



RESORT TO LAURA MADRID

EXPERT TRAVEL PLANNING

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Maroma Resort
Riviera Maya,
Mexico



January 2012

Dear Partners in Travel —

Happy New Year! I am thrilled to **celebrate the one-year anniversary of Resort to Laura Madrid!** In January 2011, I sent a notice to friends and family that I was finally going to provide travel consultation and planning services. Thanks to you and your referrals, my phones (and emails) have not stopped buzzing. This is a testament to my long-held belief that people want to ensure that their travel experience is as enriching as possible and that their investment truly provides ROL (Return on Life)!

I truly hope that 2011 was an exceptional year for you and your family and that you fulfilled many of your personal goals. For many of us, travel is something that we dream about, look forward to, plan, research and sometimes “collect.”

I too have an ever-growing bucket list of “must-see” places and experiences, but as a professional travel consultant, keeping up with what is new, what has changed, and simply digging deeper into places I have been before is a never-ending mission. As part of the expertise I bring to my clients, I continually invest in my own personal travel and education so that I can be the ultimate resource for you.

Please check out some of the “research” I have done this year, with you in mind. If anything inspires you, please call me so we might discuss how we can narrow **your** bucket list in 2012!

Gratefully,

Laura
Laura Madrid

◀ *Me, dancing with the
Masai Village Women
Kenya, December 2011*

Look inside for detailed descriptions of my 2011 travels:

- Cruise through Southeast Asia
- South Carolina's Lowcountry
- St. Regis Atlanta
- Las Vegas
- Alaskan Expedition
- Riviera Maya, Mexico
- Nicaragua and Costa Rica
- Virtuoso Travel Mart
- Auberge Resorts
- The Galapagos
- Island Destinations Showcase
- Safari - Kenya and Tanzania



HAPPY NEW YEAR

WISHING YOU HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES IN 2012

REVIEWS & RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LAURA'S 2011 TRAVELS

JANUARY 2011

SEABOURN CRUISE: SOUTHEAST ASIA

I had the pleasure of taking a 12-day adventure from Bangkok to Hong Kong via Vietnam aboard the luxurious Seabourn Odyssey, a 400-passenger **all-suite** ship with exceptional service and **phenomenal cuisine** and wine. If you like the idea of unpacking once and waking up each morning in a different port of call, luxury cruising may be just the answer. It's shocking how many people think they "don't like cruising" until they have been aboard a small luxury line such as Seabourn when travelling to coastal Latin America, Africa, India, Canada, the Caribbean or Europe! Pricing includes all food and beverage, room service, honor bar and even gratuities, making your voyage completely carefree.



FEBRUARY 2011

INN AT PALMETTO BLUFF, AN AUBERGE RESORT IN SOUTH CAROLINA

This **charming and picturesque** resort property comprised of an inn, romantic cottages and family villas is located on 2,200 acres on the May River in **South Carolina's Lowcountry**, situated between Charleston and Savannah. I like to think of it as the



Auberge du Soleil of the Southeast — fabulous service, dining, and accommodations, plus sporting activities including biking, golfing, tennis, swimming, fishing and boating. Especially perfect weather is enjoyed in the spring or fall, but it's a wonderful value during the summer and winter months.

◀ *Shopping at the Inn at Palmetto Bluff*

MARCH 2011

ST. REGIS ATLANTA

For many of my clients located in Atlanta and the Southeast, a very **quick getaway** is sometimes just the ticket to revive oneself from the daily grind. I checked out the newish St. Regis Atlanta and I must say that the fabulous Buckhead property has perhaps the prettiest hotel rooms in the city right now. The hotel has a lovely spa and a fantastic outdoor pool for summer "**staycations.**" During the winter, St. Regis is a great idea for an excellent dinner out, a nightcap in the bar, followed by an effortless elevator ride to a plush accommodation.

APRIL 2011

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Regardless of how you feel about "Sin City," when it comes to a **romantic getaway** or a **girls' or boys' trip**, Las Vegas does not disappoint. With so many wonderful restaurants and shows, coming home exhausted is just the way it goes. However, for a bit of sanity while in Las Vegas, I recommend staying in a **smaller**

hotel where guests can count on **personalized service and attention to detail**, but still access the gaming in a nearby or connected mega-hotel. Nothing is more irritating than waiting behind 20 people just to check in, or having to march through a giant casino in search of a morning coffee or a poolside lounge chair. Three properties that I love in Las Vegas are:

- **Encore** (the upmarket private tower within the Wynn Hotel),
- The **Mandarin-Oriental** at City Centre, and
- The **Four Seasons** tucked into the side of Mandalay Bay.

