

Take time to plan a trip to remember

By ALISON ASHTON
Copley News Service

OK, so you dream of starting your married life beside a clear blue sea with palm trees swaying in the warm trade winds. Since organizing is usually the groom's chore, gentlemen, here are some tips to plan a perfect romantic retreat that will make your bride glad she said, "I do!"

- Do your homework. First, pick a region, then start narrowing your choices. Read up on the destination in travel magazines, and check out Web sites for hotels, resorts and tourism bureaus. These can be a wealth of helpful information. But don't forget to ask around, too. Personal recommendations from other couples are often the most reliable.

- What is your dream honeymoon?

Talk to your fiancée to find out what she has in mind - and if it meshes with your ideal getaway. She may want to lounge at a spa resort by the beach while you want to kayak down a rain forest river. Know your expectations so you can plan accordingly. Happily, most destinations offer a variety of activities to keep you both content.

- Where do you want to stay? Full-service resorts are a lot of fun, and a good value, but they're not everyone's idea of heaven. Do you prefer an all-inclusive honeymoon resort, or is a week at a secluded inn more your speed? Every destination offers both.

- Get a feel for the property. All hotels and resorts are not created alike. In Jamaica, the

and more fun. Also look for good off-season deals, when hotels and resorts offer better rates and special packages to attract guests.

- Let them know you're honeymooners.

Even properties that don't offer specific honeymoon room rates and packages include meals, activities, facilities, etc.), so there are no surprises at checkout time. Of course, ask about honeymoon packages, which usually include plenty of romantic perks: candlelight dinners, champagne on arrival, in-room flowers and such. But don't overlook other packages.

If you're avid golfers, divers or spa-seekers, other types of packages could be a better deal.

private plunge pools for each room.

- Get off the property. Yes, honeymoons are a time to cuddle and woo in your room, but there is something to be said for the thrill of a shared adventure. Rent a car and spend some time exploring, or arrange for an off-property excursion. You can go hiking in Jamaica's Blue Mountains, or bicycle in Maui, or kayak in the warm, gentle waters off Baja California.

- Don't overlook details. Traveling to exotic destinations often means you'll need certain documents (passports, visas) and possibly vaccinations, too. Have these details taken care of at least a month before the wedding ceremony, or you could forget them in the rush of getting to the altar.

Party icebreakers

Engagement parties can take on the look of an eighth-grade dance with the boys on one side and the girls on the other - unless the bride- and groom-to-be take charge.

Breathing life into an engagement party where all the guests may not know each other is easy with these icebreakers suggested by (beginning Bride's) (endital) magazine. Conduct a champagne taste test and let your guests vote for the bubbly that will show up at your wedding reception. Or play a personalized form of Jeopardy! by grouping your guests in teams and testing their knowledge of your courtship. Don't forget to award prizes! (CNS)

WEDDINGFACTS

Top honeymoon destinations

The majority of honeymoon destinations involve sun and fun. All-inclusive resorts and cruises are very popular, too.

Here are the hottest honeymoon destinations, according to *Honeymoon* magazine:

- The Caribbean
- Hawaii
- Florida
- The Poconos, Pa.
- Mexico

Other often-requested honeymoon destinations include:

- Hilton Head, S.C.
- Disney World
- Sandals (for other couples-only) resorts

SOURCE: <http://eocl.webpoint.com/wedding/>

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