



HONEYMOONS
IN THE
CARIBBEAN

— by CHRISTINA McDONALD LEGG —



If romance begins with scenery, the most enchanting setting has to be where the sky meets the sea in a fluid sweep of turquoise and sun bleached white sand beaches expand to meet lapping crystalline waters. No matter what disagreements went into the myriad of details for the wedding, the Caribbean is the most obvious choice for a luxurious honeymoon encompassing culture, activity and even isolation. With over 7,000 islands, islets, reefs and cays, this is a tropical paradise and the perfect place to begin marital bliss.

Although relics of the British Empire still remain (with cricket and high tea being the norm) the Caribbean culture, rich with Reggae, Jerk chicken and barbecued fish fuse seamlessly, creating a paradise unparalleled in Europe. With such a spectacular mingling of traditions, uniquely seasoned, the Caribbean offers a myriad of choice for prospective honeymooners with a taste to suit each palette.

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FOR THE ACTIVE — BARBADOS —

Barbados is the Eastern most Caribbean island with a coastline of pure sand white beaches. Mangrove swamps, tide pools, low lying coral rock and sandstone can also be found along rugged shorelines. Coral cliffs overlook calm bays and beaches nestle between the heads of jetties sculpted by the sea. Yellow and blue wooden

fishing boats, anchored to the harbour, contrast against large 18th century colonial buildings that stand in the main borough of Bridgetown. In fact, Barbados has playfully been nick named as the 'Euro-bbean' by some due to its intriguing blend of Europe and the Caribbean.

Fly fishing is observed on the beaches and is the National dish which is eaten by the locals religiously. Decidedly laid back, the island offers no limit to activities for the adventurous with a myriad of exotic locations to practice an extensive variety of sports and activities.

The west and east coast differ greatly. On the west of the island is Paynes Bay, one of the most popular beaches which offers spectacular snorkeling, underwater caves and an infinite number of tropical fish. Although the area can become quite crowded, the scenery is well worth the effort. More hotels and tourist activities are offered here than on the east coast which is less developed yet ruggedly beautiful.

Mullins Beach is another favourite, where glassy blue waters attract sunbathers and snorkellers a like. Silver Sands Beach can be found on the South side yet is more remote than the crowded west coast but popular with the locals.

As can be expected, the nightlife in Barbados is always lively with pulsing reggae music and limbo dancers. Spicy seafood cuisine with tropical fruits and vegetables can all be washed down with the islands' rum.

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— TRENDY ST MARTIN —

For an even more European feel to your honeymoon, the Caribbean island of St. Martin is ideal. Split between the French on the Northern side and Dutch on the Southern this is known as the smallest land mass in the world to be shared by two different nations. Luckily, rather than clashing, these two different cultures marry per-



fectly, creating a delightful hub where comfort and elegance meet trade and tourism.

For quiet refinement, secluded, white beaches, luxurious resorts and fine dining the French side is ideal. Up to the minute French fashions can be found in the many boutiques whilst the waft of fresh croissants and pastries, mixed with the traditional spicy aromas of barbecued jerk chicken, fill the air.

The Dutch side is great for activities, from snorkeling to waterskiing, horse riding to tennis. Its busy cruise port and bustling commercial district retains strong ties with the Netherlands and there is a vibrant nightlife with dancing and clubbing.

Despite being physically small, this island boasts a multitude of landscapes including a central mountain range providing rugged and varied terrain. Roads wind through craggy hills, small villages and much untouched land.

Simpson Bay Lagoon, the Caribbean's largest bay is located here. It is mainly landlocked,

apart from two narrow channels whose draw bridges are large enough to house a giant fleet of luxury yachts that anchor in its sheltered blue waters.

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FOR THE LUXURIOUS LIFESTYLE

— ST BARTS —

As befits a French island, St. Bart's (St. Barthélemy) is the most luxurious of all the Caribbean islands and offers a refined and sophisticated honeymoon. Unfeasibly stylish St Barts attracts a rich and famous clientele, and as well as being a getaway for the stars, it is by far the most fashionable of the Caribbean islands.

This island lies about fifteen miles South East of St. Martin and offers numerous beaches, water sports, restaurants and shopping. Scantily clad, men and women stroll the beaches, socialise in bars, sip rum and juice or snorkel in pristine waters. Luxury villas and small hotels offer elegant five star accommodation and gourmet food. The island's terrain is far more rugged than many of its other Caribbean counterparts; however with the influence of the French, plus the A list clientele there remains

an atmosphere of unapologetic class.

The capital, Gustavia is a charming village, with houses that clamber over the hillsides of the harbour. Wooden boardwalks line the beaches and expensive looking yachts take pride of place in the marina. The shopping is unmistakably chic with elegant French designer boutiques filling the streets and quaint cafés standing shoulder to shoulder with municipal buildings.

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SECLUSION

For a little seclusion yet a lot more relaxation, visit the island of Virgin Gorda, little sister to the British Virgin Islands capital, Tortola.

Virgin Gorda offers an exotic, romantic honeymoon amidst secluded intimacy. This is a utopian dream of perfect harmony which is not only a destination, but an experience. A small number of inns, cottages, villas and resort hotels are situated amidst a variety of settings. From beach side waterfronts to the spectacular views that the hills have to offer, this island is magical. Accommodation with private swimming pools is the norm and regulations state that no building is permitted to rise taller than the surrounding palm trees.

Virgin Gorda can only be reached by way of ferry from the island of Tortola and offers honeymooners the chance to explore the deserted pristine beaches minus the hustle and bustle of tourists.

The magnificent Leverick Bay spills down from Bay Hill to the bays and peninsula of the beautiful North Sound. Picturesque reefs protect Mahoe Bay to form a tropical lagoon which offers shallow reefs ideal for snorkeling.

A long, pristine, white beach can be found on Savannah Bay forming an unparalleled sunbathing and water sports playground located just on the other side of Katitche Point.

Rugged trails run through the island from Leverick Bay to Spanish Town, offering a variety of indigenous plants, flow...ers and birds. Don't miss the Baths, where huge, black boulders arise from the surf, powerfully creating a series of spectacular pools and grottoes from the sea water.

While the Caribbean is definitely aesthetically appealing, it offers a degree of pampering, a chance to treat yourself, and more than anything, enjoy time with the one you love. So, to experience simple, low key and beautiful or stunning, sophisticated and classy, the Caribbean offers honeymooners contemporary appeal without a loss of traditional charm. *

