

# ASK THE experts

Laura French speaks to the specialists to get their top predictions for booking trends in 2020



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# DESTINATIONS

## TRENDS | 2020 BOOKINGS

# 1

### “SELL THE EXPERIENCE”

Carole has been in travel for more than 30 years, working for several independent luxury agencies before joining Beaver Travel in 2005. After a stint at Mr & Mrs Smith, she returned in 2013 to head up the retail sales and development team.



**Beaver Travel**  
**Carole Short, head of retail sales and development**

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**SHE SAYS**

Luxury no longer just means the best hotel – it's more about the experience. We're seeing a big increase in gorilla watching in Rwanda, for example, and cultural experiences in Japan.

People are prepared to pay for unique, personalised experiences. We recently had a Rome booking where the client wanted a private tour of the Colosseum to celebrate a special birthday.

Even with fly-and-flop holidays in the likes of the Indian Ocean, clients want something a bit different – an unusual dining experience or something else they wouldn't think of themselves.

Demands have changed as people want to learn more. They're more conscious of the environment and they want adventure. There's still demand for big brand hotels, but we're also seeing a trend towards smaller, one-off boutique hotels, such as Luxury Lodges of New Zealand.

Thinking about next year, personalised service is really important. It's about giving the best service you can; making sure you find out what your clients like and then making hoteliers aware of that so they can then provide a tailored experience that will make your clients feel special.

# 2

### “BOOK SUSTAINABLE ADVENTURES”

Michael has worked as a sales manager at Dragoman and Imaginative Traveller for the past eight years, specialising in adventure. He has travelled extensively in Patagonia, Africa, Central Asia and beyond.



**Dragoman and Imaginative Traveller**  
**Michael Battley, sales manager**

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**HE SAYS**

Sustainability and responsible travel will be the biggest-growing areas in the year ahead. We're seeing a big move towards making trips as sustainable and responsible as possible right now, and sustainability credentials will become a key factor in helping clients decide who to travel with.

We're also seeing a lot of demand for adventure travel, with growing interest in our overland truck tours – more clients are wanting to get off the beaten track and see something a little different. In terms of destination trends, Patagonia and the Central Silk Route are getting a lot of interest, and Tajikistan trips are also selling very well for the year ahead.

My top tip for selling adventure travel next year would be to know the product. There are differing levels of adventure, so it's important to find the right trip for your clients. They want to talk to people who have expertise, can give them a fair price and can offer them something different. The destinations might change, but good customer service and expert knowledge will remain key in 2020.

# 3

### “GET THE BEST CRUISE DEALS”

Michael has worked in the cruise industry for more than seven years, with roles at Norwegian Cruise Line and Princess Cruises. He now works as sales and product manager for specialist agency Worldwide Cruises UK.



**Worldwide Cruises UK**  
**Jordan Brewer, sales and product manager**

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**HE SAYS**

Our customers are booking either far in advance or very late, which points to a price-sensitive market. Cruise deals with more included – drinks, tips, excursions etc – will lead the way in 2020.

We have seen a big increase in Mediterranean and Caribbean fly-cruises for 2020, partly driven by a range of new, big ships launching there.

We're also noticing that one-off itineraries are selling much quicker than mainstream options, and there's a big focus on the destinations – we have been specialising in more in-depth land and cruise tour combinations.

Customer expectations are also growing, as cruise lines introduce ships at an ever-higher standard. The change in the industry over the last few years is staggering, just look at Princess Cruises' Ocean Medallion, or Virgin Voyages, which is introducing a completely new concept.

My advice when it comes to selling in 2020 would be to explain the value a cruise offers, rather than just focusing on the bottom-line price. Cruises offer fantastic value for money and, more often than not, agents can access the best prices or offer a deal with more value included compared with a direct booking.