



# RESORT TO LAURA MADRID

## EXPERT TRAVEL PLANNING

WWW.RESORTTOLAURAMADRID.COM



*I adore the charming shops, cafés and galleries in Kennebunkport, Maine*



*St. Petersburg, Russia — one of the most stunning cities in the world!*



*A cooking class (with wine, of course) at the Relais Il Falconiere in Cortona, Italy*

Dear Trusted Friends and Fellow Travelers,

What an exciting year it has been! I have had the opportunity to personalize beautiful itineraries across the globe. Thank you for allowing me to assist with your trips to Australia and New Zealand, South Africa, Southeast Asia, Iceland, Costa Rica, Peru, Ecuador, Croatia, Morocco and to nooks and crannies all over the United States, just to name a few!

As we enter our sixth year of operation at Resort to Laura Madrid, I wish to send my heartfelt gratitude to each of my valued friends for entrusting us with your most precious asset—your leisure time!

Just as you may have advisors who assist you with managing your health, wealth, household or any other aspect that is near and dear to your life, you count on the Resort to Laura Madrid team to take care of perhaps one of the most enjoyable parts of your life—your discovery, your relaxation, and your cherished time spent with loved ones. We are fully aware that travel for many of our clients is an investment that needs to be just right, and we pride ourselves in helping connect you with just the experience that will surprise and delight you each time.

The number one lesson I have learned this year is that the wisest thing you can do is to book your travel early; this way, we can secure properties that you will covet at the best possible value. It is not too early to plan your summer and even Holiday Season trips for 2016.

We love getting your feedback, pictures, Facebook posts and, most of all, your referrals. Each and every day, our phone rings with one of your friends or colleagues who tell us that you raved about our services—this is the greatest reward of all!

Thank you for allowing us to do what we love. Here's to a fabulous 2016, in which we hope to make many more of your dreams come to fruition!

Warmly,

*Laura*  
Laura Madrid

P.S. The next few pages feature abbreviated versions of my travel research from 2015. For the full articles, please visit my blog at [www.lauramadridtravel.com](http://www.lauramadridtravel.com).

# LAURA'S ANSWERS

## TO HER MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### FUN TRIP I'M CURRENTLY PLANNING FOR CLIENTS:

A **design and fashion trip to Amsterdam**, complete with private access to very special designers and private collections for a lovely group of women.

### FAVORITE HOTEL THAT I VISITED THIS YEAR?

**Les Airelles**, a Five-Star Palace hotel in Courchevel 1850 in the French Alps — a warm and cozy alpine village retreat where the scent of local perfume, hand-painted murals, and the attentive, beret-clad bellmen are just a taste of what is to come!



*The ski attendants at Les Airelles in Courchevel, France make it all so effortless!*

### NEW OPENINGS THAT I'M EXCITED ABOUT?

**Hacienda AltaGracia in Costa Rica** is a fabulous luxury equestrian ranch located in the pristine Pérez Zeledón region, complete with spectacular horses, ultra-lights, and views of the lush mountains and valleys of the area.

### EMERGING DESTINATIONS?

**Colombia** and **Cuba** are newly hot, and I have seen a steady increase in travel to **Iceland**.

### HOT DESTINATIONS FOR THOSE IN THE KNOW?

**Croatia, Slovenia** and **Montenegro** in the Balkans, as well as **Puglia** and **Basilicata** in Southern Italy.



*Ultra-lighting at AltaGracia is a thrilling way to see the Costa Rican countryside*

### TRAVEL TREND?

**Nature travel** is really big. Many travelers don't just want to observe, they want to be an active participant in discovering a destination — which often involves hiking, cycling or rafting to even reach that destination — or immersing themselves in remote destinations so they can experience the wildlife and indigenous people in a natural and non-contrived way.

### CULINARY TREND IN TRAVEL?

Travelers are not just wanting to be served an amazing meal, they want to help cook it. Or even source it — whether that means shucking oysters with champagne in Australia, truffle-hunting with dogs in France or Italy, or being the first to meet the fishermen as they come into the market at 5:00am in Japan.



*Purchasing perfect mangosteens from a street vendor in Bogotá, Colombia*



*Truffle-hunting with my canine and human guides in Norcia in Umbria, Italy*

# TIPS FROM LAURA'S 2015 TRAVELS

JANUARY 2015

## FOUR SEASONS ORLANDO at Walt Disney World

There is finally an absolutely perfect way to do the theme parks of Orlando in style — and in a way that is special for every member of the family, no matter what they value in an Orlando holiday. The newly-opened Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Disney is the ticket! After a day spent at the parks, nothing is nicer than coming back to Four Seasons for an afternoon of lazing by the pool with a cocktail. Kids and adults alike can continue the fun by playing in the fountains or floating down the lazy river, all in a very civilized environment!

