



RESORT TO LAURA MADRID

EXPERT TRAVEL PLANNING

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Dear Loyal Travel Enthusiasts and Friends of Resort to Laura Madrid,

2023, ready or not, here we come!! I am delighted to share a few trends that might help you more enjoyably navigate this coming year of travel, which you'll find on the next page.

I am often told how this annual newsletter inspires your own travel to-do list, so I am honored to share my 2022 adventures — from gorilla trekking in Uganda and Rwanda to biking, eating, and drinking our way through some of the world's best wine regions in Northern Italy and France. I escaped with friends to the Riviera Maya, witnessed Mother Nature on full display in Iceland, and remembered how much I adore Madrid. Plus I've shared some tips from a few getaways that don't require a passport — Palm Springs, Santa Fe, and a long-time favorite, Blackberry Farm.

As you make your 2023 and 2024 travel plans, know that my team and I are able to provide our best, most efficient service when you reach out to us well in advance. We can't wait to hear from you, and look forward to helping you plan that next adventure, wherever it may be!

Lots of love,

Laura

Laura and the Resort to Laura Madrid team –
Celeste, Holly, Gil, and Mylene

*A phenomenal hike through
Thingvellir National Park in
Iceland's Golden Circle*



LAURA'S TOP



1 RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL: CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY

Let's face it, if you are reading this newsletter, you likely have "passport privilege," or the ability to enter many countries without a visa. The ability to travel, in and of itself, is a privilege, too. With such a privilege comes an even greater responsibility to have a positive impact on the communities we visit, by supporting the people and the local economy. There is growing awareness about the negative impacts travel can have on the environment and people — particularly through climate change, unsustainable pressure on wildlife and habitats, distortion of local economies, or even changing local customs and cultures.

At Resort to Laura Madrid, we carefully vet the "rolodex" of hand-selected local partners that we work with in each country around the world. Our local cohorts are an extension of Resort to Laura Madrid, and they help you to engage with locals and experience the customs, cultures, and natural resources that make each destination unique, and ensure your travel money stays in the destinations you visit. Sustainable travel is more than protecting natural resources, it is also about protecting the cultures that are constantly threatened in a quickly globalizing world. By valuing and experiencing local cultures, you return home knowing that you have not only done something good for yourself, but you have also done something good for the destination and the people you visited.

2 CONSIDER TRAVELING OFF-PEAK — OR SOMEPLACE ELSE

Have you ever heard of loving a destination to death? Well, overtourism is doing just that in so many "bucket-list places" that we adore visiting. It does not mean we should not visit these iconic destinations, but rather we should consider going in the "off-season" to help alleviate the impact of tourism. In doing so, you'll enjoy a much higher-quality, less frustrating, and more authentic experience by seeing a destination without the crowds.

Allow me to suggest a travel plan you might not have had in mind. Using my expertise, I can help you find areas slightly off the radar. For example, in South America, Uruguay is an absolute gem where in-the-know, well-heeled South Americans go for their holidays. Colombia has incredible history, cities, nightlife, beaches, and biodiversity. In Italy, how about Puglia instead of the uber-popular Amalfi, or for wine lovers, the Piedmont instead of Chianti? For island-hoppers: Ischia or the Aeolians, rather than Capri? For Southeast Asia, Laos, Myanmar, or Malaysia offer authenticity. Maybe Sumatra instead of Bali? Think about lesser-known cities where the locals will really appreciate your visit — Ghent instead of Bruges, Porto rather than Lisbon, Bilbao over Barcelona, Lyon in lieu of Paris. You may have enjoyed the "pura vida" in Costa Rica, but are you familiar with Guatemala, Panama, or Nicaragua? For a Caribbean escape, why not Grenada, Dominica, or Curaçao for a change of pace?

5 TRAVEL TRENDS

3 STAY LONGER IN A DESTINATION

Being somewhere longer allows you to make time for the *Dolce Far Niente*, the pleasant idleness of downtime. Staying longer allows you to get off the beaten path, visit niche cities, towns, and villages, or less-visited museums, attractions, and neighborhoods. A longer stay allows for a deeper understanding and more intimate appreciation of a particular culture. Along with our world-class, insider-access guided experiences, we can schedule time for you to wander on your own, sleep in, read a good book, or even catch up on your workout routine, all of which will make the trip feel more balanced and enjoyable.

