

travel



WILLOWS HISTORIC INN FOR DESERT ROMANCE!

By Sue Facter

Every day is romantic at **The Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn**. Built in 1927, this Mediterranean villa makes guests feel like they are visiting a friend's antique-filled home. It's no wonder legendary lovers Clark Gable and Carole Lombard honeymooned in this private haven.

Located at the end of Tahquitz Canyon Way, The Willows feels secluded (there is a gate and you need a remote key to get in and out), yet this historic inn is only a few blocks from downtown Palm Springs main drag with hip shopping, innovative dining, casual bars and live entertainment.

Eight Rooms with Romantic Character

Each room at The Willows (there's only eight!) has its own character such as the "library" and "rock" rooms. Although actress (and William Hears't's lover) Marion Davies only resided in the inn's largest room once, the largest room at the inn is named after this temptress.

The king-sized feather bed in the Marion Davies room is outfitted with silky smooth Egyptian cotton sheets and down pillows along with a view of the fireplace. The suite's living room has a couch, two chairs and two luxurious resting pods. The bathroom was extra large with a deep-draw soaking tub, marble-floor shower and a decadent chaise lounge. The balcony on our suite also overlooked both the tropical pool area and the inspirational San Jacinto Mountains.

Cocktail Hour in the Living Room

At The Willows, there is no lobby for checking in. Innkeepers Diana and Gordon meet you at the gate and take care of paperwork in your room. Ready for cocktail hour? Just call a few minutes before you're ready for lounging with drink in hand and all is freshly prepped just for you.

Whether you choose to sip your wine in the living room (with piano), dining area or various gardens, you can seek a remote nook and cranny to enjoy appetizers such like bris with apricot sauce, homemade empanadas, artichoke dip, filo triangles, spinach and or mushroom quiche.

Breakfast at The Willows

In the morning, get dressed and find a table next to the 25-foot waterfall in the inn's verdant garden. There, Chef Joan Johnson cooks and personally delivers a three-course breakfast made from gourmand ingredients like fresh-squeezed orange juice, homemade granola, freshly-baked orange and rosemary muffins, peppered bacon, applewood-smoked sausage, baked eggs with black truffle sauce and Parmesan cheese and German-style pancakes with berries.

Romance at Le Vallauris

Directly across the street from The Willows is a



HALF MOON BAY FOR VALENTINE'S DAY!

By Sheryll Alexander

Did you know **Half Moon Bay** in northern California is a very romantic spot to spend the love holiday?

This coastal wonderland is located about 40 minutes south of San Francisco and is resplendent with wild Pacific Ocean scenery, lots of outdoor and water-related activities, marine life watching, charming communities and vibrant seafood, farm and artisan producer economy. Also located near the Santa Cruz Mountains, Half Moon Bay is a place for foodies and those who love wine, beer and cheese.

Even in the dead of a February winter, Half Moon Bay is a lovely place for couples, families and even girlfriends as luxury, spa-minded retreats abound in what is one of California's most dramatically beautiful locales. This Valentine's Week, Half Moon Bay hotels are offering sumptuous and rather affordable packages for couples, families and girlfriends who are celebrating singlehood in style.

Fire and Wine Butler at The Ritz Carlton

The dramatic Ritz-Carlton Half Moon Bay recently introduced its new **Fire & Wine Butler** service for those who like to take casual beach romance to its most sophisticated limits. Yes, a private butler drives to up to your room's terrace in a specially outfitted golf cart for stocking a private fire pit and bringing the ingredients for a bottle of wine and roasting s'mores under the stars. This sprawling world-class resort is known for its dozens of private fire pit guest terraces, patios and cottage lanais, as well as larger shared fire pits. Set atop a rugged bluff overlooking 50 miles of pristine California coastline, The Ritz-Carlton Half Moon Bay is the only oceanfront resort in the San Francisco Bay area. The 261-room hotel features an award-winning 16,000-square-foot spa, golf on two adjoining courses and acclaimed NAMI restaurant and year-round wine tasting and wine education in ENO Wine Room. You can also experience water sports, coastal walking and hiking, tennis, whale watching, bike riding, bird-watching, horseback riding and the renowned Signature Drive – a self-guided half-day driving tour through the five distinctly different tourism and scenic regions surrounding picturesque Half Moon Bay (see <http://www.experiencehalfmoonbay.com>).

Ritz-Carlton Half Moon Bay, One Miramontes Point Road, 650-712-7000, <http://www.ritzcarlton.com/hmb>.

Tub Time at Seal Cove Inn

Take time to relax at Sea Cove Inn as this serene hideaway set amongst a meadow of wildflowers and bordered by cypress trees. Stylish rooms are outfitted with fine linens, fireplaces, sitting areas with desks, private patios or decks (some with whirlpool baths). Gourmet-style breakfast



KEEP ROMANCE ALIVE AT TERRANEA!

By Joanne Tucker

Romance comes alive at the **Terranea Resort** for a couple's getaway or a parent's date night without the kids.

Located just 40 miles from the OC on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, Terranea Resort sets the stage for keeping those romantic fires burning. Lovers can walk hand-in-hand along scenic bluff-top trails or cuddle up on a secluded beach cove while watching a beautiful winter sunset.

