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*the knot* HONEYMOONS

# honeymoon wonders

Looking for some ideas for the biggest trip of your lives? Trek to one of the new seven wonders of the world—or their closer-to-home counterparts. BY JENNIE MA

**christ the redeemer**  
The best time to visit Brazil's mountaintop monument? Right at sunset.

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## rio de janeiro, brazil

### CHRIST THE REDEEMER

Standing at 105 feet and perched atop Rio's Corcovado Mountain, Christ the Redeemer is one impressive statue and can be seen from almost any vantage point in the city. Our favorite view: from a private helicopter tour (book one at [Viator.com](http://Viator.com)). But that's not the only reason to come to Rio. The Brazilian hot spot is known for its sizzling shores—and let's be honest, it's hard to beat a beach honeymoon. Don't miss the famed sands of Copacabana, where you can cool off with a dip in the crystal-clear waters or with sweet caipirinhas (Brazil's signature cocktail) on the mosaic promenade. If you're looking to keep the party going, time your visit with Carnival, an over-the-top festival that takes over the city every year, with pulsating samba music and colorful dancers filling the streets.

#### where to stay

Designed by modern master Philippe Starck, Hotel Fasano Rio de Janeiro is the epitome of Brazilian chic—and *the* hangout spot of the world's elite. Loll away your afternoons in the rooftop infinity pool or on the shores of the fashionable Ipanema beach (just steps away from your posh suite), where the only thing you'll have to worry about is when to turn over (from \$770, [Fasano.com.br](http://Fasano.com.br)). For a more secluded retreat with a tropical feel, book a room at Hotel Santa Teresa, a classic colonial mansion overlooking Guanabara Bay. There, you'll be treated to luxe amenities, including a nature spa (try the passion fruit oil massage), romantic extras and suites with marbled tubs and incredible panoramic views (from \$500, [Santa-Teresa-Hotel.com](http://Santa-Teresa-Hotel.com)).

MINI WONDER

## key largo, florida

### CHRIST OF THE ABYSS

If you can't make it to Rio's monument on a mountain, grab your scuba gear and visit Key Largo's Christ of the Abyss. Located 25 feet underwater, the submerged statue is one of the top diving spots in the US. Kick off your flippers on the pristine shores of the exclusive Little Palm Island Resort & Spa for the ultimate in pampering and romance (think: tiki-torch dinners), and for unreal views, they also offer private helicopter tours (from \$790, [LittlePalmIsland.com](http://LittlePalmIsland.com)).

*rome, italy*

**THE COLOSSEUM**

You don't have to be history buffs to get goose bumps as you walk around this ancient amphitheater. Once the epicenter of Roman entertainment, the Colosseum (and its surrounding ruins, like the Palatine Hill and Roman Forum) is one of those iconic pieces of history worth checking out. But the real draw of this wonder is its location. With stunning art and monuments everywhere you look, out-of-this-world restaurants on every corner and as many romantic backdrops as churches and ruins, the Eternal City is pure newlywed nirvana. When in Rome...well, do as the Romans do: Hit Piazza Navona to sip on vino and people-watch; share a gelato on the Spanish Steps; visit the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel; and toss a coin in the Trevi Fountain (throw it over your left shoulder and legend holds you'll return to Rome one day).

**where to stay**

You'll feel at home—well, if home means a private palace—at the Residenza Napoleone III. With just two suites, the opulent hotel takes exclusivity to a whole new level. Our favorite suite has all the trappings of old-world luxury—a canopy bed and tapestries—mixed with special touches like a plasma TV conveniently hidden behind an oil painting and another artwork that opens up to a marble bathroom (from \$950, [ResidenzaNapoleone.com](http://ResidenzaNapoleone.com)). For classic Roman elegance with a little more action, check in to The St. Regis Rome, where they've mastered the art of creating la dolce vita for their guests. Picture starting the day with gourmet breakfast in bed and ending it with a romantic dinner of traditional Italian fare (from \$429, [StarwoodHotels.com](http://StarwoodHotels.com)).

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*las vegas, nevada*

**THE STRIP**

To get a feel for what the Colosseum may have been like in its heyday, head to Sin City for the ultimate in games and entertainment—trapeze artists, championship boxers (modern-day gladiators) and, of course, gambling. But there's a romantic side to Vegas too: Get serenaded on a gondola ride at The Venetian (squint and you'll think you're in Italy); share a kiss atop the "Eiffel Tower" at Paris Las Vegas; and get pampered at the iconic Bellagio—it even has its own famous fountains to wish on (from \$159, [Bellagio.com](http://Bellagio.com)). >>



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**the colosseum**

Climb to the third ring of the ancient amphitheater for great views and photo ops.



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the great wall  
The 5,500-mile-long man-made wall has remained standing for over 2,000 years!

