

Wendy Perrin's 8TH Annual
Worldwide Guide to

Foolproof Villa Vacations

PART I: THE LIST **41** experts who hold the
REPORTED BY KATHRYN MAIER



VILLA RAYOL

Le Rayol, France

Eight bedrooms; from \$26,000 per week. Contact Nick Westwood, Red Savannah.

THE SPACE

The three-story villa, set on an acre of fragrant gardens, has two four-bedroom wings separated by a courtyard. There's also a small cinema and a pool house with a full kitchen.

THE NABE

Fifteen miles from St-Tropez in the rarefied village of Le Rayol (Nicolas Sarkozy and Carla Bruni, as well as Jerry Hall, have houses nearby). You're a short walk from crescent-shaped beaches and directly above a scenic cycling route stretching from Toulon to St-Tropez.

THE SERVICE

At your disposal: A small team of full-time housekeepers; a chef to prepare breakfast, lunch, and dinner; and an estate manager who lives nearby and doubles as your personal concierge.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND IN A HOTEL

Such an unobstructed sea view, rare on the Côte d'Azur: This house has 180-degree vistas over the Hyères Islands and the Mediterranean.

keys to dream houses (and castles and cottages) at your favorite destinations worldwide



***PERRIN'S PEOPLE:**

The Villa Pros

WITH THE EXPLOSION OF VACATION-RENTAL WEB SITES, it's never been easier to find a house. It's also never been riskier. How much can you trust the online description? Is the house really as nice as it looks in the photos? Does "a short walk to the beach" mean five minutes or five miles? Committing to a vacation rental sight unseen is one of the more nerve-wracking decisions you can make—especially if you're choosing a house not just for your family but for a long-anticipated friends' getaway or a family reunion, exactly the kind of trip where you need everything to be perfect. My advice? For sheer peace of mind, nothing beats the voice of authority. That's why for the past eight years, we've been rigorously vetting villa rental agents around the world—renting from them, accompanying them on villa inspections, interviewing them extensively, and hearing feedback from readers. Getting on our list of top villa specialists means filling out a 47-question application and sending sample house books, checklists used to evaluate properties, and at least one client reference. Staying on the list is even tougher: It requires proving user-friendliness, conscientiousness, and honesty again and again. Forty-one agents made this year's cut, representing properties in all our favorite destinations—from Tuscany to Turkey's Turquoise Coast. To read reviews of these agents or to post your own, visit condenasttraveler.com/villa-specialists. To nominate an agent for a future list, e-mail me at perrinfeedback@condenasttraveler.com.

—Wendy Perrin

*Go to condenasttraveler.com/travel-specialists for a complete list of Perrin's People, which includes 141 top travel specialists as well as the 41 top villa specialists.

Caribbean

MULTIPLE ISLANDS

Timothy Roney
The Villa Experience,
Farmingdale, New York

900 properties (low season, \$3,500–\$53,000; high season, \$4,000–\$75,500)
Overall portfolio: \$\$

Roney has listings on 25 islands and knows the Caribbean inside and out. He's selective about the properties he takes on, paying particular attention to fur-

nishings and decor and only choosing places with a sense of style. He's great at helping people figure out which islands will best suit their needs—say, which have the most plentiful and affordable beachfront homes, which the best golf or shopping (631-845-8000 ext. 4563; cntrvrlr.com/tim).

ANGUILLA

Sue Ricketts
Ricketts Luxury, Anguilla

87 properties (low season, \$3,500–

\$50,000; high season, \$6,000–\$122,500)

Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

A former guest-relations manager at Mal-liouhana and Cap Juluca, Ricketts knows how to coddle even the most demanding of travelers with white-glove service. Her 30-plus years living on Anguilla translate into knowledge key to a villa renter—which grocery store is open latest, which carries items from the island's top bakery, which wine shop stocks Far Niente and Duckhorn—and her extensive house books will guide you to the freshest beachside lobster and the least-visited beaches with the gentlest surf (264-497-6049; cntrvrlr.com/sue).

BRITISH AND U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Nancy Anderson
McLaughlin Anderson Luxury Villas,
St. Thomas

100 properties (low season, \$1,575–\$32,500; high season, \$1,950–\$40,000)
Overall portfolio: \$\$

Anderson has lived on St. Thomas for 39 years, so she knows every road, beach, and restaurant and will share her favorite finds with you. Each property, whether a studio cottage or a ten-bedroom mansion, comes with access to a concierge who is accustomed to providing top-flight luxury and who can arrange anything from in-villa massages to a decorated Christmas tree (800-666-6246; cntrvrlr.com/nancya).

