

THE IRISH TIMES

Never mind the wedding – where’s the honeymoon?

As Prince Harry and Meghan Markle tie the knot, here are some right royal options



Wildlife

Where Harry took Meghan? Well, not exactly, but those who caught the engagement interview might remember Harry’s favourite place in the world is [Botswana](#) – and for good reason. The [Okavango Delta](#) is one of the world’s last true areas of game-inhabited wilderness, with elephants, giraffe, lion, zebra, hippo and more. Game viewing on horseback offers a unique opportunity to get up close and personal with them, while the watery delta provides the perfect footing for splash canters and gallops alongside them. Fly in by helicopter from [Maun Airport](#) and stay in [Macatoo Camp](#), in a honeymoon tent that is large and airy with Egyptian linens and a fully plumbed bathroom – including an oval centrepiece bath-with-a-view. Honeymooners can eat alone on their deck and enjoy romantic sundowners or join the other guests for dinner overlooking the spillway, complete with silver service. After the adrenaline rush of the trail, fly back to [Victoria Falls](#) for some “no news, no shoes” chilling at a luxury lodge in [Mozambique](#). [Macatoo Camp](#) costs from €540pps per night in low season (Dec to Mar).

zarasplanet.com



Or how about a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the Galapagos? [Pura Aventura](#) has a package that will see you snorkel with sea lions, trek across lava fields, wander with penguins and generally marvel at the uniquely fearless wildlife in this remarkable pocket of the planet. The trip includes two days exploring the Ecuadorian capital of [Quito](#), with a local guide, followed by a flight out to the [Galapagos](#) to join the *MV Origin*, a first-class yacht, for seven nights of luxury. See giant tortoises on Santa Cruz, spot flamingos on Floreana Island and commiserate with the blue-footed boobies about their stupid name, from £4,545pps (around €5,137) excluding international flights.

pura-aventura.com



Twin-centred honeymoon

Twin destination honeymoons are all the rage, so how about one that combines high-rolling [Las Vegas](#) with a laidback beach break in Mexico? Start in the New York New York hotel – yes, that good – a four-star property with a hopping nightlife right on Las Vegas’s famous strip. Stay four nights to try your hand with [Lady Luck](#) in the casinos before moving on to concentrate on [Lady Love](#) for 10 days with a flight down to the [Crown Paradise Club](#), an all-inclusive resort in Cancun, [Mexico](#). Cancun offers year-round sunshine, fine white sand and turquoise waters, while the resort has swimming pools, a spa, water sports and golf. Priced from €1,773pps.

Shandontravel.ie



Take an exotic two-step with a honeymoon combining laidback luxury in [Thailand](#) and city-centre shopping in [Singapore](#). Relax under the palm trees at the Manathai resort in Koh Samui, with beautiful gardens, pools and Colonial architecture, right on the seafront, for 10 days. Then amp it up with a four-day stay at the Hotel Jen Tanglin in Singapore. Located on the Orchard Road, Singapore's most famous shopping district, it's also within walking distance of the Botanic Gardens, the country's first [Unesco World Heritage Site](#). From €2,175pps.

[Worldchoice.ie](#)



Splurge

For a total blow-out, opt for end-to-end luxury and spend three nights in the One&Only Royal Mirage [Dubai](#), a very smart beachfront property backed by the city's now-iconic skyscrapers. To follow, slow things right down with seven nights at the Kuramathi island resort in the [Maldives](#), the quintessential honeymoon destination, with individual water villas and private pools. Stay half-board in the first and all-inclusive in the second, priced from €4,349pps in September, including luxury transfers in Dubai and that all-important speedboat transfer in the Maldives.

[Sunway.ie](#)



What could be more romantic than being holed up in a private compartment on a posh train? Commandeering an entire railway carriage, that's what. [Golden Eagle Luxury Trains](#) offers the Romanov Suite, an entire private carriage on its already private Trans-Siberian train. The carriage has its own kitchen and fully functioning private chef. It also comes with your very own personal guide who, presumably, is happy to play gooseberry as you two canoodle your way across [Russia](#). Might be one for oligarchs only, mind you – the two-week private carriage trip from Moscow to [Vladivostok](#) takes you 11,000km and sets you back north of €90,000.

[Goldeneagleluxurytrains.com](#)

Home

A jaunt around the Ring of Kerry is the quintessentially Irish honeymoon, and a wonderfully romantic option to boot, particularly as there is now no shortage of five-star properties to stay in along the way – including [Muckross Park](#), the [Park Kenmare](#), and The Brehon in [Killarney](#). Alternatively, hole up in one of the luxury thatched cottages on the grounds of Sheen Falls Lodge, a five-star hotel in Kenmare. It's a great base for touring the ring and handy for Garnish Island too, the most romantic garden in the country. Book the Garden Cottage at Sheen Falls Lodge, a perfect love nest for two with a terrace overlooking Kenmare Bay from which to watch the sunset. Inside there's a cosy lounge, beautiful bedroom and a kitchenette you can ignore – it's your honeymoon; go room service all the way. From €500 a night for a week's stay in summer.

