

**Yvonne Gordon**  
finds six cosy  
retreats that are  
full of romance  
all year round

# Six of the best romantic getaways

01

## A private tower in Bologna

If you're looking for an exclusive retreat full of history and romance, stay at the Prendiparte Tower in the heart of medieval Bologna in Italy. The tower, which dates back to the 12th century, is in a hidden maze of narrow streets and has a bird's eye view over the city; a couple can have the tower all to themselves.

At 60 metres, Prendiparte is the tallest tower in the city after the Asinelli Tower. With walls up to two metres thick, the tower was once a military stronghold but is now an exclusive one-bedroom retreat: you get your own key to the giant wooden tower door and are not disturbed.

The sitting room is full of art, books, CDs and antiques, while there is a double bedroom on the mezzanine floor. There's also a large, fully-equipped kitchen.

The accommodation suite is on the lower levels, and you can climb to the roof to watch the sunset and see the city at night. For a really special occasion, arrange a romantic dinner for two or a rooftop musical recital.

The tower's suite costs from €250 per night; tel: 39-51-589023 or see [prendiparte.it](http://prendiparte.it). Aer Lingus flights from Dublin to Bologna cost from €55.99 one way includ-

ing taxes and charges, direct flights start on 25 March, see [aerlingus.com](http://aerlingus.com).

02

## A treehouse on the French Riviera

Sleeping in a treehouse and listening to the swishing of the trees in the breeze and the sounds of nature is deeply relaxing. Your only neighbours are squirrels and birds, and your alarm clock is their song.

For a truly romantic retreat, the Orion treehouses, in a quiet and exclusive setting in the valley of Saint-Paul de Vence on the French Riviera, are a must. Each treehouse is different and they blend into the woods, with great views of nature and the surrounding estate.

The treehouse is a great way to spend a relaxing evening with your partner, enjoying the peace and quiet, with a focus on nature, wellbeing and simplicity. In winter, the treehouse becomes a cosy retreat and couples can take a sauna, have a massage or just curl up with a book, while in summer, there's a natural outdoor pool for summer dips; couples can also arrange a gourmet picnic basket with champagne.

Treehouses sleep two or more and start from €350 for two nights including breakfast; for more information, see [orionbb.com](http://orionbb.com).

Ryanair flights from Dublin to



**Top: Porer Lighthouse in Croatia; above: Orion treehouse on the French Riviera, and Prendiparte Tower in Bologna**

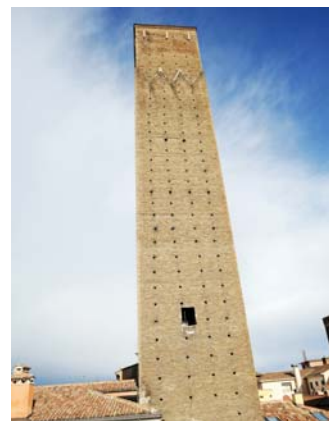
Nice start from €40.99 one-way including taxes and charges; see [ryanair.com](http://ryanair.com). Aer Lingus flights from Cork to Nice start on 27 March and from Dublin to Nice start on 25 April, from €55.99 one way including taxes and charges; see [aerlingus.com](http://aerlingus.com).

03

## An island lighthouse in Croatia

A private lighthouse provides the ultimate romantic escape and superb views, with lighthouses – by their nature – designed to face the open sea.

There are private lighthouses to stay in around the world (includ-



ing in Ireland), but some of the best are in Croatia, with the added benefits of blue skies; the clear, warm seas of the Adriatic to bathe in; and perfect positioning for romantic sunsets.

Some lighthouses are totally secluded, set in remote locations such as a rock out to sea, a small island or a peninsula, providing exclusive retreats away from the hustle and bustle. Others are nearer to villages, towns or tourist centres.

Porer Lighthouse in north Croatia was built in 1833. The tower is 35 metres high and is on an islet of the same name, southwest of Istria's southernmost cape and 2.5 kilometres from the mainland. There are many beautiful bays and islets in the vicinity of Porer, and the sunsets that can be

seen from here are considered to be some of the most beautiful on the Adriatic.

Rental of Porer costs from €69 per day up to May 26, €89 per day in June and €119 per day from July to September. Transfers cost €100 return from Premantura.

For information and more lighthouse rentals, see [adriatica.net](http://adriatica.net) or tel: +44-207-1830437.

04

## A canal-trip in Venice

Sailing along Venice's sweeping Giudecca Canal is romantic enough in itself, but gliding past the glorious, crumbling palaces and out into the lagoon on board one of the world's most beautiful sailing ships adds a whole new dimension.

The Star Clipper is a tall ship designed in the traditional clipper style with wooden and brass fittings, but also all types of modern comforts. Measuring 360 feet in length, the ship carries just 170 guests and has 16 sails to power it along in the breeze.

A five-night mini-break with Star Clippers and Kirker Holidays provides a night in a four-star Venice hotel to explore after the crowds have departed, setting sail the next day to explore some of Croatia's most fashionable anchorages: Mali Losinj, Hvar and Rovinj.



The trip, which departs on July 27, costs from €839 per person sharing. To book, tel: 0856-2006145 or visit [starclippers.co.uk](http://starclippers.co.uk).

Aer Lingus flights from Dublin to Venice start at €55.99 one-way including taxes and charges; see [aerlingus.com](http://aerlingus.com). Ryanair flights from Dublin to Venice Treviso airport start from €31.99 one way, including taxes and charges; see [ryanair.com](http://ryanair.com).

## 05

### A trip on the Orient Express

A trip on the Orient Express is on many people's romantic wishlist. The journey from London to Venice via Paris on the legendary Venice Simplon Orient Express is one of the most famous in the world, with each carriage having a special history and rich decor.

Prices per person start from €2,370 based on two adults sharing and include all meals on board.

If your budget doesn't stretch that far, try a daytrip in Britain on the British Pullman or its sister train, the Northern Belle.

Both day trains operate day and weekend trips from London and



other locations to spectacular cities and stately homes in Britain, with prices starting from a more modest €211 per person.

For reservations, see [orient-express.com](http://orient-express.com) or call +44-203-1171300.

## 06

### A cliff-top hotel in Waterford

Ireland is full of secluded locations for romantic breaks and, with prices coming down in many of the five-star castle hotels and country houses and plenty of spe-

cial offers, this could be the year to escape for a romantic weekend.

The Cliff House Hotel in Waterford is in an area of unspoilt natural beauty, and the cliff-top walk and sandy beach provide plenty of romantic settings.

Romantic foodies will also love the restaurant – and you can even contribute to your own meal by going foraging.

The hotel can arrange guided nature walks with an expert, where you can hunt for mushrooms, forage along the seaside, watch for whales and dolphins or just admire the beautiful countryside.

The hotel's Couples Spa Suite



Clockwise from above left: the Orient Express, the Cliff House Hotel in Waterford and the Star Clipper

opened at the start of the month with a 'his and hers' twin treatment room boasting panoramic view over Ardmore Bay. The room is situated beside the Cliff House's twin outdoor seaweed baths.

One night for two people in a deluxe sea view room, with breakfast, a full body massage and seaweed bath each is €440 until June 1. Tel: 024 87800 or visit [thecliffhousehotel.com](http://thecliffhousehotel.com).



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