

Five hot honeymoon destinations

By Ashley Strickland, Special to CNN

CNN.com



Bora Bora, one of French Polynesia's most popular honeymoon spots, offers a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

(CNN) -- Trying to choose a luxurious spot for the honeymoon of your dreams can be overwhelming.

Hawaii, with its tourist-friendly islands and

exotic feel without the passport, gets a lot of attention from honeymooners. But there are other scintillating destinations you don't want to overlook in your search.

CNN asked Jacqueline Gifford, travel editor of Brides Magazine, for some unforgettable honeymoon ideas. She shared the results from a recent poll of top travel agents from Signature Travel. These are some of their favorite destinations.

French Polynesia

In a relaxing contrast to Hawaii's big waves, the blue lagoons of French Polynesia provide calm waters. The French Polynesian islands are also a favorite of celebrities -- Keith Urban and Nicole Kidman honeymooned there as did Carrie Underwood and Mike Fisher.

Skip the silver, register for a honeymoon



Sofitel Moorea la Ora Beach Resort is among the French Polynesia resorts that offer overwater bungalows.

"It's all about the overwater bungalows," Gifford said. "They have amazing rooms and you're able to jump right off your deck and go snorkeling. Swimming with (reef) sharks is also very popular with young couples."

Tahiti, Bora Bora and Moorea stand out as honeymoon favorites among the nearly 130 islands that make up French Polynesia. It's a haul from any spot in the U.S., but it creates an unforgettable experience for newlyweds.

Five spectacular overwater hut resorts

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime trip," Gifford said. "When we were there, we talked to a few couples and they said, 'This is our honeymoon, we want to do something special and different. We might not ever get back here.'"

Fiji

If you've ever imagined your honeymoon as a secluded escape, Fiji's private island resorts are just what you're looking for. "It's the ultimate 'Gilligan's Island' fantasy come to life," Gifford said.



Shangri-La's Fijian Resort and Spa, located on Yanuca Island, is a private island resort.

There are a limited number of villas on each island, so it isn't deserted, but seclusion remains a priority.

Although staying in one of Laucala Island's 25 villas can cost up to \$3,800 a night, the expense is all-inclusive. In other words, requesting five bottles of champagne won't cost you any extra.

iReport: Share your scenic destination wedding photos

But with various price ranges for different islands, you can more affordably stay in a beach-front private cottage, or bure (pronounced like "beret"), Gifford suggested.

"For people who like to be by the water, Fiji's islands are great," Gifford said. "You see other people, but it still feels private -- nothing like a big resort."

Italy

When it comes to romantic honeymoons in Italy, couples tend to think of the Amalfi Coast and Capri, or major cities such as Venice, Florence and Rome. But venturing off into the Tuscan countryside or the northern Lake District makes for equally scenic getaways, Gifford said.



Isola Bella on Lake Maggiore is a popular tourist spot in Italy's Lake District.

While Tuscany is well-traveled, its countryside provides an inviting environment for couples who enjoy exploring during the day and relaxing over a good meal and a bottle of wine at dusk.

Lake Como is also a gorgeous destination for honeymooners looking to take in the Italian scenery and culture without the rush of the cities.

"The whole region around the Lake District is beautiful, and I'm not sure people are completely in the know about it," Gifford said.

Bali

If planning your wedding was a little too hectic, then Bali, the ultimate relaxation destination, is for you. As seen in the movie "Eat, Pray, Love," expect to enjoy a natural getaway in a place where life slows down to take pleasure in the little things.

Tiered rice paddies provide soothing scenery throughout Bali.

"Bali is the zen destination," Gifford said. "You're enjoying a blissful culture and looking out over serene rice paddies."

While Bali's beaches provide a nice place to stay, the hills are home to relaxing, isolated retreats. Gifford also



recommends taking in some of the spa culture while visiting.

Bermuda

Although often associated with the Caribbean, Bermuda is actually situated about 650 miles off the coast of North Carolina. For people living on the East Coast, the plane ride to paradise lasts less than two hours.

Travel Snapshots: Bermuda

"Bermuda has amazing beaches, the pink sands, great food, warm people and all the pampering and nice hotels without having to travel far," Gifford said.

A small island, Bermuda gives off a close-knit community feel while providing an exotic flavor. Pastel-colored buildings and crystal blue waters give the scenic impression that you're far from home without the long journey.

For couples taking a "mini-moon" -- and compensating with a longer honeymoon when time allows -- Bermuda provides a special weekend getaway where you can still make it back to work on Monday, Gifford said.



© 2011 Cable News Network. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. All Rights Reserved.