[sheenfallslodge.ie](#)



Value

For affordable luxury check out the Sarojin hotel in Khao Lak, Thailand, an hour north of [Phuket](#) but a much quieter option. The hotel has a range of accommodation options, including expansive suites with terraces overlooking your own private pool. You'll also get the benefit of a dedicated "imagineer" – a personal concierge whose job it is to create bespoke adventures for you in a part of the world where there's plenty to do, including diving in the Similan Islands park. There are five rainforest national parks in the vicinity and the hotel is happy to organise such experiences as dinner beside a candlelit jungle waterfall, or on a private island, and gourmet picnics on a secluded riverbank. A week's B&B starts from €1,189pps.

[Tropicalsky.ie](#)



With sun, stunning beaches and top-notch hotels, honeymoon hotspot **Mauritius** has a dizzying array of water and land-based activities too. In recent years it has developed into a popular golf destination, with nine superb courses. Beachcomber Hotels have a number of four- and five-star resorts on the island, all of which have their own PADI diving schools. Get your diving licence on honeymoon and you've a whole new hobby for when you get home. The Beachcomber Le Mauricia, located in Grand Bay, Mauritius's sunniest coast, offers a range of free activities, including water skiing, reef snorkelling, mountain biking and glass-bottomed boat excursions. Packages start at €1,508 for a week in June.

jgt.ie

The Maldives is very much on the beaten track for honeymooners, so how about getting off it a little on the **Laamu Atoll** island of **Gan**. It's only in recent years that the laws have changed in the Maldives to allow guesthouse-style boutique hotels to be built on the smaller islands, so you'll get a much more culturally authentic experience here than you would at one of the big resort islands. As well as world-class diving, it has Buddhist ruins, surf spots, eight kilometres of white sandy beach and an unspoiled reef. Reveries Diving Village is the only hotel on the island, with just 25 rooms, a rooftop bar, gym and a wellness centre. If you're not a diver, snorkel amid the turtles instead. A 10-day honeymoon here, including half-board accommodation, nine boat dives and UK flights, costs from £2,375pps.

diveworldwide.com

Touring

Take a romantic road trip through South Africa's picturesque Cape Winelands, the country's gourmet region, staying in picture-postcard towns such as Franschhoek. Take the Cape Whale Coast trail to **Hermanus**, one of the world's best viewing sites – by land or boat – to see whales, between June and November. Finish up at the Pumba, a private game reserve in the malaria-free **Eastern Cape** and home to Africa's Big Five as well as rare white lion, hippo, hyena, cheetah and giraffe. Its beautiful thatch and glass lodges overlook either the lake or the bush, and all come with private game-viewing decks, private plunge pools, outdoor showers and earthenware fireplaces. A 12-night tour of the best of the region costs from €2,499pp, including flights, car hire and Capetown transfers.

hayesandjarvis.ie



Slow

How about a gastronomic cycle? It only sounds vaguely surgical but in fact it's a leisurely spin around the fairytale chateaux of France's [Loire](#) region, staying in top-notch hotels and stopping for wine tastings and gourmet meals along the way. The terrain here is flat and the distances short, so even if you haven't been on your bike in years, you'll manage. And the size of the prize will spur you on: Amboise, Chambord, Cheverny and Chenonceau, each chateau more romantic than the last. The area is well catered-for on the cycle path front and there are lush forest trails and quiet country lanes a-plenty. Hotels are handpicked for food, with picturesque gardens and private swimming pools, including two nights at Château de Chissay, a former royal residence. Tour-only price from £1,169.

[Headwater.com](#)



The couple that walks together talks together, so put your best foot forward and start married life with a walking holiday. A week-long walk in [Tuscany](#) will see you descend from Etruscan Hills to Ligurian Sea, in an easy ramble that takes in woodlands, hilltop villages and cliff paths. And, because it's self-guided, there's no one to hear you row about the map. In fact, the route notes are great, and cunningly designed to ensure that while you may not meet another soul along your tranquil path, there are ample opportunities for great food and wine stops along the way. And luggage is transported for you, so that's another row averted. Highlights include the hilltop village of Castagneto Carducci, the walled medieval village of Suvereto and the Golfo di Baratti, a picturesque bay, while accommodation includes a family-run winery, an olive estate and an 18th-century country house hotel. From £ 975pps, half-board.

[inntravel.co.uk](#)

Cruising

If the stars – and church availability – align, aim to honeymoon aboard Royal Caribbean's spanking new *Symphony of the Seas*, embarking in Barcelona and taking in Majorca, [Marseille](#), Florence and [Pisa](#), Rome, Naples and Capri. It's the world's biggest cruise ship, a 15-deck behemoth with waterpark, ice rink, climbing walls, basketball court and even a fully planted park. In September you'd be looking at around €2,160 pps, including flights to and from Barcelona. But catch her while you can; come November the vessel will be heading to the Caribbean, where it will cost you a whole lot more to get to.

jgt.ie