4 FLIGHT CONNECTIONS AND VIP MEET & GREET

Making your flight connection requires more time than ever. Airlines continue to make schedule changes as they work to ramp up post-pandemic operations to meet high travel demand, and it has not been easy to staff flights, lounges, and airport services in a challenging labor market. Flight cancellations and delays are more common than ever. Airports, even with fast-track services such as Global Entry, TSA PreCheck, and CLEAR, are still struggling to staff up, so you may find these expedited lines closed or severely congested. Avoid stress by arriving early to the airport and allowing for plenty of extra time to make international flight connections. I advocate for a bit more time than you need so you can relax in the lounge before the flight rather than the agony and stress associated with arriving later and missing a flight. (Yes, it is all new behavior for me, too!). VIP Meet & Greet Services may have been considered an indulgence in the past, but in today's travel climate, we suggest this service anytime our clients have an international connection under 90 minutes. Expedited VIP Meet & Greet services include a greeter waiting for you as you exit the jetway, where they effortlessly escort you through immigration and customs formalities all the way to the door of your next flight. Priceless!

5 PLAN NOW FOR 2023 AND 2024 TRAVEL

Trip planning and booking pace for 2023 is already off the charts, and in fact, many of our savvy clients already have their 2024 travel plans confirmed! Travel requests are at an all-time high, and we are already seeing top destinations sold out or nearing capacity for peak travel dates in 2023. If you plan to travel, I urge you to allow me to organize your trip now. By planning early, we can ensure you are allocated our best guides and drivers, the perfect hotels, lodges, villas, and yachts, and hard-to-get permits and tickets for everything from trekking with gorillas to the Monaco Grand Prix! Pricing models are dynamic, and for the best value, it is important to lock your holidays in as soon as possible. All of us at Resort to Laura Madrid — Laura, Celeste, Holly, Gil, and Mylene — are excited and ready to help make this your most meaningful travel year yet!



ABOVE: With my husband, Gil, ready for our amazing gorilla trekking adventure in Rwanda. **BELOW:** With a fun group of wine-tasting friends at Cos d'Estournel in Bordeaux. **OPPOSITE PAGE, Top:** At Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda. **In Bordeaux, touring the vineyards before tasting the wine in Sauternes** - We clearly enjoyed a succesful Italian shopping expedition in Lake Como! - With my mother-in-law at the PNB Paribas Tennis Open in Palm Springs



LAURA'S 2022 TRAVELS: A YEAR IN REVIEW

RIVIERA MAYA: Etéreo, A New Auberge Resort

Everyone needs a WARM WEATHER getaway weekend in the middle of the winter to sustain them through the colder months! So for a fun couples' trip with some besties, we jumped on an effortless flight to Cancun and then off to **Etéreo**, the hot new Auberge property in the Riviera Maya. Peacefully floating over a protected mangrove forest, Etéreo is an experiential, boutique property boasting 1.2 miles of white sand beaches located half a mile away from an undisturbed coral reef. As is the ethos at all Auberge resorts, the team makes a painstaking effort to create an uber-relaxed yet luxurious vibe, highlighting all that is local and authentic, from the people to the food and beverage, to the experiences.

LAURA'S TIP: *The culinary at Etéreo did not disappoint, and I can say with confidence that they offer some of the best gastronomy of any resort I have been to in Mexico!*



"Just hanging out" takes on a whole new meaning at Etéreo

SANTA FE: A Girl's Trip

As America's Oldest Capitol, Santa Fe is a bustling melting pot of Spanish and Native American culture that attracts artists, foodies, culture-seekers, nature-lovers, wellness enthusiasts, and anyone wanting to soak up an incredibly special part of America. Since Santa Fe has an eclectic collection of wonderful places to rest your head, we opted to split our stay between town and country. Nestled in the heart of downtown Santa Fe, often called "The City Different," our first hotel stay was at the iconic and truly



At Bishop's Lodge in lively, lovely Santa Fe

magical **The Inn of Five Grace**. Set in the historic Barrio de Anasco, the oldest continuously inhabited neighborhood in the U.S., the Inn's earthy, traditional adobe and stone exterior makes guests feel like they are traveling back in time. But authentic Mexican breakfasts and the fantastic, fireside margaritas served right to our suite were proof that we were actually in heaven. For a stay "in the country" (really just 20 minutes outside of downtown), nothing beats the historic and now trendy **Bishop's Lodge**, an Auberge Resort. Santa Fe is a hiking paradise and has some of the best mountain cycling trails in the world. You can do it all with Bishop's Lodge as your base camp.

