

Your Top 3 Travel Romance Reads

...so far, by Jacquelyn Joy

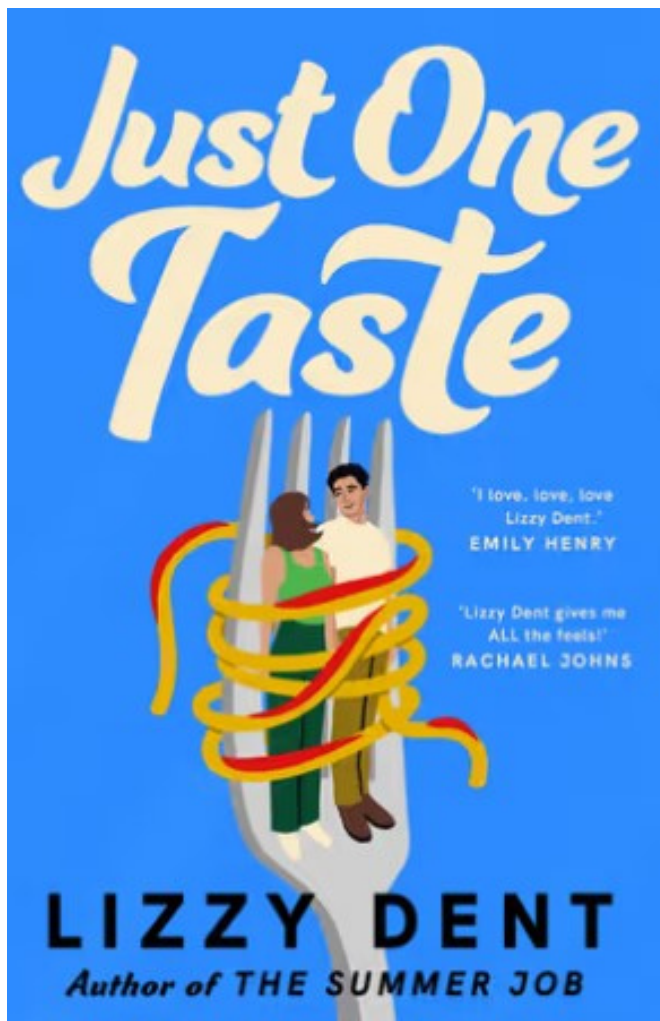
Apr 7, 2025

Just One Taste by Lizzy Dent

Published by Harper Collins 2024

From London to Italy – Sicily, Tuscany and Liguria (Positano). Mild spice.

Tropes: Slow Burn, forced to work together, enemies to lovers, forced proximity, foodie fun, surprise inheritance, family secrets, found family, failing business, seeing each other naked by accident.



Number 1.

This is a foodie travel romance with sizzle and spice: picturesque Italian settings, mouth-watering regional foods, loud and welcoming Italian families, fun banter, a hilarious BFF group chat and a hot chef MMC.

“I stare at him and the whole universe narrows to *this* moment. His stomach flexes, and his hands clench, his eyes on the curve where my neck meets my shoulder, and then they drop to my breasts and I feel all my blood rush to where his gaze rests, my breath shallowing to tiny gasps for air.” (Just One Taste, 2024)

FMC, London food critic, Olive Stone, became estranged from her Italian restaurateur father fifteen years ago and yet he has willed her his now failing restaurant. His dying wish is for her to complete the last few chapters of his cook book by travelling to Italy with her nemesis, the tasty looking sous chef, Leo Ricci. Olive must endure four weeks in Italy with Leo, the man who replaced her in her father's restaurant and in his affections. She is determined to sell the restaurant. Leo is determined to convince her to keep it.

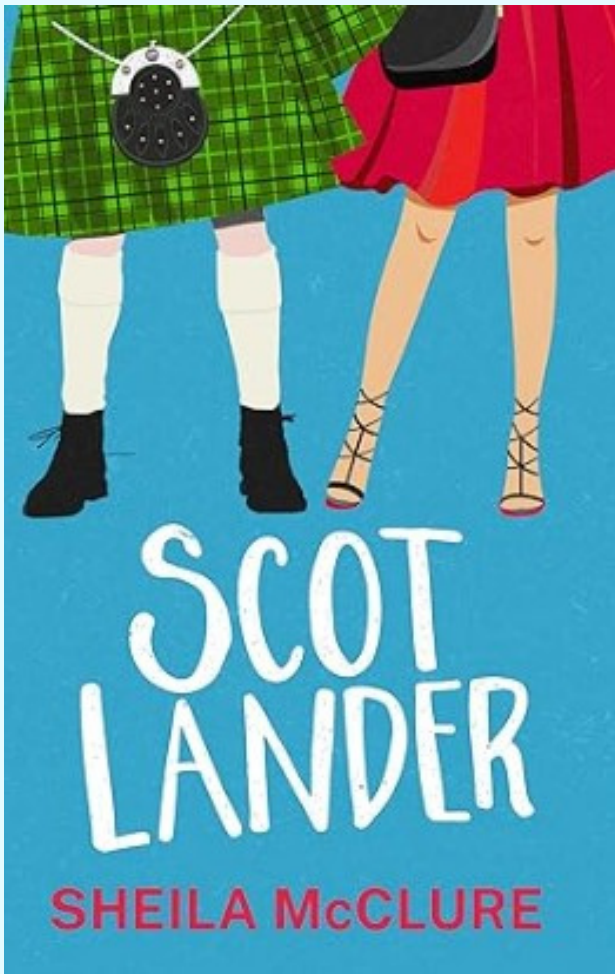
As they research, cook and taste test their way through Italy, Olive's stone cold heart is thawed by Italian hospitality, family reconnections and the realisation that Leo isn't who she expected him to be. Now she's fighting the urge to taste test the chef. Determined not to mix business with pleasure Olive places their romance on the backburner. As their simmering chemistry threatens to reach boiling point, Olive considers giving into it just once, but can she stop at just one taste?

