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Your winter staycation reading list

By **Linley Taber**, The Frisky

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- The holidays are the perfect time to get lost in a book, especially if you're at home
- Among suggestions: "Fool's Paradise" by Steven Gaines, about South Beach
- Hemingway, Garcia Marquez also make the list

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(The Frisky) -- For those of us who won't be spending our holidays somewhere warm and wonderful, the next best thing to jetting to St. Barts, Miami, or Cabo is getting lost in a book that takes you there. Herewith, ten tomes that offer tropical settings and enough sun-drenched drama to make Jay-Z's yacht look boring. The only thing you'll miss is a tan.

1. **"The Sweet Life" by Mia King.** The bulk of this charming novel takes place on Hawaii's Big Island, where Manhattan wife and mom Marissa has been unexpectedly relocated. Though her tale is punctuated with sunsets, tropical flowers and charming local customs, the sweetest thing about the book -- aside from the list of Hawaiian recipes in the back -- is the lesson she learns about motherhood, marriage, friendship and life.
2. **"The Beach" by Alex Garland.** Pick up this 1996 cult thriller for a dose of nonstop action set in paradise, and you'll be transported to a gorgeous, unspoiled lagoon on a remote Thai island. Just don't expect to relax: the story has enough twists and turns and thought-provoking themes to get even a holiday-hungover heart pumping.
3. **"Fool's Paradise" by Steven Gaines.** Why do celebs head to South Beach for wild New Year's parties? According to this dishy new expose, it's because the town is "a place where people get away with things they'd never get away with any place else." Expect true tales about mobsters, models, Madonna and a healthy dose of scandal.
4. **"Islands in the Stream" by Ernest Hemingway.** It wouldn't kill us to put down our US Weekly and pick up some Hemingway, and what better way to get our smart on than with a classic set in the islands? The novel starts in the Bahamas and ends in Cuba, but the protagonist (brooding, macho, and complex) and the plot (death, war, and even a little Nazi-hunting) make this way more than your typical beach book.

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5. **"The Last Song" by Nicholas Sparks.** The setting of Sparks' latest bestselling tearjerker -- Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina -- might not be the tropics, but the coming-of-age tale is so chock full of summer romance and beach town drama, you'll see why Miley Cyrus fell for beau Liam Hemsworth on the set of the big-screen adaptation. That comes out this spring, by the way.
6. **"It Takes Two" by Patrizia Chen.** Middle-aged (and unhappily married) Francesca takes on Buenos Aires in this smart new novel packed with local history and sexy characters. Romance and more than a little tango ensue.

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7. **"Eat Pray Love" by Elizabeth Gilbert.** Unless you've been living under a rock, chances are you've read this global sensation about one woman's search for happiness across three exotic countries. This memoir is worth reading again just for Gilbert's lushly transporting descriptions of her travels: think mouthwatering Italian meals, fascinating Indian customs and the type of idyllic Bali beaches that winter-vacay dreams are made of.
8. **"Love in the Time of Cholera" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.** This instant classic has it all: a Nobel Prize-winning author, an Oprah's Book Club seal of approval and an epic romance set in a steamy Caribbean port town. What more could you want?

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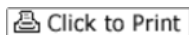
9. **"The Motion of the Ocean: 1 Small Boat, 2 Average Lovers, and a Woman's Search for the Meaning of Wife"** by **Janna Cawrse Esarey**. In this new memoir, Esarey recounts a honeymoon that was anything but normal: she and her hubby set sail for an 18-month adventure, making stops at some postcard-perfect South Pacific Islands. Yet the lessons she learns while sharing a 35-foot boat with her new husband are hilarious, poignant and completely relatable.

10. **"The Best Women's Travel Writing 2009: True Stories from around the World"** edited by **Lucy McCauley**. From Sicily to South Africa, from Jamaica to Japan, this anthology follows travelin' chicks around the world and stuns with its range of journeys -- both physical and emotional. Just try and not catch the travel bug.

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