



RESORT TO LAURA MADRID

EXPERT TRAVEL PLANNING

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Dear Friends and Fellow Travelers,

I think 2014 might have been the fastest one yet. Maybe flying through so many time zones makes the clock spin, but it is so worth it!

Staying current and relevant on all the destinations that my clients travel to is what distinguishes me as an invaluable resource in their lives. Clients of Resort to Laura Madrid count on us for first-hand recommendations and understanding of what awaits them on the other end of the tarmac. I am delighted to provide a recap of some of the breathtaking research I have done in 2014 and I hope to help you get to the places of your dreams for 2015!

I am more than glad to sit down with you and your family and make a 1, 3, 5 and 10-year plan! It really works and puts goals into perspective. I'll look forward to hearing from you soon —

Laura
Laura Madrid

THIS PAGE • Top: A 2014 highlight included traveling with a group of clients to Italy to drive Ferraris through the hills of Tuscany. La Dolce Vita indeed! **Middle:** Coffee Break during morning safari drive at Tanda Tula in the Timbavati Reserve, South Africa. **Bottom Left:** Fishing on the "Big Sugar" at Mukul Resort – Gucalito de la Isla, Nicaragua. **Below:** Alpine skiing at the mighty Matterhorn in Zermatt, Switzerland.



VIRTUOSO MEMBER.
SPECIALISTS IN THE ART OF TRAVEL

LAURA'S ANSWERS

TO HER MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

FUN TRIP I'M CURRENTLY PLANNING FOR CLIENTS:

An Australian Photographic Adventure with Atlanta resident and renowned Aussie Photographer, Greg Newington

FAVORITE HOTEL THAT I VISITED THIS YEAR?

Singita Boulders in South Africa – WOW in every way, but mostly in the highly polished, professional, and friendly staff. Yes, the place is eye-candy, but the team takes the cake!

NEW OPENINGS THAT I'M EXCITED ABOUT?

Condado Vanderbilt in San Juan, Puerto Rico – The grandeur and elegance of the former Vanderbilt Resort completely reinvented. **Rosewood Baha Mar in Nassau** will be an incredible upgrade to the destination with all of the fun, gaming, beaches and easy-access but much more sophisticated than Atlantis.

WHAT CONTINENT IS THE HOTTEST RIGHT NOW?

Many of our clients seem to be flocking to Australia and New Zealand this year!

HOT 2016 EVENT?

The European Football Championships (EURO 2016), taking place in France in July 2016. We are securing many villas for our clients who want to experience the fun, sun, culinary, wines, weather and history while training off to the key Euro Cup cities for the matches in Bordeaux, Toulouse, Nice, Lyon, Marseilles, and Saint Etienne.

TRAVEL TREND?

Finding America. So many clients who have travelled long and far want to have a romantic ranch weekend or take their children to see what America once looked like at our National Parks.

WELLNESS TRENDS?

More and more people are taking care of themselves and getting away from our daily routine is often the best way. Ask me how you can take advantage of special pricing at Canyon Ranch or Miraval in 2015, or allow me to design your personalized wellness retreat!

My Personal 2015 Bucket List:

- New Zealand
- Antigua
- Deer Valley
- Colombia
- Uganda & Rwanda, for a Gorilla Trek
- Panama
- Cuba
- Belize
- Cabo
- Jamaica



With my son in Grand Teton National Park



My phenomenal en suite at Singita Boulders in South Africa



On a hike during our girls' wellness retreat at Miraval

TIPS

FROM LAURA'S
2014 TRAVEL
RESEARCH

JANUARY 2014

PALM BEACH PERFECTION

This South Florida destination is always so delightful — and easy to get to, with the island less than 15 minutes from the airport. Yes, everyone is impeccably dressed and you often see three generations of family enjoying each other's company, but Palm Beach is also a sophisticated place for couples seeking to relax, shop, play golf or tennis or simply hang out on the beach. There are excellent dinner spots and a lively bar scene both on the island and across the bridge in West Palm Beach.

