

## Cultural Travel

An Interview with Nancy G. Novogrod, Founder, Culturati Travel Design

**EDITORS' NOTE** Nancy Novogrod was Editor in Chief of *Travel + Leisure* for 21 years, and during much of this time also served as Senior Vice President and Editorial Director of *American Express Publishing*. Novogrod oversaw the launch of six global editions of *Travel + Leisure*: Mexico, Turkey, China, Australia/New Zealand, South Asia, and Southeast Asia as well as *Travel + Leisure's* website and book series. She was also an advisor for the annual *American Express Publishing Luxury Summit*. Before joining *Travel + Leisure* in 1993, Novogrod was Editor-in-Chief of *House & Garden* magazine. Previously, she served as an Executive Editor of *Clarkson Potter/Publishers*. Novogrod began her publishing career in the fiction department at *The New Yorker*. She is a very active trustee of the *American Academy in Rome*.



Nancy G. Novogrod

**COMPANY BRIEF** *Culturati Travel Design* ([culturatitraveldesign.com](http://culturatitraveldesign.com)) is obsessed with culture, travel, and with discovering the people and places at the heart of a destination. It seeks to share its passion for art, design, food, style and local connections with discerning travelers. Utilizing expert guides, well-placed insiders, and privileged access, it creates transformative experiences for intimate groups of like-minded travelers. *Culturati Travel Design* is an affiliate of *Valerie Wilson Travel*. ([ValerieWilsonTravel.com](http://ValerieWilsonTravel.com)), one of the largest private, family-owned and managed travel consulting firms in the United States.

**What led you to create Culturati Travel Design and what made you feel the timing was right for the company?**

*Culturati Travel Design* brings together many elements of both my personal interests and my professional experience. It's a very special opportunity for me.

I was an art history major in college and that interest has always remained and influenced much of the work I've done, both in book publishing and in magazines. This was certainly the case at *House & Garden*, a magazine that covered design, lifestyle, and art, as well as at *Travel + Leisure*, where the art and architecture and design elements were very important.

I also have a passion for food and for shopping, but not merely shopping – I call it cultural cruising. It's an opportunity to dig deep

into a culture and find out some of the cues about what makes a particular destination distinct.

As for the timing, I'm passionate about travel and *Culturati Travel Design* has clearly provided me with the opportunity to be out there keeping up with the world of travel and the people in it, and the news about destinations. It affords me the opportunity to explore the world while researching new trips.

During my time at *Travel + Leisure*, the access I had was of enormous value. My effort, as the editor of the magazine, was to try to find a way to share information that would enable people to dig deep into destinations and get beneath the surface in a way that was beyond the reach of ordinary travelers, and closer to my own experiences.

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Planning trips through *Culturati Travel Design* makes it possible for me to share my knowledge and access.

**How do you describe the service that Culturati Travel Design provides and where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth?**

First and foremost, it's about curation. I work with specialists on the ground to put together trips that are meant to enrich and further people's knowledge of areas they are passionate about, and to provide meaningful and memorable experiences that enhance their lives. That, above all, is what I'm trying to do.

My time at *Travel + Leisure* provided me with a network of global contacts and unique sources of information. This, combined with my own point of view and particular interests and tastes will, I hope, create a rich experience for *Culturati* travelers. Our trips will allow for a deep dive into what each destination has to offer.

**You've partnered with Valerie Wilson Travel. Will you discuss this relationship and the value that you feel the partnership provides for Culturati Travel Design?**

I believe that *Valerie Wilson Travel* and I share a great interest in delivering quality experiences and doing things the right way. I have a high comfort level with the company and have known it for years. I worked with Valerie to plan my travels when I was the editor of *House & Garden* (she helped many of the company's top editors with their travel arrangements). I also know Kimberly, who was a valued member of the *Travel Advisory Board* of *Travel + Leisure*. They are highly professional leaders in the travel industry, with a significant business that is operated in a thoughtful and intelligent way.

Our partnership gives me a great deal of confidence that the trips I design will be executed in the most careful and excellent manner. I'm not a travel advisor, so having the support and expertise of a team of people who have that experience is crucial.

At *Valerie Wilson Travel*, it's not just the front-line individuals at the firm – there are also many excellent people who support the trips that they plan and are valuable sources. I feel like I have an expert team around me.

**Were you drawn to the hospitality industry at an early age and what makes the industry so special for you?**

I've always been interested in how life is lived in other places, in meeting people whose experiences were very different from my own. As the only child of a working mother, my parents brought me along on their vacations, so I got to see something of the world at a young age.

Travel is such a great opportunity to get beyond the surface of a destination and experience aspects of a place that are clues to the life that is lived there. As I used to say as the editor of *Travel + Leisure*, it opens hearts and minds. ●