JAMAICA

Linda Smith
Villas by Linda Smith,
Cabin John, Maryland

93 properties (low season, \$2,750–\$50,590; high season, \$3,500–\$61,500)
Overall portfolio: \$\$

Smith has been renting homes on Jamaica for 27 years and spends several months on the island annually. When inspecting and evaluating properties, she moves into each one for several days so she can sleep in every bedroom and bathe in every bathroom, enabling her to know the most minute details of each. All of her listings include full staff trained by Smith herself (301-229-4300; cntrvrlr.com/lindasmith).

ST. BARTS

Peg Walsh
St. Barth Properties,
Franklin, Massachusetts

160 properties (low season, \$1,620–\$70,000; high season, \$2,200–\$140,000)
Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Walsh spends at least six months on the island each year and holds weekly cocktail parties for her clients near her full-service on-site office. She thinks of absolutely everything—advising you where to park at beaches, where to go for sunsets, where to buy the catch of the day, which grocery store to stop at en route to your villa from the airport. And since the grocery store requires a one-euro deposit for a shopping cart, her airport greeters even provide a coin for you to use (800-421-3396; cntrvrlr.com/peg).

ST. MARTIN / SINT MAARTEN

Marilyn Pulito
Villas in Paradise,
Medway, Massachusetts

275 properties (low season, \$1,400–

PG: **108**
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TRAVELER

100 POND BAY

Virgin Gorda,
B.V.I.

Six bedrooms; from \$17,500 per week. Contact Nancy Anderson, [McLaughlin Anderson Luxury Villas](http://McLaughlinAndersonLuxuryVillas.com).

THE SPACE

A modernist fantasy, paved in quartzite stone, the house consists of six sea-facing pavilions, three swimming pools, and an air-conditioned gym.

THE NABE

Perched cliffside, the house sits above one of the island's most stunning beaches—with another, Pond Bay Beach, a five-minute walk away via private footpath.

THE SERVICE

Housekeeping daily. Massage, spa treatments, and yoga instruction at the villa can be arranged for a fee.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND IN A HOTEL

Three chlorine-free pools, ocean kayaks, and stand-up paddleboards—just for you.



\$53,000; high season, \$1,750-\$80,000)
 Overall portfolio: \$\$
 Pulito has been booking villas on the island for 28 years and has owned a home there for 25. All properties come with a private pool and daily housekeeping, and she can tell you which best accommodate small children and whether the walk from your villa to the beach is sandy or rocky (866-468-4552; cntrvtr.com/marilyn).

Europe

FRANCE

Lauren Bunton

Hosted Villas, Toronto

38 properties (low season, \$6,600-\$21,750; high season, \$7,900-\$40,000)
 Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Bunton hunts down properties with character and native charm. Each villa includes a local host—an English-speaking longtime resident of the region who is eager to share insider advice and the hidden gems that you might otherwise miss. The host can recommend restaurants, make reservations, take you to a favorite winery or outdoor market, and arrange special events (a truffle hunt with picnic, for example). Hosted Villas' steep rates reflect the assistance you get not only from the host but also from the housekeeper (all properties are cleaned daily), not to mention the attention to detail in the house book, which covers everything from how to ask "Do you have this in a size 44?" to ways to identify a hand-rolled baguette (800-374-6637; cntrvtr.com/lauren).

Annie Flogaus

Just France, Berwyn, Pennsylvania

175 properties (low season, \$1,650-\$20,850; high season, \$2,000-\$29,750)
 Overall portfolio: \$\$

Flogaus knows every detail of her houses—the views from each bedroom, the walking distance to the nearest village, the best weeks to go. She recommends Provence in June, when the village markets are not crowded and the fields are dotted with bright-red poppies. The only thing missing, she notes, is the lavender, which blooms in early July. Just France is best for self-sufficient travelers, and a bit of French may help: Not all of the house managers speak English (610-407-9633; cntrvtr.com/annie).

PARIS

Erica Berman

Haven in Paris, Lexington, Massachusetts

31 properties (low season, \$850-\$8,225; high season, \$995-\$9,100)
 Overall portfolio: \$\$

All of Berman's apartments are in historic buildings (some date back to the 1700s, others to the Art Deco era) and span the city's buzziest neighborhoods, with clusters in the Marais and St-Germain-des-Prés. Most have balconies or terraces and stellar views (think Eiffel Tower or Sacre Coeur), the decor ranges from classic to contemporary, and every apartment comes with a computer for guests' use, free Wi-Fi, and free international phone calls (617-395-4243; cntrvtr.com/erica).

