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Places for a fine romance

A honeymoon is possibly the most important holiday you will ever plan. **Mercedes Maguire** looks at the top 10 honeymoon packages available



HUNDREDS of years ago, a honeymoon was traditionally taken as a trip to visit family members who had not been able to attend the wedding. These days it's more of an excuse to get away and relax following the stress of planning the big day.

Australian couples will spend about two weeks on a honeymoon and fork out about \$7000 on the post-wedding trip.

Kim Skilton, marketing director of My Holiday Centre, says relaxation and an all-inclusive package with luxury inclusions are top of a bride and groom's must-haves for the perfect honeymoon. Her company specialises in packages to places considered typical honeymoon destinations such as Fiji, Bali, Hawaii, Thailand, Malaysia, Queensland and LA.

"Newlyweds want to have a holiday to remember and are willing to pay a little more for the privilege, so they'll go for things such as a better room type, extra privacy and special touches like champagne on arrival, spa treatments and a late checkout," she says.

"But relaxation is probably top of their list. Most couples are often after a great location where they can just 'fly 'n' flop



for a week or two." She says with most couples paying for their own wedding these days and already having set up a home together, wishing wells – where guests can contribute financially to their honeymoon – are popular.

My Holiday Centre offers a wishing well service, as do Flight Centre and several online companies such as travelregistry.com.au and ourwishingwell.com.au

Escape found the best honeymoon packages on the market right now.

BYRON BAY
HEAD to The Byron at Byron on the NSW north coast for a

three-night package in a deluxe suite priced from \$1950 a couple. The package also includes buffet breakfast daily, sparkling wine, cheese platter and Byron Bay Chocolates on arrival, a \$140 spa voucher each, daily yoga and bicycle hire, Wi-Fi and a leather bag.

This price is valid during April and from September 19 to March 31 next year.

Ph 1300 554 362 or see thebyronatbyron.com.au

FJI
HONEYMOONERS can indulge in luxury at the Qamea Resort & Spa in Fiji for seven nights from \$US3500 (\$A3865) a couple, down from \$US5400.





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The "Privately Qamea Package" includes seven nights in a beachfront bure, private seaplane transfers, continental breakfast daily, bottle of NZ wine daily and \$FJ250 spa credit. The offer is only available Tuesday 10am each week from Nadi airport during April and May. Email reservations@qamea.com.au or see qamea.com

BALI

PACK your bags for Ayana Resort & Spa Bali with honeymoon packages priced from \$US475 a night, a couple. Indulge in a Balinese massage, a private sunset dinner for two, complimentary cocktails and a private cliffside villa with plunge pool, 24-hour butler service and airport transfers. A minimum four-night stay applies. Inquire about the resort's Wedding Gift Registry where guests can contribute to the honeymoon. Valid from April 1 to December 23. See ayanaresort.com

THAILAND

CELEBRATE your union with a traditional "Buddhist Blessing of Love" at the Sarojin in Thailand. Pay from THB6500 (about \$A222) a couple, a night to stay in a garden residence including all-day a la carte breakfast and sparkling wine. For an extra THB2200 (\$A75) a couple, receive a personal spiritual blessing from a Buddhist monk on the shores of the Andaman Sea. Email reservations@sarojin.com or see sarojin.com

WHITSUNDAYS

FIND romance with a three-night package priced from \$1500 a couple. The "Romance me Whitsundays" package includes a stay in a one-bedroom spa apartment, limousine transfer from Whitsunday Coast Airport or ferry transfer from Hamilton

Island Airport, Moët & Chandon and Lindt chocolates on arrival. Also receive Peter Alexander PJs for him and her and a champagne picnic including a helicopter flight to a deserted Whitsunday Island. Offer available at one of five participating Airlie Beach hotels. See athotelgroup.com.au

MAURITIUS

RELAX in Mauritius for 10 nights from \$3183 a person, twin share, at the 5-star Dinarobin Hotel Golf & Spa. The price includes hot buffet breakfast daily and dinner every night. As a honeymoon bonus, newlyweds will also receive a bottle of champagne and fruit platter on arrival, two-course lunch daily, gift voucher for the Beachcomber Boutique and a couples' massage. Book by March 31 and receive a free upgrade to private car transfers plus a half-day city or shopping tour. The package price is valid until September 30 for travel from May 1 to September 30. Ph 1300 939 414 or see flightcentre.com.au

TAHITI

INDULGE in Tahitian luxury from \$5499 a person, twin share, including five nights in an overwater villa at the St Regis Bora Bora Resort and two nights at Manava Suite Resort Tahiti (pre/post flight). This package also includes return airfares from Sydney, airport transfers, inter-island flights, breakfast daily plus champagne on arrival and a couples massage in Bora Bora. Offer on sale until April 19. Ph 1800 800 722 or see spacificatravel.com

