

ROMANCE TRAVEL

Destination
Spotlight:
St. Kitts
& Nevis

10
Places to
Honeymoon
in Europe

*Michael & Akilah Moore's
Destination Wedding*



Three Cruise Lines That are Perfect for an Unforgettable Honeymoon

By Dana Fox

It's not enough to have the planning for the perfect wedding... it's about the honeymoon. For the honeymoon you want to be able to relax, enjoy the scenery, and get away from the stress of the wedding. Here are three cruise lines that are perfect for a honeymoon. They each offer a different type of experience, so you can choose the one that's right for you. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a cruise line for you.

Destination Spotlight: SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Located in the Caribbean Sea, Saint Kitts and Nevis is a two-island country that offers many beautiful beaches and scenic views. This is a great destination for a honeymoon. The islands are small and easy to explore, and there are many beautiful beaches and scenic views. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a beach for you.

FESTIVAL LOVES PARADISE
If you're looking for a fun and festive honeymoon, the Carnival Festival in Saint Kitts and Nevis is a great choice. The festival is held every year and features a variety of activities, including music, dancing, and parades. It's a great way to celebrate your wedding and enjoy the local culture. The festival is held in the heart of the islands, so you can enjoy the best of both worlds.



BELIZE, Mother Nature's Best Kept Secret

By Tracy Wylie, guest editor

Are you looking for a romantic getaway? Belize is a great choice. It's a beautiful country with a rich culture and stunning natural beauty. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a beach for you. Belize is a hidden gem in the Caribbean, and it's the perfect place for a honeymoon. The country is small and easy to explore, and there are many beautiful beaches and scenic views.



Exotic Venues
If you're looking for a unique and exotic honeymoon venue, Belize is a great choice. There are many beautiful and unique venues throughout the country, from traditional Mayan ruins to modern resorts. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a venue for you. Belize is a hidden gem in the Caribbean, and it's the perfect place for a honeymoon.

Food, Organic Fun
If you're looking for a fun and delicious honeymoon, Belize is a great choice. The country is known for its fresh and organic food, and there are many beautiful and unique venues throughout the country. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a venue for you. Belize is a hidden gem in the Caribbean, and it's the perfect place for a honeymoon.

Wild Romance: Find the Honeymoon Adventure That is Right for You

Are you looking for a romantic and adventurous honeymoon? Belize is a great choice. It's a beautiful country with a rich culture and stunning natural beauty. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a beach for you. Belize is a hidden gem in the Caribbean, and it's the perfect place for a honeymoon.

Let an Award-Winning Luxury Safari Outfitter Help You Create the Trip of a Lifetime

Adventure - Adventure
If you're looking for a romantic and adventurous honeymoon, Belize is a great choice. The country is known for its fresh and organic food, and there are many beautiful and unique venues throughout the country. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a venue for you. Belize is a hidden gem in the Caribbean, and it's the perfect place for a honeymoon.



10 Great Places to Honeymoon in Europe

Are you looking for a romantic and adventurous honeymoon? Europe is a great choice. It's a beautiful continent with a rich culture and stunning natural beauty. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a beach for you. Europe is a hidden gem in the world, and it's the perfect place for a honeymoon.



Paris, France
Paris is a beautiful and romantic city in France. It's a great choice for a honeymoon. The city is known for its art, culture, and beautiful architecture. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a beach for you. Paris is a hidden gem in Europe, and it's the perfect place for a honeymoon.

Vienna, Austria
Vienna is a beautiful and romantic city in Austria. It's a great choice for a honeymoon. The city is known for its art, culture, and beautiful architecture. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a beach for you. Vienna is a hidden gem in Europe, and it's the perfect place for a honeymoon.

Edinburgh, Scotland
Edinburgh is a beautiful and romantic city in Scotland. It's a great choice for a honeymoon. The city is known for its art, culture, and beautiful architecture. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a more adventurous trip, there's a beach for you. Edinburgh is a hidden gem in Europe, and it's the perfect place for a honeymoon.



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Publisher's Message

This is our second annual Destination Wedding and Honeymoon issue. In this issue we spotlight Michael & Akilah Moore's beautiful destination wedding in Mexico. We plan to showcase more destination weddings in other issues. So if you like your destination wedding to be considered email us at: info@kazoompub.com. Put Destination Wedding in the subject line.

One of the traditions of the wedding is for the best man to make the first toast. But it's not uncommon, for a father, brother or good friend to make a toast as well. The best wedding speeches are carefully thought out and planned way ahead of the reception. A good speech will touch all the high points that you wish to deliver. There are specific elements to consider when writing these types of speeches, and they can all come together to help you deliver a message that hits just the right tone for the celebration. The following are five tips for making a successful wedding toast.

1. Go online or search through books that contain famous quotations. While you do not want to overload a speech with these quotes, it's a good way to add interest to your message.
2. Include any memories you may wish to mention about the couple during your delivery. A humorous but engaging story can work great to help set the tone for the rest of the speech and be something that the bride and groom can enjoy.

3. Stories from shared experiences like childhood or college make excellent anecdotes to include in your speech. These stories can also tug at heartstrings if your anecdote revolves around something sentimental.
4. I was a member of Toastmasters International and one of the things they stressed is the importance of practice. Practice your presentation before the actual event. As you practice, you may discover issues with pacing or ways to give dramatic pauses to emphasize points or punchlines.
5. Remember to look to the future in the speech and offer words of encouragement intermittently. These congratulatory remarks can help balance any good-natured ribbing.

Besides weddings, there's a lot more included in this magazine issue. We also cover great places for a honeymoon by cruise ship or throughout Europe. Plus, we provide some great romantic ideas for Valentine's Day. Debrina Jackson Gandy's article in this issue offers advice on, *How to Keep the Love Fresh in Your Relationship*. As you look at ways to enhance and strengthen your relationship in 2015, remember to take a romantic getaway that makes time just for the two of you. All of us at, Romance Travel Magazine, wish you the joy of travel for fun, inspiration and romance. Happy New Year!

Donna Beasley, The Romance Lady

Gluten Free Recipes: Once A Rarity, Now A Tasty Option Valentine's Day

There was a time in the not so distant past, when to utter the words 'Gluten-Free' prompted odd looks. Questions often surfaced about glue, construction, craft projects or coupons because it was such a new idea. Who could have guessed a tiny protein in wheat, barley, and rye could cause such havoc for the intestine in some people? And who could have imagined a diet without wheat, or where the protein had been separated somehow? Today, not only is the discussion a hot health topic, but more and more people are looking into gluten free recipes and uncovering a healthy beneficial diet?

