THE BOCA RATON OBSERVER

2003-2013
CELEBRATING A DECADE OF COMMUNITY

GO FOR THE GLOBE
TRIPS TO SATISFY THE MOST ADVENTUROUS TRAVELERS

A TOAST TO ARGENTINA
HOME OF EXTREME SPORTS AND SUPREME WINES

NO ACCIDENTAL TOURISTS
A LOCAL FAMILY GOES AROUND THE WORLD IN 280 DAYS

SCOTLAND YARN
PAST MEETS PRESENT IN ENCHANTING EDINBURGH

LOVE IS IN THE FLAIR
THE 10 MOST ROMANTIC VACATIONS ON EARTH

THE TRAVEL ISSUE

FEBRUARY 2014

MEXICAN INDULGENCE
GET THE STAR TREATMENT IN LOS CABOS

ICE ICE BABY
CHILL OUT ON AN ALASKAN CRUISE

*BASED ON MAILED QUANTITY US $3.95
LOVE IS IN THE
Flair

The 10 Most Romantic Vacations On Earth—Because You’re Worth It

WITH VALENTINE’S DAY UPON US, WE’D BE REMISS NOT TO PROVIDE SOME SCINTILLATING VACATION SUGGESTIONS. WHEN CUPID STRIKES THIS YEAR CONSIDER BOOKING ROUND-TRIP TICKETS TO ONE OF THESE 10 DREAMY DESTINATIONS, HAND-PICKED FOR THEIR ROMANCE QUOTIENT. WANT TO KNOW WHERE TO FIND THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VIEW IN SEVILLE, OR WHERE TO ENJOY THE MOST ROMANTIC DINNER IN PARIS? WE’VE GOT YOU COVERED. HOW ABOUT THE BEST PLACE TO STEAL A KISS IN CROATIA, HAWAII OR SAN FRANCISCO? WE’VE GOT THAT, TOO. PERHAPS YOU’D ENJOY A SUNSET CRUISE ALONG THE FRENCH POLYNESIAN ISLANDS, A CARRIAGE RIDE THROUGH THE COBBLESTONE STREETS OF BRUGES OR A STROLL THROUGH YOUR OWN PRIVATE PARK IN NEW YORK CITY? THAT’S WHAT WE THOUGHT. BETTER GET PACKING.

BRUGES, BELGIUM
Imagine a nostalgic carriage ride, you and your honey wrapped up in warm blankets as you meander down cobblestone streets past beautiful historic churches, picture-perfect market squares and soaring buildings. In Bruges, even the wind whispers romance. Chocolate is romantic in any language, but Belgian chocolate evokes a special passion (be sure to try some).

Where to stay: THE PAND ROMANTIC LUXURY HOTEL
Just steps from historic Burg Square, this former 18th century carriage house has been converted to a charming boutique hotel where couples are treated to Champagne breakfasts, cozy fires in the library and high-end, comfortable quarters. Its tranquil location near the idyllic canals makes the perfect place for arm-in-arm strolls. (Call 011-32-50-340-666 or visit pandhotel.com.)

Where to dine: PERGOLA KAFFEE
Guests are treated to an intimate dining experience at Pergola Kaffee, located inside the Hotel Die Zwae. Ask for a table perched along one of the most romantic, picturesque canals of Bruges, then relax while you and your paramour enjoy assorted gourmet offerings. (Call 011-32-50-447-650 or visit dieswaene.be and click on Pergola Kaffee.)

MAUI, HAWAII
Romance is part of the daily fabric in Maui, which Condé Nast Traveler named No. 1 on its list of “Top 25 Islands in the World.” Where else can you enjoy both an intimate sunrise atop a 10,000-foot-tall volcano and a vibrant sunset on a six-mile stretch of shoreline?

Best place to steal a kiss: By the Lake of Love at Minnewaterpark. Located in the south of Bruges, local legend claims that if you walk over the lake’s bridge with your partner, the two of you will experience eternal love. Step slowly, take in stunning scenery and savor the moment.

