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10 great places to pop the question

The road to romance

January 24, 2012 | By Katherine Rodeghier, Special to Tribune Newspapers

With Valentine's Day on the horizon, here are some great places to propose marriage. For the long-range planners, take heart. For the short-timers, let this be a lesson to you.

Sure, you can pose the question over an intimate dinner at a local restaurant or just during a snuggle on the couch, but why not make a marriage proposal part of a romantic vacation? You'll be creating pages in a new book of memories, adding chapters later for the wedding, [honeymoon](#), maybe a family.



Propose on a carriage ride through the Garden District or in the French Quarter... (Katherine Rodeghier, Chicago Tribune)

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A few suggestions, from right here in the U.S. to dream destinations around the globe:

- 1. Lavender field, South of France:** Getting engaged in Paris, a la Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes at the Eiffel Tower, is tres passe. Be different: Head south to the lavender fields near Mont Ventoux or Provence. Pull over anywhere, wander into a field and speak your love. If you want a specific spot, consider the field at Grignan, with its wonderful Renaissance chateau, or Senanque, a 12th-century abbey near Gordes. Lavender blooms from late June to mid-July. She may be so blown away she'll choose lavender for her wedding bouquet. web.france.com/landmarks/castle_of_grignan, sacred-destinations.com/france/senanque-abbey
- 2. Biplane over the Alabama coast:** Husband-and-wife pilots Bar and Dannie Eisenhower take couples up in their 1928 biplane for engagement [flights](#), with Champagne upon landing. Flights over sugar-white beaches off Gulf Shores are especially lovely at sunset. The plane seats two snugly, with the pilot in an open cockpit in the rear. Headphones prevent you from hearing each other, but you don't need words, do you? 866mustfly.com/gulfshores.com
- 3. Cathedral Cove, New Zealand:** Accessible by kayak or an hour's hike, this stunning sheltered cove, featured in "The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian," is bookended by towering rock formations and a natural stone arch. Kayak guide Hayden Gray says a couple booked one of his group kayak trips to the cove, then ducked inside the arch for a private proposal. Back on the beach, they announced their news to cheers all around. On another occasion, Gray spotted a prospective groom setting up Champagne and flowers on the beach with a guitar to serenade his soon-to-arrive future bride. seekayaktours.co.nz and thecoromandel.com
- 4. Horse-drawn carriage, Mackinac Island, Mich.:** [Cars](#) are banned on this island in Lake Huron, so horses are the primary mode of transportation. Book a private carriage tour — or take the reins yourself in a self-drive carriage — and clip-clop to scenic spots on the island. Arch Rock frames the beach below where, with some advance grunt work, you can spell out "Marry Me" in rocks on the sand. Carriages operate May through October. mict.com/jacksiverystable.com
- 5. Private island, French Polynesia:** Whisk your sweetie away to a private island in the South Pacific. Surrounded by warm, turquoise waters; palm trees; and the jagged peaks of dormant volcanoes in the distance, how could she say no? The St. Regis Bora Bora can arrange some alone time on its private islet. stregisborabora.com

6. Havasu Canyon, Arizona: This section of the Grand Canyon is part of the Havasupai Indian Reservation and much less [congested](#) than the national park. A 10-mile hike down from the rim is rewarded with the breathtaking blue-green waters of Havasu Falls, a great place to get down on one knee. Stay in the campground or the lodge in Supai, then hike or helicopter out. Plan the trip yourself or let Arizona Outback Adventures handle the details. AOA's Brian Jump says several couples have become engaged in the canyon, and he has helped one plan a wedding there. havasupaitribe.com aoa-adventures.com

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7. Historic properties, Elizabethan England: With its rolling hills studded with castles, who wouldn't feel romantic in England's Cotswolds and Shakespeare Country, especially spring through fall, when gardens are blooming and historic [properties](#) welcome guests? Sit with your beloved on the bench in the gardens overlooking Anne Hathaway's Cottage and read a sonnet. William Shakespeare was only 18 when he married Anne, then 26 and living in the thatched-roof farmhouse a mile from Stratford. Or you could take your love on a stroll through the pleasure garden of Kenilworth Castle. Robert Dudley, favorite of Queen Elizabeth I, created the garden to romance the queen, whom he'd been courting for 17 years. Let's hope you'll have better luck. shakespeare.org.uk <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/kenilworth-castle>

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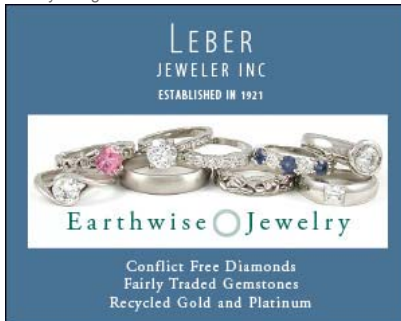
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8. Georgia Aquarium, Atlanta: Are you and your honey into marine life? Enlist a diver at the world's largest aquatic habitat to help you declare your love. Book the Ocean Voyager Dive Proposal Program, and a certified diver will descend into a 6.3-million-gallon tank, dodging whale sharks and rays to display a personalized sign for your intended, standing with you on the other side of the glass. Not quite your thing? Stephanie Brown and the aquarium staff will design a proposal plan for you, perhaps in one of its galleries or behind the scenes. georgiaaquarium.org

9. New Orleans: More than six years have passed since Hurricane Katrina swept over the city, and it has returned to its romantic roots with Creole culture, great food and music providing a backdrop. Plan a picnic under the moss-draped trees of City Park, first filling a basket with wine, cheese and muffuletta from Central Grocery in the French Quarter. Or celebrate with Champagne and a meal at Commander's Palace after declaring your love on a horse-drawn carriage ride through the Garden District. Take a moonlight [cruise](#) on the Mississippi River aboard the Steamboat Natchez, or ask a jazz band in the French Quarter to play her favorite song, enticing her onstage, where you will follow to share in the spotlight as you ask the big question. neworleanscvb.com neworleansonline.com

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10. Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, Maldives: Check into this resort split between two atolls in the Indian Ocean and book a table in the Ithaa Undersea Restaurant. You'll have a 180-degree view of coral reef and schools of fish 6 feet below the surface. With a six-course tasting menu matched by Champagne cocktails, you'll have plenty of time to work up the nerve to propose. Rather be topside? The Conrad will arrange a private yacht trip with chef and sommelier. conradmaldives.info
conradhotels3.hilton.com/en/hotels/maldives/conrad-maldives-rangali-islandmlehci/index.html

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