

**TRAVEL**

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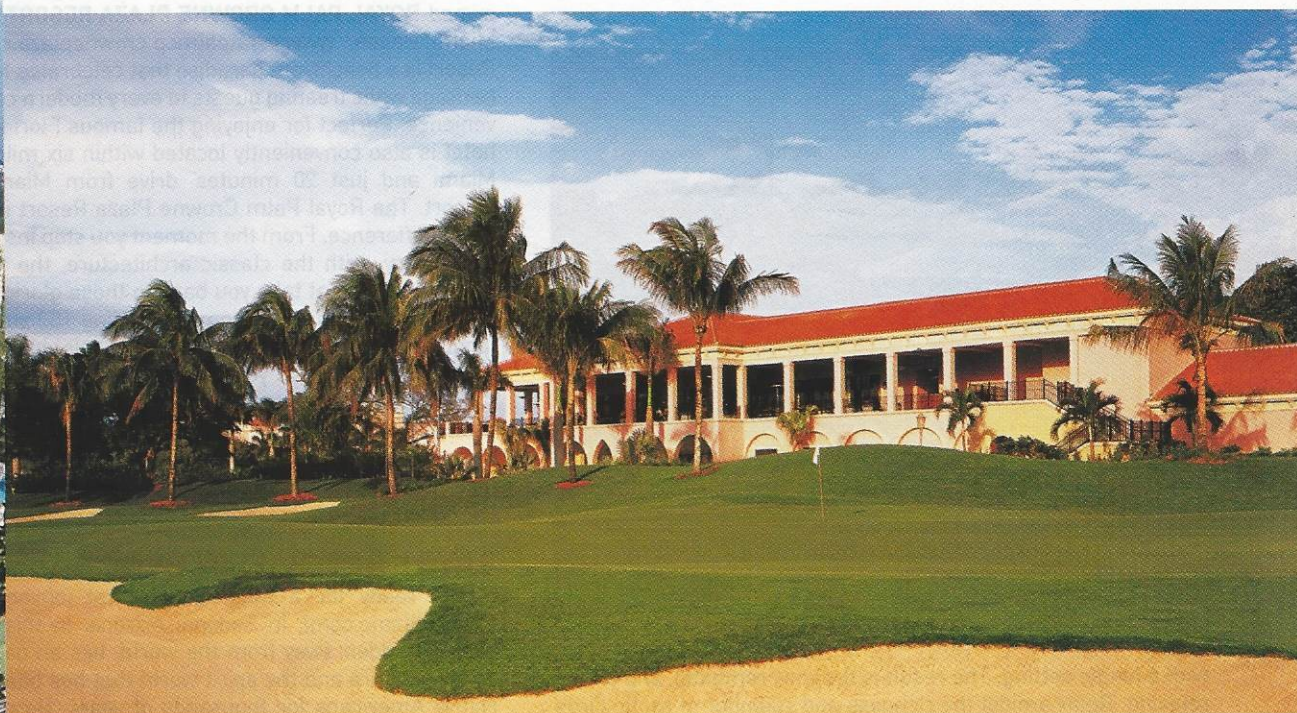
# PARADISE ON EARTH: Resorts & Spas for Couples



**D**id you know that the wonderful art of massage was behind one of the true silver linings to come out of the cloud of 9/11/01? Two days after the tragedy, massage therapist Dawna LoPiccolo began volunteering regularly to help relax the rescue workers at Ground Zero. She worked tirelessly for four months when, on Christmas Day, she met John Marz.

This New York firefighter had just returned to work on the day of the disaster following a leave of eight months to recover from the death of his wife. Dawna gave John a massage and the healing force of love was sparked.

In June the two were married, and, since the romance was publicized by the *New York Post*, the owners of Paraiso de la Bonita Spa Resort, on Mexico's Mayan Riviera, gave them a honeymoon at the Resort. You can create (or continue) your own romantic story at any of these wonderful couples resorts and spas around the world.



### **JAMAICA IS FOR LOVERS**

Negril, Jamaica is one of the most magical spots on the map and there are a number of choices here for couples looking to visit the spa and resort life.

First, magic and transformation is what proprietor Jackie Lewis was looking for when she made a decision to change her life from being a successful, black business woman in New York City and go to Jamaica and open a holistic spa. Featured in Oprah Magazine, Jackie's story is one of inspiration and dedication, resulting in a peaceful, slightly new-agey-minded spa in Negril.

### **JACKIES ON THE REEF**

([www.jackiesonthereef.com](http://www.jackiesonthereef.com)) offers a peaceful and supportive environment in a spacious and serene setting, nestled on an old coral reef. At Jackie's, the

Caribbean Sea lullabies you to sleep, while the Trade Winds keep you cool. The infinite splendor of nature keeps you in awe.

The cottage, a cozy temple of rest, has a double bed and private bathroom, or you can stay in one of four spacious chambers in the magnificent stone house, with private bathrooms and furnished with two ¾-size handmade dogwood tree beds. Practitioners who hail from New York and are spending some time Island-side usually administer spa treatments. They include facials, body massages, reflexology and more.

