

# Romance



## with a twist

**W**arm sultry nights perfumed with the heady fragrance of roses in full bloom, evening skies studded with the glow of a million bright stars, the caressing touch of a soft summer's breeze... Yes, it's the season for love; and all over New Zealand, young and old alike are rediscovering their passions with a little romance. It may seem a world away, but Paris-based company *Apoteo Surprise* is in the romance business; offering a service quite unlike anything you've ever seen before...

"Everyone has dreamt of declaring their love or proposing in a truly original way," says Apoteo Surprise founder Nicolas Garreau. A qualified aeronautical engineer, Garreau started this business in 2006; calling it "the fruit of the desire to offer couples visiting Paris exquisitely romantic experiences based on enchanting scenarios". Indeed, the options given in the Apoteo Surprise catalogue range from the fairly predictable (a limousine ride to a signboard flashing your declaration of love) to the somewhat bizarre (strolling through a wax museum, and having one of the 'wax statues' come to life; offering your beloved a parchment containing your proposal) "Why not seize the opportunity of having the most romantic city in the world as your enchanting backdrop to passionately declare your love?" reasons Garreau.

This is just one of the romantic surprises on offer:

You'll be transported in a chauffeured vehicle to a waiting horse and carriage. This horse and carriage will carry you and your beloved through a medieval forest, along a rutted country path. Here is the description in Garreau's own colourful language...

"While dozily waddling along with the equine vibrations of your romantic ride, you'll be able to breathe in the divine scents of a rich and perfumed flora. The majestic foliage of several century old oak, beech, linden, pine and chestnut trees will gracefully salute you. You'll lovingly allow yourself to be rocked in your gentle cradle of love like a truly seigniorial couple, while the rich, shaded scenery will add an ounce of sweet mystery to your journey..."

To continue in a somewhat less prosaic fashion:

Your relaxing carriage ride will be interrupted by two men – one on horseback, and one on foot – fully kitted out to resemble 16th Century bandits; complete with swords. As these men scramble onto your carriage, intent on plundering everything they can get their hands on, your valiant footman will gallop at full speed crying for help. In response to these cries, a prince will appear; and will immediately set about vanquishing the lawless brigands. Through swordplay and dramatic fight sequences, the bandits are run off; and the honourable prince will approach your carriage, dip his horse into a curtsy, and offer up a parchment revealing a message of love from your sweetheart.

Your carriage will then be escorted to the safety of the castle (of course there's a castle! This is France, remember?) where a gourmet picnic lunch will be waiting for you, spread out upon the flowing castle grounds. Champagne will flow, the delicious lunch will be consumed, and your day will be complete.

If this doesn't get her to say yes, guys, I'm afraid you might



**I** Love **Bite**

I have always been a bit of a grinch when it comes to celebrating Valentine's Day, however, this year I feel I might just break with tradition. I admit you cannot escape the commercial aspect of this 'special day' but considering the economy and the doom and gloom that you see in the news and on the television every day, why not get involved in something positive. I mean it does not take much to make that special person in your life feel that little bit appreciated: breakfast in bed, dinner out, a small trinket or, if you feel so inclined, a whopping great ostentatious, keeping up with the Jones's LCD television. Really your credit card is your oyster. One year my boyfriend and I bought some Chinese takeaway, coke and had a picnic in the long grass on a property we had just purchased. I mean you cannot get cheesier than that, but looking back at the terrible photo I managed to take of us both, it still makes me smile and what's not good about that. Perhaps this year take any opportunity to 'share the love' as we say at the office and just may be this year will be much improved on 2008!

- Maree Gately



Love is in the air ... an Edge of Sweden rhodium-plated sterling silver heart shaped pendant, set with Mozambique garnets.

want to give up altogether! With over seventeen options to choose from, Apoteo Surprise can offer anything from the clichéd hot air balloon ride, to the more unusual 1001 Nights castle experience – it all just depends on your tastes, and, of course, your budget!

For more information on Apoteo Surprise, check out their website: [www.apoteosurprise.com](http://www.apoteosurprise.com) – and select the English option – Emma Jelsma

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