



The Red Bikini

Lauren Christopher

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A sparkling debut romance where a getaway vacation turns into an unexpected new beginning.....

For the last five years, Giselle McCabe's life has been about sippy cups and playdates. But when her husband suddenly leaves her, Giselle flees to her sister's California beach house for a two-week getaway. Out of her element, she's surprised to receive such a warm welcome—especially from gorgeous celebrity athlete Fin Hensen.....

Fin is escaping his pro tour for a season, trying to lie low until all the hubbub over a huge mistake in his past blows over. And when he sets his sights on Giselle, he realizes that the beautiful good girl just might be the ticket to his success.

But Giselle never expected romance to enter the picture again—especially with a hot twentysomething from a completely different world. And even though it feels like Fin is everything she's trying to run away from, she can't help coming back for more.....

The Red Bikini Details

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Author : Lauren Christopher

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From Reader Review The Red Bikini for online ebook

Jacqueline says

A lovely contemporary romance. This is older woman younger man but the conflict is not really built around that though it is mentioned. It is more about life styles and what each character thinks they do or do not deserve out of life. The characterization in this novel was stellar. I loved both the hero and the heroine. Fin especially seemed so real. He was vulnerable and sweet but he wasn't beta at all. I really liked him. I liked the heroine too, she was a sweet woman who was used to looking after everyone but herself. She was cool and Grace Kelly like. At first they each wanted to use each other for the surface stereotypical characteristics that each portrayed and when they were faced with who the other actually was was when they fell in love.

The book was well written all around. The secondary characters were great and well drawn too. The world of surfing was a focus in this book but not in the least info dumpy. And that is another thing that made the book so good. The author got all the info in without you really noticing. It was all organic to the story.

I can't wait for more from this debut author.

AM says

OMG Giselle has such low self esteem at the beginning of this book I really couldn't stand her. Heaven only knows why she stayed with her scumbag ex-husband. He had two affairs while they were married & near the end she finds out about a third affair. Anyway, when she finally starts getting a backbone is when I started liking her again. She was so insecure she kept doubting her worth as a person every step of the way & it was getting on my nerves. As for Fin, he's a typical party boy who's finally starting to grow up. When he meets Giselle he starts to realize he wants something more substantial in a relationship besides one night stands or meaningless girlfriends that he feels nothing for. They start off as strangers who made a deal with each other. He would be her date to the funeral of her ex-father-in-law to make her ex-husband jealous. She would be his date at a sponsor party to make him look good to his company sponsors. They end up falling for each other (of course) & realizing that there's more to life than shallow relationships. I would be interested to read the next book in the series which deals with Giselle's sister Lia.

Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews says

JavaGirl's review posted on Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews

3 STARS

Review copy provided for an honest review

The Red Bikini is the story of a woman who lost herself; she sacrificed her relationships with her mother and sisters; she set aside her own goals and dreams, in order to be the perfect wife and mother, only to get kicked to the curb by her cheating husband.

Giselle has fled her life and her cheating ex-husband in Indiana for a California beach vacation with her five year-old daughter, Coco. Offered the use of her sister's apartment while Lia is out of town on business, Giselle and Coco are surrounded by Lia's friends and neighbors, who won't allow Giselle to hide out and lick her wounds.

I usually enjoy stories of people, especially women, who are on a journey to find themselves after being in a stifling relationship. While there were elements of *The Red Bikini* that I enjoyed, I didn't really connect with Giselle and was ultimately disappointed.

Giselle's divorce is final. Her ex-husband, Roy, refuses to answer or return her phone calls; he has made it clear he has no desire to be a father to their daughter; the woman he left Giselle for is pregnant, and just the latest in a string of mistresses. He is a total jerk, with no visible redeeming qualities, and yet Giselle calls him constantly wanting to know why he left her; she still wears her wedding ring, and continues to believe it is in her daughter's best interest that her parents are together. I really struggled to understand why such an intelligent woman would continue to pine for this man and their marriage in spite of how badly he behaved toward both her and their child.

Giselle and Coco are befriended by some young neighbors who run a surf school, where Coco takes lessons. She also meets Fin, an attractive younger man, who is trying to hold on to his sponsors and regain his former surf champion status. Fin needs a respectable woman on his arm to convince his main sponsor that his wild, partying days are behind him and he is ready to focus on surfing. In exchange for being that woman, Giselle invites Fin to be her date to Roy's father's funeral. I thought this was a breakthrough for Giselle—using a hot younger man to show Roy that she has moved on, but no. She saw the funeral as an opportunity to talk to Roy about why he left her. Roy mysteriously hates Fin, and threatens Giselle with a custody battle if she doesn't immediately stop seeing him. There is supposed to be a bit of a mystery surrounding Roy's attitude and why he knows so much about a man he just met, but it wasn't much of a challenge to figure out exactly where this story was headed.

