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A leading luxury travel advisor shares her expert tips

By [Matthew Keegan](#) on Jul 05, 2017



Photo: Courtesy of Charlotte Harris

Charlotte Harris, head of sales and marketing for Hong Kong-based luxury travel agency [Charlotte Travel](#), got an early start in travelling. Thanks to the family travel business, which her mum named after her, she did her first hotel inspection by the age of four months, and had two African safaris under her belt by the age of three.

Countless trips later, and after having completed a master's degree in Anthropology, she now curates tailor-made luxury itineraries for VIP clients at Charlotte Travel.

Ever the intrepid traveller, Charlotte is always seeking out the next hot destination and advising clients on how to get the most out of their trips. Here, she shares some of those expert tips:

Last trip?

Beijing. I used to live in Beijing and hadn't been back for the past seven years. I loved seeing all the new luxury hotels that have opened and was shocked at how much the city has developed. I stayed at **The Peninsula** which recently got renovated. I remember it from seven years ago, but it was like walking into a whole new building. The new rooms are huge and Peninsula hospitality is pretty hard to beat.

Next trip?

I'm going to Phuket next month. It's rare that I get to travel on holiday because usually all my travel is work related. I'm finally taking a week off just to switch off and sit on a beach and drink mojitos. I'm planning to stay in some really nice hotels in Phuket and Krabi and just hit the beach and possibly do some rock climbing in Krabi as well.



Photo: Courtesy of Charlotte Harris

On the bucket list?

I haven't done South America yet and the whole region is very high on my list. I haven't visited the Maldives either, but that's because I just didn't want to go to a honeymoon destination on my own. I'm also dying to see the icebergs before they disappear. I don't have a tick list for travelling; I'm more open and just see where life takes me.

One place you'd visit over and over again?

I absolutely love South Africa—I honestly think that I could live there. There's such diversity. For example, a place like Cape Town and the [Cape Winelands](#) where you could just do wine tastings all day, every day for seven days a week. And then you can be out in the bush and be on a safari with stunning wildlife around you.

It excites me just to think about my next trip to South Africa. I've been four times already starting from when I was two years old. I love the weather there, the wine, the food—it's all fantastic. The setting is unbeatable. You can be on a cliff at a restaurant having amazing food and wine overlooking the ocean and be able to see as far as

[Robben Island](#).



Photo: Courtesy of Charlotte Harris

Things you always travel with?

My Macbook Air, and facemasks to keep my skin hydrated because I do travel on planes quite often (I don't apply them on the plane, but I definitely do it as soon as I arrive). And I always take with me a pashmina because it often gets cold when travelling.

What do you usually read on the plane?

I've always got my Kindle with me—so whether it's fiction or non-fiction, there's always something on there for me. Also, I always pick up a copy of *Forbes* and *Vogue* when I'm at the airport.

Favourite travel companion?

I would have to say my boyfriend [and] my family. My dad's English and my mum's Chinese. My mum started our travel business and my dad has done a lot of consulting work for the UN and so when I was younger we moved around a lot.



Photo: Courtesy of Charlotte Harris

Window or aisle?

Window seat for short-haul, aisle seat for long-haul. Short-haul I'm usually the last one on the flight and I do enjoy sitting by the window and taking photos for Instagram. Long-haul—definitely aisle seat because it's all about getting up and being mobile.

Favourite travel app?

I have this app called [Flightradar24](#) and I love it. It's air traffic control. You have a map on your phone and you can see all the flights that are in the air or on the ground at that time. It's great for travelling in and out of China because it gives you live updates on delays. They have this camera function as well where you can point it at any plane and it tells you where it's flying to. It's the perfect app for aviation geeks.

Your best travel tip?

Travel for the experience and not for ticking off a list. You find some people who will say "I've been to 24 countries", but it's not about one-upping each other. It's about going, enjoying the destination and really experiencing the place.

What do you love most about travelling?

The people—just being integrated with the people at the destination. Also, for me, it's an occupational disease to travel and be in a hotel and to judge it. I enjoy seeing how a hotel can transform a guest's experience to make it relate to them and to the culture of the destination as well.

A good example is Mandapa, a [Ritz-Carlton Reserve in Ubud](#). I loved it. There was a temple on the piece of land that they had bought but they decided not to destroy it and the locals still come in and do ceremonies in the temple. It's a plastic-free hotel as well. There was literally no plastic, which is very hard when you consider things like room toiletries, food packaging, etc. Everything is locally made and there was a story behind everything that was in the rooms.



Photo: Courtesy of Charlotte Harris

Any tips on overcoming jet lag?

Pick a flight time that allows you to arrive in the morning so that you can sleep on the plane (for people who are able to sleep on planes). Whenever I get on a long-haul flight I change my watch to the time of the destination that I'm going to and then I start acting as if I'm already there. So say I'm on a flight at 9am in the morning and the time at the destination is 9pm in the evening then I will try to go to sleep.

Follow Charlotte on her adventures around the world on Instagram [@charlotte.a.harris](#) and stay up to date with Charlotte Travel [@CharlotteTravelHK](#).