

2018 BUCKET LIST OF THE TOP 8 LUXURY TRAVEL AGENTS IN ASIA

by Vivienne Tang



Top luxury boutique travel agents in the know share their 2018 bucket list

If you've already ticked off a number of destinations on your bucket list and are looking for up-and-coming adventures, find out where these top boutique travel agents are heading this year.

Andrea Oschetti of [Blueflower](#)

"This year I'm getting an early start on my bucket list. As I write this, I'm on my way to **Lapland** to see the **Northern Lights**. I have always thought they are a way to gaze into mysteries that remain hidden. Having to go to the edge of the world to find them? Well, that just makes it irresistible. Then, I'm going to the **Kalahari** to see the desert wildlife. I'll be traveling on foot and hiking with the bushmen, my way to reconcile my love of wildlife and my love of culture. From **Botswana** I will be traveling to **Uganda** to see the **gorillas**, something I have dreamed of since I was a child. On my way back to Hong Kong in February, I will stop over in **East Africa** and travel to **Ethiopia** and possibly **Sudan**, I've been hearing about the cultural aliveness of **Addis Ababa** and the **pyramids** in the deserts, and I need to find out what that is all about."

[Blue flower](#) offers life-enriching journeys. Imagine travel that brings you closer to the people you love, travel that is challenging and sees you return stronger, travel where you reconnect with your passions and discover fulfillment. In short, travel that makes you happy. Over the last decade, Oschetti traveled the world as a journalist on assignment. He was able to access incredible places and cultivated a network of fellow journalists, chefs, travelers and connoisseurs. Today, he forms a collective that curates and executes journeys that are impactful and transformative. Blueflower has a growing number of itineraries, as its network expands. However, the company has deep roots and a wealth of connections in Italy, which allows Oschetti to create unique experiences that are Blueflower exclusives. Blueflower is also pioneering experimental travel to Scandinavia and the Arctic, and this winter it curated itineraries centered around the Northern Lights. The travel agency is also proud of the opportunities it has created for travel in Africa for both family and adventurers who seek something more than the usual game drives.

Follow Blueflower's adventures on Instagram [@blueflower.la](#)



Hiking with the bushmen



Gorillas in Uganda

Alex Malcolm of [Jacada Travel](#)

"**Bolivia** - I'd really like to explore more of the high plains and the beautiful landscapes of Bolivia. I love visiting places where the landscapes have the ability to really take you out of yourself. It's quite moving. **Greenland** - Having been to (and absolutely loved) Iceland and Antarctica, I'm keen to explore more of the **Polar regions**. Greenland is still relatively un-traveled to, so I'm excited about going there and discovering this beautiful and remote land."

[Jacada Travel](#) custom-designs private, inspiring journeys that venture deep below the surface of a place. The company started by selling trips to Latin America, but now it has expanded to Africa, Asia, Europe, Australasia and the Polar Regions as well. Everything Jacada Travel does is completely bespoke to its travelers, and it really focuses on getting under the skin of a place - showing people a city or a country the way the locals know it and offering those experiences and encounters that you may otherwise not find yourself.

Central to everything Jacada Travel does is the desire to affect positive change and enrich the lives of those it encounters along the way. The company does this in a number of ways, from making sure it works with lodges and hotels that share its ethos of responsible travel and giving back to donating a portion of its profits to conservation and community-focused organizations around the world. Jacada Travel also works to fight climate change through an initiative to offset the carbon emissions of all of its trips. Traveling with Jacada means knowing you'll have a positive impact.

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Cumbre Y Nevados in Bolivia



Greenland by Kit Wong

Chance Xie of [Journeys by Chance](#)

"**Madagascar** is a destination that touches your heart. All of our travelers returned feeling wowed by the beautiful nature and gained a renewed appreciation of happiness in their own lives. There are few places in the world that offer such emotional impact and bio-diversity, at the same time, this magical island is still relatively untouched by tourism. Dancing lemurs, magical sunsets, spectacular wildlife and dramatic landscape, Madagascar will impress the most seasoned travelers. It is a challenging destination to navigate for regular tourists with unreliable commercial flights and 24-hour overland drives on very bumpy roads. To avoid this, we only travel with private chartered planes for the entire duration of the trip."