For every step forward that Giselle took, and she did, she took two steps backward. I was thrilled when she took off her wedding ring, only to be disappointed when she put it back on. I was so excited when she and Fin started dating, only to be annoyed and frustrated by the constant misunderstandings and lack of communication. They both had lots of thoughts swirling around in their heads, but neither was good at verbalizing those thoughts.

There was quite a cast of secondary characters. I loved the surfers. They're a fun bunch, who gently encourage Giselle and Coco to step outside their comfort zones. Even though Roy is a stereotype, he's the type of character you love to hate. I had no such love for the wife of one of Fin's business associates/friends whose childish, over the top behavior provided what I thought was unnecessary melodrama (I won't spoil it for you), but who Giselle, inexplicably adored.

Giselle does find herself; she literally lets her hair down and wears jeans, and eventually, that red bikini. However, her journey took much too long for me to really enjoy it.

Sophia says

A cast aside woman and her little daughter head to the beach for a time of healing and discover that sometimes the Prince in the fairy tale arrives the second chance around and he may not be anyone's idea of a Prince- including his own- when he starts out.

I picked up this book with the promise of a diverting summer beach read and was pleasantly surprised when it delivered so much more. There was fun in the sun, laughter, passion and romance, but the character development, the plot, the pacing and tone gave it that little something more. The author's writing and the way I responded to this story had me so surprised to discover that this was a debut novel. I loved how the red

bikini, the abalone shell, and the next wave were used as symbolism to offer the evidences of healing and change in both the main character's lives. I was pretty impressed to say the least.

The story opens when a nearly broken and despondent Giselle Underwood arrives at her sister's beach house while she's away in NYC. Her husband cheated on her and finally left with no explanation after ten years of marriage. She tried so hard to be the perfect wife and she never met up to Roy's expectations. From her appearance, to her personality, her interests, to her sexuality, to her family and even their daughter, it was never enough. But now, she and Coco are starting fresh. Too bad, the very idea of change has Giselle hyperventilating. Her family worries about her and her sister did it one better than the house when she arranged for Coco to get surfing lessons from the young neighbor next door in exchange for Giselle photographing him and his buddies to make a brochure for his surfing school for kids, she arranged for a blind date with a 'safe' guy, and finally, she left a bold red bikini for Giselle. Giselle whisks the bikini to the back of the drawer, she feels overwhelmed by Rabbit and his boisterous, friendly group and the blind date? Well she wasn't exactly excited about that. But she was here to start anew so she would take a few baby steps forward and those baby steps are leading her toward the much younger and free-wheeling pro surfer, Fin Hensen. Fin isn't the type to want a staid middle-aged woman like her when he has all those bouncy younger women in bikinis hanging on him, right?

Fin Hensen spots the gorgeous, sophisticated, Grace Kelly-looking Giselle and knows instantly that she is the right person to take to his sponsor's art gala event to impress them with a new image of a stable, mature surfer at the top of his game. It doesn't hurt that Giselle is beautiful, sweet and kind and so attractive that he can't get his mind off her. Fin doesn't do relationships though so he is wary of his own plans. It shocks him when Giselle has a bit of fake boyfriend need too when her ex pressures her into attending his dad's funeral, graveside and wake at her ex-mother in law's house. The more Fin learns about Giselle's ex and the number he did on her self-esteem and self-confidence; the angrier and more protective of her he becomes. He needs to keep his distance since she is his best friend's sister and not the kind of woman who does one night stands and that's all he's good for. He can't seem to stay away though. Giselle's presence in his life sends him into a tailspin of confusing emotions, wants and needs that he denies because of his pro-surfing lifestyle of being away traveling so much and because he doesn't think he's cut out for a real home and family.

This book elicited so many different emotions in me. I found it amusing on one level, sad for Giselle and Fin, and a burning hatred for her ex, Roy. It was heartwarming particularly when Coco was present and it got steamy without getting extremely explicit.

I really enjoyed following along as the two took turns narrating from the beginning when they are both so broken and in need of healing. Their flaws make it tough to like them at first, but they do grow so the reader just needs to be patient. They were beautiful together even when they were in the early stages of getting stuff sorted out. I was cheering so hard when she finally put on that red bikini and Fin finally got up on his board in competition and rode the wave like a boss.