Many people are still not sure exactly what all of this means. But most understand it is restrictive and circling around the subject of wheat. With each day new options abound for those looking for ways to experiment with this new diet. We are even starting to see things from boxed mashed potatoes to baking products with labels proclaiming themselves gluten free at the grocery store.

In a matter of 10 years the modern diet has gone from having this subject completely obscure and off the wall, to having major grocery chains carry a wide variety of gluten-free products. From complete obscurity to fame overnight, it offers a plethora of options and variety to please the pallet. By taking an emphasis off wheat, barley, and rye, there are many combinations of solutions that often increase health. One can choose to eliminate carbohydrates all together, focus on vegetables, or seek alternatives or modified processed foods. Often a combination of these options create the most innovative, tasteful, and unique recipes.



Sources for recipes are increasing by the day as well. There are a number of websites dedicated to helping consumers live a wheat-free lifestyle. Many of the recipes tend to focus on one or two styles. Most emphasize either increasing vegetables or using alternative wheat substitutes. New grains to the modern pallet that have increased in popularity with an emphasis on eliminating wheat include various types of rice and quinoa.

The world of gluten free recipes is offering new alternatives to traditional wheat. This diet offers consumers added health benefits, new tastes, textures, and a world of colorful ideas. For the average consumer facing digestive issues day in and day out, a diet with gluten free recipes is getting better by the day.



Do you need to make a gluten-free treat this Valentine's Day? Here are a few ideas.

Try Simple Mills Gluten-Free Chocolate Muffin & Cupcake Mix. The recipe is fast, easy and economical to prepare. The cupcakes are flavorful and good even without icing. www.simplemills.com. Or whip up a batch of Heartland Gourmet's delicious red velvet cake or peach-flavored gourmet muffin mixes. Remember presentation is important, so add icing, glaze or sprinkles and serve your cupcake on a beautiful dish.

www.Heartlandgourmet.com



Photo Courtesy of Oceania Riviera

Three Cruise Lines That are Perfect for an Unforgettable Honeymoon

By Dusty Fox

Every couple knows that planning the perfect wedding is no easy feat. And that is exactly why when it comes to making your travel plans for the honeymoon you may want to opt for a stress-free getaway. One that doesn't require booking hotels, planning daily itineraries, or pre-purchasing tickets to major attractions. If this sounds like your idea of a perfect honeymoon, you should definitely consider taking a cruise after saying your "I do's."

If you've never been on a cruise, you may be shocked to discover the enormous variety available for vacationers today. Whether you're looking for complete relaxation by the pool with pampering and fine dining, or are thinking of a non-stop itinerary packed with adventures and local experiences, today's cruise ships offer it all. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of

options when it comes to picking the right cruise ship and route. From Alaska's stunning scenery to tropical journeys through the Caribbean to tours through the Mediterranean, you can explore nearly every corner of the world on a cruise.

Just as there are all types of cruise ship experiences available for honeymooning couples, from the laid back to the action-packed, there are also options to fit every budget. If you've spent big time on the wedding and are looking to stick to a budget, you should have no problem doing so. On the other hand, if you are ready for a fantastically upscale experience and are able to pay for a heightened level of luxury, you'll have no shortage of options. If the idea of a cruise sounds appealing to you, make these 3 cruise lines your starting point as you begin your research:

Silversea

When it comes to lists of the best in luxury cruising, Silversea is a perennial favorite. The cruise line has just 8 ships, all of them relatively small, carrying just 100-540 guests each. The crew focuses on providing personal attention to everyone on board and there is nearly one crew member for every guest, a remarkable statistic for anyone in the hospitality business.

Silversea offers a variety of unique experiences that place an emphasis on different themes, including wellness cruises, culinary and wine voyages, and bridge sailings. Regardless of which ship or destination you choose, you'll enjoy ocean views from your suite and will experience the convenience of an all-inclusive pricing structure.

Oceania

Oceania boasts an impressive and unique collection of onshore excursions and longer land programs that allow guests to more thoroughly explore and learn about the countries which they visit. Destinations include the Caribbean, Panama Canal, South

Pacific, Australia, and more. Special activities include wine tastings, chef-led presentations, jazz concerts, and seminars. If you're interested in getting in touch with your artistic side or mastering a new skill in the kitchen, you will certainly want to check out one of the hands-on classes offered at the onboard learning centers.

There's no shortage of night-time entertainment aboard Oceania cruise ships in the form of martini bars, ship lounges with an eclectic variety of headline acts, and casinos. During the day you can always rest and relax poolside or head to the Canyon Ranch SpaClub, where they offer both soothing and invigorating treatments such as body wraps, acupuncture, and massages.

Celebrity Cruises

Celebrity Cruises include a number of amenities that will make your honeymoon all the more memorable. Onboard shops and shopping excursions on shore give you plenty of chances to find that perfect souvenir to take home as a memento of your trip. Late night comedy shows, Broadway-inspired performances, and a myriad of casinos, clubs, and bars will keep you entertained every evening. And if you feel like being part of the show yourself, you should definitely join in the nightly trivia games or "The Living Room Games," a fast-paced pop culture quiz show.

Even if you only have time for a mini getaway following your wedding, you can enjoy a few days on the open sea with Celebrity Cruises. Their itineraries are as short as four days and are priced very affordably. They sail to traditional favorites, like the Caribbean and Europe, and less-expected destinations like the Galapagos Islands and New England as well.

For those couples who are ready to unplug and travel without having to deal with separate hotel, dining, and entertainment reservations, cruising is an excellent option. With more cruise lines offering all-inclusive packages, you and your spouse-to-be can simply pick the destination that sounds most appealing to you and the number of days you'd like to travel, then rest easy knowing you'll have access to as much activity—or as little!—as you want throughout your trip. It's no wonder so many couples are opting to celebrate their first days as husband and wife aboard a cruise ship!



Photos Courtesy of Celebrity Constellation

Destination Spotlight: SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

By Dusty Fox

Located in the Caribbean Sea, Saint Kitts and Nevis is a two-island country that even many seasoned travelers have never heard of. This sense of being undiscovered only adds to its charm and allure. If you're looking for a tropical destination where you and your sweetie can escape this year, this tiny West Indies' nation deserves your consideration.

A FESTIVAL LOVER'S PARADISE

If you love celebrating alongside the locals at parades, concerts, and festivals, a well-timed trip to Saint Kitts and Nevis will be particularly rewarding. Here's a peek at some of their most noteworthy annual celebrations:

Carnival: Late December/Early January

Just like many of their neighbors throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, residents in Saint Kitts and Nevis celebrate Carnival. But this celebration is very unique, merging together Christmas traditions with cultural events that draw attention to the nation's African heritage. Highlights from the festival include lively parades and street performances, and competitions like the National Carnival Queen Pageant and Miss Talented Teen Pageant.