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Best Beach: Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach

Best People-Watching: HMF at The Breakers Hotel

FEBRUARY 2014

NIZUC, The New Game in Town

Whatever your impressions of Cancun, there is a new player in town and for the refined traveler, it's not to be missed! **Nizuc** is a sleek and unique resort on a quiet bay less than 10 minutes from the airport. The Cancun hotel zone is nearby, yet feels a million miles away.

The resort's original design was supposedly meant for an Aman property, so the architecture is minimalist while gorgeous materials, water features, and symbolic art prevail. Nizuc has approximately 250 rooms but feels completely boutique in every way; the thoughtful layout never allows the resort to feel busy or big. Service is well-rehearsed and though they are still working out some growing pains, the sincerity and genuine warmth of the staff is not lost.



Nizuc offers numerous unique restaurants, each designed in a special setting as a worthy destination in its own right. My favorite is the open-air La Punta Bar & Grill, found along a jungle path at the very end of the resort on its own beach. Ceviche, crab tacos, veal chops, osso bucco, grilled shrimp and guacamole are all the right choice. The beach and pool here is targeted to adults only. ▶

Perhaps the best thing about Nizuc is that flights from most U.S. cities to Cancun are under three hours. Nizuc will surprise and delight even the most jaded sun-seekers!

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If you plan to tour the Riviera Maya, Tulum or Chichen-Itza, it is worthwhile to rent a car, as taxi fares beyond the hotel zone are outrageous!

LATE FEBRUARY 2014

BLACKBERRY FARM'S RHONE EVENT

I loved my return visit to culinary mecca Blackberry Farm in Tennessee, this time for one of their famed "Event Weekends." I attended the coveted annual *Hospice du Rhone* where I literally rubbed elbows with boutique Rhone wine-makers who traveled from France. We savored three days of sumptuous meals, decadent wine tastings, and even a hilarious afternoon of "shooting with the vintners." This roving house-party was a ball!

Blackberry hosts multiple special events throughout the year, including culinary, cycling, shooting, and concerts. Each is intimate, with exceptional access to the celebrities or talent hosting the affair. Please ask me about special happenings that are taking place in the coming months — I can guarantee they will be a highlight for your year!

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Blackberry Farm is expensive but if you're willing to go mid-week, you can find a wonderful bargain. The event weekends are very special and great to do with a group of friends, especially for a celebration.

MARCH 2014

SWISS PURE-FECTION

It's true, just about everything is PUREfect in Switzerland: the air is invigoratingly fresh, the water is crystal clear and the trains are strictly punctual. My goal for this trip was to discover the idyllic alpine ski holiday for my clients who love to ski, but even more importantly, love all that goes with a European mountain holiday — fine food and wine, along with the charm and tradition only found in an authentic alpine village.

Most Americans value the ski-in/ski-out access and convenience of ski resorts. But in Europe, the ski experience revolves around the villages, most of which were there long before skiing was invented. This means that you must often shuttle, walk, train or drive to the gondolas, which are built above the villages. There are certainly some very efficient and purpose-built ski villages just as you'd find in the U.S., but then you lose the picturesque alpine village that makes the European ski experience so special. As long as you are prepared to work a little bit harder to get to the slopes, you will be largely rewarded by a European holiday, incredible food, beverages and lots and lots of charm.

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It's very common to hire a ski guide to show you the best the mountain has to offer and guide you from village to village. Sometimes the best bargains are on the Italian side of the mountain. Our expert ski providers will help you find the perfect spot!

LATE MARCH 2014

MIRAVAl in Tucson, Arizona

While I did not drop a single pound, I emptied my mind and body of a great deal of junk and found myself more in balance, both physically and even more so, mentally. The Miraval experience is a very flexible one — come for as long or as little as you like, sign up for endless fitness classes or spend your days in the spa or perhaps the pool. Eat whatever you like and even enjoy a glass of wine, if you desire. It is not about restricting what you consume, but offering you the freshest organic choices: all delicious, colorful, and perfectly prepared. Portion sizes are “normal” — not to your typical American restaurant standard, but to what our bodies actually need. It was not unusual during dinner for me to enjoy two appetizers, an entrée, and some dessert! The choices are so plentiful that this was a fabulous way to try a bit of everything without feeling over-indulgent.

