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Jordan Harvey, a South America specialist, plans treks in the Andes passing alpaca- and llama-filled pastures.

The more unpredictable our natural and political landscapes become, the more we feel the urge to visit places untouched by the news cycle. So, as we continue to support and keep a close watch on those areas hit hardest by a rash of hurricanes, fires, and foreign-policy blunders, we're craving the kind of life- and perspective-changing travel that's made all the more magical when planned by the pros—no matter how fearless and self-sufficient we sometimes feel. Because surviving in, say, the Bolivian jungle one day and meeting with the hottest artists in Lima the next requires both grit and access—to say nothing of a network of on-the-ground know-how that you quite literally can't live without in some places. Here are the experts, fixers, and experience makers you'll want in your foxhole. →

2017

TRAVEL SPECIALISTS

ARGENTINA, CHILE,
AND COLOMBIA**Harry Hastings***Plan South America*

Hastings has intel on top-notch estancias and can connect you with all sorts of interesting locals, from emerald miners to rock-star chefs.

ARGENTINA, CHILE,
AND PERU**Jordan Harvey***Knowmad Adventures*

He's scoured the whole of Chile, scrambled all over Machu Picchu, and searched the cities and pampas of Argentina to find the top hikes and best hotels.

BOLIVIA AND PERU

Marisol Mosquera*Aracari*

She taps insiders like museum curators, chefs (like Pedro Miguel Schiaffino of Lima's Malabar), and even jungle-survival experts for her trips.

BRAZIL

Martin Frankenberg*Matveté*

Frankenberg is dialed in with incredible villas, Amazon River charter yachts, and expeditions to the dunes of Lençóis Maranhenses National Park.

Paul Irvine*Dehouche*

He's planned exclusive workshops with a local fashion designer, cooking classes with chef Felipe Bronze of Oro, art tours, jaguar tracking, and samba dancing lessons.

Jill Siegel*South American Escapes*

If you want the best seats at the Carnaval parade, a trip up the Amazon in search of pink dolphins, or a yacht charter off the coast of Paraty, Siegel can hook you up.

"I HAD A CLIENT, A PRO CRICKET UMPIRE, WHO WANTED TO CALL A GAME AT THE FAMOUS NEWLANDS STADIUM IN CAPE TOWN. I ARRANGED IT—AND DINNER WITH SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL CRICKET TEAM."

Deborah Calmeyer, Southern Africa specialist

CHILE

Brian Pearson*Upscape*

He knows the top boutique hotels (like Casa Bouchon), the Sno-Cat guides who'll have you skiing chutes, and the cycling routes for riders of all fitness levels.

COLOMBIA

Boris Seckovic*Amakuna*

Seckovic can make it all happen: street-art tours through Medellín's once-dangerous *comunas*, dark-roast tasting at a coffee farm, or a visit to lesser-known villages like Mompós.

COSTA RICA

Irene Edwards*GreenSpot Travel*

She can pull off helicopter flights over volcanoes or a day at a sloth sanctuary.

COSTA RICA, NICARAGUA,
AND PANAMA**Pierre Gedeon***Nicaragua Adventures*

He's clutch when it comes to multicountry trips that combine running rapids with relaxing at retreats like Nekupe.

ECUADOR AND PERU

Tom Damon*Southwind Adventures*

His focus is active travel with guides like the grandson of one of the Peruvians who took Hiram Bingham to Machu Picchu.

EUROPE



CENTRAL EUROPE

Gwen Kozlowski*Exeter International*

Kozlowski can score tours of the Spanish Riding School, open doors to crafts workshops in the Czech Republic, or plan multi-day tasting trips to family-owned wineries in the Wachau Valley.

Ellison Poe*Poe Travel*

She'll arrange for the best tables at under-the-radar restaurants in Vienna and private tours of legendary Habsburg palaces.

CROATIA

Wanda S. Radetti*VisitCroatia.com*

Tap Radetti for the latest intel on the best hotels (like the Lešić Dimitri Palace), wineries, restaurants, and yacht charters along the Adriatic Coast.

FRANCE

Anthony Bay*Anthony Bay Is Europe*

He has extraordinary historical and regional

knowledge and an extensive network of personal contacts who open their homes to his guests.

Pascale Bernasse*French Wine Explorers*

She's got the connections and clout to get the most exclusive tours of legendary estates, often from family members whose names are on the bottles.

GERMANY

Marion Harbison*Brownell Travel*

Harbison will take you to normally overlooked (but supremely stunning) castles and coordinate fascinating tours of centuries-old abbeys and wineries.

GREECE

Mina Agnos*Travel2Greece by**Travelive*

Her on-the-ground ops team can handle complex multi-island itineraries with private boat and helicopter transfers to spots like Ios and Koufonisia.

Ronnie Liadis*Liadis Travel*

She's secured access to otherwise off-limits ancient sites and wineries that aren't open to the public, and chartered boats around Santorini.

Leftheris Papageorgiou*Hellenic Adventures*

Go behind the scenes at artists' studios and archaeological digs with Papageorgiou. He'll even set up chats with experts on contemporary Greek politics (if geeking out is your thing).

Christos Stergiou*TrueTrips*

Stergiou can pull off private, after-hours access to museums, organize catamaran trips around the Cyclades, and find quality hotel rooms, even in high season.

ICELAND

Chris Gordon*Icelandpedition*

He's the guy to call if you want to kayak among icebergs, go horseback riding on an Arctic Ocean beach, or spend the night under the Aurora Borealis.

IRELAND

Geraldine Murtagh*Elegant Ireland*

She has an insane Rolodex—dukes and duchesses, historians, politicians, mountain climbers, artists—all of whom look after her travelers. She also has a can't-find-it-anywhere-else roster of amazing castles and estates for rent.

Kathleen Sheridan*McCabe World Travel*

Sheridan knows the top castle hotels and countryside manors (like Sheen Falls and Ballyfin), and has clued-in guides who lead seaside hikes, fishing trips, and horseback rides.

ITALY

Brian Dore and Maria Gabriella Landers*CIU Travel*

They've arranged a prime viewing spot for the iconic Palio race, the best rooms at small-but-lovely Sicilian inns, and tours of privately owned Palladian villas that aren't normally open to visitors.

Andrea Grisdale*IC Bellagio*

She has behind-the-scenes access at fashion houses (like Gucci and Zegna) and iconic sites like the Vatican and the Uffizi, where she'll make sure you never wait in line.

Adamarie King*Connoisseur's Travel*

She'll have you baking alongside locals in Sicily, touring private art collections, visiting ceramicists and furniture makers, or sailing the Venetian Lagoon.

Gary Portuosi*Authentic Italy*

He's our go-to for tooling through Parma and Modena to sample Parmigiano-Reggiano, balsamic vinegar, and prosciutto; flying from Rome to Capri for lunch (back in time for dinner); or having a private picnic on the Sicilian island of Mozia.

Rudston Steward*Trufflepig*

He's sussed out amazing food (and places to stay) in lesser-known corners of Italy, like the Aeolian Islands, Tuscany's Monte Amiata, and towns like Matera in Basilicata.