

Table for TWO

Sending a couple to the Caribbean? Find out how hotel extras can boost your booking, says Laura French

@laurafrench121

The Caribbean has romance down to a tee, and it's not just the white-sand shores, crystal waters and gently swaying palms that give it its va va voom - there's a plethora of hotels that go out of their way to entice lovebirds with romantic extras and unique add-ons.

With many of them pre-bookable and commissionable, these can prove something of a godsend when it comes to boosting the value of a booking.

We've rounded up some of the best to get you feeling inspired.

THE SCENIC DINNER

There's nothing quite like a romantic dinner beneath the starry sky to get couples feeling loved up, and with postcard-perfect scenes just about everywhere you look, the Caribbean isn't short on options.

Jade Mountain and Anse Chastanet - both overlooking

Saint Lucia's lush, dramatic Pitons - are specialists in the field, with options spanning a candlelit dinner right at the water's edge (\$130), and a private meal on the celestial terrace beneath the star-blanketed sky (\$95). But the most idyllic dining experience here has to be the 'castaway' gourmet dinner, which takes place at the ultra-secluded Anse Mamin beach with canapes, champagne and a three-course meal with foie gras, scallops and a surf-and-turf main among the delights on offer (\$995 for two; all can be pre-booked by agents).

Over in Barbados, Cobblers Cove offers an experience that takes guests on a boat trip to a remote island to enjoy a secluded picnic in scenic surrounds.

In Mexico, Unico 20° 87° Riviera Maya lets guests dine alfresco next to the cenote, an aquamarine pool of water that looks like it's come straight



Secrets Silversands
Riviera Cancun



LEFT:
Open-air
massage,
Sandals

RIGHT:
Swimming
with pigs in
the Bahamas

BELOW:
Candlelit
dinner at Anse
Chastanet,
Saint Lucia



PICTURES: STEVE SANACORE; CARLOS BOLANOS; BERND RAC

→ out of Hollywood film *Avatar*. Try beating that for Insta-food glory.

▶ THE COUPLE'S SPA TREATMENT

For those wanting an even more intimate experience, suggest a couple's spa treatment. Sandals resorts offer a commissionable Scents of Love couple's massage with candles, aromatic scents and a warm oil ritual on hand to add spice (\$304 for an hour).

Meanwhile Saint Lucia's Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort, features a Sulphur Seduction therapy that combines a dip in volcanic, black-water springs with a visit to a sulphur mud bath, an all-natural shower under the Toraille Waterfalls and a 25-minute back massage in a treetop treatment room back at the spa.

Elsewhere on the island, Windjammer Landing has a similar idea with its Soufrière



Experience the healing properties of the steaming waters, while staring at the jaw-dropping vistas

volcanic mud bath tour, a half-day expedition that whizzes passengers over to the west coast to experience the healing properties of these warm, steaming waters while staring out over the vistas that characterise this jaw-dropping island.

▶ THE ROMANTIC SWIM

If that's not unique enough, Hard Rock Hotels' Mexico and Dominican Republic outposts have the answer – a swim with dolphins.

Guests get the chance to admire these sleek and elegant creatures from above the water, before stepping in to interact with them during an hour-long experience they'll never forget. While it's not commissionable for agents, it is redeemable using the \$1,800 resort credit clients get per week – meaning it's worth highlighting as a selling point to those unsure about going all-inclusive.

For an alternative version though, suggest the Bahamas – specifically Dolphin Cay at Atlantis Paradise Island, where guests get the chance to snorkel, kayak, swim and paddleboard in dolphin-dotted waters (prices from \$55). For the ultra-keen, there's even the option to be a trainer for a day (\$490).

But the unique experience here has to be swimming with pigs in Exuma. Sandals offers the chance to do just that on a

three-hour adventure combining the once-in-a-lifetime experience with stops at several remote cays, where secluded paradise meets the thrill of speeding along on a 35-foot Power Cat. Persuaded?

