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World's best cities for romance

TRAVEL+LEISURE

By **Stephanie Orma**, Travel + Leisure
updated 11:45 AM EST, Fri February 14, 2014

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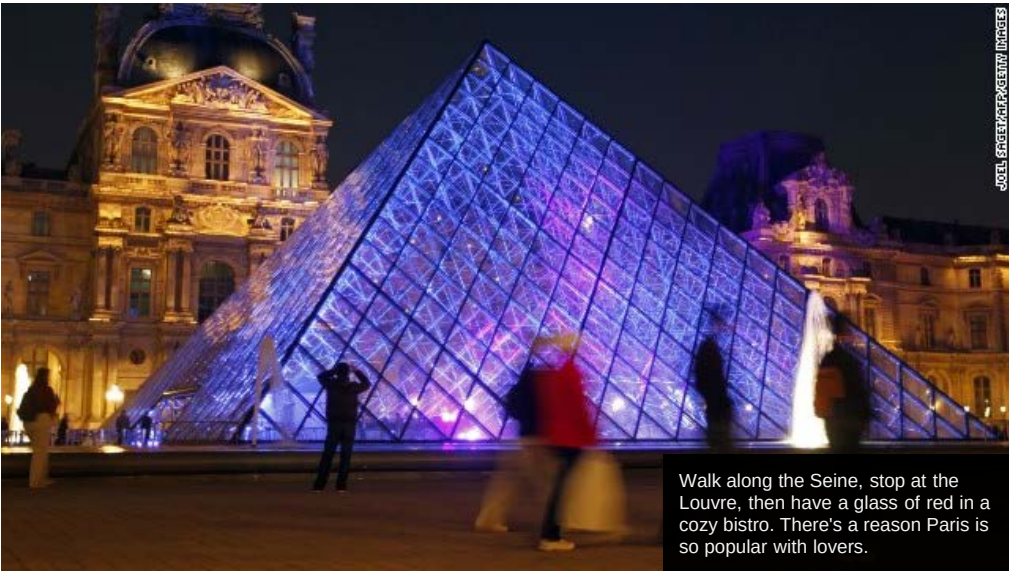
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Walk along the Seine, stop at the Louvre, then have a glass of red in a cozy bistro. There's a reason Paris is so popular with lovers.

Paris

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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- The City of Light is still tops for lovers of love and art
- No need to cross the pond with two romantic California towns on the list
- Cross over the Canadian border to find French-style romance

(CNN) -- "Everything seems sexier in Paris," muses New Yorker Alison Drew, who recently returned from an unforgettable romantic escape. "Just walking around makes you want to be in love."

Paris has proved itself irresistible to Travel + Leisure readers as well, who again rated it No. 1 for romance in the latest [World's Best Awards survey](#). For some cities, setting the stage for love seems second nature.

The 18th-annual awards revealed destinations for that perfect romantic getaway closer to home as well, like California's quaint seaside village of Carmel (No. 3) with its storybook cottages, sheep meadows and rugged coastal views.

Be it a gorgeous cityscape, an overflow of culture, or pastries that make your heart sing, the world's most romantic cities offer plenty to love, whether you've found a match or are merely looking to let some sparks fly.

No. 1 Paris

Part of complete coverage on
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Peek inside modern ruins

updated 11:53 AM EST, Wed February 12, 2014



Are abandoned buildings urban blight or historic relics? Photographers love them, in either case.

Blood Falls and other natural oddities

updated 5:25 PM EST, Fri January 17, 2014



Earth never stops surprising us. Every corner of the planet offers some sort of natural peculiarity.

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8 roadside curiosities worth the stop

updated 3:21 PM EST, Tue February 11, 2014



Some roadside attractions have become kitsch institutions. You might even make a trip just to see them.

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For both art lovers and lover lovers, ranking the City of Light as the best in the world in both categories may sound cliché, but the heart wants what the heart wants (and is always right). Walks along the Seine, tree-lined boulevards and cobbled lanes, a swoony stop at the Musée Rodin, or a simple glass of red in a cozy bistro all add to l'amour Parisienne.

Don't miss: The picnic-perfect Place des Vosges, one of Paris's oldest and most beautiful squares, surrounded by elegant 17th-century mansions in the Marais quarter.

No. 2 Venice

Although Venice ranked No. 25 overall this year, the City of Water rises toward the top of the world's best cities when it comes to love - and it's easy to see why. Its hidden bridges, cobblestoned alleyways and iconic canals are perfect for getting lost in with a partner. Stroll the palaces and piazzas, explore the ancient architecture and while away the day in chic boutiques, art galleries and canal-side cafés.

Don't miss: The legendary grandeur of Hotel Cipriani (Europe's No. 5 small city hotel) on serene Giudecca Island, offering balcony views of St. Mark's Square and a private wooden boat for traversing the lagoon.

[Travel + Leisure: America's best new romantic restaurants](#)

No. 3 Carmel, California

Storybook cottages, quaint shops, art galleries and inviting eateries in this quaint seaside village abut one of northern California's most spectacular swaths of sand. Amble along the cypress-fringed path overlooking the rugged coast or cuddle on a bench and gaze out on the Pacific. Wine-tasting in nearby Carmel Valley, Pebble Beach's scenic 17-mile drive and the redwood-laden road to Big Sur only heighten the romance factor.

Don't miss:: A glass of wine on the patio of Clint Eastwood's Mission Ranch, with rolling sheep meadows and sparkling sea vistas, before dinner at L'Auberge Carmel's cozy Aubergine restaurant, helmed by one of Food & Wine's Best New Chefs of 2013, Justin Cogley.

