



6 OF THE Best SELF-DRIVE HONEYMOONS

Aby Dunsby rounds up the best road trips à deux

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With spectacular scenery, the freedom of the open road and a new spouse to keep them company, a self-drive honeymoon affords adventurous clients the romanticism of a big adventure, and the flexibility to see the sights at their own pace.

Opting for a tailor-made road trip is perfect for honeymooners, as it ensures they'll keep their independence, offers the reassurance of an itinerary and allows them to pick out the right accommodation. Whether they want to explore Italy's chic Amalfi Coast, drive through Cuba's crumbling colonial streets in a Cadillac, or watch the sunrise over the Grand Canyon, we've rounded up six of the best self-drive honeymoons to get their motor running.

1 ALENTEJO, PORTUGAL
Despite Portugal's popularity with Brits, the peaceful Alentejo between busy Lisbon and the Algarve remains relatively undiscovered, which means couples can explore the beautiful rural region without the crowds.

Summer here is for dedicated sun-worshippers because of the heat, while spring and autumn turn the landscape into one rich with meadow flowers or harvest colours. The region is also one of the country's best to discover by car, as the roads are good and there's little traffic.

Sunvil's seven-night Pousadas of the Alentejo itinerary takes in diverse landscapes, moving from

coast to mountains, plains to parks, through an award-winning wine region, before bedding down in romantic and historic pousada hotels.

Rosanna Melaragni, product manager for Sunvil's Portugal and the Azores programme, says: "The key selling points for honeymooners are that this is a really well-balanced itinerary. It's off the beaten track, but not too remote. It encompasses medieval towns and beautiful landscapes, which could mean lots of excursions and culture, or just the opportunity to relax in stunning surroundings – often really necessary after busy wedding preparations."

Book it: The Pousadas of the Alentejo itinerary starts from £675, based on two sharing and including B&B accommodation, flights from Heathrow to Lisbon, and eight days' car hire. sunvil.co.uk

2 CUBA
With relations between the US and the Caribbean's largest island starting to thaw, Cuba will top the list for many clients as a must-visit destination before it changes dramatically.

Cuba oozes nostalgic old-school charm, and clients will feel as though they've stepped back in time as they stroll through crumbling colonial streets where salsa plays in the squares and classic American cars cruise along palm-lined avenues.

For honeymooners, the

photogenic beaches of the north coast are a big draw, and clients can add on time exploring the cultural treasures of historic towns including Havana and Trinidad.

"For adventurous clients, the most rewarding way to travel around Cuba is to drive your own hire car," says Claire Milner, manager at Journey Latin America. "Clients will relish the flexibility and the ability to choose how fast and how far they travel before stopping to enjoy a sight or chat to the locals."

Milner advises clients visit between November and April for the best weather, and recommends booking at least eight months before travel to secure the best accommodation for honeymooners. Journey Latin America's two-week private tour of Cuba includes visits to the historic cities of Havana and Trinidad, and moves on to the limestone landscapes in the Viñales valley and emerald forests around Las Terrazas.

Book it: Journey Latin America offers a 14-day Self-Drive Cuba: Best of the West trip from £1,809 including accommodation, car hire, excursions and breakfast. journeylatinamerica.co.uk

3 AMALFI COAST, ITALY
In a destination as unabashedly romantic as Italy, the Amalfi Coast still reigns supreme when it comes to heart-stopping beauty, providing glamorous hotels, a wiggling coastline, and cinematic villages

by the spaghetti bowlful.

Lying along the southern side of the Sorrento Peninsula, the Amalfi Coast is united by the 25-mile Strade Statale 163, which connects the village of Meta with Vietri sul Mare. Driving here is not for the faint-hearted: the narrow hairpin bends might make clients hold their breath, but it's worth it for the views.

This itinerary is perfect for clients who don't want a jam-packed trip: the short route allows clients to spend time in each town, while taking rest breaks in some of Italy's best hotels. Must-see towns include Positano, famed for its pink and terracotta houses that stack down the mountainside towards a topaz sea; and Ravello, a secluded hilltop town surrounded by olive groves and lemon terraces.

Carrier's Southern Italy Sojourn combines the romance of the Amalfi Coast with the architectural marvels and superlative food of Sicily. **Book it:** Carrier offers nine nights on its Southern Italian Sojourn from £3,155, based on two sharing and including flights, car hire, transfers, three nights at Le Sirenuse in Positano, three nights at Capri Palace Hotel & Spa, and three nights at Belmond Grand Hotel Timeo. carrier.co.uk

4 GARDEN ROUTE, SOUTH AFRICA
"The Garden Route in South Africa is one of the most staggeringly

PICTURES: TURISMO DE PORTUGAL; CUBA LAT; YDO SOLL; SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM; TOURISM VICTORIA

→ beautiful stretches of coastline people will ever see – as well as being incredibly romantic,” says Clare Crowson, senior marketing manager at Premier Holidays.

