

A 'mooon for all seasons

There's a honeymoon destination no matter what time of year you get married, writes **Katie McGonagle**

Setting a wedding date can be a tricky task – you've got to consider the venue, the guests, the weather, not to mention avoiding your favourite football team's cup final (unless you don't mind your wedding party skipping the speeches to check the score). So thinking about the best time to be in your chosen honeymoon spot might, understandably, rank low on the list of priorities.

That's where a travel agent comes in, able to spot in the blink of an eye that the soon-to-be-weds have decided to go to India in monsoon season, the Australian outback in the height of the southern hemisphere summer or the snow-filled streets of northern Canada just as the mercury plummets.

If you find yourself needing to suggest an

alternative option at a moment's notice, here's our pick of the best spots for every season, so you can make sure their honeymoon is every bit as sweet as it should be – and they can concentrate on the big day.

SPRING

Sri Lanka: This teardrop-shaped isle is a honeymoon staple, catering for couples who can't decide between culture and adventure, sightseeing and sunbathing, and more in between. It has its share of beautiful beaches, but Travel Gallery managing director Farzana Dobbs says more couples are choosing to pair a busy itinerary in Sri Lanka with relaxation in the Maldives. "It's a perfect honeymoon combination, with memorable adventure, culture ➤

DESTINATIONS

WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS | SEASONS



FROM LEFT: Isle of Skye, Scotland; Bush breakfast at Serengeti Bushtops, Tanzania
PICTURES: VisitBritain/Michael Block; KT Merry

and nature in Sri Lanka, which offers exceptional value. By contrast, the Maldives offers picture-postcard beaches, and is the ultimate dream of luxury and tranquillity," she says.

Book it: A 14-night honeymoon including Sigiriya, elephant-spotting in Minneriya National Park, a scenic train journey and tea plantation stay in Sri Lanka, followed by six nights' all-inclusive at Oblu by Atmosphere at Helengeli in the Maldives, starts from £4,150.

The price includes SriLankan Airlines flights, transfers and entrance fees.

travel-gallery.co.uk

Brazil: Forget the fun and frivolity of Rio or the well-trodden path to Iguazu Falls in favour of some of Brazil's less obvious – but no less beautiful – tourist spots. The stunning coastline of northeast Brazil is prime honeymoon territory, bringing together the colourful colonial architecture of Unesco-listed city Olinda and pretty cobbled streets of Salvador (and its bar scene) with some of the best beaches in the world. Porto de Galinhas, for example, is famed for its impossibly clear waters and rock pools that abound with marine life, while

“Zanzibar and Tanzania are a great option; the peace of the bush and allure of the beach are just what you need to ease into married life

Praia do Forte is an upmarket beach town with great surfing and diving.

Book it: Latin Routes has a 16-day self-drive through northeast Brazil, starting from £2,249 including flights, 14 nights' accommodation and airport transfers. latinroutes.co.uk

SUMMER

Scotland: Honeymoons don't have to mean far-flung destinations – Scotland's wild scenery and wholesome highland culture make it a top choice closer to home. Add extra excitement with a journey by sleeper train, leaving London in the dead of night and trundling

through the countryside in darkness, awaking to mountain peaks and bright blue lochs as the sun rises in Scotland.

Robert Kidd, director of Scotland specialist McKinlay Kidd, says: "Summer is a great time to go because the longer, lighter evenings provide the perfect opportunity to explore each location to its fullest. It is the perfect choice for a honeymoon because of the romance of falling asleep in London and waking up in the breathtaking Scottish scenery – plus in some of the more remote locations, you may not see another soul."

Book it: Luxury Skye and Highlands by Sleeper is a six-night trip with private tours in Perthshire and Inverness and two days on the Isle of Skye, from £1,865 in summer. mckinlaykidd.com

Tanzania: No honeymoon round-up would be complete without a safari-beach combo, bringing together the romance of wildlife sightings and safari sundowners with the ultimate in relaxation. Summer is a great time to go, whether you want to catch Kenya's great migration of wildebeest across the Masai Mara (July and August),

or simply get there in time for the dry season, when wildlife viewing is better as animals congregate around waterholes.

Amanda Bailey, reservations manager at Carrier, says: "Zanzibar and Tanzania are a great option for a honeymoon; the peace of the bush and allure of the beach are just what you need to ease into married life. This is a great time to go as it's peak time to see the migration. We recommend a balloon safari so newlyweds can watch the animals from the sky. At Bushtops, honeymooners enjoy a private bush breakfast, which is a great start to the day, and at Zuri Zanzibar, we recommend the Ocean Front Suites for uninterrupted ocean views."

