



# RESORT TO LAURA MADRID

EXPERT TRAVEL PLANNING

[www.resorttolauramadrid.com](http://www.resorttolauramadrid.com)

Dear Fellow Travel Lovers —

Welcome to my annual newsletter, which offers you a short recap of the travel research I have conducted this calendar year. There is an old adage in travel that says, “If you have not been somewhere in ten years, then you have never been.” Keeping abreast of new properties, special experiences, restaurants, and the changes in destinations due to politics, climate, economics, and globalization is no small feat. I love staying on top of the world and sharing my findings and opinions with you. If you would like to learn a bit more about a destination or product I highlight in my newsletter, I encourage you to check out the images and full article on my blog at [www.lauramadridtravel.com](http://www.lauramadridtravel.com). In the search button, you can type in any place that is of interest and if I have written about it, it will come up. Of course, I'd love to set up a time to speak on the phone or in person as well!

Happy reading and have a marvelous year ahead. I am eternally grateful for the wonderful trust you place in me in assuring your holiday travel is top-notch, seamless, creative, and rewarding!

Yours Truly,

*Laura*

Laura and the Resort to Laura Madrid Team —  
Celeste, Holly, and Jacqueline

*Clockwise from top:  
Namaste in the Atacama Desert;  
a San Francisco bike tour;  
exploring the Tuscan hillside by Vespa;  
sailing in the Cayman Islands*



# A YEAR IN REVIEW: LAURA'S 2018 TRAVELS

## WINTER

### MIRAVAl Re-Visited

The start of winter is a fantastic time to hit a wellness retreat to brush off the dust, get rid of the cobwebs, and simply re-energize. At Miraval, traveling with several couples or a group of girlfriends has become even more attractive with their new **RETREATS**, which I checked out myself last January. The modular design of these elegant living spaces offers the utmost in connectivity and flexibility, a unique combination of luxurious privacy, and welcoming community. The one-, two-, and three-bedroom arrangements are perfect for any size party. Each has a separate entrance, private pool or spa, and indoor-to-outdoor shower. Many include a full gourmet kitchen, fireplace, and desert mountain view.

I have my favorite resorts focusing on “well-being” in the U.S., the Caribbean, Spain, Italy, Bali, India, and Thailand. Where do you want to be well? Let me know how I can help you reach your best self in 2019!



*Ziplining in Belize with my husband and daughter — an incredible experience!*

### BELIZE: You Better Belize It! Jungle Love and Reef Time

Belize is a gem in the rough! Talk about a country that has so much to offer but is simply under-discovered. My family and I cave-tubed, zip-lined, puddle-jumped, road-tripped, kayaked, hiked, horse-backed, golf-carted, biked, jogged, paddle-boarded, motor-boated, parasailed, snorkeled, and hammocked our way from the jungle to the Caribbean. The amazing King of the Jungle is Francis Ford Coppola's charming **Blancaneaux Lodge**, located in the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve in Northwest Belize close to the Guatemalan border.

If doing just the beach, Belize can be a long, lazy weekend jaunt. The Belize Barrier Reef is a 300km long section of the 900km long Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System. It is the second largest coral reef system in the world after Australia's Great Barrier Reef and is popular for scuba diving and snorkeling. It includes seven marine reserves, 450 cayes,

and three atolls, so deciding where to stay is no small feat. I can't say enough about the luxurious private island resort, **Cayo Espanto**, located just nine minutes away by private boat from the bustling town of San Pedro. Cayo Espanto is comprised of six one-bedroom villas and a single two-bedroom unit. Total occupancy is only 18 guests — an excellent option for those who are truly looking to ESCAPE and be pampered.



*The Roman Seaside Resort, La Posta Vecchia*

## SPRING

### ITALIA – Rome, Tuscany, and Florence

Italy is one of the most sought-after holiday destinations in Europe and where, like many of my clients, I eagerly return to time and again. Tuscany offers so many places in which to relax and explore — from world heritage hill towns such as Pienza and San Gimignano, to highly regarded wine-estates like Chianti, Montalcino, and Montepulciano, to seaside villages like Grosseto and Castiglione della Pescaia. I visited some phenomenal options to make your home base while touring the region, including **L'Andana**, **Castello Banfi**, **Castiglion del Bosco**, and **Borgo Santo Pietro**.