Hsu-Yung Lau of [Journeys by Chance](#)

"**Ireland** is a country of endless beauty. With its dramatic landscape and legendary hospitable culture, the **Emerald Isle** is high on my 2018 bucket list. I am a big fan of the recent **Star Wars** motion pictures and the **GoT** series, so bringing the stories to life by visiting the scenes would be epic. I'm expecting endless treks through green pastures passing windswept coastal lines and strolling through medieval castles after a quick inspection of a local brewery perhaps. There is also a **luxury train experience by Belmond** that I'm very keen to try out, and it just so turns out that Cathay Pacific will introduce direct flights to Dublin from June!"

[Journeys by Chance](#) believes that holiday planning is designing an intricate part of one's life story. From weekend escapades to wedding proposals and honeymoons to summer family reunions, college educational trips and completing 7 continent ambitions, Journeys by Chance cares to design every trip for one's travel needs. The couple takes pride in focusing on destinations that they have exhaustively explored and thoroughly know so their clients can be in the right place at the right time and meet the most extraordinary people.

Follow Chance Xie's and Hsu-Yung Lau's adventures on Instagram [@journeysbychance](#) and [@hsu1](#)



Baobab Avenue in Madagascar



Sunset at Haven Coast on Galley Head Coastline

See also: [111-Day Spiritual Bucket List Journey](#)

Charlotte Harris of [Charlotte Travel](#)

"I've deemed 2018 as a year of giving back and would like to plan a trip to build a **school in Nepal** and to visit a village I used to work with in the highlands of **Borneo**. However, I am most looking forward to **Kenya** and **Tanzania**. My family took me on my first trip to Kenya at the age of 3, and I'm looking forward to visiting the **Masai** community that had a big impact on me and my family all those years ago, along with **game spotting on safari!**"

[Charlotte Travel](#) is a family-run boutique travel agency delivering high-end corporate and leisure travel services to discerning travelers. As a Virtuoso member and preferred agency partner to top luxury hotel brands its clients have access to exclusive benefits, upgrades and deals that are unavailable elsewhere ensuring that experiences on any trip, whether holiday or business, are well looked after.

The company doesn't focus on a specific destination as it is a one-stop-shop and provides travel advice to all corners of the globe. Clients come to Charlotte Travel with a blank canvas and the team paints their travel journeys with them. Some of its popular destinations and experiences include yoga and meditation trips to Bhutan, convertible wine trips through Tuscany and yachting around Indonesian islands.

Follow Charlotte Travel's adventures on Instagram [@charlottetravelhk](#) and Charlotte Harris' [@charlotte.a.harris](#)



Game spotting on safari

Jose Cortes of [A2A - Safari | Journeys](#)

"I want to see **bonobos (or pygmy chimpanzees)** in the **Congo** basin this year. With the current state of affairs around the world, I think they are the primate species humans should emulate as their society is all about kindness and love and generosity.

Then there is **northern Ethiopia's Danakil Depression**. I love to photograph natural beauty as well as visiting areas, which have recently reopened to tourists after being off limits for a long time (like this one due to the Ethiopian-Eritrean wars). This one ticks both boxes. Also called Hell on Earth, it is one of the hottest and lowest places on earth, but it is also one of the most photogenic areas.

Lençóis Maranhenses in Brazil's Maranhão region (its Portuguese translation is "bedsheets of Maranhão" where, between July and September, you have a sea of white dunes with blue lagoons running through them. This one I want to visit to experience natural beauty first-hand, which is ephemeral, and when you go back to the same spot a few weeks later it will look totally different i.e. bone dry and like a true desert.

A return trip to the **Pantanal in Brazil to track the elusive jaguars**. Tried my luck almost 20 years ago when there were no luxury lodges (stayed in a ranch with some gauchos who made me drink passion fruit caipirinhas 24/7 so their tracking skills were awful). But in recent years the Brazilians have taken a page out of the African's book and there are world-class properties there now."

[A2A - Safaris | Journeys](#) specializes in aspirational luxury journeys to Africa, Latin America and Antarctica. Within these destinations it focuses particularly on remote and wild areas steeped in natural beauty. A2A loves taking its city-slicker clients out of their comfort zones on life-changing experiences to bring them back in a much better state than when they left, in terms of their appreciation for nature, wildlife and humanity. Almost everyone comes back with a new purpose, whether being more conservation-oriented or climate change advocates or just being more generous and kind. One of A2A's partners in Africa has a new slogan "Luxury is the New Purpose", and many well-traveled adventurers in Asia find this new purpose after coming back from their trips."