This is an older woman- younger man romance. There is a bit of insecurity, but it was just enough to feel authentic without going overboard on the unnecessary drama. I'm glad because the story already had enough legit conflict going on and didn't need that as a distraction. They didn't seem that different in age when they were together because Fin is an old weary soul and Giselle had been so suppressed and under her ex's thumb that she's really just starting to live.

I look forward to getting Giselle's sister's story next. I had so much enjoyment from this story about the little beach town of Sandy Cove and a few of its inhabitants that I can't wait to go back for a visit. This would definitely appeal to Contemporary Romance fans who are looking for a summer beach romance with a bit

more substance.

My thanks to Penguin Group for the opportunity to read this one in exchange for my honest review.

Suzanne says

Lauren Christopher truly captures the ambiance of high/low Southern California beach communities; shacks and mansions, the best surfing beaches, laid back surfers, young surfing phenoms, fish tacos, and the art scene. A little long, but fun to read.

Melann says

Plutôt 3,5/5

Un Promesses qui sent bon les vacances, c'est tranquille (trop dans la 1ère partie) et gentil.

Janelle says

Loved this book. Finished it in less than 24 hours.

First you should know that I'm a bit prejudiced when it comes to the romance genre. I want my books to have a love story in them, but I also want adventure and excitement...maybe an epic battle between good and evil. I don't mind some steamy scenes, but I don't like the lust to overpower the love. I also want my heroine to kick butt. To be blunt, I can't get past the cover of most romance novels with the cliche half-clad man holding up a swooning woman. My sense of feminist indignation kicks in. So it is generally a section of the bookstore that I steer clear of.

This book was different for me. The cover of the book showed a couple in love, not lust. Good start. I was surprised to learn that the heroine is a recently divorced mother. I can relate to a woman that wants passion, but puts the needs of her child first. But the moment I really got sucked in was the first time the story went into the head of the hero. This man needed saving as much as the woman. I was continually pleased that the author delivered so much respect and dignity through her characters while still keeping it steamy. I even got some adventure thrown in.

Overall, if this is the direction that the modern romance genre is headed, I'll have to reconsider my prejudice. The only reason I didn't give it a 5-star rating is that I reserve that for books I know I will read over-and-over again. Not sure I will read this multiple times, but I will definitely be picking up the next one in the series.

Kathleen Roth says

In her debut novel, *The Red Bikini*, author Lauren Christopher puts a capital "S" on the word sleazebag

when it comes to rotten ex-husbands. But hey, she also manages to put a very fine capital “S” on the word steamy when it comes to hot heroes. Giselle McCabe has been dragged down so low in a marriage to a narcissistic bully, she’s a mere shadow of the person she once was. Her self-confidence at an all-time low, the only thing she feels capable of doing with any measure of success is raising her young daughter. So when Giselle escapes to a California beach vacation and a hot, younger-than-her, international surfing champion Fin Henson can’t take his eyes off her (I so want to find this guy in real life and take him home with me), she thinks he’s only after a one-night stand. But as time passes, and a one night stand begins to appeal to her, the tables are turning because Fin is coming to the realization that he wants something more in life than wealth and fame. A yummy, yummy read I stayed up all night to devour. I definitely have this new author on automatic buy.

I read an ARC of this book in return for an honest review.

Terri Osburn says

I really love Lauren's voice, and her heroine is so relatable. Highly recommend this author.

Tricia Lynne says

This is the best contemporary romance that I've read in a long, long time. Ms. Christopher brings Southern California to life and takes the reader on a long luxurious vacation through the streets of Sandy Cove. Her description is so exact that if you close your eyes, you can envision yourself walking along the beach with Giselle as she discovers excitement and romance away from home. I fell in love with her hero Fin from the beginning and angst coupled with his vulnerability regarding Giselle is one many readers will sigh over. Her secondary characters are engaging and well-rounded, and one will root for Rabbit to have his own book. This is a wonderful start to a fantastic series, and I can't wait for the second book to arrive. Sandy Cove is a world I will revisit again and again..

(Given an advanced copy to review.)

Thuan says

DNF @ 59%

The Red Bikini starts off quite interesting with Giselle and Fin's encounter. However, the execution of

Giselle and Fin's story did not work for me.

