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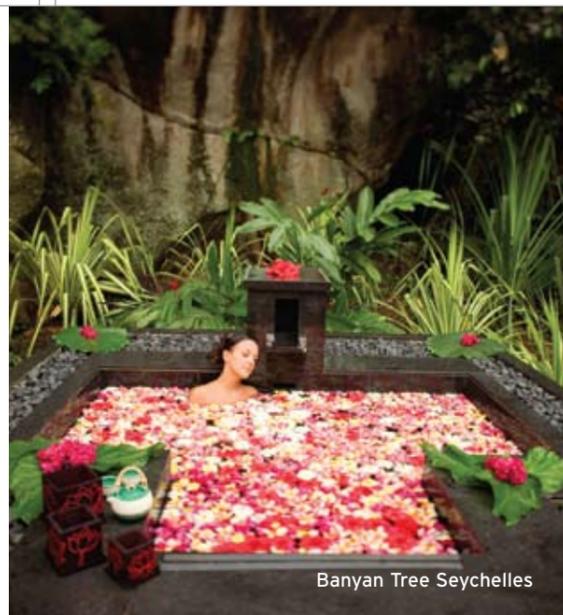
IF YOU'RE SEEKING A DEFINITELY DIFFERENT HONEYMOON EXPERIENCE, WE'VE GOT JUST THE TICKET. BY TOM JOSEPH