Where to stay: TRAVAASA HĀNA
Experience complete serenity at this world-class spot, where guestrooms intentionally have no televisions, radios or clocks. This all-inclusive resort sits on the easternmost tip of Maui,
enabling guests to be first on the island to watch the sunrise. Located on Kaahalulu Bay, the resort offers true seclusion amid palm trees and grassy hills—a true taste of Old Maui. Book an intimate Sea Ranch Cottage and secure your own private lanai and hot tub. (Call 808-359-2401 or visit travasa.com/hana.)

Where to dine:
SONZ’Z MAUI AT SWAN COURT
This Hyatt Regency restaurant offers fine cuisine and Hawaii’s most extensive wine cellar. Not only are the offerings superb, but the ambiance will have your heart doing the hula—think open-aired dining with a tropical waterfront view. It’s the perfect candlelit spot to share a slice of Chocolate Lava Cake. (Call 808-667-4506 or visit sonzrestaurant.com.)

Best place to steal a kiss:
In front of a waterfall along the Hana Highway, a breathtaking 50-mile road that winds past botanical gardens, taro patches, verdant rainforests and waterfall pools. Spend a day cruising this celebrated route and stop for a smooch by a waterfall along the way.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
Located where the Pacific Ocean meets the bay, it’s easy to see why Tony Bennett left his heart in San Francisco. The cosmopolitan home to the Golden Gate Bridge is perfect for long romantic cruises, cable car rides or city strolls where you can check out the pastel-colored homes that jut from steep roadsides. Don’t miss the Conservatory of Flowers, a stunning spot placed on the 100 Most Endangered World Monuments list.

Best place to steal a kiss:
Crissy Field. Part of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, a walking trail offers stunning views of the Bay and Golden Gate Bridge. If your timing’s right, you can catch the sunset over the Bay as you head west, and the city lights on your way back. Or walk the beach, where jetties provide the perfect perch for a salty kiss.

PARIS, FRANCE
Paris, aka, the City of Love, has long been renowned as the epicenter of Napoleon Bonaparte’s grandparents, Prince Roland. Located in the heart of Paris, guests receive the royal treatment, including rooms with private terrace views of the Eiffel Tower and Seine River. Before hitting the town, enjoy a relaxing afternoon at the exclusive spa, which recently made Condé Nast Traveler’s “Hot Spas” list.

Best place to steal a kiss:
Under the Pont des Arts. Built in the early 1800s, the famous footbridge is the spot for lovers to memorialize their mutual feelings. Sweets are from around the world go there to attach padlocks to.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The Eiffel Tower in Paris at sunset; a view of the Golden Gate Bridge from Crissy Field in San Francisco; Acquerello’s ridged pasta with foie gras, black truffle and marsala; intimate dining in Acquerello enblazoned with their initials and messages before throwing the locks’ keys into the Seine River below. Many then choose to seal the moment—with a French kiss, of course.

DUBROVNIK, CROATIA
Nicknamed the “Pearl of the Adriatic,” Dubrovnik sits right next to the sea. Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw once said, “If you want to see heaven on earth, come to Dubrovnik,” and we can’t disagree. Winding paths between villages showcase valleys, vineyards and vistas. Hold hands walking through Old Town’s streets and relish in the beautiful churches and gothic architecture of this United
Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture World Heritage Site.

Where to stay:

**HOTEL VILLA DUBROVNIK**

With "Romance Forever" as the hotel's slogan, Villa Dubrovnik sets a high bar for itself—and succeeds. This luxurious five-star boutique destination is perched above the crystal Adriatic Sea, sitting on the cliffs above the St. Jacob precinct. Tranquility and seclusion top the list at this award-winning spot; relax on the private beach or enjoy a cocktail in the shade of a gazebo. (Call 011-385-20-500-300 or visit villa-dubrovnik.hr.)

