-room Monaci delle Terre Nere, in Sicily, which sits on the slopes of the active Mount Etna volcano. The owner has enormous respect for the environment, and it shows: the lush estate retains a rustic sense of place and is partly fueled by solar energy.

**Years as agent** 18.  
**Other specialty** Croatia.  
**Contact** *Select Italy, Chicago*; 800/877-1755; andrea@selectitaly.com.

## Marjorie Shaw

**Special booking** When an American wanted to make contact with her long-lost relatives in the Abruzzo region southeast of Rome, Shaw managed to locate the family and sent her client with a driver and translator. The American left with not only a deeper connection to her ancestors but also a secret recipe for meat loaf that had been passed down for generations.

**Years as agent** 24.  
**Other specialty** Honeymoons.  
**Contact** *Marjorie Shaw's Insider's Italy, Bronxville, N.Y.*; 914/470-1612; info@insidersitaly.com.

## RUSSIA

### Greg Tepper

**Excited about** Plyos, a charming rural town five hours north of Moscow where dachas, or summer villas, dot the rolling countryside. American travelers are just discovering this remote gem. "The best way to explore the area is on a sleigh ride in the winter or a carriage ride along the river in the summer," Tepper advises.

**Years as agent** 19.  
**Other specialty** Eastern Europe.  
**Contact** *Exeter International, Tampa, Fla.*; 813/251-5355; greg@exeterinternational.com.

## SCANDINAVIA

### Carol Arklind

**Top tip** If you can't get a reservation at Noma, try Bror, which was opened in April by two of Noma's former sous-chefs. The 46-seat restaurant is already garnering stellar reviews for its Northern European-inspired comfort foods, such as salted pollock, a rich white fish, served with fennel.

**Years as agent** 24.  
**Other specialty** United Kingdom.  
**Contact** *Cadence, La Jolla, Calif.*; 925/308-7048; arktravel@cadencetravel.com.

### Tor Jensen

**Special booking** Jensen recently planned a four-man, three-week expedition across Greenland on dogsleds. "There were no stops other than tented overnights on the ice cap," he says of the once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

**Years as agent** 20.  
**Other specialty** Southeast Asia.  
**Contact** *Jensen World Travel, Wilmette, Ill.*; 800/853-6736; tor@jensenworldtravel.com.

## SCOTLAND

### Claire Schoeder

**Special booking** Schoeder threw an over-the-top party for a family staying in a private castle in Inverness. The entire clan was fitted with traditional Highland dress for a day that included whisky tastings, falconry, bagpipe lessons, and a formal dinner with Scottish dancing on the castle lawn. The next morning a piper woke everyone for breakfast.

**Years as agent** 21.  
**Other specialty** England.

**Contact** *Century Travel, Atlanta*; 404/324-4011; claire@centurytv.com.

## SPAIN

### Virginia Irurita

**Insider clout** Madrid-based Irurita has strong ties to local chefs. For one food lover, she arranged a day of mushroom foraging in Daroca de Rioja, in northern Spain, with chef Ignacio Echapresto of the Michelin-starred Venta Moncalvillo, followed by a private cooking class in Echapresto's kitchen.

**Years as agent** 15.  
**Other specialty** Food and wine.  
**Contact** *Made for Spain, Madrid*; 34/91-448-7275; virginia@madeforspain.com.

### Judith Wolf

**Excited about** The Routes of Sefarad, a network of 21 cities that highlights the history of the Jews who lived in Spain before the Inquisition. The organization is also an excellent resource for finding specialized guides and ancient synagogues, and for travelers looking to trace their ancestral roots.

**Years as agent** 28.  
**Other specialties** Turkey and Italy.

**Contact** *Frosch Travel, Deerfield, Ill.*; 847/948-5300; judith.wolf@frosch.com.

## SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

### Joel A. Zack

See *Super-Agents*.

## SWITZERLAND

### Ilene Koenig

**New favorite** Adventure travelers shouldn't miss the Titlis Cliff Walk near Engelberg, the highest suspension bridge in Europe. It's 10,000 feet above sea level, 330 feet long, and only five feet wide—and it hovers 1,500 feet in the air above a glacier.

**Years as agent** 28.  
**Other specialty** Skiing.  
**Contact** *Let's Travel (a division of Plaza Travel), Santa Monica, Calif.*; 310/451-5805, ext. 1258; ilene@letstravel-sm.com.

## TURKEY

### Frederick Poe

**Excited about** The formerly Armenian city of Ani, close to Turkey's eastern border, for its windswept countryside and incredible medieval ruins that were only recently opened to the public.

**Years as agent** 53.  
**Other specialty** Eastern Europe.  
**Contact** *Poe Travel, Little Rock, Ark.*; 800/727-1960; fpoe@poetravel.com.

## UNITED KINGDOM

### Ellen LeCompte

**Special booking** LeCompte, who has a cottage in the Cotswolds, loves to give clients a sense of local British traditions by arranging for them to attend private events—jousting matches; horse-racing trials; car rallies—at historic estates in the English countryside.

**Years as agent** 22.  
**Other specialty** Africa.  
**Contact** *Brownell Travel, Richmond, Va.*; 804/353-0075, ext. 3; ellenl@brownelltravel.com.

### Linda M. Raymer ★

**Excited about** The Jewish Museum London in Camden, which reopened a few years ago after a \$15 million renovation. It traces the Jewish community in Britain back to the time of William the Conqueror.

**Years as agent** 30.  
**Other specialties** Switzerland and Napa Valley.  
**Contact** *Travelink, American Express Travel, Nashville*; 615/277-5146; linda.raymer@travelink.com.

### Susie Worthy

**Insider clout** If you want access, Worthy delivers—and then some. After her clients attended a private dinner party at Buckingham Palace, she rented them a boat on the Thames for a front-row seat at the Diamond Jubilee Pageant.

**Years as agent** 36.  
**Other specialty** Paris.  
**Contact** *NoteWorthy, London*; 44-20/3051-5165; susie@noteworthy.co.uk.

A Historic Corner King room at the Wythe Hotel, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (see Amy Glass).



## U.S. & CANADA

### HAWAII

#### Carolyne Brandon

**Excited about** The Ulupalakua Vineyards, where rows of grapes overlook the Pacific from Maui's mountains. A handful of the estate's specialty wines, such as the sparkling Hula O Maui, are made with local pineapples.

**Years as agent** 31.

**Other specialty** Cruises.

**Contact** *Altour American Express Travel, Newport Beach, Calif.*; 650/248-2344; carolyne.brandon@altour.com.

#### Darlene Mulkewich

**Top tip** On the Big Island, you can cruise on Fair Wind's *Hula Kai* luxury catamaran to a lovely spot for snorkeling and scuba diving.

They'll even lend you a stand-up paddleboard for the afternoon.

**Years as agent** 26.

**Other specialty** Alaska.

**Contact** *Altour American Express Travel, Oak Brook, Ill.*; 800/535-4458, ext. 11; darlene.mulkewich@altour.com.

#### Edward Phillips ✓

**Discovery** Musician Henry Kapono plays at Duke's restaurant in Waikiki on most Sunday evenings. "It's a scene right out of a Jimmy Buffett song; there's tropical music, fresh seafood, and fruity cocktails—and a global crowd dancing to Kapono's island-inspired rhythms with a rock-and-roll twist," Phillips says.

**Years as agent** 23.

**Other specialty** Spain.

**Contact** *Frosch, San Mateo, Calif.*; 650/373-4425; ed.phillips@frosch.com.

### NAPA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

#### Michelle Murré ★

**Insider clout** Murré likes to combine Napa Valley's food and wine experiences with its gorgeous natural surroundings by sending clients to the Jaffe Estate, a winery that is closed to the public but accessible to her through personal connections. Travelers can sample the estate's extraordinary Cabernets, see the professional-grade telescope in owner Gary Jaffe's private observatory, and enjoy a private dinner with wine pairings under the stars.

**Years as agent** 9.

**Other specialty** Italy.

**Contact** *Azurine, San Francisco*; 415/796-3869; michelle@azurinetravel.com.

### NEW ORLEANS

#### Linda Kibak

**New favorite** The Hotel Mazarin, in the heart of the French Quarter, where 102 rooms overlook either the neighborhood's historic buildings or a quiet European-style interior courtyard. The complimentary breakfast includes Southern staples such as

grits and sausage.

