

# Relationship Restart Kauai

Tips for Recapturing the Romance

BY JAN SCHRODER

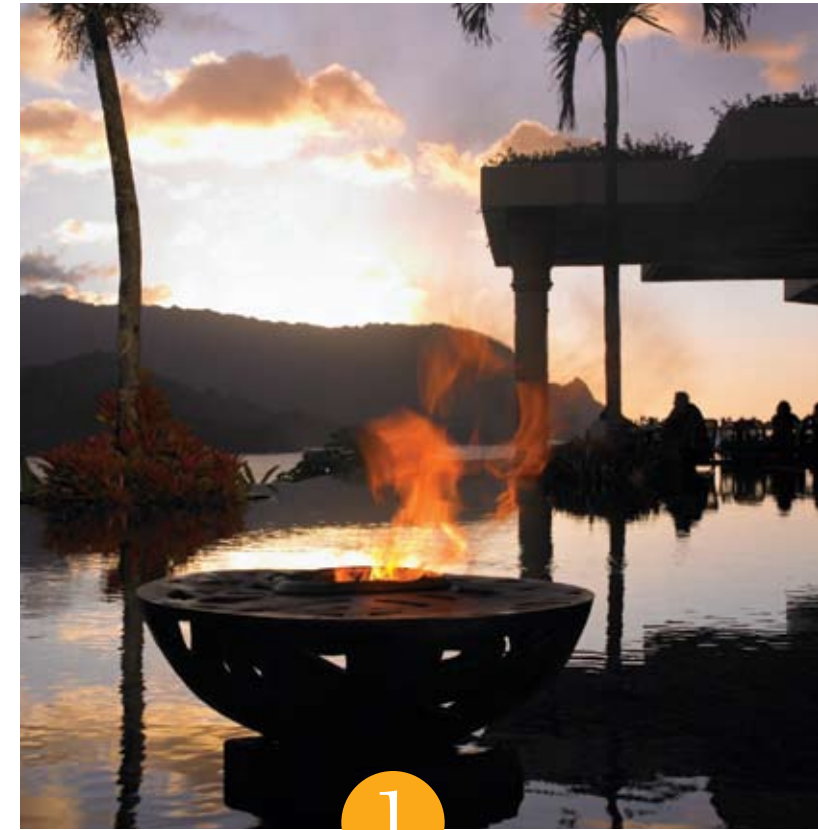
Hard to believe, isn't it? That same man you took dreamy-eyed walks on the beach with and shared loving champagne toasts with on the balcony on your honeymoon is the same one who must intentionally be trying to work your last nerve because *he is incapable of emptying the dishwasher or putting a sock in the hamper.*

Sometimes a relationship needs a bit of a restart, and there's no better way to do that than to get far away from the stress of everyday life where you can truly reconnect.

Okay, I admit it — we took a shortcut to rekindling romance on a recent trip. 1. We returned to the scene of our honeymoon, which gives you a giant head start on those I-only-have-eyes-for-you feelings, and 2. We had spent one week of our honeymoon on Kauai. With its lush gardens, gorgeous resorts and mystical landscape, this Hawaiian island may be the most romantic place on earth.

But maybe your idea of romance is eating hot dogs cooked over a campfire, then snuggling in a sleeping bag. Or your budget these days is more in line with a weekend at a cabin in a state park. No matter where you stay — whether it's a yurt or a castle — following a few simple tips can help remind you why you picked him, and maybe make those socks on the floor just a bit more tolerable.

PHOTO: HTA/TOR JOHNSON



1

## Stay in the best accommodations you can afford

I've stayed in my share of bordering-on-dump places where the bath towel could be interchangeable in size and texture with a piece of sandpaper. "We're only going to sleep here," was often the justification. Remember, this is a romantic rendezvous and your surroundings *do* matter.

Staying at your local state park? Do your research and make sure your campsite doesn't overlook the parking lot. (Learned that one the hard way!) And no matter what class hotel you're in, up the romance factor by taking your own wine glasses and music to set the mood. And yes, it's cheesy, but spread some rose petals on the bed and pack your favorite massage oil.

We were lucky enough to stay in first-class accommodations in Kauai, starting at the gorgeous St. Regis Princeville Resort, where our spacious room had a view of Hanalei Bay and Mount Makana, better known as Bali Hai after the movie "South Pacific."

We could watch the last sunset in the United States in the evening while lifting a glass to toast each other and our good fortune to have returned to the gorgeous island of Kauai.

After a few days we moved around the island to the more populated southern part, where we checked in at the Sheraton Kauai Resort in Poipu and received a surprise upgrade to a suite. Our romantic karma flowing, a private balcony yielded more spectacular views of the ocean, and a small volcanic beach below.



2

Plan for some shared adventures you both enjoy

My husband loves football and running. I don't know the difference between a safety and a sack, and if you see me running, call the cops because someone must be chasing me. So we decided we needed to cultivate a shared interest, the more physical the better, in hopes of making up for our shared adoration of food and wine. We picked hiking and kayaking, activities we both love.