No. 4 Florence

With its red-roofed buildings along the Arno backed by rolling hills, it's no wonder this Renaissance city leaves visitors love-struck. Art lovers fall for Florence's classic architecture and masterful Michelangelos, while foodies adore the authentic Tuscan cuisine and stone's-throw jaunts to the Chianti countryside.

Don't miss: Jaw-dropping skyline vistas from the Giardini Bardini, or essential souvenir shopping in the charming Oltrarno quarter, with its artisan workshops and small boutiques.

[Travel + Leisure: Worst romantic hotel fails](#)

No. 5 Honolulu

This tropical paradise wins over T+L readers with a perfect cosmopolitan coast: miles of sandy stretches, dramatic cliffs, balmy weather and a buzzing dining and nightlife scene. Couples can snorkel the calm shores of Hanauma Bay Beach; hike to the top of Diamond Head Crater for stellar sea and Waikiki views; then hit the

Travel photos we wish we'd taken

updated 11:27 AM EST, Mon February 4, 2013



Check out daily travel photos from CNN.com readers and share your best shots.

50 states, 50 spots to visit

updated 10:02 AM EST, Thu January 2, 2014



The coasts get all the glory in the United States, but there's something fun to do in each and every state. Yes, every state.

Stalking world's biggest planes

updated 7:22 AM EDT, Fri June 21, 2013



The big stuff moves us.

A crown jewel of the national parks

updated 8:18 AM EDT, Thu June 6, 2013



Yosemite National Park has almost everything a nature lover could desire.

Airports where architecture soars

updated 2:17 PM EDT, Tue June 11, 2013



It's about making an entrance. Dramatic entries are a given with air travel, and airports should convey a sense of welcome and arrival.

World's most popular museums

updated 6:05 AM EST, Wed November 27, 2013



An afternoon spent in a world-class museum can be an out-of-body experience -- a trip in a mental time machine.

7 amazing private island rentals

updated 9:56 AM EDT, Tue September 10, 2013



When even the most secluded beach on the mainland is too crowded, there's always the option of renting a private island for your vacation. Really.

22 can't-miss U.S. beaches

updated 3:34 PM EDT, Tue August 13, 2013



Beaches along the coasts of the United States call to shoreline explorers year-round.

Five guys take same photo for 30 years

updated 9:01 PM EDT, Fri July 27, 2012

When five teenagers sat down and posed for a picture at Copco Lake in 1982, they

town for a date night of Pacific Rim cuisine.

Don't miss: A stay at the posh Halekulani, a five-acre resort with tropical grounds fronting Waikiki Beach, or Sunday brunch at its open-air Orchids restaurant, where Hawaiian specialties come with views of Diamond Head.

No. 6 Quebec City, Canada

Set on the banks of the Saint Lawrence River, Quebec may be one of the oldest cities in North America but the French appeal of this capital -- which jumped up this year from No. 11 -- never gets old. Stroll the historic quarter's narrow cobbled lanes, where centuries-old stone buildings house antique shops, museums and sidewalk cafés in an almost fairy-tale European-like setting.

Don't miss: Parc Linéaire, a weave of walking trails along the St. Charles River that lead to lush gardens, canyons and waterfalls.

[Travel + Leisure: America's most romantic towns](#)

No. 7 San Francisco

While San Francisco scored high marks for food (No. 2 in the world), trendsetting eateries are only one ingredient in the City by the Bay's allure -- as are Napa-Sonoma's wine country an hour north. Couples with a penchant for kissable selfies have a multitude of worthy backdrops, from colorful Victorian row houses to Art Deco mansions, hilly bohemian-chic neighborhoods and rugged natural vistas out over the (often fog-shrouded) bay.

Don't miss: The storybook town of Tiburon, where twosomes can picnic on the sprawling grassy waterfront, hike to 360-degree panoramas of the San Francisco skyline or bike along the banks of the shimmering bay.

No. 8 Rome

Romance is undeniably a part of Rome's heritage -- it's not nicknamed the Eternal City for nothing -- with its epic monuments, baroque churches and medieval ruins vying with charming trattorias for your attention. Few pleasures come close to grabbing a table for two by a millennia-old fountain, sipping a cappuccino and soaking it all in.

Don't miss: A romantic walk over cobblestones on the 2,300-year-old Appian Way, past Roman countryside, ancient statues and imperial palaces.

No. 9 Cape Town

Framed by the dramatic Table Mountain ridge and breathtaking seascapes, Cape Town is arguably South Africa's most beautiful city, where markets and colonial-era cottages meet the modern metropolis. You can wander the local art galleries or take a short drive through the rolling-hilled Winelands and get a flavor for the region's burgeoning farm-to-table fare. Sun-seekers can also find a secluded spot on Camps Bay's white-sand beaches.

Don't miss: A sumptuous room with service to match at Cape Grace, a luxurious hideaway set on its own private quay on the V&A Waterfront.



didn't plan on making it a tradition. But that's what it became.

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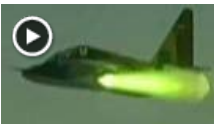
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10 Great Small Cities for Retirement
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No. 10 Charleston, South Carolina

Whether it's the charming folks (ranked No. 9 for world's friendliest people), blossoming arts scene, raved-about Lowcountry cuisine or historic neighborhoods, Charleston satisfies every southern fantasy. In fact, every corner seems to stage a proposal-worthy scene, from the Battery with its moss-draped oaks and antebellum mansions to Waterfront Park's picturesque Cooper River views.

Don't miss: Unrivaled harbor and skyline panoramas over sunset cocktails at the Market Pavilion Hotel (ranked No. 1 small city hotel in the U.S. and Canada).

[See all of the world's best cities for romance](#)

Planning a getaway? Don't miss Travel + Leisure's guide to the [World's Best Hotels](#)

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The best city for romance is whichever one my wife and I are in!

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