Gail Boisclair

PerfectlyParis, Paris

31 properties (\$830-\$2,230 year-round)
 Overall portfolio: \$



PENTHIÈVRE

Paris

Two bedrooms; from \$5,950 per week. Contact Erica Berman, Haven in Paris.

THE SPACE

A study in Parisian polish: On the sixth floor of a Haussmann-style building, the flat has two bedrooms, two-and-a-half baths, three marble fireplaces (decorative only), silk curtains, and a wood-paneled library.

THE NABE

In the eighth arrondissement between Parc Monceau and the Champs-Élysées and near the Élysée Palace, the tony boutiques of rue du Faubourg St-Honoré and famed macaroon shop Ladurée are just a five-minute walk away.

THE SERVICE

Weekly housekeeping is included, and daily can be arranged, as can a chef, babysitter, or driver—for an additional fee.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND IN A HOTEL

The space per euro. For as little as \$850 a night (or \$425 a room), you get 1,680 square feet—plus two balconies—bang in the middle of one of the city's most desirable neighborhoods.

Boisclair's cozy apartments are in turn-of-the-century buildings with old-world charm (but with modern conveniences, including free Wi-Fi and international calling), all in or near the famously artsy neighborhood where she has lived for a dozen years: Montmartre (home to the Moulin Rouge and Lapin Agile). You won't mistake your stay for one at the Ritz, but the small size of Boisclair's portfolio allows her to provide personal service—she might be the one to greet you when you arrive at your flat (33-1-44-92-00-84; cntrvtr.com/gail).

PROVENCE

Nick Westwood

Red Savannah, Cheltenham, England

30 properties (low season, \$4,300-\$39,489; high season, \$7,986-\$131,631)
 Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Westwood has spent the past 15 years scouring Provence to find its most stylish, best-located properties. Nearly all are available only through him, from modern minimalist villas on the Côte d'Azur to stone farmhouses surrounded by lavender fields farther inland. Looking for an authentically French experience in the next it location? Try one of Westwood's properties in Le Rayol, the newly fashionable town just down the coast from St-Tropez (and close enough to nip round to Club 55 for lunch), or Saignon,

an eleventh-century village in the upper Luberon Valley (44-1242-787811; cntrvtr.com/nick).

ENGLAND

Suzanne B. Cohen

Suzanne B. Cohen & Associates, Inc., Hallowell, Maine

313 properties (\$826-\$21,232 year-round)
 Overall portfolio: \$

FOR REVIEWS OF THESE VILLA SPECIALISTS FROM FELLOW TRAVELERS AS WELL AS ANSWERS TO ESSENTIAL RENTAL FAQS, GO ONLINE TO [CONDENAST TRAVELER.COM/VILLA-SPECIALISTS](http://CONDENASTTRAVELER.COM/VILLA-SPECIALISTS).

The two-night minimum for Cohen's collection—which ranges from manor houses to lighthouses to flats, even including a windmill in Wales—is welcome news to anyone interested in getting a taste of country home or cottage renting before committing to a full week. She will steer you around the pitfalls, from homes with no shower cur-

tains (or no showers at all) to traffic fines: "Don't park on the double yellow line even if everyone else has" (207-622-0743; villaeurope.com).

Warren de Long

Blandings Ltd., London

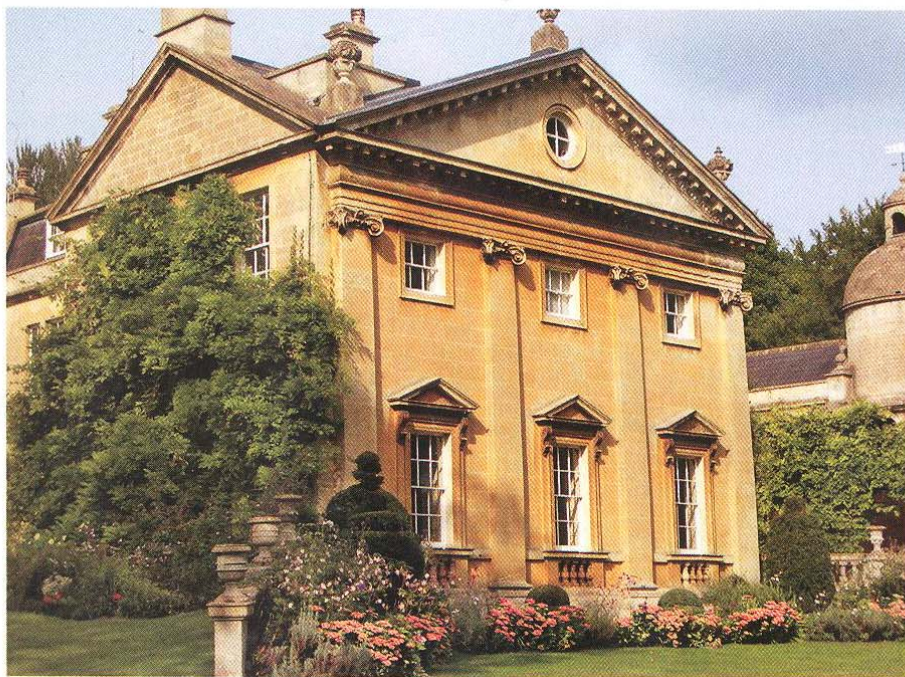
162 properties (low season, \$1,560-\$90,000; high season, \$2,340-\$90,000)
 Overall portfolio: \$\$

