



We've cherry-picked **10** of the country's most **romantic hotels**—we're talking private **luxury** cabins in the woods and lofts on the Kona coast, all at very **reasonable** rates. And because we **heart** our readers, mention *Every Day with Rachael Ray* when you book and you'll pay even less. Think of it as our **valentine** to you.

# What makes a hotel romantic? The little touches: a complimentary bottle of tequila, soft sheets, a staff that knows your name (and knows when to leave you alone).

This much has become clear over the past four years, as my husband, Eric, and I have been driving across North America for our ongoing working road trip, which we document in the blog [trans-americas.com](http://trans-americas.com). We've crashed in hundreds of spots, from bare-bones shacks to four-star lodges, so I can assure you: It's the details that make a hotel truly romantic. Because I haven't stayed at every hotel in America (though sometimes it feels like it), I called on a team of experts. Together we chose 10 hotels that are putting the "hot" in hot spots. —KAREN CATCHPOLE

## 1 INN OF THE MOUNTAIN GODS *Mescalero, New Mexico*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** In the lobby you'll see the Sacramento Mountains behind floor-to-ceiling windows. Your room has a wood-burning fireplace and a bed with a pillow-top mattress. Rest up: It's a short walk to the 55 runs of the Ski Apache resort.

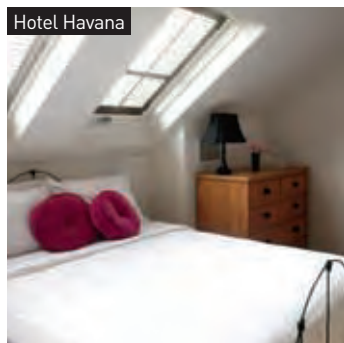
**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** The Royal Suite has two private balconies overlooking Lake Mescalero.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Through December 15, 2011, book a deluxe room for \$99 weekdays or \$129 weekends (a savings of \$30 and \$40 per night) and get \$25 toward breakfast in bed. (287 Carrizo Road, [innofthemountain gods.com](http://innofthemountain gods.com))



## 2 HOTEL HAVANA *San Antonio*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** Situated on San Antonio's Riverwalk—ideal for a sunset stroll—is the nearly century-old Hotel Havana, reopened last April after a top-to-bottom renovation. The original antique furniture remains, but the new look is decidedly modern and chic. The dreamiest spot in the 27-room hotel has to be the



entirely candlelit basement bar, where you can snuggle up on velvet sofas and order mojitos and, if they're your thing, cigars.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** Room 33 has skylights and extra seclusion.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Take 15 percent off room rates and sip two free mojitos at the bar (mention code "Rachael"). (1015 Navarro St., [havanasanantonio.com](http://havanasanantonio.com); doubles from \$149 before discount, including in-room breakfast)

## 3 CARSON RIDGE LUXURY CABINS *Carson, Washington*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** Latisha and Pete Steadman—environmental biologists and owners of this 11-cabin retreat in the Columbia River Gorge—have posted a motto on their website: "Romance is vital to a lifelong love relationship." Cheesy as that may sound, this place delivers



on romantic touches: fireplaces, private porches with log swings, hydrotherapy bathtubs and large showers built for two.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** The Gifford Lodge (one of three new cabins unveiled this past summer) has a hanging log bed and a spa bathroom with a 35-square-foot shower and a large jetted spa tub.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Reserve two or more nights in 2011 and receive a 60-minute in-cabin couple's massage (a \$180 value) and take 10 percent off your room rate. (1261 Wind River Road, [carsonridgecabins.com](http://carsonridgecabins.com); doubles from \$215 before discount, including breakfast)

## 4 BREWERY GULCH INN *Mendocino, California*

**WHY WE LOVE IT** In the morning you'll listen to the distant surf and watch the fog roll in from your feather bed. You can join your fellow guests for breakfast (served by waiters), or have your choice of entrées (including a farm-fresh egg omelet with candied bacon) delivered to your room. After spending the day exploring Northern California's coastal inlets and wineries, return by 5:30 for a (free) wine-and-appetizer hour,



which might include home-cooked pastas and sliced steak. Before turning in, grab a movie from their large DVD collection.

**MOST ROMANTIC ROOM** Although all 10 rooms have an ocean view, the Osprey Room has a two-person soaking tub with a view.

➔ **EXCLUSIVE DEAL** Book a stay in February or March 2011 and get a bottle of California sparkling wine and chocolate-covered strawberries (a \$35 value), plus 10 percent off the Ultimate Romantic Escape package (originally \$430, not including room rate), which includes chocolates, wine, flowers, a picnic lunch and two 75-minute hot-stone massages. (9401 N. Hwy. 1, [brewerygulchinn.com](http://brewerygulchinn.com); doubles from \$210, including breakfast)

### LOVE LESSONS

We asked our panel of experts to share their most romantic travel moments, and they bared all—and offered up some bonus hotel recommendations!



#### GLORIA ESTEFAN

Grammy-winning musician and co-owner (with her husband, Emilio) of *Cardozo Hotel* and *Costa d'Este Resort*, both in Florida

"After being on tour for more than six months, my husband surprised me with three nights at **Little Palm Island Resort & Spa** ([littlepalmisland.com](http://littlepalmisland.com)), not too far from where we live. The best part of a vacation close to home is that right when you get in the car, your adventure begins. We spent hours in a hammock under a palm tree, enjoying the most amazing sunset, far from the distractions of life but not far from home."