LAURA'S TIP: *Consider taking over the 20-person luxe **BUNK House at Bishop's Lodge** for your next big birthday celebration or family reunion! And absolutely don't miss dinner in town at James Beard Chef Fernando Olea's coveted restaurant, Sazón!*

PALM SPRINGS: Perfection

What a treat to be invited by **Four Seasons Resort Lanai** to enjoy the PNB Paribas Tennis Open in the Palm Springs desert in their private box. I used to work in Palm Springs, so coming back with my fabulous and fiercely competitive, tennis-playing mother-in-law was icing on the cake. The tennis was fantastic, of course, and enjoying Nobu-prepared sushi while watching the pros and connecting with industry colleagues in A+ weather made the experience an extra wow. We stayed at the classic **La Quinta Resort** for a couple of nights for easy access to the tournament and then went to check out all the enhancements at my old workplace, **The Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage**. For a new wellness option to keep your eye on, **Sensei Porcupine Creek** (sister property to **Sensei Lanai, A Four Seasons Resort**) has just opened and is a superb retreat for golf, tennis, spa, and general lovers of healthful programming.

LAURA'S TIP: *For those coming in to enjoy all that is Palm Springs, including adventures at Joshua Tree National Park, let us book the fire-pit, ground-floor rooms at the Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage for the best evening cocktail location for desert sunsets and poolside views of the valley below.*

VIVE LA FRANCE!

BORDEAUX for Food and Wine Aficionados

A legendary name for all French wine lovers, Bordeaux is home to some of the most famous wine-producing estates in the world, and is also renowned for its history, food, and art *de vivre!* It was an absolute joy to accompany eleven spectacular wine enthusiast friends on a journey through this storied, complex, and historic region! We happily settled in for five nights at **Les Sources de Caudalie**, a tranquil luxury resort and spa located in the heart of the vineyards of Château Smith Haut Lafitte in Pessac-Léognan. This charming haven of relaxation made an ideal home base for day trips. We could venture out to the historic and picturesque St. Émilion and Pomerol and jaunts up the Route des Châteaux, where we enjoyed coveted visits to first and second Grand Cru Classé wineries Château Lascombes, Cos d'Estournel, and Château Haut-Brion, then down to explore the magical AOCs of Sauternes and Barsac.

LAURA'S TIP: Break away from wine days with a visit to Arcachon Bay, a superb natural protected reserve located on the Atlantic Coast just one hour from the vineyards. Aboard a traditional "Pinasse" (a quaint wooden boat), we indulged in exceptional oysters with local wines as we cruised around stunning Lège-Cap-Ferret, soaking in the sun with views to the impossibly blue waters and white sand dunes.



Boys will be boys! In St-Émilion, at Château Troplong Mondot

ÎLE DE RÉ: The Nantucket of France

While irresistible Île de Ré is where you'll find half of Paris on their holidays, the majority of Americans have yet to discover these UNESCO world heritage islands with breathtakingly idyllic villages, gorgeous beaches, and some of the most succulent, wonderfully-priced seafood in all of France. Surrounded by the ambiance of the French seaside, the first thing you will notice in Île de Ré is that everyone travels on bicycles, so in high seasons

(July to August), make sure to rent your bikes well in advance. While Île de Ré is only 18 miles long and three miles wide, it can take at least two hours to cycle from one end to another. There are many wonderful beaches, vineyards, nature reserves, salt pans, and even pine forests to pedal through, not to mention one fantastic oyster shack after another, so plan for a day of it!

LAURA'S TIP: Owned by iconic luxury hoteliers, Didier and Olivia Le Calvez, the **Hotel de Toiras** is exceptionally located near the port of Saint-Martin-de-Ré, the historic capital of Île de Ré. They also have two gorgeous villas on the island, which can be reserved on an exclusive, private basis. With just 20 rooms, they sell out early!



With my mother, overlooking the lovely city of Lyon.

THE RHÔNE VALLEY: From Lyon to Avignon

Many Europeans consider wine part of the daily diet, to be enjoyed at every meal. If you have a passion for fabulous food and wine like me, then a visit to Lyon is a MUST. With centuries of history and more restaurants per capita than any other city in France, you will be filled with knowledge and incredible cuisine. The Northern Rhône is the mecca for French Syrah grapes, so those grown here are unlike Syrahs from anywhere else in the world. They say Syrah loves a view and while it's what the Northern Rhône is famous for, I absolutely fell in love with the region's aromatic white grapes: Viognier, Marsanne, and Roussanne. Strolling through the medieval streets of the old walled city, it is easy to reach the UNESCO World Heritage sites of the Palace of the Popes (the largest Gothic palace in the world, home of the Popes from 1309 to 1423) and the Saint-Bénézet Bridge, better known by the name of "Pont d'Avignon." Finally, in the Southern Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape was the star of the show, known for its bold Grenache-based red blends.

