

TRAVEL+LEISURE

— PRESENTS —

THE

A helicopter hike on a New Zealand glacier. Witnessing priest-led rituals in an Indian Hindu temple. Attending a calligraphy lesson in Japan. Some of the most extraordinary experiences can be had only with the help of a well-connected travel agent. In *Travel + Leisure's* 15th annual A-List, we showcase the 137 best specialists in the business—destination authorities, honeymoon planners, family-reunion whizzes, cruise experts—to help take your trip to the next level.

Edited by LINDSEY OLANDER
Reported by STIRLING KELSO



ASIA EXPERTS

(continued)

INDONESIA

Jarrold Hobson

Called “the Indonesia guy” by his colleagues, Hobson is the go-to for planning trips both classic and current in Bali, Java, and beyond: private-yacht charters, daylong mountain drives, and honeymoons that string together stays at Bali’s best resorts.

BEST FOR families, adventure, honeymooners, luxury seekers
720-881-5575; jarrod@asiatranspacific.com

JAPAN

Mark Lakin

Lakin’s itineraries focus on the preservation of Japan’s culture and tradition. A few highlights include making baskets with one of the country’s foremost bamboo weavers and attending lantern-lighting ceremonies at temples typically closed to the public.

BEST FOR cultural immersion, philanthropic travel
646-580-3026; ml@epicroad.com

Noriko Townsend

This Aomori native excels at working with different age groups. She’s arranged origami lessons for kids, entertained teens with J-pop concerts, set up flower-arranging classes for moms, and sent car-loving dads to the speedway at the foothills of Mount Fuji for a spin with professional drivers.

BEST FOR culture buffs, multigenerational families
970-631-8621; noriko.townsend@altour.com

Duff Trimble

Trimble invests considerable time and resources in order to show travelers the “lost Japan.” A trip might include strolling the sandy streets of faraway islands, visiting monkeys on the UNESCO World Heritage—designated island of Yakushima, and uncovering still-hidden restaurants and shops in Tokyo and Kyoto.

BEST FOR luxury seekers, off-the-beaten-path itineraries
647-477-1711; duff@wabi-sabijapan.com

MALDIVES

Justin Parkinson

Which of the 100-plus Maldivian resorts is right for you? Parkinson has stayed in scores of them, evaluating each property against a checklist of attributes (the quality of the spa therapists, the privacy of accommodations) so he can perfectly match clients with their dream stay.

BEST FOR honeymooners, multigenerational families, luxury seekers
818-292-8738; justin@linaratravel.com

MYANMAR

Rebecca Mazzaro

With Mazzaro, you’ll go beyond the usual sights and attractions of Bagan and Yangon with activities like a hot-air-balloon ride over Inle Lake or a guided trek through scenic jungles and secluded villages between Inle and the interior town of Kalaw.

BEST FOR adventure, culture buffs,

off-the-beaten-path itineraries
720-881-5568; rebecca@asiatranspacific.com

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Andrea Ross

Ross’s company, Journeys Within, runs about 200 trips per year to Southeast Asia, and she excels at itineraries that pair the region’s top guides, hotels, and behind-the-scenes experiences with philanthropic endeavors like volunteering at a local community center.

BEST FOR voluntourism, eco-travel, adventure
877-454-3672; andrea@journeys-within.com

THAILAND

Holly Monahan

Annual trips keep Monahan up-to-date on Bangkok’s best emerging neighborhoods and which islands remain under the radar. A vegan herself, she’s also an expert at helping those with food allergies navigate Thailand’s diverse culinary scene.

BEST FOR unusual experiences, honeymooners
212-627-1950; hmonahan@absolute-travel.com

U.S. & CANADA EXPERTS



HAWAII

Marilyn Clark

Let Clark, one of only 11 individuals with Master Specialist certifications for Hawaii’s six major islands, be your source for trips that combine culture, history, romance, and local intel (Maui’s best gluten-free sweetshop, an exotic-animal sanctuary on the Big Island).

BEST FOR foodies, culture buffs, history lovers, wellness, honeymooners, destination weddings
844-339-1774; marilyn@lighthouse-travel.net

NAPA VALLEY AND SONOMA

Michelle Murré

Tap Murré if you want to visit wineries that aren’t open to the public, take part in harvest parties at top vineyards, or venture beyond Napa to little-known hiking trails and cliff-side beaches.

BEST FOR foodies, couples, multigenerational families
415-796-3869; michelle@azurine-travel.com

NEW YORK CITY

Lia Batkin

Batkin and her partner, Seth Kaplan, are known for granting unprecedented access to her hometown’s greatest hits—they can line

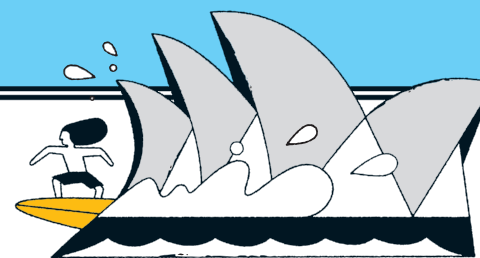
a Manhattan street with food trucks for a birthday, arrange an Eloise-themed tea party at the Plaza, and schedule a dance lesson with the Rockettes.
BEST FOR millennials, foodies, fashion lovers, luxury seekers
212-776-1784; lia@itkexp.com

PACIFIC NORTHWEST AND CANADA

Sheri Doyle

Doyle excels at planning itineraries that pair cuisine with adventure, such as gourmet kayaking trips through the San Juan Islands or scenic drives punctuated by farm-fueled restaurants with overnights at independently owned inns.

