

LAKE LIFE



PHOTO CREDIT

Lapping waves, flapping sails, and sunsets over the water – lakeside vacations speak to us. Here are seven that will make a splash.

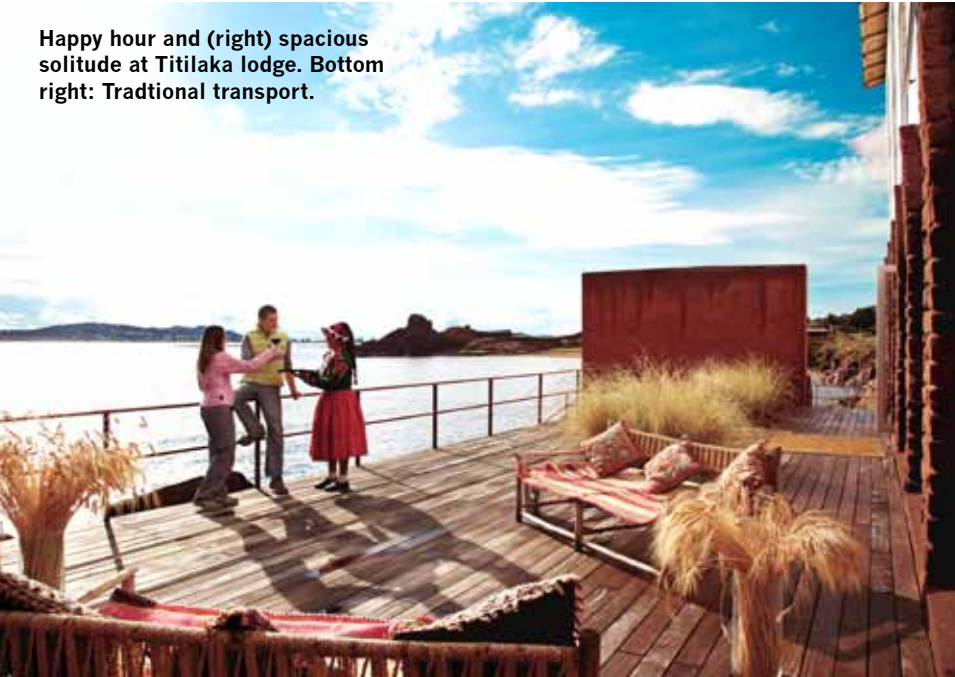
By BECCA HENSLEY



PHOTO CREDIT

Take a seat: Peaceful views of Lake Titicaca preside at Titilaka lodge in Peru.

Happy hour and (right) spacious solitude at Titilaka lodge. Bottom right: Traditional transport.



LAKE TITICACA

Andean Oasis and Ancient Incan Stomping Ground

SACRED TO ITS NATIVE CULTURES, South America’s largest – and highest navigable – lake sprawls along the border of southern Peru and western Bolivia. More than 25 rivers empty into its reed-fringed shores, and the ruins of **centuries-old temples** and dwellings occupy many of its mountain-marked islands.

THE EXPERIENCE

Though hydrofoils, barges, steamships, and wooden rowboats cruise its waters, Titicaca’s immensity means the lake radiates **peace and solitude**. Framed by jagged Andean peaks, its limpid surface reflects low-hanging clouds by day and a glittering, star-studded canvas by night. With many of the lake’s 41 islands considered sacred, descendants of the Incas still pay homage at spots such as the Island of the Sun, which is said to house a deity known as Inti. Drawn by its bevy of birds, ornithologists enthuse over Titicaca’s shores, and sightseers make cultural visits to Isla Suriqui, where the art of reed-boat

construction still survives. A visit to the “floating islands,” an archipelago made entirely from *titora* reeds by the pre-Incan Uros people, is also a must.

THE STAY

Pisco sours, vibrant textiles, and panoramic views from each of **Titilaka’s** 18 suites immerse guests in the world of the Andes. Sleek and swank, this intimate lodge offers a variety of excursions, including island-hopping, kayaking, and wildlife viewing. Unravel any knots with a one-hour massage per room, complimentary for Virtuoso guests. *From \$530 (including taxes, meals, and activities) per package, per night.*

LEGEND HAS IT

When the Spanish conquistadors took Cuzco, the Incas tossed a two-ton gold braid into the lake. It may still be there today.

BEST SUNSET

Head to the Island of the Sun’s highest point, a lighthouse set at 13,441 feet.

