

Beneath The Surface

with... *Gary Bartelings,*
Managing Director, Bartelings



Bartelings' Marketing Manager, Samantha Hannay chats with travel expert and Company Owner and Founder **Gary Bartelings**. Currently living in Cyprus with his family, Gary doesn't sit still for long! With specialisms in private and luxury travel, tour creation and management, and unwavering energy and enthusiasm for air travel, it's no surprise that Gary develops strong industry partnerships around the Globe. Here we uncover Gary's insight into the world of travel as it recovers from a 2-year standstill.

Bartelings: The global travel market is still recovering from the last 2 years of inactivity. What movement are you seeing in the market and financial spend on holidays?

Gary: I think what has surprised most companies is the speed with which travel markets are bouncing back. Apart from the often cited 'pent up' demand from travellers, there also seems to be a high level of confidence in travel companies. We see it in the engagement of companies with Bartelings, looking at developing new and innovative programs with us. You also see it in the recruitment drive of many travel businesses working to get back to pre-pandemic booking numbers and increasing resources to be able to handle the building demand.

Bartelings: What do you think travellers are looking for from their travel experiences today, particularly after lockdown and the pandemic?

Gary: I get a sense there is a growing interest in what I would refer to as 'meaningful' travel. We all know that sustainability is bandied around, explained by many as being environmentally aware. However, I think we need to look at this in much broader terms. One of the reasons Bartelings joined the [World Tourism Association for Culture and Heritage](#) is that their aims are much more comprehensive. Travel has, in my view, a significant role to play in developing understanding between cultures and people. Being able to appreciate the differences, accept those and ensure that our diverse world is a place we can all enjoy and live, adds a different depth to the travel experience. Respecting the fact that cultures and ways of life are not the same but by virtue of not being the same, they are exciting to explore and understand. I think that the traveller of today is much more in tune with this. Sustainability is not just about the environment; it is about so much more.

Bartelings: Bartelings works with some of the most respected and experienced global travel companies. What does Bartelings offer that enables you to sit around the table and start the conversation?

Gary: Our expertise in our brand of global travel tours, [Escorted Journeys by Air](#), has evolved since 2005 when I was first exposed to the concept of chartering an aircraft to give travellers access to unique and often hard to reach places in one itinerary. I marvelled at the genius of it and wondered why more companies were not offering this unique experience. Then I worked on my first tour! And quickly realised the preparation required and the work involved creates high barriers for entry into this market. It isn't a straightforward programme but we were determined to become a specialist in this area of travel. So, when I set up Bartelings we focused on this niche, expanding and enhancing our services, partnering with and helping clients breakthrough into this market. Now we are becoming known as the experts in this market which has been earned by delivering on what we promise and our clients seeing their customers coming back for more! We say the 'proof is in the pudding' and our [case studies](#) are a testament of what Bartelings are able to achieve with our clients.

Bartelings: What tend to be the key offerings that make Bartelings an attractive B2B partner within the global travel industry?

Gary: Our expertise and knowledge is relatively unique in the travel industry. The concept of an *Escorted Journey by Air* is still considered as something which requires specialist expertise and we see that when we speak to prospective clients. The realisation that travelling between countries every 3 to 4 days, moving through airports and hotels, and all the logistics that surrounds that, can be challenging to say the least. It is our business to ensure it is as seamless as possible, ensuring travellers experience a smooth and relaxed journey. Furthermore, it is about ensuring the initial tour planning focuses on the route to take, time zones, weather and seasons, as well as a balance of activities and inclusions in each destination to optimise the travellers' enjoyment. It takes time to do this well, and when done correctly, the client feedback and repeat travel, offers real opportunities for our clients.



Bartelings: It's obviously a lot more expensive so why would travellers choose to travel by private jet?

