

THE CHALLENGE: PLANNING EXTRAORDINARY TRIPS FOR THE ULTRA-WEALTHY

BY Brown + Hudson

The Challenge: Planning extraordinary trips for the ultra-wealthy

If you're responsible for planning for a demanding and seasoned traveller or family, you've probably seen the following trends reshaping their expectations and raising the stakes for you.

Transformative Experiences

Luxury travel has typically been geared towards pleasure and rejuvenation. But as Vogue magazine predicted in a 2017 travel trends report: "Transformational travel is the next evolution... it's travel motivated and defined by a shift in perspective, self-reflection and development, and a deeper communion with nature and culture."¹

Extreme customisation

UHNW travellers want their trips highly customised. But not every travel service has the expertise, creativity, resources, and exacting standards to deliver.

Travel Technology and Solutions noted in its 2017 trends analysis: "There is one thing that technology is still very poor at, and that is the personalised human touch which can enhance travelling."²

Unfettered access

Today's elite craves access to rarely visited places. "Travellers want to live personalised, out-of-the-ordinary experiences with a wide variety of activities that reflect local cultures and lifestyles," states branding agency Origin.³ But this demands a wealth of local knowledge and contacts.

Impeccable execution

Elite travellers insist that everything runs flawlessly. "At its most basic, travel for the super-rich means never having to deal with the petty and not so petty annoyances," points out Condé Nast Traveller.⁴ Accounting for all this means that anyone—no matter

how experienced—can get overwhelmed planning travel at this level.

Traditional Travel Planning Options: How do they measure up?

Most personal assistants and family offices plan trips through one of these options:

- DIY online tools
- Travel agents and tour operators
- Corporate travel departments
- Concierge services
- Special-interest tour operators

But how well do these services work for today's elite travel planners?

DIY online tools

Pros: The Internet is available 24/7, and a simple web search can yield seemingly limitless possibilities. Online-booking sites and room-service apps are user-friendly, and reviews can inform decisions.

Cons: Running web searches can be incredibly time-consuming. Contradictory, dated or incorrect information may come up. The Internet is particularly poor for researching remote destinations without existing tourism infrastructure or a developed online culture.

Travel agents and tour operators

Pros: These professionals save time for clients by planning itineraries and making bookings, with elements of customisation.

Cons: Traditional high-end agents simply retail pre-existing products from a list of approved vendors. But these packages are too generic to excite any elite traveller. And a conventional travel agent's knowledge is never specific enough to tailor the rare and insider experiences that the ultra-wealthy crave.

Corporate travel departments

Pros: These on-staff bookers are experienced in

arranging flights, hotels, ground travel and classic business leisure such as spa treatments and golf. They may be familiar enough with an elite traveller to arrange details such as special diets and seating preferences.

Cons: They know how to secure the best seats in business class, but do they know anyone in a village in India who can arrange for the client to be a guest at a colourful Hindu wedding? Or can they set up afternoon tea with Archbishop Desmond Tutu? The Internet is their biggest resource for researching anything out of the ordinary, and we've already seen the limits of that approach.

Concierge services

Pros: With their insider knowledge and high-level lifestyle management capabilities, concierge services can cater to the ultra-wealthy traveller's desires on a trip. The most high-end concierge companies will be exclusively available to their client and extremely familiar with their needs.

Cons: The definition of a concierge is someone who can arrange third-party services on behalf of a client. While a concierge may have contacts for renting luxury villas and private jets, they often outsource to larger chains. Beyond travel, many concierges take care of other services so they lack the laser-focus on travel that is required.

Special-interest tour operators

Pros: These offer travel experiences for specific interests, such as cycling or gastronomy, or in specific destinations, like Mexico or Tuscany. They devote substantial time and care to plan and create itineraries beyond industry-standard offerings.