Follow A2A - Safari | Journeys' adventures on Instagram [@a2asafaris](#)



Bonobos eating grass roots, Native to Democratic Republic of the Congo by Frans Lanting



Lençóis Maranhenses in Brazil by Rio Life

See also: [Dubrovnik Travel Guide](#)

Sophie Mensdorff-Pouilly of [So Me Travel](#)

"I will attend the **Baden-Baden Festival** in the stunning **Black Forest in Germany**. It's a unique combination of culture and natural beauty. In 2018 the festival is celebrating its 20th anniversary with stars like Anna Netrebko, Very Gergiev and Daniil Trifonov. Tickets to the major operas and concerts will be sold out by the start of the year."

[So Me Travel](#) offers boutique group trips focusing on culture, castles and classical music in Europe. The trips are centered around highlights of classical music like the Vienna New Year's Concert and the Salzburg Festival. They combine hard-to-get tickets to first class opera performances with expert introductions and stays in private castles. Clients feel like guests, rather than tourists. Destinations for these cultural trips are Germany, Austria and Italy.

Follow So Me Travel's adventures on Instagram [@so_me_travel](#)



Festspielhaus in Baden-Baden

Adrian Bottomley of [Whistling Arrow](#)

"To be honest, I have slightly mixed feelings about bucket lists. In some cases, the urge to just 'tick off' a destination can result in relatively superficial and well-trodden travel experiences. In truth, I try to discover new adventures before they appear on any lists. And so in 2018, I will be leading four new trips into completely unexplored lands; two adventures among **untrekking sacred peaks in western China/eastern Tibet**, a pioneering expedition in **western Mongolia** and a 'first foray' into a remote **Himalayan region** in the far **north west of Bhutan**. When I have time, I would also like to try and ride a tuk tuk around **Sri Lanka** for a few weeks to further explore that wonderful country."

Hong Kong-based [Whistling Arrow](#) specializes in a select number of uniquely designed adventures that you just won't find anywhere else. Intrepid, and expeditionary in nature, its scheduled small group treks are open for everyone to join and focus predominantly on the company's core areas of expertise - western China, eastern Tibet and western Mongolia. Whistling Arrow also designs bespoke special interest (e.g. photography, botanical, cultural immersion) and family trips for private clients seeking to venture well off the beaten track. By way of example, in 2018, it offers spectacular custom adventures for families to live in a traditionally decorated ger, as well as ride and hike alongside the fabled eagle hunters of the Altai.

Follow Whistling Arrow's adventures on Instagram [@whistlingarrowhk](#)



Eagle Hunter in western Mongolia



Altai in western Mongolia

Lucy Jackson of [Lightfoot Travel](#)

"With a toddler in tow, the family-friendliness of a destination is now of paramount importance. [New Zealand](#) has always been on my bucket list, even more so now as it's so wonderful for young children. It offers huge open spaces, a plethora of wildlife, trains and boats, and the freshest air to recharge those little lungs. If I manage to get away this year sans child, [Mongolia](#) is somewhere I'd love to explore. The sheer size of the country and its diverse terrain is staggering. Witnessing the centuries-old nomadic traditions and culture that has remained firmly entrenched, despite the country evolving and modernizing, would also be fascinating. It's a country that is changing very quickly, so one to visit sooner, rather than later!"

With offices in Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai, [Lightfoot Travel](#) is a luxury tour operator delivering some of the most memorable and exclusive travel experiences around the world. Lightfoot is driven by the emotions that only exploring the world can bring, and it aims to provide its guests with these same incredible feelings through its bespoke designer holidays. The company sells destinations spanning all seven continents and covers a tremendous range of holiday types, from trekking the Andes Mountains in Patagonia and cruising around Cuba in a classic car, to relaxing in an overwater villa in the Maldives.

Follow Lightfoot Travel's adventures on Instagram [@lightfoottravel](#) and Lucy Jackson's [@jacksonlucy](#)



Wharariki Beach in Nelson Tasman, New Zealand

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