

Claudia Gordon, of Naples Luxury Travel Advisors, tailors itineraries for every client

Claudia Gordon has met Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge in Great Britain. She has gone on numerous safaris in Africa and has traveled to exotic lands such as Sri Lanka and Malaysia. Yet her biggest quest is bringing travel adventures to others.

As the owner of Naples Luxury Travel Advisors, she has created unique itineraries and personal travel experiences for clients for the past 35 years.

Gone are the days when a travel agent simply books air travel and hotels. People do that online now. Instead Claudia is an advisor and planner.

“Last year I had a couple that wanted me to plan a trip to Italy for their family of 21 people from ages 9 to 74,” Claudia recalls. “They wanted someone who knew Italy very well and had experience in planning multi-generational trips.”

Claudia not only took care to match the family’s interests with the itinerary, she oversaw the smaller details such as making sure those with children had connecting hotel rooms.

“We were planning a multi-generational trip with 10 children and 11 adults,” says Sharon Cirincione. “She just took it and made it work beautifully. She had some excellent ideas. She had everything organized before we got there — every meal, every tour, every site. We just had the most amazing trip of our life.”

Sharon and Jim Cirincione and their family experienced things they had never thought of before.



Claudia Gordon poses for a portrait at her office in Naples on Thursday, March 22, 2018. (Photo: Olivia Vanni/Naples Daily News)

“We had a gelato class in Florence,” Sharon says. “That was wonderful. Her restaurant choices were excellent. We had no idea what restaurants could take that many and not be a problem, and her hotel locations were perfect.”

Claudia never intended to go into travel. The Detroit native got a degree in accounting from Western Michigan University and then got a job in the finance department of a hospital. Then her husband got a great job in Moscow, Idaho, and they moved to the small town.

“I was looking for a job, and a local travel agency was hiring,” Claudia reminisces. “From there I never looked back. I had an instant passion for the industry.”

She found it fascinating not only learning geography and how to book travel, but working with people to plan the perfect trip.

“I learned very early what people wanted and the different types of travel people do,” she says. “Within six months of being hired, I was escorting groups to Hawaii. It was incredible. I had never thought of a travel agency as a career, but it just meshed. It has opened a world I never knew existed.”

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Claudia's specialty is tailoring a trip to match everyone's interests. She recently arranged a vacation for a client to Japan, and after discussing some of the children's interests, she added a trip to a robotic museum, interactions with locals and a meeting with a samurai as part of the adventure.

Claudia has planned many trips for Ann and Bill DeBruler. She arranged a unique vacation that took them to London for Christmas and Paris for New Year's Eve with the couple's four children and 12 grandchildren.

"My granddaughter said the highlight of her life was being on the Eiffel Tower at midnight on New Year's Eve," Ann says. "That was a very, very neat experience and nothing we would have thought of. The hotel in London was the one that Kate and Pippa stayed in the night before her wedding. We would never have thought of anything like that."

Claudia arranged another trip for 21 of them to South Africa. The trip included safaris, sightseeing and a tour of Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned.

"When you have a range of children, it is hard to keep everybody satisfied, but they were," Bill adds.

Ann and Bill recently went to Antarctica, another vacation designed by Claudia.

"It was our seventh continent, so we definitely wanted to do it," Ann says.

Now Claudia is busy setting up a trip for 22 of them to Hawaii this Christmas.

"She asks for your input, and then she arranges it from there," Ann explains. "The boys are taking ukulele lessons, and the girls are taking hula lessons. That was Claudia's idea. Then we will have a dinner and the kids will perform for their parents. She just does everything, and it makes it so easy."

Claudia's experience not only comes from work behind a desk but from her own travels. She's been all over the world, including India, Africa, Egypt, China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, throughout Europe and the Caribbean. This summer she is taking a cruise above the Arctic Circle in Norway.

“Any place I go I am always on high alert for activities, events, hotels, different experiences,” she says. “People today want to experience and meet local people. They want to learn along the way.”

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Claudia says cruises are very popular now in travel.

“They have a lot of new cruise ships that are more comfortable with a lot of new features, like Wi-Fi,” she says. “They are popular because people can unpack and settle in. You can see many unusual destinations by ship.”

Other hot spots now are Japan, the Baltics, Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica. For year-round residents of Southwest Florida, she says Iceland, Russia and Scandinavia are popular, because clients want to escape the heat.

Claudia’s experience is recognized internationally. In March 2015, she was invited to the 105th anniversary of the Goring Hotel in London where she met Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge. This March she was invited to Florence, Italy, to a special summit of travel advisors. She is a certified travel consultant and has been on Travel and Leisure’s A-List of travel agents for five years.

“I never thought this is what I would be doing, but I love it,” Claudia exclaims. “I want to match their interests to the place and give them the best experience that the destinations have to offer.”