

# Summer lovin'

**Make the most of wedding season with the best honeymoons to take in summer, says Katie McGonagle**

**@katie\_mcgonagle**

**I**t's the start of summer, the flowers are in full bloom, and up and down the UK, people are dusting off their hats, posh frocks and three-piece suits, because wedding season is well under way.

Nearly two thirds of weddings take place between May and September, according to the Office for National Statistics, with four in 10 during the peak months of June, July and August. And while some couples might hold off their honeymoon for a few weeks or even months, most still want to jet off within a few days of their big date – if only to unwind after the worry of wedding planning.

That means you need to have a few ideas up your sleeve for the best places to go on a summer honeymoon. There's no point

sending them to Vietnam in the middle of monsoon season, or to the South Island of New Zealand at the height of the southern hemisphere's winter. But get it right, and you'll keep the happy couple's wedding day buzz going all the way through the honeymoon.

## ► THE FLY-AND-FLOPPERS

After all that wedding stress – the flurry of fittings, photographers and family drama that seems to come with any set of nuptials – couples could be forgiven for wanting to flop down on a beach and not move for a fortnight.

They aren't short on options, but why not look for somewhere that will spoil them with a dedicated honeymoon package and help their wedding budget

stretch that bit further too?

Secrets Akumal Riviera Maya includes a complimentary Secrets Eternity Honeymoon package on stays of a week or more in a Junior Suite Swim Out, so as well as easy access to the pool, they'll get sparkling wine, fresh fruit and flowers on arrival, breakfast in bed with champagne cocktails one morning, a massage for two, plus another couples' spa treatment of their choosing, a private beachfront dinner one evening, and nightly turn-down service with petit fours.

And if you're wondering whether summer is the best time to be by the Caribbean Sea, Funway Holidays' product destination manager Malcolm Davies offers reassurance. He says: "July is one of the



→ warmest times of the year to visit Mexico, when the average temperature is a scorching 28C, making it a perfect choice for a summer honeymoon.

This month is also a good time to see turtles nesting, and the hotel beach is home to plenty. Honeymoon couples can swim with the turtles too."

**Book it:** Funway Holidays offers seven nights' all-inclusive in a Junior Suite Swim Out at Secrets Akumal Riviera Maya from £1,912 in July 2019, including American Airlines flights from Gatwick. [funway4agents.co.uk](http://funway4agents.co.uk)

**Or try:** The Maldives is a honeymoon favourite, and while there's plenty to do if you've got energy to burn – snorkel with manta rays, dive on the house reef, or try one of myriad water sports – most guests content themselves with kicking back on their overwater sun deck or taking a stroll along a white-sand shore. New stargazing sessions at Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas, home to an overwater observatory and a 'sky guru' to explain what you're seeing, are a good selling point for romantic types.

## THE BUCKET LISTERS

It's probably not going to be the couple's first time away together, but it should definitely be the most memorable, so why not put that honeymoon budget to good use and help them go further or do more than they've ever done on holiday before?

The 'once-in-a-lifetime' tag is much overused, but seeing the great migration in Kenya – when 1.5 million wildebeest make the arduous journey from the Serengeti in Tanzania to the plains of the Masai Mara – is worthy of



PICTURES: CARLOS BOLANOS; SUGUR OKCU



**The 'once-in-a-lifetime' tag is much overused, but the great migration of 1.5 million wildebeest is worthy of the title**

the title for sheer spectacle alone.

It's a dramatic fight for survival as the wildebeest, along with hundreds of thousands of zebras and gazelles, cross crocodile-filled rivers and journey thousands of miles over wild terrain in search of food, while being pursued by hungry predators.

Alison Holman, Africa product manager at Cox & Kings, says: "Book early for Kenya's great migration in August and September 2019, as it's the

most popular time to view wildlife. As the wildebeest cross the Mara River, you will see dramatic scenes as crocodiles eagerly await their prey. After a safari, a popular choice is to add a beach extension, whether that's in Kenya, the Seychelles or Zanzibar, depending on which one best suits the budget."