Green Valley Festival: May

Calypso performances, a beauty pageant, and a large community parade are the staples of this annual event. An evening of street jamming and an international artist night add to the fun and ensure attendees have plenty of chances to dance!

Saint Kitt's Music Festival: June

What better way to spend three nights in this Caribbean nation than under the stars, dancing along to international reggae and calypso artists at the region's largest music festival? After 17 years, this annual gathering has proven itself as the leading music event throughout the Caribbean. If you're looking for good tunes and good vibes, you can't go wrong with a trip to this legendary festival.



Photo Courtesy of Ocean Terrace Inn



Photo Courtesy of Photo courtesy of Nevis Tourism Authority

BEACHES FOR EVERY TASTE

It should come as no surprise that as an island nation, Saint Kitts and Nevis is home to some absolutely fantastic beaches. No matter what your idea of the perfect beach is, chances are pretty good that you'll like what you see as you explore the area.

Dieppe Bay Beach

If you and your sweetheart are fans of snorkeling, you'll definitely want to visit Dieppe Bay Beach. With the Caribbean Sea to one side and the Atlantic Ocean to the other, the scenery from this volcanic black sand beach is beautiful. In the water, snorkelers see lots of aquatic life, including beautiful coral, thanks to the reef which surrounds the area.

Cockleshell Bay

Those who enjoy long walks on the beach must visit the white-sanded Cockleshell Bay, which is over 2 miles long. There are a number of grills and restaurants along the water, allowing you stop in for a meal or drink whenever the urge strikes.

South Frigate Bay

Known as the place to party, South Frigate Bay has a lively energy that goes late into the night. During the day you can spend your time sunbathing, swimming, or windsurfing, and at night you'll have your choice of a growing selection of clubs and bars along "The Strip."

TOURS GALORE

From sailing to zip lining, and ATV tours to volcano hiking, there is no shortage of activities to keep you busy if you're looking for an activity-filled vacation. And those who want to explore the island from a more relaxing vantage point can always opt for a railway or private taxi tour.

Out at Sea

Naturally, many of the islands most famous excursions are based offshore. Deep sea fishing, catamaran outings, and sailing are just a few excellent ways to spend the day on the water. And if you're looking forward to getting wet, try scuba diving, snorkeling, or stand-up paddle boarding!

On Dry Land

Though small in size, both islands offer guests plenty of activities in addition to the to-be-expected beach-hopping and sunbathing. Birdwatching, petroglyph tours, and golfing are a few favorites with international visitors. You can also spend a few days visiting the many historical sites throughout the area, including churches, government buildings, quaint villages, and botanical gardens.



MENTAL AND PHYSICAL RELAXATION GUARANTEED

Even the most active of couples will agree that no romantic getaway is complete without at least a bit of pampering and relaxation. At Saint Kitts and Nevis, spend a day on a remote beach or getting a soothing spa treatment to unwind and reach an even deeper state of inner calm.

Spa Treatments and Massages

The islands are home to several spas which offer just about every type of treatment available, all but guaranteeing you'll be able to relax and enjoy your vacation to the fullest. Troubleshoot aches and pains or strive to attain a carefree state of mental bliss with popular treatments like a couples massage, full body wrap, or revitalizing facial.

Remote Beaches

While some local beaches are a hub of activity, others are tucked away in hidden corners where few tourists ever go. Spend a day or two visiting these remote places with your sweetheart and you may even have the whole beach to yourselves.

Luxury Dining

Dine in style at an upscale restaurant like "Blue Seafood Restaurant" or "La Cucina" and let the chefs take you on a culinary adventure. There are lots of beachfront restaurants where you can admire the views and watch the sunset while eating a gourmet meal inspired by local favorites and other cultures from around the world. Leave your watch and home and forget about time as you take in the experience with your sweetheart.

If you'd like to learn more about Saint Kitt's and Nevis, pay a visit to their official websites at <http://www.stkittstourism.kn> and <http://www.nevisisland.com>. They are both excellent resources for seeing what the islands have to offer and planning your visit. After just a few minutes of looking at pictures and reading about this incredible destination you'll be daydreaming about a trip to this lovely two-island nation!

BELIZE,

Mother Nature's Best Kept Secret

By Travel Media, guest author

Are you imagining a romantic, hassle-free wedding where you can have barefoot nuptials on a white-sand beach? A place where the azure Caribbean is your backdrop and all you have to worry about is being on time? If so, Hamanasi Adventure and Dive Resort in Belize will help you choose the perfect setting for your big day—whether on the sand or near Mayan ruins—and the resort's wedding coordinator will create the destination wedding of your dreams. This eco-friendly venue and honeymoon escape offers the unparalleled, off-the-beaten-path experience that adventurous couples seek.



Photo Courtesy of Travel Media-Hamanais Beach Wedding

Exotic Venue

This boutique resort hotel was built on 30 acres of dense beachfront forest and was designed to protect the local ecosystems and their biodiversity. Hamanasi was the first beachfront resort in Belize to receive Green Globe certification. In addition, it recently became the first resort in the country to earn the rigorous STEP certification by Sustainable Travel International and is dedicated to being a premier provider of sustainable lodging and eco-tourism in Central America.

The resort built stunning tree house accommodations amidst the trees—another first for Belize—and set aside more than 10 acres as a private nature preserve. The heart of this award-winning resort, the Great House, was recently renovated following “green” guidelines as well. During this renovation they doubled the square footage—including a spacious second floor—to house reception, a bar, and lounge area; new library/work room; and expanded restaurant, opening up the floor plan to allow for more natural light and better airflow.

Get ready to take advantage of diverse reef and rainforest adventures, then relax in a comfy hammock or cool off in the 50-foot freshwater pool. Hamanasi is a magical, intimate place where newlyweds can escape and enjoy the lush jungle of Belize, yet be a minute's walk from the sparkling Caribbean Sea.

Seaside Ceremony

With Hamanasi's Tropical Dreams Wedding Package, brides can choose to walk down a conch shell aisle with the sand between their toes or delight in a view of historic Mayan ruins. You can incorporate local, cultural elements into the ceremony, like Garifuna drummers playing traditional music in the background and sharing your first matrimonial kiss under a traditional Belizean wedding arch. Prior to the nuptials, the Hamanasi staff can arrange a private, guided hike to the Mayflower Waterfall and a romantic picnic lunch or schedule a private sunset cruise along coastal waters for some stress-free alone time.