De Long's delightfully quirky properties are mostly located in southern England with a concentration in the Cotswolds. His focus is on larger, historic country houses—from farmhouses to manor

WORLDWIDE VILLA RENTAL GUIDE

DOWNLOAD OUR DIGITAL EDITION TO SEE PHOTOGRAPHS OF AVAILABLE VILLAS FROM EVERY SPECIALIST'S PORTFOLIO OF PROPERTIES.

PRICES Some agents have cottages, others have fairy-tale estates; we've characterized their portfolios from one dollar sign (\$) for the least expensive to four (\$\$\$\$) for very expensive relative to the region. Unless otherwise noted, prices reflect one-week rentals.



COOMBE COURT

Near Bath, England

Nine bedrooms; from \$32,500 per week. Contact Warren de Long, Blandings Ltd.

THE SPACE

Built by John Wood the Elder (who also designed most of Bath's finest houses), the Georgian mansion sits on nearly 50 acres of parkland, complete with tennis and boules courts, a swimming pool, and a flock or two of Hebridean sheep.

THE NABE

Just beyond the property is the small town of Bradford on Avon, with cafés, pubs, and antiques shops. Trains run twice hourly from the nearby station to Bath, a 15-minute ride away.

THE SERVICE

Daily housekeeping is included; a cook can be arranged for an additional fee. A staff cottage on the grounds can also be rented upon request.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND IN A HOTEL

The four acres of meticulously landscaped neoclassical gardens, registered by English Heritage, as well as a beautifully preserved eighteenth-century shell grotto.

homes—often on significant acreage. The homes are lived in by their owners much of the year and are likely to contain antiques, heirlooms, and interesting collections (of anything from modern British art to equestrian esoterica). You'll find only a few sample homes on his Web site; after a conversation to determine the homes best suited to you, he'll send property details for your perusal (44-207-936-9611; cntrvrlr.com/warren).

LONDON

Madelyn Byrne Willems London Perfect, London

45 properties (low season, \$1,960–\$4,984; high season, \$2,400–\$6,100)
Overall portfolio: \$

Willems has lived in London for more than 20 years and understands the importance of location in this sprawling city: Her listings (all historic apartments and houses) are in the most desirable central neighborhoods. She encourages you to take advantage of the properties' stellar settings by providing extraordinarily detailed house books that contain not only step-by-step instructions for appliances and even where tricky-to-locate light switches are found but also an overview of the city's attractions that is more comprehensive and useful than many guidebooks (44-7798-877-530; cntrvrlr.com/madelyn).

GREECE

Anna Deimezi and Dimitris Giannakopoulos

White Key Villas, Athens

130 properties (low season, \$7,000–\$50,000; high season, \$10,000–\$78,000)
Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

These two Greek natives have sourced high-end properties that span the mainland and the islands, many concentrated on the Peloponnese peninsula and in the Cyclades. All homes are either beachfront or no more than a ten-minute drive from the sea, and all have ocean views. Standard services include daily housekeeping, a chef, and concierges who can arrange anything from private jet transfers to fishing excursions with local fishermen (30-210-721-5530; cntrvrlr.com/annaanddimitris).

Ileana von Hirsch Five Star Greece, London

80 properties (low season, \$8,000–\$50,000; high season, \$10,000–\$60,000)
Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Von Hirsch hails from one of Greece's oldest shipping families, and thanks to her social connections, she has exclusive access to some of the country's finest properties—from historic village homes to sprawling beachfront estates. Don't try to view them on her Web site, though: Each property has its own password-protected Web page. After Von Hirsch speaks with

you, she'll handpick up to ten suitable villas and send you the links. We love how conscientiously she discloses drawbacks and suggests alternatives: She'll advise which islands are best for avoiding the August meltemi winds, and where non-party-animals can find refuge from the sometimes noisy nightlife (44-20-8422-4885; cntrvrlr.com/ileana).

