

Love against the odds 



1
Be dreamily transported by ancient worlds

The lost cities of Siem Reap in Cambodia, Machu Picchu in Peru and the soon-to-be-unveiled Madain Saleh in Saudi Arabia have an incomparable appeal. The imagination is piqued by the vanished glory and advanced engineering skills of civilisations past. Travellers are also reminded that they belong to a long line of humans enthralled by the sublime and always reaching into the future. Surely they would have loved and lost, like most people. But no need to get lost in thoughts. Whiz through – or linger – in places like India’s Jaipur, Jodhpur (left) and Jaisalmer. Europe is rich in places of the past: the Colosseum in Rome, the Acropolis in Athens and Stonehenge in England, just for starters.

Heartbreak havens

The world offers singles myriad destinations for perspective and wellness journeys that restore and soothe fragile emotions



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In this season of love and virus, the heartbroken can still rejoice. Anytime, anywhere, there is always somewhere wholesome to escape to for a change of scenery and soul-soothing.

Whether the single traveller is keen on fresh air, cafe-chilling or inner healing, the world has destinations galore to squelch the blues.

There is more. Singles and self-romance are ascendant in the realm of travel.

This is the prediction of Mr & Mrs Smith, a boutique-hotel booking service. Last Wednesday, it released a report on Modern Love: Exploring The Future Of Romantic Travel. “Singledom will increasingly have an equal standing to coupledom in hospitality offerings,” according to the report, which also dwells on trends like “workations” and wellness.

This means the growing market for “self-romance” for solo sojourners will boom in the next decade.

“Some will take themselves away in search of self-care, self-love and to enhance their well-being,” adds the study co-authored by foresight consultancy The Future Laboratory.

Restful Nikko in the mountains 150km north of Tokyo looks ideal for self-love. “A quieter alternative to other bustling prefectures, the slow pace and calm nature of Nikko gives one a reprieve from heavy emotions,” says Ms Sarah Wan, head of marketing at the Singapore office of Klook, a travel activities and services booking platform.

The spiritual atmosphere here is accentuated by the scenic surroundings. Fatigue dissipates in the crystalline water of the Nikko Hot Spring. The Kegon Waterfall is best viewed in autumn when trees around it form a warm gradient of orange.

Nikko is a top activity booked by solo travellers on Klook.

For the lost and lovelorn, this idea to combine the unparalleled buzz of a mega-city such as Tokyo, New York and Paris with the simpler pleasures of a less-seen country-

side gem can work wonders.

Want to travel as far as you can from Singapore, and the reminders of loss?

Mr Jose Cortes, co-founder of luxury travel company A2A Journeys and A2A Safaris, recommends Gheralta in Ethiopia and Antarctica, which is owned by no country.

In Gheralta, walking the circuit of ancient mountain churches “is like entering a time machine on many levels, with a lot of soul searching”.

On Antarctica, he says: “The seventh continent is simply humbling, and the scale, raw power and purity is the perfect setting to recuperate from loss.”

Solo journeys need not be an intimidating time, not even when couples are strolling hand in hand all around.

Just decide on what your personal travel values are. Playing? Foodie indulgences? Far-flung journeys? Focus, then dive in for an extended me-time.

If really intimidated, start with a weekend getaway. Mr Edmund Weng, general manager of international business (Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam) at Trip.com, an online travel agency, points to Vietnam’s Phu Quoc island, which is trending for solo travellers.

“Its sandy beaches, calm seas and beautiful sunset views will always cheer one up – especially after going through an emotional break-up.”

Or go somewhere with friends. There is nothing that says those who grieve must holiday alone.

Mr Anthony Lim, managing director (Asia) of Insight Vacations and Luxury Gold, reckons that a singleton on a guided group holiday can combine the best of both worlds.

“Perhaps one day you’re feeling gregarious and want to wander with the crowds; have a drink, dinner and a laugh,” he says.

“But another time, you might want to sink into the background and have some down time to yourself.”

Scandinavia and Croatia, both less-travelled, are destinations he recommends.

While navigating new horizons, near or far, the wanderer is likely to start feeling empowered to navigate life on his or her own, for a season or so.

Here are five more ideas on where to go to recover from heartbreak.

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2
Combine nature and cities for contrast

The lush tea plantations of Pinglin can be enjoyed as a scenic half-day tour out of Taipei. Attend a tea ceremony or hike up Elephant Mountain for a great view of the Taipei 101 skyscraper

in the capital. From popular Perth, go for a wine tour or crab hunting. There is also skydiving at Rottnest Island (above) for views of Western Australia state and possibly its pink lakes.

Klook offers such doses of big-city stimulation and secluded places just beyond. Enjoyed in the right balance, such itineraries offer fun contrasts.



4
Be immersed in water or the great outdoors

Liquid escapades are rejuvenating. Whether the traveller is admiring the fjords of Norway, cruising the Loire in France or splashing in the equatorial sea all around Singapore, the positive emotions

that flow may be a sense of upliftment, relaxation or fun that evokes childhood days.

The new Borneo Eagle Resort (above) on the Sabah coast has jungle terrain surrounded by the South China Sea.

Gaze in tranquillity at Mount Kinabalu on the horizon or encounter wildlife such as hornbills and proboscis monkeys.



3
Vast places offer perspective

There is Antarctica (above), a wild, white, wonderful frontier that is like another planet.

And there are exotic places dotted around Singapore that also feel like the edge of the world.

Think about the wilds of Sabah; Indonesia’s seemingly endless archipelago of islands; and the Golden Triangle, where the borders of Thailand, Laos and Myanmar meet.

Or gaze skywards. In dark-sky reserves like the Lake Tekapo and Mount Cook regions of New Zealand, go stargazing and get unmoored from terrestrial troubles.



5
Restorative holidays

Wellness resorts, yoga retreats and multi-day treks restore body and soul. Look for mindfulness programmes. For instance, Absolute Sanctuary (above) in Koh Samui, Thailand, has designed a mix of healing therapies, pampering treatments, life coaching sessions, fitness classes and healthy meals.

Ms Claire Bostock, director (Singapore) of wellness travel

company Healing Holidays, says: “Wellness holidays are great for those experiencing loss or recovering from a break-up, as it is a time to focus on you, reflect, heal and reconnect with your inner self in a highly supportive environment with a team of experts and healers.”

Or sign up for fitness classes, or for a contemplative, moderate trek by travel company Walk Japan. Cycling in the flatter terrain of the Netherlands or kayaking in or beyond Halong Bay in Vietnam are other possibilities.