

<https://www.johnnyjet.com/travel-style-mark-baker/>



## Travel Style: Mark Baker

Johnny Jet



*Want to know how to travel in style, just like the pros? We check in with frequent fliers to find out how often they fly, their favorite destinations and what they never leave home without.*

**Name:** Mark Baker

**Occupation:** Amazon ship operator and naturalist Hometown: Jamestown, Rhode Island, USA

**Residence:** Manaus, Amazonas, Brasil, and also Rhode Island

**College:** Duke University College major: History

**Website:** naturetours.com YouTube: AmazonNatureTours

**Short bio:** Mark Baker found a way to weave together a variety of his early life's passions into a livelihood. A love of the outdoors, a fascination with tropical wildlife, an obsession with ships, an irrepressible urge to explore wilderness, and an unavoidable thirst to build things combined over a 40-year career to operate ship expedition cruises deep into the wilderness Amazon rainforest. He is a naturalist, a boat builder and a ship operator, and for all the time that he has spent deep in the wilderness, he is still impassioned and enthralled by the loveliness of Amazon flora and fauna.

**How often do you fly?** Nearly monthly international flights. How many countries have you been to? Dozens, have never tried to count them. How many continents have you been to? Four.

**Earliest travel memory:** Crossing the Atlantic from New York City on the SS United States.

**Favorite American city:** Boston.

**Favorite international city:** Manaus, Brasil. Perched as it is on the edge of the great Amazon wilderness Manaus is a blend of sophisticated style and the raw beauty of the wild forest. The stylish modernity of Brasil and the cultural traditions of the 19th century persist in this great, emerging, astonishing city. **Least favorite country:** I like them all. It is not the boundaries that matter, it is the people and the more of the world that I see, the more I like the variety and the humanity of all every country I visit. I have no desire to go to: I don't think that way at all. What travels come my way are always welcome and I travel with an open mind, ready for news experiences.

**Friendliest people in the world:** Brazilians, com certeza! Country with the meanest immigration officers: United States. It was not always this way, and I hope that one day it will change.

**Favorite World Heritage Site:** Corredor Biológico Central da Amazonia.

**Favorite airline:** LATAM.

**Favorite aircraft type:** I am pretty fond of float planes. They go anywhere that there is water.

**Aisle or window:** Window on starboard side of aircraft.

**Favorite airport lounge:** Centurion Lounge, São Paulo.

**Favorite U.S. airport:** TF Green, Providence, RI.

**Favorite international airport:** Keflavik Airport, Iceland. One of my children took her first steps there while we were waiting for a connecting flight. **Favorite hotel:** Sofitel, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro.

**Favorite cruise line:** I am partial to all expedition cruise companies, but will have to say my heart lies with my own, Naturetous.com/Amazon Nature Tours.

**Favorite travel credit card:** AMEX.

**Favorite island:** Isabela, Galapagos.

**Favorite beach:** Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro.

**Favorite National Park:** Monument Valley.

**Favorite fancy restaurant:** La Coupole, Paris. It may not be the most exclusive, but the traditions and style of this iconic restaurant are for me, unforgettable.

**Favorite hole-in-the-wall:** Phil's Restaurant, Wakefield, Rhode Island. The staff will almost always call you hon.

**Favorite airport restaurant:** La Carreta, Miami International, where you can get good Cuban food and a good dose of Cuban hospitality.

**Favorite bar:** Union Oyster Bar, Boston. Be sure to ask for Daniel Webster's booth.

**Favorite fruit:** Lime.

**Favorite food:** Gallus gallus: prepared simply and with my favorite fruit.

**Least favorite food:** Meatloaf: I am not sure why it exists.

**Drink of choice (in the air and on the ground):** Sauvignon blanc, my preference being vineyards in Chile.

**Favorite travel movie(s):** I have a habit of watching kitschy films on planes that I would never consider watching on the ground. Rom coms and sci-fi fill that bill well.

**Favorite travel show(s):** Can't say that I ever watch them. My life is travel so travel shows are bit like work to me.

**Favorite travel podcast(s):** Same as with travel shows, I spend so much time thinking about travel that it is hard to enjoy listening to a travel podcast.

**Favorite travel book(s):** “The Naturalist on the River Amazons,” Henry Walter Bates. The years that this naturalist spent exploring in the Amazon and the obstacles and victories he suffered and enjoyed are pretty familiar.

**Right now I am reading:** “Wild Thoughts from Wild Places,” David Quammen.

**Top 3 favorite travel newsletters/magazines/blogs:** Travel Weekly, Seatrade Cruise News, National Geographic Traveler.

**Favorite travel website(s)—besides JohnnyJet.com, of course!** I can’t say that I ever look at them, but that has got to change!

**5 things you bring on a plane:** I often bring books that require real attention to read because planes seem to help me focus well, a tiny LED flashlight to find things on the airplane floor, a yellow pad and pens for making uninterrupted lists, and a heavy jacket in case the air-conditioning is quite cold.

**What do you always seem to forget?** Reading glasses.

**What do you like least about travel?** Official TSA staff. Sadly, they have become world-famous.

**What do you want your loved one to buy you from an airport Duty Free store?** I don’t need anything, please don’t bother!

**Favorite travel app(s):** I know that I should, but I really don’t do that. I try to keep it simple.

**Most embarrassing travel moment:** I am never ever forgetting my passport again, never. I promise. I’m embarrassed I haven’t been to: Beijing.

**Worst travel moment:** Three decades ago I took a primitive ferry boat on a week-long journey down the Amazon to the Atlantic. Much of this week I spent waiting in line at the single bathroom while suffering from serious intestinal discomfort, along with 100 other people. Happily everything is better now on these transits, including sanitation.

**What’s your dream destination?** One day I will go snorkeling with whale sharks in Mexico and one day I will visit Komodo Island and see the dragons.

**Favorite travel charity:** Conservation International (I know, it’s not a travel charity).

**Best travel tip:** Avoid the “culture of complaint” that can afflict groups of people traveling together. Remember to look and listen and be open to experience. This is the way, the only way, to make travel worthwhile.

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