On a clear Hawaiian morning we joined Outfitters Kauai for a relaxing two-mile paddle down the scenic Hule'ia River. Next, we hiked through the jungle for a quick ride on a rope swing into a pond where Johnny Depp swam during the filming of *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*. Another day we went on a guided hike with Kayak Kauai on the Kalalau Trail along the Na Pali Coast, pausing along the way for spectacular views of the ocean and beach below, while marveling over local Dr. Seuss-like blooms.

One of our most enchanting outings was a return to the magnificent Na Pali Coast, which we had marveled at from the sky during a helicopter ride on our honeymoon. This time we saw it by sea, aboard the luxurious *Southern Star Catamaran*.

This six-hour sail started in the early morning with a delicious continental breakfast, followed by snorkeling, then a freshly grilled lunch, served with bottomless glasses of beer or wine. This one tops my must-do list for any visit to Kauai.

But it's okay to spend time apart. One afternoon when I went to visit the lush Allerton Garden, Chris opted to stay back and relax in the room. Sure, it would have been romantic to stroll through the garden rooms and huge rainforest trees together, but going solo for an outing gave me a chance to reflect while he enjoyed a rare afternoon nap.



3

Make meals fun and memorable

To keep our budget in line we mix inexpensive local fare at lunch with more leisurely, upscale dinners. One day for lunch we had the Hawaiian-style hot dog at Puka Dog, where we had fun debating the merits of toppings like guava mustard, coconut or mango relish. Another day we dined at Fish Express, a locals' favorite, where we got poke fish lunches to go and sat in a nearby park.

By far, our most memorable meal — one of the best meals of our lives in fact — was at Josselin's Tapas Bar & Grill. Each dish was a mini work of art and tasted even better than it looked. Just a few of the dishes created from local ingredients included Kajiki Ceviche, Kekaha Shrimp and Seared Walu.



4

Remember the small things that make him happy

Small acts of kindness go a long way to keeping a marriage happy. That's the conclusion from a recent study by the University of Virginia's National Marriage Project. The study defined generosity as "the virtue of giving good things to one's spouse freely and abundantly." Researchers studied the role of generosity in the marriages of 2,870 people and found that those with high scores on the generosity scale were far more likely to report that they were "very happy" in their marriages. So load up on his favorite treats for a road trip, surprise him with a back rub or take lunch to him poolside.

Don't be surprised if he begins reciprocating on his own. But if he doesn't, remember men aren't mind readers! Sweetly suggest something you'd like from him — a cup of coffee from the lobby before breakfast, a foot rub or a chance to listen to your favorite podcast in the car — and be sure to tell him how much you appreciate it when he delivers.



5

Don't get derailed over delays, detours and disasters

Nothing can derail a romantic rendezvous faster than blaming each other when plans go awry. If you run into a travel snafu, make the best of it. Together. On our Hawaiian trip I left my brand-new camera behind and our luggage was lost after our flight was rerouted. So we spent our first hours in Kauai in the Walmart and Costco stocking up on toiletries and underwear and selecting a new camera. We discovered a section in Costco with locally made items and had fun selecting a new Hawaiian shirt for Chris.

Ever since the memorable I'd-like-to-behead-you fight we had over getting lost on the outskirts of Versailles years ago, we've learned to tone down the tension to keep the vacation running smoothly.

And lastly, don't put too much pressure on one trip. Don't fall into the "all-or-nothing" trap as relationship expert Andrea Syrtash calls it in her book *Cheat on Your Husband (with Your Husband)*. One trip probably won't transport you back to courtship days. But it can provide plenty of lovely memories to get you through the next squabble over housework.

On our anniversary this year, January 1, my husband posted this on Facebook: "7 years and nary an itch in sight." And if that isn't the height of romance, I don't know what is.

For more on Kauai, visit the Kauai Visitors Bureau at [www.gohawaii.com/kauai](http://www.gohawaii.com/kauai)

BE YOUR VACATION SELF

These tips can help you reconnect during your next vacation. But the bigger challenge is keeping that spark going when you return home to the everyday grind. So we turned to relationship expert Andrea Syrtash for some tips on holding onto that lovin' feeling, even when there's no beach, sunset or pina colada in sight. She is the author of *Cheat On Your Husband (With Your*

*Husband*.) And yes, I did have to explain why I had a book with that title lying around!

1) Mind Control

When traveling, you're open to new experiences, getting outside of your comfort zone, having fun and being present. These are all great things to keep in mind on date night. Even if you only have a two-hour night out planned, stay present and leave your stress at home just as you do on vacation.

2) Date Talk

On vacation, chances are you and your husband remembered to connect as lovers and partners, not just as parents or roommates. One study showed that the average couple with kids speaks (uninterrupted) for about 15 minutes a day! Commit to 10-15 minutes a day to check in with each other and make certain topics (in-laws, bills, household chores) off limits! Stay curious about each other.

3) Human Touch

Why wait until your next vacation to hold hands while walking down the street? Touching each other will release oxytocin in your brain, which will help you and your partner feel more connected and attached.