1. It has too much superfluous descriptions. The prose has a one line dialogue, followed by paragraphs of monologues or narrations, and then followed by another one line dialogue with paragraphs of monologues or narrations afterward. It isn't always like this but the majority of it is and it grew very tiresome.
2. There is NO DEVELOPMENT. For the 59% that I read, the characters just push and pull, and rinse/repeat. I really expect that by 50%, there's some progression to the plot or characters in respect to the problems presented. But alas, it's one of those stories where the two main romantic characters just spend the majority of the book pushing away each other but they only get together at the end.

I prefer reading romance novels that actually spend most of the story on the actual romance, rather than *not* romance. When I realized that the story is just going to meander and skirt around without any romantic development, I just gave up. I especially hate reading stories with characters that do everything in their power to push each other away for silly reasons.

If the above isn't your pet peeves, then it will be a good read. Personally, it was a very slow and frustrating read.

Andrea says

**** 4.5 stars ****

I went into *The Red Bikini* expecting a fun summer romance. What I got was a summer romance that was sexy, transformative and inspiring. For me, *The Red Bikini* was a great summer romance, but also held strong Women's Fiction elements of life changes and the heroine's personal growth, although our hero Fin undergoes quite a few changes himself.

After a painful marriage that was filled with her husband's infidelities, capped by his abandonment four months prior, Giselle escapes to her sister's home in Sandy Cove, California, with her daughter in tow. Her first encounter is with the oddly charming Rabbit, her sister's neighbor and daughter's new surf instructor. Rabbit introduces Giselle to Fin, a world-renowned pro surfer. With his amazing looks and broody personality, Giselle is attracted to Fin, but assumes someone with bikini-clad women at his disposal would never be interested in someone like her. With the benefit of having his point-of-view as well, we learn that the broody and elusive Fin is also attracted to Giselle, despite knowing he'd be no good for her. This mutual attraction sets *The Red Bikini* off on course for a romantic, transformative relationship between two people who couldn't seem more wrong, but are so very right for each other.

Fin and Giselle's "relationship" begins as a mutually beneficial partnership. He needs a responsible, safe woman to convince he's a good investment. Giselle needs a sexy man to show her ex she's moved on. They both put the other into a neat little box, labeled with their expectations. But, Fin isn't just the wild, handsome pro surfer. He's someone who's always lived a nomadic life, suddenly finding himself longing for a home. Giselle doesn't want to simply be a safe, responsible woman who bakes cookies and makes school runs. Her husband forced her into a lonely life, and now she wants to be sexy and free, to take chances. The guilt they each face at their initial assumptions and the roles they give each other was a nice touch by the author. I like that she dug deep into Fin and Giselle, and forced me to dig as well.

Fin was sexy and mysterious, and it doesn't take long to figure out he's troubled. And troubling. I was initially excited for Fin and Giselle to connect. Then I learned his reasons and I wanted to tell Giselle to keep her distance, to protect her heart. And then I wanted to duck under my covers. There's a power exceeding alluring people have, and as with Spider Man, it comes with great responsibility not to jack other people up just because you're beautiful and you can. What I'm saying is, I was afraid Fin would dick around with Giselle's heart and I was not at all cool with that.

As it turns out Fin's more honorable than nefarious, when it comes to Giselle. After a strained ten-year marriage, Giselle has become a pale shell of her former self. When she meets Fin, she's overwhelmed by him. He's beautiful, young and mysterious. How could a man like him ever want a woman like her? Giselle has a prim appearance, Grace Kelly-esque sophistication and innocence that intrigues Fin. He wants to see her in her prim pajamas, and then he wants to take them off. Fin wants Giselle, not despite her controlled and elegant exterior, but because of it.

Fin and Giselle have so much to work through if they want the happy ever after. Fin must determine whether he wants to continue his solitary life, whether he wants to continue surfing at the professional level, whether he is willing to grab the chance of a life with Giselle. As for Giselle, she's been burned badly. Fin's feelings for her aren't truly in question, but after her painful marriage and divorce she needs someone who wants to be with her, home and with a family. The last part of the book was so difficult because I did want Fin and Giselle together so badly, but how could they bridge the distance. It wasn't easy in the slightest, but it was so worth it.

The more time I've had to consider The Red Bikini, the more I loved it. I loved that I couldn't predict the characters and the story, that I couldn't take for granted how it would end. The author pulled me so thoroughly into Fin and Giselle's story, and I haven't forgotten a moment of it since. The next book in the Sandy Cove series appears to center on Giselle's sister, Lia. I can't wait for more!

Favorite Quotes

"Fin," she whispered.