The coast is peppered with excellent beaches and picturesque lagoons and lakes, while inland is a visual feast of desert-like landscape and vineyards.

Cape Town is only half a day’s drive from the route, making the perfect start or finish point. Plus the coast is one of the easiest and best places to see whales and dolphins from land, while adventure-lovers can spend a day hiking or kayaking on the Eastern Cape.

For wine enthusiasts, the inland Route 62 provides countless opportunities for tastings, with impressive boutique accommodation offering welcome respite from the road.

“I would recommend that people add on a visit to Pumba Private Game Reserve & Spa at the end of their drive, to make their honeymoon extra special,” suggests Crowson.

Book it: Premier Holidays offers a 12-night self-drive tour of Cape Town, Garden Route and Eastern



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The Garden Route is one of the most staggeringly beautiful stretches of coastline people will ever see

Cape from £1,599, including return flights, all accommodation, breakfast throughout, one lunch and two dinners, nine days’ car hire, and two activities per day at Kuzuko Lodge, including game drives, nature walks, cheetah walk or 30-minute spa treatment. trade.premierholidays.co.uk

5 GRAND CANYON, THE US

For clients seeking sweeping panoramas, gaping mountain valleys and some of nature’s most show-stopping parks, it doesn’t get much better than a Grand Circle road trip.

This iconic route takes →



PICTURES: ROBERTO BONARDI; SHUTTERSTOCK; LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU; TOURISM AUSTRALIA

ABOVE: Pousada Mosteiro do Crato, Portugal

LEFT: Belmond Grand Hotel Timeo, Taormina, Italy

BELOW: Malecón in Havana, Cuba





LEFT: Las Vegas

RIGHT: Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, Cape Town

BELOW: Pebbly Beach, New South Wales, Australia



clients to four national parks in southern Utah and northern Arizona, and active clients can take advantage of countless opportunities to get out of the car and hike in eye-wateringly sublime surroundings.

Highlights include visits to the soaring sandstone cliffs of Zion, the otherworldly hoodoos at Bryce Canyon, Mesa Verde National Park, and the vast wonder that is the Grand Canyon.

October is a great time to visit, as the summer crowds will have dwindled, making way for autumnal colours and fantastic photo opportunities.

Nick Talbot, Funway Holidays head of marketing, says: "There are lots of reasons why the Grand Canyon is a great option for honeymooners, especially for



Honeymooners can picnic on beaches, see koalas snoozing in trees and swim in clear blue waters

couples looking for an adventure. From hiking or rafting together, meeting the local wildlife to breathtaking sunsets from the Canyon's rim, this trip is a wonderful experience to share with a loved one."

Funway's itinerary kicks off in Vegas, giving newlyweds the chance to hit the town together and experience the intoxicating and frenetic City of Lights before getting back to nature.

Book it: Funway offers an eight-day self-drive Canyon Adventure

from £949, including economy return flights and three-star accommodation with two nights in Las Vegas plus overnights in Bryce Canyon, Moab, Mesa Verde National Park and Grand Canyon. funway4agents.co.uk

6 SYDNEY TO MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

For clients looking to take in Australia's natural wonders, the coastal road trip from Sydney to Melbourne is a great introduction to this vast country.

The blockbuster 650-mile drive will take honeymooners on a dramatically impressive journey along the coast, past pretty coves and beaches, and inland to discover the unspoilt wilderness of the national parks and lakes.

"On this journey, honeymooners can picnic on beaches with kangaroos at Pebbly Beach, taste some of our best food and wine, see koalas snoozing in trees and

swim in clear blue waters," says Denise von Wald, regional general manager for Tourism Australia.

Those visiting between September and December will be able to watch whales along the south coast of New South Wales, and also take advantage of its white-sand beaches.

Wildlife highlights include Wilsons Promontory National Park, a 50,000-hectare reserve threaded with a labyrinth of walking tracks and home to wombats, emus, echidnas and kangaroos; and a night on Phillip Island, where clients can watch the dusk parade of little penguins.

Clients can end their week in cosmopolitan Melbourne drinking some of the country's best coffee, finding hidden rooftop bars and dining on food to remember.

Book it: 1st Class Holidays offers an eight-day self-drive coastal tour of Sydney to Melbourne including seven nights' accommodation, car rental and airport transfers, from £712.

1stclassholidays.com