Soon, Olive is re-evaluating her entire career and what she thought she knew about her father. The poignancy of grief lends some weight and plausibility to the obstacles this couple faces and adds depth to the characters' personal transformations in this otherwise light-hearted romantic comedy that is deliciously saucy and as warm as an Italian summer.

Scotlander by Sheila McClure

Lake Union Publishing 2023

Tropes: Slow burn, love triangle (but not), pretend marriage, forced proximity, hot men in kilts, surprise inheritance, failing business, found family.



Number 2.

This is a laugh-out-loud holiday romance filled with warmth, kilts and tatties, a ramshackle castle, candle lit events, campfire parties, misty mornings, an ensemble of quirky characters, and even a few celebrities.

“It was, hands down, the best kiss she’d ever experienced. So perfect, it had felt preordained. As if Finlay Jamieson had been put on this earth, on this farm, in that kilt, for the express purpose of cupping her face in those incredible hands of his and showing her what a real kiss was meant to feel like.” (Scotlander, 2023)

FMC, ambitious and driven entertainment reporter, Willa, is finding her life in LA lacklustre after the death of her best friend, Valentina. At the reading of the will, Willa meets Valentina’s estranged brother, Gabe, a “six-foot-something wall of hunk-a-liciousness”, and learns the two of them have been gifted a two-week immersive Outlander-themed, Jacobean farm stay experience at Balcraigie Castle, Scotland. It’s just the kind of prank Valentina would pull, but Willa senses this is more than just a prank.

Willa goes along with the plans mainly out of guilt for refusing to embrace Diana Gabaldon’s Outlander world along with her superfan friend, Valentina who is clearly match-making from behind the Pearly Gates. Gabe, a secret superfan who carries his own guilt about his sister, helps Willa

prepare for their holiday. Despite their easy rapport, this match made in heaven is feeling more like the friend zone.

Meanwhile, Willa is struck by Catalogue Kilt Man, the man who appears on the brochure for Balcraigie Castle. He is nothing less than a suuh–mokin’ hot “exquisite example of a rugged highland male” with legs for days and big ol’ man hands. He was a harmless distraction, no doubt, a Photoshopped model and definitely not the real deal.

Willa and Gabe arrive in Scotland to find Catalogue Kilt Man is not only real; he is Finley Jamison, the owner and hands-on participant in the Balcraigie Castle family-run business. As per Valentina’s booking instructions, Gabe and Willa are separated, much to the confusion of everyone, including Finn.

To get the ‘full’ Clare and Jamie Outlander experience, participants are paired with their own Scottish partner to engage in the activities. Willa is paired with the annoying – and annoyingly sexy Finn, with whom she will pose as fake husband and wife for the full two weeks, doing real-life farm work.

With Willa feeling publicly embarrassed that Gabe is totally into his own Clare and Jamie experience and unsettled by her intense attraction to Finn, she is tempted to leave, but then she makes a discovery. Finn’s family might lose the farm and the castle if they can’t make this experience a success. Willa’s departure would not help matters. Willa knows that she and Gabe possess the skills to help Finn save his castle, if they could all work together.

Does Willa discover the real reason for Valentina’s gift and will she find love or is this just a Highland fling?

The Summer House in Santorini by Samantha Parks

From New York to the Greek Island of Santorini. Mild spice.

Tropes: Fish out of water, reverse grumpy vs sunshine, big-city girl vs small-town boy, slow burn, surprise inheritance, a home renovation, family secrets, found family.



Number 3.

This is a heart-warming story that sizzles beneath a Greek summer sun and is suffused with the culture and food of Greece, picturesque villages, blue-painted roofs, turquoise waters of the Aegean Sea, white sandy beaches and a feeling of welcome and community.

“She stood up to follow him, as if he were a magnet.

‘Come on, we won’t go too deep,’ he said, stepping toward her and putting a hand lightly on either side of her waist. Then, in a whisper, said. ‘What’s the worst that could happen?’

He pulled her closer to him, and Anna felt herself press against him instinctually. She knew exactly what could happen.”
(The Summer House in Santorini, 2019)

A summer in the Greek home of her estranged father was not what FMC, Anna, had in mind, but after her affair with her boss blows up, destroying her photography career, and she receives word she has inherited her father’s summer house on the island of Santorini, she has little reason not to go.

Anna intends to renovate the house, put it up for sale, and get on with her ‘real’ life in New York. After all, the house held no sentimental value for her. Her father had abandoned the family when Anna was just five years old and she had never seen nor heard from him again. Her mother’s accounts of the events leading up to him leaving coloured Anna’s attitude to her father and his side of the family in Greece.

After Anna's arrival in Santorini where she meets the people who knew and loved her father, including the gorgeous Nikos and her Greek grandparents, she begins to realise not everything is as she had been led to believe. As she renovates the house, she uncovers family secrets that will change everything.

As she begins to explore new possibilities, new family and friends, and a new perspective on her photography career, she finds herself wanting to explore romantic possibilities with the charming Nikos. But Nikos has had enough of the girls who come to Santorini for a summer, looking for a hot Greek boy to fulfil their summer romance fantasies, only to leave to get on with their 'real' lives.

As Anna begins to fall in love with Santorini, the summer house and Nikos, she begins to discover a new direction for her photography in Greece. Just when everything is falling into place, her boss arrives with an offer too good to refuse.

Will the island, her new family, her newfound friends and Nikos be enough to make her stay or will her career prove more important?

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