

Cunard's newest luxury liner, *Queen Elizabeth*, is perfect for the couple that wants to spend their honeymoon feeling like royalty.

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 **BON VOYAGE!** *The honeymoon*

Cruising no longer means cramped quarters and dining with the masses. Set sail on a **sea-going honeymoon** that's as romantic as you are. *By* **KARI MOLVAR**

THE NEW

Love Boats

IF YOUR IDEA OF A ROMANTIC HONEYMOON involves island hopping, feasting on scrumptious food prepared by a celebrity chef, paddling around in a glass-bottom kayak, or being massaged head-to-toe in a private spa villa, you might be surprised to hear that a cruise — yes, a cruise — could be your ticket to bliss.

As more modern and luxurious ships hit the open waters, the concept of what a cruise entails is changing, according to travel expert Ann Petronio, of Annie's Escapes in Cranston. For newlyweds,

the option to combine ultra-romantic moments with top-flight service and activities geared to their interests (think wine tasting or surfing, not shuffleboard) is appealing, says Petronio. Of course, not every cruise is right for honeymooners — the best ships tend to offer spacious cabins, stunning views, non-kiddie itineraries (this is not the time for Disney World), flexible dress codes and private nooks where you can unwind together. Pricing is usually all-inclusive — another nice bonus — but you'll most likely have to cover extras like luxurious spa treatments or excursions ashore (our tip: reserve some funds in a travel registry). To help you navigate the options, we've selected seven unique cruises for any kind of couple. Bon voyage! >>

Best for: foodies & vino lovers

CRYSTAL CRUISES — CRYSTAL SERENITY

TOP FEATURES: A “theme cruise” might make you groan, but Crystal Cruises takes a modern, elegant approach (no line dancing, we promise). The Food and Wine

tours are particularly popular and visit culinary-rich destinations like Seville, Spain, and the Mexican Rivera. World-renowned chefs and celebrity experts come along for the ride and prepare special tastings and meals both onboard and ashore. The star-studded lineup recently included Jeremias Tower, one of the founding chefs of Alice Waters’ Chez Panisse in Berkley, California, and Audrey Saunders, owner of the chic Pegu Club in New York City, where the cocktails have been described as liquid art.

HONEYMOON DELIGHT: Sampling sushi prepared by acclaimed Japanese chef Nobu Matsuhisa, who has a restaurant on the ship.

ROMANTIC ROUTE: A nine-day journey from Portugal to the sun-drenched shores of Morocco and the Canary Islands. From \$4,845 per person (double occupancy), usually offered in November. For dates and rates, call 1-866-446-6625.

crystalcruises.com

Best for: thrill seekers

SEADREAM YACHT CLUB — SEADREAM I & II

TOP FEATURES: Designed to feel like your own personal yacht (sigh, if only), the SeaDream Yacht Club’s fleet only carries 112 passengers, max. Thanks to their smaller size, the ships can visit harbors and ports where larger boats can’t go, including tiny, exclusive Norman Island in the Caribbean. Sporty types will love all the toys at their disposal in the ship’s marina. Twin-hulled Hobie Cats, Laser sailboats and all-transparent Molokini kayaks are just some of the options you can tool around in ports such as the Spanish Virgin Islands of Culebra, Culebrita and Vieques.



After a day of adventure, escape to a romantic alcove.

HONEYMOON DELIGHT: After a day of snorkeling or wave riding, relax under the stars in the ship’s Balinese daybed or secure one of the dining alcoves made just for two.

ROMANTIC ROUTE: Seven or nine-day St. Thomas loop, visiting the islands of the British West Indies, including St. John and St. Barts. From \$2,999 per person (double occupancy), offered through April. seadreamyachtclub.com

Best for: far-flung explorers

PAUL GAUGUIN CRUISES — PAUL GAUGUIN

TOP FEATURES: Named for the famed French Post-Impressionist who painted the languid atmosphere of Tahiti, this upscale ship is an ideal ride since it’s specially designed to sail the shallow seas of French Polynesia and the South Pacific. Gourmet Polynesian cuisine is sourced with local ingredients and even the spa treatments incorporate native botanicals such as hei poa, or red flowers. The itinerary provides unique access to the stunning natural landscape — you can lounge on the pristine beaches of the magnificent volcanic islands, dolphin-watch at Moorea, snorkel off Bora Bora, or spend the day on your own private motu (islet) off Taha’a.



Enjoy the South Pacific aboard the Paul Gauguin.

HONEYMOON DELIGHT: Taking part in a Polynesian love blessing ceremony performed by Les Gauguines, local women who recreate the traditional ritual on board.

ROMANTIC ROUTE: Weeklong Tahiti and Society Island. From \$3,997 per person (double occupancy), offered Oct.–Dec. pgcruises.com

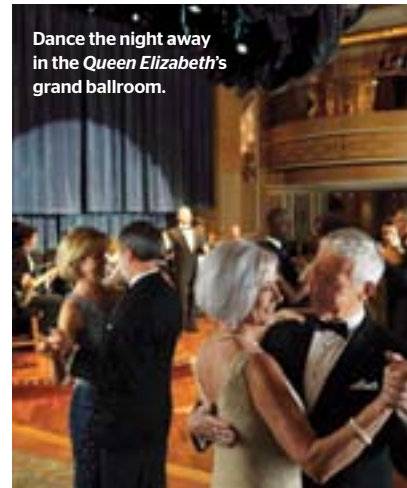
Best for: glam style-setters

CUNARD — QUEEN ELIZABETH

TOP FEATURES: There’s been much buzz surrounding Cunard’s newest transatlantic ocean liner, the *Queen Elizabeth*,

