

Over the moon

Inspired by the 10-year anniversary of marriage equality in England and Wales, Laura French rounds up some of the best spots for LGBTQ+ honeymoons



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ith more countries legalising same-sex marriage (legislation for marriage equality was passed in England and Wales 10 years ago) and others offering a welcoming, tolerant attitude, the number of LGBTQ+ honeymoon destinations is growing all the time. To help you give clients a steer on where to choose, we've rounded up some of the best – from the Seychelles to South Africa, Mexico to Mykonos and plenty beyond.

THAILAND

Why: As one of the most LGBTQ-friendly countries in southeast Asia, Thailand is an obvious choice for a honeymoon that combines a gay-positive attitude with paradise islands, head-turning landscapes and fascinating culture. Although same-sex marriage isn't legal there yet, LGBTQ+ couples are warmly welcomed. The country is home to one of the world's largest transgender communities, making it a good option for gender-diverse travellers too.

Experts say: "Asia has become increasingly popular for LGBTQ+ honeymoons," says Chris Crampton, chairman of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) UK & Ireland. "In Thailand, as well as in countries like Taiwan, Singapore and Japan, there are diverse travel experiences as well as a colourful calendar of LGBTQ+ festivals and events, making it an ideal destination for multi-centre honeymoons."

Where: For a honeymoon that pairs cultural explorations in Bangkok with laid-back island life on Koh Samui, Kuoni recommends twinning Avani+ Riverside – an LGBTQ+ hotspot that's the home of Lost & Found, known for its pop-up drag shows and other performances – with Rocky's Boutique Resort. Set in a secluded cove right on the beach, the latter boasts exceptional snorkelling, with lively Lamai a short stroll away and offering a slew of bars, restaurants and shops. ➤

PICTURE: Shutterstock/Soloviova Ludmyla



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Kensho Ornos restaurant, and pool (below); Rocky's Boutique Resort; enjoying the beach

PICTURES: Dimitrios Poupalos; Shutterstock/oneinchpunch



Book it: Kuoni offers three nights at Avani+ Riverside Bangkok and seven nights at Rocky's Boutique Resort in Koh Samui from £1,749 per person, including daily breakfast, with flights from Heathrow in May 2024. kuoni.co.uk

GREECE

Why: For a honeymoon closer to home that fuses cultural sites with idyllic beaches, look to Greece. Along with Santorini and some of the smaller islands, Mykonos is especially welcoming to same-sex couples, with a number of upscale, LGBTQ+ bars and clubs across the island (including the famous JackieO'). You'll also find postcard-pretty beaches, an excellent culinary scene and opportunities for idyllic strolls around the cobbled, maze-like streets of Mykonos Town.

Experts say: "Greece's commitment to safety, inclusivity and warm hospitality makes it an exceptional choice for LGBTQ+ honeymooners," says Eleni Skarveli, UK and Ireland director of the Greek National Tourism Organisation. "For clients seeking off-the-beaten-track

options, Tinos and Syros provide unique, authentic and tranquil experiences, offering a serene escape for LGBTQ+ travellers."

Where: For those heading to Mykonos, Caribtours recommends Kensho Boutique Hotels & Villas. "With views of the bay of Ornos and traditional Cycladic architecture, this is a tranquil, intimate setting," says head of sales Rebecca Bryson. "Dining here is exceptional, and most of the rooms have either private plunge pools or Jacuzzis."

Book it: Caribtours offers seven nights at Kensho Boutique Hotels & Villas from £1,549 per person, based on two sharing a Zen Room, including breakfast, transfers and flights from Heathrow on October 9. caribtours.co.uk

SOUTH AFRICA

Why: As the fifth country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage in 2006, South Africa is the continent's most welcoming country for LGBTQ+ travellers and honeymooners can expect a mix of wildlife, beaches, world-class cities and wine.

Experts say: "Cape Town and Johannesburg have the country's largest and most diverse LGBTQ+ populations," says Kgomotso Ramothoa, acting head of South African Tourism for the UK and Ireland. "These cities have some of the hottest galleries, restaurants, theatres, shops and nightlife, alongside fantastic Pride events."

Where: For couples aiming to combine city explorations with luxury vineyard visits and game drives without the crowds, look to Abercrombie & Kent's Classic South Africa itinerary. This 12-day private tour starts with a stay at the One&Only Cape Town before heading to Hermanus, one of the best whale-watching locations in the world; the Cape Winelands; Sabi Sands, a private game reserve next to Kruger National Park; and Johannesburg.

Book it: Abercrombie & Kent's Classic South Africa private tour costs from £8,680 per person for 12 days, including flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast and some guiding. abercrombiekent.co.uk

BEST OF THE REST

Mexico: Same-sex marriage became legal last year in Mexico, and it's one of Latin America's most LGBTQ+ friendly destinations. For a luxury stay 10 minutes north of Cancun, If Only recommends Secrets Playa Mujeres, where couples can combine the honeymoon with a complimentary wedding package. A week's all-inclusive costs from £5,818 per couple, including flights between May 1 and October 31, 2024. ifonly.net

Vietnam: Centred around Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, where Viet Pride takes place in August, Vietnam's reputation as an LGBTQ+ travel hotspot is on the rise. "In recent years, positive strides have been made to recognise the LGBTQ+ community in Vietnam, and it's now a hassle-free and welcoming destination," says Stuart Wakefield, senior destination specialist at Flight Centre UK. "Visitors can also enjoy experiences that would be significantly more expensive in honeymoon hotspots such as the Maldives." flightcentre.co.uk

The Seychelles: As one of the only destinations in the Indian Ocean where same-sex relations are legal, the Seychelles is a popular spot for LGBTQ+ honeymoons, and there's plenty to lure - from barely touched beaches to lush mountains and unique wildlife. For a stylish beachfront stay on Mahé, Gold Medal recommends the all-villa Hilton Seychelles Northolme Resort & Spa. A week in a Sunset Villa costs from £3,999, including flights on May 4, 2024. goldmedal.co.uk