Fresh, Organic Fare

At mealtime, you and your wedding guests will delight in the chef's “Fresh meets Fusion” cuisine, with different items served each day. Breakfast is a buffet of eggs—think vegetable scrambles and spinach omelets—with local meats, fresh fruit yogurts, cereals, and freshly squeezed juices, accompanied by a plate of tropical fruit and homemade baked breads. Lunch and dinner options consist of American classics as well as exotic, local dishes created using traditional ingredients such as cocoa, cassava, and yampie, as well as fresh produce from the on-site organic garden. The chef offers a new menu each night that includes a Catch of the Day, daily ceviche, and a trio of starters among other delicious dishes. You may dine inside beneath the spectacular mahogany trusses, on the veranda amidst the trees, or al fresco on the lower deck. Sip a glass of wine and savor your meal then wander up to the new widow's walk, or “Stargazer's Deck,” providing daytime views from the forest to the sea and nighttime stargazing enjoyment.

Honeymoon Hideaway

Turn your celebration into a honeymoon getaway with Hamanasi's Seaside Romance Package. Couples can imbibe their celebratory champagne in one of the honeymoon suites, private tree houses, or deluxe tree houses with private jacuzzi. This eight-day, seven-night package includes accommodations, three meals per day, five couple adventures, and some air and ground transfers, as well as a romantic, candlelit dinner with private server beachside, poolside, in-room, or on a private terrace. As a bonus,

all rooms come standard with Type B electrical outlets, hair dryer, basic toiletries (including locallymade soap), and a shoe cleaning kit.

Adventures Aboard

Your wedding party and guests can discover the best of Belize through a variety of tours offered by the Hamanasi Adventure Center. The resort has access to unspoiled habitats and is close to everything from caves to jungle rivers. They offer excursions like hiking Mayan ruins, scuba diving, and deep sea

fishing. All Hamanasi guides are fully licensed Belizeans who ensure plenty of excitement on their daily adventures while being mindful of the exposed natural environment.

Start planning your "I dos" on a warm beach amid cerulean waters. Hamanasi is sure to give you a casually elegant, eco-chic, white wedding to remember. Call 1-877-552-3483 or visit www.hamanasi.com for more information about wedding and honeymoon packages.



Photo Courtesy of Travel Media

Additional information: Hamanasi recently received accolades from TripAdvisor's 2014 Travelers' Choice® Awards and Conde Nast Traveler 2014 Readers' Choice Awards. This eco-friendly resort earned its position as #2 hotel in the World for exceptional service and #1 hotel in Central America and Belize in the same category. Additionally, Hamanasi was awarded #1 small hotel in Central America & Belize, and #1 in Belize and #2 in Central America for Romance. Hamanasi also made the Conde Nast Traveler Gold List, a listing of the world's best properties as voted by readers.

Wild Romance:

Find the Honeymoon Adventure That is Right for You

By Travel Media, guest author

You spent countless hours planning every detail of your big day and, now that it's over, you want to actually enjoy some quality time with your spouse before getting back to the daily grind. Why not start your journey together with an unforgettable trip to the Wouthern Hemisphere, where lions quietly stalk their prey, wildebeests run wild across the savanna, and you can get some much-deserved pampering after long days of tracking diverse wildlife. Here are three amazing honeymoon options for those who want more than the traditional sandy beach:

Let an Award-Winning Luxury Safari Outfitter Help You Create the Trip of a Lifetime

Romantic Adventure

Get your heart racing on an exhilarating tour through Cape Town, Kruger Park, and Victoria Falls—three places that should be on every bucket list. This is not a program for the average traveler; this itinerary is for couples that want to have true YOLO experiences throughout their tour! Start your adventure in Cape Town, a gorgeous city with rich cultural heritage, vibrant nightlife, white-sand beaches, and majestic mountains. While most tourists will spend their days in the city, you will stand at the edge of the continent at the Cape of Good Hope in Table Mountain National Park, home to penguins, seals, chacma baboons, and hundreds of other bird and mammal species. Spend an entire day on the water coming nose-to-nose with the colossal king of the ocean during a great white shark cage diving adventure. Enjoy another full day of beautiful scenery as you make your way into the Winelands for a private tour of a Stellenbosch vineyard, then sample some fabulous wine, chocolate, and cheese. You will also get to visit the Cheetah Outreach Center, where caretakers will teach you about the plight of the cheetah as you interact with these incredible felines.

Wing your way to Victoria Falls, known as “The Smoke that Thunders,” where an expert guide will take you on a tour through the forest, under a canopy of chattering monkeys, to spots that give you commanding panoramic views of the greatest curtain of falling water in the world. Climb aboard a gentle giant for a memorable elephant-back safari, culminating with a delicious breakfast in the bush. Thrill seekers will be torn when asked to choose between a birds-eye view of the



Photo Courtesy of Travel Media

falls via helicopter or a bungee jump over the water-filled gorge. Either way, you will have earned a relaxing break, so settle in on a romantic sunset cruise on the Zambezi River and watch as hippos and crocs float by.

Your final destination is Kruger National Park, one of the largest game reserves in Africa. The park offers amazing opportunities to explore the bush by land and by air, sometimes putting you within touching distance of wild animals in their natural habitat. You will take off in open safari vehicles on guided game drives to discover the Big Five—lion, elephant, buffalo, rhino, and leopard—in Kapama Game Reserve and track elusive leopard on foot during guided nature walks, learning the secrets of the bush from professionals. Round out your adventure with a breathtaking, early morning hot air balloon ride across the wilderness then soak it all in during a “his and her” spa treatment at the luxurious Kapama Wellness Center.

Safari for Lovers

If you're looking for a soft safari adventure with an unhurried pace, this itinerary is right for you. Spend four nights in awe-inspiring Cape Town, one of the most picturesque cities in the world. You may not want to leave your chic waterfront hotel with views of the azure seascapes, but there is so much to explore that we highly recommend stepping out. Enjoy a half-day city tour with an optional visit to the iconic Table Mountain via cableway, an opportunity lovebirds will find enchanting. Embark on a romantic sunset cruise across Granger Bay while sipping on complimentary sparkling wine and holding your loved one close. Travelers will sample some of the country's finest vintages and indulge in chocolate and cheese tastings in the Winelands before driving to the Cheetah Outreach Center for playtime with young cheetahs. During the second half of the trip, sweethearts will spend five days in Kruger National Park for incredible wildlife adventures. You will explore the bush in an open Land Rover with professional safari guides in search of the Big Five. Return to purely decadent accommodations offering gourmet cuisine and blissful nights under starry night skies.

Couples that want some rest and relaxation after an exciting safari should choose the exotic Seychelles extension. These islands are heaven for beach lovers and a haven for exceptional creatures like the black parrot, the Aldabra giant tortoise, and 26 species of crab. Whether you like luxurious resorts or quaint B&Bs, you will be able to find amazing accommodations amidst the white powder beaches and green-blue waters of this archipelago.