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We have very special discounted pricing available for a four-day Miraval escape March 26-30, 2015. Contact us for details.

APRIL 2014

NEW ORLEANS – Laissez Les Bons Temps Rouler

New Orleans is genuinely all about letting the good times roll, and roll, and roll! If you have not been back in a while, now may be the time, as there is no place quite like it. Even if you decide to avoid the grit of Bourbon Street, the French Quarter has so many streets to walk. And who doesn't love antique shopping on Royal? While a short stay certainly warrants at least one meal in the Quarter — Friday lunch at Gallatoire's or dinner at Arnaud's — I prefer to dine in the fantastic Warehouse District or head uptown to the Garden District and beyond.

The true delight about New Orleans is the level of professionalism and interest that servers in the city take in their jobs. All of the servers we encountered were articulate about the chef's style, passionate about food, and knew intricacies about every detail of the menu. Wine lists leave nothing to be desired. And craft cocktails are made by the most competent and impassioned bar staff I have experienced anywhere — perfect Saceracs, Caipirinas, Bloody Marys, and Martinis abound.

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Pick a hotel with an outdoor pool: it's a great way to relax in the sun for an afternoon nap or to grab a burger during the day. I recommend the Windsor Court for those seeking a bit more luxury, but for historic character, the Roosevelt is fun!

MAY 2014

ITALY BY FERRARI AND THE AMALFI COAST

A Ferrari (or Maserati) drive through any region in Italy makes for an unforgettable day in a larger Italian itinerary, or as a means to get from Point A to Point B (Cinque Terre to Tuscany, Rome to Puglia, etc.). It's a decadent way to kick off a big birthday or other milestone! Let Resort to Laura Madrid organize your drive with point-to-point directions, fantastic restaurants and wonderful places to stay, with luggage delivered in advance of your arrival.

After escorting our clients' Ferrari drive, I spent several days touring the Amalfi Coast checking out special properties (both old and new) in Amalfi, Sorrento, Ravello, Praiano, and Positano. Italy never loses its romance and I would love to help you select just the spot for your heavenly escape!

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During the peak summer months, allow us to hire a local car and driver so you can explore all of the wonderful towns of the Amalfi Coast. Your driver will give you superb insight on the best beaches, views, restaurants and stop in for local ceramic shopping and limoncello tasting. Leave the aggravation of driving to the pros — it's money well-spent!

JUNE 2014

CLAYOQUOT

Remote, Refined, Remarkable: That is the tagline for this luxury outpost located on the wild Pacific Ocean near Tofino on Vancouver Island. Only accessible by sea-plane, Clayoquot is a stunning retreat with 20 tented accommodations, spectacular cuisine and wines, and a very unique, personalized way of delivering exactly what you want, when you want it. Guests are indulged with personal private guides for activities that include ocean and fly fishing, sea or river kayaking, whale and bear watching, hiking, rock and tree climbing, archery, shooting, horseback riding and even heli-hiking and fishing experiences.



Clayoquot is very relaxed but at the same time, über high-end. John and Adele have a carefully selected team, from the kitchen staff, servers and sommelier at the cook house, down to the guides, and everyone who keeps this wonderful place humming — and always with passion. Whether stoking the fire, serving a local BC (British Columbia) Syrah, clearing out snow for a new luxury mountaintop campsite, or taking a group of kids for a horseback ride, no one day looks the same for the team members here, as they treat each other and their jobs with such vigor, care, and respect.

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If you're short on time but love an African Safari or the remoteness of hiking in Patagonia, Clayoquot may check all the boxes without the jetlag. Book a year in advance for July or August!

