

A HONEYMOON CRUISE...

And a few things to keep in mind
By Rebecca Garcia-Pons, Editor

When your wedding day is over and it's time for the honeymoon, do you picture the two of you drinking margaritas on a sunny tropical island, or exploring ruins in Turkey, maybe climbing a lava trail in Hawaii, or even photographing glaciers in Alaska? Sure you do, but you are thinking: "We don't have the money to do something so exotic!"

But maybe you do! To combine good value and a good time, travel experts often advise honeymooners to consider a cruise vacation.

When it's time to put the hectic planning that has gone into your wedding behind you, and to savor the celebration of your wedding day and the beginning of your new life together as husband and wife, a cruise offers a chance for both relaxation and as many activities as you choose, for an all-inclusive price.

Those who choose to cruise quickly discover that when it comes to seagoing vacations, the value proposition reaches new heights. Typically, a cruise package will include your accommodations, meals, shipboard facilities and activities, entertainment, and, of course, traveling from port to port. Take time to compare the price of a seven-day cruise to a week's stay at a comparable resort, where the guest must also pay extra for meals, entertainment and leisure activities, with no extra travel.

Instead, the ship passengers will spend several days at sea, enjoying rest and relaxation, or a host of on-board activities, before spending the rest of the cruise visiting ports of call which can range from white sandy beaches in the Caribbean to glaciers in Alaska. Or consider a European cruise which may glide through the Scandinavian fjords, or stop at quaint ports in Italy, or the beautiful Greek isles.

Remember that the cruise passenger arrives on board (in your case, both tired and exhilarated from your wonderful wedding day!), and settles into a comfortable stateroom. You will pack and unpack only once, and then choose from a variety of onboard restaurants and dining options, as well as quality entertainment nightly. Depending upon the ship you select, the onboard activity list may include volleyball and other deck games, demonstrations in ice sculpting (more fun than you would think!), rock climbing, ice skating, mock horse races, newlywed or trivia games, classes in gourmet cooking, and appearances by famous authors, sports figures, chefs, decorators...the list is endless.

Or, you can just lounge by the pool, soaking up the sun, before hitting your first port where you can choose from another wide range of options for shore side restaurants, tourist attractions, beaches, and activities such as snorkeling, scuba diving, windsurfing, fishing, golf, tennis, and more.

Your ship will become your home-away-from-home as you explore exotic places. Start thinking now, and talk with your travel agent about the kind of ship that appeals to the two of you. Do you want a big mega-ship which offers many onboard attractions and lots of other people, or do you see yourselves on a smaller vessel, maybe even a sailing ship, enjoying your honeymoon with fewer people and fewer formal activities?

Do you just want to relax and do as little as possible, or are you looking for adventure, or maybe lots of sightseeing? Every couple is different, just as every cruise line, and every ship is



different. Be certain to talk this over at length with your travel agent, who will know which ships are popular with young couples, and which have a more sedate crowd onboard. Remember, even when you are planning something as special as your honeymoon, there is more to consider than just good prices as far as getting good value from your vacation dollar. For example, can you put a cost on relaxation, comfort, service, and convenience? How much is it worth to explore exotic locales without having to worry about the details?

A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Remember, although the all-inclusive price of a cruise is a bargain in the long-run (providing transportation, lodging, meals and activities), there are other costs involved.
- Determine if airfare or other transportation is included in the cruise price. Some fares include flights to the port of departure, and others do not. You will have to take a taxi from the airport to the ship terminal unless this is included in your package.
- If you must fly to your point of departure, you may incur hotels costs, as well as meals, the night before or the night after the cruise.
- Alcoholic beverages are typically not included in the price of the cruise.
- All meals onboard are included, including such extras as high tea, ice cream socials, midnight buffets, etc. But certain ships have special restaurants, often couples only, which have a surcharge. Also, if you choose to eat onshore, these meals will add to the cost of your honeymoon.
- Most onboard activities are included, although there are charges for such things as spa treatments, etc.
- Ships will offer shore excursion packages which are at an extra charge. Unless you want to take a tour of an island with a “free” tropical punch drink, you can easily visit the port on your own. Negotiate a price with a local taxi driver to take you to a local beach or place of interest, or just wander around a quaint town such as St. Thomas or St. Maarten on your own.
- Tips are usually expected of each passenger for such service personnel as your room steward, maitre d’, and waiter. On some cruise lines, tipping is not permitted. On those where it is, remember that the service personnel are depending upon these tips for their livelihood. The good news is that onboard service is typically so superb that you don’t mind paying for the pampering you have received for seven days!
- BOTTOM LINE:** A cruise is all-inclusive IF it includes airfare and ground transportation, if you do not require a hotel before or after, if you only eat the meals included onboard the ship, if you do not order alcoholic beverages, and if you do not sign up for organized tours or special activities. Regardless, you should still expect to tip your service staff. AND, even with the extras, it is still one of the best bargains on earth when you consider what you are getting for the price!