(LEFT) PHOTO COURTESY OF CRYSTAL CRUISES. (RIGHT) COURTESY OF SEADREAM YACHT CLUB. (OPPOSITE) COURTESY OF PAUL GAUGUIN CRUISES

which set off on her maiden voyage in October and recalls the glamour of high society in the '30s. You'll feel like royalty with amenities such as a grand ballroom with a 1,000-square-foot dance floor; 6,000-volume library with stained glass and a spiral staircase; games deck (paddle tennis courts; croquet lawns); dinner and dancing in the glass-roofed conservatory; and afternoon tea served beneath ornate cantilevered balconies in the Queens Room. If you can swing it, splurge on a Queens Grill cabin, which comes with the services of a private butler.



Dance the night away in the *Queen Elizabeth's* grand ballroom.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CUNARD CRUISES

HONEYMOON DELIGHT: Going to an evening performance (with champagne and petits fours) at the dazzling three-story Royal Court Theatre.

ROMANTIC ROUTES: Choose from five-to twenty-two-day excursions through the Canary Islands, the Mediterranean, northern Europe and the Caribbean. For dates and rates, call 1-800-728-6273. cunard.com

Best for: party partakers

CELEBRITY CRUISES — *CELEBRITY ECLIPSE*

TOP FEATURES: Sensuous temptations abound while you cruise the seas. You can keep the spirit of your nuptials going as you dance and imbibe at the glass-walled Sky Lounge, walk barefoot on real grass aboard the ship and dine at ten glamorous restaurants, including a sparkling dining room with a two-deck glass wine tower.

HONEYMOON DELIGHT: Stealing away in a wicker bed located in the hidden sunning spots.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CELEBRITY CRUISES

This two-story wine tower was inspired by the vineyards of Napa Valley.

ROMANTIC ROUTE: Fourteen-night Italian Mediterranean tour including Provence, Florence and Lisbon. From \$2,291 per person (double occupancy), offered June–July. celebritycruises.com

Best for: spa and body buffs

YACHTS OF SEABOURN — *SOJOURN*

TOP FEATURES: Seabourn's newest luxury yacht, *Sojourn*, launched last June and feels like a floating spa paradise for newlyweds. A panoramic sliding glass wall

leads to a two-deck outdoor spa that features seven treatment rooms, a thalassotherapy pool (which French beauties swear reduces cellulite), a Finnish sauna, and a Kinesis Wall — a tri-dimensional pulley system that stretches and tones your body. You can also de-stress from wedding mania with yoga, tai chi and pilates classes, or book a session with a personal trainer, if you're feeling ambitious.

Relax at Sojourn's two-deck outdoor spa.



HONEYMOON DELIGHT: Book a couple's treatment in one of the ship's 750-square-foot, private spa villas for a hedonistic half-day of pampering. Each villa includes an oversized bathtub and private wraparound terrace with chaise lounges.

ROMANTIC ROUTE: Nine-day Norwegian fjord, which travels through the sparkling blue waterways that jut through the mountains and round-trips from Copenhagen, Denmark. From \$4,299 per person (double occupancy), offered May–Aug. seabourn.com

Best for: cozy cultural-enthusiasts

FRENCH COUNTRY WATERWAYS — *HORIZON II*

TOP FEATURES: Enjoy the calm and quiet exploration of the French countryside on an intimate six to twelve-passenger barge. Cruise on historic canals, visit romantic châteaux and medieval villages, and taste wines at world-famous vineyards while sampling local cheeses at meals prepared onboard by a French-trained chef.

HONEYMOON DELIGHT: Borrow the barge's bikes and head off to explore riverside villages and peaceful country roads on your own.

ROMANTIC ROUTE: Six-day central Burgundy journey, which snakes through a network of more than 600 miles of waterways. From \$5,495 per person (double occupancy), offered April–Oct. fcwl.com

**Please note: All prices quoted are approximate. >>*

MORE TOP GETAWAY TRENDS

If you're not cruising (or don't have sea legs), consider two more trends that are hot among honeymooners right now, according to Ann Petronio, of Annie's Escapes in Cranston.

Island Pairing: Split your time between two islands that are within close proximity to one other, but offer very different vibes or atmospheres. This way, you can spend a few days in each location and never get bored with just one scene, explains Petronio. Some prime pairs? In Hawaii, combine Waikiki, Oahu (a beachy, surf city), with Maui (miles of lush wilderness abound); in the Caribbean, hop between Barbados (a bustling party spot) and St. Lucia (a more chill, laid-back escape).

Quirky Custom Tours: Couples are getting more creative and planning trips around their own specific (sometimes very specific) interests, says Petronio. She recently organized a honeymoon for a couple who loved beer so much that they went to Belgium on a romantic pub crawl, complete with tours of the local breweries and growing fields. "Think of what shared interests you have as a couple and go from there," advises Petronio. If you're both baseball fans, plan a journey to visit the most picturesque small-town ballparks around the U.S., or if you're art-obsessed, arrange behind-the-scenes tours of lesser-known museums and galleries in Europe. ●

Split your time between two islands, such as Oahu and Maui, in Hawaii.



HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY (HTA)/TOR JOHNSON