



We've cherry-picked 10 of the country's most romantic hotels—we're talking private luxury cabins in the woods and lofts on the Kona coast, all at very reasonable rates. And because we heart our readers, mention *Every Day with Rachael Ray* when you book and you'll pay even less. Think of it as our valentine to you.

# What makes a hotel romantic? The little touches: a complimentary bottle of tequila, soft sheets, a staff that knows your name (and knows when to leave you alone).

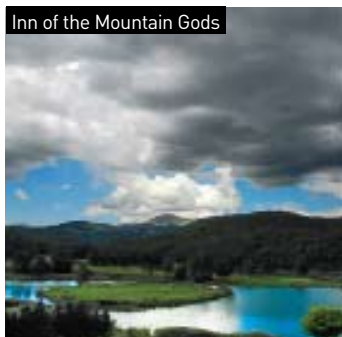
This much has become clear over the past four years, as my husband, Eric, and I have been driving across North America for our ongoing working road trip, which we document in the blog [trans-americas.com](http://trans-americas.com). We've crashed in hundreds of spots, from bare-bones shacks to four-star lodges, so I can assure you: It's the details that make a hotel truly romantic. Because I haven't stayed at every hotel in America (though sometimes it feels like it), I called on a team of experts. Together we chose 10 hotels that are putting the "hot" in hot spots. —KAREN CATCHPOLE

## 1 INN OF THE MOUNTAIN GODS *Mescalero, New Mexico*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** In the lobby you'll see the Sacramento Mountains behind floor-to-ceiling windows. Your room has a wood-burning fireplace and a bed with a pillow-top mattress. Rest up: It's a short walk to the 55 runs of the Ski Apache resort.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** The Royal Suite has two private balconies overlooking Lake Mescalero.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Through December 15, 2011, book a deluxe room for \$99 weekdays or \$129 weekends (a savings of \$30 and \$40 per night) and get \$25 toward breakfast in bed. (287 Carizo Road, [innofthemountain gods.com](http://innofthemountain gods.com))



## 2 HOTEL HAVANA *San Antonio*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** Situated on San Antonio's Riverwalk—ideal for a sunset stroll—is the nearly century-old Hotel Havana, reopened last April after a top-to-bottom renovation. The original antique furniture remains, but the new look is decidedly modern and chic. The dreamiest spot in the 27-room hotel has to be the



entirely candlelit basement bar, where you can snuggle up on velvet sofas and order mojitos and, if they're your thing, cigars.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** Room 33 has skylights and extra seclusion.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Take 15 percent off room rates and sip two free mojitos at the bar (mention code "Rachael"). (1015 Navarro St., [havanasanantonio.com](http://havanasanantonio.com); doubles from \$149 before discount, including in-room breakfast)

## 3 CARSON RIDGE LUXURY CABINS *Carson, Washington*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** Latisha and Pete Steadman—environmental biologists and owners of this 11-cabin retreat in the Columbia River Gorge—have posted a motto on their website: "Romance is vital to a lifelong love relationship." Cheesy as that may sound, this place delivers



on romantic touches: fireplaces, private porches with log swings, hydrotherapy bathtubs and large showers built for two.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** The Gifford Lodge (one of three new cabins unveiled this past summer) has a hanging log bed and a spa bathroom with a 35-square-foot shower and a large jetted spa tub.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Reserve two or more nights in 2011 and receive a 60-minute in-cabin couple's massage (a \$180 value) and take 10 percent off your room rate. (1261 Wind River Road, [carsonridgecabins.com](http://carsonridgecabins.com); doubles from \$215 before discount, including breakfast)

## 4 BREWERY GULCH INN *Mendocino, California*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** In the morning you'll listen to the distant surf and watch the fog roll in from your feather bed. You can join your fellow guests for breakfast (served by waiters), or have your choice of entrées (including a farm-fresh egg omelet with candied bacon) delivered to your room. After spending the day exploring Northern California's coastal inlets and wineries, return by 5:30 for a (free) wine-and-appetizer hour,



which might include home-cooked pastas and sliced steak. Before turning in, grab a movie from their large DVD collection.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** Although all 10 rooms have an ocean view, the Osprey Room has a two-person soaking tub with a view.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Book a stay in February or March 2011 and get a bottle of California sparkling wine and chocolate-covered strawberries (a \$35 value), plus 10 percent off the Ultimate Romantic Escape package (originally \$430, not including room rate), which includes chocolates, wine, flowers, a picnic lunch and two 75-minute hot-stone massages. (9401 N. Hwy. 1, [brewerygulchinn.com](http://brewerygulchinn.com); doubles from \$210, including breakfast)

### LOVE LESSONS

We asked our panel of experts to share their most romantic travel moments, and they bared all—and offered up some bonus hotel recommendations!