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beijing, china

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

One of those you-have-to-go-there-to-“get”-it monuments, it’s impossible to grasp how cool the Great Wall is until you see it in person. But trust us, the largest man-made structure in the world should be on every couple’s bucket list. The best places to visit along the wall are Badaling and Jinshanling. We like the latter, which is a bit farther away from the city center and not as well-restored, but is less touristy. China’s capital is also worth adding to your list. On the honeymoon itinerary: a tour of the Forbidden City, an awe-inspiring palace complex that was once home to generations of Chinese emperors; a rickshaw ride through the winding *hutongs*, the last of Beijing’s ancient alleys; and lunch at Houhai Lake, a picturesque spot with charming boutiques and locals practicing tai chi.

**where to stay**

There are two ways to go: You can stay in trendy Sanlitun Village (think: glossy, colorful geometric buildings filled with bars and shops) at The Opposite House. Like its name suggests, this stylish hotel is all about fusing opposing elements—a concept that comes to life in its sleek modern design with subtle nods to traditional Chinese décor sprinkled in (from \$300, [TheOppositeHouse.com](#)). Your other option: Relax at a scenic retreat farther away from all the action. For private access to the wall and panoramic views of it from your room, rent a modern loft-like suite, or an entire villa designed by one of Asia’s top architects, at the ultra-secluded Commune by the Great Wall (from \$363, [CommunebytheGreatWall.com](#)).

MINI WONDER

quebec city, canada

VIEUX-QUÉBEC

Get lost in Vieux-Québec, a centuries-old walled city with French flair (think: quaint cafés and pastry shops)—sans the transatlantic flight. There’s plenty to keep you busy in picturesque Quebec City: Modern with old-world architecture, it’s surrounded by rolling hills. Live like royalty at Fairmont Le Château Frontenac, a historic hotel that seems more like a castle and overlooks the romantic St. Lawrence River (from \$249, [Fairmont.com/frontenac](#)). >>

agra, india

TAJ MAHAL

Talk about a romantic tribute—the Taj was built by a Mughal emperor in memory of his late wife. And if you think the impossibly white, perfectly symmetrical, domed structure looks impressive in photos, your jaws will drop when you see the real thing, complete with the mother of all reflecting pools. But the Taj is just one of the many draws that have earned India its new honeymoon destination status. Other reasons to make the trek: New Delhi's bustling bazaars, where you can snag fragrant spices and a sari, and get your palm read; ancient architectural feats in all directions, including majestic desert palaces in the north and ornate Hindu temples in the south; Goa, a coastal paradise with culture to boot; and the chance to go on a tiger safari in Ranthambore National Park.

where to stay

You'll feel like you never left the Taj Mahal at The Oberoi Amarvilas. Not only are the glossy white interiors reminiscent of the marble mausoleum, but the über-luxe property is nearby, so there are incredible views of the monument throughout, including from your bathtub (from \$500, [OberoiHotels.com](http://OberoiHotels.com)). Inspired by classic Mughal architecture, the ITC Mughal, Agra, has a pretty convenient location too—it's just a quick taxi ride from the Taj Mahal. But you'll feel much farther away from the popular attraction—the hotel is set among acres of plush gardens. Splurge on one of the suites in the property's new wing, the Palace of Dreams, which come with private plunge pools and personal butler service (from \$170, [ITCHotels.in](http://ITCHotels.in)).

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providenciales,  
turks and caicos

