



The New York Times Style Magazine

GETAWAY GUIDE

Where to Travel After a Breakup

And more answers to readers' winter vacation queries.



Octant Douro hotel in Portugal's Douro Valley. Courtesy of Octant Douro

By **Deborah Dunn**

Nov. 6, 2025

For the latest installment of our [Getaway Guide](#) series, T asked readers what types of trips they had in mind for their winter vacation this year — and to share their approximate budgets, not including airfare — so that, with the help of travel experts, we could make suggestions. Below are a few of the queries that caught our attention. Rates are for December unless otherwise noted. Below is the second of the two batches of answers we're publishing. [See part one](#) here.

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“During the first pandemic winter, my family started visiting beaches close to New York City since they were mostly unpopulated and we didn't have to wear masks. This morphed into traveling to places in the off- or shoulder seasons, like the Hamptons in winter and the Azores in March. Sure, it's a lot cheaper to travel then, but what we loved is how there were no crowds and we got to discover things that aren't necessarily on the 'must' list during peak tourist season. I'd love to find a new place to go for a week that isn't a main draw in winter but still offers enjoyable activities for a family. I'll be traveling with my husband and our kids, a 7-year-old and a 10-year-old. We enjoy hiking, hot springs, art and good food.” Kieran, New York; budget: \$5,000

Forgive my home state bias, but what about California? A drive along the coast is a crowd-pleaser any time of year, but there's more breathing room in winter. Granted, it might be cool and a little rainy, but if you base yourself in or near Santa Barbara, at least for a few days, you can combine indoor diversions — like visits to Moxi, a kid-friendly science museum, or to the Sea Center — with a hike to a waterfall and winery visits in Santa Ynez Valley. There's even a hot spring in Gaviota State Park. Food-wise, brace yourself for a contentious debate about the best local taqueria. You can immerse yourself in the subject by forging your own taco trail. Or make a lunch reservation at Bell's in Los Alamos, where you can introduce the children to beef cheek. (There's also a kids' menu.) As for where to stay, several city hotels offer discounts in winter, but if you prefer a house, check the listings at Kid & Coe, a rental site that caters to families.

