

# Planning honeymoon makes for a smooth trip

BY MICHELLE ARNTZ

Special to the Record-Eagle

"Honeymoons are the trip of a lifetime," said Kristie Ryder-Slater, owner of Third Rock Travel of Traverse City.

An independent travel agent, she suggests that couples begin planning their trip about six months in advance.

In Michigan, weddings and honeymoons are particularly seasonal, with May

through August being the busiest months. Booking should be completed three to four months before the departure date.

Hawaii, Jamaica and Mexico are currently the most popular vacation choices among couples.

"Couples usually come in with at least an idea of where they want to go and what they want to do on their honeymoon. Weather, environment, culture and

amenities are more of a determining factor than is expense," said Ryder-Slater. "The bride and groom are more willing to splurge to get what they want for this trip."

She said that while vacations are planned as a getaway from daily routines, honeymoons are planned as a celebration on a new beginning. For those with a limited travel budget, Ryder-Slater suggested booking at an all-inclusive resort. Airfare, room, shuttle services, food, beverages and some activities are often included in a travel package.

"When you break everything down, the all-inclusive is the way to go. They offer piece of mind that you will have everything you need with the money that you have budgeted for the trip," said Ryder-Slater.

Some vacation companies she works with offer package deals that include pre-booked helicopter tours, dinners and other excursions.

"This helps couples make the most of their time while

## What to pack for the honeymoon

99% of newlyweds take a honeymoon. In a Bridal Guide survey, wedding couples indicated the items they were mostly likely to acquire for honeymoon travel:

- Wardrobe 70.1%
- Swimsuit 69.9%
- Sunglasses 69.9%
- Sunscreen 57.8%
- Luggage 49.7%
- Video camera 36.6%
- Camera 31.0%
- Sports equipment 7.3%



SOURCES: www.usabride.com; www.weddings.co.uk

vacationing," she said.

To accommodate her clients, Ryder-Slater makes house calls. She advised that travelers keep a photocopy of their credit cards, driver's licenses or passports with them in a separate secured location or even with family back home. According to the latest issue of *Travel Agent Magazine*,

passports will be mandatory for any airline travel into the United States by the year 2008.

"Even now, having a passport makes travel easier," said Ryder-Slater.

She also believes that travel insurance is money well-spent. Protection policies include from coverage against loss of luggage, emergency evacuation and medical reimbursement.

"We all have a concept that it's not going to happen to us. It is a minimal cost to protect you and your investment," said Ryder-Slater.

John Wehr, a branch manager at AAA Club and Travel Agency in Traverse City, agreed that all travelers should purchase insurance. Some companies offer insurance for as little as \$16 per person, and prices vary with destinations.

"No doubt. It's economical. I wouldn't travel without it nowadays," he said.

Wehr finds that cruises, especially those to Caribbean destinations, are

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