Encore has its own lobby, reception, pool, restaurant and elevators, and as a hotel guest, your interests are of prime importance to the management. Fantastic suites are available here! If you are ready to play, the casino and attractions of the Wynn are just outside the entrance. The same goes for the Four Seasons, which has its own entrance and elevators to whisk you right past the Mandalay Bay guest rooms, directly to the privacy of a Four Seasons floor. And if you're looking for personal service and swank accommodations, the Mandarin Oriental is very sexy, low-key and private. As part of the City-Centre complex, shopping, restaurants and casinos are only a short walk away.

With all three options, your privacy and service are priorities, unlike the larger Las Vegas hotels where the casino guest is king and queuing up for just about everything is the way things roll.

MAY 2011

ALASKA: LINDBLAD NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Lindblad National Geographic is the way to go for clients who thrive on digging into a destination with the guidance of expert **naturalists, anthropologists, culturalists and photographers**. I boarded the Sea Lion with my 7-year old daughter and about 25 other guests as we set out along Alaska's **inner passage**. The vast wilderness and infinite beauty of the glaciers, lush forests, and daily encounters with bears, whale sharks, and orcas was fascinating, especially through the eyes of a delighted child. The intimate setting and evening cocktails reviewing the day's sightings with the naturalists was a highlight.



Glaciers along Alaska's Inner Passage

JUNE 2011

RIVIERA MAYA, MEXICO

Having lived in this area in 1993 as part of the opening team of The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun, I was anxious to see all of the new luxury resorts on the Riviera Maya. I stayed at **Maroma**, an Orient-Express property that is without a doubt the most special hotel in the area, and perhaps the loveliest in all of Mexico. Maroma is a former **private hacienda** that has been converted into a small hotel. All the rooms and suites are one-of-a-kind and the dining showcases the very best interpretations of Mexican cuisine. The margaritas are to die for. The beach has silky white sand, and the service is intuitive and personal. Children are generally not allowed at Maroma, making it an ideal place for a romantic getaway or birthday celebration with friends.

Rosewood Mayakoba is the complete opposite of Maroma in terms of style — **sleek and modern** and comprised of large suites with either beach or lagoon views. As part of a larger complex called Mayakoba, this hotel is great for both couples and families who want a manicured, peaceful Mexican beach experience. Both Maroma and Rosewood Mayakoba are just a 35-minute drive from Cancun but could not feel further away. Flights to Cancun are under 3 hours and well-priced!

JULY 2011

COSTA RICA AND NICARAGUA

I love Central America, and having lived there as a child, I was anxious to return with my own children. **Four Seasons Resort at Peninsula Papagayo** is ideal if you want to experience it all without having to trek around the country — luxury, beaches, eco-adventure, golf, and fantastic architecture and setting on a peninsula jutting four miles out into the Pacific. For those looking to do a bit more exploring and immerse themselves into the “Pura Vida,” I can recommend the two Islita Group properties. **El Silencio Lodge in the Cloud Forest** is an ideal base for adventure activities such as rafting, canyoning, and zip-lining; then we enjoyed the beach and surfing on the Pacific coast at **Punta Islita**.



Nicaragua is a fantastic choice for those wanting a Central American experience but **off the beaten path**. We stayed at Jicaro Island Lodge, which is a great combination with Morgan's Rock. Central America is an **ideal family vacation destination** — my children rated our entire trip a 10 out of 10!

AUGUST 2011

VIRTUOSO TRAVEL MART

Every August, I attend Virtuoso Travel Mart along with about 2,000 of the world's top luxury hoteliers, adventure companies, villa and yacht charters and airlines. It's a cross between a marathon and speed-dating — I participate in **80 four-minute appointments each day** to get updates on incredible products around the globe for my clients. At Travel Mart, I invest in my education and ensure that I personally know the General Managers and Tour Operators who take care of my clients when they travel. Travel Mart is an exhausting week-long event, but I always come home with so many new ideas for you to consider. If you have anything on your mind that you would like me to research, just let me know, as Travel Mart is THE place!

