

Green Honeymoons (1/08)

A. Introduction

A green honeymoon should be an expression of you as a couple, who you are and your values. It should also be a special occasion to first and foremost enjoy one another's company and secondarily to have a memorable travel experience together. Your honeymoon can be green, no matter what you pick by being selective about your destination, accommodations, modes of travel getting to your destination and while there. You can look at your carbon footprint for your trip and make choices to that reduce the footprint. For example, your choice of transportation to your destination (rail vs. air for example) and while at your destination (public transit vs. rental car) can make a difference.

Ecotourism/ecotravel principles can be used as you plan and choose the various elements that will make up your honeymoon:

- Do your choices support the local economy?
- Is the hotel or tour company respectful of local culture and the local environment?
- Do the activities you plan to do support the local community and respect the environment?
- Do your choices represent your values?

But the bottom line is what makes this trip special and memorable to both of you. Its your honeymoon!

B. Style & Timing

As you plan your green honeymoon, consider whether you both want a romantic getaway, an outdoor or cultural adventure or an opportunity to give back to a community, place or people (volunteer travel). These are not mutually exclusive but represent some of the ways to narrow down the type of experience you are looking for as you plan a honeymoon. Again, environmentally and culturally sensitive vendors, accommodations and tours can be found in a variety of styles.

Timing can be keyed to both events in your life like the wedding date or it can be linked to the best time to visit a specific destination like Hawaii in winter. Of course you can do both – pick the best romantic destination after a fall wedding date. Some people love winter and winter sports and may delay six months from a spring or summer wedding to enjoy a honeymoon. Some people do not have the time to take their dream trip or do 8 weeks of volunteer wildlife work in Africa until sometime later. A honeymoon/anniversary trip can be anytime in your life. Choose the time that means the most to you as a couple and the style of honeymoon you want.

Having picked a type of trip and when you want to go, then its time to think about the destination. The destination choice can make a difference in how you travel and needs to be related to your budget.



C. Destination

The choice of destination will be guided by your decisions and preferences on style and timing. Tropical honeymoons in North America can be found in Hawaii, Florida, Mexico and the US Virgin Islands. Romantic getaways for people who want to relax and hike can be found any time of year across the country. Fall makes one think of New England and the east coast and the beautiful colors. Winter makes one think of the south and southwest unless of course you enjoy winter sports and cozy lodges. Culture suggests a romantic getaway in one of our wonderful urban centers – Toronto, New York or a cruise on the Mississippi and a stay in New Orleans.

D. Transportation

"It is almost axiomatic that the worst trains take you through magical places." - Paul Theroux

Passenger rail can be used for a variety of destinations and a deluxe bedroom and the sleeping car service can be romantic. It may be a great way to relax after the stresses of a wedding and to slow down. VIA across Canada offers beautiful scenery. Try taking the train on one leg and flying the other to reduce the carbon footprint of the trip.

The central hub for the rail system in the United States is Chicago which offers a variety of options depending on where you are headed. From New Orleans to the Grand Canyon, Glacier National Park or New York City, train travel may be an option for you. Also consider an all inclusive scenic rail trip as your honeymoon. These luxurious trains take you to some of the most scenic parts of any country!

At many destinations, public transit can be used and at others hybrid cars can be rented. Are you interested in bike riding? Floating a river? Using mopeds? Or using shuttles?

The Green Concierge Travel concierge service can be extremely valuable in matching up the different travel needs at different points in the honeymoon itinerary. Finally, you can also purchase carbon offsets or plant trees after you calculate your carbon footprint for your honeymoon including you rail, air and auto transportation.

E. Accommodation (services and operation)

Accommodations at a specific destination can be selected to fit the type and style of honeymoon experience desired. Green lodging certification programs can help but some are not as transparent as others in what the certification is awarded for. And because the number of these programs is growing using an experienced travel company like Green Concierge Travel can help you find the accommodation that meets your needs.



Use your lifestyle at home as a guide for finding the right place to stay. Energy efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, landscaping with native plants, water saving measures etc. can all be a part of a green accommodation. Put the emphasis on what is most important to you. Many smaller inns and B&Bs have made significant changes in their operations but will not show up in a certification program.

Ecolodges have often been built from the ground up with your comfort in mind while minimizing the lodge's and its guests environmental footprint. Some of the bigger certification programs for North America are:

- Green Globe - <http://www.ec3global.com/products-programs/green-globe/Default.aspx>
- Green Seal - <http://greenseal.org/findaproduct/index.cfm#lodging>

And if you can not find certified lodging, you can always use a tool provided by Ceres (pronounced "series"), a national network of investors, environmental organizations and other public interest groups working with companies and investors to address sustainability challenges such as global climate change. They have two tools for travelers – a best practice survey that can be left with the hotel or filled in on your visit and a green service request card that is left at the front desk on checking in. See Ceres - Hotel Initiative -

<http://www.ceres.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=761&srcid=748> for downloadable copies of the forms.

F. Travel Philanthropy

Green Concierge Travel encourages its clients to participate in Travel Philanthropy. **Travel Philanthropy is the practice of giving back to the destination.** This can be through volunteer work and, or donations to an organization working to protect the local culture and environment. As a couple, you can recognize a special group that protects or conserves your special place. This could be your hometown, wedding location or your honeymoon destination.

How do you do this? Choose organizations or institutions that do important work and help guide the contributions of your friends and relatives. For your wedding, you can ask guests traveling to your wedding to contribute to the local group that enhances your local bike trails that you use for work, protects your local lakes where you canoe, or maintains the historic barn or house where you have your wedding.

On your honeymoon, choose a group that cares for the destination you have chosen and make a personal contribution. Or invite your wedding guests to contribute to both your honeymoon and your pick for travel philanthropy. For example, in Hawai'i, you might pick the Conservation Council for Hawai'i, P.O. Box 2923, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96802, <http://www.conservehi.org/index.html>. Conservation



Green concierge TRAVEL

Council for Hawai'i is dedicated to protecting native Hawaiian plants, animals, and ecosystems - the essence of a Hawaiian get away!

G. Conclusion

Get creative and incorporate your ideas and values into your honeymoon. Use your budget and timing needs to hone these ideas. The result - your honeymoon will be extremely satisfying, memorable and a true expression of you as a couple. At Green Concierge Travel, we advocate having fun when you travel but **Don't leave your values at home!**