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Industry Q&A: Jacqui Spice, Founder of Touch of Spice

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Unique, luxury experience packages await clients traveling to New Zealand with Touch of Spice

By: Michelle Rae Uy

As is tradition, when the cold creeps in, the snowbirds and holidaymakers pack their bags and head south. With the fall spell now underway and hibernation season just around the corner, travelers are setting their sights on the summery lands of the Southern Hemisphere.



Jacqui Spice, founder and CEO of Touch of Spice. // © 2017 Touch of Spice

And for adventure, jaw-dropping landscapes and a Polynesian flair, clients should look no further than New Zealand for a winter holiday.

Jacqui Spice, founder and CEO of Queenstown-based tour operator Touch of Spice, crafts high-end tours of New Zealand and prides herself on creating one-of-a-kind packages that combine the country's great outdoors with upscale service and accommodations.

We sat down with Spice to learn more about her company's concept and the itineraries available to clients.

Tell us about Touch of Spice and its philosophy.

My background is in tourism and hospitality. For more than a decade, I worked as a chief stewardess on super yachts catering to high-net-worth clientele all over the world. I often visited New Zealand to see my family, and on one particular trip, I spent quite a bit of time in Queenstown, which is often referred to as the "adventure playground" of New Zealand.

Feature image (above): For a premium alpine adventure, guests can be helicoptered to a wilderness location in the Southern Alps for a wide range of outdoor activities. //

I saw a gap in the market for a personal concierge service catering to the high-net-worth clients traveling in and out of the region. The business grew quickly and has become one of New Zealand's leading luxury tourism and concierge companies.

New Zealand is best for rugged experiences. What made you think to combine that with elements of luxury?

New Zealand has had a longstanding "clean and green" image, particularly with our country's "100% Pure" tagline. My role has been to showcase that not only do we have breathtaking scenery, but we also have world-class luxury lodges, boutique hotels and private residences, as well as incredible once-in-a-lifetime experiences such as dining under a waterfall, eating freshly caught crayfish, enjoying award-winning food and wine and seeing trendsetting art and architecture.

Tell us about your experience packages.

We spend our days curating bespoke packages that are perfectly tailored to our clients' individual requirements. That means we create both adventure-driven and non-adventure-driven experiences for our guests.

Although New Zealand is renowned for being one of the adventure hubs of the world, our outstanding natural beauty affords a range of experiences ideally suited to those who want to just sit back and relax while here on holiday.

This might mean clients are taking a helicopter journey to a private boat cruising the majestic Milford Sound; drinking Champagne on a snowcapped mountaintop; or taking a backstage tour of our award-winning wineries with the winemakers themselves. We design our experiences to the customer.

How easy is it for travel agents to book your packages?

Incredibly easy. One of our brand mantra's is "Everyone is a VIP in our world," and this extends to the agents we work with. It's our job to make the booking process as streamlined as possible. All the packages and itineraries that we craft can also be white labeled, meaning that agents can get them straight through to their clients without delay.

What are your most popular tours, and what would you recommend agents sell clients?

The options are endless in a landscape as diverse and whimsical as New Zealand. A popular tour is the premium alpine adventure, where guests are helicoptered to an otherwise inaccessible wilderness location in the Southern Alps. Here, they enjoy a range of activities, such as heli-biking, fishing and heli-skiing.

Lunch is then served at a gourmet mountain kitchen, where modern cuisine is prepared by the resident chef using fresh local produce and paired with award-winning regional wines. It's the ultimate remote fine-dining experience.

Another popular tour is night glamping. It really showcases New Zealand's great outdoors to guests without asking them compromise on luxury. Clients can elect to arrive to their camp via helicopter or on horseback. The day can be spent in the wilderness gathering fresh local produce with their personal guide or relaxing in the tranquil setting with a massage and Champagne. The day will conclude with an exquisite, chef-prepared meal by the open fire, followed by a night spent under the stars. It's absolute bliss.

Tell us about Touch of Spice's new Residence Collection.

Earlier this year, we introduced a new tier of lavish luxury accommodation, The Residence Collection by Touch of Spice. It is the first of its kind in New Zealand. This came in response to the growing demand from our ultra-high-net-worth-individual travelers looking for their "home away from home." The collection provides them with more space and privacy and gives us the ability to cater to the ever-increasing popularity of multigenerational families traveling together.

The Residence Collection is an ultra-premium portfolio of the very finest luxury accommodation available throughout New Zealand, ranging from \$3,565 to \$25,000 per night. It includes expansive estates, private-island retreats, boutique lodges and exclusive-use homes that can be both self- and fully catered.

The majority of properties within The Residence Collection are also exclusively managed and represented by Touch of Spice, which enables a seamless guest experience from beginning to end, leaving our guests free to relax, unwind and enjoy — always with a Touch of Spice.