

## COVER STORY

## The Cool Hunters

The little-known travel mavens who help the industry to anoint new destinations



**Simon Cooper**  
Chief operating officer, Ritz-Carlton  
Looks for signs of growing wealth among locals; 90% of the food and beverage sales at his city hotels come from local customers.

## Ross Klein

President, Starwood Luxury Brands Group  
Scours 1950s- and '60s-era travel magazines for ideas of forgotten travel destinations that might have a retro-chic appeal.



**John Stoll**  
Director of land programs, Crystal Cruises  
Arrives at each potential new destination by boat, to see it as a cruise passenger would.

## Adrian Zecha

President and founder, Amanresorts  
Picks places he likes to vacation himself, such as Montenegro, where he's been more than a dozen times in the last decade.



**Marc Hediger**  
Senior vice president of development, Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts  
Keeps on eye on where Chinese travelers—millions of whom now have passports—are going.

## Gerard Joachim

Beach consultant, Club Med  
The 73-year-old—a 50-year veteran of Club Med—swims and snorkels at the beaches before sites are approved.



**Scott Woroch**  
Executive vice president, development worldwide, Four Seasons  
Keeps three working lists of future destinations, depending on the chain's interest level.

## The Contenders

Below, 10 places the travel industry hopes will become hits in the coming years



## 1 Honduras

**The Pitch:** A cutting-edge Costa Rica

**What to do:** Snorkel around the island of Roatan's protected reef, hike through tropical jungles or spot local "Jesus lizards" that appear to walk on water.

**Watch for:** Cruise crowds. Carnival is building a terminal here to handle as many as 7,000 passengers a day.



Getty Images (2); Joe LeMonnier (map)

## 2 Providence, R.I. ▲

**The Pitch:** A cultural center with more than \$500 million in revitalization projects under way

**What to do:** Explore the growing arts scene by gallery hopping; the city is also known for its varied restaurant scene.

**Watch for:** Conventioneer crowds. A push for convention travelers is underway.

## 3 Newfoundland, Canada

**The Pitch:** A Canadian island drawing second-home owners

**What to do:** Ski and snowboard in the winter, or try salmon fishing, kayaking and whale watching in summer and early fall.

**Watch for:** Global warming. Summers there are getting warmer and longer.

## 4 Montenegro

**The Pitch:** A newly independent country where Sophia Loren used to vacation

**What to do:** Lounge on the Adriatic's beaches and tour old towns like Ulcinj and Kotor.

**Watch for:** Rising prices. Unlike other Balkan countries, Montenegro has adopted the euro.

## 5 Rwanda

**The Pitch:** A view of Africa few tourists have discovered

**What to do:** Trek for mountain gorillas and golden monkeys, and visit genocide memorials in areas like Kigali.

**Watch for:** Uncomfortable rides. Rough roads can make traveling by car treacherous—especially during the rainy season.

## 6 Seychelles ▼

**The Pitch:** An Indian Ocean alternative to the Maldives

**What to do:** Study the flora—Vallée de Mai island boasts the rare coco de mer palm, with seeds that weigh up to 30 pounds.

**Watch for:** Long flights, with a layover necessary in London or Dubai.



## 7 Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi

**The Pitch:** The flash of Dubai, with an eye toward culture

**What to do:** A dozen new luxury hotels are coming to the area and Guggenheim and Louvre outposts are opening by 2012.

**Watch for:** With so much hype, the island may lose its coolness soon after opening.

## 8 Almaty, Kazakhstan

**The Pitch:** A luxury hub awash in new oil money

**What to do:** Ski at Chimbulak Ski resort; the city is also hosting the Asian Winter Games in 2011.

**Watch for:** Border areas. The State Department says travel generally is safe, but that groups like al Qaeda "remain active" in neighboring countries like Uzbekistan.

## 9 Sanya, Hainan Island, China

**The Pitch:** The "Hawaii of China," popular with China's leisure class

**What to do:** Explore a diverse landscape of rain forests, mountains and beaches.

**Watch for:** Complex itineraries. Major U.S. carriers don't go there yet, so finding direct flights takes some work.

## 10 Boracay, Philippines

**The Pitch:** A regional vacation spot reinvented for luxury-seekers.

**What to do:** Go windsurfing or hunt for native puka shells on white-sand beaches.

**Watch for:** Travel fatigue after a 15-hour flight from Los Angeles, a stopover in Manila and a boat ride from Kalibo Airport.