If you want to be swept away in luxury and ease, then nothing is more romantic than a stay at the **COUPLES SWEEP AWAY NEGRIL RESORT**, or any of the other two Couples Resorts in Jamaica, including Couples Ochos Rios and Couples Negril. ([www.couples.com](http://www.couples.com)). If you are a man and a woman

in love, this is the place for you. Couples Swept Away Negril offers the intimacy of a private villa and the romantic ambiance of a tropical hideaway. Mind and body are both soothed by the warm waters and even warmer welcome you find here. From scuba diving and sailing to spa treatments and yoga, this is an environment that will restore, refresh and invigorate.

### TEMPTATION ISLAND

If you truly want to enter another world, one that is outrageous and sexy, then check out the world of Belize, in Central America. Don't worry if some of Temptation Island was taped here, you and your sweetie won't have eyes for anyone else. Belize offers a variety of experiences for the spa and resort-seeking couple. First, there is the Maruba Resort & Jungle Spa ([www.maruba-spa.com](http://www.maruba-spa.com)). This resort is located in a spot that feels like it is forgotten by time. In this oasis of charm and grace, you will feel everyday problems melt away. But be warned, this is not your traditional spa — Maruba offers an alternative to the regimen and routine. The resort has been conceived and created to blend various Mayan, Creole, and African designs side by side



with a jungle setting. The result is dreamy, romantic, and totally relaxing. Relax amidst the richness and splendor of exotic birds and fauna. The Jungle Falls swimming pool will cool you in the day and the Japanese tub will make evening star gazing an unforgettable experience. The Resort's spa offers all natural treatments derived from ancient techniques, which incorporate all natural products produced from Maruba Therapy and the surrounding jungle environment. In fact, the Resort specializes in a number of mud treatments using its own natural Mood Muds, created to melt away stress and problems and imbue the client with qualities that range from sexy, to confident, to mental powers, depending on your preference. More choices in Belize include:

**THE SOULSHINE RESORT & SPA** ([www.soulshine.com](http://www.soulshine.com)). Here, you stay in traditional thatched cabanas. The spa offers soaking tubs, beachside massages, mineral baths, facials, reflexology and more.

**THE LODGE AT CHAA CREEK** ([www.chaacreek.com](http://www.chaacreek.com)) This upscale jungle lodge with 19 palm-thatched cottages and two luxury suites offers massage, cellulite treatments, facials, tropical body wraps and scrubs, hydrotherapy message. Day and overnight spa packages. Guided nature walks, canoeing, horseback riding, mountain biking.

### THE SUNSHINE IS STATESIDE

Staying Stateside and relaxing with your partner has never been so easy as with the wide variety of Spas and Resorts available today in the continental U.S. Here are some choices in Florida, otherwise known as the Sunshine State.

First, the upscale **BOCA RATON RESORT & CLUB**, located in Palm Beach County, is world-renowned. It offers a 365-acre estate that abounds with exotic birds, brilliant tropical flora and beautiful, historic architecture. The newly opened Spa Pallazo, was designed to replicate paradise on earth, both structurally and through specialty services and amenities. Fashioned after the legendary Alhambra Palace, this sanctuary of health and rejuvenation is about 50,000 sq.ft. and features 22 treatment sites, an opulent wet room, an eclectic menu of spa treatments, and 10,000 sq. ft. of palatial gardens with waterfalls, whirlpools and a spa pool with underwater music. Guests can choose to indulge themselves in individual and couples massage, hydrotherapies, scrubs, masques and wraps.

Or, for a much more active adventure, get down at the black owned **ROYAL PALM CROWNE PLAZA RESORT**, in the heart of Miami Beach, [www.royalpalmcpr.crowneplaza.com/](http://www.royalpalmcpr.crowneplaza.com/). This new Resort is a beachfront paradise that celebrates Miami's art deco heritage while treating guests to every modern comfort and convenience. Perfect for enjoying the famous Florida sunshine, the hotel is also conveniently located within six miles of downtown Miami and just 20 minutes' drive from Miami International Airport. The Royal Palm Crowne Plaza Resort is a Miami hotel with a difference. From the moment you step inside, you can feel the history, with the classic architecture, the furnishings and vibrant colors that take you back to those glorious "deco days". The 422 spacious guestrooms, including 150 suites, offer spectacular ocean and city views. Every imaginable service, amenity and convenience is at your disposal.

The hotel offers great recreation facilities as guests just need to step from their room directly onto the beach for sunbathing and water sports activities. Two outdoor swimming pools and a luxurious whirlpool provide both relaxation and great views of the ocean.