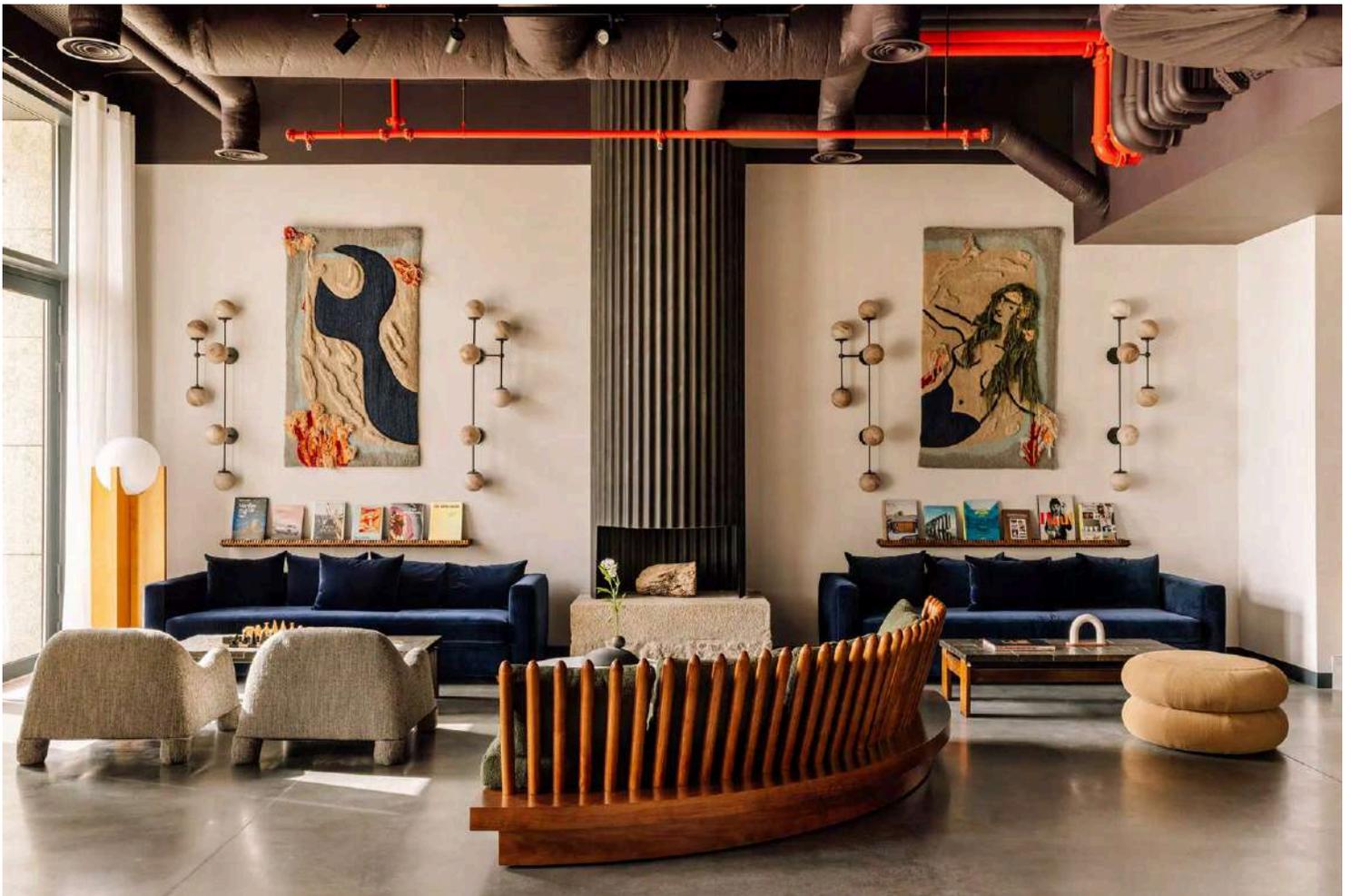


Inside the Farmloft house at Craveiral Farmhouse in southern Portugal. Andre Chaica



The hotel, set on a working farm, has 38 houses spread throughout the property and bicycles for guests to use during their stay. Courtesy of Craveiral Farmhouse

For somewhere a bit more adventurous, Lee Friedman, the founder of the travel agency Mango Tree, which specializes in upscale family vacations, is as big a fan of off-season Portugal as it seems you are. One of her favorite regions is the Vicentina Coast, south of Lisbon, which feels more traditionally Portuguese than the Azores. “It’s a place of wide-open beaches, surf culture and small whitewashed villages,” she says. “I took my 8-year-old daughter there last January. It’s a trip I think of often.” For stylish hotels that appeal to families, she likes Craveiral Farmhouse, with its pizzeria, vegetable gardens and resident goats and donkeys (two-bedroom houses start at about \$460 a night).



The lobby of the Rebello hotel, a converted factory in Porto, Portugal. Courtesy of The Rebello Hotel

Friedman is also fond of Porto, which is rich with art and architecture, and the picturesque Douro Valley, a few hours' drive north of Lisbon, and recommends a stop in Nazaré to ogle the big waves. In Porto, she sends her clients to the Rebello, a former factory that was turned into a cheery 103-room hotel with a rooftop bar and a kids' club (from about \$445 a night for a two-bedroom suite). In the Douro, she suggests spending a few nights at the riverside Octant hotel, which has three pools, including one indoors, and is close to hiking trails (from about \$515 per night for a suite that sleeps four during Christmas week). Throughout the country, daytime temperatures are typically in the 50s and rain showers are fairly common, but at "incredibly cozy winter hotels like these," says Friedman, you might not mind staying in.