For Valentine's Day, Terranea Resort has several ways to celebrate cupid's day of love.

For couples, the **Keep It Simple Sweetheart** (or KISS) package includes plush accommodations from \$455 per night with dinner and breakfast for two.

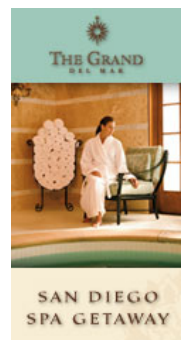
The **Reconnect** package starts at \$450 per night and features bungalow accommodations, spa access, welcome amenity, all-day dining at the Spa Café and 10 percent off spa and salon services. Also, couples receive 10 percent off food at the spa pool's cabana as well as an Amazon Kindle tablet to enjoy during the stay for easy poolside reading.

Can't ditch the kids? No problem! Terranea Resort has a **Date Night** package, which allows moms and dads to spend time alone while the kids have supervised fun on their own. This package starts at \$810 per night and includes a spacious two-to-four-bedroom villa or casita accommodations that feature living areas, kitchens and dining rooms. Parents enjoy a romantic dinner for two in the resort's mar'sel restaurant or Catalina Kitchen, while the kids have a blast at Tidepools Kids Club for the evening. In the morning, parents and kids come together over breakfast, which is included in the package. Rates are from \$810 per night.

Dramatically poised at the edge of the Pacific Ocean on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, the brand new **Terranea Resort** sits on 102 acres that are infused with the elegance of a classic Mediterranean estate. The resort includes guest rooms, suites, bungalows, casitas and villas as well three ocean view restaurants with spectacular vantage points for whale watching, spa treatments at a 25,000 square-foot oceanfront spa, three swimming pools (one with children's play area and a 140-foot waterslide) and a nine-hole golf course.

Terranea Resort, 100 Terranea Way, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA90275, 310-265-2800, <http://www.terranea.com>.

Joanne Tucker is a freelance travel and dining writer, based in Costa Mesa, Calif.



French restaurant that's considered one of the best in California. [Le Vallaurius](#) is Willow's go-to room service. But if you want real romance, then step inside the main dining room with its Flemish tapestries, Louis XV furniture and lovely white rose centerpieces at each table. Outside in the tree-canopied garden, which is cool even on hot days, couples are even more wowed by the relaxing al fresco scene (just a few days earlier Javier Bardem and Penelope Cruze dined here).

Proprietor Paul Bruggemans greets each guest and helps them choose from the classic French, Provencal and California dishes such as duck ravioli with orange sauce, Prosciutto and baby endive babysalad and roasted veal filet with Portobello mushrooms, mashed potatoes and sautéed spinach.

For Valentine's Day, Chef Jean Paul Lair is offering a \$79 prix fixe menu that features such sumptuous dishes as foie gras crème brulee, roast duck, Maine lobster ravioli, a rack of Australian lamb and decadent desserts.

Sue Facter is a luxury travel aficionado whose work has appeared in USA Today and other publications worldwide. Follow her on Twitter @TheFacter.

buffet and wine and appetizers are complimentary. For Valentine's Day guests can add to their relaxation with The Perfect Bath where upon arrival, they'll be greeted with a charming metal bathtub gift tin, which brims with everything needed to create a luxurious soak including organic aromatherapy oils, salts, bath tea, loofah sponge and instructions for creating a pampering experience (costs just \$45 extra).

Seal Cove Inn, 221 Cypress Avenue, Moss Beach, 800-995-9987, <http://www.sealcoveinn.com>.

Spanish Revival Romance at Half Moon Bay Inn

Located on Main Street in a gorgeous 1932 Spanish Revival building, Half Moon Bay Inn features 15 guest rooms complete with European furnishings, plush pillow top mattresses, Italian linens, marble baths, complimentary wireless and 27-inch flat screen TVs. The **J'Adore L'Amour Package** includes overnight accommodations for one night, a glass of champagne to sip during a 20-minute deep-soaking aromatherapy bath for two and a 60-minute couples Swedish massage at the Oceano Coastal Spa. Rates start at \$380 (excluding tax). Valid February 11-14.

Half Moon Bay Inn, 400 Main Street, Half Moon Bay, 650-560-9758, <http://www.halfmoonbayinn.com>.

Seaside Luxury at Oceano Hotel & Spa

Oceano Hotel and Spa is a luxurious seaside escape that boasts 84 suites with fireplaces, wet bars and private balconies with panoramic views of the harbor, ocean and coastal mountain range. This season the hotel is offering a selection of packages from whale watching adventures to a romantic getaway for Valentine's Day. The **Oceano Romantic Valentine's Day Retreat** includes accommodations in a deluxe suite, a bottle of sparkling wine, a red rose, chocolate-dipped strawberries and breakfast for two in bed. Package prices start at \$349 (excluding tax). Valid February 11-14. Add an additional night for \$169 plus tax.

Oceano Hotel & Spa, 280 Capistrano Road, Half Moon Bay, 888-OCEANO-1, <http://www.oceanohalfmoonbay.com>.

For more information on Half Moon Bay, visit <http://www.visithalfmoonbay.org>

Sheryll Alexander is a freelance car, travel and dining writer and editor based in Costa Mesa, Calif.

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