MYKONOS

Federico Arduino

Aqualiving, Mykonos

100 properties (low season, \$5,000–\$30,000; high season, \$10,000–\$50,000)
Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Stark-white Cycladic architecture, private pools, and a touch of glamour characterize Aqualiving's villas, which are concentrated on Mykonos and the neighboring islands of Paros and Antiparos. The agency's on-island concierge team spoil you from the moment they meet you at the airport to escort you to your villa, sharing insider advice such as where to buy the freshest fish and which clubs are in vogue (44-207-060-6244; cntrvrlr.com/federico).

ITALY

Countess Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda

The Best in Italy, Florence

90 properties (low season, \$8,500–\$70,000; high season, \$12,000–\$160,000)
Overall portfolio: \$\$\$\$

Want to live like royalty? The countess has exclusive access to some of Italy's most lavish estates—the kind that come with stables and laundresses and museum-quality paintings. These fully staffed villas are owned by her friends, many of them local nobility. Brandolini's house books are practically works of art and detail each villa's history (down to the names of the ancestors in the family portraits hanging in the halls). She'll greet you at the villa herself with a magnum of her family's wine and keep in touch during your stay, offering to conjure up anything from an invitation to the Palio in Siena to an art history lecture at your villa by a university professor (39-055-223-064; cntrvrlr.com/simonetta).

Suzanne B. Cohen

Suzanne B. Cohen & Associates, Inc., Hallowell, Maine

197 properties (low season, \$1,098–\$52,866; high season, \$1,098–\$52,866)
Overall portfolio: \$\$

No matter the size of your wallet, Cohen is ready to help, since her collection includes affordable cottages and farmhouses and she promises the lowest car-rental rates. Thanks to her warm relationships with villa owners, she can open doors you didn't know existed—offering you access to private art collections, for instance, or sending you to a perfumer for a custom scent—and her restaurant tips are invaluable. She'll even suggest a no-menu trattoria where “Mama cooks, grown sons serve, and Papa brews the grappa” (207-622-0743; cntrvrlr.com/suzanne).

Mara Solomon

Homebase Abroad, Marblehead, Massachusetts

66 properties (low season, \$7,600–\$150,100; high season, \$10,900–\$289,400)
Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

The worldly owners of Solomon's staffed houses tend to be restorers and designers

with a strong personal aesthetic. These are well-loved homes, many lived in by the owners for part of the year, so they have a distinct sense of place. Solomon will get to know you and your tastes and sensibilities well enough to make the right match. And thanks to her photographic memory and copious villa-inspection notes, she can tell you whether the trees surrounding the pool are pear, plum, or fig, and what type of local wood the kitchen table is carved from. As for excursions, she'll send gelato lovers to a farm that makes buffalo-milk ice cream and motorcycle buffs on a backroads tour on antique Vespas (trailed by a mechanic). One caveat in Tuscany: Although your villa's unmarred views will be of countryside that has not changed for centuries, the rough dirt road to the property might not have changed either (781-639-4040; cntrvrl.com/mara).

FLORENCE

Lisa Byrne and Pat Byrne *Italy Perfect, San Francisco*

50 properties (low season, \$890–\$6,365; high season, \$1,145–\$6,365)

Overall portfolio: \$

Raised in Italy, the Byrne sisters favor apartments that exude old-Europe charm, most of them located in Florence's palazzi or other centuries-old buildings. Because the Byrnes have stayed in nearly all of their properties, they can advise you in advance about even the most minute detail, right down to the firmness of a mattress. Be aware that they do not offer concierge-style services: You're on your own for booking a table in that trattoria, but they do offer a "manual for Italy" which covers not only the choicest nearby cafés but also how to properly order a cup of coffee (415-221-5018; cntrvrl.com/lisaandpat).

LAKE DISTRICT

Andrea Grisdale *IC Bellagio, Bellagio, Italy*

20 properties (low season, \$800–\$105,000; high season, \$1,000–\$105,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

Grisdale knows her villas so well that she can tell you which flowers are planted in what part of the garden and, if a church is nearby, how often you'll hear the bells toll. A Brit who's lived on Lake Como for 21 years, Grisdale fills her house books with such terrific tips—from local recipes to road-sign translations—that clients ask to purchase them. Her Web site is intentionally spare: She asks questions and, based on your answers, selects four to eight villas and sends photos (39-031-952-059; cntrvrl.com/andrea).

