



# Heavenly Honeymoon Hideaways

By Janice Mucalov

For your honeymoon, get swept away in a special place. Something unique and downright heavenly. Here are five passionately romantic retreats where you can celebrate your love.

## BANYAN TREE MADIVARU, MALDIVES

Republic of Maldives

It's all about escape at the exclusive Banyan Tree Madivaru, Maldives. The resort features just six tented pool villas sprinkled about a tiny palm-studded island. The encircling lagoon is a snorkeller's dream with rainbow reefs and galaxies of fish. And the only footprints you'll see on the powdery white beach are likely to be yours.

**What's wow:** Each villa's three huge interlinked canvas tents (for lounging, sleeping and bathing) are oases of luxury, with polished timber floors, leather chairs, handcrafted teak chests, billowing ceiling canopies – even A/C and a temperature-controlled wine fridge. In the midday heat, cool off in your own ocean-blue tiled pool. A personal host just for the two of you ensures you want for nothing 24/7.

**What's honeymoon-worthy:** On a deserted sandbank surrounded by candles, dine à deux on fresh lobster prepared by your own chef. Side-by-side spa treatment beds in your villa's bath tent are the scene of soothing massages with an herbal pouch dipped in warm sesame oil.

**What else to do:** Enjoy sea safaris on the resort's *The Banyan Madi* (a two-masted Turkish gulet) to watch dolphins and manta rays. Dive experts accompany you on scuba trips to coral pinnacles sparkling with fish.

## KO'A KEA HOTEL & RESORT

Kaua'i, Hawaii

This chic couples-oriented boutique hotel opened in April following a multimillion-dollar reconstruction. Ocean-inspired art adorns the walls, and gauzy sheer fabric frames the verandas of all 121 rooms and suites. The result? A light and airy beachside escape where the vibe is blissfully serene (no pool music, just the lull of the surf).

**What's wow:** Endangered monk seals bask in the sun on the golden curve of beach embraced by Ko'a Kea. Dining is sublime at the Red Salt restaurant – a three-star Michelin-trained chef whips up lemon soufflé breakfast pancakes and, for dinner, vanilla-seared mahi with avocado ginger salsa.

**What's honeymoon-worthy:** The specially designed natural fibre featherbeds and Anichini linens from

Italy are so comfortable, you won't want to get up in the morning. Then again, you might be tempted by the premium coffee from your in-room Nespresso machine (with real cream) or by lathering each other with L'Occitane bath products in your double marble rainshower.

**What else to do:** Nicknamed the 'garden island,' Kaua'i is a tropical Eden with activities galore. Hike lush mountains to tumbling waterfalls, ride horses across sugar cane fields and rolling foothills, bike along the coast, tee off on championship golf courses, and more...

## VEDEMA RESORT

Santorini, Greece

Nestled between vineyards and a traditional Greek village, the 45-suite Vedema Resort is built around a 15th-century winery. It also feels more like a charming little village than a luxury hotel. Lava-rock pathways wind around pink and yellow domed townhouses, garlanded with bougainvillea. Hollywood celebs Angelina Jolie and Heidi Klum are among the guests who have checked into the Presidential Villa.

**What's wow:** Joyful suites have white-washed walls, stone floors, abstract oil paintings and at least one marble bathroom. At dusk, throw open the burgundy wooden shutters and listen to church bells ringing and birds singing in the trees. Come morning, greet the day with a champagne breakfast by the pool.



**What's honeymoon-worthy:** Sample/savour your welcome bottle of chilled Santorini wine and, from your rooftop terrace, watch the sun set over sugar-cube houses and churches with blue cupola roofs. Evening wine-tastings are offered in the candle-lit Canava Wine Bar, housed in old vaulted catacombs.

**What else to do:** The concierge can arrange a deluxe sailing trip past the island's towering red and ebony cliffs. It's fun soaking in the volcanic hot springs and there's also a complimentary shuttle to the resort's beach club, set on a black sand beach lined with tavernas.

#### FOUR SEASONS RESORT CHIANG MAI and FOUR SEASONS TENTED CAMP GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Mae Rim Valley and Chiang Rai province, Thailand

Indulge your adventurous spirit – and be pampered too – at this exotic northern Thailand duo. Start at the Four Seasons Resort Chiang Mai, which blends Thai sculptures, silk accents and teak latticework in a spectacular setting overlooking rice paddies with working water buffalo. Then fly in a puddle-jumper to the Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle, a sanctuary of 15 safari-style tents in the jungle where Thailand meets Burma and Laos.



**What's wow:** You can skinny dip at your whim in a posh villa with private infinity-edge pool at the Chiang Mai resort. At the Golden Triangle, the show-stopper in your sumptuous tent is an enormous beaten-silver tub with faux elephant-tusk taps. But actual elephants are the real draw – you get your own elephant to feed, train, bathe in a lagoon, and ride bareback.

**What's honeymoon-worthy:** Luxuriate in an aromatic couples massage at Chiang Mai's spa, designed like a real Thai temple. Pure magic: being kissed by an elephant trunk, followed by a torch-lit dinner for two at the Golden Triangle's elephant camp. Afterward, make wishes as you release rice-paper lanterns into the starry sky.

**What else to do:** Chiang Mai activities include bamboo rafting, zip-lining and visiting ethnic hill tribes. In the Golden Triangle, check out the fascinating Hall of Opium.

#### LIKULIKU LAGOON RESORT

Malolo Island, Fiji

Suspended on columns over a beautiful coral reef, the 10 overwater *bures* (palm-thatched Fijian-style bungalows) at Likuliku Lagoon Resort are impossibly romantic. Snorkel with lollipop-striped fish right from your deck, and drift off to sleep with the sound of wavelets lapping beneath you. The 18 *bures* strung along the white sand beach are ultra-luxe too; they boast private plunge pools, canopy-covered daybeds and outdoor lava-rock showers.



**What's wow:** For a bird's-eye view, fly in by chopper (the resort boasts its own helipad). At dusk, switch on underwater lights and gaze through the glass panels in the wood floor of your overwater bure – you'll see harmless baby reef sharks swimming below.

**What's honeymoon-worthy:** Sip a glass of bubbly (honeymooners receive a welcome bottle of champagne) as you soak in the egg-shaped tub of your overwater bure, gazing at the turquoise lagoon through the wide-open window. Fijian guitarists serenade you during dinner with a goodbye love song the night before you leave.

**What else to do:** Visit a local Fijian village, where the chief greets you with a ceremonial drink of kava (made from the root of a pepper tree). You can also buy shell necklaces and small wooden handicrafts. WH