**Years as agent** 19.

**Other specialty** Switzerland.

**Contact** *Frosch Travel, New York City*; 212/784-0265; linda.kibak@frosch.com.

### NEW YORK CITY

#### Amy Glass

**Top tip** So many travelers limit themselves to Manhattan, but Brooklyn should be a required stop. To get a taste of the borough's diversity, Glass suggests heading to Tanoreen, in Bay Ridge, known for its authentic Palestinian dishes. If you want to overnight in Brooklyn, opt for a room in the new 70-room Wythe Hotel, in Williamsburg.

**Years as agent** 35.

**Other specialty** Costa Rica.

**Contact** *Protravel International, New York City*; 212/409-9540; amy@protravelinc.com.

### WESTERN U.S.

#### Harold C. Jenkins

**Excited about** The little-known town of Buffalo, Wyoming, tucked into the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains. Stay at the Occidental Hotel, steeped in Old West history. Past guests include Teddy Roosevelt and Calamity Jane, and the 17 rooms have names like Outlaw and Prairie Cowboy. In the Occidental Saloon, 23 bullet holes pepper the walls and ceiling—the bartender has the whole story.

**Years as agent** 25.

**Other specialty** Skiing.

**Contact** *Corporate Vacations American Express, Lake Forest, Ill.*; 615/714-9917; harold.jenkins@corpvacations.com.

#### Deborah Trevino

**Special booking** Trevino reserved a helicopter to drop a pair of adventure enthusiasts at the top of a remote ski run at Alyeska Resort, in Alaska. At the bottom of the slopes, a dogsled waited to take them to a romantic lunch in the mountains; with champagne on hand to celebrate, the client proposed to his girlfriend.

**Years as agent** 20.

**Other specialty** Australia.

**Contact** *Hobson Travel, Naperville, Ill.*; 630/983-8000; dtrevino@hobsontravel.com.



# MEXICO & CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

ARGENTINA, CHILE, AND URUGUAY

## Maita Barrenechea

See Super-Agents.

ARGENTINA AND CHILE

## Jordan Harvey ★

**Insider clout** Harvey, who once lived on a Patagonian dairy farm, has relationships with many family-owned haciendas and vineyards that aren't typically open to the public. At the Julio Bouchon winery, in Chile's Maule Valley, travelers can dine with the family and ride horses through the 914-acre property.

**Years as agent** 4.

**Other specialty** Peru.

**Contact** *Knowmad Adventures*, Minneapolis; 612/877-1735; [jordan@knowmadadventures.com](mailto:jordan@knowmadadventures.com).

BRAZIL

## Martin Frankenberg

**New favorite** The Botanique Hotel & Spa, the first truly sophisticated hotel in the mountains outside of São Paulo. The six-suite, 11-villa property is not only architecturally striking and eco-conscious, it also showcases the area's natural and cultural draws: Brazilian music plays in common areas; the restaurant's chef forages for fresh fruits and vegetables; and along with pillow, wine, and cigar menus, the hotel offers a selection of waters curated by a local geologist.

**Years as agent** 12.

**Other specialty** Villa rentals.

**Contact** *Matuete*, São Paulo, Brazil; 866/709-5952; [martin@matuete.com](mailto:martin@matuete.com).

## Paul Irvine

**Insider clout** To tap in to the emerging visual-arts scene in Rio, Irvine turns to internationally renowned artist Marcos Chaves, a born-and-bred Carioca and current resident of the bohemian Santa Teresa neighborhood, to lead tours of his favorite places, including galleries, friends' studios, and private homes.

**Years as agent** 10.

**Other specialty** Argentina.

**Contact** *Dehouche*, Rio de Janeiro; 800/690-6899; [paul.irvine@dehouche.com](mailto:paul.irvine@dehouche.com).

CHILE

## Silja Torborg

**New favorite** The Refugia hotel, with 12 ocean-facing rooms, on the Chiloé archipelago off central Chile. The architecture is smart and sustainable, and includes high-design elements—fireplaces, furnishings, art—by local artisans. A new airport has made the island more accessible.

**Years as agent** 17.

**Other specialty** Food and wine.

**Contact** *Trails of Chile*, Puerto Varas, Chile; 56-65/566-671; [silja@trailsofchile.cl](mailto:silja@trailsofchile.cl).

ECUADOR

## Tatiana Johnston

**Excited about** The rehabilitation of Ronda Street (also called Calle Morales), a lovely colonial thoroughfare in Quito. After much investment, the once-down-on-its-luck Old Town artery is lined with stylish boutiques and restaurants as well as traditional sweetshops, hardware stores, and local markets.

**Years as agent** 17.

**Other specialty** Peru.

**Contact** *Big Five Tours & Expeditions*, Stuart, Fla.; 800/244-3483; [tatiana@bigfive.com](mailto:tatiana@bigfive.com).

GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

## Brian Morgan

**New favorite** The 16-passenger *Ocean Spray* catamaran, operated by Haugan Cruises, which sails on eight-day Galápagos trips. Its spacious cabins have modern interiors and private balconies. There's also an outdoor whirlpool, a large sundeck and lounge, and a restaurant with alfresco dining.

**Years as agent** 14.

**Other specialty** Peru.

**Contact** *Adventure Life*, Missoula, Mont.; 800/344-6118; [galapagos@adventure-life.com](mailto:galapagos@adventure-life.com).

MEXICO

## Zachary Rabinor

**Discovery** The 22-room hotel Bo, on the site of an Art Deco building in Chiapas's San Cristóbal de las Casas. A playful mash-up of Midcentury Modern furniture and traditional design elements, the hotel incorporates natural materials from the surrounding regions, giving it a strong sense of place.

**Years as agent** 10.

**Other specialty** Central America.

**Contact** *Journey Mexico*, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; 800/513-1587; [zach@journeymexico.com](mailto:zach@journeymexico.com).

CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

## Emmanuel Burgio

**Insider clout** Burgio organized a trip for a renowned photographer who wanted to take aerial shots across South America. Thanks to Blue Parallel's close relationships with national park directors and country officials, Burgio was able to obtain permits to fly over restricted areas in the Galápagos Islands, Machu Picchu, and Mayan ruins in the Yucatán.

**Years as agent** 11.

**Other specialty** Private villas.

**Contact** *Blue Parallel*, Potomac, Md.; 800/256-5307; [emmanuel@blueparallel.com](mailto:emmanuel@blueparallel.com).

## Marisol Mosquera

**New favorite** Palacio Nazarenas from Orient-Express, housed in a 16th-century former convent in Cuzco, Peru. The 55 rooms—all oxygenated to provide relief from the 11,000-foot altitude—have Peruvian-marble bathrooms, espresso bars, and native art and historic artifacts. It's one of many

exciting developments in Cuzco's hotel scene.

**Years as agent** 16.

**Contact** *Aracari Travel Consulting*, Lima, Peru; 312/239-8726; [marisol@aracari.com](mailto:marisol@aracari.com).

SOUTH AMERICA

## Carlos L. Fida

**Excited about** Adventure travel for all levels of experience—Fida led a group of clients ranging in age from 28 to 72—through Patagonia, especially Chile's Torres del Paine National Park. Fida can set up mountain-biking, kayaking, and hiking excursions, as well as overnights in family-owned ranches and small hotels.

**Years as agent** 35.

**Other specialty** Adventure.

**Contact** *PanAmerican Travel Services*, Salt Lake City; 800/364-4359; [cfida@wfintl.com](mailto:cfida@wfintl.com).

## Beth Jenkins

**Discovery** For families, the all-inclusive Dos Lagos Lodge, on the 442,000-acre Cerro Castillo National Reserve in Chilean Patagonia. "It's only accessible by boat or helicopter, making it incredibly private, with activities such as horseback riding, fishing, and kayaking, keeping all ages engaged," Jenkins says.

**Years as agent** 4.

**Other specialty** Honeymoons.

**Contact** *McCabe World Travel*, McLean, Va.; 703/762-5048; [beth@mccabeworld.com](mailto:beth@mccabeworld.com).

## Eric Sheets

**Special booking** Sheets, whose professional sweet spot is combining the Galápagos with other South American destinations, planned a wedding for a couple who wanted to marry among Darwin's famous islands under a full moon. The chartered yacht was equipped with a violinist, band, and minister; after the ceremony, the couple flew to Cartagena, Colombia, for their honeymoon.

**Years as agent** 17.

**Other specialty** Cuba.

**Contact** *Latin Excursions*, Bal Harbour, Fla.; 305/356-8488, ext. 100; [eric@latinexcursions.com](mailto:eric@latinexcursions.com).