Safari in Style

If you want a luxurious honeymoon that still offers some adventure, then you can have it all with this crème de la crème program that will not disappoint. This itinerary features Relais

& Châteaux properties exclusively, which means you will receive a consistently high level of luxury and customer service throughout your journey. Relais & Châteaux is an association of the world's finest hoteliers, chefs, and restaurateurs that has set the standard for excellence in the hospitality industry.

You and your loved one will travel to Cape Town, Kruger National Park, Johannesburg, and Victoria Falls where you will experience daily game drives, wine tasting, city tours, animal interactions, and so many other amazing activities. However, each night you will get to bed down in some of the most exquisite accommodations in the world:

- Cape Town, Ellerman House: A quintessential urban refuge offering stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean and Lion's Head Mountain. The stylish interior is defined by bold fabrics, fine woods, and traditional furnishings. Each of the 11 guest rooms and two suites is individually decorated, creating a unique and comfortable environment all your own.
- Kruger Park, Camp Jabulani: This family-owned, luxury safari lodge is located in Kapama Game Reserve and features its very own herd of trained elephants that were rescued and brought to this sanctuary. Enjoy the only nighttime elephant-back safari in the world, feast on gastronomic delights, and pamper yourself with a treatment in the outdoor Therapy Lapa.
- Johannesburg, AtholPlace Boutique Hotel: This elegant, contemporary-classic hotel boasts a furnished library, swimming pool with built-in fireplace, and stylish bar area. Enjoy pre-dinner drinks and canapés before dining outside in the landscaped garden. Relax on your private balcony before slipping between the imported Frette bed linens and luxurious duck-down duvet.
- Victoria Falls, Royal Chundu River Lodge: Royal Chundu is Zambia's first Relais & Châteaux property and was created in complete harmony with its natural surroundings along the banks of the Zambezi River. The entire lodge looks out over the river, where an abundance of wildlife gathers, providing optimal game viewing throughout your stay.

Whether you are newlyweds or celebrating your golden anniversary, or you just want to share an unforgettable adventure with someone you love, Great Safaris provides romantic itineraries that will bring you closer together and give you more amazing memories than you could ever dream. For more information about these and other amazing Great Safaris' tours, visit www.greatsafaris.com or call 800-409-7755.



How to Keep the **LOVE** Fresh in your Relationship

By Debrena Jackson Gandy, author of “The Love Lies”

It started with Date Nights one Friday night a month consistently, and then expanded eight years ago, to him bringing me my favorite Starbucks espresso drink, a venti decaf breve latte, on Saturday mornings while I was still tucked cozily under the bedcovers. Now it includes praying out loud together, at least one night per week, for each other, our children, and family members, and also for friends and others outside of our immediate circle.

So what is “it” you may ask. “It” is a special ritual between you and your significant other or spouse that creates closeness, supports you in being present and attentive to one another, and strengthens your connection.

Let’s Start at the Very Beginning....

I’ve found that the best time to initiate rituals is at the beginning or near the beginning of a relationship, and then you can continue to build upon those you had from the very start. The possibilities are endless and should reflect what works for the two of you.

Maybe your ritual is a walk, jog, or bike ride together on Saturday mornings, or tea or coffee together at a usual spot around town or even a certain place at home. Maybe you have your “check-in chats” for 15 minutes after you’ve both gotten home from work sitting at the table or the counter, while sipping a certain wine or beverage together.

What Makes Couples Rituals Powerful

What makes a ritual powerful for a couple and different from a routine you do together is that it has the effect of increasing your appreciation for one another, and creates a space where time and attention are the most important investments. A ritual is

particularly powerful when it becomes a consistent ingredient in a relationship. Couples rituals should serve each couple, regardless of whether they work or not for other couples. Though the rituals may change, the key is in the constancy of having a ritual or rituals over time, in the face of changing circumstances and despite life changes. A couples ritual can be counted on to keep them tuned in to one another, valuing the other, and cherishing quality time that carries special meaning.

Even after 21 years of marriage, I still look for rituals to add to our relationship. Retiring to bed early and then both reading together, me a book and my hubby, the newspaper. Leaving him a love note on the bathroom counter once a week since he gets up very early to head out to work, long before I’ve arisen. Him opening and closing my car door for me when we go on our date night; sharing a favorite dessert, one plate and two spoons, whenever we go to a certain restaurant, or having Pillow Talk together on Monday mornings, his cherished weekday off from work. Greeting him with a hug as soon as he walks in the door (I have an in-home office for my business) at least a couple of days of the week.

Keeping It Juicy

Having rituals also helps couples keep their connection energized and fresh, and can keep you from two all-time relationship-killers: the contempt of familiarity and taking each other for granted. If you need some ideas for rituals, the site couplesrituals.org offers a broad range of rituals, from the bedroom to the bathroom, from traveling to talking, and some with food, too! Couples can have parting rituals, greeting rituals, texting rituals, phone rituals, bathing rituals, bedtime rituals, eating rituals, and the list goes on. The key is to be creative, and to do what works for the two of you.

A writer was quoted as saying, “Love doesn’t sit there like a stone; it has to be made, like bread, re-made every day, made new,” and I would offer that these couples rituals help us to re-make our relationships every day, make them anew, and keep them fresh.

Where to From Here

According to couplesrituals.org, the average “very happy” couple has 12 rituals. If your relationship is a little skinny on rituals, now is a great time to begin to incorporate them into your modus operandi as a couple.

To get started, you both can contribute some ideas for rituals, and then you can choose one from each of you to start incorporating into your love life. I agree wholeheartedly with this approach. I believe that having rituals as part of my relationship with my husband helps to keep it juicy. It also helps me to see him with “new eyes” and get excited about him every day. As I also share in my book, *The Love Lies*, I’m not interested in just a “good” marriage—I’m interested in having a juicy marriage. And this is what we have; and we have rituals to thank as part of what keeps our marriage juicy.

About the Writer: Debrena Jackson Gandy is a national best-selling author of two books. Her newest book is titled “*The Love Lies: 10 Revelations for Women that will Transform and Enrich Your Relationships*.” She is the self-proclaimed leader of the Relationships Revolution. Debrena is a popular radio show guest and has participated in more than 50 radio shows; has appeared in Oprah’s O, Essence, Ebony, and Woman’s Day magazines; and has been seen on Oprah.com, Redbook.com, Jet.com, and SoulofAmerica.com, as well as on TV on CNN, CNN Live, Good Day New York, Good Morning Texas, Good Day D. C., The Better Show, and numerous regional morning news shows. She lives in Seattle with her family. You can order her book through her website, www.MillionDollarMentor.net.