SEPTEMBER 2011

AUBERGE RESORTS

During her visit to Atlanta, one of my best friends — the Director of Sales at Auberge Resorts — updated me on their newest, exclusive collection of properties. The Auberge du Soleil in Napa is the flagship property, but each of the Auberge hotels and resorts is distinct, basking in understated elegance with a wonderful sense of place. Element52 is Telluride's state-of-the-art ski-in/ski-out

residences, and Auberge just took over the charming Hotel Jerome in Aspen. Encantado in Santa Fe, Esperanza in Cabo, and my favorite in the Southeast, the Inn at Palmetto Bluff are all special properties include where service and cuisine are paramount!

OCTOBER 2011

THE GALAPAGOS – INTERNATIONAL EXPEDITIONS

I believe The Galapagos is the way earth was meant to be — **natural, untouched and wild**. It was pure joy to watch my children swim with sea lions and fur seals, stepping over hundreds of Christmas lizards, laughing at the blue-footed boobies, and gaping at 500 pound-tortoises. There are no human predators on these majestic islands where Darwin wrote his Theory of Evolution, so it is truly a unique experience to be among the wildlife with no fear from either side. The animals don't flee and neither did we. Snorkeling is a paramount part of the experience: the sharks, dolphins and whale sharks, along with an infinity of rainbow-colored fish, are mind-blowing. **The Evolution** is an intimate 40-passenger expedition ship run by the capable International Expeditions team, who also operate the impeccable villa **Casa Iguana**, for families who prefer to be land-based in a fully-staffed house with daily expedition outings.



My children loved the sea lions

NOVEMBER 2011

ISLAND DESTINATIONS SHOWCASE

I attended the Island Destinations Showcase, where I met with resort sales managers from the most exclusive and special island destinations in the Caribbean — a hot destination for many of my clients. Some of the resorts I really love include **Cap Juluca** on Anguilla, **Golden Eye** in Jamaica, and **Hotel Guanahani** in St. Barths. In Hawaii, you can't go wrong with **Four Seasons all the way** — Maui, Hualalai and Lanai. In my mind, they are the four best experiences available there!

DECEMBER 2011

SAFARI WITH MICATO — KENYA AND TANZANIA

It begins the moment your plane touches down in East Africa! You spend the night at a **lodge or tented camp**, rustic, so very African from the outside, yet cool and elegant inside, surrounding you with luxury and pampering you with world-class service and cuisine. Sun up at 6:00am — a brilliant orange ball. Steaming coffee awaits as your driver prepares for an early morning game run. The dew is fast-disappearing and predators are on the prowl. Chance and the skill of your driver will determine whether you will see a family of cheetah sunning themselves, the drama of a lion kill or the thrill of an elephant charge... **A life-changing experience!**





Clockwise from top left: Cruising with luxurious Seabourn; with my Mom on a long-tail boat on the Mekong River in Vietnam; my children make friends with a 500-pound tortoise in the Galapagos; and our pool and casita at Punta Isleta in Costa Rica.

PHONE
+1 404-502-9191

EMAIL
laura@resorttolauramadrid.com

WEB
<http://www.resorttolauramadrid.com>

FACEBOOK
<http://facebook.com/resorttolauramadridtravel/>

BLOG
<http://lauramadrid.wordpress.com>

With my network of hoteliers, guides, drivers, and experts around the globe, ensuring your holiday investment is my top priority. I like to “shake hands” with the professionals on the ground that will take care of you once you arrive to your destination, and I also like to keep current on products, trends and destinations. Putting myself in the shoes of my clients and experiencing many of the same trips that they do is just one way that separates Resort to Laura Madrid from a standard travel agent or an online booking experience.

January is a great time to think about 2012 as a whole. Is there a milestone birthday or anniversary on the horizon for a parent or spouse, a multi-generational family trip that needs to get underway for next summer, a romantic surprise you keep meaning to plan, or a simply a ski or beach break that needs to be confirmed? Life is short and travel is an experience that only enriches the journey.

I am happy to meet with you to discuss and map out your plans or even have a quick phone conversation to help you get on the right track. It is never too soon to book a holiday and often the “early bird gets the worm.”

Thank you for your support, your referrals, and your trust!

▲ If you enjoyed reading all about my 2011 travel adventures, be sure to check out my blog!

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Laura D. Madrid • (+1) 404.502.9191
EMAIL laura@resorttolauramadrid.com
VISIT www.resorttolauramadrid.com
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