#### GLORIA ESTEFAN

Grammy-winning musician and co-owner (with her husband, Emilio) of Cardozo Hotel and Costa d'Este Resort, both in Florida

"After being on tour for more than six months, my husband surprised me with three nights at **Little Palm Island Resort & Spa** ([littlepalmisland.com](http://littlepalmisland.com)), not too far from where we live. The best part of a vacation close to home is that right when you get in the car, your adventure begins. We spent hours in a hammock under a palm tree, enjoying the most amazing sunset, far from the distractions of life but not far from home."

## 5 THE ALLISON INN & SPA *Newberg, Oregon*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** The Allison is one of 22 green hotels in the country that are LEED gold certified—but that's hardly the only reason to visit. Located in the pinot noir region of Willamette Valley (just southwest of Portland), the inn features a 15,000-square-foot spa and a working vineyard—a picturesque backdrop for the chic farm-to-table Jory restaurant. No wonder The Allison earned a coveted AAA Four Diamond rating in its first year.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** The sublime room 415 has sweeping views over 5 acres of pinot noir vineyards.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Book for February or March 2011 and receive a bottle of local sparkling wine (a \$75 value). (2525 Allison Lane, [theallison.com](http://theallison.com); doubles from \$295)



**TAMARA HEBER PERCY  
& JAMES LOHAN**

*Co-owners of Mr & Mrs Smith ([mrandmrssmith.com](http://mrandmrssmith.com)), which aggregates hundreds of hotels that have been anonymously tested by couples*

"Manhattan is such a romantic city. There's always something new or hidden to discover. Recently, we stayed at the fabulous **Greenwich Hotel** ([thegreenwichhotel.com](http://thegreenwichhotel.com)). We checked in and talked about going out somewhere—perhaps that trendy bar you enter through a phone booth (PDT, short for "please don't tell"—oops). But as we tried to stifle yawns, we knew the only place we were going was our big, comfortable bed. Sometimes the most romantic moments can be the simplest: just dozing together."





# 6 THE COSMOPOLITAN OF LAS VEGAS *Las Vegas*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** Sure, sure: Vegas is for quickie weddings. But the brand-new Cosmopolitan brings some romance to the strip. You can kick back in a private Japanese soaking tub before dining at Blue Ribbon Sushi Bar & Grill or another of its 13 fabulous restaurants (all of which are famous in their original cities and making their Vegas debuts). And consider this: Staying at a hotel with nearly 3,000 rooms means no one will notice if you never even leave yours.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** One-Bedroom Terrace Suites have private terraces and soaking tubs with views of the Vegas skyline.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Through June 30, make a reservation in a City Room, Terrace Studio, Terrace Suite or One-Bedroom Terrace Suite (use promo code "MRR11") and get a free upgrade (a \$50 value) and a champagne toast (a \$50 value), plus a 4 p.m. checkout. *13708 Las Vegas Blvd. S., cosmopolitanlasvegas.com; doubles from \$199*



## SAMANTHA BROWN

*Host of The Travel Channel's Samantha Brown's Asia and Samantha Brown's Great Weekends; spends an average of 230 nights a year in hotels*

"The most romantic hotel experience I ever had was with my husband in Zihuatanejo, Mexico, at **La Casa Que Canta** (*lacasaquecanta.com*). Our casita felt like a nest perched high above a pristine, Mediterranean-like bay. We had a private balcony, so we pretended we were celebrities and sunbathed nude. While walking the grounds the next day, I looked up to see that our balcony was far from private, and anyone could and likely did see us in all our glory. In our attempt to be romantic, I only hope we didn't ruin the romance for someone else!"



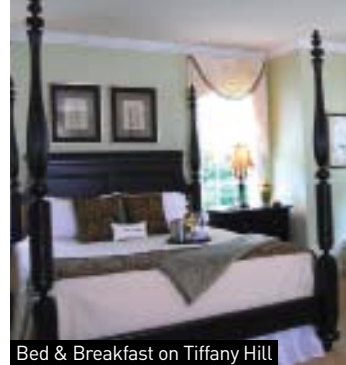




## PARIS PERMENTER AND JOHN BIGLEY

Co-founders and co-editors of *Lovetripper* ([lovetripper.com](http://lovetripper.com)), a site devoted entirely to romantic travel

"We were staying at **Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa** ([sandals.com/antigua](http://sandals.com/antigua)), and we were watching the sun set into the sea when it happened: a green flash on the horizon! The instant of lime-colored light was undeniable, like copper coins igniting. We turned to each other. *You saw that? I saw it!* According to legend, couples that witness the green flash are guaranteed true love. It's a rare sight, requiring the right combination of sun, sky and luck, and we'd spent a decade looking for it. Afterward, we walked hand in hand down the darkening beach."