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TIP

You can book — and your family can enjoy — the princess beauty salon and character breakfasts right on property at Four Seasons. You'll be in the lap of luxury and experience the magic without the crowds and chaos.

FEBRUARY 2015

## A FOODIE WEEKEND GETAWAY at the Condado Vanderbilt in San Juan, Puerto Rico — A Classic Reinvented!

I have always been an aficionado of the Spanish Caribbean — I just love the Latin culture on a tropical island. If your idea of a weekend away involves at least three meals a day, all of which must be fabulous, I would definitely suggest this easy getaway, and for U.S. Citizens, of course NO PASSPORT required!

We stayed at the newly restored and recently opened Condado Vanderbilt in San Juan, just a 10-minute drive from the airport. I loved the vibe at this new hotel, which has creatively merged its re-designed Art Deco historic building with the modern wings. The property sits literally on the roaring Atlantic surf, and while I am sure this close access would not be allowed for a new build, it gives this classic property a real sense of place and drama. The pool and sun decks are creatively positioned and flow from the east wing to the west wing as if a ship's deck.

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TIP

Book a table at Santaella in the festive and fun La Placita Santurce area — a MUST DO for anyone visiting San Juan wanting an amazing meal. Don't miss the tuna avocado tacos and squid with white bean cassoulet!

EARLY MARCH 2015

## COLOMBIA — Oh, What a Delightful Surprise!

Colombia is incredibly sophisticated, organized, and clean, making it an enjoyable destination offering fascinating history, culture, nature and wildlife, and cities with spectacular gastronomy, shopping, and nightlife. Even better, Colombia is still a great value, but that will inevitably change as word gets out!



*My son and I enjoy some Coca tea with a local vendor in Bogotá, Colombia*

Bogotá is by far the largest city in Colombia, but equally, if not more interesting, are its much smaller cities Cali, Medellín, Barranquilla and one of my new favorite cities in the world — Cartagena!

The fact that two new Four Seasons properties have opened in Bogotá is testament enough to how the country is transforming, as there is more demand from the luxury consumer. And as often happens in many destinations, when a new Four Seasons property opens its doors, their loyal clientele follows. In Cartagena, a new Viceroy property is opening in the San Diego zone, which will add to the already charming and special boutique offerings in this stunning city!

A visit to the coffee zone is also a must! We stayed at Hacienda Bambusa where the charming staff took us under their wing, showing us a friendly and casual ranch experience while teaching us about the country's coffee production. The Colombian way to drink coffee is a large, very black cup, maybe with a bit of sugar. Delicioso!

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TIP

Cartagena is a fascinating, fun, and gorgeous Spanish colonial city with spectacular restaurants, nightlife, boutique shopping and the warmth of the Caribbean. Delta now has four-hour, non-stop flights from Atlanta!

MARCH 2015

## COURCHEVEL, the Charm and Civility of European Skiing Simply Not Found Elsewhere!

They say that once you ski in Europe it is hard to go back, and it is true! We flew the easy overnight flight into Geneva and were met by a car and driver. Within two hours, we pulled into the gorgeous Alpine Village of Courchevel, a tiny French hamlet that boasts no less than 17 five-star Hotels and five Michelin Star Restaurants.

In Courchevel, there simply is no shortage of chic — from the international clientele to the genuine warmth of the French hosts. Gorgeous shops, special hotels, luxury chalets, and award-winning restaurants seamlessly blend into the mountain village atmosphere without taking from its authentic French Alpine character.

Courchevel is only open in the winter, as its clientele are much happier to be on the French Riviera during the summer months. While prices are certainly high, there has never been a better time to go, as you can take advantage of the American dollar being nearly on par with the Euro.

Les Trois Vallées (the three valleys) is the largest ski area in the world, connected solely by ski lifts and slopes and requires a single ski pass. The charm is being able to breakfast in Courchevel, ski in Val Thorens, and après-ski in Meribel. All in a day's work!

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**TIP**

Food and beverage in Courchevel can seem obscenely expensive, but many of the luxury properties offer spectacular Michelin star "all-inclusive" meal plans — and you will want to dine on-property often anyway, so do book this in advance!



*Skiing ABOVE the clouds in Courchevel, France*

APRIL 2015

## MIAMI BEACH — Sun, Fun, Glamour... Like Never Before!

Miami Beach is always a ball and an easy escape for a much-needed break or weekend jaunt.

