



RESORT TO LAURA MADRID

EXPERT TRAVEL PLANNING

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HIGHLIGHTS & TIPS FROM 2012

Dear Trusted Friends and Fellow Travelers –

For so many of us, travel is something that we dream about, read about, and plan. Like me, you may have an ever-growing bucket list of "must-see" destinations and experiences. As a professional travel consultant, keeping up with what's new, what's changed, and simply digging deeper into places I've already been is an ongoing challenge and a big part of my job. One area of expertise that I bring to my clients is that I constantly invest in my own personal travel and education, so I can be the best possible resource to you.

With my network of hoteliers, guides, drivers, and experts around the globe, ensuring that your travel investment is a good one is my top priority. I like to "shake hands" with the professionals on the ground who will take care of you once you leave home and I also keep current on products, trends, and destinations by personally experiencing them. This is just one of many services that separates **Resort to Laura Madrid** from other travel consultants who take orders from behind a desk, or exclusively rely on the internet when consulting their clients rather than on first-hand experiences. Look inside for **Resort to Laura Madrid** travel tips in the "field research" I conducted throughout 2012 with you in mind!

Gratefully,

Laura
Laura Madrid

Clockwise from top left: the famous shops and restaurants of Jose Ignacio, Uruguay; a view of the Mediterranean from the cliff-top island of Santorini; a toast at Napa's Auberge du Soleil; SeaDream Yacht Club's famous Caviar Splash; sailing SilverSea through Turkey and Greece




VIRTUOSO MEMBER.
SPECIALISTS IN THE ART OF TRAVEL

TIPS FROM LAURA'S 2012 TRAVELS

JANUARY 2012

Quick Weekend Trips through the Southeast

With the holiday hustle and bustle behind us, I devoted a few weekends in January to explore and re-explore some of our favorite resorts, including the Old Edwards Inn in Highlands, NC, Blackberry Farm in the Smokey Mountains, TN and the glamorous Cloisters at Sea Island, GA. I also visited my favorite Four Seasons, Ritz-Carltons, and sleek boutique hotels in Palm Beach, Boca Raton and Miami. All of these nearby destinations make easy weekend getaways for my clients based throughout the Southeast.



WEEKEND JAUNTS: You may think you don't need to **Resort to Laura Madrid** for easy-to-book or quick trips, but did you know that at all of the above properties and so many more, my clients nearly always receive an upgrade on arrival, a welcome amenity, complimentary daily breakfast, and a \$100 spa or food and beverage credit? You are leaving value on the table by handling your own arrangements.

FEBRUARY 2012

The Caribbean Aboard SeaDream Yacht Club with Visits to St. Barts, St. John, and Virgin Gorda



SeaDream Yacht Club

I joined 13 friends aboard the 112-guest SeaDream with SeaDream Yacht Club, whose motto is "It's Yachting, Not Cruising." Because the vessels are so small, they truly can go at their own pace and meander into ports that are not otherwise accessible to larger ships. Within hours of boarding, literally every staff member I came in contact with knew my name — and scarily enough, my favorite drink too! The weekly fare for SeaDream includes everything: wonderful meals, unlimited cocktails, and even all gratuities.

A highlight of the trip was calling on the ooh-la-la island of St. Barts, where I visited the ultra-chic properties of Eden Rock (the place to see and be seen) and Isle de France (the place to melt away in the most serene of settings). St. Barts is incredibly sophisticated, sassy, fun, French and an absolute haven for foodies!

Another highlight was a day at Villa Aquamare on Virgin Gorda, made up of three 5-bedroom villas with a massive ocean-front outdoor living room in the sand.



CARIBBEAN SAILING: Sometimes a "wow experience" at a port of call is simply to spend the day on a pristine beach with to-die-for dining at a private resort. Resort to Laura Madrid has relationships with some of the Caribbean's most prestigious island resorts and can arrange a truly pampered day visit for you.

MARCH 2012

Vail and Beaver Creek — Haute Skiing

Beaver Creek, CO is an absolute delight for those who seek the modern comforts of skiing with a bit of posh. Families can literally ski from village to village and expect fresh chocolate chip cookies slope-side at the end of each day. I personally love the location and character of The Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch with its own gondola chair, a lively après ski scene, resident St. Bernard, and its massive log cabin feel. If you prefer the action of Vail Village and access to its many fantastic restaurants, I love Four Seasons Resort Vail.



Family Ski Break in Vail and Beaver Creek



IN VAIL: Sushi lovers must book in advance the tiny 14-seat Osakis, a truly authentic Japanese sushi house where you literally wait in the hallway until you are called. It's a mouth-watering sushi experience worthy of the best in Tokyo.