SOUTH AMERICAN FOOD & WINE

## Liz Caskey ★

**New favorite** Bocanariz, a hip wine bar in Santiago's Bellas Artes

neighborhood—think of it as the West Village of Chile’s capital—that organizes its bottles not only by region but also by valley. Travelers can order flights of one- to three-ounce pours.

**Years as agent** 8.

**Other specialty** Adventure.

**Contact** *Liz Caskey Culinary & Wine Experiences, Santiago, Chile; 904/687-0340; liz@lizcaskey.com.*



## CARIBBEAN

### Margie Hand

**Excited about** For families in search of an exclusive and convenient getaway, Hand recommends taking over the five-villa Royal Island retreat, in the Bahamas, set on a private island just four miles from North Eleuthera. The staff will arrange meals, spa services, watersports, and outdoor activities, as well as parties to celebrate any special milestones or events.

**Years as agent** 19.

**Other specialty** Destination weddings.

**Contact** *All Seasons Travel, Birmingham, Ala.; 888/234-0046; mhhand@allseasonstravel.com.*

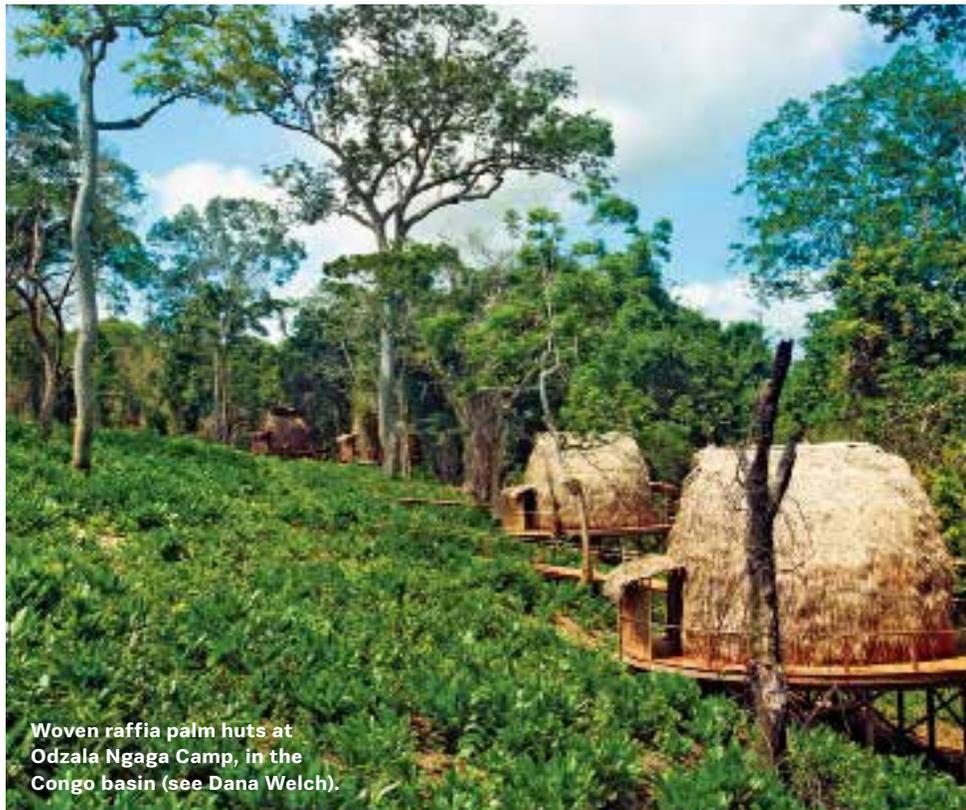
### Janet McLaughlin

**Special booking** McLaughlin went the extra mile for a husband who wanted to surprise his wife with a special gift on an anniversary trip to Barbados. In addition to arranging their trip, she went to Tiffany’s, picked out a diamond bracelet, and sent it in an insured package down to Sandy Lane resort, where the couple was staying.

**Years as agent** 24.

**Other specialty** Italy.

**Contact** *Provident Travel, Cincinnati; 800/486-5060; jmclaughlin@providenttravel.com.*



Woven raffia palm huts at Odzala Ngaga Camp, in the Congo basin (see Dana Welch).



## AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST

AFRICA

### Bob Berghaier

**New favorite** The former zookeeper and wildlife expert loves the high-end Muchenje and Ngoma safari lodges in the remote western section of Botswana’s Chobe National Park. There are far fewer vehicles there than in the more visited northern part of the park, and great opportunities to view predators such as lions, leopards, and African wild dogs.

**Years as agent** 12.

**Other specialty** African history and culture.

**Contact** *Premier Tours, Philadelphia; 800/545-1910, ext. 414; bobb@premiertours.com.*

### Katie Cadar

**Special booking** An adventure-

minded couple’s Africa itinerary began with shark-cage diving outside Cape Town and an elephant-back safari at Camp Jabulani, near Kruger National Park. They took in Victoria Falls from a microlight airplane and a river raft, then ended in a beachfront suite at White Pearl Resorts, in Mozambique.

**Years as agent** 27.

**Other specialty** French Polynesia.  
**Contact** *TravelStore, Los Angeles; 310/689-5415; katie.c@travelstore.com.*

### Sandy Cunningham

**Special booking** Cunningham arranged a “breakfast” with baby rhinos at Kenya’s Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Clients were able to bottle-feed the calves and learn

about the conservancy’s pioneering anti-poaching efforts.

**Years as agent** 18.

**Other specialty** Adventure.

**Contact** *Uncharted Outposts Safari & Travel Company, Santa Fe; 888/995-0909; sandy@unchartedoutposts.com.*

### Lisa Lindblad

*See Super-Agents.*

### Dana Welch

**New favorite** Wilderness Safaris’ two Odzala camps—Lango, on the edge of a savanna, and Ngaga, surrounded by forest—in the Congo basin. The intimate, eco-friendly camps, made up of just six rooms each, give travelers unprecedented access to the area’s tropical rain forest and its dense population of lowland gorillas.

**Years as agent** 21.

**Other specialties** Active and experiential travel.

**Contact** *The Travel Society, Denver; 303/563-6225; dana@travelsociety.com.*

BOTSWANA, ZIMBABWE,  
AND ZAMBIA

## Craig Beal

**Excited about** Matusadona National Park, in Zimbabwe, where Beal spotted the increasingly rare black rhino on a hiking safari last fall. Stay in one of the classic tents at Musango Safari Camp on Lake Kariba, he advises. “Owner Steve Edwards has personally greeted nearly every guest since 1992.”

**Years as agent** 8.

**Other specialty** South Africa.

**Contact** *Travel Beyond*, Wayzata, Minn.; 800/876-3131; craigb@travelbeyond.com.

EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

## Dan Achber ★

**Insider clout** Achber arranged for a photography-loving client to accompany zebra researchers as they counted the animals while flying over Botswana’s striking Makgadikgadi salt pan in a Cessna 206—without the doors. Needless to say, his aerial pictures were spectacular.

**Years as agent** 5.

**Contact** *Trufflepig*, Toronto; 416/628-1272; dan@trufflepig.com.

## Jeanie Fundora

**Special booking** By using private jets and securing off-hour runway stops, Fundora was able to plan a trip to top lodges in South Africa, Tanzania, and Rwanda for busy clients, shaving down what could have been a three-week trip to meet their 11-night time frame.

**Years as agent** 14.

**Other specialty** Indian Ocean islands.

**Contact** *Travel Beyond*, Wayzata, Minn.; 800/823-6063; jeanief@travelbeyond.com.

## Tim Lapage

**New favorite** The Potato Bush Camp, in Zambia’s Lower Zambezi National Park, which has four tented rooms—with claw-foot tubs, hammocks, and plunge pools—and is set on the banks of the Zambezi River.

**Years as agent** 32.

**Other specialties** South America and India.

**Contact** *Safari Experts*, Park City, Utah; 435/649-4655; safari@safariexperts.com.

## Sunit Sanghrajka ★

**Discovery** Rubondo Island Camp, in Tanzania. The only public

property in Africa’s largest island national park, the camp supports Rubondo’s goal of becoming a self-sustaining conservation area. Travelers can go on guided hikes to encounter chimpanzees and other animals in their native habitat.

**Years as agent** 20.

**Contact** *Alluring Africa*, Winter Park, Fla.; 800/510-6059, ext. 101; sunit@alluringafrica.com.

EGYPT

## Malaka Hilton

**Top tip** To dress like a local when in Luxor, stop at the Mobaco Cottons store in the Pyramisa Isis Luxor Hotel. The well-tailored line is made with Egyptian cotton and comes printed with a small camel logo.