ADVISOR TIP

*“With its excellent hiking, biking, and kayaking, a visit to Titilaka is all about getting out and enjoying the beautiful surroundings, so you don’t want to arrive and find out your body disagrees with the 12,500-foot elevation! The trick is to **ease your way in**; make this a later stop on your Peruvian itinerary.”*

— JESSICA OURISMAN,
BALTIMORE

PHOTO CREDIT

ADVISOR TIP

*“Relaxing in a heated Jacuzzi in one of the Grand Hotel Tremezzo’s rooftop suites – now that’s la dolce vita. These suites feature the best views of Lake Como, as well as butler service to handle every whim. For families, the hotel has wonderful **two-bedroom, two-bath suites** in an adjacent building – a rarity in Europe.”*

– NANCY YALE, FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT



Italian idylls: Lakeside Lombardy and (left) Grand Hotel Tremezzo.



LAKE COMO

Italian Playground for the Crème de la Crème

DOTTED WITH HILL-PERCHED VILLAGES, a backdrop of **snow-kissed peaks**, and an unusual wishbone shape, this cobalt-colored lake an hour from Milan has lured luminaries from Lord Byron to George Clooney to its shores.

THE EXPERIENCE

Perhaps best maneuvered in a **red Ferrari**, the twisting roads that fringe Lake Como define the region’s jet-set spirit. In summertime, the lake is a veritable child’s toy-filled bathtub of activity, with Jet Skis, sailboats, wind surfers, and swimmers splashing in its glacial waters. First popularized by Victorian travelers, this resort destination retains some belle époque grandeur, exhibited in the architecture of shoreside villages such as Bellagio, Tremezzo, and Como. Snazzy boutiques, waterfront eateries, and gelato shops brim with hot-weather crowds, but romantic nooks can be found for those who desire something more reclusive. End your day like the locals with an evening saunter, or *passeggiata*, along the lakeside promenades.

THE STAY

Like most hotels of its pedigree in Italy’s Lake District, **Grand Hotel Tremezzo** occupies the heart of a terraced park. Providing lake views galore, this art nouveau property proudly bares its heritage in drawing rooms and period decor. The 97-room classic exhibits an Italian zest for fashion with bright colors and an eclectic mix of modern art. Virtuoso guests can toast their stay with a complimentary three-flight wine tasting at the hotel’s wine bar. *From \$520 per room, per night.*

SIGNATURE DISH

Lavarello. You’ll find this moist white fish everywhere. Try it sautéed with butter and sage.

WHEN TO GO

May through October brings the best weather to Lago di Como. Italians throng there during July and August weekends, so consider a weekday stay if you want to avoid the crowds.

PHOTO CREDIT

LAKE LOUISE

Canadian Backcountry in Banff National Park

LIKE A MIRROR, THIS TURQUOISE lake reflects the towering pine trees and mountains that surround it. A pristine retreat in **Alberta's Rockies**, the area earns its place as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

THE EXPERIENCE

It takes commitment to make the trek here. Though far-flung, the lake can still be reached by train as it was in the Victorian era, when well-heeled travelers first christened the region a vacation wonderland, popular for its hot springs. In winter, tour the area aboard a horse-drawn sleigh – warmed by a buffalo robe and with hot chocolate in hand, of course – or swirl across the **nature-made ice rink** on skates. Summertime transforms the spot into a splashy playground: Bike or hike the lakeshore trail, which puts you face-to-face with Victoria Glacier, a vista so beautiful that it's impossible to take a bad photo of it.

THE STAY

As lofty as its surroundings, **The Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise** reigns as queen of the Canadian Rockies. Regal and castle-like, the 487-room property manages to be stately and welcoming, extravagant and casual – attributes that ensure it's as ideal for families as for honeymooners. The hotel treats Virtuoso guests to a professional portrait session and a framed photo souvenir. *From \$270 per room, per night.*

DID YOU KNOW?

At 5,033 feet, Lake Louise village (just minutes from The Fairmont) is the highest community in Canada.

EXPLORE

The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, an art and history archive located in the town of Banff. *111 Bear Street; www.whyte.org.*



Clockwise from top: Horsing around, a One Bedroom Suite, and wild decor at The Fairmont.

PHOTO CREDIT

ADVISOR TIP

“Incredible, spectacular, unusual, mystifying – in all the world, there’s nothing quite like the floating Taj Lake Palace. A private dinner on the hotel’s candlelit raft is a definite must-do.”