Florence always makes me happy! I lived here for a year in the late 80's and have been back at least a dozen times since. The city remains true to its impressive 15th century architecture, proud Florentine style, and astonishing Renaissance art. On this visit, I stayed at the grand **Il Salviatino** hotel, located in the hills of Fiesole overlooking this magical city. One of the most impressive moments of this trip was the private visit to **Casa Buonarroti**, the former home of Michelangelo, where we had an exclusive viewing by a renowned curator of his original drawings! It was absolutely mind-blowing and I can arrange it for my clients too!

Rome is the eternal city and like its name suggests, it never stops providing awe and joy! On this trip, I visited several of the city's top hotels to check out which are the best fit for our clients. **Hotel Eden**, located at the top of the Spanish steps, is part of the prestigious Dorchester Collection group of hotels. It recently re-opened after a long closure and gargantuan renovation, during which every detail was considered to ensure that absolute comfort and luxury were foremost. The views at the **Hassler Roma** hotel are still the best (especially from their incredible restaurant), and the courtyard and stylish setting at **Hotel de Russie** is very chic and a perfect respite from the hustle and bustle.

What a treat to enter the **Vatican Museum** at dawn with the holder of the Vatican keys, to see centuries of art and masterpieces utterly alone as Gianni turned on the lights was a priceless experience that we can also arrange for our clients!

After touring the ruins at **Ostia Antica**, I traveled to the Tyrrhenian seaside resort of **La Posta Vecchia**, “Rome’s Voluptuous Seaside Resort.” This wonderful historic hotel on the ocean is just the place to dine like an aristocrat and sleep like an emperor. Located just 18 miles from the Rome Airport and 24 miles from the city center, it is the place I book when our clients need one last night near the airport or prefer to relax and overcome jet lag before the start of a longer trip. *Magnifico!*

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## CAYMAN – Luxury Villas

For those looking for a friendly, safe, easy-to-get-to, food-forward, and service-oriented Caribbean island with fabulous beaches and water, Cayman checks all the boxes! One of my biggest challenges when identifying villas for my clients is finding not just a great-looking and quality home, but ensuring the service is of the highest quality. In Cayman, we have an incredible partner who is responsive, organized, completely connected, and in-the-know. This means that getting chefs, transfers, private boats, and activities organized is done with the same professionalism as the actual home management. To ensure the highest standards for every property in their portfolio, our Cayman partners personally inspect each home, hire the staff, and even select the mattresses and linens. I toured many of the homes personally so that I can help you identify the best fit for your crew in Cayman!

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# SUMMER

## IRELAND: A Breath of Fresh Air

**Ireland** is a magical country and in recent years, it has become off-the-charts popular for many reasons, but what I love the most are the unabashedly gregarious people. This trip with my husband and in-laws included stays at some of the most sumptuous castles and manor houses in the world, more than a few pints of Guinness, and plenty of golf! **Doonbeg, Adare Manor, Ballyfin, Sheen Falls, Aghadoe Heights**, and the **Merrion** were all special and I can tell you why not to miss them!

*Practicing my swing in Ireland. Let Resort to Laura Madrid plan YOUR next golf vacation!*



## LAKE KORA: Historic Adirondack Great Camp Escape

Resort to Laura Madrid is always on the hunt for magical places to take over on an exclusive basis for that fitting occasion. Many of my clients are thinking about that “big birthday,” multi-generational gathering, or another milestone to celebrate with loved ones. From ranches to private islands to villas, chalets, and haciendas, I pride myself in identifying the “it” place for you to gather.

**Lake Kora** is a fully-staffed, all-inclusive rustic paradise set on a thousand-acre private wilderness escape. This is summer camp for adults – reminiscent of childhood, but oh, so much better! The Boat House is where guests can find kayaks, motorboats, and paddleboards, while the Play House boasts a vintage bowling alley and billiards room. Snacks are strategically placed throughout the property to keep “gamers” satiated! The accommodations are vast, private, rustic, and charming and include the choice of your own island house, gardener’s cottage, or tree house, to name a few. Fresh Adirondack fare is expertly prepared for guests.

Lake Kora is available for exclusive use during July and August, when the property can accommodate one to 24 guests for a total takeover. September and October are foliage months and offer weeks where guests can book by the room.