Where to dine:

**NAUTIKA RESTAURANT**

You'll rethink the meaning of seaside dining at Nautika, which in 2008 Conde Nast Traveler named the sixth "Most Romantic Restaurant in the World." It's easy to see why. Located on the very outskirts of the sea at Pile, alongside the western entrance to Dubrovnik’s Old Town, it's an idyllic spot for unique terrace dining overlooking the sea and fortress of Loprijena and Bokar. Master Chef Mario Bunda always uses the freshest organic fruits, vegetables and catches of the day. (Call 011-385-20-44-25-26 or visit nautika-restaurant.com.)

**Best place to steal a kiss:**

On top of Fort Royale on the island of Lokrum. The gorgeous green island is just a 15-minute boat ride from Dubrovnik out of Old Town. Its subtropical vegetation lends the perfect backdrop for an island kiss atop a historically charming fort, which towers above the land. You'll feel on top of the world, too.

**NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

New York City didn't become one of the world's most famous metropolises by accident. The contrast of beaming skyscrapers to blossoming parks gives it a personality and vibrancy that can only be felt in person. This vibrant concrete jungle is the epicenter for just about everything—from fashion to food, and especially romance.

Where to stay:

**GRAMERCY PARK HOTEL**

This classic boutique hotel, which was built in 1925 and renovated in 2006, oozes romance with its grand chandeliers, modern appointments and rotating 20th-century art collection featuring everyone from Andy Warhol to Jean-Michel Basquiat. Luxury abounds here, from the well-appointed suites to the rooftop terrace that overlooks Gramercy Park—the city's only private park where guests have exclusive access. (Call 212-930-3300 or visit gramercyparkhotel.com.)

**Best place to steal a kiss:**

On Bow Bridge in Central Park. This iconic spot has set the stage for lovers in films such as “Manhattan,” “The Way We Were” and “Keeping the Faith.” The surrounding woodlands change colors with the seasons and it's a favorite spot for photographers, who capture stunning shots of Fifth Avenue and Central Park West.

Where to dine:

**ONE IF BY LAND, TWO IF BY SEA**

Located in a charming 18th-century carriage house nestled in the heart of the West Village, this restaurant’s fairytale vibe radiates from the moment you walk in through the refinished barn doors. Expect to see roaring fireplaces, sparkling chandeliers and a pianist belting out tunes on a baby grand. (Call 212-255-8649 or visit oneifbyland.com.)

**VENICE, ITALY**

With baroque buildings, gondola rides, piazzas, opera and all the wine you could want, Venice is a veteran when it comes to all-out romance. There's always love in the air in this Italian city, whether you're enjoying the sunset at St. Mark's Square or a lazy lunch on the Grand Canal.

Where to stay:

**BAUERS IL PALAZZO**

Located on the famed Grand Canal, this 18th century home-turned-gothic-style luxury hotel is situated in the heart of Venice, just minutes from St. Mark's Square and a vibrant shopping and cultural area. Check out their "Romancing the Stars" package, which includes three nights, a romantic dinner for two, gondola ride and more. (Call 011-39-041-241-3111 or visit ilpalazzovenezia.com.)

Where to dine:

**L’ALCOVA RESTAURANT**

Gaze at your amore while savoring the cuisine at L’Alcova Restaurant, located inside the Ca’ Sagredo Hotel. Wine and dine on the intimate terrace overlooking the glistening waters of the Canal Grande while enjoying Chef Michele Potenza’s fresh ingredients from land and sea. (Call 39-0412413111 or visit casagredohotel.com/restaurant-and-bar.)
Best place to steal a kiss:
We know it might sound cheesy, but you really must share a lingering kiss on a romantic gondola ride while being serenaded in the language of love. There’s no better opportunity for a romantic proposal.

