

cigar aficionado

THE GOOD LIFE MAGAZINE FOR MEN

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**KEVIN
COSTNER**

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THE TAILORS OF TRAVEL

The top bespoke travel providers specialize in particular regions or activities. Here are some of the best:

Absolute Travel: Since 1989, this New York-based luxury travel agency has organized custom itineraries to 53 countries throughout Asia, Africa, Australia and the South Pacific. Individual agents specialize in each continent or region, visiting them several times each year and creating detailed daily tour itineraries for every client. (800-736-8187, www.absolutetravel.com)

Butterfield & Robinson: In 1966, George Butterfield and his wife, Martha Robinson, created the category of guided luxury active travel with bike trips to France. They were the first Western bike tour operators into Vietnam, Namibia and other locales. Their bespoke division has its own full-time staff and offers bike tours, walking tours and yacht charters, among other trips, with a focus on

British royalty. The queen does not carry a wallet, and in that spirit, everything, even checking in and out of luxury hotels, is done for clients. Hampshire covers the British Isles and specializes in private castle visits and tee times at exclusive golf clubs. (011-44-207-373-1999, info@latitude-international.com)

Lisa Lindblad Travel Design: For the past 10 years Lindblad has been considered an industry guru of luxury bespoke travel, but she accepts only a small number of discerning clients. The Columbia-educated anthropologist has lived in Africa, written two books on the continent and specializes in Africa and Southeast Asia, although she covers the globe. (212-876-2554, www.lisalindblad.com)

Micato Safaris: For more than 40 years Micato has specialized in luxury wildlife safaris across East and South Africa, using the finest boutique lodges, tented camps, guides, drivers and pilots. A few years ago the company launched its Bespoke Collection of accommodations, consisting of private ranches, family homesteads and country estates in Africa, many within private game reserves, to which guests have exclusive access. (800-MICATO-1, www.micato.com)

Remote Lands: Barnard College graduate Catherine Heald lived in Asia for seven years before founding Remote Lands with fellow Asia aficionado Jay Tindall, in 2006. The company is entirely Asia-focused and its customized trips feature locals, from monks to maharajas, fishermen to financiers, and nomads to nobility. (646-415-8092, www.remotelands.com)

Seasonz: The extra Z is for New Zealand, which is native Sam Porter's specialty. Seasonz has its own collection of rental properties, from wilderness lodges to private islands, its own guides—with expertise in fishing, rafting and adventure travel—and even its own regional chefs, who specialize in local cuisine. (011-64-9-360-8461, www.seasonz.co.nz)



Elite Travel International is known for its white-glove, one-on-one service in exclusive destinations around the globe such as the Soneva Gili by Six Senses in the Maldives.

Black Tomato: Since 2005, Black Tomato has organized trips, from scuba diving between tectonic plates in Iceland to watching the Monaco Grand Prix in style, for elite British clients. Now, the company, founded by Tom Marchant, James Merrett and Matt Smith, hopes to inspire Americans to venture to offbeat locations such as Croatia, Slovenia and Syria. Black Tomato suggests itineraries, but clients are free to tweak them or create something on their own. (www.blacktomato-travel.com)

Blue Parallel: Founded by an ex-investment banker to cater to the demands of high-income Wall Street executives, Blue Parallel has quickly grown into a full-service bespoke travel provider that does equally well with families and adventurers. The company covers Central and South America and uses extensive local connections to provide unique VIP access and experiences. (800-256-5307, www.blueparallel.com)

food and wine, especially in Burgundy. (866-551-9090, www.butterfield.com)

Country Walkers: For almost 30 years this Vermont-based company has led walking trips all over the globe, and has seen a boom in bespoke trips among its many repeat customers in the last two years. The company consistently wins kudos for its excellent pool of multilingual, locally knowledgeable guides. (800-464-9255, www.countrywalkers.com)

Elite Travel International: Stacy Small has parlayed her insider knowledge as a travel expert into a boutique luxury travel agency offering white-glove, one-on-one service, with a focus on the finest accommodations around the globe. (877-714-7224, www.elite-travelinternational.com)

Latitude International: As an equerry, owner Dominic Hampshire made high-powered connections while planning trips for