### SAY IT SPECIAL, IN SEDONA

Get ready for a magical, mystical journey at **MII AMO**, ([www.miiamo.com](http://www.miiamo.com)), in Sedona, Arizona. In this lush, beautiful canyon, hidden away from the world, lies an oasis — a confluence of nature and the spirit world that has been recognized by Native Americans for thousands of years. Here, nestled in the heart of a private red rock canyon, bathed in beauty, you can learn to walk in harmony with nature. This magnificent spa is located in what is considered one of the most sacred healing places on Earth, Sedona, Arizona. It offers top-notch therapists from around the world who are intensely dedicated to creating memorable and life enhancing experiences in mind & body wellness.

The spa's name means Journey or Passage in the Yuman dialect of Native American language, so daily in Mii amo, spiritual ceremonies honoring the union and balance of sacred earth elements are held in the Crystal Grotto near the main entrance. The dome shaped grotto is fashioned after the traditional Native American "kiva", which is a room used for rituals and cultural observances.

Adorned with crystals spotted by natural light from the sky through an opening in the ceiling of the grotto, this sacred space within Boynton Canyon will see the daily blending of essential oils and other rites.

### WINE COUNTRY WONDER

You would think it would be enough to celebrate California's wine region in style by settling the **BERNARDUS LODGE**



(www.bernardus.com) among the rolling hills and ancient oaks of Carmel Valley. Or, by keeping up the region's reputation for gourmet cuisine, wines, and culinary arts, the proprietors of the Bernardus Lodge would be satisfied. But, this resort, full of rustic charm, also offers a world-class spa and salon.

The Spa at Bernardus offers understated elegance in a pampering environment. Between signature treatments, guests gather before a cozy fire in a warming room designed for comfort and the rejuvenation of spirits. One of its signature services is made especially for couples. The Vineyard Romance Experience offers the magic of romance and the vitality of the vineyard in one extraordinary treatment. In the heart of the Vineyard Room, couples share the pampering experience of a Harvest Crush body scrub before adjourning to the total privacy of an outdoor lavender bath, surrounded only by tranquil views of the nearby Santa Lucia Mountains. This intimate luxury is made perfect for both of you when the experience is completed by a full-body warm grape seed-oil massage.

### BACK TO OUR LOVERS

Finally, the spa that gave a honeymoon to our 9-11 lovers, **PARAISO DE LA BONITA SPA RESORT**, (www.paraiso-bonita.spa.intercontinental.com/), in Cancun, Mexico, offers a truly magnificent experience to lovers. That is lovers of fine food and wine, lovers of white sands and blue waters, lovers of architecture and Mayan culture and lovers of massages and spa treatments. This is an intimate beach resort and thalassotherapy spa is nestled on the secluded sugar-white beaches along Petenpich Bay in a 14-acre oasis carved from the tropical selva. It combines the elegance of traditional Mexican architecture with the great Mayan culture that is the hallmark of the Yucatan Peninsula. Tucked into a protected private bay and surrounded by mangroves and a bird sanctuary, Paraiso de la Bonita is only 20 minutes south of Cancun International Airport, yet a world away on Mexico's Mayan Riviera. The Spa at Paraiso de la Bonita sets a new standard in treatments for mind and body.

The resort is the first spa in Mexico and only the second in the Americas to offer Thalassotherapy: this is a system using fresh heated seawater to encourage an exchange of minerals and toxins between the blood and the water. Massages, beauty and hydrotherapy treatments are also offered. **BE**

### QUEEN FOR A DAY

Since not everybody has the time, money, or honey for a whole romantic getaway, here are some great ideas to do at day spas, to pamper yourself inside and out. Ahh, Aroma. Therapy never smelled so good as when you give yourself over to a relaxing aromatherapy treatment. Chose Lavender to relax and soothe, Ylang-Ylang can be sexy and lift negative moods, and Bergamot, a citrus, is used to alleviate depression, melancholy and tiredness.

**Don't get mad, get mud.** Mud facials and body wraps are the rage. Amazingly enough, all that dirt is incredibly cleansing and detoxifying.

**Go with your reflex-ology.** First practiced by the early Indian, Chinese and Egyptian peoples, reflexologists feel that congestion or tension in any part of the foot mirrors congestion or tension in a corresponding part of the body. Thus, when you treat the big toes there is a related effect in the head, and treating the whole foot can have a relaxing and healing effect on the whole body.

**Get Stoned.** Stone Massage therapy is gaining popularity. It uses basalt and sedimentary massage stones which are thought to be generators of energy; they give to an area that is depleted and help move energy in places of excess, promoting a harmonizing and cleansing effect thus allowing for a soothing meditative state of quietude, calm and balance. Here are some day spa selections from across the country:

In Oakland, CA — Danielle's Touch  
www.daniellestouch.qpg.com

In Ft. Lauderdale, FL — Diva's Day Spa  
954-771-9772

In Brooklyn, NY — The HomeSpa  
718-596-8668

In New York, NY — Body Essentials  
Day Spa and Ayurvedic Center  
212-465-2220

In Washington, D.C. — Paris Alexander's Day Spa &  
Wellness Center  
202-466-8827