



The World's Most Romantic Places

Top of any poll for the most romantic place on the planet is always Paris – there's no competition. Or is there? We pay a visit to some of the other contenders, and find some off-beat things to share with your sweetheart in the cities of the Mona Lisa and Macy's.

You could say that finding romantic places is easy... just listen to the music. "I left my heart in San Francisco"; "I love Paris in the springtime"; "I like New York in June". Or you can think of things you like to do with your significant other, whether it's having a romantic meal, taking a stroll along a new street or a familiar one, watching the sun go down over a tropical beach, or simply enjoying a gorgeous view. It's a deeply personal thing. Might even include taking a bungee jump together, ski-ing off-piste, or white-water rafting. People even get married while running marathons. So romance is where you find it.

Still, there's no denying that some places seem to attract romantic feelings more than others. Let's face it, if you wanted to pop the question, you'd usually pick a nice bistro rather than a pub with Sky Sports on the telly or the tube in the rush-hour. There's a reason, too, why people opt to tie the knot in Bali or

the Seychelles over wondering what the weather will be like in Britain and whether there'll be a train strike. We're all a bunch of softies at heart, and we want everything to be perfect. And there's nothing wrong with that.

So... how to find the most romantic place in the world? Somewhere with that special something which makes it stand out from all the others. Well, of course, it has to be beautiful. Whether your idea of beauty is a stretch of sand with no-one else in view, a busy city, snow-covered mountains, or a fabulous hotel, if your venue doesn't have – let's call it charisma – then it's not The One. Love doesn't just happen between people... it works with places, too

Here are a few that might take your fancy. Blind dates with places, if you like. Not a definitive list. But one of them might just take your fancy!



Paris, clockwise from the Eiffel Tower: Vélib bikes, Artisan chocolates, Bistro menu, Moulin Rouge, Passage des Panoramas, Books for sale along the Seine, Parc des Buttes-Chaumont.





Best Romantic Beaches:
Maldives, Fiji, Hawaii
Best Romantic Views:
Hong Kong, Sydney,
Capri

Best For Chocolate:
Paris, Bruges, Barcelona
Best Romantic Cities:
Paris, New York, San
Francisco

Paris

Why Go? Paris is THE most romantic city bar none. And if the euro exchange rate is a bit eye-watering at the moment, there's plenty to enjoy for free. Whether you love art, food, style, or just strolling, everything looks better when you're hand-in-hand with your honey. Look out for special Eurostar offers in the UK daily papers and eat in local bistros, not touristy places. Buy a Carnet for the Métro (10 tickets at a reduced price, that's 5 each).

What To Do: Make like a local and hire a Vélib bike for half a day. Take the Métro to Buttes-Chaumont station for fabulous panoramic views in the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont (and watch the locals doing t'ai chi and yoga). Or go to the end of the Métro line to Château de Vincennes. Wander round the Jardin des Plantes, established in 1626 (Métro: Austerlitz). Explore the shops in the quirky Passage des Panoramas. Visit Paris's best gourmet street, Rue de Montorgueil near Les Halles. If you're feeling energetic walk up to Sacré-Coeur and Montmartre (don't take the Métro, it's like the London Underground in the rush-hour, all day long). Enjoy the fantastic kinetic fountain by Swiss sculptor Tinguely at Beaubourg (better known as the Pompidou Centre) [inset pic]. Check out the old books, postcards and kitschy souvenirs in the *boîtes* all along the banks of the Seine. Sit and have a rest in the grounds of the Palais Royale or in the Tuileries. Have a flower-overdose in the amazing flower market on the Ile de la Cité.



New York

Why Go? For the buzz and the glamour – there's nothing to beat the streets of Manhattan for a high-energy, feelgood sense of freedom. The sterling exchange rate with the dollar is better than it has been for a long while, and the subway is a safe and convenient way to get around. Look out for special offers from all the transatlantic carriers, and stay in boutique hotels or check out homestay schemes.

What To Do: Take the free Staten Island ferry for the best views of the Manhattan skyline and the Statue of Liberty. Walk in Central Park and watch the rappers, in-line skaters and breakdancers [inset pic]. Go to the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens in spring-time to see the best display of blossom outside of Japan, and walk back over the Brooklyn Bridge (touristy, but fun). Make sure you wrap up warm! Check out NYC's latest walk, the High Line, an old elevated railway turned into an urban parkland (www.thehighline.com). Don't bother with the Empire State, go up the Rockefeller Center instead for views from Top of the Rock. Before you go up don't forget to take some photos of the amazing Art Deco-style exterior of the building. Head downtown to Strand Books on the corner of 12th Street and Broadway – 18 miles of books at bargain prices. While you're there you may catch the farmers' market close by.



New York City, clockwise from top left: Walking Brooklyn Bridge, Central Park, Staten Island Ferry, Around Times Square, Lady Liberty, Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, Top of the Rock