HAWAII

FEEL the love on a six-night Hawaiian honeymoon package priced from \$1990 a person staying at the Hyatt Regency



INTIMATE: A private dining pool at the Sarojin, Thailand (above); and a private pool and spa villa at Ayana Resort & Spa, Bali (left).



six-night honeymoon package staying at the 5-star Anantara Veli Resort & Spa priced from \$2585 a person, twin share. Stay in an overwater bungalow and enjoy breakfast daily, airport transfers by boat/launch, \$25 spa credit a couple, bottle of sparkling wine with fruit platter and honeymoon gift on departure. This offer is valid for sale until July 31 and for travel from April 28 to July 31. Ph 1300 301 711 or see creativeholidays.com

TASMANIA

CREATE memories to last forever at Peppers Cradle Mountain Lodge in Tasmania. Priced from \$890 a couple for two nights in a Pencil Pine cabin, honeymooners will also receive breakfast daily, a bottle of sparkling wine and chocolate plate on arrival, wine and cheese platter during your stay, a five-course degustation at Highlands Restaurant and a spa treatment for two. Ph 1300 806 192.

Waikiki Beach Resort & Spa. The package includes return airfares from Sydney, transfers, bottle of sparkling wine, 25 per cent off a couples massage, an Aloha Trolley pass to get around the city and a shopping centre discount book. Must book by

March 31 for travel to April 8. Add \$100 a person for travel from June 21-30. Ph 1300 004 292 or see myhawaii.com.au

MALDIVES

ESCAPE to the Maldives with a



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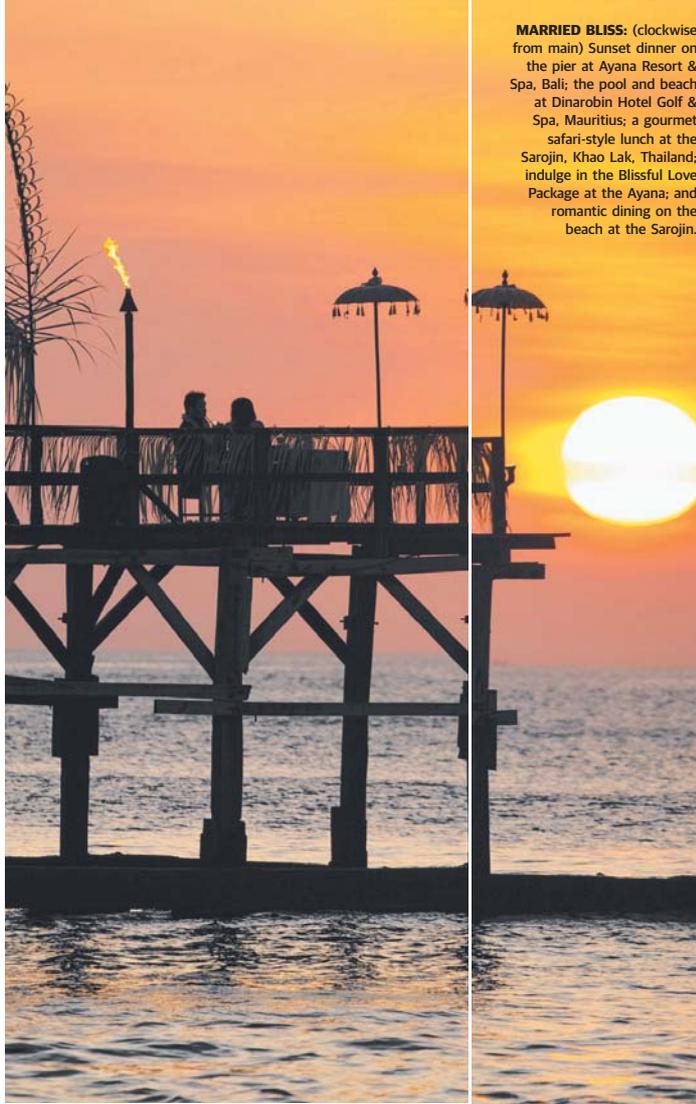
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MARRIED BLISS: (clockwise from main) Sunset dinner on the pier at Ayana Resort & Spa, Bali; the pool and beach at Dinarobin Hotel Golf & Spa, Mauritius; a gourmet safari-style lunch at the Sarojin, Khao Lak, Thailand; indulge in the Blissful Love Package at the Ayana; and romantic dining on the beach at the Sarojin.