

When two become one

Twin-centre honeymoons are on the rise, and it's time to capitalise, writes Laura French

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Twin-centre honeymoons might not be a new phenomenon – the classic safari and beach option is an absolute staple of the market – but they're having something of a moment right now.

Kuoni's commercial and product manager, Sheena Paton, says: "We have seen a steady increase in honeymooners combining more than one destination since 2014."

The most popular options are Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Dubai and the Maldives, and Singapore and Bali, according to the operator. But where else can you send clients who've seen half the world, and how do you top anything they've experienced before?

We've picked the industry's brains to find out, and from cultural explorations in Guatemala to cruising the backwaters of Kerala, they've

come up with a host of corkers that prove honeymoons don't just have to be about palm trees and blue seas (though fear not – pina colodas on white-sand shores aren't going anywhere soon).

▶ NORTH AMERICA

Where: San Francisco and Hawaii

Why: Exotic palm trees swaying in the breeze, burning sunsets descending over the sea and crystal-clear waters lapping on sugar-sand shores – Hawaii makes perfect honeymoon sense, holding appeal for thrill-seekers as much as it does sun lovers, with treasures including surfing, hiking and helicopter rides.

Among the least-developed and most-romantic islands is Kauai, where Hawaii's very own 'Grand Canyon' squats over cliffs that were once the setting for *Jurassic Park*. Funway Holidays suggests combining a stay on the island with a stop in San



→ Diego or San Francisco on the way out. Iconic sites in the latter – from the Golden Gate Bridge to Alcatraz Island, Mission District to Fisherman’s Wharf – promise to provide a vibrant dose of culture, before honeymooners escape it all on this secluded patch of paradise. **Or try:** Vancouver and the Yukon. Hayes & Jarvis packs up one of Canada’s most outdoorsy and scenic cities with an Arctic wilderness adventure on its six-day Vancouver and the Yukon twin-centre trip, making the perfect beach antidote for couples after a honeymoon with a difference.

reefs and verdant pine forest invite snorkelling, diving, dhow cruises, horse riding and castaway picnics, offering a slice of peaceful seclusion to round off a wildlife-rich, once-in-a-lifetime trip. **Or try:** Kilimanjaro and Zanzibar. Rainbow Tours’ Kilimanjaro & Zanzibar Honeymoon takes a slightly different approach, offering adventure seekers the chance to summit Africa’s highest peak before flopping down on a beach in Zanzibar for a well-deserved rest. Clients will also get to check out Stone Town, the island’s capital, for a quick culture fix.

▶ AFRICA

Where: South Africa and Mozambique
Why: Safaris and beach breaks have long been on the agenda for adventurous honeymooners, but increased connectivity is making it easier than ever to combine several countries in one, according to Joss Kent, chief executive of &Beyond. “In the past, connecting Cape Town to Botswana, for example, required a full day of travel, but now there are almost daily direct flights into Maun, as well as flights to romantic beach destinations such as the Seychelles and Mozambique,” he says. “Three-quarters of our itineraries involve multiple destinations.”

Suggest combining &Beyond Ngala Safari Lodge, South Africa – complete with old-world colonial decor and romantic fire-lit dinners, all bordering Kruger National Park – with Benguerra Island Lodge, set just off the coast of Mozambique. Here, untouched coral

▶ INDIAN OCEAN

Where: Sri Lanka and the Maldives
Why: First on the list of Kuoni’s most-popular honeymoons is the Maldives; second is Sri Lanka, home to the highest number of Unesco World Heritage Sites per square metre in the world. Combine them and you have a honeymoon that throws in food, wildlife and culture with private-island paradise. It doesn’t have to mean megabucks either: Thomson combines seven nights’ all-inclusive at the four-star-plus Riu Sri Lanka with seven nights at Cinnamon Dhonveli, from £2,862 per person, including flights from Gatwick on November 13.

Or try: Dubai and the Maldives. If it’s more of a city add-on that catches your clients’ attention, Kuoni recommends a stop-off in Dubai – specifically the four-star JA Ocean View Hotel, where couples get a complimentary room upgrade to help them celebrate in style.