**Years as agent** 19.

**Other specialties** Jordan and the U.A.E.

**Contact** *Admiral Travel International*, Sarasota, Fla.; 888/722-3401; malaka@admiraltravel.com.

ISRAEL

## Rachel Epstein

**Excited about** The Beresheet Hotel, perched on the edge of the Ramon Crater in the Negev Desert just a 2½-hour drive from Tel Aviv. A beautiful, minimalist structure, it offers guests a unique base from which to explore the desert, nearby wineries, and the area’s history.

**Years as agent** 31.

**Other specialty** Spain.

**Contact** *Frosch*, New York City; 800/866-1623; rachel.epstein@frosch.com.

MIDDLE EAST

## Jean Newman Glock ★

**Insider clout** Glock, who spent 17 years with Smithsonian Journeys, maintains a little black book of door-opening contacts. Dr. Salima Ikram, for example, the head of the Egyptology department at the American University in Cairo, has taken some of Glock’s clients behind the scenes to see the mummies at the Egyptian Antiquities Museum.

**Years as agent** 2.

**Other specialties** North Africa and the Arabian Gulf.

**Contact** *Connoisseur Travel*, Washington, D.C.; 202/469-8904; jean.glock@ctltd.com.

MOROCCO

## Michael Diamond

**New favorite** While Diamond usually prefers traditional *riads*, he was impressed with Morgan Hotel Group’s 71-room Delano Marrakech: “It brings a hip and youthful option to town. Even if you aren’t staying here, stop by the rooftop lounge for cocktails and city views.”

**Years as agent** 12.

**Other specialty** Turkey.

**Contact** *Heritage Tours Private Travel*, New York City; 800/378-4555, ext. 102; michael@hprivatetravel.com.

SAFARIS

## Volker Altvater

**Special booking** For clients who wanted to see both Kenya’s famous highlights and its best-kept secrets, Altvater arranged a helicopter safari that provided views of Lake Turkana in the north, the forests of the Matthews Range, Mount Kenya, and the thundering herds of animals on the grasslands below.

**Years as agent** 27.

**Other specialty** South Africa.

**Contact** *Big Five Tours & Expeditions*, Stuart, Fla.; 772/600-2213; volker@bigfive.com.

## Mark Nolting

**New favorite** The eco-sensitive, six-tent Singita Mara River Camp—the only permanent lodging in the Lamai Wedge, in Serengeti National Park. A high concentration of wildlife around the Mara River means that your private, elevated deck is often the best place in the park for game spotting.

**Years as agent** 27.

**Other specialties** Madagascar and Malawi.

**Contact** *Africa Adventure Company*, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; 800/882-9454; safari@africanadventure.com.

## Norman Pieters

**Top tip** Pieters has noticed a major upswing in multigenerational safari travel, to which the industry is responding. MalaMala Game Reserve, in South Africa, for example, has suites that sleep four, and junior ranger programs for guests 12 and under. Kids receive backpacks with animal checklists and a compass; specially trained guides teach them how to track animals.

**Years as agent** 41.

**Other specialty** India.

**Contact** *Karell’s African Dream Vacations*, Miami; 800/327-0373; normanp@karell.com.

## Jackie Rush

**Excited about** Rush loves Mombo Camp in the Okavango Delta for its intuitive staff, plush tents, and fantastic wildlife viewing, arguably the country’s best. “Mombo continues to top the charts. Book far in advance,” she advises.

**Years as agent** 37.

**Other specialty** Jordan.

**Contact** *Frosch*, Washington, D.C.; 800/296-0071; jackie.rush@frosch.com.

SOUTH AFRICA

## Julian Harrison

**Insider clout** Harrison introduces Johannesburg-bound clients to guide Robin Binckes. An expert on apartheid-era history and a master storyteller, he arranges home visits with locals and takes people to lesser-traveled sites, such as the imposing Voortrekker Monument, in nearby Pretoria.

**Years as agent** 27.

**Other specialty** East Africa.

**Contact** *Premier Tours*, Philadelphia; 800/545-1910, ext. 429; julianh@premiertours.com.

## Ginger Hill ★

**Top tip** Cape Town’s new City Bowl Food Market on the waterfront. “It’s an easy way to experience African street food,” Hill says. “You can explore the stalls on your own or book a private tour with a culinary guide.”

**Years as agent** 23.

**Other specialty** East Africa.

**Contact** *Heritage Tours Private Travel*, New York City; 800/378-4555, ext. 105; ginger@hprivatetravel.com.

## Judy Udwin

**Top tip** Cape Town—bound travelers who love to cook should book the Cape Malay Experience at the Cellars-Hohenort Hotel. In the interactive class, participants learn to make regional dishes such as butternut-and-lentil *potjie*, a stew prepared in a cast-iron pot.

**Years as agent** 31.

**Contact** *Century Travel*, Atlanta; 800/533-6336; judy@centurytvl.com.



In the lounge of the Palace Hotel Tokyo, adjacent to the city's Imperial Gardens (see Duff Trimble).



## ASIA

ASIA

### Diane E. Hilliard

**Discovery** The village of Mae Hong Son, in northern Thailand, where you can ride elephants, visit a local hill tribe by boat, and—best of all—get a Thai massage at Phu Klon Country Club Health Mud Spa for about \$10.

**Years as agent** 41.

**Other specialty** Middle East.

**Contact** Hilliard Olander Travel, Stillwater, Minn.; 651/307-8225; [diane@hilliardolander.com](mailto:diane@hilliardolander.com).

### Janet Moore

**Excited about** Tracing the Burma Road from western China to Rangoon, Burma. Travelers make their way through emerald-green

rice paddies, fertile valleys, and the Gaoligong Mountains, known for their forests and fields of sugarcane, coffee, and papaya. Stops in Burma include Sagaing, famous for its monasteries, and the temple-studded Pagan.

**Years as agent** 28.

**Other specialty** Middle East.  
**Contact** Distant Horizons, Long Beach, Calif.; 800/333-1240; [janetm@distant-horizons.com](mailto:janetm@distant-horizons.com).

CHINA

### Stan Godwyn ★

**Insider clout** For a traveler passionate about Chinese porcelains, Godwyn arranged a

visit to the private OX Culture and Ceramics Museum, in Xi'an, where she met with the curator and was able to examine—and in some cases even handle—pieces from the early Ming dynasty.

**Years as agent** 19.

**Other specialty** Southeast Asia.  
**Contact** TravelStore, Sacramento, Calif.; 800/283-2772 ext. 5511; [stan.g@travelstore.com](mailto:stan.g@travelstore.com).

### Karin Hansen

**New favorite** The 313-room Four Seasons Beijing, the company's seventh property in China. "It's a cut above the rest," Hansen says, noting the impeccable service, the spacious suites, and the hotel's artwork, which showcases the city's contemporary art scene.

**Years as agent** 36.

**Other specialties** Thailand and Cambodia.

**Contact** Frosch Travel, Deerfield, Ill.; 800/323-1276; [karin.hansen@frosch.com](mailto:karin.hansen@frosch.com).

### Guy Rubin

See Super-Agents.

### Laura Woo

**Discovery** A Hong Kong expert, Woo cautions clients not to leave the city without sampling a *dan tat*, or egg tart, from Tai Cheong Bakery, at Lyndhurst Terrace. Locals line up around the block for the hot, flaky pastry.

**Years as agent** 31.

**Other specialty** Hawaii.

**Contact** West University Travel, Houston; 281/497-8820; [woo@hal-pc.org](mailto:woo@hal-pc.org).

### Mei Zhang

**Insider clout** For a prominent U.S. architect, Zhang planned a design-focused trip in Beijing that included a private tour of the National Center for the Performing Arts (a.k.a. the Egg), a discussion with a feng shui expert at the Temple of Heaven, and a private tour of the Rem Koolhaas-designed CCTV building.

**Years as agent** 13.

**Other specialty** Tibet.  
**Contact** WildChina, Beijing; 888/902-8808; [mei.zhang@wildchina.com](mailto:mei.zhang@wildchina.com).

INDIA

### Jonny Bealby

**New favorite** The Lotus, a luxury houseboat in the backwaters of Kerala. The two rooms come with

teak floors and furniture, dhurrie rugs, observation windows, and private verandas. Travelers can arrange onboard yoga lessons and ayurvedic massages, and borrow the boat's mountain bikes to explore the area's temples and coconut groves.