Gary: Cost is relative and depends more on what a person's disposable income looks like. One of the benefits for many is 'time' – a finite and valued commodity and many of the travellers we look after

have a lot of things they want to do and see. Travelling on a private jet facilitates this and saves time. The other reason is convenience. Chartering a jet normally means you depart and arrive at private terminals and often at airports which are closer to the destination you are going to. On an Escorted Journey by Air, we work tirelessly to make sure passengers pass through airports as quickly and easily as possible. With expedited customs and immigration arrangements (where available) we minimise time at airports, time that is much better spent enjoying a destination!

Bartelings: For a travel company who hasn't used private aircraft before or developed a private air tour product, what would you suggest are the top 3 reasons for a company to add this to their travel portfolio?

Gary: This is something we often discuss with prospective clients. There is a myriad of reasons, however I would say the key ones are:

1. Innovation strengthens the company's appeal to their current customer base *and* it can attract new clients to a brand. We have found that with many of our clients up to 50% of travellers are new to them when they launch an Escorted Journey by Air.
2. Repeat customers - clients that have done one tour, regularly want to do another one. Experiencing this type of travel, the ease, the access and the convenience of a privately chartered aircraft encourages people to travel more.
3. Nothing to lose – we work closely with our aircraft partners to limit any financial exposure by negotiating low deposits and long penalty free periods so that our clients can “give it a go” as we say. The investment they need to make is no different from any other product range or new destination – so why not try it?

Bartelings: Committing to a new product such as an Escorted Journey by Air could be seen as a bit of a leap of faith. How does Bartelings support their clients and address some of the risks involved?

Gary: Very much around point 3 above which is to limit any financial exposure for as long as possible, effectively until a client finds it is working for them. Furthermore, we provide a lot of advice in relation to project development (route planning), timings (you need to release adequate time prior to departure to allow time for the program to sell), destinations and highlights. The key is to create something which captures the imagination of your client base. Naturally, our clients are the custodians of their brand and know their customers better than anyone, so we work closely with them to create an itinerary that ignites a spark.



Bartelings: What would you say are the main 'blocks' that your potential clients raise and how does Bartelings address these?

Gary: The perceived upfront financial commitment tends to be the main block and we can address and virtually eliminate this barrier at the very start. The environmental impact of using an aircraft for touring can also be a block for some and we understand that. Most, if not all, of our clients work with carbon offsets now and there are other ways we believe clients can minimise their impact. However, we also encourage our clients to consider the positive impact they can make on communities and local businesses by visiting these destinations and having a greater understanding of their lives and culture. In a drive to be environmentally conscious, companies often miss the positive impact travel can make on people around the world and we bring that to life within our itineraries.

Bartelings: Travelling by private aircraft can take people to places that can be challenging to reach by scheduled flights or cruise ships. What are your 3 favourite destinations in this respect?

Gary: I have been very fortunate to have visited some incredibly exciting and unique destinations. One thing that always strikes me is that destinations are made so much more interesting by the people you meet there. It is the people you meet who bring a destination to life, whether it is the Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat or the Great Barrier Reef. Whilst it is difficult to have a definitive 'top 3' the following have certainly enchanted me:

1. Taj Mahal – I have visited on a number of occasions and each time it takes my breath away.
2. The Falkland Islands – hard to reach but so unique, a great wilderness full of adventure opportunities. Perhaps not on everyone's list but I loved the place.
3. Easter Island – so magical and a perfect destination for private jet travel as cruise ships are not always able to dock. Most cruise ships make a scenic pass of the island, there is no harbour, and the weather can be problematic.

Bartelings: How does Bartelings deliver on its ethos of sustainable tourism?

Gary: We need to look at sustainability as more than simply reducing carbon emissions. The WTACH organisation focuses on much more than just the environment which is why Bartelings became a member. We see sustainability in travel as protecting culture, heritage and traditions for future generations, ensuring we support the livelihoods and longevity of different people around the world. Apart from that, our mutual understanding surely is something this world could do with.

Bartelings: And finally, what is the one place you have always wanted to visit but not made it to yet?

Gary: Antarctica – the one continent I haven't visited. It is on my list and I am saving up for it!