10 *Romantic Ways To Spend Valentine's Day*

By Lana Orndorff

VALENTINE'S DAY IS A WONDERFUL TIME TO SHOW THE PERSON YOU LOVE HOW MUCH YOU TRULY CARE. FLOWERS, CANDY, AND JEWELRY ARE ALWAYS NICE, BUT NOTHING COMPARES TO SPENDING SOME QUALITY, ROMANTIC TIME TOGETHER. SINCE VALENTINE'S DAY 2015 IS ON A SATURDAY, PLAN A WHOLE DAY OR WEEKEND'S WORTH OF ACTIVITIES THAT YOU AND YOUR LOVE WILL NEVER FORGET.

1 *Stay at a Bed and Breakfast*

For a great overnight or weekend getaway, spend some time with your love at a Bed and Breakfast. The beauty of Bed and Breakfasts is that each one is unique. You can choose one in the city or one out in the country. An old B&B or a new one. A two-room or a twenty-room. Near or far. Whatever fits you as a couple. The quaintness of a Bed and Breakfast and the personal touches it can bring will surely put you and your beloved in the mood for romance. Have someone else make you a delicious breakfast without having to clean up. Stay in and enjoy each other while you are there, or explore the neighboring area.

2 *Watch an Old Movie*

Find a theater that plays old black-and-white movies, or watch your favorites at home, and let them transport you to an era of pure romance. Classics like *Casablanca*, *Gone with the Wind*, or *Sabrina* are perfect for cuddling up with your beloved and sharing a favorite snack or drink. Make sure to steal a few sweet kisses between your favorite scenes.

3 *Go to a Memory-Filled Restaurant*

Special occasions are a great time to remember some of the most meaningful times in your relationship. What restaurant did you go to on your first date? Or when you realized you loved the person sitting across from you? When you proposed? Spend Valentine's Day eating, drinking, and reliving that moment. Remember to make reservations well in advance, though. Tables certainly fill up fast.

4 *Visit a Cozy Bookstore*

Books have the ability to transport the greatest love poems and stories through time and space. Ditch the well-lit Barnes and Noble on Valentine's Day and find a cozy corner of a local used bookstore. Share favorite poems, quotes, or love stories with your beloved. Secretly buy each other a book you know your love would enjoy, then exchange them while sharing a romantic Valentine's Day moment.

5

Explore a Nearby City

Just because it's close, doesn't mean it can't be an adventure. Explore a city with your valentine that neither of you has been to before. New places and experiences always create lasting memories.

6

Rent a Hotel Room with a Jacuzzi

Rent a room in any hotel that meets your budget--just make sure it has a Jacuzzi tub! Spend the evening in, just you and your valentine, relaxing in a tub for two. Drink champagne and celebrate your love for one another. If that isn't perfect enough, ordering room service will be the whipped cream on top of this Valentine's Day treat.

7

Wander through a Museum

Pretend you are in Paris, the city of romance, and wander through an art museum with your valentine. Spend a couple hours wandering hand-in-hand, letting the beauty of the art around you set the mood for a perfect Valentine's Day. Complete a romantic faux-Parisian afternoon at the museum with an espresso and a pastry from a nearby cafe.

8

Enjoy a Wine Tasting/Local Vineyard Getaway

Do you and your beloved enjoy a nice glass of wine? A Valentine's Day (or weekend) trip to a local vineyard or winery can be the perfect way to celebrate. Virginia, Illinois, California, Michigan, Washington, and Colorado have some of the most notable vineyards in the country, but almost all 50 states have somewhere to enjoy a variety of good wines with your love. Check it out and see what is close to where you live. You might be surprised. Sipping wine by a fire might be closer than you think. Bonus Tip: Some vineyards have connections with local hotels or bed and breakfasts, so ask if they have any deals, or even free transportation between the two, in case you want to extent your Valentine's Day outing into an overnight excursion.

9

Have a Picnic

If you are lucky enough to live in an area that is warm during February, pack a picnic for you and your valentine. Include favorite foods and drinks, bring a big, comfortable blanket, and choose a quiet spot where the two of you can relax and enjoy the day. If the weather isn't suitable for an outdoor picnic, have an indoor picnic! They can be just as fun and romantic.

10

Create a Scavenger Hunt Leading to a Favorite Place

Send each other on a scavenger hunt, through your home or through the city, leaving personalized love notes that will give your beloved a fun, romantic adventure. Have them end the hunt in a special place where the two of you can celebrate the magic that is Valentine's Day.



STOCKHOLM:

A World of New Experiences For Valentine's Day

By Nathalie Aucutt

To me, there is nothing better than cold and sunny winter days when I can wrap up, walk over frosty leaves, and see my breath in the fresh air. It must be a winter baby thing as my boyfriend is the same, and so rather than chasing the sun, we opted to go with the snow and spent a long weekend in Stockholm for Valentine's Day last year.

There is something quite fairytale-like about this Scandinavian hub. Known as the Venice of the North, its set on the edge of a beautiful archipelago in the Baltic Sea. The landscape is simply breathtaking, especially at this time of year when snow is a regular occurrence and the air is still. As Sweden's capital, Stockholm has everything you'd expect from a big city, but its waterside setting, beautiful architecture, and historical center give it so much more—something magical.

After a filling breakfast on our first morning, we put on our warm gear and headed out from our cozy hotel in search of the country's biggest open-air museum. We wandered through the city past snow-covered buildings to the island of Djurgården and eventually reached Skansen, which charts Swedish culture and lifestyle through the ages. This place is so interesting, but also so much fun! You can find out about all Sweden's history and there is even a zoo, which was my favorite part. Like a couple of big kids, we loved seeing the different animals that we'd never seen before, like the huge bison.

The new experiences don't stop there, though. Unusual foods are also on the menu in Stockholm, and we went to a gorgeous restaurant called Fem Små Hus to celebrate our Valentine's Day. The name of the restaurant means "five small houses" in Swedish. The restaurant is located in the old center of the city, Galma Stan. There has been a restaurant on this site for over 300 years, and when you get inside you can see the different levels of each of the rooms. This setting adds to its enchanting atmosphere, which is just perfect for a romantic meal. We loved trying the reindeer fillet with blackcurrant sauce and the marinated elk with fig compote—the flavors were incredible!

After our delicious food we decided to have a drink in the old town, which is full of great little bars where

you can really enjoy the evening. It's easy to get lost in this part of Stockholm because of the narrow, cobbled streets and all the shops that tempt you to come inside, but that's part of the fun, and we loved being able to wander through this twinkly area—it's just such a welcoming place!