ROME

Patrice Salezze *Papavero Villa Rentals, Schnecksville, Pennsylvania*

46 properties (low season, \$1,442–\$6,713; high season, \$1,998–\$9,163)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

Salezze has stayed in every one of her 46 Rome apartments in the course of multiple visits to the city every year, so she knows them all from a guest's perspective. Her centrally located flats (many near the Spanish Steps) are a great base for sightseeing, and the friendly, welcoming owners are the icing on the *torta*. A chat with Salezze provides a valuable introduction to Rome, but for a more up-

close look, she can arrange sightseeing tours with her handpicked guides (866-737-0000; cntrvrl.com/patrice).

SCOTLAND

Andrew Loyd *Loyd & Townsend-Rose, Ltd., Roxburghshire, Scotland*

25 properties (\$21,740–\$65,225 year-round)

Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

If living like a Scottish lord is your fancy, Loyd's your man. His portfolio of mostly antiques-filled ancestral homes includes a mix of Georgian manor houses, Victorian castles, Edwardian homes, fifteenth-century tower houses, Palladian villas, and shooting lodges. True royal treatment is courtesy of the homes' full staff and Loyd himself: He can arrange everything you'd need to make the most of the Gaelic country life, from an afternoon of falconry or clay pigeon shooting, to having Wellington boots awaiting you at your manor (44-1835-824-642; cntrvrl.com/andrew).

SPAIN

Mary Vaira *El Sol Villas, Wayne, Pennsylvania*

215 properties (low season, \$2,000–\$32,000; high season, \$2,500–\$85,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

With accommodations ranging from castles to castles, Vaira has something for everyone and will also book day tours and,

for a fee, entire itineraries. She sends foodies to San Sebastián or Barcelona, and suggests that traditionalists consider booking one of her *cortijos* near Andalusia's historic white towns (610-687-9066; cntrvrl.com/maryv).

TURKEY

Mathew Simpson *Simpson Travel, London*

32 properties (low season, \$858–\$2,652; high season, \$1,716–\$7,332)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

During the two months he spends in Turkey each year, Simpson sources properties in the most idyllic spots along the coastline from Akyaka to Kas. Whether you're looking for a sea-and-sun getaway a short stroll from a taverna, or an authentic Turkish experience in the rural countryside (your neighbors might stop by with fruit or freshly laid eggs from their farm), he's got the perfect place. Note that in keeping with the ebb and flow of Turkey's tourist season, his homes are available only from early May through early November (44-208-392-5864; cntrvrl.com/mathew).

MULTIPLE COUNTRIES

Adam Coats *Abercrombie & Kent Villas, Cheltenham, England*

300 properties (low season, \$3,000–\$40,000; high season, \$5,000–\$100,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$\$



VILLA SPINAL-TERMINE

Umbria

Five bedrooms; from \$16,000 per week. Contact Marina Gratsos, Carpe Diem Luxury Travel.

THE SPACE

A rustic-chic farmhouse on a 2,000-acre estate run by an aristocratic Italian family (they live in an eleventh-century *castello* elsewhere on the property). The grounds include tennis courts, stables, a heated pool, and an *osteria*.

THE NABE

The nearest village is Lisciano Niccone, a charming medieval relic five minutes away by car, or you can explore the immediate—and fabulously scenic—surroundings by bike or on horseback.

THE SERVICE

The property comes with housekeeping for four to five hours a day, six days a week, and you can arrange for a chef, a driver, or horseback-riding lessons on the property for a fee.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND IN A HOTEL

The hilltop seclusion of the farmhouse, as well as private panoramic views—from the pool, the dining terrace, and every room in the house—over the quintessential Umbrian landscape.

WORLDWIDE VILLA RENTAL GUIDE

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**WORLDWIDE
 VILLA
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If Mediterranean sun, a private pool, and serious pampering are on your agenda, Coats's villas in France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain will fill the bill. You'll find renovated old stone fincas in southern Spain and more modern villas on the Côte d'Azur; the common thread running through all of his properties—including several in Austria, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom—is a high standard of luxury. You can book the home only or arrange for A&K's "hosted" service, which includes daily housekeeping, a local host who'll provide a welcome supper and a tour of the area, and concierge services during your stay (44-1242-547932; cntrvrlr.com/adam).

Marina Gratsos
Carpe Diem Luxury Travel Ltd., London

25 properties (low season, \$15,000–\$300,000; high season, \$18,000–\$300,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$\$\$

Seeking an over-the-top experience (say, an estate on a private island) or something specific (an Austrian castle)

but don't know where to look? Gratsos is your problem solver. If none of the 25 fully staffed gems to which she has personal access are right for you, she will use her aristocratic and professional connections to track down the perfect fit. Since her owner friends demand privacy, these villas cannot be viewed on her Web site. Contact Gratsos and, after an initial consultation, she will select suitable properties and provide links to their Web pages (44-20-7402-5330; cntrvrlr.com/marina).