"What do you need?" He covered her hand, right there in her lap, then let go quickly and dipped his head to try to meet her downcast eyes. He smelled so good--like intrigue and dubious morality. It sent a delicious shiver down her arms.

She was anxious about missing him. He made her feel accepted in a way she hadn't felt in years--so unlikely, yet there it was. A twenty-eight-year-old pro surfer in California, making her feel she was good enough, smart enough, beautiful enough, and even a good enough mother--when it was all she'd been looking for from everyone she knew all her adult life.

Saly says

This book made me go zzz and skim! I honestly felt no connection to the heroine atleast, she was so weak and passive. The hero Finn was better but I didn't buy their love connection. Enough said!

I would rate it an average 3 stars!

Hailey Newbury says

Giselle Underwood is recently divorced with a 5 year old daughter, Coco. She and her daughter flee to California for a two week getaway at her sisters beach house. Totally out of her element, suburban stay at home mom Giselle is surprised to meet 28 year old Fin Hensen, a celebrity surfer at a beach party with her daughter. With her self confidence at an all time low, she focuses on raising her daughter rather than finding the missing romance in her life.

"Giselle was enough of a surprise- her kindness, her humor, her patience with Coco, her curves, her softness. But he knew he'd be doing her a service by getting the hell out of her way as soon as possible. He wasn't a good person for her to have brought here. She should have brought someone with honor..."

Fin Hensen is escaping his pro tour for a season, attempting to lie low until all of the chaos over his past rolls with the tide. A woman who he surfed with for years, who he also called his best friend, was killed by surfing, and he blames himself for not noticing her disappearance. To cope with the loss, he strings women along (it sounds bad, I know), and only has one night stands, no long term relationships. But Giselle brings something out in him that he can't ignore. He is able to have honest, real conversations with her, but he is insecure about himself so much that he doesn't want Giselle to fall in love with a beach bum.

"...Giselle's beauty was different. It began at her spine, or maybe at her soul, and radiated from there. He'd read once that a pretty woman was only pretty when she was young, but a beautiful woman was beautiful her whole life. The line finally made sense to him"

Giselle contemplates about her love life, and decides to have a one night stand with Fin. This moment truly illustrates her love and awareness of herself as an individual, in addition to Fin. Giselle's ex never really shares the reason to which he divorced her, except that he cheated twice in their 10 year marriage. After the one night stand, with Fin and Giselle realize their love for each other, but they really aren't ready for it because of her ex, who completely degrades Giselle at any moment possible. At the end of Giselle's two weeks, Fin travels to South Africa for a competition, and realizes in the semifinals that his "perfect wave" is having a family, a wife, and most of all, love.

"He liked laughing with her. He liked talking with her. He liked seeing her with Coco. He liked how she smelled, how she smiled, and how she left him feeling whole, and absolved, and smart, and... like he mattered somehow..."

This book has so many feels, so many emotions that I cant help but wish that I had a Fin Hensen in my life. It had heart, sass, steamy romance, and laughter. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and will recommend it to any reader!! :)

"You asked me the night while we were watching the water if I'd been in love before, and I hadn't, but I couldn't help but stare at you and wonder if it was like that I was feeling right then for you. From now on, I'd have to say yes. I've been in love. With you."

Jacqueline's Reads says

3 Surf and Sea Stars

Giselle is a single mother. Her husband has left her for a younger woman. It's the summer and Giselle plans to find herself. She moves to the beach to recharge her batteries.

Fin is a pro surfer, but doesn't have the best reputation. He's taking time off and he needs to get a better image. Maybe dating a sophisticated older woman will help him.

Giselle

I liked Giselle. Her story is sad. She's in her mid-thirties, has a daughter and doesn't have a job. She doesn't feel young or desirable. I have a soft spot for single mothers and although I'm not too fond of the older woman and younger guy story line, the age gap wasn't too much.

Fin

Fin is a character and he has a lot of issues. He single and doesn't want to settle down. He's never been in love and doesn't plan on to. He asks Giselle to go with him to impress some sponsors. Giselle said she would if he would go with her to a funeral where her ex will be there. Both know they are using each other and both agree to keep their relationship at a friendship level.

Review

Of course it's difficult to keep a friendship relationship, when one starts to have more feelings for the other. The Red Bikini's pace is a bit slow and very descriptive. I'm not fond of descriptive reads, but I do find the beach setting perfect for the current season.

The relationship between Fin and Giselle forms slowly and there's definitely chemistry. I wouldn't call The Red Bikini too steamy, but very light and cute.

An Arc was provided in exchange for an honest review

AMAZON