JULY 2014

MUKUL, NICARAGUA

Mukul is the new resort developed by the billionaire Pellas family that is literally transforming the country's luxury offerings and tourism. Nicaragua is a bit like Costa Rica was 30 years ago — still natural, raw, authentic, lush and beautiful.

If you read my blog or even know me just a little bit, then you know I won't bother going anywhere if the food won't be delicious. Mukul has an incredible cuisine that they like to call NiKul cooking. They keep all that is wonderful about the Nicaraguan produce — fresh, healthy, organic and local. Lobster, crab, fish, yucca, platanos, coconut, cilantro, fruits of all variety and sweet as can be. All served, of course, with Flor de Cana rum!

Mukul is quaint and private yet offers so much to do. The best day may have been out on the 55-foot "Big Sugar"— we caught 29 massive fish that afternoon, a few of which the chef cooked up for dinner.

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Nicaragua is nearby, yet still very authentic. I suggest that you go now before the secret gets out!

AUGUST 2014

VIRTUOSO TRAVEL WEEK: Shopping for Travel, Las Vegas

I attended my annual pilgrimage to Las Vegas along with my colleagues from Virtuoso, a by-invitation network of the top 1% of travel consultants in the world. During this week of non-stop meetings, I reconnect with the most important hoteliers and luxury/adventure travel providers in the world. This conference enables me to assure my clients that no matter where in the world I send them, I have already shaken hands with the people who will take care of them on the ground.

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What's on *your* bucket list? Allow me to create 1, 3, 5, and 10-year plans for you. I can also do the legwork by suggesting itineraries and products that you'll want to consider.

SEPTEMBER 2014

CANCUN vs. RIVIERA MAYA vs. TULUM

Our clients often ask where to stay in Cancun, on the Riviera Maya or even in Tulum. Given the vast number of hotel options, it can be dizzying. Here is the skinny on the destinations:

CANCUN — With the hotel zone located just 10 minutes from the airport, you literally can be sipping margaritas beachside by 11:00am. While more built up, Cancun is ideal for those coming for a very quick getaway, especially if shopping, off-resort restaurants, and nightlife are part of the holiday equation. Unless you are considering many excursions outside of Cancun, a car is not needed here.

RIVIERA MAYA — What two decades ago was simply called the Cancun-Tulum corridor has now been developed and marketed as Mexico's best destination, where the once-empty beaches of the area are filled with a wide range of resort accommodations. Don't worry, the beaches are ►

still gorgeous and you can still find a fun local vibe in Playa del Carmen, a grown-up beach town and gateway to Cozumel. Guests staying in the Riviera Maya can easily stay on their resort, go into Playa del Carmen, or dine at some other nearby wonderful properties. Many of the eco-activities are located in this area and you have easy access to the ruin of Tulum and Coba. If you plan to get out and explore, you may like to have a car in the Riviera Maya; driving is easy with an excellent highway and clear signage. But if you're the type who likes to hunker down in a resort lounge chair, I suggest to simply go with the airport transfers and leave the driving to a local.

TULUM — If you are seeking a relaxed, young, and Bohemian atmosphere with a plethora of tiny "eco-chic" hotels and fantastic beaches, this is the ticket. If you're the type who seeks an incredible room product and many amenities such as air conditioning and gyms, then Tulum is likely NOT be the place for you. But if you want to completely unwind, ride bikes to bars and restaurants, and take in the jet-set, New-Yorker-turned-weekend yoga-warrior, you might just never want to leave Tulum.

OCTOBER 2014

RANCH AT ROCK CREEK & NATIONAL PARKS DISCOVERED

Do you ever feel the need to break away from the routine, step back in time, soak in the beauty of the land? Or to just get remote without sacrificing any comforts? Montana may be the perfect place for escapism, cleansing the soul, reconnecting, and recharging.



