



Hot honeymoon destinations

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island, the options for honeymooners are vast, he added, but can always be narrowed down and then personalized.

Leslie Sickterman and Rob Bacigalupi are Traverse City residents who were married this past June. They put almost as much time into planning their honeymoon trip as they did their wedding.

The couple knew they were interested in a relaxing, sunny, tropical climate where they could also enjoy outdoor activities like bicycling, hiking and snorkeling. Through extensive research on the Internet and through conversations with others, they determined that Hawaii was where they wanted to spend their 10 days away from home and their jobs in downtown Traverse City.

Eventually, they settled on Maui, which has been called the "Honeymoon capital of the world." Through friends, they learned about a condominium complex with rentals that was on the ocean. It had a pool, spacious rooms with kitchen facilities and access to the kinds of activities they wanted to do.

They booked their room, flight to Hawaii, rental car there and then were off. They describe their trip as having been a "wonderful" one that met all of their expectations.

"We did our homework beforehand and between the Internet research, having good recommendations from people we trusted and pretty specific ideas about what we wanted ourselves, we got a trip where we felt comfortable about what we were getting even before we'd gotten there," said Bacigalupi.

Nancy Sundstrom is a local freelance writer.

Save the date

Many couples want to get out the word about their wedding as soon as they've chosen a date so far-flung family and friends have time to plan. One way to do that is with save-the-date cards.

Here are some guidelines from eInvite.com, a stationery Web site where couples can design their own cards:

- Save-the-date cards can be sent as soon as an engaged couple has chosen their wedding date and place. They are usually sent no later than six months prior to the wedding.
- Like wedding invitations, save-the-date cards can be formally or informally worded. The cards almost always include the phrase "Save the Date," the date, city and the couple's names.
- Save-the-date cards do not have to be sent to every guest. For example, if only 30 percent of the guests will be traveling long distances, it's fine to limit sending the cards just to them.
- Envelopes for save-the-date cards should be addressed by hand, like invitations, but spending money on a calligrapher for them is not necessary.
- Couples typically spend about 3 percent of their total wedding budget on invitations and stationery. That includes the invitations themselves, response cards, wedding programs, calligraphy and save-the-date cards.

Money-saving tips

With the average wedding costing \$22,000, here are ways to cut costs and save money:

- Wedding gowns: Choose a simple gown and dress it up with glamorous accessories, such as a jeweled tiara. Don't be afraid to buy last season's dress. Big discounts can be had at salon sample sales.
- Bridal accessories: Longer veils cost more money, so go for a shorter look, which is less expensive and more fashionable now.
- Bridal beauty: Frequent the department store cosmetics counter to learn do-it-yourself makeup techniques. Having your hair done in a salon instead of having a stylist come to your home will also save money.
- Invitations: Order early, as rush charges can increase costs by 50 percent. Include reception information on the ceremony invitation instead of ordering separate cards.

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