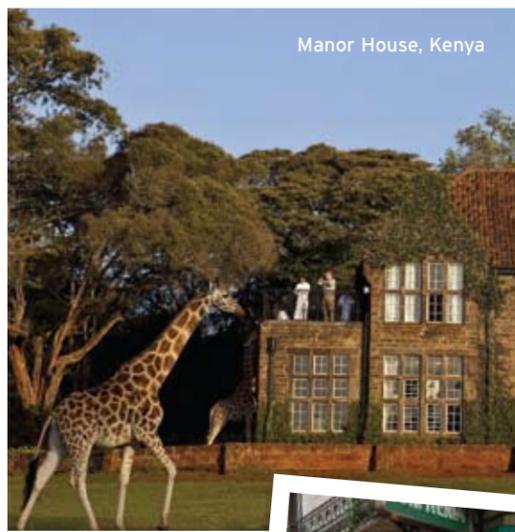
Rayavadee, Thailand



Banyan Tree Seychelles



Banyan Tree Seychelles

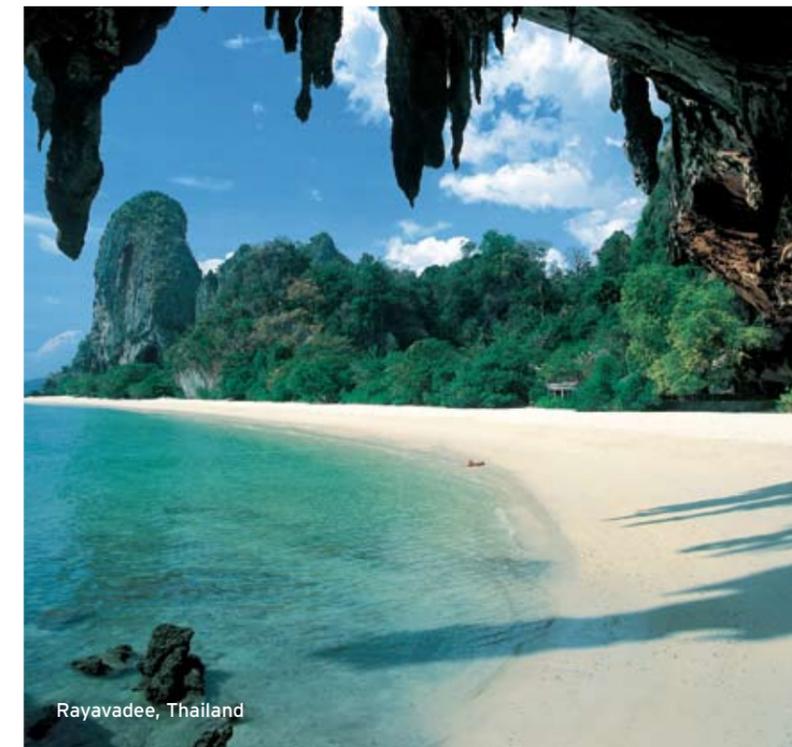


Manor House, Kenya



FRANCE Our affair with all things French (who doesn't adore melt-in-your-mouth croissants?) continues with haute couture as well as luscious Chanel parfums. For honeymooners, no place is as synonymous with over-the-top romance as the land of Chateaux and Champagne. Surely France is a destination. But it's also a lifestyle—one you feel the moment you step off the plane. The French have a talent for living in the moment, appreciating the sensual, lingering over long dinners and endless bottles of fine wine with friends—and making time for the good things in life. So here's your reason to love the country that made French-kissing famous. There's nothing quite as sexy as strolling hand in hand through Paris, getting lost in the moment, stopping at a café for a glass of wine, exploring Montmartre (the haunting grounds of Renoir, Picasso, and Monet), strolling the flower markets. We'll bet you'll feel inspired to say "je t'aime" (that's "I love you") over and over—which is why couples fall in love with France each and every time they visit.

WHERE TO STAY Located on the Champs-Élysées, the **Hotel Plaza Athénée Paris** (plaza-athenee-paris.com) will make you feel like royalty as you step into its breathtaking lobby. The one-time palace, built in 1911, is exquisite in every way. Rooms are fashioned in Regency, Louis XVI, or Art Deco style, with remote-control air-conditioning, mini hi-fi/CD players, and even a pillow menu.



Rayavadee, Thailand

THAILAND Here is a destination for honeymooners in search of serenity, spirituality, and exotic wonders. Think monks in saffron-colored robes, gold and jade Buddhas sitting in gilt-domed temples decorated with gold and mosaics, topped with shimmering spires; orchids that grow like wildflowers, and everywhere the scent of spices and florals. These are all vivid images of a lovely corner of the world known as "The Land of Smiles." Begin your visit in bustling Bangkok, the capital, where three-wheeled tuk-tuk (taxi) jockey for road space along with cars, bicycles and motorcycles. Sidewalks are crowded with street vendors hawking foods both familiar and exotic. For a complete experience, venture beyond Bangkok. In Chiang Mai take a tour in your own chauffeured tuk-tuk and explore the city as well as the Tribal Museum, which tells the stories of the various hill tribes living along the border between Thailand and Laos. Chiang Mai is also home to numerous stellar Buddhist temples including the 14th-century Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep, set on a hill overlooking the city. End your stay in Thailand with a few relaxing days in Phuket in one of its ultra-luxurious resorts. Spend the days wandering the powder soft beaches and nights counting the twinkling stars.

WHERE TO STAY Located just east of Phuket on Phranang Peninsula's Krabi town, a relatively small and peaceful place, is where local farmers and fishermen will welcome you to their way of life. Elephant riding, scenic natural parks, hiking trails, and waterfalls are also nearby. Here you'll find **Rayavadee** (rayavadee.com), set within the spectacular scenery of the famous Marine National Park, surrounded by towering cliffs and hidden among palm trees. Spread over 26 acres of coconut groves bordered by three national park beaches (one of which is rated as the most beautiful in the world); the resort's award-winning architecture and tropical landscaping provide an atmosphere of a southern Thai village. The charming two-story villas feature tropical woods and local fabrics. Guests enjoy a full-menu of water activities including kayaking, snorkeling, scuba diving and expeditions to outlying islands. Afterward, indulge at the spa with a refreshing wrap that leaves a healthy glow as it nourishes skin with a mixture of carrot, soybean and coconut milk. Perfect for balancing and moisturizing the body, this wrap also has a healing effect, making it an excellent choice both before and after exposure to the sun.