▶ THE ISLAND GETAWAY

It's not only the Bahamas that's speckled with idyllic little spots to explore by boat, and with thousands of islands and cays dotted around these bright teal waters, you'd be daft not to embark on a sailing trip.

St Vincent and the Grenadines alone boast 32 islands – several of which were among the settings for the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films – and Mandarin Oriental Pink Sands Club on Canouan Island gives clients the perfect opportunity to explore them with a catamaran excursion add-on, which is bookable and commissionable through Caribtours. →



➔ Further north, Carlisle Bay in Antigua offers sailing-boat charters to explore the 365 beaches that encircle the island, alongside all-day cruises to secluded islands including Great Bird – boasting excellent snorkelling and hiking – plus picnic charters, sunset cruises and plenty more.

In Mexico, Zoëtry Paraiso de la Bonita offers a catamaran sailing to Isla Mujeres, taking guests to glimpse the rugged coastlines, craggy cliffs and idyllic beaches that make up this tiny island town, with snorkelling around bright coral reefs and a gourmet lunch thrown in to round off the day.



Don't neglect the sunset cruise. There's nothing quite as spine-tingling as a fiery sky over a serene horizon

▶ THE WINE AND CHAMPAGNE

For couples who appreciate the finer things in life, there's wine tasting. Secrets Silversands Riviera Cancun

offers a wine-paired dinner with a sommelier in the hotel's atmospheric cellar, while Curtain Bluff in Antigua offers wine-tasting classes with an expert (\$70).

Anse Chastanet pairs it with a tasting of the estate's organic, homemade chocolate (\$45), while Hard Rock Riviera Maya gives it a Mexican twist with some tequila thrown in.

If it's more champagne that floats the boat, suggest Elegant Hotels' champagne breakfast in bed, available at The House and Turtle Beach, both in Barbados, for \$95.

▶ THE ADVENTURE

If you've got a couple wanting to get a little more active, look no further than a horse ride for two along the beach. Saint Lucia's Windjammer Landing offers a two-hour trip through the island's northern trails on the tranquil Atlantic Beach, culminating with a horse ride through the water, or there's a four-hour version that adds an idyllic barbecue lunch on the sand (suitable for beginners as well as advanced riders).

For those seeking even more adventure, suggest Marigot Bay Resort & Marina. It offers a string of active add-ons including a climb up the island's Gros Piton and a 'zipline into plantation lunch' experience – think ziplining and trekking through lush forest before tucking into a Creole lunch at a 140-year-old plantation, surrounded by tropical gardens.



Funway Holidays offers seven nights at the all-inclusive **Secrets Silversands Riviera Cancun** in Mexico from £2,129 for a July 3 departure. The price is based on two adults sharing an **Over the Pool Cabana Honeymoon Suite** and includes **Delta Air Lines** flights from Heathrow via New York. funway4agents.co.uk

A week's B&B at the five-star **Blue Waters** in Antigua costs from £1,699 per person with **Sovereign**, based on a June 12 departure. The rate includes UK airport security fast passes and lounge access, private transfers and flights from Gatwick with Virgin Atlantic. sovereign.com

▶ THE SUNSET CRUISE

On that note, don't neglect the sunset cruise. There's nothing quite as spine-tingling as a dramatic, fiery sky over a serene horizon – and catching it from a catamaran is as dreamy as it gets.

Sovereign recommends the honeymoon-friendly **Blue Waters**, Antigua, for exactly that. **Jade Mountain**, meanwhile, boasts a livelier version: its jazzy champagne sunset cruise, complete with a saxophonist playing romantic ballads and soulful rhythms, has departures every Thursday (\$105 per person, pre-bookable by agents).

Also on Saint Lucia, **Cap Maison** has a luxury motorboat taking guests out as the sun beds down, with soaring mountain forms in silhouette surrounding passengers at every turn.



PICTURE: AJ HEATH PHOTOGRAPHY

ABOVE: Catamaran cruise at Zoëtry Paraiso de la Bonita

LEFT: Blue Waters, Antigua