Cons: While special-interest tour operators can create excellent experiences, they rarely approach the extraordinary. They often focus on one type of activity, which limits their capacity to create a full and rounded experience with consistently top-tier standards. Using these traditional methods, how could a client possibly know that their jungle destination was surpassed in natural beauty by a lesser-known Eden on another continent? How could they know that by moving their booking just two days, they'd witness a once-in-a-decade ceremony in a remote Arctic village? How could they know a bird thought to be extinct had just been spotted nesting at the lodge 5 miles away from the one they chose?

A Better Option: Bespoke Travel Advisors

A bespoke travel advisor serves as a specialised PA to guide the client through the world of travel. They can suggest an unimaginable range of possibilities, assess the risks and rewards of any destination and work tirelessly to increase comfort and enjoyment of the final selection.

Instead of selling a package a bespoke travel advisor commits to a longer-term relationship, so they are there in the wings—or on the ground at the destination—during each journey, making sure everything is extraordinary.

What to Look for in a Bespoke Travel Advisor

To succeed in creating the experience of a lifetime, a bespoke travel advisor should offer a proven track record in these four criteria:

1. Extreme customisation
2. An extensive network of contacts and local knowledge
3. Exceptional service
4. A proven track record working with UHNW clients

1. Extreme customisation

To meet the trend towards ultra-personalisation, Brown + Hudson conceived something more: Bespoke 2.0.

Brown + Hudson provide the highest possible quality of travel experience, as organic and ever-changing as each traveller. They employ in-country guides, docents, fixers and experts smart enough to throw out

the rule book and knowledgeable enough to turn on a dime to satisfy their client's evolving needs. The company's elite travel planners take the time to learn the client's deepest needs, challenge the client to think bigger, and explore options they would otherwise never imagine.

2. An extensive network of contacts and local knowledge Bespoke Travel Advisors have friends in high, low and remote places worldwide. If a client wants to explore uncharted territory? Their advisors are ready to pack a bag, grab a GPS, and scout a location in person. For example, the time clients asked Brown + Hudson to find a tepui (table-top mountain) that had never been summited. After finding the perfect peak, they went one step further: arranging for them to climb to the summit with a team of biological researchers to collect samples of the unique fauna that had evolved there for centuries.

3. Exceptional service from start to finish By only working with the top 0.1%, these few truly bespoke travel advisors deliver a different level of service. Even after spending a minimum of 90 hours crafting a trip to the exacting needs of the client, they recognise that those needs can change. Dedicated advisors are on hand 24/7 to make any adjustments requested by the client as the trip unfolds.

4. A proven track record of working with Ultra High Net Worth clients Brown + Hudson founder, Philippe Brown, understands the world of UHNW clients from direct experience. He and his team of advisors are well-versed in security protocol, the essential role of the PA, and the finer details of private jet travel.

They can turn big ideas into once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Here are just a few examples: Biking through the desert: Brown + Hudson arranged for a client to bike through the Gobi Desert on a Harley Davidson. They stayed in a traditional nomadic ger (yurt) camp, custom-built with en-suite bathrooms, plush camel-hair blankets and aromatherapy.

Diving in a submarine: On a trip in Borneo, every comfort the client requested was provided in their lodge by the Kinabatangan River, from hypo-allergenic pillows, to their favourite scotch. Then the client travelled to the

Semporna Archipelago where they dove in a submarine brought in from the Philippines to see the rich marine diversity.

Meeting an isolated tribe: When a client travelling in the Amazon Rainforest wanted to meet a remote native community, Brown + Hudson enlisted their contacts to reach the top echelons of the Brazilian government and gain the necessary permits. They then sent an advance party to meet with elders and win their approval for the visit. A dirt airstrip was built and several abandoned thatched homes were transformed into a luxurious camp.

Conclusions Today's ultra-wealthy travellers seek life-changing travel experiences, extreme customisation, unfettered access, and impeccable execution.

Traditional travel planning services have shortcomings that can compromise an elite traveller's experience. An ideal travel partner must offer four key prerequisites: extreme tailoring, an extensive network of contacts and local knowledge, exceptional service from start to finish, and a track record of working with UHNW clients. Fortunately, there is one bespoke travel advisor that meets all these criteria: Brown + Hudson.

SOURCES:
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