As a guest at The Ranch at Rock Creek, I gazed at Montana's infinite blue sky, gulped the freshest air, and hiked and biked over her rolling, suede-covered mountains. The Ranch at Rock Creek is a member of prestigious Relais & Chateaux and the only Forbes five-star guest ranch. The resort's design is reminiscent of an 1800's mining town outpost with authentic and tastefully appointed lodge rooms, cabins, homes and canvas tents — each accommodation is different and each is special. Let us discuss your particular needs so I can best guide you. This slice of western paradise is ideal for a romantic escape, an unforgettable family reunion, a guys' or girls' trip, or simply the best family trip ever!

Seeing our National Parks will be something I forever keep close to my heart. My son and I were in awe of the beauty and diversity of our landscapes and wildlife and the stories of our [CONTINUED ON BACK ►](#)

[OCTOBER 2014, CONTINUED] Native American people as we drove from Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and the Badlands National Parks.

I have fantastic partners along the route and we would be delighted to organize a tour of any of our National Parks. Allow us to set you up with the best possible lodging including some luxurious respites, incredible guides who will help you maximize the experience, and provide turnkey logistics and suggestions all along the way.

RESORT TO LAURA MADRID TIP For summer travel, we recommend booking one year out as July and August are incredibly popular and busy. Ideal times to travel are the second half of June or early September, when the weather is spectacular and the crowds have either not yet arrived or have already gone. For winter visits, we can organize one-day trips that include snow activities in some of the parks and ranches.

NOVEMBER 2014

SPECTACULAR SOUTHERN AFRICA – Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia

There are NOT many countries in the world that rival South Africa for all the wonderful things it offers! The wildlife is mind-blowing. The wines are free-flowing and exceptional. The cuisine is sophisticated and varied. The weather is dramatic and can be all four seasons in one day. The people are generous, kind, remarkable and impressive. I have traveled to East Africa and that indeed was life-changing, but nothing prepared me for how I would feel in this gorgeous land! ▶



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I travel a lot and strive to ensure that I advise my clients well on the best experience for their holiday travel. This trip took me to some of the very best properties in the region and I'm glad to share a bit about what this experience might look like for you. Please call me or check out my latest blog on South Africa — www.lauramadridtravel.com.

RESORT TO LAURA MADRID TIP

Splurge for helicopter and small plane transfers between safari camps. It will add to your budget but will save you a great deal of time and hassle, and you won't regret it! I did a pre-safari beach trip to the absolutely delightful Azura Resort on Benguerra Island in Mozambique and an exhilarating post-safari trip to the mighty Victoria falls on the Zambezi River. Both are special experiences that can enhance your tour of Southern Africa while allowing for some much-needed down time on either side of the bush!

DECEMBER 2014

CANYON RANCH in Tucson, Arizona

Around the holidays is the perfect time to de-stress, de-tox, and de-clutter and I did just this at Canyon Ranch in Tucson as a pre-holiday getaway with my mother. Often, we take care of ourselves last and that means that the gift of health is one of those intangibles that people really appreciate. It is the one thing you can't over-indulge in either!

Here's what a day at Canyon Ranch looked like for me:

- 7:00 am 3-mile run with Bob
- 7:45 am Breakfast
- 8:30 am Abs Class
- 9:00 am Yoga For Your Back Class
- 10:00 am Peruse the shops. Mom gets a personalized athletic shoe fitting with an expert (she loves her brand new sneakers!)
- 12:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm Relax pool-side before the afternoon workouts begin
- 2:00 pm Introduction to Wally Ball
- 3:00 pm Wally Ball tournament (this is addictive!)
- 4:00 pm Spin Class
- 5:00 pm Muscle Melt Thai Massage
- 6:30 pm Dinner (fabulous!)
- 8:30 pm Another great night's sleep getting ready for my morning 5-mile uphill hike!

RESORT TO LAURA MADRID TIP

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO SECURE YOUR PERSONAL PEACE. Kick off 2015 with your own personal wellness retreat. A four-day getaway filled with healthful eating, workouts, hikes, or blissful spa time can certainly invigorate you to take on the New Year with poise.

For in-depth updates on all my trips, follow my blog at www.lauramadridtravel.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 this year. I always appreciate your call as well as your referrals!