The Americas

ARGENTINA: BUENOS AIRES

Parker Stanberry
Oasis Collections, Capital Federal, Argentina

200 properties (low season, \$450–\$5,500; high season, \$550–\$7,500)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

With a portfolio full of design-oriented apartments and homes in Buenos Aires's most prime locations, Stanberry proves he understands city dwellers' needs by

providing everything from notes on how to deal with taxi drivers to Internet USB sticks as a backup for the city's notoriously fickle Internet service. Oasis guests get access to two substantial perks: the Oasis Clubhouse, a private club offering entrée to the social life of the city (as well as a pool), and the Quintessentially concierge service, renowned for its ability to grant any wish (54-11-4777-3692; cntrvrlr.com/parker).

BRAZIL

Steven Chew
Brazilian Beach House Company, Rio de Janeiro

50 properties (low season, \$1,995–\$35,000; high season, \$2,450–\$70,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

Britain-born Chew, who has been living in Brazil for the past six years, sets the standard for South American house rentals. His properties range from a restored fisherman's cottage in Bahia to a 12-bedroom mansion in Búzios, and are grouped into fanciful-sounding categories (is your style more "flip-flop luxury" or "city surfers"?); common to most is a beachfront location in a choice spot on the country's coastline. All come with staff and access to a local concierge. A former tour operator, Chew is also happy to arrange multi-day itineraries for his clients (55-21-2225-9476; cntrvrlr.com/steven).

COSTA RICA

Mark Mead
Mead Brown, Playa Herradura, Costa Rica

44 properties (low season, \$2,700–\$59,500; high season, \$3,600–\$59,500)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

Mead, a Costa Rica resident, selects properties with a strong sense of place and easy accessibility—sometimes a challenge in this region. Each has a pool and comes with daily housekeeping. All are located on the Pacific coast (many in the resort area of Los Suenos), on or near beaches but also within driving distance of the country's quintessential inland experiences (e.g., volcanoes and zip-line tours). Mead's full array of concierge services makes it easy to arrange these activities and more: Sportfishing with top-notch boats and crews or surfing lessons with a national champion, anyone? (866-567-1516; cntrvrlr.com/markm.)

MEXICO

Zachary Rabinor
Journey Mexico, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

60 properties (low season, \$600–\$6,000 per night; high season, \$1,000–\$15,000 per night)

Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Mexico resident Rabinor has assembled a carefully chosen portfolio of luxury properties all over the country, with a concentration in Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta/Punta de Mita, and Riviera Maya/Tulum. Whether at a country hacienda or a contemporary beachfront casa, you'll find authentic Mexican style, full staff (at most properties), and information packets that offer guidance on everything from tequila tastings to turtle-nesting sites. Rabinor can also masterfully plan any local itinerary or day-trip (52-322-225-9821; cntrvrlr.com/zach).

CASA CARLOS CALVO

Buenos Aires

Four bedrooms; from \$3,400 per week. Contact Parker Stanberry, Oasis Collections.

THE SPACE

A century-old mansion owned—and stylishly remade—by a local interior designer. Home highlights include a state-of-the-art kitchen, a small pool, and a rooftop terrace.

THE NABE

Colorful, historic San Telmo is full of fashionable antiques shops and upscale restaurants and is famous for its tango scene. The Sunday street market is a city institution.

THE SERVICE

The house comes with twice-weekly maid service, and additional staff, including a chef, can be arranged for a fee.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND IN A HOTEL

Access to the members-only Clubhouse in Soho Palermo, where the city's elite drink, dine, attend concerts and film screenings, or simply lounge by the pool.



LOS CABOS

Julie Byrd

*Earth, Sea & Sky Vacations,
Watsonville, California*

105 properties (low season, \$1,400–\$35,000; high season, \$2,100–\$57,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

Byrd's villas come with ocean views, a pool, and daily housekeeping, and the concierge team in her Los Cabos office is available around the clock. Want to charter a fishing boat, swim with dolphins, or have a mariachi band play at your villa? She'll make it happen (800-745-2226; cntrvlr.com/julie).

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: WINE COUNTRY

Liza Graves

BeautifulPlaces, Sonoma

30 properties (low season, \$5,000–\$25,000; high season, \$5,925–\$33,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

Oenophiles will love Graves's listings in California's wine country, which range from classic ranch homes to Tuscan-style villas; some properties even have vineyards. Her relationships with the local vintners mean that she can arrange for lunch in a wine cave, a painting lesson in a vineyard, or a tasting with a winemaker (800-495-9961; cntrvlr.com/liza).

