

50 Best Romantic Getaways 2010

Rediscover romance this year by stealing away to one of these hot spots.

From February 2010 By Jennifer Flowers , Clark Mitchell

Romance doesn't always involve strolling a beach at sunset. Just ask Deanna Matyskiel, who went on a spa retreat with her husband in a gorgeous Palm Springs, CA, resort. "My therapist kept cracking his knuckles," says Matyskiel. "And my husband was less fortunate: when he was on the massage table, one of the table legs broke and he fell off."

Romantic? Maybe not at that time, but the Matyskiels were able to laugh about it later (at least, after the resort refunded their money) and connected through the shared experience. Of course, romance often springs from more traditional moments too: hiding away in a secluded hotel, sitting down to a candlelit dinner, and watching the sunset from a remote beach.

And traditional romantic hot spots still attract travelers in search of these experiences. "The Caribbean has really come back as a major destination in the last year," says Georgia Johnson, director of marketing and sales in the weddings department at American Express Travel. "And the one island that is constantly requested for romantic travel is St. Lucia. Other popular islands tend to be Jamaica and Dominican Republic."

It's not surprising that beach getaways remain one of the most popular romantic vacation options: you can spend long, warm days snorkeling, enjoy afternoon naps in an over-water bungalow, and take sunset walks along the water. At least, that's what you'll find at the Aitutaki Lagoon Resort & Spa in the Cook Islands. Or head to another romantic locale, Bali, where the Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay has perfected the seaside repose with its new Beds on the Beach nights. Barefoot waitstaff serve cocktails and Asian-inspired tapas on silk-draped canopy lounge beds located directly on the sand.

Some travelers may get antsy from all this beach time, but not newlyweds, according to Susan Breslow, a guide to honeymoons and romantic travel for About.com. "After the stress of a wedding, most couples prefer to finally relax at a tropical resort by the water," says Breslow. "Those willing to fly further to arrive at a more exotic spot—still by the beach—are heading to Tahiti, the Seychelles, and the Maldives, among other destinations."

Other couples like to turn their trips into epic adventure stories. For them, there's the outstanding horseback-riding program at India's palatial Mihir Garh hotel on the wild plains of Rajasthan. And if you literally want to go to the ends of the earth, take a cruise to Antarctica, following in the footsteps of explorers James Cook and Ernest Shackleton. From the cozy Prince Albert II ship, you'll see hulking glaciers, blue icebergs, southern fur seals, albatross, and chinstrap penguins.

To help inspire you, we pulled together 50 of the hottest romantic getaways this year. Just don't forget that a romantic moment can happen anytime, anywhere—even when it involves falling off a massage table.

Beach Getaway: Boca Grande, Florida

This idyllic enclave on the Gulf of Mexico, 60 miles from Fort Myers, is a genuine glimpse of Old Florida, with whimsically named streets such as Damnificare, a postcard-worthy lighthouse watching over Gasparilla Island State Park, and long, quiet beaches lapped by gentle waves. The Innlet, the 33-room sister property of the old-guard Gasparilla Inn, has a dockside restaurant and a relaxed, let's-go-fishing vibe. A certifiably funky Florida joint, Temptation—think murals of leaping tarpon and a neon martini sign—serves local grouper, pompano, and soft-shell crabs.