IN BEAVER CREEK: While in Bachelor Gulch, wow your friends and family by taking over Anderson's Cabin, a tiny remote two-room log cabin from one of the original bachelors of the Gulch. The Ritz-Carlton will cater a traditional raclette meal with wines and a mixed grill while you enjoy hot toddies by the bonfire.

APRIL 2012

Grand Cayman — Easy Fun

If you're seeking an easy getaway, powder-white sand beaches, and golf, fun, and sun for the family, The Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman is the place to go. The service and the food and beverage here are the very best on the island.



IN GRAND CAYMAN: Splurge for a private cabana for the day on Seven Mile Beach. You'll have a day bed, music system, complimentary snacks and beverages, and spectacular service with as much shade or sun as you like. It's a wonderful way to feel like royalty on a beautiful, but busy beach.

MAY 2012

French River Cruising Aboard AmaWaterways

River Cruising is becoming extremely popular as Europe's most important city-centers are built along the banks of its great rivers. In search of wonderful things to eat, my mother and I took

the food route aboard AmaWaterways from Lyon (the city of famed super-chef Paul Bocuse), through truffle farms, olive groves, the wineries of Chateauneuf de Pape, and the Michelin three-star restaurant, La Pyramide.



Pont D'Avignon aboard AmaWaterways on the Rhone River

In Paris, a wonderful boutique property called Esprit St. Germain on the Left Bank makes a wonderful and homey base for exploring the city's many bistros and markets. But the highlight of the entire trip was at the Relais and Chateau in charming Aix-en-Provence, Villa Gallici — perhaps one of the most romantic hotels in the world!

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SAILING AMA WATERWAYS: The least expensive category on a River Cruise is usually a bottom-floor cabin with a tiny port window just above the water line. Because the pleasure of river cruising through Europe is to watch city life pass you by, always splurge for an upper deck with a balcony. On nights when the ship is docked in the evening, pre-book the city's local Michelin Star restaurant in advance to have a meal of a lifetime!

JUNE 2012

Napa Valley: Wine, Food and Some Pretty Fantastic Trailer Parks

Any wine country is a treat, but a special way to see Napa Valley is by staying at a couple of fabulous "trailer parks." At the Carneros Inn, all of the sumptuous suites are stand-alone cottages named after their original residents. The grounds are vast and simply beautiful with gardens, trails alongside the vineyards, and at the "Hilltop," a pool seemingly set in the midst of a field overlooking the vineyards of Carneros.



Gamble Family Vineyards, Napa Valley

After a few days in Carneros and some dining in Yountville, a trip to Napa Valley can only be perfected by a stay in Calistoga — the more natural, organic and off-the-beaten-path part of Napa wine country. We were delighted to stay at yet another former trailer park: perhaps the most special in the region, Calistoga Ranch.

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IN WINE COUNTRY: Anyone can walk into the mass-market wineries, but for a special experience, let Resort to Laura Madrid reserve a local guide and driver for the day. You'll visit family-run, off-the-beaten path, limited-production wineries, meet winemakers and growers, and see where grapes are grown. When experienced this way, you'll better appreciate the wine and will have stories to tell when you drink it with friends back home.

JULY 2012

Romantic Rhode Island and New York City with the Family

The Northeast has so many wonderful romantic inns, but I am confident I can pick just the right stop for any couple wanting a weekend getaway they will always treasure. One of my favorites from this particular trip was the infinitely beautiful Ocean House in Watch Hill, Rhode Island. Every detail throughout the resort is eye-candy, the beach is terrific, and their restaurants are worth the trip alone.

We then went to New York City, which we explored this time through the eyes of our children — and now I can recommend a perfect three-day family trip! We loved the service, rooms and views at the stunning Mandarin Oriental. Families may also love The Ritz-Carlton, Central Park where they can opt to stay on the Club Level with a private concierge to help you plan each day while you enjoy your breakfast. Nothing beats retreating to the lounge for a glass of champagne and a nibble after a busy Manhattan day.

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IN MANHATTAN: While one of the best things about New York City is pounding the pavement through its fabulous neighborhoods, finding a restroom is nearly impossible. Did you know that Bryant Park won the award for nicest public commode? It is a spotless, centrally-located place for a pit-stop. Beyond Central Park, plan a hike on the High Line, a park built on an historic freight rail line elevated above the streets on Manhattan's West Side with entrances from Gansevoort Street up to West 34th Street. It's a beautiful place to people-watch, enjoy the arts, and have a light bite.

AUGUST 2012

Close to Home: Ritz-Carlton, Reynolds Plantation

For those who live in Atlanta, nothing beats a 90-minute drive to the serenity of Lake Oconee. Guests of The Ritz-Carlton can rejuvenate in the spa, swim and cruise on the lake, play five of the resort's golf courses, or bike and hike on miles of trails. Off-season there is some terrific pricing for an easy getaway with the family, a spouse, or a girls' or guys' weekend!