As Stockholm is situated on the water, we were eager to explore the beautiful archipelago for its fascinating nature and geology. There are literally hundreds of islands around Stockholm; some are inhabited but others are too tiny to live on and have either just a few trees on them or nothing at all, making for a dramatic setting for a boat ride. Although it was cold out there with the wind in our hair, we were lucky that the sun was out and so we had a fantastic time out on the Baltic Sea, seeing the city and its surroundings from a totally new viewpoint.

When we travel, we love to try things that we wouldn't usually get to do at home, so since we were in northern Europe in the winter, we decided to make the most of it and go ice skating the natural way! Stockholm has a few ice rinks set up throughout the colder months, but we were ready for an adventure so we went skating on Lake Malaren. With a natural surface, skating on a lake is not as smooth as it is on a rink, but the novelty of it makes up for this. Snow on the trees, the stillness in the air, and the tranquil atmosphere made this a totally serene activity, and we both loved this trip out of the city. It was an amazing experience and although we were a little nervous at first, we grew more confident and were able to enjoy the stunning winter wonderland together as we laughed our way around the ice and helped each other get up when we lost our balance!

After all that ice, there was only one thing left—more ice! After hot baths, we decided to round off our trip in Stockholm's Icebar—an entire bar made from, you guessed it, ice! You can, of course, keep your coat on in this bar and they even give you a big cape to wear, complete with fur-trimmed hood for an authentic Scandinavian experience. Even the drinks are served in giant ice-cubes, which just makes the whole thing even more exciting. This was the perfect way to end our Valentine's break in what is absolutely my favorite city in winter.

10

Great Places to Honeymoon in Europe

By Nathalie Aucutt



As a long-time favorite among honeymooning couples, Europe is a continent bursting with vibrant history, top-class attractions, and breathtaking scenery. Home to the world's best food, wine, and service, Europe is overflowing with dream honeymoon destinations.

Highlands, Scotland

Want to get away from it all on your honeymoon? Host to craggy mountains and heather-covered hillsides, the Highlands' unique landscape is a tranquil retreat where you and your partner can get back to nature and drink in total relaxation.

Head to the remote lodge Skiary for complete seclusion; only reachable by boat or foot, it offers newlyweds an idyllic sanctuary without electricity or phone signal.

Rent a VW Campervan for a fantastic and fun way to get around the Highlands, allowing you to take advantage of "wild camping" and the majestic scenery.

Nature lovers can spend a magical morning at the Black Isle to watch the dolphins playing in the sea. Spend cozy evenings in atmospheric pubs then let a night under the stars capture your imagination on this wild, rugged, and absolutely breathtaking honeymoon.

Paris, France

As you would expect from the city synonymous with romance, Paris is a heady mix of stunning architecture, world-class dining, and inspiring culture that will truly sweep you off your feet. Even its language is romantic! After taking a walk through the pretty, tree-lined streets, order coffees and croissants at a street-side café on the famous Avenue des Champs-Élysées. Indulge in Paris' famous haute cuisine at Restaurant David Toutain on the Left Bank where you can enjoy an exquisite tasting menu. Of course, no honeymoon in Paris would be complete without visiting the Eiffel Tower. Once at the top, you can take in the views of this European gem and see where you'll be heading next. To round off your visit in style, enjoy a romantic, champagne-filled dinner cruise on the River Seine—the best way to enjoy the City of Lights.

Venice, Italy

Beautifully painted buildings, incredible food and a magical atmosphere await you in the world famous floating city of Venice. Made up of 118 islands connected by tiny bridges and canals, Venice is the gleaming jewel of Europe and an enchanting honeymoon destination in its Mediterranean lagoon. Throw away your tourist map and enjoy getting lost in Venice's narrow streets or jump on a water taxi to explore another island, like Murano, home to Venice's colorful glass. Of course, the most romantic way to experience Venice is on a gondola ride, where you'll glide through its canals in style. With music filling the air and often the option of food and drink on board, it's a truly glamorous experience that epitomizes this captivating city.

Lake Bled, Slovenia

If you weren't lucky enough to tie the knot in the Gothic Assumption of Mary church, which sits serenely in the center of Lake Bled, then perhaps you could enjoy the lake on your honeymoon. Lake

Bled is set in tranquil northwestern Slovenia, and for years, it's maintained its status as one of the most romantic destinations in Europe. Set beneath the Julian Alps where you can enjoy breathtaking hikes in pristine surroundings, Lake Bled is a perfect honeymoon destination, focusing on the beauty of nature, enhanced by magnificent architecture. Climb up to Bled castle, which is perched on top of a steep hill and dates back to the 11th century, to get a great view of the whole area, then take a boat trip for an afternoon of relaxation.

The Romantic Road, Germany

If you like road trips, this alternative honeymoon could be perfect for you. Linking Würzburg in southern Germany with Füssen near the Austrian border, this old medieval trade route winds its way through picturesque towns and pristine countryside, giving you plenty of opportunities to stop off at ancient churches and majestic castles along the way. Usually travelled north to south, this trip is like something out of a fairytale. The quintessentially German architecture and landscape are stunning, and the history of these beautifully preserved places is unmatched. If you're looking for incredible scenery and old-fashioned romance, look no further!

Reykjavik, Iceland

Forget relaxing on a beach and drinking cocktails; a honeymoon in Iceland is way off the beaten path. For an extraordinary couples retreat, make your way to Reykjavik, the most northerly capital city in the world. Shrouded in a totally unique culture, Iceland is always intriguing, and its capital is one of Europe's most unusual cities.

Perfect for couples that have enjoyed a winter wedding, Reykjavik is one of the few places in the world where you can catch a glimpse of the aurora borealis. This incredible natural phenomenon, also known as the Northern Lights, can be seen above this beautiful city from September to March, giving you an unforgettable and completely out-of-this-world honeymoon experience.

Santorini, Greece

This volcanic Greek island is a haven for honeymooners who want to enjoy the best service in front of some of Europe's best views. The dramatic scenery, dominated by a volcano, makes for an amazing setting for romantic evenings wandering the tiny streets of pretty Oia. Enjoy fresh seafood overlooking the turquoise Aegean Sea after an afternoon of winetasting at one of Santorini's vineyards. You're sure to feel the romance on stunning Santorini—there is even a beach the color of love, so don't miss your chance to spend a morning on the red sand! Afterwards, you can catch a boat to the volcanic hot springs and enjoy a rejuvenating mud bath together. For total privacy on your honeymoon, check into one of the cave hotels in which

rooms are built into the side of the cliff, facing out to sea, offering uninterrupted views.