**Years as agent** 11.

**Other specialty** Pakistan.

**Contact** *Wild Frontiers, London; 800/454-1080; jonny@wildfrontiers.com.*

## Carole A. Cambata

**Special booking** Cambata personally hosted a trip visiting Rajasthan sights by Cessna Citation private jet. In Jodhpur, the group met the city's former maharajah for tea and sailed on Lake Pichola in a 150-year-old royal boat. In a village outside Jaipur, a local opened his house to them for a rooftop dinner accompanied by musicians.

**Years as agent** 32.

**Other specialty** Bhutan.

**Contact** *Greaves Tours, Highland Park, Ill.; 800/318-7801; ccambata@greavestvl.com.*

## Ellison Poe

**Excited about** The city of Amritsar, in the Punjab region of northwestern India. There are grand sites—including Sri Harmandir Sahib, or the Golden Temple—and rewarding voluntourism opportunities. Poe often arranges for guests to volunteer at a Sikh *langar* (free communal kitchen) that feeds thousands of people a day.

**Years as agent** 30.

**Other specialty** Sri Lanka.

**Contact** *Poe Travel, Little Rock, Ark.; 800/727-1960; epoe@poetravel.com.*

## Ashish Sanghrajka

**New favorite** Sanghrajka loves the about-to-open Banyan Tree in Kerala, India, one of the region's few high-end eco-sensitive hotels. Located on a private island, the resort's rooms overlook the southern state's serene backwaters.

**Years as agent** 13.

**Other specialty** Kenya.

**Contact** *Big Five Tours & Expeditions, Stuart, Fla.; 800/244-3483; ashish@bigfive.com.*

## Pallavi Shah

*See Super-Agents.*

## Bob Watson

**Top tip** If you go to Delhi, take a city tour with the Salaam Balak Trust. The organization's student guides—many rescued from life on the streets—lead tours of where they used to live, usually through backroads and slums seldom seen by travelers.

**Years as agent** 28.

**Other specialty** Southeast Asia.

**Contact** *Valerie Wilson Travel, New York City; 914/701-3215; bobw@vwti.com.*

## JAPAN

## Noriko Townsend

**Excited about** Akiota-cho, a small town in southwestern Japan, for its artisans and soft adventure opportunities. Hike past waterfalls in a forest to the Sandankyo Gorge, known for its dramatic canyon walls. Back in Akiota-cho, stop at Yokohata Craft Shop for gorgeous, hand-carved kitchen utensils.

**Years as agent** 18.

**Other specialty** Southeast Asia.

**Contact** *Altour American Express Travel/Japan In Style, Fort Collins, Colo.; 877/737-1647; noriko.townsend@altour.com.*

## Duff Trimble

**New favorite** The Palace Hotel Tokyo, where many rooms have balconies overlooking the Imperial Palace grounds, a rare front-row seat in the capital. The hotel also has an excellent set of restaurants—from the six-seat tempura bar, Tatsumi, to the French-inflected Crown—and a buzzy, see-and-be-seen atmosphere.

**Years as agent** 12.

**Contact** *Wabi-Sabi Japan, Toronto; 647/477-1711; duff@wabi-sabijapan.com.*

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

## Catherine Heald

**Special booking** Heald planned an over-the-top Balinese wedding for a Brazilian couple that began with a traditional Hindu wedding ceremony on a beach—the couple, in Balinese dress, arrived via helicopter—before moving to the prince of Bali's palace, where guests danced in the dozens of pavilions and gardens.

**Years as agent** 9.

**Other specialty** Asia.

**Contact** *Remote Lands, New York*

*City; 646/415-8092; catherine.heald@remotelands.com.*

## Jarrold Hobson

**Special booking** Hobson (known as “the Indonesia guy” among colleagues) chartered a modern version of a traditional wooden spice-trading boat for a family traveling around Indonesia's Coral Triangle—what biologists call the Amazon of the Seas. Between trips to island villages, clients can snorkel right off the boat to see exotic corals, clown fish, and pygmy sea horses.

**Years as agent** 18.

**Contact** *Asia Transpacific*

*Journeys, Boulder, Colo.; 800/642-2742, ext. 223; jarrod@atj.com.*

## Sandee Litwin

**Top tip** Timing is everything when it comes to visiting Cambodia's Angkor Wat. “Have a private guide take you at 4:30 in the morning,” she says. “It's much cooler, you'll miss the crowds, and you'll see the sunrise over the temple domes.”

**Years as agent** 31.

**Other specialty** Europe.

**Contact** *Litwin Travel, Los Angeles; 310/470-7202; sandee@litwintravel.com.*

## Rebecca Mazzaro

**Discovery** The obscure but fabulous balloon festival in central Burma's Taunggyi, which takes place every November. Tribal villagers fashion handmade paper hot-air balloons (shapes range from roosters to life-size elephants) that are loaded with candles and fireworks, released, and eventually catch fire and explode into a light show.

**Years as agent** 15.

**Other specialty** India.

**Contact** *Asia Transpacific Journeys, Boulder, Colo.; 800/642-2742, ext. 233; rebecca@asiatranspacific.com.*

## Patrick O'Connell

**Special booking** For clients who wanted to see Vietnam's Ha Long Bay but didn't have much time, O'Connell chartered a helicopter to and from Hanoi. A private boat tour of the bay's islands was followed by a candlelit dinner in a limestone cave—they were back in the city by late evening.

**Years as agent** 14.

**Contact** *Asia Transpacific*

*Journeys, Boulder, Colo.; 800/642-2742, ext. 242; pat@atj.com.*

## Darlene Ravin

**New favorite** Bangkok's Siam Hotel, surrounded by palaces and temples, on the Chao Phraya River. All 39 suites and villas have plunge pools, as well as personal butlers and Art Deco lighting fixtures and furnishings. Don't miss a Thai twist on whiskey soda at Chon Thai Restaurant.

**Years as agent** 15.

**Other specialties** Africa and South America.

**Contact** *Worldview Travel, Santa Ana, Calif.; 303/929-8877; darleneravin@gmail.com.*



Kingsford Homestead, a 19th-century Georgian-style manor in Australia's Barossa Valley (see Cassandra Bookholder).



# AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, & THE SOUTH PACIFIC

## AUSTRALIA

### Catharina Apodac

**Excited about** Experiencing Sydney by water on a Sea Sydney cruise. The 52-foot Pacific motorboat makes its way from the urban center to the outskirts, passing landmarks such as the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge. Travelers can take in the sights, kayak, and sunbathe.

**Years as agent** 24.

**Other specialty** New Zealand. **Contact** *Carefree Vacations, San Diego*; 800/795-0720; [capodac@sdtg.com](mailto:capodac@sdtg.com).

### Cassandra Bookholder

**New favorite** The 225-acre Kingsford Homestead, on the edge of South Australia's Barossa Valley. Originally built in 1856 as a sheep station, it now has seven suites with crystal chandeliers, and L'Occitane amenities in spacious bathrooms. The slow-roasted Barossa lamb at the farm-to-table restaurant is a must-try.

**Years as agent** 7.

**Other specialty** New Zealand. **Contact** *Camelback Odyssey Travel, Phoenix*; 602/889-5902; [cassandrab@camelbacktravel.com](mailto:cassandrab@camelbacktravel.com).

### Terry Coffey

**New favorite** The 18-room Cicada Lodge, on the Katherine River in the remote Northern Territory, for its contemporary design paired with local Aboriginal art and unusual excursions. Helicopters are available to take guests to faraway swimming holes and ancient rock-art sites.

**Years as agent** 34.

**Other specialty** Pacific Rim. **Contact** *World Discoveries, Rumson, N.J.*; 732/741-6726; [agent@terryc.com](mailto:agent@terryc.com).

### Suzy Mercien-Ferol

**Excited about** Australian tour company Luxury Outback Tours' new outback excursions. Explore remote areas like the Gibb River Road (in the northwest) and Cape York (in the northeast) in a customized RV with reclining leather seats and a full galley kitchen. A support vehicle zips ahead to set up plush, safari-style tents for overnights in the bush.

**Years as agent** 19.

**Other specialty** New Zealand. **Contact** *Touring Treasures, Brighton, Australia*; 800/536-5328; [suzy.mercien@touringtreasures.com](mailto:suzy.mercien@touringtreasures.com).

## NEW ZEALAND

### Jean-Michel Jefferson

**Insider clout** One of Jefferson's clients spent a day horseback riding through a private high-country sheep station on the South Island. He then joined the owner at his house for a meal of local rabbit and lamb with New Zealand's preeminent landscape artist, Grahame Sydney, and poet laureate Brian Turner.