LAURA'S TIP: The Rhône Valley has some of the top wines in the world, often at a fraction of the cost of internationally-hyped Bordeaux and Burgundy. While famous for its reds (primarily Syrah and Grenache), those with a preference for whites will find plenty of mind-blowing varietals here. Wine friends, trust me on this one!

AND THE ADVENTURES CONTINUE...

UGANDA & RWANDA: Gorillas and Chimps

Gorilla trekking is one of the most thrilling wildlife activities in Africa. Intrepid travelers who have been on a safari before often yearn for that next African wildlife adventure of Gorilla trekking. Mountain gorillas are only found in three places on earth: the Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. This opportunity is extraordinary because lucky trekkers hike into this region's hilly, forested mountains to find gorillas in their natural habitat. To encounter a family of gorillas is like no other wildlife encounter because they look and behave so much like humans. This area is the primate capital of the world, and we had unreal encounters with not only gorillas, but also chimpanzees and several other of the 20 species of primates found on the continent.



Selfie with a gorilla in Uganda

This might be my favorite trip of the year! We went for the wildlife, but it was the people of Uganda and Rwanda who really stole our hearts. Both Uganda and Rwanda are extraordinary countries, and to get a good overview of the highlights and beauty of both countries, I suggest two weeks.

LAURA'S TIP: Always HIRE A PORTER to carry your backpack when you trek. Even if it is easy enough to carry your own backpack, by hiring a porter, you will provide much-needed employment, make a friend, enrich your life and theirs, and likely save your rear from a few embarrassing falls on the muddy slopes of the Impenetrable forest!



Lake Como's stunning Grand Hotel Tremezzo

LAKE COMO AND PIEDMONT WINE REGION: Barolo and Truffles

Accompanied by a band of wine-forward fun-seekers, we kicked off this Italian adventure with a stay at one of the world's greatest hotels, the **Grand Hotel Tremezzo**, gracing the glorious shores of chic Lake Como. We cruised the villa-laden towns of Lake Como onboard classic Riva boats and cooked a traditional Lombardian meal in a private home before heading off to the rolling hills of the Piedmont region's Langhe area. That's when the serious wine-drinking (um, wine-tasting) began, as we discovered what I believe is Italy's most prolific wine-making region with delightfully elegant, yet powerfully aromatic wines of Barolo, Barbaresco, Gavi, Roero, and Montferato. We found the verdant countryside perfect for days of hard-core cycling, picturesque hikes, and classic truffle-hunting, all while gorging on Piedmont's autumn fare of mushrooms, white truffles, chestnuts, hazelnuts, and cheeses.

LAURA'S TIP: Even if you are uber-fit, go for the e-bike! Langhe's rolling hills never stop, and as you pedal your way through Asti, you will be glad to have the extra push over the hills! Breathtaking scenery and wine, cheese, and coffee stops replenish you as you go.

We biked, ate, and drank our way through Italy's Piedmont region.



ICELAND: A Geothermal Miracle

As one of the most geologically active areas on Earth, Iceland offers lucky visitors the opportunity to be a first-hand witness to the creative forces of nature at work. With over 30 active volcanoes — and an abundance of glaciers, geysers, and waterfalls — it seems that everything is constantly in motion. What you see on one trip likely won't be there the next time you visit, or at least it won't be the same! It is easy enough to get to Iceland, located halfway between the USA and Mainland Europe.



A Jeep 4x4 volcano tour in Iceland

Many of my clients enjoy Iceland during the summer, where from May to August, sunlight is endless and temperatures average 55°F. But it also makes for a magical destination in the winter — even with very short days and temperatures averaging around freezing, lucky travelers feel as though they have the country to themselves for horseback riding, glacier-walking, exploring lava tubes and ice caves, snowmobiling, and soaking in the natural hot thermal spas found throughout the country. With a mix of authentic countryside retreats and over-the-top five-star hotels, the experiences go way beyond the activities themselves. The water is some of the purest and most delicious in the world, always enjoyed straight from the tap or the stream. We devoured outstanding local foods: delectable arctic char, lean Icelandic lamb, and sweet greenhouse-grown tomatoes. Yes, whale, horse, and puffin are also on the menu, but my motto has always been to try everything at least once! I absolutely cannot wait to go back to see the rest of the country. You can easily spend two weeks or just enjoy a long weekend in trendy Reykjavik, the world's most northernmost capital!