– PETER FRIEDMAN, PALM BEACH, FLORIDA



Clockwise from top: Taj Lake Palace's facade, swimming pool, and Chandra Prakash Suite.

LAKE PICHOLA

Maharajahs and Starlit Nights

EDGING SEDUCTIVE UDAIPUR – India’s “White City,” named for its profusion of **milky palaces**, many of them set like gems on tiny islands – Pichola’s shores harbor Hindu temples and age-old homes.

THE EXPERIENCE

Located in the state of Rajasthan (literally, “Land of the Kings”) this seductive locale draws celebrities and the Indian elite, especially for weddings, which tend to be extravagant, action-packed, multiday parties. Expect to see **painted elephants**, fireworks, decorated boats, Bollywood stars, life-size puppets, turbans galore, and abundant

jewel-hued saris. With labyrinthine lanes, Rajput architecture, and watery canals, this “Venice of the East” evokes the finery and ritual of India’s bygone ruling class.

THE STAY

Like a magic carpet ride, the white-marble **Taj Lake Palace** whisks travelers to a time when maharajahs reigned. Set on an island, this manse, built circa 1743, was erected as a prince’s folly. Embellished with rich fabrics, frescoes, sculpted marble columns, and gilded moldings, the hotel employs butlers, many of whom descend from the original staff. Count on goose bumps when you arrive by boat at night.

Virtuoso guests enjoy a complimentary meal at Taj’s Jharokha or Neel Kamal restaurants. *From \$430 per room, per night.*

SIGHTSEE

Visit Udaipur’s premier site, City Palace, to ogle its famous miniature paintings. www.rajasthanourism.gov.in.

SHOP

An array of stores sells locally made handicrafts and clothing. Score pashmina shawls at Andraab. *170A New Fatehpura; www.andraab.com.* Brahma Arts & Textiles is best for paintings and antiques. *31 Lake Palace Road.*

PHOTO CREDIT

LAKE WAKATIPU

High Adventure Down Under

SHAPED LIKE A SCRIBBLY ZIGZAG, New Zealand's longest lake dwells in a glacier-hewed, peak-bordered trench in the **Southern Alps**. Its unique formation creates a seiche, or standing wave, that rises and falls every half hour.

THE EXPERIENCE

You might recognize the landscape from *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, but this South Island destination caters more to outdoor enthusiasts than to hobbits. A revered snow-skiing retreat, the lake

also welcomes the swimsuit-clad to its beaches in warmer months, when the local maxim "Come for the winter, stay for the summer" rings true and a bevy of outdoor activities awaits. Try parasailing, canyoneering, bungee jumping, and horseback riding around Wakatipu's rim. Fly-fishing aficionados can **cast a line** at the mouths of the Lochy and Greenstone Rivers, which teem with trout.

THE STAY

Cuddle up on the terrace and take in the vista at **Matakauri Lodge**. Each of

its 11 suites looks out across the glistening lake. Though you'll be tempted to explore the mountain trails or go for a swim, the lodge's cozy ambience may convince you to stay indoors instead, with a good book and a glass of local sauvignon blanc. Use your Virtuoso \$100 spa credit for a waterfront massage. *From \$1,020 per room, per night.*

RUMOR HAS IT

According to Maori legend, Wakatipu's recurring wave is caused by the heartbeat of a monster that slumbers below the water.



The suite life at Matakauri Lodge and (below) striking a pose at Lake Austin Spa Resort.



LAKE AUSTIN

Texas Hill Country Terroir + Wellness and Wine

A COLORADO RIVER RESERVOIR that winds more than 20 miles through Austin's urban west side, this human-made swimming hole boasts jade-colored water and banks lined with luxury homes and **casual dock-up eateries**.

THE EXPERIENCE

The Lone Star State's capital is as famous for its blistering heat as for its spirited festivals and music scene; join local hipsters and hippies alike for chill-out time in the water. **Stand-up paddleboarding** has taken this landlocked burg by storm, but dawn to dusk, you'll find locals partaking in a plethora of other water sports as well: Kayakers and anglers share the watery expanse with skiers and wakeboarders. Luxury motor craft abound and can be rented. Party cruises and prettied-up tropical-themed rafts set a festive mood.