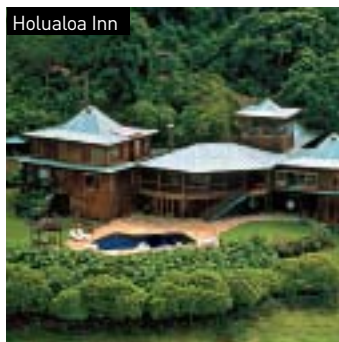


Bed & Breakfast on Tiffany Hill

but a number of couples have returned half a dozen times in its young life.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** Light a fire and climb on your four-poster bed in the grand Charlottesville Suite.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Through 2011, receive a Star Gazing Romance Package (a \$45 value), which includes use of a telescope, two glasses of wine, chocolates and a red rose, and take 10 percent off your room rate. (400 Ray Hill Road, [bbontiffanyhill.com](http://bbontiffanyhill.com); doubles from \$185 before discount, including breakfast)



## 7 HOLUALOA INN Holualoa, Hawaii

**WHY WE LOVE IT** This simple six-room inn on the Big Island is nestled amid 30 acres that produce tropical fruit and Kona coffee—both of which figure prominently in daily breakfasts. Don't skip the french toast filled with passion fruit: You'll need that fuel for snorkeling and surfing at the nearby beaches.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** The Gardenia Suite offers panoramic views of the Kona coastline and a private patio lush with tropical flowers.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Book a stay of six nights or more in 2011 and take 10 percent off your room rate, plus receive a Romance Package (a \$65 value), which includes champagne, chocolate-covered macadamia nuts and a bouquet of tropical flowers. (76-5932 Mamalahoa Hwy., [holualoainn.com](http://holualoainn.com); doubles from \$285 before discount, including breakfast)

## 8 THE INN AT CASTLE HILL Ipswich, Massachusetts

**WHY WE LOVE IT** At this New England charmer, distractions have been stripped away. You won't find televisions or phones—just deer, fox, hawks,

and a bald eagle or two. Located on the 2,100-acre Crane Estate, this inn's heart and soul is its large wraparound porch, where you can sit back and sip pinot noir while looking out to the Atlantic over salt marshes and sand dunes. You can feel good about spending money here, too: All proceeds support the state's land conservation and historic preservation.

### MOST ROMANTIC ROOM

The Cornelius Room has five large windows facing the ocean.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Book two or more nights in 2011 and take 10 percent off your room rate and receive a bottle of Domaine Chandon Brut Classic (a \$45 value), plus a private tour of the neighboring 59-room, 17th-century-style mansion (a \$50 value). (280 Argilla Road, [thetrustees.org/the-inn-at-castle-hill](http://thetrustees.org/the-inn-at-castle-hill); doubles from \$115 before discount, including breakfast; closed January, February and March)

## 9 RUBY ROOM Chicago

**WHY WE LOVE IT** If you're a skeptic, services like "intuitive reading" and "auratherapy" might have you raising an eyebrow. But after a stay at this new-age hotel-salon-spa, you just might become a believer. It sure doesn't look like a crunchy-granola ashram. Walk through the red doors inside the chic Wicker Park brownstone, admire the sleek dark-wood-and-cream aesthetic, and

head to your luxurious room, where you'll find a bed with 500-thread-count sheets, but no television. Put on some music, book a treatment or two and let the healing begin.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** Deluxe Suites include a fantastic steam shower and reading nook.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Take 10 percent off Deluxe Suite reservations (use promo code "Rachael Ray" when booking online) and receive two 10-minute intuitive readings (a \$40 value), said to focus energies in your love life. Worth a shot! (1743-45 W. Division St., [rubyroom.com](http://rubyroom.com); doubles from \$99)



## 10 BED & BREAKFAST ON TIFFANY HILL Mills River, North Carolina

**WHY WE LOVE IT** In 2009, Selena Einwechter opened this genteel five-room retreat on pastureland near Asheville. Maybe it's because of the candlelit breakfast, maybe it's the luxe beds, or maybe it's the very charming Selena herself,



## MERCEDEH SANATI

Co-owner of bespoke travel agency *Quench Trip Design* ([quenchtravel.com](http://quenchtravel.com)), spends almost two months a year scouting hotels

"A year ago, after a frenzied summer with very little downtime, we headed to Northern California for a mini-break. The minute we coasted into the driveway at **Napa Valley's Bardessono** ([bardessono.com](http://bardessono.com)), we decompressed. We treated ourselves to an in-room couple's massage, and the beauty of it was that at the end of the treatment, we didn't have to get up, get dressed and head back into the real world. We happily stayed in our bathrobes and sat outside on our lovely, sunny patio. It sounds hokey, but providing these special moments is what makes hotels romantic."



Tell us about your most romantic trip at [rachaelraymag.com/february](http://rachaelraymag.com/february).