**Years as agent** 11.

**Contact** *Ahipara Luxury Travel, Central Otago, New Zealand; 64-3/447-3558; jean-michel@ahipara.com.*

## Donna Thomas

**Top tip** Thomas loves suggesting unexpected side trips. For people headed to the South Island, for example, she recommends a short hike to the pristine Ohau waterfalls, where they may find baby seals playing in the spray.

**Years as agent** 41.

**Other specialty** Australia.  
**Contact** *New Zealand Travel, Langhorne, Pa.; 800/367-5494; nztravel@aol.com.*

FRENCH POLYNESIA

## Susanne Hamer

**Excited about** On her last trip, Hamer discovered Mihiarii Pearls, a fantastic shop along one of Papeete's backstreets. "They have boxes of loose pearls in all price ranges. Choose your favorites and they'll make any jewelry you like on the spot."

**Years as agent** 18.

**Other specialties** Maldives and Seychelles.

**Contact** *TravelStore, Los Angeles; 310/689-5411; susanne.h@travelstore.com.*

## Robin Turner

**Top tip** InterContinental guests at any French Polynesian property can enjoy the facilities—the locker room, showers, pools, and the beach—at the InterContinental Resort Tahiti, Faa'a (the closest to the international airport) before taking the red-eye back to LAX.

**Years as agent** 25-plus.

**Other specialty** Maldives.

**Contact** *American Express Travel, Chicago; 800/627-2815, ext. 83207; robin.l.turner@aexp.com.*



Looking onto the Danube from the upper deck of the *Viking Odin*, from Viking Cruises (see Liz Sadie Sutton).



# CRUISING

## Claudia Gordon

**Top tip** While docked in Cape Town, stop in at Tribal Trends, where sibling owners Eugene and Anita Kramer have hand-selected items including painted ostrich eggs, woven fabrics, carved pots, and feathered lamps, most of which are made in South Africa.

**Years as agent** 33.

**Other specialty** Space travel.

**Contact** *Naples Luxury Travel Advisors, Naples, Fla.; 239/325-5040; claudia@naplesluxurytravel.com.*

## Scott Kertes

**Top tip** When traveling with Crystal Cruises or Regent Seven Seas Cruises—two of Kertes's favorite lines—ask about booking your next cruise while still on board. "You won't find this in print, but perks could include

cabin upgrades, generous ship credits, reduced deposit amounts, and more," Kertes says.

**Years as agent** 23.

**Other specialty** Group cruises.

**Contact** *Hartford Holidays Travel, Garden City, N.Y.; 516/746-6670, ext. 1003; scott@hartfordholidays.com.*

## Lois Moran

**Excited about** Moran advises travelers to skip the typical Venice port excursion and instead hop the 45-minute ferry to Torcello, in the northern part of the lagoon. The island is home to the seventh-century Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, known for its Byzantine mosaics.

**Years as agent** 40.

**Other specialty** Private jet travel.

**Contact** *Hurley Travel Experts, Naples, Fla.; 239/594-7400; lois@travelexperts.com.*

## Paul Niskanen ✓

**Discovery** The Vintage Room, the only restaurant on Crystal's *Serenity* and *Symphony* ships that requires an extra fee. "Menus are personally prepared by the ship's executive chef, the head sommelier handles all wine pairings, and the whole experience is limited to 12 to 14 guests a night," Niskanen says.

**Years as agent** 39.

**Other specialty** African safaris.

**Contact** *Cruise Masters/Concierge Travel Advisors, Portland, Ore.; 503/863-5400; paul@finevoyages.com.*

## Betsy Patton

**Special booking** Patton hosted a group of family and friends on a cruise through Alaska's Inside Passage. Among other once-in-a-lifetime experiences, the group saw orcas and humpback whales on a private shore excursion in Juneau, then hiked to a stream where they saw dozens of bald eagles diving for salmon.

**Years as agent** 35.

**Other specialty** Milestone celebrations.

**Contact** *Hurley Travel Experts, Naples, Fla.; 800/874-1743; betsy@travelexperts.com.*

**Mary Ann Ramsey** ✓*See Super-Agents.***Marcella Rappoport**

**Top tip** If you want to get one of the coveted seats at Silversea *Silver Spirit's* Le Champagne restaurant, known for its seasonally inspired dishes, talk to your personal butler. The dining room keeps a few tables open every night just for butler reservations.

**Years as agent** 31.

**Other specialty** Private jet travel.  
**Contact** *Ovation Travel, New York City; 212/329-7260; mrappoport@ovationtravel.com.*

**Steven Shulem**

**Excited about** High-end riverboats in the United States. The new *Queen of the Mississippi* has large staterooms with private balconies, a sundeck with outdoor fitness equipment, afternoon tea, and daily lectures by historians and other experts.

**Years as agent** 24.

**Other specialty** Luxury hotels.  
**Contact** *Strictly Vacations, Santa Barbara, Calif.; 805/682-1022; steve@strictlyvacations.com.*

**Liz Sadie Sutton** ✓

**New favorite** Viking Cruises' Longships, which currently ply the Danube, the Rhine, and other European rivers. Not only are the boats eco-friendly—solar power; organic herb gardens—they also have hotel-like suites with terraces and an alfresco dining room at the bow of the ship.

**Years as agent** 36.

**Other specialty** Caribbean.  
**Contact** *Alabama World Travel, Montgomery, Ala.; 334/260-2482; liz@suttonplanning.com.*

**Ruth Turpin**

**Insider clout** Turpin and her team keep a running file of great shops and restaurants for their cruise destinations (and since Turpin has gone on more than 200 cruises, it's quite a list). They send that intel to clients in advance, giving them a huge advantage in port.

**Years as agent** 34.

**Other specialty** River cruises.  
**Contact** *Cruises Etc. Travel, Fort Worth, Tex.; 817/732-6991; ruth@cruisestctravel.com.*



# FAMILY TRAVEL

**Julia P. Douglas** ✓

**Top tip** In foreign countries, Douglas arranges VIP airport meet-and-greets to assist families from the moment they exit the Jetway all the way through passport control and customs. "Getting lost or delayed with tired kids can ruin a trip before it starts," Douglas says.

**Years as agent** 8.

**Other specialty** South Pacific.  
**Contact** *Jet Set World Travel, Chicago; 312/574-1181; julia@jetsetworldtravel.com.*

**Jessica Griscavage**

**New favorite** Griscavage loves Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, just west of San Juan. The former Laurance S. Rockefeller hotel has been reborn as a 115-room property with 64 pools, imaginative artwork, and naturalist-led educational excursions through the surrounding forest canopy.

**Years as agent** 9.

**Other specialty** Honeymoons.  
**Contact** *McCabe World Travel, McLean, Va.; 703/762-5056; jessica@mccabeworld.com.*

**Paul J. Largay**

**Excited about** South Africa's 18,500-acre Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve & Wellness Retreat, with its kid-friendly Koro Lodge. The private villa is located in a predator-free zone, and offers dozens of activities, ranging from rock-art excursions and stargazing to guided treasure hunts and cooking lessons with the lodge's chef.

**Years as agent** 29.

**Other specialty** Adventure.  
**Contact** *Largay Travel, Waterbury, Conn.; 800/322-9481; paul@largaytravel.com.*

**Sam McClure** ★

**Excited about** The small but growing segment of families who are traveling the globe for a year or more. McClure not only pieces together lodging and itineraries

but also coordinates educational curricula so that children can easily return to school after the trip.

**Years as agent** 14.

**Contact** *Small World Travel, Austin, Tex.; 512/495-9495; sam@smallworld.travel.*

**Kathryn Sudeikis** ✓

**Insider clout** Clients with infants traveling to the desert city of Ouarzazate, Morocco, didn't bring enough diapers. When they couldn't find their preferred brand, Sudeikis had a box shipped to their hotel, Le Berbère Palace.

**Years as agent** 44.

**Other specialty** India.  
**Contact** *Acendas, Mission, Kans.; 913/671-7700; ksudeikis@acendas.com.*

**Kimberly Wilson****Wetty** ✓

**Discovery** Tendido 1 restaurant, in Granada, Spain, which serves delicious tapas (and Riojas, for parents), is located within the brick walls of a bullfighting ring. "It sets the stage for a fascinating conversation with children about Spanish heritage and the bullfighting ritual," Wetty says.