The number of fabulous hotels and resorts in the area is astounding and with so many new projects in the works, it was high time I paid a visit. It use to be that for luxury and service you had to hit Brickell or Key Biscayne, but now Miami Beach is alive with some of the most incredible properties with service and food to match. Some of our favorites are the Metropolitan, the Edition, One South Beach, and the newly opened Faena (of Buenos Aires). Let me know when you are going and I will help you decide the best fit for your tastes!

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**TIP**

You can only stay in one hotel, but you can always "hotel hop" by dining at several — so I always book my clients a table at some of the other properties and suggest they go for a drink beforehand to check out the scene. Some of my favorite restaurants are OLA at the Sanctuary South Beach and Bazaar by José Andrés at the SLS South Beach.

MAY 2015

## SOUTH AFRICAN SOUJOURN: Cape Town and the Peninsula, Stellenbosch, and Sabi Sands

I am not sure there is another country that offers all that South Africa does: spectacular nature, astounding wildlife from the sea to the bush, sophisticated cities, beautiful winelands, and some of the most gorgeous, abundant, varied and fresh cuisine I have had anywhere on earth. And with people who make your heart sing, it is the entire package — I cannot get enough! Many of my clients say that Africa is a "trip of a lifetime," but then, like me, they end up returning again and again to South Africa and beyond — Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, Kenya-aaah!!

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**TIP**

Book a year in advance to ensure you get a spot at some of the most special safari lodges. A safari may be one of the most expensive trips you take, but it will certainly be one that you will never forget, and it is not the place to go on the cheap. You really do get what you pay for, and the quality in the guides and the game viewing is a huge point of differentiation between a moderately-priced experience and a higher price point, in addition to the wow accommodations, food and beverage, and manor in which you travel — road versus flights, type of vehicles, number of guests in a vehicle — this all matters in Africa. Leave it to us to help you guide the way!

JUNE 2015

## CHARLESTON, The Gracious

Charleston is absolutely gorgeous and gracious in every way. At the Charleston Place Hotel, they say that looking out any window you can see at least three church steeples. The homes and gardens in Charleston are immaculate, classic, and painstakingly kept. The restaurant scene is incredible, with delicious and creative menus and fantastic spots for libations on every street.

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**TIP**

Plan a "city & sea" stay, combining the charm of Charleston's gardens, art galleries, restaurants and bars with the relaxation of The Sanctuary at Kiawah for beach, biking, golf and sun.

JULY 2015

## NEW ENGLAND Charm

Whether a family driving adventure or a romantic adult getaway, Newport, Rhode Island and wonderful small towns in Maine such as Kennebunkport and Camden certainly satisfy your hunger for lobster, crab, and sailing! Charming shops, cozy cafés, and towns steeped in historic Americana. We loved our multi-generational family holiday complete with a BIG BIRTHDAY this summer, but many of our clients covet long fall weekends here too. We know just the place!

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**TIP**

Let us suggest quaint small inns in the charming old city centers that allow you to walk to everything. Always plan to charter a boat for at least a day — it's a great way to enjoy the area like a local!



The luxurious Crystal Symphony sails through Scandinavia and St. Petersburg

## AUGUST 2015

### SCANDINAVIAN SPLENDOR:

#### The Baltics by Sea Aboard the Crystal Symphony

After four glorious days revisiting old and new favorites in London (both hotels and friends!), we set sail on the glorious Crystal Symphony for eleven nights, six countries, and too much fun to count!

Some destinations are better seen by sea, and this itinerary lends itself to a ship as you are able to visit the most important ports of call in the Baltics: Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, and finally glorious St. Petersburg (where we luckily had three full days to explore). The ship also explored the charming smaller medieval ports of Visby, a Swedish Island, and of Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

While I know many ships are “award-winning,” Crystal has been voted the world’s best cruise line for 21 consecutive years, so let me explain what they do well. Crystal’s ships are large, but still carry fewer than 1,000 passengers. The mass-market ships of similar sizes carry 3,000 passengers! The ship has outstanding entertainment, making for nights at sea filled with great fun! Food is absolutely incredible, from Nobu at Sea, to authentic Italian, to a glamorous dining room. The menus are exceptional, satisfying the biggest food snob, and the wines poured are absolutely delicious. Everything is included, however extra costs apply if you would like to select a special vintage, indulge in a cigar from the cigar room, or get a massage. The spa and fitness centers are fantastic and you can opt for massages, personal training and even targeted physio health consultations — so no excuses for not taking care of yourself, even with the daily indulgences and late nights at the saloon or casino. When looking at cruises, be sure you choose one that truly does include it all — it is so nice not to have to figure out who is picking up the tab each night!



St. Petersburg, Russia is a mind-blowing, must-see city and a day is definitely not enough to get your head around the art, the palaces, and the natural beauty of this “Venice of the North.”

