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# GENTRY

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## Gwen BOOKS

Gwen Books is in the business of making travel dreams come true—the more luxurious the better. She is equally adept at securing a small ship cruise on the Amazon or a boutique experience in Barcelona. Books believes each journey should contain magical moments and surprises—memories you and your family will cherish for years to come.

Her passion for seeing the world began as a young girl. “My first purchase was a suitcase to take on a sleepover. I was born ready to see the world,” she explains. Since then, she has. When asked about her favorite pleasures abroad, Books doesn’t hesitate. “I never tire of sitting in a café and listening to the languages of the world all around me.”

**People to Know**



Books’ business is based solely on referrals. A steady stream of CEOs, venture capitalists, and corporate clients rely on her to deliver exceptional travel experiences. Beyond luxury travel, CEOs also look to Books to provide concierge services at home. “My clients have diverse needs,” she says. “Some just want to pack their bags and go, while others are very hands-on. They trust my experience and my hand-selected teams on the ground in every city. Exceeding my clients’ expectations is what I do on a daily basis. I love knowing that the very best of Silicon Valley continue to trust me to deliver seamlessly at home and abroad.”



## Laura COOK

Have you had a drink in Farley Bar at Cavallo Point in Sausalito? Dined at the Commissary in the Presidio? What about the Menlo Grill at the Stanford Park Hotel in Menlo Park? You should. These hot spots are designed by one of the most sought-after certified Interior Designers and LEED Accredited Professionals in the Bay Area—Laura Cook. Cook’s philosophy is founded on functional design, incorporating a balance of timeless interiors with a modern aesthetic. Prior to founding her own eponymous firm, Cook was Vice President at Brayton Hughes Design Studios in San Francisco. She takes pride in her ability to work collaboratively, creating spaces that reflect the tastes of the client while fulfilling the design objective.

With a passion for travel and culture (Cook has lived throughout Europe, Asia, and North America), she brings a cosmopolitan sensibility to each of her projects. Although born on the East Coast, Cook feels that her true home is San Francisco. “I’ve always found people in the Bay Area to be innovative and original with their approach to design, but they also love their history and beautiful architecture.” Currently, she’s working on projects with famed



chef Traci Des Jardins and renovating the Monterey Plaza Hotel. Whenever anyone asks Laura Cook what her design secret is, she replies, “A respect for the sense of place in each project. It’s all about each environment and how we use the space.”

## Amanda NORTH

Raised in the Bay Area in a family of ardent travelers, Amanda North has explored the world. Several years ago, North was in Udaipur with her daughter Lili, enjoying precious time away from her job as a high-tech executive. Together, they visited an artisan whose family had made gorgeous textiles for more than 500 years. The artisan lamented that he might be the last of his line to practice their ancestral craft. Amanda was haunted by his words.

Fast forward to April 2013. Amanda was at the finish line of the Boston Marathon cheering on her daughter, a race participant. In a flash, her world changed forever. As she recovered from injuries sustained in the bombing, she contemplated her passions and purpose. She explains, “I thought back to our time in Udaipur and realized I could put my 30 years as a high-tech marketing executive to work to help these incredible artisans thrive.”

To that end, Amanda founded Artisan Connect to help artisans prosper in their traditional livelihood and celebrate their craft by providing the first online shopping destination focused on curated home décor items handmade in developing countries. “We take pride in the fact that Artisan Connect sources from non-profits, artisan collectives, and other organizations that ensure a fair wage is paid to the artisans, and we provide them with healthcare and education. We are building this community with the vision that all may thrive and that the tradition of global crafts will live on.”