



## Arts & Entertainment

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### Find romance in Cape May this Valentine's Day

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When "Cape May" comes to mind, most people imagine summer scenes filled with bustling boardwalks and crowded beaches. Although the best time to lay out and enjoy the sun may be the summer months, Cape May offers plenty of dining options, entertainment, shops and other attractions to make this a year-round destination.

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, this is the perfect time to re-explore this seaside haven just an hour away from Hammonton. Whether you have the whole weekend to get away or can only spend a night, there are plenty of wonderful ways to enjoy the town with your sweetheart.

Although many of the tourists are gone, plenty of the shops in the area continue to stay open through the winter months.

Summer Station offers a prime location near the beachfront, shops and surrounding restaurants. Rooms feature a kitchen and living room with cable TV, along with bedroom and bathroom and washer and dryer so guests can just as easily enjoy a night in as they can a night

out. DVD player and movie rentals are available in the lobby.

Beachfront rooms offer a perfect view of the water from the oversized window in the living room. Step out onto the deck to feel the sea breeze or watch the sun rise or set. If you and your sweetie would prefer to go out, you won't have to worry about traveling too far since several of Cape May's attractions are only a few blocks from the hotel.

If you're looking for a fun place to try



Courtesy of Spirit Catcher Photography

Enjoy a relaxing and romantic getaway in Cape May this Valentine's Day.

out for lunch or dinner then make your way to The Ugly Mug, a pub located at 426 Washington St., which is essentially an Applebee's or Chili's with a soul. Notorious for their mug décor, The Ugly Mug is decorated with mugs that belong to members of the Ugly Mug Club. These mugs represent Ugly Mug Club members from today and yesterday, with deceased members' mugs facing the ocean.

Although the place is adorned in memorabilia, old photos and serves standard

pub fare, the difference is this place has genuine character and personality. This is a meeting place for regulars and tourists alike, a fun place to go to watch a game, hang out with old friends or make new ones. Visitors can enjoy such food as mini tacos, burgers, soups, salads and crab cake sandwiches. One house specialty includes the Ocean Burger, which features a patty along with shrimp and sharp cheddar cheese.

After tasting it, you'll understand why it's a favorite for patrons, but don't feel

bad if you can't finish the whole thing—it's pretty filling. The crab cakes are also tasty and as the menu boasts, the "Cape May style" cake is grilled, not fried and if you end up liking them, you can take some home. Freshly frozen crab cakes are available for purchase.

This is a good place to grab a quick bite during the day or to hang out in the evening if you want to hear some music or have a couple drinks.

For more information visit their website at [www.uglymugenterprises.com](http://www.uglymugenterprises.com) or call 884-3459.

If you're looking to have a sophisticated and romantic dinner, Congress Hall's restaurant, the Blue Pig tavern, (also just known as "The Tavern") is a good destination. Don't let the name of the establishment fool you—The Blue Pig's menu focuses on serious culinary quality and taste.

With salmon colored walls, hardwood floors, an inviting fireplace when you enter the tavern-styled room, it is easy to immediately feel at home. Subtle hints of "Blue Pig" blue can be noted throughout the restaurant, from the insignia on the cloth napkins to the hostess's turquoise jewelry, complementing the rest of the décor nicely.

Once the place starts getting packed, it can be difficult to make conversation over other patrons. This can be easily remedied by moving in closer to your date, which if you're out on a romantic night, isn't such a bad thing.

The dim overhead lighting

and small candle votives on each table also invoke a relaxed and cozy atmosphere. The Blue Pig offers American fare with a flair—many of the meals are classic dishes with an international twist.

We started off our meal with American standards, a crock of classic French Onion Soup made with Gruyère cheese and Cape May Clam Chowder which featured smoked bacon and thyme.

The Cornmeal Crusted Sea Scallops are large and fresh, served over a flavorful crab and sweet corn risotto with a tomato chili broth. The winner at our table was the Atlantic Salmon Fillet with wasabi crust served over sweet chili mashed potatoes, sesame snow peas and lobster wontons. The presentation was beautiful and the different elements of the dish complemented each other nicely.

Of course, what meal is complete without dessert? Although dinner may be filling, try and save room—the dessert menu here is definitely worth checking out.

After dinner, take time to stroll through the corridors of the hotel that are open to the

public where several old photos and other artifacts from the hotel are on display. The history of Congress Hall is as impressive as its modern day state, and it's a great (and free) way to learn about Cape May's history. Call (888) 944-1816 or visit [www.congresshall.com](http://www.congresshall.com) for more information.

Then stop by the Brown Room Cocktail Lounge (located next to the Blue Pig) which often features live music. Another venue for live music is the Virginia Hotel, located at 25 Jackson St., which often features jazz.

The Mad Batter is the perfect place to enjoy a Sunday brunch. With brightly colored walls covered with eye-catching art to enjoy (and if you want to admire it from your own wall, to purchase), the atmosphere is just as inviting as the menu.

The restaurant has a great selection of brunch options to start a relaxing day off right and making it difficult to try just one thing. If you have to choose, go with breakfast, especially their buttermilk or oatmeal pancakes with real maple syrup for a special treat. Their croustade, which consists of scrambled eggs, roasted pepper

and garlic with green onions, sausage and Pepper Jack cheese served over Texas Toast is another favorite and will be sure to leave you full until dinnertime. Along with your breakfast, be sure to try out one of the various mimosas they serve. For more information, visit [www.madbatter.com](http://www.madbatter.com) or call 884-5970.

If you're looking for some daytime entertainment that doesn't just focus on eating, then enjoy some shopping at the Washington Street Mall. The main shopping area in Cape May is the Washington Street Mall, which is a three-block outdoor mall featuring a variety of fun and funky shops.

There's a little something for everyone here. With clothing, jewelry, sweets, knick knacks and other trinkets, visitors will be sure to find the perfect gift for yourself or someone else. If you love a bargain then you'll love coming here in the winter—most stores have discounted merchandise and off season sales.

For a complete listing of shops at the Washington Street Mall, visit [www.washingtonstreetmall.com](http://www.washingtonstreetmall.com) or call 884-0555.

If you and your beloved are interested in appreciating Cape May's natural beauty, then the Nature Center of Cape May is a wonderful resource. From now until April the center's hours are from Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Visitors can come anytime during regular hours to enjoy various activities, including a three-story observation tower which provides a panoramic view of the harbor and east Cape May or birding from the deck on the second story of the welcome center where guests can spot birds around the harbor and meadow. There are also monthly exhibits in the Trucksess Welcome Center, covering a variety of topics.

For a complete listing of available activities and upcoming special events visit [www.njaudubon.org](http://www.njaudubon.org).

For a more complete listing of places to stay or activities to enjoy during a romantic stay in Cape May visit [www.capemay-mac.org](http://www.capemay-mac.org).