ABOVE: San Francisco
LEFT: Munnar, India

“Combine the Maldives and Sri Lanka for a honeymoon that throws in food, wildlife and culture with private-island paradise”

▶ ASIA

Where: Kerala and Marari, India
Why: India is on the radar right now, and Kerala, with its lush landscapes, diverse wildlife and mouthwatering cuisine, is on the up for honeymooners.

Premier Holidays’ India product manager, John Parker, says: “This always sells well, and the scenic hill country combined with the serene backwaters makes for a romantic setting.”

The operator suggests twinning a tour through the region – visiting Cochin, Periyar (known for its spice plantations), Munnar, Alleppey and Kumarakom – with a coastal extension at Marari Beach Resort, where a handful of rustic, thatched villas sit among coconut groves and lotus ponds.

Or try: Cambodia. For a more offbeat honeymoon in the region, Cox & Kings suggests the multi-centre Cambodia in Style trip. The private tour takes in iconic Angkor Wat, temple-studded Phnom Penh and a peaceful coastal resort in Kep, all topped with a suitable dollop of luxury.

▶ CARIBBEAN

Where: Barbados and Saint Lucia
Why: The Caribbean is a honeymoon haven, full stop. Caribtours suggests twinning a stay at the idyllic Fairmont Pavilion Barbados, located on the west coast of the island, with the Anse Chastanet Saint Lucia, a romantic retreat set among 240 hectares of tropical foliage and bordering two pristine bays (all part of a marine reserve). Adventurous couples can bike through the jungle, hike through the rainforest or try their hand at scuba diving, while those looking to cosy up can head to the Diamond Falls Mineral Baths, tour the old French Colonial Plantation of Anse Mamin or sail off into the sunset on a kayak.

Or try: Antigua and St Barths, for a quieter getaway. “Ultra-stylish boutique hotels and sandy beaches



invite relaxation on these seductive islands,” says Fiona Greenhalgh, head of product and commercial at Carrier, who recommends pairing Antigua’s Hermitage Bay with St-Barth Isle de France for a classic honeymoon stay.

▶ LATIN AMERICA

Where: Guatemala and Belize
Why: Laura Rendell-Dunn, destination specialist at Journey Latin America, says: “Twin-centre honeymoons are extremely popular in Latin America. Straightforward border crossings across Central and South America, coupled with a huge network of flight routes, allows us to create some really exciting trips.”

The operator’s best-seller among honeymooners is the Luxury Guatemala and Belize private tour, which gives clients a chance to glimpse traditional indigenous life and laid-back Caribbean vibes via visits to bustling markets, Mayan temples, exotic rainforest and talcum-powder-white beaches. **Or try:** Galapagos Islands and Quito. Giant tortoises, green sea turtles and bottlenose dolphins in vast, untamed nature – what’s not to love about the Galapagos? G Adventures ties it in

with a stay in Quito for a trip clients will never forget, so suggest it to those after something a little different from the beachy norms.

▶ EUROPE

Where: Island-hopping in Greece
Why: From caldera views in Santorini to buzzing cities in Crete, the Greek islands have long been a honeymoon favourite, and pairing them gives clients a chance to taste their sheer diversity. Olympic Holidays suggests matching culture-rich Rhodes with the smaller, quieter island of Symi in the Southern Dodecanese for an authentic stay among quintessentially Greek villages and verdant forest. In Symi, the four-star Opera House makes a worthy base with its traditional architecture, elegant wooded garden and handy location close to a smattering of beaches.

Or try: Twin cities in Italy. Nowhere says amore quite like Rome with its iconic architecture and to-die-for food. Travel 2 suggests tying it in with a stop in Sorrento, perched on the cliffs of Naples and home to a picturesque, cobbled old town, for hand-in-hand, wander-all-day-long paradise. **TW**



Three nights at the Hotel Whitcomb in San Francisco followed by five nights at the Kaua’i Marriott Resort in Hawaii starts at £1,744 per person, with **Funway Holidays**. The price includes United Airlines flights from London on October 27. **funwayagents.co.uk**

Journey Latin America’s 12-day Luxury Guatemala and Belize: Tikal and the Caribbean trip starts at £2,966 per person including transfers, luxury B&B accommodation, and excursions. The price excludes international flights. **journeylatinamerica.co.uk**



LEFT: Riu Sri Lanka