



**Prepared for British Airways
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**Beyond the Sea
British Airways Brings You Valentine's Day along the Pacific Coast Highway**

In the US, cars and romance are often intertwined in a steamy, high-octane embrace. Why not try love, American style, along one of the world's most beautiful roads? Almost as famous as Route 66, the drive along the Pacific Coast Highway, from Los Angeles to San Francisco, is one of the most romantic and relaxing stretches of pavement on Earth, and February in California is cool, dry and delicious. British Airways can fly you and your Valentine direct to LAX from Heathrow, then back to Heathrow from San Francisco International Airport.

Warm up for shopping along Rodeo Drive and in San Francisco's Union Square with a Valentine's splurge in some of the shops in British Airways' new home at Heathrow, Terminal 5. Start with a coffee at Soho patisserie Amato, or with authentic British fare at Huxley's, then stroll through some of the world's finest shops, including Bulgari, Coach, Gucci and David Clulow, where you can shop for a pair of exclusive designer sunglasses. They'll help you blend in with the Angelenos.

Give your heart to LA before you drive it to San Francisco – spend at least a day or two in the City of Angels. BA Holidays can help you find a swank hotel like the Millennium Biltmore, in downtown LA, or the Portofino Hotel and Yacht Club in nearby Redondo Beach. BA Holidays can also arrange a fully narrated city tour, which includes the historic Hollywood Bowl, Grauman's Chinese Theatre and the Walk of Fame, the fabulous Sunset Strip, and Beverly Hills, the poshest neighborhood in the USA. Tours include shopping on Rodeo Drive, which features exclusive shops such as Bijan, Chanel, Fred Hayman and Gucci. For more information, visit www.baholidays.com (you can also book a tour of the stars' homes).

An important rule of thumb in Los Angeles: traffic is fierce and omnipresent, so leave yourself enough time between destinations, and be sure to travel with a good map and plenty of patience. Grab lunch in Venice Beach, home to artists and street performers (don't miss the Jim Morrison mural), unique shopping and Muscle Beach, the famous



open-air gym, then spend an afternoon in Santa Monica on the Third Street Promenade, a pedestrian thoroughfare lined with restaurants, shops and movie theaters (and dinosaur topiary fountains!). Santa Monica is also home to the Getty Museum, one of the finest art collections on the West Coast. High upon a hillside in the Santa Monica Mountains, the museum's collection is housed in a complex of buildings and gardens built around a beautiful piazza. *Captured Emotions: Baroque Painting in Bologna, 1575–1725*, is on exhibit at the Getty through 3 May 2009. For a romantic dinner, and a warm-up spin, drive your date up into the Hollywood Hills for Mexican cuisine at Beso.

With your lover beside you and the top down, start north from Los Angeles the following morning – wake up *early*, you've got miles to go and a lot to see before you sleep. The drive should take you about two days. Stop in Santa Barbara for a walk on the pier and a visit to Mission Santa Barbara, built in 1786. North of Santa Barbara, Highway One takes you through Solvang, a Danish village tucked into the hills of northern Santa Barbara County. From there, Route One twists through the hills of Central California until it reaches the sea at Pismo Beach. Enjoy the splendor of Pismo with a walk along the beach, or visit nearby Oceano Dunes Beach, where you can actually drive your car onto the sand.

Finish the first day on Pacific Coast Highway in San Luis Obispo, a quiet hillside town a short drive north from Pismo and the unofficial capital of the Central Coast wine region. Downtown San Luis Obsipo, also known as SLO, is packed with galleries, shops and restaurants, including the Mission Grill, where you can dine under the stars beside the San Luis Obispo Creek on produce from local farms. Nighttime should find you ready for a wild night at the Madonna Inn, a San Luis Obispo landmark. The décor in each of its 110 rooms is unique – for Valentine's Day, check into "Love Nest," "Romance" or "Vouz", the only room with a round king bed. The next morning, treat your Valentine to an hour or two at the Spa at Madonna Inn before you hit the road again.

Start your second day on the road in Morro Bay, a picturesque harbor town just north of SLO and home to Morro Rock, a massive dormant volcano located in the center of the Bay. Fuel your engines with a classic American pancake breakfast and a view of Morro Rock at the Otter Rock Café or at the Outrigger Restaurant, both along the Embarcadero. After breakfast it's onward to San Simeon and Hearst Castle, the former vacation home of William Randolph Hearst, immortalized as Xanadu in Orson Welles's masterpiece, *Citizen Kane*. There are tours throughout the day, the first at 8:20 am.



After you tear yourselves away from the ornate majesty of Hearst Castle, you will soon find yourself in the heart of the Central Coast, driving along cliffs high above the Pacific Ocean, deep blue and sun-kissed, toward Big Sur and its dense forests. Stop for lunch at Nepenthe, a family-owned restaurant built at the edge of a cliff overlooking the Pacific. The restaurant provides benches and blankets for its guests, so feel free to linger with a glass of wine and enjoy a stunning view of the ocean. After lunch, continue north, through Carmel and into Monterrey, where you can hear sea lions barking as you enjoy an ice cream cone during a romantic stroll along the pier. Evening should find you driving into San Francisco, sparkling like a jewel at the tip of the Peninsula.

Spend a few days in America's loveliest city – you can book a room through baholidays.com at the Monaco, a restored 20th century hotel that features original art in its lobby and in every room, or at the San Francisco Clift, Phillippe Starck's Union Square destination hotel – the lobby bar is Starck's plush, sophisticated take on a hunting lodge. Ride the cable cars up and down California Street, and take a walk down 24th Street between Mission and Potrero for a tour of some of the city's best murals and some of its best burritos. Hayes Valley, just behind City Hall and within walking distance of Union Square, is packed with one-of-a-kind shops – browse for antiques, try on shoes, or head straight to Alla Prima and shop for lingerie (it is Valentine's Day, after all).

With apologies to New York, San Francisco may be America's best city for dining. Try Belden Lane, a short walk across Union Square, for romantic al fresco dining at Café Bastille, Plouf, Café Tiramisu or B44, the city's only Catalan restaurant – the alley is closed to traffic from lunchtime and strung with lights after dark. For gustatory adventures further afield, how about some of the best Asian food in the world? Visit the Inner Sunset, particularly Ninth Avenue below Irving, for incredible Thai at Marnee Thai and some of the city's best sushi at Ebisu. For Vietnamese or Burmese, try Mai's and Burma Superstar, both on Clement Street at Third. After dinner, browse the massive selection of new and used books at Green Apple on Clement at Sixth in the Inner Richmond, a San Francisco institution and one of the largest independent bookstores in the US.

For nightlife, catch some live music at the Great American Music Hall – this former bordello, built in 1907, is one of the most beloved theaters on the West Coast, with floor and balcony seating – or at Café DuNord, a former speakeasy on Market Street. Finish the evening with a nightcap at Harry Denton's Starlight Room in the Sir Francis Drake Hotel on Powell, "where the cable cars meet the stars". With the City by the Bay



glittering beneath you, you and your Valentine may remember this as the moment when you left your hearts in San Francisco. San Francisco poet Aaron Shurin once wrote, “beautiful things are necessities.” Come find out why so many people the world over find California so necessary.

Sad as you’ll be to leave the Golden State, you can fly direct to Heathrow from San Francisco. If you have to leave California, you may as well do it in style and comfort. Visit ba.com to book your flights, and find out why the West is the best this Valentine’s Day.