AMANYARA RESORT

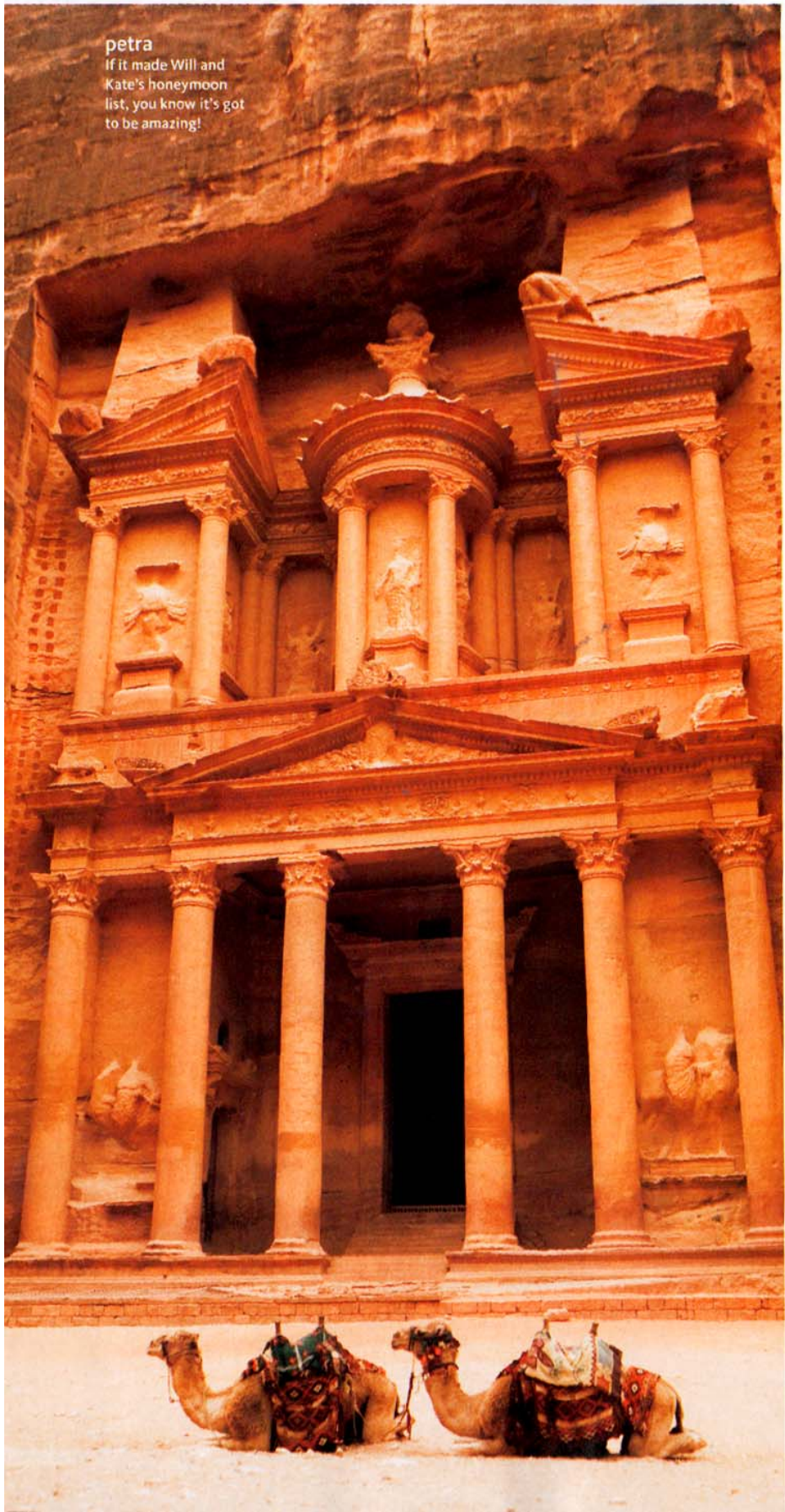
Situated right next to Malcolm's Beach, this dream-worthy property is dotted with tranquil ponds and is surrounded by the turquoise waters and white-sand beaches of Providenciales—marvels themselves. And did we mention that the pristine beachfront retreat has its own reflecting pool that rivals the one at the Taj Mahal? So there's no need to feel guilty if you don't travel much beyond the sugary sands outside your villa (from \$1,400, [Amanresorts.com](http://Amanresorts.com)). >>

taj mahal

The majestic structure is a symbol of one of the most romantic acts ever.



*the knot* HONEYMOONS



**petra**  
If it made Will and Kate's honeymoon list, you know it's got to be amazing!

*ma'an, jordan*

**PETRA**

Even if you think you've seen it all, you'll still have a serious pinch-me moment when you enter Petra, a city carved into rose-colored mountains set in the middle of the desert. But don't just take our word for it. This ancient city got the royal stamp of approval—Prince William and Kate Middleton reportedly considered honeymooning here. Trek through narrow gorges on camelback to explore the amphitheater and the out-of-this-world Treasury (a temple with columns carved into sheer rock). And don't miss the chance to float in the buoyant Dead Sea (its spa-like waters are believed to have healing powers); it's just a three-hour drive to its salty shores. Follow your float with a mud bath—the combo of salt and mud will leave your skin irresistibly soft (wink).

**where to stay**

You'll be treated like Arabian royalty at Mövenpick Resort Petra, located just outside the entrance to the historic city. After exploring, cool off by the pool and enjoy dinner under the stars in the roof garden (from \$302, [Moevenpick-Hotels.com](http://Moevenpick-Hotels.com)). If you're flying into Amman (where one of the closest airports to Petra is located), spend a day or two exploring the capital and make the Grand Hyatt Amman your home base. The urban oasis has suites with walk-in massaging showers and private terraces, plus an indoor and an outdoor pool (from \$230, [Hyatt.com](http://Hyatt.com)).