LAURA'S TIP: *With all of Iceland's twists and turns — ice caves, lava tubes, secret black sand beaches, and off-road natural delights — it is a destination where my clients are always assigned a local driver-guide, whom I can promise will become your new best friend. Icelandics are fiercely passionate about the miracle of their country and are so incredibly kind and fun to be with!*



At the Mandarin Madrid, ▶ my husband actually asked the doorman for directions!

MADRID: It's Not Just My Last Name!

Astounded by the number of RTLM clients heading to Europe this year to celebrate the holidays — and feeling a slight bit of envy — my husband and I took a last-minute trip to Madrid in December.

After an easy, nonstop, eight-hour flight and a 15-minute cab ride into the city, Gil and I were toasting with cava and enjoying tapas in no time! Madrid is an elegant and spotless city, with a buzzing dining and bar scene, cutting-edge culture, and no shortage of shopping! Maybe my two favorite things about Madrid are that it remains authentically Spanish and it is a mind-blowing bargain to eat and drink exceptionally well! Top luxury hotels — including **Mandarin Oriental**, **Four Seasons**, and **Rosewood**, to name just a few — are attracting well-heeled travelers to this gem of a city. ¡Felices Fiestas!

LAURA'S TIP: *Madrid has endless opportunities to see European art. We loved the Picasso/Chanel exhibit at the Thyssen Museum.*

BLACKBERRY FARM: Blissful As Ever!

For my local clients looking to stay within a five-hour drive of Atlanta, the options are endless: from Asheville to Nashville, Charleston to Savannah, Kiawah to Sea Island, Lake Oconee to Cashiers and Highlands — all with superb hotels. Of course, a RTLM client favorite is in Tennessee's Great Smoky Mountains: **Blackberry Farm** has always been about exceptional food, beverage, and top-notch service, but if you haven't been in a while, you will be astounded by all of the wellness and fitness offerings and the diversity of nurturing experiences.

Blackberry Farm was the perfect location for the Resort to Laura Madrid team's annual holiday celebration. We toasted to 2022, a banner year for travel during which we helped our clients dust off their passports and take in the world in a monumental way! I am grateful to work with the very best team in the business, so if we were a bit slow to respond to your emails during two December days of fun, now you know that we were celebrating a job well done! Go Team RTLM, and kudos to Blackberry Farm for continuing to stay on top of your game after so many years. I like to think we have some things in common... wink, wink!

LAURA'S TIP: *Register to receive my e-newsletters so you can be the first to know about future retreats: www.lauramadridtravel.com*

The bar at the lovely Mandarin Hotel in Madrid

LAURA'S 2023 PLANS:

2022 was an epic travel year not only for me, but also for so many of my clients who have been waiting to take a legendary trip or two.

So what's in store for me for 2023? I always have something in the works — it's what keeps me energized and forward-thinking. I am still filling in the blanks and leaving a bit of calendar space for spontaneous travel, but by this time next year, you can expect to read about the following adventures:

- A family ski trip to Aspen
- An epic adventure to the White Continent of Antarctica
- A deep dive into the Caribbean, including Barbados, St. Barths, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, Dominica, and Martinique
- A wellness retreat to The Ranch Malibu
- A girls' trip to Asheville
- A family reunion in Mexico City and San Miguel de Allende
- A return to Spain, our happy place (it has nothing to do with the surname, I promise!)

Lake Como



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"HEY LAURA, WHAT'S ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?"

Even though I've been to over 90 countries, my bucket list is always overflowing!! I'm not sure how that works, but they say the more you travel, the longer your list gets. Here are a few places I will be working towards in the next couple of years:

Further Afield:

Israel, Bhutan, Sri Lanka

Closer to Home:

Hudson Valley and Paso Robles

Place I Want to Repeat:

José Ignacio, Uruguay

Places I Want To Explore More Deeply:

Brazil and Sicily

Next Wine Regions:

Alsace and The Mosel

Place I'm Dying to Stay In:

Post Ranch Inn, Big Sur

Can't Wait Until It Opens:

The Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York

SO, WHAT'S ON YOUR LIST?

Let's work on getting you there, and sooner rather than later. Life is short and the world is vast, so get your R.O.L. (Return on Life)!!

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