Hotel Plaza Athénée, Paris



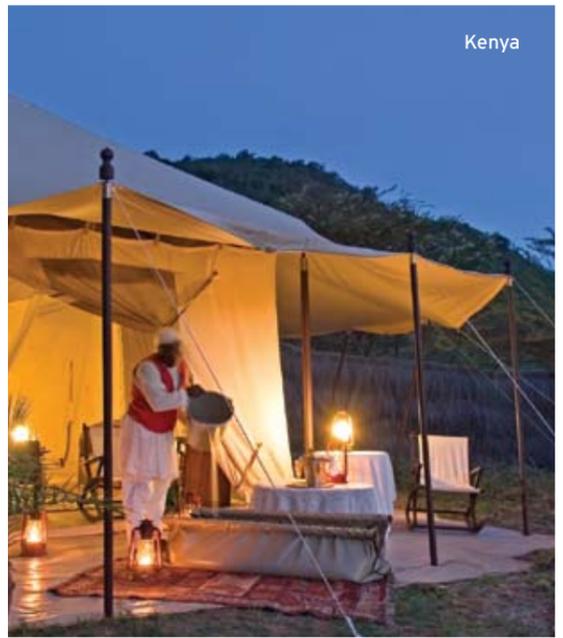
Goring Hotel, England

ENGLAND These days it's definitely a mod, mod world across the pond. Royal Weddings aside, "Merrie Ole England" has reinvented itself into the "hot, young U.K." Sure you can still sip stout in a centuries-old pub, soak up literary charms in Oxford, and even chase your Heathcliff across the North Yorkshire Moors. But you can also hit the shops in London's Carnaby Street; or join A-listers at trendy eateries. And don't forget Her Majesty's upcoming Jubilee and those Olympic medals come summer.

WHERE TO STAY Where else but **The Goring Hotel** (thegoring.com), where Kate Middleton stayed the night before her marriage to Prince William. Centrally located—it is steps away from Buckingham Palace—the hotel's 71 rooms and suites are individually designed to create the atmosphere of a warm and inviting country house retreat. Beautiful St James's Park is virtually on the doorstep and there are boutiques in abundance in nearby Sloane Street and the Kings Road. Later, return for a light lunch on the terrace overlooking the gardens.

KENYA Better known as birthplace of the safari, Kenya has conjured images of decadence in the wild ever since the Brits trekked china and bathtubs into the bush. Other countries in Africa offer great safaris, but it's here where tribal village tours, game drives in the Maasai Mara during the annual migration, and flights over the rolling Ngong Hills best deliver an *Out of Africa* experience. Pop open bubbly on the banks of the Mara and toast the zebras as they attempt a river crossing then swoon under the stars during a bush dinner for two.

WHERE TO STAY A safari to Africa is the ultimate honeymoon experience—and Extraordinary Journeys (ejafrika.com) will customize an itinerary to fit your needs. For first-timers EJ Africa recommends their Kenya "Great Cats and Magnificent Elephants" safari which includes a visit to Amboseli National Park—most noted for its abundant and well-protected elephant population sheltered by Mt. Kilimanjaro. Once accustomed to the wilderness, you'll treasure days spent viewing lions in their own habitat. On this trip, no effort is spared in making wilderness life as cozy as possible. Couples sleep in large, comfortable luxurious lodges and/or walk-in tents. The tents even have elevated terraces, with canvas chairs for taking in the beautiful views.



Kenya

AUSTRALIA Couples seeking a far-off and exotic locale, where the lingo is reassuringly familiar, should honeymoon Down Under. In fact, not many countries can boast of having one of the world's oldest rainforests (the Daintree), its largest coral reef (the Great Barrier Reef) and the biggest monolith (Uluru). Mix in incredible Aussie charisma and a roster of luxury retreats and you've got one very enticing honeymoon. Australia is definitely a big land (it takes 14 to 20 hours to get there!), so focus on what you love and want to do. Divers should certainly plunge into the Great Barrier Reef.

WHERE TO STAY For water lovers, **Hayman Island** (hayman.com.au) located on a private island in the Great Barrier Reef, is nothing short of liquid paradise. Guests can go scuba diving, parasailing and windsurfing, all without leaving the property. Whale-watching expeditions cruise the surrounding waters as well. All villas have superb vistas of the clear, blue water of the reef.

