

5 most romantic getaways

Slumdog Millionaire child star Rubina: 'I'm still waiting for my dream home!'

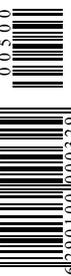
FASHION

A Fine Romance

Fall in love with floaty dresses and sharp suits this Valentine's

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Our top 5 romantic getaways

► From a Robinson Crusoe-style island escape to an exotic African safari, Jessica Hudson seeks out five destinations that are perfect for a loved-up holiday

Planning a Valentine's getaway? We've hand-picked five luxe, exclusive and easy-to-get-to destinations that will put love firmly back in the air. There's no better way to rekindle romance, than with a holiday à deux!





1

Privacy on a Seychelles island

A favourite of Prince William and Kate Middleton, Desroches Island in the Seychelles – a remote paradise island in the Amirantes archipelago – has to be one of the most exclusive Valentine’s destinations. Surrounded by 14 kilometres of powdery white sand beaches, with giant tortoises roaming free and boasting one of the world’s best dive spots, it is quite simply just picture-perfect.

If you’re in the mood to splash the cash, check into one of their stunning new beach retreats, where you get your own plunge pool and butler service. Ask your butler to prepare a private picnic for you, then cycle through the tropical palm groves to your own secluded beach and spend the day swimming and snorkelling in the turquoise warm waters.

You can follow this up with a couple’s massage at the luxe spa – or in the privacy of your own room – before taking a speedboat trip across to an uninhabited island.

Then enjoy a romantic candlelit dinner on your private deck to



finish off your unforgettable Valentine’s Day experience.

Get me there now: The Seychelles is a four-hour flight from Dubai. Prices for the Desroches private beach retreats start from 870 euros per person per night (around Dh4,160), including accommodation, food and select activities. www.desroches-island.com



2

Thai castaway adventure

Head to Sarojin, a stylish resort set on an 11-kilometre stretch of secluded white sand beach in Khao Lak, Thailand. Located near Phuket, the contemporary Asian resort is surrounded by five spectacular national parks and the world-famous dive sites of the Similan and Surin Islands, and offers a unique Valentine’s package, ‘Shipwrecked (In Style) With Your Valentine’.

Dreamt up by The Sarojin’s creative imagineer, David Koegelenberg, the six-night

package includes a carefully planned itinerary for the special day – a lavish à la carte breakfast to begin with, before being whisked away to the base of the Sri Phang Nga National Park. You get to stop en route to pick up local ingredients from the colourful Takuapa market, before being led to the foot of a jungle waterfall, where you enjoy a private Thai cooking class.

After lunch, you will be escorted to the *Lady Sarojin* private yacht for a private sunset cruise. Sit back and let the onboard crew spoil you with canapés as you sail towards your

own deserted island. On arrival, you will be welcomed by your personal butler and chef who will prepare a fresh seafood dinner, with flickering candles providing the perfect setting. At the end of your shipwreck adventure, a traditional Thai longtail pleat boat will ‘rescue’ you and transfer you back to your romantically styled luxurious room.

Get me there now: Flights to Bangkok take six hours, and Phuket is an extra hour and a half away by air. This package costs from 112,320 Thai bhat (around Dh13,100) for two. www.sarojin.com



3

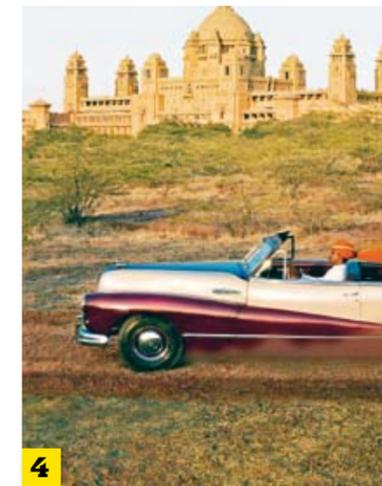
Tropical escape in Sri Lanka

The ‘Pearl of the Indian Ocean’, Sri Lanka is a lush, verdant getaway that is easy and affordable to get to, even if it’s just for a couple of days. To do Sri Lanka in style, book in at boutique hotel Maya in the sleepy coastal village of Tangalle, which is owned by celebrity interior designer Niki Fairchild.

Set in tropical gardens and surrounded by coconut trees and paddy fields, it feels like a home away from home. When you can tear yourself away from the intimately luxe five-suite resort, step out to explore the pretty local villages and nearby temples, or see

endangered marine turtles nesting on the beaches. You can also take a trip to the nearby UdaWalawe wild elephant park, or go on a whale-and dolphin-watching trip on the south coast. Back at the hotel, the option of Sri Lankan cooking classes with the in-house chef or in-room massages awaits. But, you could also simply switch off and reconnect with each other amidst nature, cricket song and lantern lights.

Get me there now: The flight to Colombo is around four hours, and Tangalle is a short seaplane flight from there. Suites at the Maya cost from \$275 (Dh1,010) per night. www.mayatangallesrilanka.com



4

Royal retreat in Rajasthan

The history, culture and romance of the Raj are just a short hop from the UAE. Live the life of a king at the Umaid Bhawan Palace – the largest private residence in the world and still home to a Maharaja – in the ancient walled city of Jodhpur. Exotic painted murals, original artifacts and breathtaking views over the blue city below and a traditional Rajasthani welcome will greet you on arrival.

Go for a romantic spin in one of the palace’s vintage cars through the bustling markets, or enjoy a horse ride in the palace grounds. Watch the sunset from the Rooftop Pavilion, followed by a candlelit dinner overlooking the majestic Mehrangarh Fort for a truly regal end to your stay.

