

TRAVEL

Romantic Breaks

EDITED BY SARAH BLADEN, PHOTOGRAPHS BY GETTY IMAGES/GALLO IMAGES

WHY GO?

The Greek Isles are, hands-down, a brilliant destination for lovebirds. Aside from the sun-drenched beaches, there's the stunning setting with some passionate culture thrown in. Mykonos and Santorini are perfect for couples wishing to have a quiet intimate break whereas those looking to party should head to Rhodes or Ios where you'll find lots of after-hour bars and bouzouki stars and beach parties. The truth is every island in Greece has a romantic allure...

WHAT ROMANTIC THINGS CAN I DO?

Indulge the hedonist in you by visiting the spas in Mykonos. Steeped in history, try the Althea Spa Centre at the Mykonos Grand Resort – named after the healing Greek Goddess – where you can experience amazing ancient Greek beauty traditions. Their array of treatments will satisfy even the snootiest spa connoisseur. For a decadent experience head to The Myconian Ambassador Thalasso Spa Center where you can be pampered by the deep blue Aegean Sea. Nestled on the hillside and surrounded by gardens, this temple of wellness provides breathtaking views.

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

Although not terribly luxurious, Perivolos in Santorini is super romantic, with an infinity pool that has one of the most dramatic views in the world. Set high above the sea, the hotel is dug into the side of an old volcano,

GREECE

WORDS BY NADIA GARDNER



ignite your flaming passions. Whether snuggling in a seaside boutique hotel watching sigh-inducing sunsets or swimming in secluded coves in Europe's cleanest waters or sailing a private yacht to scarcely inhabited islands, the Greek Isles is guaranteed to make you and your partner feel like the enviable stars of your own fantasy movie.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

Catch a direct flight from Dubai to Athens on Emirates. From Athens, take a ferry to any of the Greek Isles. Visit www.emirates.com.

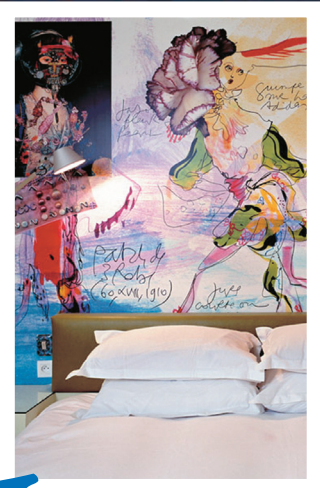
and your room is really just a cave, with a terrace outside where you can sit and watch the view with your loved one. Spend the next day exploring the old Greek village, Oia, sprinkled along the volcano lip, and sample one of a plethora of authentic restaurants.

LOVE FACTOR?

The homeland of Eros and Aphrodite, god and goddess of love, has all the ingredients to



Paris



WHY GO?

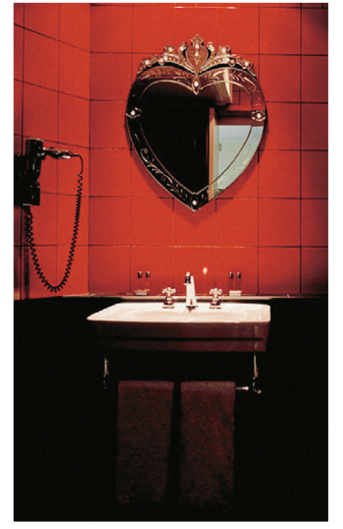
Yes, Paris is the ultimate romantic getaway but it's also a fun city for single girls to mingle! Get together with your best girl friends and book a mini-break to the fashion savvy streets of Paris. It needn't be all walks in the moonlight or boat rides up by the Seine (it's probably frozen over now anyway) – there are lots of chic shops, bars and art galleries to see.

WHAT ROMANTIC THINGS CAN I DO?