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IN REYNOLDS PLANTATION: Did you know that during the summer, The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds Plantation offers live concerts and out-of-this-world s'mores on the lake each Sunday night — it's worth the stay over! **CONTINUED ▶**

The Ritz-Carlton's Omelet Bar in Lake Oconee



SEPTEMBER 2012

Cruising with SilverSea: Ancient Turkey and Greek Island-hopping

Cruising on a luxury ship is the perfect way for a family of multiple generations to travel together — everyone can pursue what is most meaningful to them, then meet up at dinner to swap stories. The Silver Spirit is an all-suite, small ship with fewer than 500 passengers and fantastic restaurants, butler service, and countless on-board activities. Children are treated like gold. And no one ever has to reach for the check, since everything is included!



With Gil at the Parthenon in Athens

If you enjoyed ▶ reading about my 2012 travels, please check out my blog!

Highlights along our Turkish and Greek ports of call included a visit to the house where the Virgin Mary spent her final years, lunch at a local fish restaurant on the beach in Rhodes, and climbing to the chic cliff-top village of Santorini on a back of a donkey.

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CRUISING: Before sailing or as soon as you board, arrange with the maître d' to have at least one dining experience at each restaurant, as they do fill up. For ports of call with a great deal of history and sites, allow Resort to Laura Madrid to set up a private guide and driver. They'll whisk you away in a private vehicle, beating the crowds to the most sought-after sights and even arrange for lunch at a fantastic, small local restaurant that tour buses can't reach.

OCTOBER 2012

Jose Ignacio, Uruguay at the Vik Retreats

This was my highlight trip of the year! For the countless reasons on why I loved this ultra luxurious but very low-key holiday where "Montana meets St. Tropez," please read my blog.

Vik Retreats are two tiny chic hotels — a ranch and a beach resort — just five kilometers from one another on the Uruguayan Coast where art, cuisine, wines, horses, polo, art, and beautiful people all come together. Uruguay can be visited in conjunction with Buenos Aires or by flying directly into Montevideo. Avoid peak season, which is December 15 through January 15.

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IN JOSE IGNACIO: If you go into Punta de Este, stop at *Manos de Uruguay* for bespoke, locally-made alpaca sweaters in a wide array of colors and styles that make fabulous gifts (and pack an extra duffel bag so you can bring them home!). Saddle up on horses for a half-day ride out to Garzon, a charming 18th century town. Enjoy a superb meal at celebrity chef Francis Malmann's incredible restaurant, a 15-minute drive from Jose Ignacio down dirt roads with no signs, flanked on either side by cow pasture. Fabulous in every way!

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NOVEMBER 2012

Atlantis, The Bahamas

Nothing beats a two-hour flight to a beautiful beach and friendly tropical island. Indeed, Atlantis is a man-made family entertainment centre featuring 11 water slides, an aquarium, sea turtles, and of course, swimming with dolphins. It's a bit contrived, but truly fun for kids. For adults: casinos, great (but very expensive) celebrity chef restaurants, comedy clubs, and entertainment. But whatever you do, splurge by staying at The Cove, which allows you access to private pools and beaches far away from the rest of Atlantis' crowds! Better yet, stay up the road at the absolutely sumptuous One & Only Resort, a small piece of paradise. There, kids can still head over to the water slides at no added charge, or you can even hire the Kids Only Club staff to take them for you.

RESORT TO LAURA MADRID TIP

ATLANTIS is international without the hassle of an international trip. In addition to being just two hours from many U.S. cities, when departing Nassau you can actually clear U.S. customs before boarding your plane home!

DECEMBER 2012

Ready for Another Star-Studded Year Ahead!

It has been an incredibly busy and rewarding year. I have had the chance to site-inspect so many places and share this valuable insight with my clients. Yet people always ask, "What's next, Laura? What is on *your* bucket list?" There are so many places I want to visit again and others I am eager to experience for the first time. But if my dreams come true in 2013, I will get to INCREDIBLE INDIA! So stay tuned... or better yet, call me to help arrange what might be the most awe-inspiring journey of your life!

RESORT TO LAURA MADRID TIP

IN DECEMBER: Plan now for 2013, especially for travel at peak times — President's Day, spring break, summer, or Christmas. The early bird really does get the worm!

For in-depth updates on all my trips, please follow my blog: <https://lauramadrid.wordpress.com>

And if there is something on your bucket list, I say, "Seize the Day!" I am here to help you achieve your travel objectives — I look forward to your call and your referrals!