**Book it:** Cox & Kings offers a nine-night private trip to see the great migration in Kenya, with four nights at Rekero Camp in the Masai Mara and five nights at Alfajiri Villas on the Kenyan coast. Prices start at £7,440 per person based on two sharing, including flights, transfers, all meals, game drives, park fees and local drinks. [coxandkings.co.uk](http://coxandkings.co.uk)

**Or try:** Our summer is the southern hemisphere's winter, so unless clients are looking for chillier climes, it's best to stay near the equator, where temperatures are hot year-round. It never gets cold in Queensland, so die-hard divers can fulfil that lifelong ambition to dive on the Great Barrier Reef. Or send adventure-hungry honeymooners to Peru, where the Belmond Hiram Bingham train to Machu Picchu or the new Belmond Andean Explorer, which travels along one of the world's highest rail routes, are good focal points to build an itinerary around.

## THE MINI-MOONERS

Even if the pair are keeping their big escape until later in the year, it pays to offer a mini-moon, so they've got something to look forward to once all their guests have gone home – plus you get the chance to upsell



**ABOVE:** Secrets Akumal Riviera Maya

**LEFT:** The great migration of wildebeest



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PICTURES: CAMILLE MOIRENCI, STEVE SANACORE



**LEFT:**  
Crillon  
le Brave,  
Provence

**RIGHT:**  
Private  
dining at  
Beaches



➔ a weekend break into something more special.

They might choose to splash out on a swanky hotel – and Crillon le Brave in Provence is just the ticket. It's only 40 minutes by car from Avignon, accessible on Eurostar or via dozens of low-cost flights from UK regional airports, and offers plenty of packages à deux.

Not only can couples amble through its beautiful surroundings and enjoy all the good food and wine that comes with being in the French countryside, but the Crillon For Two package will also welcome them with a bouquet of flowers, a gift and bottle of Champagne on arrival. Next, they can take a tandem bicycle through nearby vineyards and olive groves, stopping for a Provencal picnic with rose wine, followed by a 60-minute massage and an exquisite meal prepared by head chef Jérôme Blanchet, served on a terrace overlooking Mont

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**Go in summer and it'll double up as the family holiday, so they need not feel guilty about splashing out**

Ventoux. In fact, if you're not careful, it might even surpass the 'real' honeymoon.

**Book it:** The Crillon for Two package starts at €830, for two people sharing a classic room for one night. A night's B&B at the hotel starts at €340 per room. [crillonlebrave.com](http://crillonlebrave.com)

**Or try:** Italy's Amalfi Coast is perennially popular with honeymooners, but squeeze it into a mini-moon and you'll rather miss the point of its laid-back Italian lifestyle. Instead, spend a more manageable weekend at Lake Como, or go for the ultimate foodie holiday in and

around Bologna, home to some of Italy's most famous bites.

#### ▶ THE COUPLE WITH KIDS

No matter how loved up they are, any parent knows the kids' needs come first – if only because they won't let you forget it if they're not happy – so you've got to find a resort that keeps little ones occupied while giving grown-ups alone time. Go in summer and it'll double up as the annual family holiday, so they need not feel guilty about splashing out.

If they're relying on interconnecting rooms, make sure these can be guaranteed in advance, and flag up any costs for babysitting or kids' activities they're likely to want, so the couple can budget accordingly.

Beaches Resorts in Negril, Ocho Rios and Turks & Caicos offer family suites or interconnecting rooms, and top-category rooms also come with butler service for help setting up those romantic extras. Of course,

the free honeymoon package will take care of at least a few of those, offering a bottle of chilled sparkling wine on arrival, turndown service with flower petals on the first evening, and delivery of fresh flowers and breakfast in bed one morning. **Book it:** A week's all-inclusive at Beaches Turks & Caicos Resort Villages & Spa in a Caribbean Deluxe Room starts at £2,809 between July 1 and August 22, including flights from London and resort transfers. [sellingsandals.co.uk](http://sellingsandals.co.uk)

**Or try:** Classy family options abound in the Med – from the swathe of luxury resorts opening up around the Greek islands, to high-end hotels in Portugal and sprawling countryside villas in Italy – but Cyprus remains a firm favourite. Anassa, one of the stable of Thanos Hotels, is known for its excellent family accommodation and facilities, while maintaining a high-quality experience for parents. **tw**



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