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## TWIN FARMS: Heaven Found in Vermont

Welcome to **Twin Farms**, a Relais & Chateaux country estate about an hour’s drive from Burlington, in the charming Vermont town of Barnard. The welcome at Twin Farms keeps on giving — hand-crafted chocolates from the in-house pastry chef and Dom Perignon are only the beginning. We had the privilege of staying in the Chalet, a fantastic accommodation with some of the best views at Twin Farms, a roaring fireplace, his-and-her bathrooms, and a Japanese bath. Each cottage and room at Twin Farms has its own charm.

Evenings at Twin Farms begin with hand-crafted cocktails, champagne, and cheese, followed by a magnificent four-course dinner paired with scrumptious wines. Twin Farms takes note of any dietary concerns or preferences, then they ask for you to sit back and watch the magic unfold. Every bite throughout my stay was a delight!

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# AUTUMN

## ATACAMA – Adventure to World’s Highest, Driest Desert

The San Pedro de Atacama oasis is situated west of the Andes mountains in Chile, in the middle of the driest and highest desert in the world. For this reason, the year-round climate is pleasant, and the transparency of light is unique. The outlandish geography of volcanoes, salt flats, and high-altitude wetlands has an unparalleled appeal. But the oasis of San Pedro is simply an introduction. It is the last area where human

life is possible, where a visitor can still be harbored. Once you leave San Pedro towards the altiplano and the volcanoes, you truly experience remoteness, an untamed place far from civilization as we know it.

At the ten-suite **Awasi Hotel** in Atacama, each guest suite is assigned a personal guide and 4x4 vehicle to enjoy the various explorations throughout the stay. This allows guests to plan each day with their guide at the pace, altitude, and adventure-level that suits them.

Food, wine, and service were all very much part of the adventure and the Awasi team absolutely nail hospitality. The Atacama left me speechless — and that is not easy to do!

*With my husband Gil in the Atacama Desert*



## MAS VINO! An Argentine Wine Extravaganza

With 300 days of sunshine and one of the most beautiful desert settings surrounded by the snow-capped Andes, Mendoza is one of the most gorgeous regions in the world. Staying at the romantic **Cavas Wine Lodge** in the prestigious Lujan de Cuyo region, dining at Francis Mallmann's 1884, cycling the Uco Valley, blending our own wines at the 100-point Parker-rated El Ememigo, six-course food and wine pairing lunches, and exploring friends' private vineyards at the Vines of Mendoza were just some of the highlights. Malbec is Argentina's signature grape, and nowhere else in the world does it rise to such heights of quality and richness as it does here. The daily tasting of powerful Malbecs complimented by the most flavorful and delicious meats I have ever tasted made for an indulgent treat!

*At Alejandro Vigil's "El Ememigo" winery in Mendoza with a fabulous group of friends*



Wine trips are always a good idea, but when you are lucky enough to do it with ten friends, they can turn an incredible trip into an unforgettable extravaganza. Resort to Laura Madrid is delighted to organize your group of friends for a trip to any wine region around the globe with access to the top wine experiences!

## YUCATAN: Rumble in the Jungle to Celebrate 50 Years

Last year, I had the wonderful opportunity to visit several private haciendas in the Yucatan Peninsula, and it was during this trip that I found the perfect hacienda to host my very own 50th birthday party celebration. As a professional travel advisor, my friends and family assumed I would pick a stunning destination to celebrate the Big 50. While I wanted something exotic, it needed to be easy to get to so my invitees could arrive without too much fuss or an overcommitment of time. The Yucatan was the absolute perfect solution, and I was thrilled to showcase four days of highlights to my 30 guests while we were hosted at the historic 14-bedroom **Hacienda Itzincab Camera** — a private historic estate complete with three pools, stunning gardens and its very own Mayan pyramid! The region is chock full of surprises to keep visitors in awe, including ancient Mayan ruins, Colonial plantations, freshwater swimming cenotes, charming towns, succulent local foods, and the warm and genuine Mayan spirit!