BOROA, FRENCH POLYNESIA
Travel + Leisure readers voted Bora Bora the No. 1 “Island for Romance” and by the looks of its exotic landscape and serene isolation, we’d have to agree. The jagged Mount Otemanu, tiny islets and colorful marine life seduce couples with their beauty.

Where to stay: FOUR SEASONS RESORT BORA BORA
This resort has romance down to a science—there’s even a Romance Menu with amenities including inflatable floating love seats and Chocolate Fantasy desserts. Stay in a private thatched-roof bungalow overlooking a turquoise lagoon in the South Pacific. Talk about setting the mood for love. (Call 011-689-603-130 or visit foursseasons.com/borabora.)

Where to dine: LA VILLA MAHANA
With only seven tables inside a dreamy Tuscan-style house located on a quiet lane, this intimate dining spot assuages couples some sweet alone time. Opt for the fixed four- or five-course meals with wine pairings—noted Chef Damien Rinaldi-Dovio’s menu won’t disappoint. (Call 011-689-675-065 or visit villamahana.com.)

Best place to steal a kiss:
Lock lips as you sail along the outer islets on a sunset cruise. The bow of a boat is the perfect place to snuggle up with your partner as the sun disappears behind the horizon.

SEVILLE, ANDALUCIA, SPAIN
Seville is a coveted destination for travelers and lovers alike—it’s located in the valley of the Guadalquivir River and charms visitors with winding narrow streets lined with vibrant orange blossoms and Moorish architecture. Experience authentic Spanish culture—flamenco, tapas, strumming guitars—and discover as a couple the many cultural secrets the city has to share.

Where to stay: HOTEL DONA MARIA
The rooftop pool and bar at Hotel Dona Maria offers rare and spectacular views of illuminated Seville at night. Located in a historic district, the four-star hotel retains an Old Town feel—cozy and authentic. It’s within proximity to must-see spots including the Santa Cruz district, Park of Maria Luisa and the Guadalquivir River, the fifth-longest river in the Iberian Peninsula. (Call 011-34-954-224-900 or visit hdmaria.com.)

Where to dine: THE ABADES TRIANA
Overlooking the Guadalquivir River, this fine dining eatery provides enchanting epicurean experiences. It’s popular for weddings because of its intimate urban glow, panoramic lounge window, and views of the Golden Tower, The Giralda and other iconic structures. It’s also a great place to pop the question—and then get married. (Call 011-34-954-286-459 or visit abadestrriana.com.)

Best place to steal a kiss:
In one of the city’s “kissing lanes,” a nickname for the narrow spaces located between Seville’s closely engineered buildings. They’re considered city trademarks—challenge your significant other to squeeze into one with you and pucker up.

KYOTO, JAPAN
Wooden Zen temples, lush gardens, tea houses and ancient palaces make this city one of Japan’s loveliest and most tranquil destinations. One of the oldest metropolises in Asia, Kyoto is home to myriad cultural festivals, Japanese attractions, fine restaurants and natural wonders.

Where to stay: THE SCREEN
No two rooms are alike at The Screen, Kyoto’s first boutique hotel, which offers 13 creative styles from which to choose (making it a favorite among creative types). There’s also a trendy on-site restaurant, urban-style bar and it’s in close proximity to Kyoto Imperial Park, Kamo River and other iconic shrines and structures. And did we mention there’s a wedding chapel on site? (Call 011-81-75-252-1113 or visit screen-hotel.jp/en.)

Where to dine: GION-KARYO
Locating this restaurant isn’t easy, as it’s nestled between buildings near the notable Gion district, where geishas can be spotted. But it’s worth it: You’ll have plenty of time to stare into each other’s eyes while savoring sake over one of its renowned 10-course meals. (Call 011-81-75-532-0025 or visit karyo-kyoto.jp/gion.)

Best place to steal a kiss: Kyoto Botanical Garden.
Imagine strolling hand in hand amid the vibrant colors and enchanting scents, locking lips by the orchids and bromeliads. Spring and fall are the best months to catch the most beautiful blooms.