Rhodes, Greece

If you're after sun, sea, and sand, Rhodes will not disappoint. This fun island has some of the most inspiring scenery in Europe, and since it's blessed with 300 days of sunshine every year, it makes for a hot and memorable honeymoon. There is an air of complete relaxation here, making this island a dream honeymoon destination; the pace is slow and the weather is simply amazing. As Rhodes has such a vibrant history, there is plenty to keep you both occupied. Rent a car to explore the secluded coves and villages around this pretty island or take a trip to ancient Lindos, where donkeys still amble along the cobbled streets. For unrivaled service and style, stay at the Aqua Grande Hotel, where you can enjoy the finest Greek cuisine as well as sea views from the divine pool.

Fjords, Norway

Start your new life together with an adventurous honeymoon in the Norwegian Fjords. These dramatic, steep-sided inlets in Scandinavian Europe are stunning natural wonders. One of the most enthralling ways to experience them is by taking a cruise during which you can enjoy panoramic views of the Fjords and, of course, top-class service. When you're not exploring the Fjords' capital, Bergen, with its beautifully preserved historic houses and cable cars with stunning views, you'll be sailing through Europe's most pristine landscapes with majestic mountains, large expanses of calming water, and fairytale towns that cling to the edge of the shores. What could be more romantic than discovering this untouched wilderness on the edge of the Arctic together?

Dubrovnik, Croatia

Perched on the edge of the Dalmatian Coast, it's easy to fall in love with Dubrovnik. One of Europe's most attractive and welcoming cities, it makes for a dream-like honeymoon where you and your loved one can enjoy a peaceful break away from the crowds, soaking up everything this fascinating city has to offer. Take a walk up onto the city walls and catch your breath together while taking in the views of the sea. As this ancient city is on the water, there is no shortage of beaches to lounge on, and there are even water taxis to whisk you over to Lokrum Island, where you can enjoy stunning views of Croatia's coastline. Back within the city walls, wander hand-in-hand through the maze of streets past the historical buildings and enjoy the street music and magical atmosphere around Onofrio's Fountains.



Michael & Akilah Moore's

Destination Wedding

By Donna Beasley

RTM: When & Where Did You Get Married?

Akilah: We got married May 9, 2014 at the Barcelona Maya Palace Deluxe in the Riviera Maya area of Mexico. It was about 20 miles from Playa Del Carmen.

RTM: Why did you choose Mexico?

Akilah: We liked that they have a vibrant nightlife, phenomenal beaches, rich culture and that there was plenty to do. We wanted a place that gave our guests the option of a lot of things to do.

RTM: How many guests attended?

Akilah: We had 53 guests.

RTM: How did you coordinate everything from your home in Chicago?

Akilah: I had spent several months researching on my own online. There were so many resorts it was getting overwhelming. So I contacted DestinationWeddings.com. They were our travel agent and they helped us secure the right packages that fit our specific criteria. Once we made our selection, they put us in touch with the on-site wedding coordinator who helped us plan all the events and details of our wedding day.

RTM: How did the on-site wedding coordinator help?

Akilah: She gave us 10 different options that met our criteria. Once we chose the resort, she created a package for our guests with a group room rate. And, she set up a website for our guests with all the wedding details and booking information. This was really helpful for us because we didn't have to handle any guests travel. She was the contact person for all our guests for booking their accommodations, excursions and transportation to and from the airport.

RTM: What was your criteria for selecting the resort?

Akilah: We wanted a beach backdrop wedding. Most of the resorts had the wedding right on the beach, in the sand. We didn't want to be casual and barefoot in the sand; we wanted our wedding to be a little more upscale. We wanted to be outdoors but off the beach. That's why we chose the Barcelona Maya Palace Deluxe. Our ceremony took place on this lovely gazebo that overlooked the beach. It was really beautiful and all of our guests were able to sit in the gazebo area.

RTM: Were there any scary moments?

It actually rained 25 to 30 minutes before the wedding. The hotel had started moving the chairs inside to their alternative location. But thank, God, it stopped raining. The sun came out and the day turned out to be picture perfect.

RTM: What did you do following the ceremony?

We took a lot of pictures on the beach and on the roof top terrace where we had a cocktail hour for our guests. From there we moved to the Coral Grill. It was a nice airy place. All of the windows opened and you had a 360 degree panoramic view. The room gave us the ambience being able to see the outdoors. It was a nice private room without the traditional banquet room setting, which we didn't want.

RTM: How was the food?

The food was wonderful. We had seafood during the cocktail reception and the coconut shrimp were great. For the entrée we had pesto chicken and tequilla lime soup which is popular in the area. We picked a delicious cake that had 3 flavors which was prepared by the resort.

RTM: Did you do any decorating on your own?

The only thing I went outside the resort for were the flowers for the table settings and the bridal bouquets. We went directly to a local florist in Cancun and saved about 50% from what the hotel would charge. I ordered the flowers and my family pitched in and made the table settings and bouquets.

RTM: What other activities were available?

One of the things that made it nice for our guests was that it was an all-inclusive resort. They had entertainment all day and into the evening. They had snorkeling, canoeing, salsa dance lessons, poolside aerobics, and a disco nightclub right on the premises. Plus, the concierge was available to book any excursions people were interested in taking. Most of our guests just wanted to stay around the beach and relax. It was great because we didn't have any pressure to entertain our guests.

RTM: What was the highlight of the day?

Our wedding dance. We selected the song just a week before our wedding. The song was, Prime Time by Janelle Monáe. We got into the moment and had fun. People asked us if we rehearsed that dance, but we hadn't. It was spontaneous and we had a good time.



RTM: What advice do you have someone planning a destination wedding?

I would recommend working with a travel agent that specializes in destination weddings. We used destinationweddings.com and that was a turning point for us. The travel agent had been to the site so she was very familiar with it and knew it fit our criteria. Sometimes when you're searching online, the pictures can't really tell you how intimate the location is, how private the ceremony area is, etc. Having an expert is really helpful, if you're not able to fly out and see the locations yourself.

RTM: Any additional tips you'd like to share?

Really know your criteria. What things from are most important to you for your dream wedding. What budget are you looking for that would be reasonable for your guests. We planned our

wedding in 6 months, so we were very conscious of the budget. Usually for a destination wedding you give your guests a year. We were surprised we got the turnout that we did. But we chose a place that was easy to get in and out of with direct flights from Chicago to Cancun. And the all-inclusive package was an excellent choice for our guests.

RTM: We wish you much success in your marriage as you head towards your first anniversary. We can't say it any better than the song from Janelle Monáe, "It's a prime time for your love, and heaven is betting on you."



ROMANCE TRAVEL

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“Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not”

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*



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