THE STAY

Forty luxe cottages, three pools, floral-lined paths, and hammocks slung between oak trees comprise **Lake Austin Spa Resort**, a world-renowned wellness

retreat. While the resort's French chef concocts wholesome meals, therapists relieve stress with a treatment menu that encompasses modalities from across the globe, from chromotherapy (also called color therapy) to a gentle Japanese hammer-tapping ritual; many treatments use herbs grown in the resort's prolific garden. Paddleboarding, sculling, and yoga may require athletic wear, but most guests lounge in spa-issued bathrobes, the *de rigueur* uniform for a stay here. Virtuoso guests receive a \$100 spa credit – how apropos. *From \$1,720 per person, per three-day package.*

EXPLORE

Tipple on the Texas Wine Trail, located about an hour away from the resort, near Fredericksburg. www.texaswinetrail.com.

SHOP

Find farm-to-table fare at Whole Foods' flagship store, which is home to a mélange of eateries, wine bars, and rows of locally made salsa and barbecue sauce – the perfect foodie souvenir. 525 N. Lamar Boulevard; www.wholefoods.com.

LAKE PETÉN ITZÁ

Eco-Adventures and Glorious Ruins

LOCATED JUST SOUTH OF THE Belize border, the shores of this shiny Guatemalan lake were once the stronghold of the Itzá Maya. Rife with wildlife, the region shelters more than **100 indigenous species**, including jaguars and the red bay snook fish.

THE EXPERIENCE

A misty rain forest encircles the water. Toucans, parrots, bananaquits, and macaws screech from leafy branches as lemurs and howler monkeys scurry through the canopy. Beneath the lake, the remains of a bygone Mayan civilization await archaeologists, who exhume artifacts there regularly. Just beyond, the **ancient city of Tikal**, thought to be the center of Mayan spirituality, stands wedged amid the jungle, its temples, palaces, and plazas evoking the power of the past. In search of more modern pursuits? Visitors can zip-line, kayak, and ride horseback along the water's edge.

THE STAY

As expected from a Francis Ford Coppola

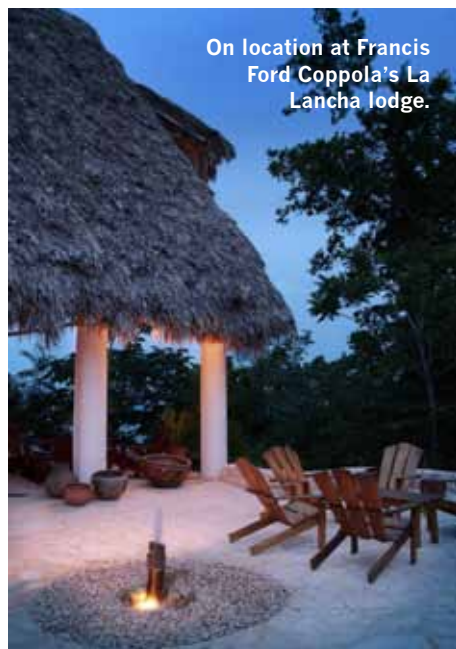
production, **La Lancha** (one of five boutique hotels in the filmmaker's collection) receives rave reviews for its understated but deep rooting in the environment. Embracing Mayan culture, this thatch-roofed, ten-room haven, adorned with indigenous artwork, colorful Guatemalan fabric, and unexpected (but compatible) Balinese furnishings, feels like part of the rain forest. Treehouse-like, the lodge overlooks the lake and offers canoe trips, cultural excursions, and Spanish lessons. Private bird-watching tours are complimentary for Virtuoso guests. *From \$129 per room, per night.*

CUISINE

Tamales have been traced back to the Mayans. In Guatemala they're most commonly wrapped in banana leaves and stuffed with chicken, pork, or cheese.

BE PREPARED

Pesky insects come out at night, so pack long pants as well as long-sleeved shirts, and expect to use some insect repellent on evening outings.



On location at Francis Ford Coppola's La Lancha lodge.

ADVISOR TIP

"La Lancha is the best base lodge for visiting the famous Tikal ruins and provides fantastic activities for everyone, from canoeing and hiking to horseback riding. Be sure to arrange a private guide and visit the ruins at sunrise or sunset – absolutely magical! For a truly amazing experience combining culture, adventure, and stunning beaches, add a stay at its sister properties, Blancaneaux Lodge and Turtle Inn, in nearby Belize."

– GINNY CARAGOL,
OLD GREENWICH, CONNECTICUT

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