

# The honeymoon gets a new look for a new generation

Technology and changing values are leading to new ways of celebrating nuptials. As **Sarah Treleven** writes, such a getaway could even take place before the actual wedding date

**SARAH TRELEVEN**  
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A bucket-list trip such as an African safari is one option for a familymoon.

SUTIRA BUDIMAN/UNSPLASH

Last week, royal wedding watchers were set atwitter by the idea that Meghan Markle and Prince Harry might be planning a "minimoon" (a short honeymoon) in Dublin after their May nuptials. And thus, a sure-to-be-widely-copied trend was born.

But that's just the tip of the iceberg. The truth is that honeymoon-style travel has long departed the stuffy convention of a postwedding, two-week trip to Hawaii. Babymoos – a sort of honeymoon for expectant parents – have been growing in popularity for close to a decade. Now, prepare to add several newer honeymoon types of travel to your lexicon: Not just the Minimoon, but also the earlymoon, buddymoon, familymoon and maximoon.

These new honeymoon offshoots can be attributed to a number of things: the prioritization of Instagrammable experiences over material possessions, a lessening attachment to formal traditions and a desire to create new and novel rites of passage – as well as the limitless ability of the travel industry to instantly brand and market any new phenomenon. Or it might be even simpler than that. Ilana Valo, founder of TWIL Travel in Toronto, put it rather succinctly: "People are always looking for a good excuse to travel." To learn more about these new trends, The Globe spoke to four travel agencies that are part of the Virtuoso travel network.

#### **EARLYMOON**

It has become a generally accepted fact that wedding planning is stressful – the price of catered canapés, the myriad logistical issues and perhaps dealing with the one relative who can't shake her annoyance over the fact that the groom isn't Catholic. And so, an increasing number of engaged couples are choosing to take an earlymoon: a relaxing getaway before the big day.

"This time is really all about disconnecting from the stress that a wedding can sometimes create, so the key here is really to choose a spot that allows the couple to just focus on themselves and get excited about their big day," Valo says.



Canyon Ranch in Tucson lets couples focus on themselves.

COURTESY OF CANYON RANCH

She recommends destination spas such as Canyon Ranch in Tucson, where couples can focus on themselves and their well-being.

For couples who place a premium on self-care, Kelly Grumbach, general manager of Quintessentially Travel in New York, recommends COMO Parrot Cay on a private island in Turks and Caicos. "It's a quick flight and they offer a separate health-conscious, yet still delicious, 'Shambala menu,' which is great for more health-conscious grooms and brides-to-be," she says.

## **BUDDYMOON**



If it's in the budget, Paris is one option for a buddymoon: a vacation newlyweds take with their closest friends.

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For couples that felt like they spent plenty of time alone with their spouse while planning and executing a wedding, the buddymoon is a perfect alternative: a vacation newlyweds take with their closest friends. Valo notes that while buddymoons can be an enjoyable way to extend the wedding celebrations, it's important to ensure that everyone in the group is aligned when it comes to objectives and expectations.

"Having similar interests and travel styles also helps, as well as agreeing on an appropriate budget within everyone's comfort level."

Valo often sends buddymooners to the Ranch at Rock Creek in Montana, where everyone can tackle the hills at their own pace (or sip hot chocolate in the chalet, depending on preference) and then meet in the evening for drinks, dinner and hot-tubbing. The all-inclusive property includes food, drinks and activities that range from horseback riding to fly fishing – which means all costs are transparent when booking.



Grumbach likes to send her buddymooners to the luxurious Four Seasons in Anguilla, which has multi-bedroom beachfront villas with private pools, or to the fashionable Hotel Plaza Athénée in Paris, which offers a recently renovated Christian Dior Spa and a remarkably high-end bar that serves imaginative cocktails.

#### **MICROMOON**

If a couple is, as so many of us are, time-starved or cash-poor, then a Micromoon might be the answer. These are incredibly short honeymoons; perhaps a night or weekend spent in a fancy local hotel, or perhaps finding a bed and breakfast or a cottage just out of town for a long weekend. Last year, English travel site TravelSupermarket announced it was preparing to launch a 24-hour micromoon package that includes a Michelin-starred tasting menu, "microspa treatments" and a hangover kit. Steve Sintra, Canada country manager for travel site Kayak, says "microtravel" is a rising trend and that such travel can be immensely rewarding if planned well. He recommends budget-friendly beach destinations in Florida or major U.S. hubs such as Boston or Chicago for couples seeking food, culture or sporting events.

#### **FAMILYMOON**

This particular "moon" combines a honeymoon with family travel and typically describes a getaway for a newly united blended family. "The most important thing for a familymoon is that there's an opportunity to bond and spend quality time together, creating new memories as a family," Sintra says. He recommends an all-inclusive package with a variety of activities to suit a range of interests and where a kids' club will allow the newlyweds to enjoy some time alone together.



Sugar Beach in Saint Lucia brings everyone together for shared family time, says Lois Barbour, owner of Travel Time – TPI.

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Lois Barbour, owner of Travel Time – TPI in St. John's, recommends Sugar Beach in Saint Lucia. "Enjoying beach activities on some of the best beaches we know in the Caribbean is a plus, but everyone comes together at the end of the day for shared family time and a great meal," she says.

Valo, on the other hand, recommends a different approach: a bucket-list trip, such as an African safari, that will help build exciting new collective memories.

#### **MAXIMOON**

Finally, the maximoon is an extended honeymoon that's closer to a lifestyle than a vacation – a getaway that stretches for months or even years. Wendy Davis, owner of Zebrano Travel in Toronto, says she works with a lot of millennials who are interested in this type of honeymoon.

"They're getting married later and they're adventurous and not afraid to spend on travel," she says. "They want to take this trip before they have kids."

Maximoons could be a round-the-world tour, Airbnb-ing across a specific region such as Asia or South America or could be more oriented around an activity such as biking or scuba diving. Planning such a trip involves a lot of research. Davis finds that most clients come with a fairly informed perspective on what they want to see and do, and she helps them put together a digital itinerary that can be loaded onto mobile devices.

Despite the often-lengthy durations of these trips, Valo recommends front-ending most of the research. This ensures maximooners are visiting each destination at the optimal time, can participate in any festivals or events they're interested in and get a clear idea of the expenses involved.