



Visiting a restricted archaeological dig in southern Turkey. Tracking snow leopards in Mongolia. Taking a private tour of the Kremlin's collection of Fabergé eggs. Some of the most extraordinary experiences can be had only with the help of a well-connected travel advisor. In *Travel + Leisure's* 16th annual A-List, we showcase the 139 best agents and tour operators in the business—the destination experts, wedding planners, family-reunion organizers, and cruise specialists who can help devise your next trip of a lifetime.

Edited by **CHRISTOPHER TKACZYK** Reported by **STIRLING KELSO** Illustrations by **MIKEY BURTON**

# MEXICO CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

Experts

## ARGENTINA AND CHILE

### Jordan Harvey

Since 2009, Harvey has built his boutique firm into a company that works with more than 500 clients a year. His mission is to connect travelers craving local experiences with artists, chefs, architects, and photographers. When Argentina's Lago Moreno became overrun with crowds, Harvey created a kayaking and picnic adventure on nearby Lago Mascardi, a pristine lake that's virtually tourist-free. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$300

612-616-8747, ext. 101; [travel@knowmadadventures.com](mailto:travel@knowmadadventures.com)

## ARGENTINA, CHILE, AND URUGUAY

### Maita Barrenechea

When he's not advising hoteliers throughout Uruguay on how to upgrade their properties, Barrenechea organizes travel for execs and celebrities visiting South America. Along with room upgrades and late checkouts, Barrenechea often surprises clients with gifts such as an Argentinean perfume or a monogrammed belt buckle. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$300

54-11-4314-3390; [maita@mai10.com.ar](mailto:maita@mai10.com.ar)

## BRAZIL

### Martin Frankenberg

What distinguishes this São Paulo-based specialist from the competition? In addition to being able to secure VIP tickets to events like Rio's Carnival, Frankenberg operates his own yachts on the Amazon and enjoys exclusive access to waterfront and jungle villas. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$800 per couple

55-11-3071-4515; [martin@matuete.com](mailto:martin@matuete.com)

### Paul Irvine

As the luxury travel market in Brazil continues to expand, Irvine is especially excited about encouraging interest in urban neighborhoods off the usual tourist trails (Rio's Botafogo, for example). Recently, Irvine had a private villa in Rio custom-decorated according to his client's wishes. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$800

800-690-6899; [paul.irvine@dehouche.com](mailto:paul.irvine@dehouche.com)

## CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

### Emmanuel Burgio

Burgio's bespoke adventures have included guided biking tours of Buenos Aires's Palermo neighborhood and meetings with Easter Island's Rapa Nui communities. Burgio likes

to include village stops on itineraries to give travelers a glimpse of rural South American life. En route to Cuzco, for example, one of his clients visited the ancient town of Piñimpampa to see families making tiles according to generations-old practices. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$1,000

301-263-6670; [emmanuel@blueparallel.com](mailto:emmanuel@blueparallel.com)

### Barkley Hickox

Hickox inspects dozens of hotels in any given location so she can best pair properties with her clients. She also has an eye for special experiences, such as tours of contemporary art galleries in Mexico City, hikes in Brazil's Lençóis Maranhenses National Park, and stays in vineyard lodges in Argentina. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$1,500 per couple

646-455-3101; [barkley.hickox@localforeigner.com](mailto:barkley.hickox@localforeigner.com)

### Beth Jenkins

Jenkins is a strong consumer advocate, negotiating great rates at hotels. In her early 30s, she's also a pro at working with adventure-minded millennial travelers. She's often able to open doors that are closed to most, like scoring tables at sought-after restaurants. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$500 per couple

703-762-5048; [beth@mccabeworld.com](mailto:beth@mccabeworld.com)

### Gisela Polo

Passionate about environmentally conscious travel, Polo organizes trips that showcase the best eco-lodges, little-known nature reserves, leading sustainable farms, and artisan communities. Polo travels to her native Peru a few times a year, so she's especially well-versed in the country's popular cities and best-kept secrets. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$850 per couple

772-287-7995, ext. 2212; [gisela@bigfive.com](mailto:gisela@bigfive.com)

## CHILE

### Brian Pearson

The Upscape Travel CEO works best with clients who want a more authentic experience—even if that sometimes means more rustic accommodations. For a client looking to combine adventure and luxury, Pearson might plan a tour of the Chilean Lake District and northern Patagonia that involves sailing, horseback riding, and private vineyard visits. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$500

802-904-6798; [brian@upscapetravel.com](mailto:brian@upscapetravel.com)

## COLOMBIA

### Marc Beale

Having spent the past six years traveling nearly every inch of his adopted country, Beale has uncovered travel secrets that few other outfitters know. His portfolio includes family-owned inns in coffee country and the less-visited Tatacoa Desert. He has created Gabriel García Márquez-themed itineraries that stop in the writer's birth town of Aracataca, the untamed Tayrona National Park, and Cartagena. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$300

646-736-7582; [marc@amakuna.com](mailto:marc@amakuna.com)

## GALÁPAGOS AND ECUADOR

### Brian Morgan

Call Morgan to set up your Galápagos trip—whether an island-hopping cruise or a science-focused expedition—as well as mainland tours that include kayaking, hiking, fishing, and visits to coffee plantations. He is as well-versed in creating backpack-style value trips as he is with ultra-luxury adventures. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$300

