

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Luxury hotels make staycations romantic this Valentine's Day

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Consumers are looking for travel and staycation options this Valentine's Day. Image credit: Ritz-Carlton

By KATIE TAMOLA

Hospitality brands are promoting thoughtfully lavish and safe events for Valentine's Day, as social distancing remains a reality for many amid the pandemic.

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For a Valentine's Day unlike any before, brands are offering services for couples that meet COVID-19 restrictions while keeping a romantic ambience. With pent-up demand for travel among affluents, hotels are looking to capitalize on the holiday by offering everything from lavish and remote travel packages to gourmet take-out, socially-distanced pampering and staycations.

"Luxury hotels have really had to think outside the box this Valentine's Day, since most people are not in a hurry to venture out of their homes to celebrate this holiday weekend," said Damon Banks, editor and managing partner at [LuxeGetaways](#), Washington, DC.

"For many hotels who understand that travel is extremely limited this year, they are offering customized staycation options for the locals," he said. "Or my personal favorite, many hotels and restaurants are offering virtual experiences and to-go options so there is no need to leave home at all."

More to love

With many growing tired of spending every day in their homes, luxury hospitality brands are using Valentine's Day to showcase safe alternatives to another evening at home.

Private aviation firm VistaJet is highlighting a range of options for those with a strong desire for travel.

Flyers have the option to travel to four ecosystems in Costa Rica, where they can explore a private beach hacienda or peninsula surrounded by four miles of white-sand beaches or to stay at an eco-lodge with waterfall views. This package also has the option of an expert guide and an all-terrain vehicle.



This Valentine's Day, luxury hospitality brands continue to offer paradise. Image credit: Marriott International

VistaJet clients will also have the option of visiting the newly opened Waldorf Astoria Ithaafushi in Maldives.

Consumers seeking an intimate, unforgettable and idyllic getaway will be attracted to this option with spacious rooms, an upper deck with chef's service and hot tub and a lower deck with its own infinity pool. Those staying at Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi can enjoy a romantic dinner at the island's treetop restaurant Terra which offers views of the Indian Ocean and the stars.

Travelers valuing privacy can also consider jetting to Triton Villa in Turks and Caicos. Visitors can enjoy private yoga sessions on the beach, private chefs, swimming in pools that overlook the ocean and a couple's massage.

For people more comfortable staying closer to home, hotels are offering staycation packages that play up romance and relaxation. While Valentine's Day has traditionally been a more experiential holiday, properties are proving that staying local can be as exciting as exotic destinations.

Rosewood Hong Kong is offering an option for every romantic need with curated meals, gifts and experiences. With the "Romance at Rosewood" staycation, available through Feb. 14, guests can enjoy in-room breakfast, food, flowers and options for dinner and other activities.

For those who are considering marriage, Rosewood Hong Kong is offering appointments with its director of romance to assist in planning the perfect Valentine's Day proposal.



Rosewood Hong Kong is offering several different romantic packages. Image courtesy of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts

Mandarin Oriental Paris is also offering a romantic package until Feb. 20.

Guests can indulge in a four-course "Love Story" themed menu with original dishes of Chef Thierry Marx, as well as daily American breakfast and desserts delivered directly to the hotel room. Other perks include savings on spa experiences, including massages and facials, and a bouquet of flowers to take home at the conclusion of the stay.

For other staycation options, Four Seasons' Philadelphia property is offering an exclusive late-night couple's massage with private access to the hotel's 57th floor spa and pool, with packages that ensure social distancing starting at \$1,500. Visitors can also enjoy an expertly-prepared three-course meal in their hotel rooms or take them home at \$110 per person.

Through Feb. 21, guests booking a romantic stay at the Ritz-Carlton Montreal can expect a day of breakfast in bed, turndown service, credit for in-room dining experiences, a bottle of sparkling wine and 30 percent savings at Spa. St.

James.

The heart wants what it wants

Although brands and consumers have had to make numerous adjustments in response to COVID-19, the pandemic has not stopped affluents from desiring travel.

After almost a year of postponing or canceling vacation plans, travelers are embracing spontaneity and booking more last-minute trips. Consumers will even be flexible with the location or timing of their vacations, with 24 percent of survey participants reportedly interested in booking a luxury hotel for a "staycation" weekend ([see story](#)).

Many luxury hospitality brands are realizing that not all consumers want to travel, in turn offering many more staycation opportunities.

To meet pent-up demand from travelers, hospitality brands are pushing ahead with renovations, expansions and new offerings ahead of the easing of lockdowns and travel restrictions. Concern over international travel and commercial airlines has more consumers interested in domestic trips and staycations ([see story](#)).

While many affluents have the means and desire to travel, there is comfort in knowing that they do not have to stay at a luxury hotel or restaurant and can take their dining to go.

A recent study showed that diners miss restaurants and the entire experience of dining out, but comfort levels vary when restaurants reopen. While missing restaurants, diners are taking a wait-and-see attitude with dining out, turning to cooking and ordering home delivery as a result of the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak and resultant lockdowns that have throttled businesses and economies worldwide ([see story](#)).

In a time of numerous limitations, affluents still seem to have a wide range of opportunities to celebrate romance on Valentine's Day.

"However, with hotels offering charter jet flights, private helicopter transfers, intimate private chef experiences in your suite and other bespoke services, it is possible for those needing to splurge and get out of the house to do so with limited interactions," Mr. Banks said.

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