

Honeymooner's Handbook

Written by Written by Hayley Mitchell and Amy Strand

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When planning your honeymoon—the first romantic trip you'll take as man and wife—you want it to be the getaway of a lifetime. Whether looking for new experiences or resort relaxation, use our tips to make this honeymoon picture-perfect—after all, you only get one.

Prepared for Takeoff

After picking the flowers and narrowing down the guest list, planning a honeymoon can be daunting. Shannon Rice, travel agent and owner of Scottsdale's Riso Studio, offers up advice for honeymooning out of the box:

If you don't have the time, the means, or the energy to start your honeymoon the day after your wedding, per tradition, couples today frequently wait until the next week—or even the next season—to travel. "Waiting is definitely the new trend," Rice says.

Be sure to allow for a sufficient amount of time. "The average [honeymoon length] is seven to ten days," Rice says. "You normally put a good day and a half into travel, and you want at least a good week somewhere."

For "green" newlyweds seeking an action-packed, yet environmentally-friendly stay, many popular global destinations (think Costa Rica, Belize, Mexico and Canada) offer eco-chic accommodations.

Although tradition says that the groom is supposed to surprise the bride with the honeymoon, sometimes rules are meant to be broken. "I think it makes it a little more special if [the couple] works together, even if it's in the initial stages," Rice says. "That's going to be part of the memory, planning it together."

Schedule some down time. "Don't over-plan. It's great that you have [activity] options but that doesn't mean you have to have everything set up before you go and that does not mean that you have to do it all," Rice says. "You want to play hard as much as you relax."

A Trio of Untraditional Trip Ideas

While Maui and Mexico are magical, many modern honeymooners are looking to branch out. Rice suggests romantic locales like the Maldives, South America and Thailand. Here are a few of our picks:

Adventure in Africa For true explorers at heart, an African safari honeymoon is one of wildlife sightings and natural beauty. Kruger National Park, located in the northeastern part of South Africa, is one of the most expansive safari destinations in the world. For romance, Kruger Park offers on-site accommodations in private luxury lodges, bungalows and villas. www.krugerpark.co.za.

Sports in Switzerland For a sporty getaway in snowy, mountainous terrain, the cosmopolitan ski town of St. Moritz, Switzerland has it all. Experience the Swiss Alps by staying at Badrutt's Palace Hotel. A favorite among celebrities and royalty, this landmark hotel offers an elegant ambiance, exclusive ski packages and a worldly culinary scene. www.badruttspalace.com/hotel.

Culture in Paris What could be lovelier than a honeymoon in the romance capital of the world? Book your stay at the luxurious, 19th century Hotel Concorde Saint-Lazare. This chic hotel is nearby cultural hot spots like Musée Baccarat; high-end department store, Le Printemps Haussmann; and fine-dining, including the Baccarat Cristal Room. www.concordestlazare-paris.com/en.

Register Your Retreat

Prefer a scuba lesson over silverware? You can register for your honeymoon and have wedding guests pay for your plane fare, hotel, rental car and activities, from bunji jumps and massages to dinner out. "It's a little bit less stressful because [the couple] knows they're getting some money coming in the door [for a fun vacation]," Rice says. You can register the whole trip and guests will buy increments, just as they would buy

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