HAWAII

Irene Ann Aroner

Tropical Villa Vacations, Maui

46 properties (low season, \$2,100–\$55,000; high season, \$2,100–\$70,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Having spent more than a decade as a concierge at various Four Seasons hotels, Aroner brings an obsessive attention to detail to her property evaluations and customer service. As befits her background, she offers extensive concierge services, such as arranging a private dinner on the beach or yoga instruction at your villa (888-875-2818, ext. 3; cntrvlr.com/irene).

Anne Pawsat-Dressler

Hawaii Hideaways, Maui

250 properties (low season, \$7,350–\$54,500; high season, \$10,000–\$85,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Pawsat-Dressler's sumptuous, mostly oceanfront Hawaiian villas come with the latest and greatest amenities (Bosch appliances and HDTV) and a 24-hour concierge who can line up everything from a private heli-hiking tour of Molokai to a pedicurist who makes house calls. Pawsat-Dressler, who lives part-time on Maui, combines intimate knowledge of the islands with type-A efficiency (808-878-8559; cntrvlr.com/anne).

MONTANA

Lisa Orr

Mountain Home, Bozeman, Montana

70 properties (low season, \$895–\$4,595; high season, \$995–\$7,095)

Overall portfolio: \$

If your reaction to log cabins and cattle ranches is Yee-ha! you'll love these Montana properties, many with log-post beds and back-porch views of wide-open spaces. None are staffed, and you'll need to rustle up your own reservations for horseback riding or river-rafting trips, but Orr is happy to recommend the best



VILLA VENTANA AL CIELO

Cabo San Lucas

Six bedrooms; from \$16,300 per week. Contact Julie Byrd, Earth, Sea & Sky.

THE SPACE

A strikingly modern four-level hilltop house, where all bedrooms have floor-to-ceiling windows and balconies with sweeping views of the Pacific. There's also an exercise room and a saltwater pool.

THE NABE

A private gated community above Cabo San Lucas. The downtown area and the marina are about a mile's drive away; an excellent swimming beach is slightly farther.

THE SERVICE

The standard rate includes housekeeping six hours a day, six days a week. Chefs and butlers are also available for a fee.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND IN A HOTEL

Your very own 1,500-square-foot deck (cocktail party, anyone?). In winter, pods of gray dolphins pass just offshore.

outfitters. She'll also advise you on when to go: late spring for wildlife lovers (since elk and bison are calving in Yellowstone and the park's not yet crowded) and summer and autumn for fly-fishing (800-550-4589; cntrvlr.com/lisa).

Other Regions

AFRICA: SAFARI VILLAS

Cherri Briggs

Explore, Inc., Steamboat Springs, Colorado

24 properties (low season, \$2,800–\$10,800 per night; high season, \$2,800–\$13,500 per night)

Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Looking to mix the adventure of a safari with the privacy and family-friendliness of a villa? Safari expert Briggs spends half the year in Africa and can advise on when and where to see the wildlife that most interests you. Many of her fully staffed villas, located on game reserves in six countries throughout East and Southern Africa, are affiliated with A-list safari lodges (888-596-6377; cntrvlr.com/cherri).

WORLDWIDE

Maxine Harrison

Elysian Holidays, Tenterden, England

270 properties (low season, \$550–\$40,000; high season, \$2,500–\$50,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$

The countries on Harrison's list encircle the Mediterranean and dot the rest of the globe (South Africa, Thailand, and Tobago, to name a few). She's lived in many of the locations where she represents homes, and the friends she's made there now act as her clients' gateway to the local culture. All properties are chosen for their regional character, and better still, Harrison knows which have owners and staff who are likely to invite guests to celebrate the local holidays with them (44-15-8076-6599; cntrvlr.com/maxine).

Sylvia Delvaille Jones

*Villas and Apartments Abroad,
New York City*

350 properties (low season, \$2,000–\$300,000; high season, \$4,000–\$400,000)

Overall portfolio: \$\$\$

Jones has Europe and the Caribbean well covered, with a few select offerings scattered on four other continents. Her listings, with a focus on larger, high-end properties, range from Caribbean beachfront cottages to a Tuscan estate that can sleep up to 100. She's especially attuned to multi-generational families' needs and will guide you to a child-safe house (complete with sturdy banisters) in a location with plenty of activities to keep all ages occupied. Her regional concierges can pull off just about any feat: She once arranged to have an opera staged at one of her Italian homes (212-213-6435; cntrvlr.com/sylvia). □

PART II
FOR A FIRSTHAND
REPORT OF
RENTING A SAFARI
VILLA, KEEP
READING.