MINI WONDER

*near sedona, arizona*

**MONTEZUMA CASTLE**

Stunning red-rock formations set in the desert and impressive structures built into the cliffs—sounds a lot like Petra, right? But we're actually talking about Montezuma Castle, a 1,000-year-old dwelling tucked into the cliffs above Verde Valley. It's also near a top US honeymoon hideaway: Sedona, known for its red-rock landscape, outdoor activities and top-notch spas. Get a taste of the good life at L'Auberge de Sedona (from \$225, [LAuberge.com](http://LAuberge.com)). >>



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**machu picchu**  
Visit the ancient Lost City first thing in the morning for stunning views and no crowds.

### cuzco region, peru

## MACHU PICCHU

Imagine hiking through mountain deserts one minute and then lush cloud forests and dense rain forests the next. That amazing and rapidly changing terrain is how you'll know you're on the legendary Inca Trail, leading to the Lost City of Machu Picchu. Peru's wonder is among the top destinations for adventurous duos. Book a guide and trek to the heights of Machu Picchu on foot. Not up for the four-day hike (and camping in tents)? Hop a train at Cuzco (the closest major city) for a day trip to the ancient citadel instead. Give your hiking boots a rest and check out Cuzco—its cobblestoned streets are lined with museums, markets and cafés. Or relax in the natural spas of nearby Aguas Calientes ("hot waters"), now called Machu Picchu Pueblo, as you soak in its steamy thermal pools.

### where to stay

If you want to be near all the action, Machu Picchu Sanctuary Lodge is literally just outside the gates to the ancient Inca city. Rooms are simple and cozy, but with incredible panoramic views of Machu Picchu, they don't need much (from \$925, [SanctuaryLodgeHotel.com](http://SanctuaryLodgeHotel.com)). Prefer to put some distance between you and all the visitors who flock to the ruins? You'll feel worlds away in a private casita surrounded by 12 acres of tropical gardens at Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel. Just a 30-minute drive from the ruins, the nature resort is perfect for outdoorsy types, offering bird-watching (the scenic hideaway is home to over 202 species) and romantic twilight nature walks (from \$498, [Inkaterra.com](http://Inkaterra.com)).

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### kohala coast, hawaii

## PU'UKOHOLA HEIAU

Say "aloha" to Hawaii's own jungle ruins. Set against the Big Island's stunning landscape, the Pu'ukohola Heiau stone temple was built over 200 years ago by a Hawaiian king to fulfill a prophecy of uniting the islands. Prophecy realized, the temple is one of Hawaii's must-see treasures. Another Big Island gem? The Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Ka'upulehu, where you can unwind by the adults-only pool, or with massages at the spa (from \$635, [FourSeasons.com](http://FourSeasons.com)). >>

*the knot* HONEYMOONS

yucatán, mexico

CHICHÉN ITZÁ

You'll cover all your honeymoon bases—culture, coastlines and cocktails—with a trip to this North American wonder. Chichén Itzá, the most famous of the Mayan ruins (and home to the step Pyramid of Kukulcan), is situated near Mexico's honeymoon trifecta: Cancún, Tulum and Playa del Carmen. In Cancún, sunbathe by day and party by night at your pick of mambo and salsa clubs. In Tulum, it's all about exploring—the town has its own Mayan ruins set along its shores and the second-largest barrier reef in the world just off its coast. In Playa del Carmen, if you couldn't tell from the name, the highlight is the sun-kissed beaches. But the prime tanning spot is also the site of Quinta Avenida, Mexico's Fifth Avenue, where you'll find tons of boutiques, charming cafés and a lively bar scene.

where to stay

Escape to honeymoon haven Secrets Maroma Beach Riviera Cancún, a three-hour drive from Chichén Itzá. It's hard to pick what we love best about this adults-only all-inclusive oasis—not having to share any of the 13 pools with belly-diving kids, the endless array of water sports or the plush ocean-view suites (from \$410 per person, **SecretsResorts.com**). Offset your wedding's carbon footprint at Tulum's Casa Nalum, an eco-friendly villa located inside the unspoiled Sian Ka'an nature reserve (about a two-hour drive from Chichén Itzá). Swim to the nearby barrier reef, dine on Euro-Mexican cuisine and then rest your heads in one of three luxe bedrooms (from \$1,800, **Nalum.com**).

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taos, new mexico

TAOS PUEBLO

You won't need your passports to explore this southwestern city with centuries' worth of history. Less than 100 miles outside of Santa Fe, the small serene village of adobe buildings has been standing since around AD 1000. And there's tons else to do: Ski or hike Taos's scenic mountain trails, or check out Santa Fe's thriving arts and music scene. Stay at El Monte Sagrado, a quiet sanctuary in Taos (from \$169, **ElMonteSagrado.com**).

**chichén itzá**  
Ancient ruins near sunny beaches makes for honeymoon perfection.

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