*Swimming with friends and family members in a freshwater cenote in the Yucatan*



## SWITZERLAND: A Winter Wonderland in St.Moritz, Andermatt, and Lucerne

If you love Europe but are a bit overwhelmed with the summer tourists, why not enjoy it in the winter when it is most authentic and local? While I adore European skiing, the festive Alpine atmosphere of Switzerland offers a winter wonderland for all types of enthusiasts. On this trip, I explored the magic of St. Moritz and its champagne climate. I stayed at the dazzling and chic **Chedi Andermatt** and delighted in the Christmas markets of Lake Lucerne. You do not need to be a skier to soak in the stunning nature aboard the Glacier express, sip mountaintop "aperos" (cocktails), snowshoe on glorious hikes, and dine on exquisite Swiss delicacies, including raclette and fondue, while marveling in the esoteric Swiss wine culture! For next holiday season, let's plan your Euro winter escape! ■



# Do you have a **TRAVEL DILEMMA** to solve? Resort to Laura Madrid to find your **SOLUTION!**

**TRAVEL DILEMMA:** We'd like to get away for a **romantic fall trip**, but don't want to travel too far. We love great food, wine, nature, and the option to be active but can't leave the kids for too long.

**LAURA'S SOLUTION:** **Twin Farms** in Vermont, **Post Ranch Inn** in Big Sur, California, **Blackberry Farm** in Walland, Tennessee, **Amangiri** in Southern Utah, or **Fogo Island** in Nova Scotia are all boutique, unique, and first class from service, to food, to setting.

**TRAVEL DILEMMA:** We have five years before our kids head off to college and really want to plan at least **three big trips** while we still have a captive audience. The world is so vast and each person in the family has different ideas. What do you suggest will give us a well-rounded sampling of experiences?

## **LAURA'S SOLUTION:**

**Peru and the Galapagos Islands:** Gives families the wildlife of the Galapagos where Darwin founded the theory of evolution, indigenous culture at Lake Titicaca, hiking the ancient citadel of Machu Picchu, rafting and cycling in the nature of the sacred valley, and dining with some of the world's top chefs in Lima.

**Southern Africa:** Provides opportunity for incredible safari life and staying in tented camps, adrenaline adventures — bungee jumping over Victoria Falls, Dune Surfing in Namibia or Cage Shark Diving on the Cape Peninsula — to fantastic food, wine, and shopping in Cape Town.

**Southeast Asia:** Offers visits to ancient temples, elephant driving, authentic locally-made craft shopping, cooking classes, snorkeling off the islands of Southern Thailand, live aboard boating in Halong Bay of Vietnam, city food tours on the back of a moped, and hiking among working rice fields.

**TRAVEL DILEMMA:** My parents are celebrating their **50th wedding anniversary** and would like our extended family to take a special trip together. We want to be under one roof or property so everyone can stay connected and will not be distracted. We want it to appeal to three generations, yet offer enough to hold each individual's interest.

**LAURA'S SOLUTION:** Taking over an exclusive-use property in a beautiful setting that offers an array of privately curated activities with varying activity levels. These properties all come with staff and chefs to ensure everyone is able to enjoy and no one is in charge of clean up: **Lake Kora** in the Adirondacks of New York State, **Hacienda Itzincab Camara** in the Yucatan Peninsula, **Singita Castleton** in the Sabi Sands of Southern Africa, **Villa Manzu** in Costa Rica, and **The Landing** on New Zealand's North Island.

**TRAVEL DILEMMA:** We have been all over the **Caribbean** and are at the point where we really want more than a beach vacation. Not traveling too far and staying close to our time zone for work purposes would be nice. We would love some adventure and culture.

**LAURA'S SOLUTION:** **Islas Secas, Panama** is a fantastic island retreat chock full of activities and combines perfectly with Panama City with its vibrant old town and Panama Canal museum. Another idea would be **Cartagena, Colombia** — a hip and colorful city full of history, shopping, and dining and offers boating trips and snorkeling to the Rosario Islands in the Caribbean.

**TRAVEL DILEMMA:** We would like to **honeymoon** someplace unpredictable that will be a WOW. We're taking two weeks off and may not get to do that again for a while, so we want it to really be special.

**LAURA'S SOLUTION:** **Sri Lanka and the Maldives** — Sri Lanka is off-the-charts special with wonderful lodges, tea plantations, coastal and highlands retreats where guests can experience great culture, nature and food and then easily retreat to a mind-blowing and idyllic island beach escape in the chic Maldives.



*A safari is a favorite way for many of our clients to celebrate a milestone birthday*

**TRAVEL DILEMMA:** I have a **big birthday** coming up and want to check off a bucket list experience. Having an incomparable experience is more important to me than budget.