ARGENTINA Argentina may be nowhere near Europe, yet for Americans seeking a taste of Continental café life and sophisticated culture, it's a worthy substitute. Here, in a land of idyllic vineyards, country estates, glacial spires, and buzzing urban centers, this country has melted into something unique. Buenos Aires, the cosmopolitan city of French architecture and Latin exuberance, is the place to begin your journey. Wander along the Plaza de Mayo area and marvel at the city's best-known site, Casa Rosada, where former first lady Evita Perón made her famous final speech. You may want to window shop at the high-end boutiques in the nearby Recoleta district, but bargain hunters and antiques collectors treasure the hunt at San Telmo's flea market in the Plaza Dorrego. And marvel at the works of artists who reside in La Boca, a hip neighborhood of brightly painted tin buildings that sits on the banks of the Rio Plata. Once the sun sets dress up and take in a performance at the magnificent Teatro Colon.

WHERE TO STAY The **Alvear Palace** (alvearpalace.com), better known as the Grande Dame of Buenos Aires, is everything you imagined—and more. Sumptuous details including ornate mirrors, overstuffed furniture and brocade upholstery will make you feel like Hollywood celebs. A full-service spa and fitness center soothes and relaxes (try the reflexology after a day of touring the city and a night of tango!).



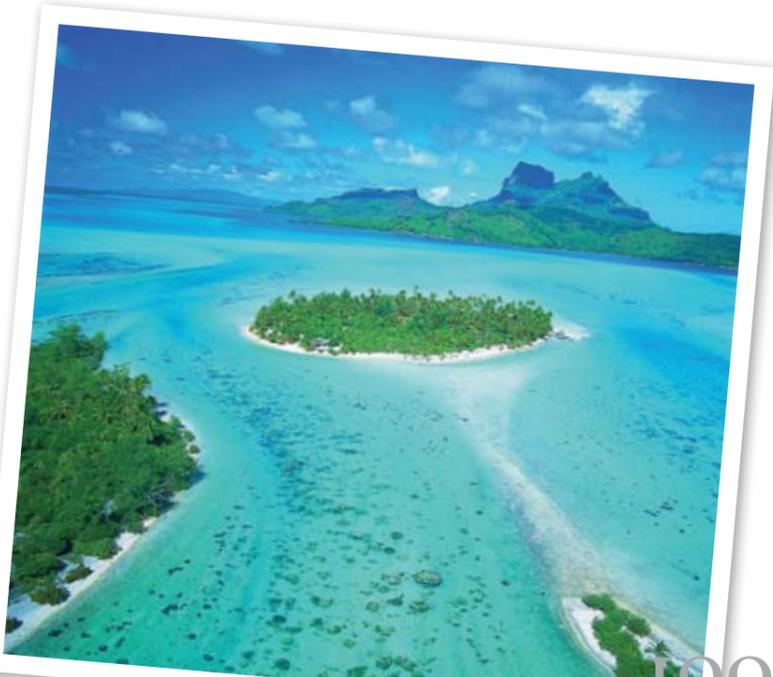
Alvear Palace Hotel



Hilton Bora Bora Nui Resort & Spa

TAHITI If you had to use just one word to describe Tahiti, it would be sensual. Imagine midday massages with luscious vanilla or ginger-scented oil, fragrant leis of frangipani and orchids, king-sized beds strewn with hibiscus, blossoms of every color; refreshing gulps of coconut water straight from the shell; and delicate raw fish marinated in lime juice and coconut milk. Tahiti and her islands have a charisma that enchants returning visitors as much as it seduces first-timers. The islands—governed by France—are scattered over an area of brilliant blue Pacific the size of Western Europe. And though all this exotic beauty exists on one of the planet's most remote archipelagos, it's still only an eight-hour flight from Los Angeles. Of the five main island groups, Bora Bora just maybe the most beautiful in the world. The warm, shallow waters are the perfect place to try out newly acquired diving skills alongside curious turtles and a kaleidoscope of tropical fish.

