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ANNUAL TRAVEL PLANNER
WHEN & WHERE TO SKI
AROUND THE WORLD

Luxury travel designer: Sally Bird

Katie Milton speaks to Sally Bird, co-founder and director of Executive Edge Travel + Events about her speciality destinations and what makes the luxury travel agency unique.
By Katie Milton



Sally Bird in Africa

"I caught the travel bug early," says Bird, who at just 17 years of age left her family in [Australia](#) and embarked on a backpacking trip across [Europe](#). She had spent her early childhood living in the UK (before her parents relocated to Australia), and was eager to return. Travel has been her life ever since. Director and co-founder of luxury travel agency [Executive Edge Travel + Events](#), Bird now works as a hands-on consultant who plans, books and coordinates leisure travel for high-end and discerning travellers.

When asked what motivated her and her partners to start the company, Bird responds, "The clients. We [my partners] worked together at another agency and that workplace became really big. I didn't want my clients to get swallowed up in the call centre environment. I wanted to ensure they still felt special."

This is how [Executive Edge Travel + Events](#) positions itself; as a personalised service with a very high touch approach. Working closely with a wide variety of clients, Bird and her colleagues cover corporate bookings for end of year company trips and business trips, as well as individual, group and multigenerational holidays. They handle everything from research, accommodation and restaurant bookings; to buying event tickets and out of office hours phone calls if something goes wrong and the client needs help. "I'm a total perfectionist. I know it all and I have to get it right, I care about every booking I make and every client I have," says Bird.

Recently, Bird has been organising a Europe trip for a group of six couples. "The men are bike riding in the Dolomites and the girls are hiking in [Germany](#) and then they are all meeting up in [Greece](#) for a cruise before they then go on individual journeys," explains Bird. The seven-week vacation has been months of planning "Hotels, car hire, flights, day tours and private guides. One couples' trip has been organised around retracing their family heritage steps from Ireland to [Scotland](#), says Bird.

While the team at [Executive Edge Travel + Events](#) organise specialised trips all over the globe, Bird has a number of speciality areas based on her own travel experiences. "[Croatia](#) is one of my favourite travel experiences because I've spent a lot of time island hopping along the Dalmatian coast. I've sent so many people on private yacht charters and cruises around those islands because I've experienced them and I know how amazing the authentic local moments are. It's the same with the south of [France](#); when my son was a year old, we rented a villa in a tiny village for a summer and did a lot of driving. So I've planned a lot of driving holidays around the area because I can look at a map and point out where they should go and the names of the villages. You become an expert by doing it yourself," says Bird.



Sally Bird in the Maldives

Her real love affair, however, is with [Africa](#). "I went to Africa with my parents for my 30th birthday and did safaris in [Tanzania](#) and [Kenya](#) and finished up on a beach in Zanzibar. It's so multigenerational because you can be five years old, or 30, or 60 and it's still amazing, no matter how old you are Africa offers something so different," says Bird. Since then, she has returned four times and visited eight countries. Bird draws on this wealth of knowledge when booking client trips, but maintains, "It comes down to finding out what they want to get out of Africa."

Bird notes the importance of little details when booking any client trip. "It's all about offering different options for different people. If you are booking a trip for the older generation you want to make sure the accommodation is on the ground floor, for families you have to make sure there's a swimming pool and a playground... does the restaurant serve kids meals? It's about reassuring things that will make the entire experience seamless".

When I ask if she has a favourite client trip Bird responds, " I love all the trips that I do but I especially love the ones when people go where I've been and they come back and share the same feelings – that makes it worth it."



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Executive Edge

Established 16 years ago, Executive Edge is a privately owned boutique travel agency based in Melbourne delivering bespoke services for the cultured leisure traveller and global corporate traveller. Sally Bird is one of three Executive Edge co-owners/directors and she caters to high-end leisure clientele, as well as leading the corporate team. Her speciality areas include Southern France, Bali, Thailand, New York, Italy, Singapore and Hong Kong.

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