Get me there now: Flights to Rajasthan via Delhi take around four hours. Room rates start from \$900 (Dh3,300) per night including breakfast. www.tajhotels.com

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5



Stargazing on an African safari
 With its sensational sunsets and safaris to get your hearts racing, Kenya is the ultimate romantic getaway. Begin your East African adventure at Giraffe Manor, a colonial country house in the leafy suburbs of Nairobi with eight resident Rothschild giraffe roaming free in the gardens - there's nothing quite like breakfast with these majestic animals! Book the Karen Blixen Suite for a true *Out of Africa* experience.

Next stop is Samburu, a ninety-minute flight away, for a safari weekend at the award-winning

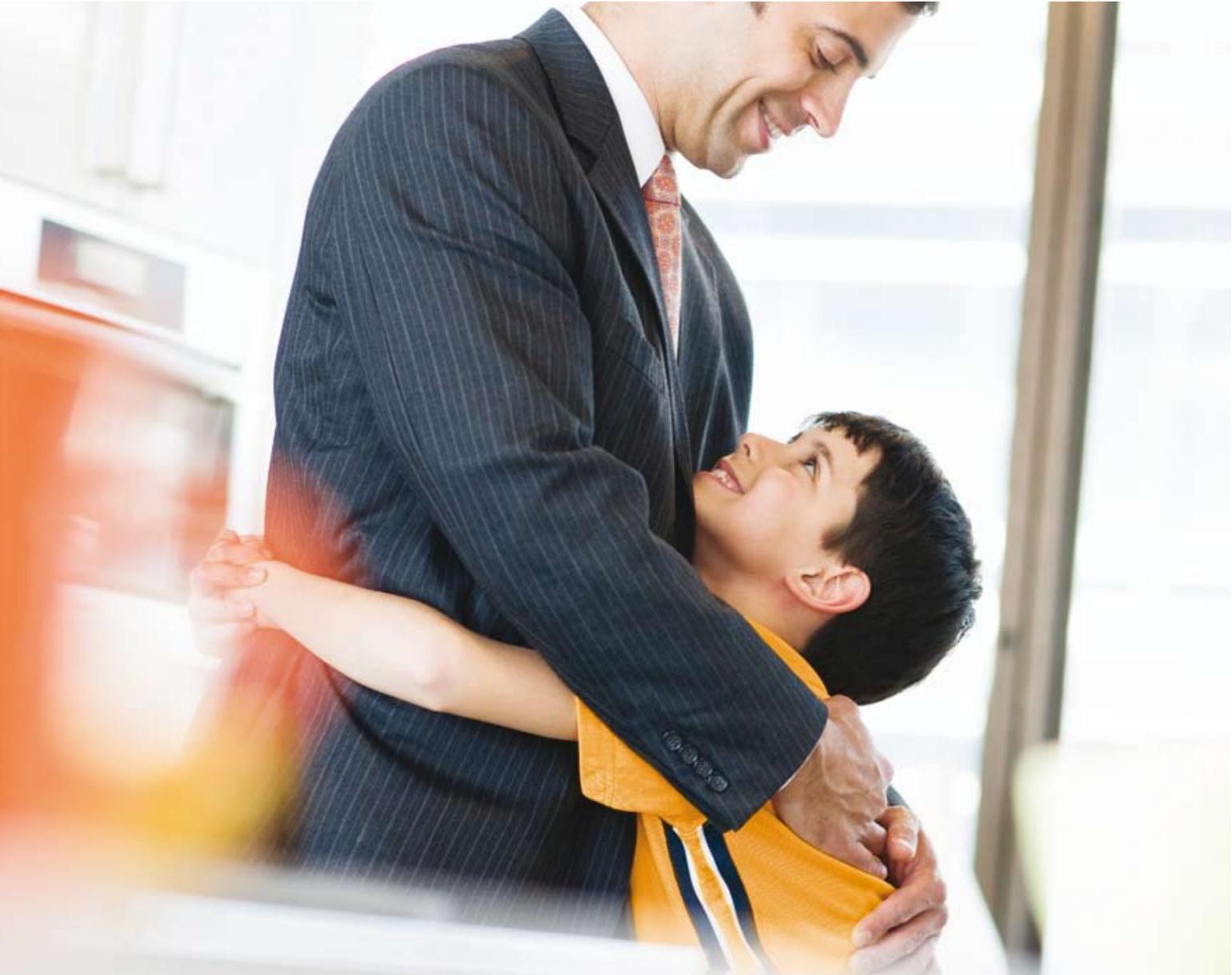
Sasaab lodge. With just nine spacious Moroccan and Swahili-inspired suites, here you can enjoy the utmost privacy and luxury, whether it's in your private pool or at an outdoor spa treatment. When you're ready to get adventurous, go leopard-spotting and lion-stalking on a game drive; enjoy a couple's camel ride; or mountain-bike through the game reserve with your private guide.

A romantic candlelit dinner underneath the African star-filled sky being entertained by Samburu Morani dancers will make for the perfect way to celebrate the special

evening. Good news, too, is that by staying at Sasaab, you will also be making a real difference as the resort helps to fund local schools with new desks, art supplies and learning materials, as well as a number of community and health-care projects for the region's indigenous people.

Get me there now: Nairobi is a six-hour flight from Dubai. Room rates at Giraffe Manor start from \$485 (Dh,1,780) per person per night with all meals and airport transfers. Room rates at Sasaab start from \$545 (Dh2,000) per person, all-inclusive. www.thesafaricollection.com

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