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Top 2014 destinations, picked by travel industry leaders

Vietnam



Cliff pool at Amano'i resort overlooking Vinh Hy Bay, Vietnam

A long-time backpacker favourite, Vietnam is increasingly courting the more affluent traveller. "It now offers the perfect balance of luxury, adventure, heritage, romance and relaxation," says Jill Taylor of Chicago-based Jetset World Travel. The latest addition to the growing roster of lavish hotels is Amano'i, which opened in September overlooking Vinh Hy

Bay, northeast of Ho Chi Minh City. "It's built on a remote area of coastline, on the edge of a natural reserve, but is still within a three-hour drive of cities such as Nha Trang and Dalat," says Gabriel Donida of Munich-based Atelier Voyage.

Christopher Wilmot-Sitwell points to another trend for the region: the growth of small, smart cruise ships on the rivers of Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar. Aqua Expeditions, which operates boutique hotel-style boats on the Peruvian Amazon, is due to launch its first ship on the Mekong this year. Starting from Saigon, guests will make a short road journey to meet the 20-cabin boat, then spend a week travelling upriver to Siem Reap in Cambodia. Later in the year, safari operator Sanctuary Retreats is due to launch the 20-cabin Ananda on the Ayeyarwady river in Myanmar, where it joins the Orcaella, recently launched by Orient-Express.

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The panel

Jonny Bealby is the founder of Wild Frontiers (wildfrontierstravel.com)

Gabriel Donida is executive director of Atelier Voyage (ateliervoyage.com)

Geoffrey Kent is founder of Abercrombie & Kent (abercrombiekent.com)

Nick Laing is chairman of Steppes Travel (steppestravel.co.uk)

Tom Marchant is co-founder of Black Tomato (blacktomato.com)

Chris McIntyre is managing director of Expert Africa (expertafrica.com)

James Mundy is marketing manager for Inside Japan Tours (insidejapantours.com)

Jill Taylor is luxury consultant at Jetset World Travel (jetsetworldtravel.com)

Christopher Wilmot-Sitwell is co-owner of Cazenove and Loyd (cazloyd.com)