**LAURA'S SOLUTION:** **African Safari:** The level of luxury, personal pampering, stunning accommodations, and fresh, exquisite cuisine offered on the African plains is incomparable, especially when considering the remote, raw, and wild setting. Helicoptering between luxurious tented camps and lodges to experience giraffes, elephants, lions, leopards, wildebeest, rhinos, zebras, monkeys, and more living in their natural habitat is a priceless adventure in itself. [CONTINUED ON BACK ▶](#)

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**TRAVEL DILEMMA:** We have four couples who love to travel together and share a common interest in golf. We really want to stay in wonderful, unique hotels and enjoy great meals together.

**LAURA'S SOLUTION:** **New Zealand** and **Ireland** both have magnificent golf, food and wine, luxury lodges, and manor houses that make for a perfect trip for a group of friends.



*Driving through the Irish countryside in a vintage car*

**TRAVEL DILEMMA:** We love the idea of being on a boat but prefer **something private just for our group**. What vessels would be wonderful to charter ourselves and give us the flexibility of planning our day-to-day itinerary with our captain so that the experiences, activities, and destinations are in our control.

**LAURA'S SOLUTION:** **Satori Yacht** is a private luxury yacht that can set sail on any itinerary you would like through the Mediterranean. Or consider barging through the Canals of France on a **Belmond Barge**, where each day you head to shore to sample wines, visit local markets, cycle, sightsee, or dine at top restaurants.

**TRAVEL DILEMMA:** I am realizing that I really only have a few more years left where I will have the energy to travel — but my list of destinations is still impossibly long. How can I comfortably **see a good bit of the world in a rather short time frame?**

**LAURA'S SOLUTION:** **Four Seasons** or **Crystal Around the World by Private Jet Experiences**. Each year, new itineraries are available. They sell out very quickly, but I can keep an eye out for you if you let me know you're interested!

# WHAT IS LAURA? UP TO NEXT?

## TRAVEL PLANS:

In 2019, I'm heading to **Mustique** to inspect its glorious villas with colleagues, **Panama** (including Panama City and some of the spectacular new island resorts) with my daughter, Ladies' Golf Bootcamp at the **Sanctuary at Kiawah** with friends, **Sicily** with my family, **cruising the Moselle and Rhine rivers** with Uniworld colleagues, **Southern Africa** (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, and Namibia with three families), and perhaps back to **Thailand and Cambodia**.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

In addition to spending a good deal of time traveling to inspect and enjoy destinations around the globe, I also make it a point to participate in a couple of **industry trade shows** a year. In 2019, I will attend **PURE** in Morocco, which brings together the world's premier and boutique adventure and experiential travel providers, and **DUCCO** in Italy, which gathers the most important hotels, castellos, villas, and resorts throughout Italy. Attending these trade shows not only further educates me on products to share with my clients, but also allows me to strengthen the outstanding relationships I have with the hoteliers and on-site experts who welcome my clients on their trips around the world.

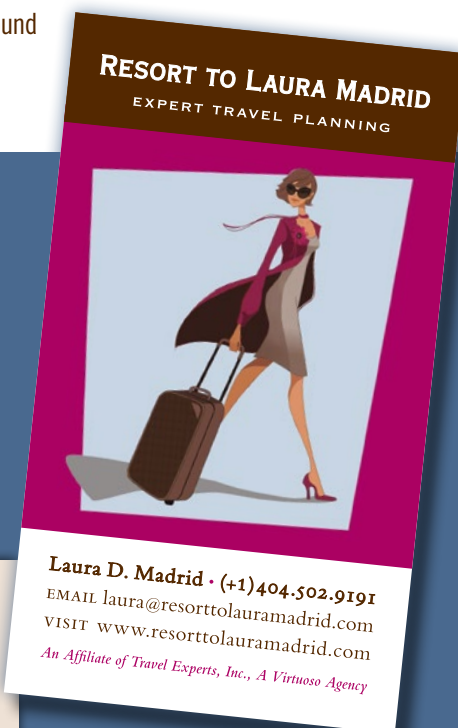
## WHERE IS YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE?

If any of the destinations mentioned in this newsletter are on your list, I invite you to read my complete recap and check out the photos on my blog at [www.lauramadridtravel.com](http://www.lauramadridtravel.com). Or simply contact me to organize your perfect trip! I always appreciate your calls as well as your referrals —they are the biggest compliment you can give me and my team!

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