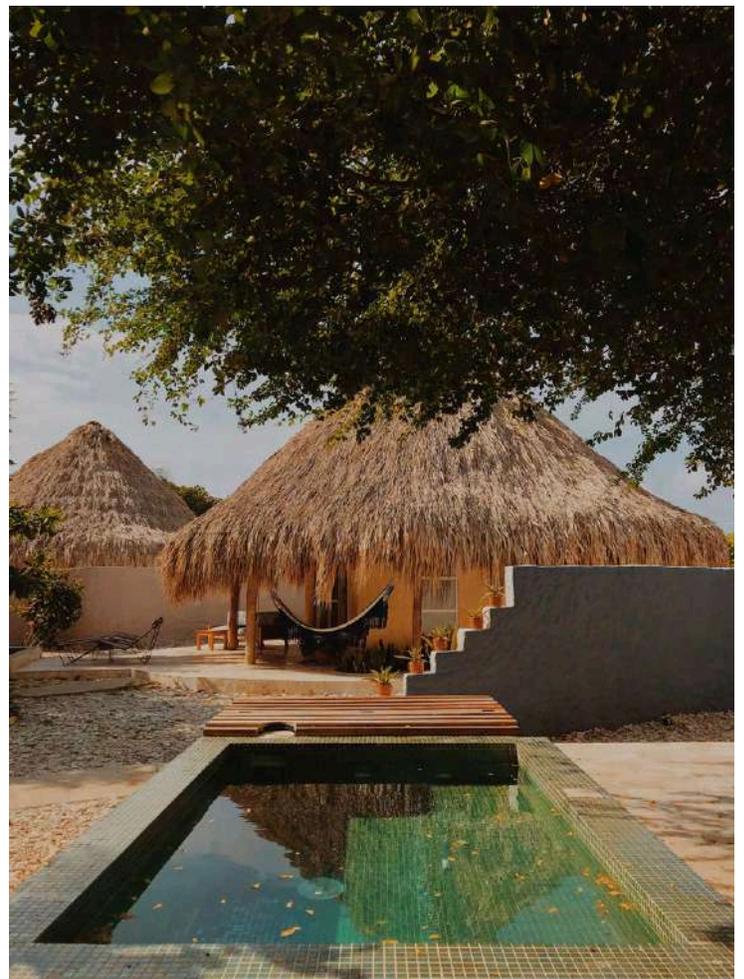
"My partner of nine years recently broke up with me, and this will be the first holiday season that I won't be spending with his Irish Catholic family in Iowa. I'm a second-year Ph.D. student and looking for somewhere that feels restorative and chill, but still interesting; has amazing food and cultural offerings; and isn't too cold. I tend to save money on accommodations and airfare so I can eat incredible meals. I'd also like a place that wouldn't be too challenging for a Black woman traveling alone." Alea, Providence, R.I.; budget: \$2,500

Here's one age-old remedy for heartbreak: Make a beeline to the Caribbean and give in to the healing powers of rum cocktails. Skip the honeymoon islands in favor of Cartagena, the Colombian port city where there are more than enough museums, galleries, shops, cafes and music-filled public squares to keep you happily distracted for days. Odds are you won't be the only Black woman traveling alone. Portia Hart, the British Trinidadian hotelier who owns the Townhouse Art Hotel in Cartagena's Old Town and Blue Apple Beach club and hotel and Amare Beach club on the offshore island of Tierra Bomba, says she's seen an uptick in solo female travelers of all races since she arrived in the city in 2015. "I moved to Colombia as a single woman. I settled on Cartagena because it was the place where I felt the happiest and the safest," she says.

Hart suggests staying in the Old Town, so you can spend the evenings within walking distance to many of the city's best restaurants and rooftop bars (she's created her own list of favorites). At least one day, she says, you should spend the morning snorkeling off the Rosario Islands, which are surrounded by crystalline water, and then head to Tierra Bomba for a poolside lunch of grilled fresh fish, coconut rice and other increasingly inventive dishes. "There are quite a few beach clubs here with really good food," she says.



A guest room at Hotel Saint Vincent in New Orleans. Courtesy of the Hotel Saint Vincent



A pool at Blue Apple Beach club and hotel on the Colombian island of Tierra Bomba, a short boat ride from Cartagena. Fabian Alvarez

One clear advantage Cartagena has over other Caribbean beauty spots in winter is reasonable prices. Room rates at the warm and convivial Townhouse around Christmas start at about \$330 a night and at about \$140 a night in January, while at Casa Carolina, a new wellness-focused hotel with a spa and yoga classes (recommended by Joe Sandillo, a co-founder of the specialty tour operator Exeter Latin America), rates start at about \$280 a night in January.

