

THE INSIDER

CONFESSIONS OF AN ADVENTURE TRAVEL EXPERT

BUTTERFIELD & ROBINSON'S **CARI GRAY** SPECIALIZES IN THE CUSTOMIZED ADVENTURE TRIP—FROM BIKING IN THE BALTICS TO HIKING BY IGUAZU FALLS.

BY JONATHAN S. PAUL • PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN HUET

What do you do at Butterfield & Robinson?

I take care of our top travelers, whether it's leading three or four trips a year myself or re-creating and designing new ones. I know a handful of our clients so well, they look to me to help them decide where to go next—which could be a place entirely uncharted.

Why would a person want or need a customized trip?

Frequently people want to travel at a specific time with a specific group. We also get a lot of multigenerational requests, which is where bespoke is great because you can plan a variety of activities that appeal to different age groups. From an operations and logistics standpoint, these are absolutely massive to orchestrate. Finally, I think many people enjoy being involved in the planning stage. We tend to attract connoisseurs and the bespoke angle allows them to indulge their interests.

What can you tell us about those journeys?

We biked by a temple in Bagan, Myanmar, in the morning and then, that night, we surprised everybody by lighting it up with candles and hiring singers for a fabulous dinner in a really sacred place. We took a group of music lovers to the Baltics and arranged visits to choral recitals at medieval venues, such as the 700-year-old town hall in Tallinn, Estonia. Recently I flew with a family to South America on their own plane, where we focused on photographing wildlife in Brazil, Argentina, the Falklands, and Easter Island. People love visiting this continent because there's no jet lag from the time-zone change—so they can be on their bikes the next morning.

How does a sporting element enhance travel?

The whole notion of biking and walking is that it gets you closer to the land, closer to the people who live there. Our clients appreciate the lavender in Provence better when they bike by it because not only can they see the color, they can smell it, too.

Is the level of activity something clients can customize?

We work with them to determine their parameters of comfort and adventure. For example, are they into uber-high-end hotels or a more experiential night in the desert? Choice and flexibility are very expensive luxuries, but that's what makes a bespoke itinerary truly unique.

How do you price a trip like this?

The ideal customers are the ones we bill afterward. But for the most part we come up with a ballpark figure and the amount is agreed upon ahead of time. They start at around \$1,500 a day per person.

Describe an especially memorable bespoke moment.

We were on the Argentine side of the Iguazú Falls, which, by the way, make the Niagara Falls look like a drizzle. It was a traveler's birthday. Through the park service we managed to get exclusive after-dark access to the catwalk—an extensive pathway that sits above the water—and arranged for a surprise celebration under a full moon with the falls roaring in the background. That was special. ■

Interested Centurion members can contact Cari Gray directly at Butterfield & Robinson by calling 416-864-2029 or e-mailing her at cari@butterfield.com.

THE STYLISH ADVENTURER
Cari Gray rides a Cannondale
bicycle wearing an RLX Ralph
Lauren tank, jacket, and shorts;
De Bress diamond studs;
and a Girard-Perregaux watch.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN HUET. STYLING: CAROLINE WOODS. HAIR: JACQUELINE TROIANO FOR VICTORIAN