**Years as agent** 18.

**Other specialty** Cruises.  
**Contact** *Valerie Wilson Travel, New York City; 212/592-1218; kimberlyww@vwti.com.*



# SPECIAL INTEREST

BUSINESS TRAVEL

**Jennifer Wilson-Buttigieg**

**Top tip** Stay close to home but feel like you're in Europe by booking a meeting at the Blantyre, a Relais & Châteaux property in Lenox, Massachusetts. The Tudor mansion spans 117 bucolic acres, with tennis and golf in the summer and snowshoeing and cross-country skiing come winter.

**Years as agent** 22.

**Other specialty** Family travel.  
**Contact** *Valerie Wilson Travel, New York City; 212/592-1210; jenniferwb@vwti.com.*

HOTELS

**Priscilla Alexander** ✓*See Super-Agents.***Manny Beauregard**

**New favorite** Fresh from an eight-year renovation, the Efendi Hotel in seaside Akko, near Haifa, Israel, has 12 rooms, individually decorated in an Ottoman style. There's also a stone-walled wine cellar—ideal for a romantic dinner—and a 400-year-old hammam.

**Years as agent** 41.

**Other specialty** Small-ship cruises.  
**Contact** *Valerie Wilson Travel, Atlanta; 404/231-0260; mannyb@vwti.com.*

**Jack Bloch**

**Excited about** Cartagena's Casa San Agustín, located within the old city walls. The 31-room hotel is set in three renovated colonial buildings. "The property also has its own fleet of yachts so guests can visit Cartagena's neighboring islands," Bloch says.

**Years as agent** 36.

**Other specialty** Private cultural experiences.  
**Contact** *JB's World Travel Consultants, New York City; 212/582-6670; jackb@jbsworld.com.*

## Valerie Ann Wilson

See Super-Agents.

## Bobby Zur

**Excited about** The opening, later this year, of the 43-villa Vela Private Island Resort, in the Maldives. With a My Blend by Clarins overwater spa and several over-the-top residences, it will bring a new level of style-meets-substance to the area.

**Years as agent** 12.

**Other specialty** Southern Africa. **Contact** *Travel Artistry, Franklin Lakes, N.J.*; 201/848-4113; bobby@travelartistry.com.

### SPAS AND WELLNESS

## Karen Benson

**Discovery** The contemporary and candlelit Vair Spa at the 40-acre Borgo Egnazia hotel, in Puglia, Italy, where olive-tree-lined walkways link villas and other buildings, making it feel like a small village. "Get the lavender-and-olive-oil scrub; the masseuse uses products from the region," Benson says.

**Years as agent** 29.

**Other specialty** Adventure.

**Contact** *Camelback Odyssey Travel, Phoenix*; 602/889-5862; karenb@camelbacktravel.com.

## Maureen "Mo" Smith

**Top tip** Don't miss the Andean Experience at the Sol y Luna Lodge & Spa, in Peru's Sacred Valley. A warm hydrotherapy soak with salts and essential oils is followed by a steam bath, an hour-long massage, and a reviving session in a whirlpool, perfect with a glass of chilled white wine.

**Years as agent** 36.

**Other specialty** Italy.

**Contact** *Travel Smith, Hilton Head Island, S.C.*; 843/815-8100; mo@travelxperts.com.

### CULTURE/EDUCATION

## Margery Hunter

**Excited about** The Åmot Opera Farm, a 120-year-old, Swiss-style farmhouse hotel in Sunnfjord, Norway, that doubles as an international opera house. It has an idyllic setting and draws some of the world's best singers.

**Years as agent** 30.

**Other specialties** New Zealand, Asia, and Europe.

**Contact** *Rudi Steele Travel, Dallas*; 214/522-2777; margery@rudisteel.com.

### DESTINATION CELEBRATIONS

## Jody Bear ★

**Insider clout** When a mechanical problem delayed a client's flight to South Africa's Singita Lebombo Lodge past the nightfall cutoff time, Bear secured special permission for her client's plane to land after dark and organized a night safari beginning at the airstrip upon arrival. The group spotted a lion just after getting in the jeep.

**Years as agent** 35.

**Other specialty** Around-the-world travel.

**Contact** *Bear & Bear/Tzell Travel Group, New York City*; 212/340-0301; jodyb@beartvl.com.

## John Clifford

**Excited about** Secret Cinema, a London-based company that fuses film and art in surprising locations to re-create the world of a film, such as *Prometheus* or *Lawrence of Arabia*. "It's interactive theater. You become a part of the story," Clifford says. It's expanding to Paris and New York soon.

**Years as agent** 28.

**Other specialty** Gay and lesbian travel.

**Contact** *International Travel Management, San Diego*; 619/299-2359; john@internationaltravelmanagement.com.

## Jack S. Ezon ✓

See Super-Agents.

### DIVING

## Gene Lashley

**Special booking** When a diving enthusiast wanted to surprise her husband on their honeymoon, Lashley booked private scuba lessons for him during the couple's stay at the Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora. By the time the couple boarded the *Paul Gauguin* for a cruise to Tahiti, he was certified to dive with his new wife.

**Years as agent** 27.

**Other specialty** Adventure.

**Contact** *Century Travel, Atlanta*; 404/478-8888; gene@centurytvl.com.

### FOOD AND WINE

## Lynda Turley Garrett

**Discovery** Garrett seeks out lesser-known wine regions. For Australia-bound clients she recommends McLaren Vale,

known for its Shiraz. It's similar to the popular Barossa Valley, but more intimate (think Paso Robles versus Napa Valley).

**Years as agent** 33.

**Other specialty** Australia and New Zealand.

**Contact** *Alpine Travel of Saratoga, Saratoga, Calif.*; 408/379-3853; lyndat@alpine-travel.com.

## Bonnie Brayham Herman

**New favorite** Focusing exclusively on Italy and France, Herman and her team are always on the lookout for under-the-radar hotels in some of the world's best-known food destinations. She loves the Relais San Sanino, in the heart of Tuscany, with its four spacious suites, saltwater pool overlooking a medieval village, and private olive oil label.

**Years as agent** 5.

**Other specialty** Experiential travel.

**Contact** *Purple Truffle, Paris*; 415/670-9294; bonnie@purpletruffle.com.

### GAY AND LESBIAN TRAVEL

## David Rubin

**Excited about** The historic and LEED-certified Inn at the Presidio, located in San Francisco's 1,500-acre Presidio Park, which was once an army post. Originally constructed in 1903 to house bachelor officers, the property now has 26 contemporary guest accommodations filled with local memorabilia.

**Years as agent** 17.

**Other specialty** Destination celebrations.

**Contact** *DavidTravel, Corona del Mar, Calif.*; 949/723-0699; david@davidtravel.com.

### GOLF

## Susan A. Dischner

**New favorite** The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain, outside of Tucson, Arizona, with its 27 holes designed by Jack Nicklaus. Through her contacts, at this and other courses, Dischner can secure a tee time even when the concierge says the day is fully booked.

**Years as agent** 47.

**Other specialty** Luxury cruises.

**Contact** *Four Seasons Travel, Savannah, Ga.*; 912/598-8000; susan@fourseasonstrvl.com.

## Jani Miller ✓

**Insider clout** A client wanted to propose to his girlfriend on the 18th hole at Pebble Beach Resorts. Miller ensured that it happened without interruptions—no easy feat on the popular waterfront course.

**Years as agent** 36.

**Other specialty** Adventure.

**Contact** *Central Travel, Toledo, Ohio*; 419/897-2070; jani@centraltravel.com.

### INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS

## Duane Penner ★

**Insider clout** Thanks to Penner's private contact list of sports-industry insiders, his clients can be guests of specific race teams at the Monaco Grand Prix. That means they meet the drivers, visit garages, have access to the team paddock, and enjoy the race itself from a sought-after vantage point.

**Years as agent** 15.

**Contact** *Roadtrips, Winnipeg, Manitoba*; 204/947-7185; duane.penner@roadtrips.com.

### WEDDINGS AND HONEYMOONS

## Harlan DeBell and Kara Bebell ★

**Discovery** The three-story suite in the medieval Torre Prendiparte, in Bologna, Italy. The tower's 40-person terrace at this one-bedroom B&B has incredible city views and is perfect for an intimate wedding. After their ceremony, the bride and groom have the tower suite all to themselves.

**Years as agent** 16.

**Other specialty** Pet travel.

**Contact** *The Travel Siblings at Tzell Travel Group, New York City*; 212/340-0316; harland@tzell.com or karab@tzell.com.