406-541-2677; [gogalapagos@adventure-life.com](mailto:gogalapagos@adventure-life.com)

## MEXICO

### Zachary Rabinor

Rabinor has worked as a tour leader, driver, guide, and logistician, giving him an inside perspective on the planning process. He collaborates with the country's best hotels on everything from wellness-focused Tulum getaways to cultural trips to San Miguel de Allende. He can book special excursions like a helicopter trip to Tequila La Fortaleza, in Jalisco, a distillery where clients sample spirits over lunch. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$800

800-513-1587; [zachary@journeymexico.com](mailto:zachary@journeymexico.com)

## PERU

### Thomas Robinson

Quarterly trips to Peru mean Robinson stays abreast of the country's exciting food scene, expanding hospitality options (private villas are a specialty), and adventure experiences such as the Sacred Valley hiking trails. He is deeply interested in Incan history, and he's particularly adept at creating trips to lesser-known sites such as Vilcabamba, the last Incan stronghold. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$450

800-690-6899; [thomas.robinson@dehouche.com](mailto:thomas.robinson@dehouche.com)

## SOUTH AMERICAN FOOD AND WINE

### Liz Caskey

A cookbook author and sommelier, Caskey is an ace at arranging culinary travel in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, and Ecuador. Recent trips for clients have included stays in an old hacienda in Chile's wine-rich Colchagua Valley and a surfing and wine-tasting itinerary along the coast near Pichilemu. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$550

904-687-0340; [liz@lizcaskey.com](mailto:liz@lizcaskey.com)

# U.S. CANADA & CARIBBEAN EXPERTS

## HAWAII

### Marilyn Clark

Clark—who books 140 trips to Hawaii a year—is one of a handful of people who have certification as a Master Specialist for each of Hawaii's six major islands, given to those with particular expertise in the state's history and culture. She's also a master of flexibility: for a recent family trip to Maui, the mom and dad teed off at Kapalua Golf Club, while the kids went ziplining in the West Maui Mountains. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$400

844-339-1774; [marilyn@lighthousetravel.net](mailto:marilyn@lighthousetravel.net)

### Stacy Small

Small spends half the year in Hawaii jumping between islands to vet resorts and hotels, meet with local tour guides, and critique new restaurants. She's especially knowledgeable about Hawaiian wellness travel and keeps a little black book full of private yoga instructors, acupuncturists, and Reiki healers. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$700

516-351-5907; [stacy@elitetravelinternational.com](mailto:stacy@elitetravelinternational.com)

## NAPA VALLEY AND SONOMA

### Michelle Murré

While Murré often works with oenophile clients interested in premier bottles and exclusive tastings, she also knows what the region offers beyond wine

and food: scenic drives, dramatic cliff-side beaches, and family-friendly parks and hiking trails. Murré has access to wineries that aren't open to the public as well as wine-making rituals (harvest parties, grape crushes) at top vineyards. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$500

415-796-3869; [michelle@azurinetravel.com](mailto:michelle@azurinetravel.com)

## NEW YORK CITY

### Lia Batkin

Batkin and her partner, Seth Kaplan, created their travel firm for savvy explorers—those who crave insider knowledge and local connections. For a fashionista client, Batkin arranged a meeting with a top shoe designer to create custom-made pumps. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$2,000

212-776-1784; [lia@itkexp.com](mailto:lia@itkexp.com)

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST

### Sheri Doyle

Doyle's trips pair food and soft adventure in British Columbia, Oregon, and Washington, including sea-kayaking excursions in the San Juan Islands and culinary road trips. Her highly detailed itineraries have smart, timely suggestions, such as street festivals worth a detour and pop-up restaurants. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$300

800-935-9730; [info@pnujourneys.com](mailto:info@pnujourneys.com)

## THE WEST

### Harold C. Jenkins

Jenkins knows the American West's rugged secrets—he visits at least four times a year to scout private fishing spots and road-trip routes, gather intel on ski mountains, and meet with knowledgeable guides who can lead backcountry excursions. For a school group, Jenkins once created a trip that highlighted Lewis and Clark Expedition sites, hiring actors to work with the students on a re-enactment of the exploration party. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$1,000

847-257-6262; [hcjvp@travel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hcjvp@travel@sbcglobal.net)

## THE CARIBBEAN

### Margie Hand

Hand is known for securing the best tables at restaurants, inspecting boats for private snorkeling charters, and vetting guides' handling of group dynamics on island tours. She pays close attention to amenities geared toward families (kids' clubs and menus, cribs, diaper services) and seniors (bed railings, wheelchair-ready showers). **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$500

888-234-0046; [margie.hand@andavotravel.com](mailto:margie.hand@andavotravel.com)

### Janet McLaughlin

McLaughlin personally inspects every villa or hotel she recommends to guests. Even on islands dominated by all-inclusives, she makes a point of getting to know the best options beyond the resorts. She keeps tabs on details like chef turnover at restaurants—"the entire vibe can change," she notes—and knows local shop owners who showcase regional products rather than dime-a-dozen souvenirs. **MIN DAILY SPEND** \$350

513-533-7867; [jmclaughlin@providentravel.com](mailto:jmclaughlin@providentravel.com)