Select a cruise that will give you at least three days to really explore the city. Splurge by spending a night off-ship at the glamorous Four Seasons Hotel Lions Palace — sublime!!!

## SEPTEMBER 2015

### THE RITZ-CARLTON LODGE, REYNOLDS PLANTATION

For my Atlanta-based clients, nothing could be easier than traveling an hour outside of town to the gorgeous Lake Oconee for time on the water, at the spa, or on one of five superb golf courses. Food and service are terrific and there is always something going on, from concerts and s’mores on summer Sundays to festive happenings over the holidays and throughout the year.



A group of friends or a family ought to splurge for one of the 2-4 bedroom cottages — a great way to hang out together with all the services of the resort at hand, including a butler who is happy to come man your barbecue!

## OCTOBER 2015

### COSTA RICA — More Pura Vida Than Ever!

On this trip, I wanted to go a bit off the beaten path to uncover places that have not been exploited by tourism. My trip took me to a relaxing and luxurious horse ranch resort in the Southern highlands, a raft-in and raft-out river lodge on the Pacuare River in the Caribbean region of Limón, an authentic coffee lodge in the coffee zone of Naranjo outside of San Jose, and to the nature reserves of the Osa Pensinsula for two unique encounters with raw nature interpreted by local naturalists.

We love Costa Rica and our favorite thing to do is organize seamless trips for families, romantics, and nature lovers to explore the “Pura Vida” in a comfortable and enriching way!



Hiking to a remote indigenous Cabécar village in Costa Rica’s Limón region



Costa Rica can easily be a long beach weekend due to its close proximity and non-stop flight access, but the way to really see Costa Rica is to explore the country, spending two or three nights in each location. A very well-rounded trip can be had in 7–10 days, but it would take a month to really see it all. If you have been to Costa Rica once, you may be due for a return visit — let us know you what you missed!

CONTINUED ON BACK ►

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NOVEMBER 2015

## CANNES, FRANCE — International Luxury Travel Market

I was so honored to be invited to the International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM) in Cannes — the ultimate global meeting in the annual luxury travel calendar! ILTM is the flagship inspirational show where the world meets the world! I met with the absolute best-in-class hotel, cruise, villa and yacht specialists so that I can best advise my clients on their dream trips around the globe. When you travel, Resort to Laura Madrid personally knows who will meet you on the other end!

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TIP

Many of our clients give me an idea of what is on their bucket list and we often devise a five-year travel plan for them. It is with this understanding of where in the world my clients want to go that I can maximize my time researching options for you while I am at ILTM in Cannes. Do not hesitate to let me know what is on your MUST DO list so I can keep an eye out for you as I meet with luxury and adventure suppliers throughout the year.

DECEMBER 2015

## ITALY with Relais & Châteaux

Italy is our number-one selling destination! I lived there as young adult and know the country inside and out. Italy is the one destination in Europe that travelers repeat again and again due to its food, people, culture, art, ancient cities, agreeable climate, and topographic diversity from coast to lakes, mountains to islands, villages to cities, and wine regions and varietals to keep you busy for a year! There are so many wonderful boutique properties that charm our clients and we pride ourselves on staying current on what is fabulous. In December, I spent a week with Relais & Châteaux on the “Route du Bonheur” in Italy. I indulgently stayed and dined at the following charming boutique properties and gourmand restaurants so I could report back to you for your next trip!

### VENICE: Londra Palace

*On the Grand Lagoon, walking distance to it all*

### VENETO: Villa Abbazia & Villa Franceschi

*Famous for Prosecco, radicchio, and tiramisu*

### FLORENCE: Relais Santa Croce & Villa Cora

*In the center of and above Florence, neither to be missed!*

### CORTONA: Relais Il Falconiere

*Home to super Tuscan wines and amazing Tuscan farm food*

### PERUGIA: Borgo Dei Conti Resort

*A former village turned resort when families need downtime*

### UMBRIA: Palazzo Seneca

*In the walled city of Norcia, the black truffle and salami capital of Italy*

### ROME: Palazzo Manfredi & Hotel Raphael

*Rome never disappoints; one with prime location, the other with best views*

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Let us map out your “Route de Bonheur” with Relais & Châteaux almost anywhere in the world — a wonderful way to stay in small, locally-owned properties where every detail counts!

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Cycling on the flawless beach at the Sanctuary at Kiawah, South Carolina



I was so lucky to have a great team taking care of my group at Sabi Sabi Bush Camp in the Sabi Sands Reserves, South Africa

For the full article on all of these destinations, visit my blog at [www.lauramadridtravel.com](http://www.lauramadridtravel.com).

If there's something on your bucket list, then let's “Seize the Day” and make some travel plans! I always appreciate your call as well as your referrals.