## Doug Easton ★

**Special booking** For honeymooners seeking a royal welcome in India, Easton arranged a dinner hosted by a Moghul nobleman in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Richly colored saris and formalwear (designed by the host's wife) were sent to their hotel rooms in advance. A 1956 Packard took the guests to the raja's *haveli* (town house) for drinks in the museum-like salon, followed by a private musical performance on a lantern-lit roof and a dinner prepared by the raja's chef.

**Years as agent** 8.  
**Other specialty** African safaris.  
**Contact** *Celestielle, West Hollywood, Calif.*; 310/339-3226; [doug@celestiellegroup.com](mailto:doug@celestiellegroup.com).

## Peter Lloyd

**New favorite** For couples looking for a sleek and sophisticated experience, Lloyd recommends the Bulgari Hotel & Residences, in London. “The attention to detail in the 85 guest rooms—Italian silk furnishings and Marquina marble bathrooms—is some of the finest I’ve seen.”

**Years as agent** 23.  
**Other specialty** Italy.  
**Contact** *Century Travel, Atlanta*; 404/324-4019; [peter@centurytv.com](mailto:peter@centurytv.com).

## ADVENTURE

## Michelle Bemis

**Excited about** The growing popularity of Iceland for its varied wildlife and geological phenomena. “Cruise lines such as Lindblad Expeditions and Regent Seven Seas are adding the destination to their itineraries to meet demand,” Bemis notes.

**Years as agent** 9.  
**Other specialty** River and ocean cruises.  
**Contact** *McCabe World Travel, McLean, Va.*; 703/762-5049; [michelle@mccabeworld.com](mailto:michelle@mccabeworld.com).

## Betty Jo Currie

**Top tip** Many itineraries in Burma don’t allow for time to get off the beaten path in the river-filled region surrounding Inle Lake. Build in a few days to explore the area’s picturesque fishing villages via boat and be sure to stop at one of the many floating cafés for the daily catch.

**Years as agent** 20.  
**Other specialty** Africa.  
**Contact** *Currie & Co. Travels Unlimited, Atlanta*; 404/254-5677; [bettyjo@curriecotravels.com](mailto:bettyjo@curriecotravels.com).

## Brooke Garnett ★

**Excited about** Australia’s Northern Territory, where travelers can have an authentic Aboriginal experience with expert guide Sab Lord (who grew up near Arnhem Land and Kakadu

National Park), then head to Bamurru Plains for a couple of nights in a safari-style tent.  
**Years as agent** 8.  
**Other specialty** Australia.  
**Contact** *Absolute Travel, New York City*; 212/627-1950; [bgarnett@absolutetravel.com](mailto:bgarnett@absolutetravel.com).

## Florine Herendeen ★

**Special booking** Herendeen recently planned a trip to Indonesia so that clients could experience the rich culture of Bali and Borobudur, encounter orangutans in Borneo and the Komodo dragons on the Komodo Islands, and snorkel off some lesser-known islands.  
**Years as agent** 27.  
**Contact** *Journeys International, Ann Arbor, Mich.*; 734/665-4407; [florine@journeys.travel](mailto:florine@journeys.travel).

## Susan Sparks ★

**New favorite** Mukul Beach, Golf & Spa, on an unspoiled Pacific beach in Nicaragua—the country’s first five-star resort. Among the 37-room property’s other activities (snorkeling, hiking, and diving), there’s mountain biking along a seven-mile stretch of jungle nature trails. “It’s a game changer for Nicaragua,” Sparks says.  
**Years as agent** 26.  
**Other specialty** Biking.  
**Contact** *Points of Interest Travel, Aspen, Colo.*; 970/925-5855; [susan@poitraveler.com](mailto:susan@poitraveler.com).

## Doris White

**Discovery** This hiking and walking specialist loves to send clients to Gspon, in Switzerland. The small, peaceful hamlet above the Vispa River Valley in the Swiss Alps has beautiful and well-marked hiking trails, some of which are accessible only by ski lifts and gondolas.  
**Years as agent** 25.  
**Other specialty** Europe.  
**Contact** *Cadence, La Jolla, Calif.*; 858/551-4560; [doris@doristrips.com](mailto:doris@doristrips.com).

## DIVING

## Robert Becker ★

**Discovery** The Komodo Resort Diving Club, in Selayar Island, Indonesia. Even the most

seasoned divers will be amazed by the schools of tropical fish, giant manta rays, and brilliantly colored corals that can be spotted just outside the resort’s doors.  
**Years as agent** 27.  
**Other specialty** Adventure.  
**Contact** *Protravel Active Adventures / Beckersphere, New York City*; 212/409-9527; [robert.becker@protravelinc.com](mailto:robert.becker@protravelinc.com).

## FLY-FISHING

## Betsy Donley ✓

**Insider clout** Thanks to contacts in nomad communities of Mongolia, Donley can arrange a taimen fly-fishing excursion on the remote Delgar River. A local support staff not only cooks delicious food but also sets up yurt camps to keep adventurers comfortable.

**Years as agent** 22.  
**Other specialty** Adventure.  
**Contact** *Camelback Odyssey Travel, Phoenix*; 602/889-5909; [betsyd@camelbacktravel.com](mailto:betsyd@camelbacktravel.com).

## Mollie Fitzgerald

**Special booking** A Northern Hemisphere fly-fishing trip took a Fitzgerald client from one remote location to the next: the Breiddalsa River in Iceland for brown trout; northern Russia’s Kola Peninsula for Atlantic salmon; Mongolia for lenok fishing; and British Columbia for steelhead.  
**Years as agent** 28.  
**Other specialty** Adventure.  
**Contact** *Frontiers International Travel, Gibsons, Pa.*; 724/935-1577; [mollie@frontierstravel.com](mailto:mollie@frontierstravel.com).

## PHOTOGRAPHY

## Janie Bullard

**Insider clout** Bullard’s extensive connections have enabled her to plan trips for clients including a week with landscape photographers David Muench and Jack Dykinga, an expedition to Canada’s Northern Territories to shoot private burial grounds with a First Nations chief, and a panda-bear trek in China.  
**Years as agent** 29.  
**Other specialties** South Africa, Botswana, and Kenya.  
**Contact** *Distinctive Journeys, Powder Springs, Ga.*; 770/888-6677; [janie@distinctive-journeys.com](mailto:janie@distinctive-journeys.com).

## AIR TRAVEL

## Michael Holtz

**Excited about** Lufthansa’s first-class airport lounges. “The airline takes the gold medal,” Holtz says. At the Frankfurt Airport, Lufthansa has a private building that’s exclusively dedicated to its first-class passengers, who get lounge-to-plane transports in a Porsche or Mercedes-Benz across the tarmac.

**Years as agent** 23.  
**Other specialty** Australia.  
**Contact** *SmartFlyer, New York City*; 212/268-9088; [michael@smartflyer.com](mailto:michael@smartflyer.com).

## PRIVATE JET TRAVEL

## David Lowy ✓

**Insider clout** Lowy thrives on “wow” moments—when people achieve something they didn’t know was possible, especially private access to popular museums and galleries. In the past, he’s arranged a solo tour of the Sistine Chapel and a buyout of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo to view all the artifacts with no one else around.

**Years as agent** 27.  
**Other specialty** Ultra-luxe travel.  
**Contact** *Renshaw Travel, Vancouver*, 604/733-1010; [dlowy@renshawtravel.com](mailto:dlowy@renshawtravel.com).

 For full profiles on all of T+L’s 2013 A-List agents, visit [travelandleisure.com/a-list](http://travelandleisure.com/a-list).

**INSIDE THE T+L A-LIST** Some agents work for agencies owned by or affiliated with American Express, the parent company of this magazine. Fourteen are members of T+L’s Travel Advisory Board (TAAB); we have noted this in their entries. **NOMINATIONS** If you know of an agent who should be considered for T+L’s 2014 A-List, send an e-mail with a brief description of the agent’s qualifications, as well as contact information, to [talist@aexp.com](mailto:talist@aexp.com).

TRAVEL+LEISURE

# THE A-LIST

THE 161 TOP TRAVEL AGENTS

In the hands of an expert, a simple vacation can become a life-changing journey: an unforgettable adventure; a soul-restoring retreat; an education unmatched in any classroom. For our 12th annual look at the best advisers in the business, we asked these travel pros to share their latest discoveries and insider tips from around the world. Wherever your travels take you—from cruising in Antarctica to a walking safari in Zambia—we have the agent for you.

EDITED BY AMY FARLEY

REPORTED BY STIRLING KELSO



CONGRATULATES  
THE A-LIST  
TRAVEL EXPERTS

The terrace café at  
Monteverdi, a hilltop retreat  
in Tuscany's Val d'Orcia.