If the airfare to Cartagena seems too pricey, the Los Angeles-based travel writer Kristin Braswell makes a compelling case for an equally spirited city: New Orleans. “Every time I go there solo, I have the most incredible time,” she says, “That’s in part because of the camaraderie. It’s a place that’s super rejuvenating in a lot of ways, particularly if you’re feeling a bit down. No other city in the U.S. has that communal spirit. It’s a great place for a Black woman to travel.”

It’s also a great place, famously, to eat extremely well. Another bonus, particularly for solo travelers, says Braswell, are the inviting boutique hotels in the Garden District, many of which were converted from historic mansions. “You feel like you’re coming home each night. You can pull up to the bar and have a cocktail and talk to the bartender, or sit on the veranda and listen to the sound of crickets.” Among her favorites are the Blackbird, with its moody hues (from about \$200 a night during Christmas week) and the exuberant Hotel Saint Vincent (from about \$230 a night during Christmas week).

One final piece of advice from Braswell: Nearly every Sunday, there’s at least one brass band-led procession in town called a second line, in which seemingly the entire neighborhood joins and visitors are welcome. “She should absolutely experience a second line Sunday. It’s magic.”

“We’re a couple in our mid-80s, in good health with the usual age-related limitations, and we’d like to go somewhere warm for up to 12 days in January or February that’s no more than one flight connection away from Boston, our home airport. Ideally, we’d stay in a single central location, so we’re not constantly packing and moving, and use it as a base for day trips to explore the surrounding area. We’d either hire a private guide and driver, or we’d consider traveling with a small group. We’re looking for gentle experiences — no mountain climbing or skydiving for us at this point.” Alan, Londonderry, N.H.; budget: up to \$25,000

If you don’t mind a long flight with a short stopover, you might consider Cape Town, where the summer sun should help ease your jet lag and the landscape itself (glistening coastline on one side, mountains on the other) is a sure antidote to the bleak New England winter. It’s a multilayered city, easy to linger in and full of great food (check out Eat Like a Local) and art. And even if you’re not up for hiking up (or skydiving near) Table Mountain, you can still enjoy

sweeping vistas from the cable car that ferries visitors up to the summit. Or take in your mountain views from the grounds of Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, on the peak's eastern slope, about a 30-minute drive from the city center and a must-see according to garden cognoscenti.



Cape Grace hotel, on Cape Town's V&A Waterfront, reopened last year after an extensive renovation. © Paris B

For longer excursions, you can tour Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 18 years; commune with penguins on Boulders Beach; and take a spectacularly scenic drive around the Franschhoek Wine Valley (stop for lunch at Babylonstoren). Premier Tours, a luxury travel company based in Philadelphia but founded by a native Capetonian, Julian Harrison, can organize your trip, soup-to-nuts, or part of it (from about \$1,800 for three days for two people, not including accommodations). As for hotels, the venerable Mount Nelson, a lush compound in the middle of town (from about \$1,560 a night in January) and the waterfront Cape Grace (from about \$1,000 a night) are among the most luxurious options, but Harrison also likes smaller, tucked-away places like the eight-room Kensington Place, situated in the foothills of Table Mountain (from about \$460 a night). For a night or two outside of town, Lekkerwater, an all-inclusive seafront lodge in the De Hoop Nature Reserve, is a stunner (from about \$770 per person per night including meals and guided nature walks).



The Strelitzia Suite at Cape Town's Mount Nelson hotel. Courtesy of the Mount Nelson Hotel



A Victorian-era estate in central Cape Town, the Mount Nelson was a favorite winter getaway spot for British aristocrats in the early 20th century. Courtesy of Mount Nelson

Then there's Buenos Aires, another magnetic city, and one with a more compatible time zone. The beautiful historic opera house, Teatró Colon, doesn't have performances in January and the schedule for February isn't set yet, but tango shows are easy to come by. Take a day trip to gaucho towns or to quaint Colonia del Sacramento in Uruguay, and if the heat in the capital proves too intense, escape to the cooler climes of Mendoza's Uco Valley for a few days. For a full-service custom itinerary and guides, try the Buenos Aires-based travel agency Mai 10, or the Lima, Peru-based Aracari Travel — both are high-end operators. Mai 10's private tours, including accommodations, start at \$1,000 per day for two and Aracari's start at around \$2,400 per day for two.

Deborah Dunn is the executive features director of T Magazine.