Book it: Carrier offers a 14-night luxury safari-beach package staying at Arusha Coffee Lodge, Serengeti Bushtops, Ngorongoro Crater Lodge and Zuri Zanzibar (half-board), with balloon safari, game drives, house drinks and honeymoon extras, plus Qatar Airways flights, internal flights and transfers, from £13,495 with economy-class flights or £16,665 in business, departing June 11. carrier.co.uk ➤

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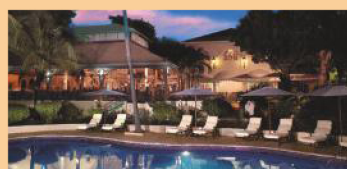
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14 night Bridgetown - Fort Lauderdale **£1599**
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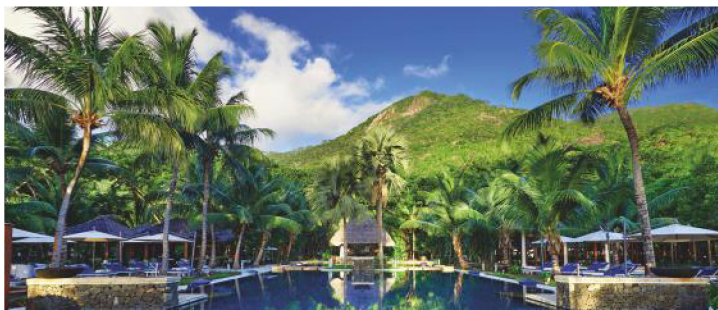
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TOUCHDOWN
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Florence; Sandals Grande Antigua; Hilton Seychelles Labriz Resort & Spa

AUTUMN

Italy: Its landscapes were enough to inspire Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci, so if the happy couple weren't already besotted with each other, they will be after a week in Tuscany – particularly in autumn, when scorching temperatures start to recede, vineyards are full of plump harvest-ready grapes, and the hills light up in a blaze of red and orange.

Citalia recommends a twin-centre stay in Florence and Siena. Regional destination manager Heather Green says: "La dolce vita flourishes in Florence, where chic hotels are nestled within centuries-old architecture and restaurants delight with tasty dishes and award-winning wines, coupled with romantic Siena, which boasts beautiful medieval buildings and charming countryside. The best time to travel is September. Not only does it paint Florence and Siena with the autumnal colours of golden and amber, but the weather will be pleasant and travellers will miss the summer crowds, making it an ideal time to explore the romantic secret escapes the region offers."

Book it: A week split between five-star properties Belmond Villa San Michele overlooking Florence and

“La dolce vita flourishes in Florence, where restaurants delight with tasty dishes and award-winning wines

Castel Monastero near Siena, both B&B, starts at £2,349 including flights in September.
citalia.com

Seychelles: Another classic couples destination, the Seychelles is somewhere people aspire to go to on honeymoon, splashing out on the ultimate Indian Ocean escape. Kuoni product and purchasing executive Sarah Gatt suggests steering honeymooners towards the Hilton Seychelles Labriz Resort & Spa. She says: "The Seychelles is a great destination as it has the mix of fantastic beaches and activities. October is a nice time to visit as it's generally drier and the trade winds are calmer. I strongly recommend upgrading to a Sanctuary Pool Villa as they offer lots of privacy with your own private pool."

Book it: Seven nights in a Sanctuary Pool Villa starts at £2,759, including breakfast, BA flights from Heathrow, transfers, and honeymoon extras including champagne on arrival and a sunset cruise. Upgrade to business-class flights from £1,485.
kuoni.co.uk

WINTER

Antigua: The Caribbean comes into its own in winter, combining chilled-out vibes with glorious, guaranteed sunshine and seriously romantic resorts. Couples-only Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa is one such escape, set on the white sands of Dickenson Bay.

It's worth upselling newlyweds to one of its Love Nest Butler Rondoal Suites, where couples get a private plunge pool, patio, oversized soaking tub and 24-hour room service, plus a personal butler to organise romantic add-ons such as a sunset cruise or candlelit dinner on the beach.

Book it: Seven nights in a Caribbean Honeymoon Premium Room starts at £2,175 with all-inclusive accommodation, BA flights from Gatwick and transfers, for travel on December 17.
sandals.co.uk

Samoa: If ever there was a time to fly to the other side of the world, it's on a honeymoon, so the South Pacific should be on the cards for couples pushing the boat out – particularly if they're keen to pair it with Australia or New Zealand for an all-round adventure.

Will McQuade, assistant product manager at Travel 2, says: "For newlyweds looking for a winter honeymoon in paradise, Samoa is the perfect choice. Just a three-and-a-half-hour flight from New Zealand, this beautiful country is unspoilt and non-commercialised but rich in culture and history.

"I would recommend the award-winning Seabreeze Resort on the island of Upolu. The resort is small, intimate and adult-only, set on a secluded cove with its own white sandy beach. With just 11 villas, the focus here is on privacy and personalised service. Guests can enjoy a cocktail overlooking the water or relax with a massage."

Book it: Three nights' room-only at the five-star Cordis Auckland, five nights' B&B at Seabreeze Resort and two at Amoa Resort, flights from Heathrow and transfers in Samoa, costs from £2,499 for travel from November 7-December 4.
travel2.com **TW**