

SEPTEMBER 2018

Editors' Choice Awards 2018

The Places, Experiences, and Things That Wowed Us

TRAVEL + LEISURE

**The Cool of
Copenhagen**

**13 Places
to See by Ship**

**Fall in Texas
Hill Country**

**An Amazon
Adventure**



EUROPE 46
U.S., CANADA & THE CARIBBEAN 49
MEXICO & CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA 50
AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST 52
AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND & THE SOUTH PACIFIC 53
ASIA 54
T+L TRAVEL ADVISORY BOARD 56
SPECIAL INTEREST 57
CRUISE 60
SAFARI 61



THE



LIST

T+L's Collection of the
World's Top Travel Advisors

• **Working with a travel advisor** comes with all sorts of benefits. Not only do these professionals eliminate the stress of planning by dealing with all of the details (visa requirements, bookings, etc.) but they also provide incredible insight and unparalleled access that gives you value you couldn't get any other way. Whether it's with a private dinner at the foot of the Pyramids at Giza, an exclusive nighttime visit to Beijing's Temple of Heaven, or a dance lesson with a Cuban rumba master, a seasoned advisor can help turn your next vacation into the experience of a lifetime. In *Travel + Leisure's* 17th annual A-List, we showcase our picks of the 117 top agents and tour operators in the business.

Edited by John Scarpinato. Reported by Sarah Bruning, Stirling Kelso, Siobhan Reid, and Hannah Walhout.

Illustrations by Mike Lemanski



AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND & THE SOUTH PACIFIC EXPERTS

• Australia & New Zealand

Cassandra Bookholder

A native Aussie, Bookholder has spent a great deal of time Down Under, traveling around her home country as a child before studying tourism and business in New South Wales. Today, she's based in San Diego and returns at least two or three times a year to search for new ways to experience old favorites, like adrenaline tours of Sydney featuring seaplanes, motorcycles, and jet boats. Recently, Bookholder has been combining drastically different excursions for clients (sand boarding in Port Stephens in the morning with wine tasting in the Hunter Valley during the

afternoon). She's also started enhancing layovers, so travelers can trade in hours at the airport in Fiji for a day drinking kava with locals. *Minimum daily spend: \$500; 602-266-4000; cassandrab@camelbacktravel.com.*

Suzu Mercien-Ferol Mercien-Ferol, who lives in Brisbane, can arrange private-jet transfers and develop trips that incorporate lodges that are often destinations in themselves. Some favorites include coastal getaways like Saffire Freycinet, in Tasmania, and mountain cabins like Minaret Station, in Wanaka. Both offer beautiful rooms and fabulous food and wine.

Our advisors know all of the best private-island resorts, like the Great Barrier Reef's Hayman Island.

Additional specialties: Fiji and Tahiti; minimum daily spend: \$1,000 per person; 800-536-5328; suzy.mercien@touringtreasures.com.

Donna Thomas

Thomas loves introducing clients to this region, and her annual visits mean she knows Australia and New Zealand inside and out. In Australia, she can arrange an after-dark wildlife encounter where you'll view eastern quolls and other native Tasmanian species in their natural habitat. In New Zealand, Thomas highlights the country's many climates by organizing activities like mountain biking in the Southern Alps, farm visits in the Marlborough wine region, and hot springs and mud pools around Rotorua and the Bay of Plenty. *Minimum daily spend: \$350; 215-741-5155; experts@newzealandtravel.org.*

• French Polynesia

Marilyn Clark (see page 49)

Christina Turrini

Turrini has been a certified Tahiti Tiare Specialist since 2006 and has visited the islands of Tahiti six times in the past three years. Her connections help her set up exclusive experiences for clients, like ahi fishing in the Tuamotus, private barbecue lunches on tiny islands, and tattoo appointments with local artists in a bungalow. Turrini is also lauded for her ability to adapt to clients' needs. For a recent trip, she partnered with a hotel in Bora-Bora to design a creative menu for a vegan family. *Additional specialties: Fiji, Cook Islands, and Italy; minimum daily spend: \$500; 415-532-8664; christina.turrini@frosch.com.*

• New Zealand

Jean-Michel Jefferson

Jefferson and his family have been living in New Zealand for 20 years. Because he's local, he has access to many contacts—photographers, chefs, and pilots—who help him create insider itineraries. He can set up a welcome ceremony with the indigenous Maori people on a holy mountain. *Minimum daily spend: \$375 per person; 64-3-447-3558; jean-michel@ahipara.com.*

Alexandra Stewart

Stewart, who splits her time between Singapore and New Zealand, is a native Kiwi. Her in-depth local knowledge allows her to create informative itineraries and suggest interesting alternatives to the most popular destinations to avoid the crowds. Instead of Queenstown and Rotorua, for instance, she may suggest Wellington and Hawke's Bay. Additionally, her company, Antipodean Luxury Travel, has private access to stunning wilderness areas, crystal-clear fisheries, private high-country stations, and exclusive food and wine experiences. *Additional specialties: family travel, Australia, and the South Pacific; minimum daily spend: \$500; 65-6725-9886; alexandra@antipodeanluxurytravel.com.*

• The South Pacific

Susanne Hamer

Hamer's trips are strikingly original in a part of the world where it's all too easy to book a run-of-the-mill itinerary. With her extensive knowledge of the region's resorts, you'll stay in some of the best overwater bungalows, and her on-the-ground connections mean you'll eat at top restaurants like La Villa Mahana in Bora-Bora. *Additional specialties: Maldives, the Seychelles, and Bali; minimum daily spend: \$500; 310-689-5411; susanne.h@travelstore.com.*