Going on a shopping spree in Paris might not be particularly romantic, but it's bound to put a smile on your face! Picture style queen Audrey Hepburn and buy yourself a chic little number for a night on the Parisian tiles with the girls. There are non-stop designer shops on Faubourg St-Honore while Left-bank St Germain is great for more high-street shops and the quirky Marais district best for cutting-edge boutiques and French designers – we love Zadig & Voltaire. Finally, even if it's just for window-shopping, don't miss the five-floor Louis Vuitton flagship store on the Champs Elysees. In between shops, pause for some coffee in one of the many romantic cafes around town: St Germain, at the Café de Flore or rival Deux Magots, Café Marly by the Louvre – also good for a spot of lunch or a chocolate dessert, and the lively Mon Vieil Ami on the Ile St Louis, followed by a truly romantic Berthillon ice-cream from around the corner. Prepare yourselves for the evening ahead by dropping into the Espace Harmonie Spa in St Germain and indulging in a relaxing Tibetan massage or a reflexology massage to soothe your tired feet.

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

Book yourself into the artsy Hotel du Petit-Moulin, one of Paris' most stylish boutique hotels in the uber trendy Marais. The rooms are designed by Christian Lacroix, with lush, colourful fabrics and start from a reasonable Dhs890 a night. If you fancy something a little more ritzy try the Hotel Mansart which is right next to Victoria Beckham's hotel of choice, The Ritz, in Place Vendome, from Dhs570 a night.



LOVE FACTOR?

What's not to love about the Parisian night life? Begin with an apéritif in Le Fumoir, or the Plaza Athenee for a one-of-a-kind champagne mojito before dinner at the Costes-owned l'Avenue restaurant just next door. The city's many DJ bars are great for post-dinner drinks and open until 2am. We suggest Mezzanine at Alcazar followed by the funky Le Cab in Palais-Royal where you can dance till the early hours and who knows, you may even nab yourself a French Valentine kiss!

HOW DO I GET THERE?

Hop on an Etihad Airlines direct flight to Paris from Abu Dhabi. Visit www.etihadairways.com

WORDS BY STEFANIE YOUNG

Istanbul

WHY GO?

Straddling two continents (Europe and Asia) and once serving as the capital city of three major empires, Turkey's capital city, Istanbul should be suffering from an identity crisis. Instead, the city on the Bosphorus is enchanting travellers year round as one of the most romantic and intriguing cities in the world.

WHAT ROMANTIC THINGS CAN I DO?

Istanbul has the power to provide the perfect romantic getaway, complete with plenty of time for you to enjoy the major sites that seem to leap out at every turn. Notoriously friendly Turkish people will gladly take a photo of you and your partner in front of any of these classic postcard icons, like the Hagia Sophia, a true wonder of the world, with its richly decorated dome that stood out as the largest in all the lands for centuries. Other classic sights include the 400-year-old Sultanahmet Mosque, better known as the Blue Mosque for the priceless, bright blue Iznik tiles that decorate its interior; the Grand Bazaar, where rows of merchants sell just about anything in the world's oldest indoor market; and the Topkapi

Palace, 172 acres of garden-filled courtyards, ornate chambers, pools and passageways, that was home to the Ottoman imperial family for 450 years. Once your "Must-See" list is ticked off, let the romantic side of Istanbul sweep you off your feet. Dine at the fashionable Vogue bar/restaurant located in the trendy Besiktas district. It's been voted 'Best Restaurant' by *TimeOut Istanbul*, and the rooftop restaurant boasts unbeatable views of the Blue Mosque and Bosphorus – so be sure to ask for a table at the edge of the terrace!

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

Book yourself into the city's uber-hip W hotel. Situated in the exclusive Besiktas district, the hotel is flanked by designer boutiques that include Bottega Veneta and Chloé. Close by is the Bosphorus Straits district, where more of Istanbul's best eateries can be found. Even the standard rooms come with a garden and decked area, providing an oasis of calm.

LOVE FACTOR?

For the ultimate romantic experience head to the city's 360 restaurant. Offering unparalleled views, enjoy the sunset over the Bosphorus while sipping on a glass or two of champers!

HOW DO I GET THERE?

Take a direct flight from Dubai to Istanbul on Emirates. Visit www.emirates.com

WORDS BY SARAH QUICK

