

Love islands

Awash in a sea of honeymoon ideas? Joanna Booth sets a course for island inspiration

No man is an island, wrote the poet John Donne in 1624. Nearly 400 years later, we're still not creatures who thrive in isolation.

Our desire to pair off and find the perfect partner remains as strong, and thank goodness – the lucrative honeymoon market isn't one travel agents want to see dying out any time soon.

In fact, islands make some of the most popular honeymoon destinations. It's easy to see why. Not only do water-bound spots tend to have beaches on tap, but they also slot neatly into our romantic notions of honeymooning in a secluded hideaway, far away from the rest of the world.

Luckily, the world isn't short

of islands. From secluded South Pacific atolls and Seychellois islets to the hustle and bustle of island city Hong Kong, there are choices diverse enough to suit all sorts of couples.

Clients could marry more often than Elizabeth Taylor and never run out of islands to honeymoon on. We've picked a few to inspire your search.

► BEACH HONEYMOONS

The quintessential beach honeymoon host has to be the Maldives – there's a reason the destination has been Kuoni's top honeymoon seller for years. The barefoot luxury of white beaches and overwater villas provide the dream setting for many couples to relax post-wedding.

But not all brides



Mirihi Island, Maldives

PICTURE: MIRIHI ISLAND, MALDIVES



PICTURES: CHRISTOS DRAZOS; JESSI COTTERILL; AXEL RUHOMAUULLY

and grooms are the same. South Ari Atoll resort Mirihi Island has launched four honeymoon packages to suit a spectrum of newlyweds. The Pampermoon includes spa treatments and yoga sessions and the Foodiemoon features cookery classes, wine tasting and private dining on the beach. The Adventuremoon wows thrill-seekers with day and night scuba diving, swimming with whale sharks and a visit to a local community. And the most luxurious of all, the Supermoon, combines elements of the other three and adds a private yacht cruise, private beach cinema show and a picnic on a private island. **Or try:** For beaches that look too exotic to be so close to home, send them to Sardinia. Chia, at the island's southern tip, is home to no fewer than five perfect crescents of pale sand.

No matter what age the kids are, loved-up parents will get to spend some quality one-on-one time at Trou aux Biches

WITH THE FAMILY

All the powder-white sand, blue sea and perfect sunsets in the world can't make a great honeymoon for a family if the kids aren't enjoying themselves. Mauritius is your go-to island to keep everyone happy - it's a beach idyll but with fantastic family facilities at many of its hotels.

Trou aux Biches Beachcomber, set

ABOVE LEFT: Trou aux Biches Beachcomber, Mauritius

ABOVE: Myconian Avaton, Elia Beach, Mykonos

BELOW: Yukinoya, Rasananda Koh Phangan Villas

in tropical gardens on a sunset-facing beach, has family suites, free kids' and teens' clubs, and even three free hours of afternoon babysitting on weekdays for toddlers aged one to three, so no matter what age the kids are, their loved-up parents will get to spend some quality one-on-one time.

Or try: Active families will love Sicily. Kids can hover over a live volcano on Mount Etna's cable car, visit forest adventure park Eco Campus Casaboli, frolic on the beaches, and everyone will enjoy Sicily's traditional breakfast - an ice cream sandwich.

SAME-SEX HONEYMOONS

The very last thing a couple want to feel on their honeymoon is uncomfortable. You can book Mykonos safe in the knowledge that it is one of the most-welcoming destinations





PICTURE: HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY/BLAKE BRONSTAD

ABOVE: Hawaii

→ in the world for same-sex couples. But that's only the start of its appeal. Honeymooners can choose between buzzing beach clubs and secluded coves, historic sites or boutique shopping, and can spend their evenings enjoying the island's legendary club scene, or dining à deux at romantic restaurants.

Myconian Collection is a family-owned group of nine properties that are all just as welcoming to same-sex couples as hetero honeymooners. Choose one of the Mykonos Town hotels for couples that crave nightlife, or select a property in Elia Beach for those seeking a quiet retreat. **Or try:** Iceland gave same-sex couples equal marriage rights in 2010, two years after electing the world's first gay head of state. Honeymoons here are filled with adventure, with mountains, waterfalls, glaciers, geothermal spas and the chance to see the northern lights.

► **CULINARY COUPLES**

Romantic dinners are de rigueur on honeymoon, and Thailand's islands are full not only of hotels that know how to pamper foodie couples, but are also dotted with little local restaurants serving authentic specialities, so clients can immerse themselves in Thai cuisine.



Honeymooners can choose buzzing beach clubs, secluded coves, historic sites or boutique shopping

The luxurious Anantara Rasananda Koh Phangan Villas is set on a white-sand beach, where the Dining by Design team can set up a table for two on the sand. There's a Thai restaurant, a teppanyaki and sushi eatery, and the island's only sea view wine cellar. Plus, the Spice Spoons cooking school can get them whipping up coconut chicken soup or Thai fishcakes in no time. **Or try:** Singapore's melting pot of cultures means it's a tasty treat of an island where honeymooners can switch from street food tours to fine dining restaurants in the blink of an eye.

► **ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE**

Not every newlywed couple wants lazy days on the beach. The Azores is a hidden treasure – an archipelago of nine islands in the Atlantic. Wooded volcanic slopes ring vivid blue crater lakes, subterranean lava tunnels snake

underground and the waters off shore play host to whales. Couples can hike, bike, dive, sail, fish, horse ride, go canyoning and even swim with wild dolphins – and then relax in the natural thermal pools. **Or try:** For something totally different, suggest Svalbard. This archipelago in Arctic Norway is home to more polar bears than people and couples can feel their hearts melt among snowcapped peaks, icebergs and glaciers.

► **ISLAND-HOPPING HONEYMOONS**

Why have one island when you can visit two, three or four? Hawaii is a beach paradise, but

each island has its own distinct personality. Let honeymooners get to know more than one with an island-hopping itinerary featuring lush, secluded Kauai with its dramatic scenery, high-energy Oahu, beachtastic Maui and volcanic Big Island. It's not hard to build a bespoke itinerary – dozens of flights connect the main islands every day. **Or try:** For something closer to home, consider Croatia. The Dalmatian and Istrian coasts are dotted with islands, and couples can choose whether they'd rather hop independently by ferry or join a small ship cruise to combine the joys of exploring on land with relaxing on deck. **TW**

📌 **New island openings**

► In the secluded Andaman Islands, the **Taj Exotica Resort & Spa**, Andamans, will be the first luxury resort on idyllic Havelock Island in the Bay of Bengal when it opens in March. Its beach villas are set between jungle and reef, and divers will delight in meeting manta rays, loggerhead turtles and reef sharks beneath the waves.

► On Crete's north coast, **Nana Princess** will open on May 1, with villas and suites with a host of private facilities spanning gyms, saunas and even heated whirlpools – a first for the island. The hotel's private beach features gazebos for guests.

► **Six Senses Fiji** (pictured) opens in April on the volcanic island of Malolo, and will suit couples who care for the environment as much as each other. It's 100% solar-powered, and sources produce for its five restaurants as locally as possible, from farmers, markets, fishermen and its own gardens.

► The Indonesian island of Flores will welcome its first five-star this summer. **Ayana Komodo Resort**, Waecicu Beach, is in Labuan Bajo, the launching point for boat trips into the Komodo National Park, the only place in the world where you can see komodo dragons in the wild.