WHERE TO STAY French Polynesia has some of the most romantic overwater villas in the world—and a stay at the **Hilton Bora Bora Nui Resort & Spa** (hilton.com) won't disappoint. Each one comes with a mahogany canopy bed that overlooks the ocean, a two-person patio whirlpool and glass floor panels for spotting the bevy of multicolored fish swimming underfoot. For the best vantage point, book villa 107, which has front-and-center breathtaking views of Mt. Otemanu.



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SEYCHELLES One walk into the lush forests where squawking endangered birds and giant tortoises lumber past waterfalls through leafy undergrowth, and it's easy to think this is the land that time forgot. Early explorers thought it was the Garden of Eden. But modern travelers quickly realize the riches lie within these islands themselves. Only a thousand miles from Africa and you'll both discover the Seychelles. Most activities center around Mahe, the largest of the 43 islands, famed for its pink granite rocks and talcum-soft beaches. Rent a car and explore the island's Creole architecture with shopping stops at markets for local crafts. Trek the rocky coastline of Morne Seychellois National Park, or dive the world's largest coral atoll with dolphins, turtles and whale sharks.

WHERE TO STAY The **Banyan Tree Seychelles** (banyantree.com) is an exotic vacation retreat located on the island of Mahe, a secluded destination overlooking Intendance Bay and the Indian Ocean. This luxury resort is located approximately 30 minutes from the Mahe airport. There are 36 villas at the resort. Guests may choose from a variety of one-bedroom villas with small private pools. Each villa offers high-end colonial/plantation interiors, a living area, a king-size bed, and a pavilion with living/dining area. For onsite dining, guests won't want for options. The three restaurants on the property offer an eclectic array of dining experiences, from Creole specialties to Southeast Asian fare, from indoor seating to candlelit seating under the stars.



Banyan Tree



The Nam Hai

VIETNAM Traveling in Vietnam is an adventure: Crowded city streets can feel overwhelming, back country roads are virtually nonexistent and the heat is constant. What makes it all worthwhile are the country's famous sites, which include Buddhist temples, and French colonial architecture. In Hanoi, the French influence is everywhere, and you'll find some of the best baguettes outside of Paris! The countryside is lush and green, and you're rewarded with the sight of ancient temples looming out of forests, traditional fishing villages along the South China Sea and intimate yet diverse cities like Hoi An, once the country's most vital trading ports. Today, this stunningly beautiful city is a mix of Chinese, Japanese and French influences. You can easily cover the entire city on foot and stop for tours of some of the city's oldest homes and temples. Then wander about the markets and even take a ride on a sampan—a traditional flat-bottom wooden boat.

WHERE TO STAY The **Nam Hai** (thenamhai.com), just 15 minutes from Hoi An on the famous China Beach, is one of the loveliest hotels in the country. Its guesthouses and villas are all decorated in grand colonial style with furniture made of rich, deep woods and luxe beds with ultra plush bedding. The spa features private suites, each with its own steam room.

COSTA RICA Mother Nature runs the show in the rainforest of this Central American eco-playground. Your wake up call will likely be a flock of green macaws bickering with a mischievous howler monkey, your spa treatment a volcanic steam bath at the base of rumbling Mt. Arenal, and your room service a juicy mango picked just hours ago. Costa Rica is one of the hottest eco-tourism destinations in the world with more than a quarter of its land protected in national parks and reserves. From the capital, San Jose, you can rent a Jeep (you'll need it on those bumpy roads) and snake your way northwest to the Monteverde Cloud Forest, a lush tropical reserve. Take a guided tour, and be amazed at the colorful toucans and monarch butterflies.

WHERE TO STAY Located in the outskirts of one of the world's most amazing volcanoes, **Arenal Nayara Hotel & Gardens** (arenalnayara.com) is the experience of a lifetime. At this hideaway, you will find a tropical jungle right outside your door. Bungalows feature secluded backyards, outdoor showers, private balconies and more luxurious amenities. Immerse yourself in the spa-quality pool complete with three independent whirlpool Jacuzzis. ♦