BEST FOR foodies, adventure, road trippers
800-935-9730; info@pnwjournays.com



AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND & THE SOUTH PACIFIC EXPERTS

AUSTRALIA

Cassandra Bookholder

Bookholder is always on the lookout for new ways to explore old favorites. Her latest finds include Brae, a farm-to-table restaurant in Birregurra, and her standbys include coastal treks outside Sydney—ideal escapes for those who don’t have time to venture farther into the interior.

BEST FOR foodies, multigenerational families, adventure
602-889-5902; cassandrab@camel-backtravel.com

Suzy Mercien-Ferol

Mercien-Ferol attracts a big-budget clientele with made-from-scratch itineraries that can tap in to Australia’s cosmopolitan attractions as well as its bush luxury—like scoring the best suite at Kangaroo Island’s Southern Ocean Lodge or seeing Tasmania’s islands from the air.

BEST FOR luxury seekers, adventure, off-the-beaten-path itineraries
800-536-5328; suzy.mercien@touring-treasures.com

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Susanne Hamer

In a region that offers many packaged

vacations, Hamer creates South Pacific trips with a personal touch, taking scouting trips to find the best overwater bungalows for views and privacy as well as new shops, restaurants, and local experiences.

BEST FOR celebration trips, honeymooners, families
310-689-5411; susanne.h@travel-store.com

Robin L. Turner

Turner has made it her mission to find hidden value at the islands’ top properties. She also loves setting the scene for romantic moments—like helicopter rides to the heart-shaped Tupai atoll and candlelit dinners on the beach.

BEST FOR honeymooners, adventure, active travel
866-901-1234, ext. 83207; robin.l.turner@aexp.com

Christina Turrini

This Tahiti insider knows all the right people to make almost any dream a reality—proposal photographers, an around-the-clock fitness trainer, a top Tahitian tattoo artist—and loves to throw in surprises like a canoe breakfast, a romantic beach dinner, or private shopping at a black-pearl jeweler.

BEST FOR romance, adventure
800-638-0600, ext. 305; christina.turrini@frosch.com

NEW ZEALAND

Jean-Michel Jefferson

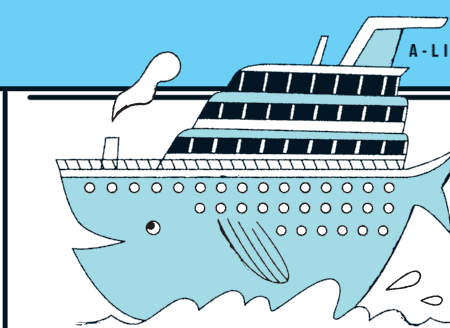
No request is off-limits for Jefferson, who has set up 4 x 4 trips across the Southern Alps and planned Maori blessings on a sacred mountain.

BEST FOR adventure, luxury seekers, off-the-beaten-path itineraries
64-3-447-3558; jean-michel@ahipara.com

Donna Thomas

Thomas has explored many corners of North and South Islands in search of hidden gems. She can help bird-watchers see the endangered yellow-eyed penguin or send avid trekkers on guided hikes to secret waterfalls in Paparoa National Park.

BEST FOR celebration trips, adventure, families
800-367-5494; nztravel@aol.com



CRUISING EXPERTS

LARGE AND SMALL SHIPS

Scott Kertes

Those who have attempted to make sense of a cruise’s fine print—which restaurants you can access at an all-inclusive rate, how much Wi-Fi costs, what is considered a premium drink—will understand Kertes’s value. He’s sailed on all the most popular lines and hunts for the best prices and packages.

BEST FOR couples, baby boomers, groups
800-828-4813, ext. 1003; scott@vbdusa.com

Ruth Turpin

With more than 200 cruises under her belt, Turpin has a knack for pairing clients with the right itinerary and planning special on-board surprises—decorated staterooms, private dinners—that are typically difficult to secure.

BEST FOR luxury seekers
817-732-6991; ruth@cruiresetctravel.com

Valerie Ann Wilson

In her 30-plus years on the job, Wilson has built 16 offices around the U.S., is chairman emeritus of Virtuoso’s advisory board, and provides counsel for half a dozen travel brands. Her clients lean on her to score top hotels and match cruises according to group interests.

BEST FOR multigenerational families, adventure, foodies, luxury seekers, honeymooners
212-532-3400; valeriew@vwti.com

SMALL SHIPS AND RIVER CRUISES

Betsy Patton

Patton knows her ships inside and out—quiet reading corners, which staterooms maximize sunrise or sunset views—including river cruises, which she notes are gaining popularity in Europe and mimicking their ocean counterparts with French balconies and better bathrooms.

BEST FOR multigenerational families, couples
239-260-4011; bpatton@dt.com

Marcella Rappoport

Trust Rappoport to be on top of cruising trends (South American and Asian boat routes), questions (ship security procedures and health risks), and the newest ships, like the 31-cabin *Crystal Esprit*, which sails through the Seychelles and the Adriatic.

BEST FOR culture buffs, luxury seekers
212-329-7260; mrappoport@ovation-travel.com