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Royal honeymoons
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Destinations fit for a future king

Prince William and Kate Middleton will be desperate to avoid the crowds and paparazzi on their honeymoon. **Sophie Campbell** has some exclusive options



As William and Kate spend the coming weeks sitting around the table with the sort of people – security, government advisers, broadcasters, protocol experts – that most of us don't have to plan our wedding day with, there will be one thought lurking seductively at the back of their minds: the prize, the light at the end of the tunnel – the royal honeymoon.

It's going to take some thinking. A honeymoon says a lot about you, after all. Ever since the concept was invented in the 13th century – in the days when you may never have clapped eyes on your new spouse before and therefore might need a period of discreet removal to get over the shock – and gradually evolved into the longest holiday a couple might have in their entire working life, the form and content of the honeymoon (especially royal) has fascinated us all.

Take the Queen, for example, who in an earlier era of austerity holidayed at the Mountbatten's country pad, Broadlands, near Bournemouth in Hampshire, before travelling north to Scotland for a week or two's pottering on her beloved Balmoral Estate. Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon, on the other hand, set off on a glamorous, six-week party cruise around the Caribbean – then a wildly exotic destination – thus, in each case, setting a pattern for life.

Then there is the quaint royal penchant for the group honeymoon: Queen Victoria – setting the austere trend with a



Prince William and Kate Middleton could rent out Peter Island in the British Virgin Islands, top, a far cry from the honeymoon of the Queen Mother and the future King George VI at Polesden Lacey in Surrey, above

lightning three days at Windsor Castle – got cabin fever after a day and organised not one but two dances, on nights two and three. This horrified the court ladies, being a frightful breach of etiquette. Poor Albert – who really did have a fever – gamely sang, played and danced to this unpromising audience, but keeled over earlier than his lively bride.

Later, King George VI and the Queen Mother – then the Duke and Duchess of York – spent part of their honeymoon in the spring of 1923 at a house party given by the Edwardian hostess Mrs Ronald Greville at Polesden Lacey in Surrey. And in 2005, the Duke and Duchess of Rothesay – aka Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall – spent their special fortnight with friends at Birkhall Lodge on Dunside, a few miles' stang bound from Balmoral. It was Birkhall – indisputably Top Royal Honeymoon Venue at six down and counting – that was chosen by Edward and Sophie in 1999.

In the end, all royal honeymoons crave that special something encapsulated by Lord Gorell when describing Glamis Castle, the childhood home of the Queen Mother: "Time, and the passing, junketing world comes and no deference, is simply the greatest – and most elusive – privilege that taxpayers' money can buy."

Transport is always a good honeymoon option, a moving target making life more difficult for photographers, though do check its provenance: King Zog of Albania and Queen Geraldine, the "White Rose of Hungary", motored off in a red open-topped Mercedes 540K, given to them by Adolf Hitler (mind you, Mussolini was a witness to the marriage), while Princess Grace and Prince Rainier Boated away on an Aristotote

Onassis yacht, presented as a wedding gift. The same goes for secure locations: the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, understandably craving some peace and quiet, rented the Schloss Wasserlehenburg in south Austria for three months in 1937, which was peaceful, but did nothing to scotch rumours about Nazi sympathies.

Perhaps the perfect balance was achieved by American royalty: John F Kennedy and Jacqueline Bouvier escaped west from their 1953 wedding – 800 guests and the event of the year in Newport, Rhode Island – to a simple cottage on the San Ysidro Ranch in Montecito, California (you can stay there today, for about 10 times the price). They then piled on the showbiz credentials by going to Acapulco, haunt of Liz Taylor and Richard Burton, Sinatra et al, and famous, in the days before mega-cruise ships, for its chic nightlife and La Quebrada divers.

A generation later, John Kennedy jr and Carolyn Bessette married secretly, and honeymooned in privacy in Turkey and on an Aegean cruise. Yes, today's media-savvy young royals recognise that escape from prying eyes is the most important component of honeymoon success. In return, they have to concede at least one photo-call, so we have seen Crown Princess

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Honeymoons

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Victoria of Sweden and her personal trainer prince, Daniel Westling, in Tahiti; Crown Prince Felipe and Crown Princess Letizia of Spain in the Red Sea; Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary of Denmark in Tanzania; and junior members of our own royal family, Lord Freddie Windsor and the actress Sophie Winkleman, and Peter and Autumn Phillips in Los Angeles and a South African game lodge respectively.

My advice is to avoid what claims to be – can this be true? – the world's most popular honeymoon destination, Niagara Falls. It will be full. I would avoid European favourites such as Venice (imagine the horror: paparazzi popping out from dripping alleyways and bridges dressed as gondoliers).

I would also avoid near-the-winter stilted lodges with glass floors, because among the shoals of tropical fish will almost certainly be someone in a frogman's outfit with an underwater camera. And do remember that the Maldives – quite aside from the recent wedding video debacle – are like holidaying on a drop scene; bounce off in opposite directions after a lover's kiss and you will meet each other five minutes later on the other side.

Avoid Niagara Falls – it will be full. And avoid places beloved of the paparazzi

No, the only way to go is honeymooning in total privacy at the centre of a vast ring of empty land, preferably patrolled by man-eating tigers. Oh, damn, there aren't enough. Well what about renting a country, San Marino, say, borrowing the army and paying for the entire population to go to Center Pines for two weeks? Or an entire county, such as Rutland.

Current favourites for William and Kate appear to be the Seychelles' good, lots of big boulders to hide behind – or Africa, though Butundu, site of the log cabins where he proposed, will now be booked for eternity by hopeful women and their terrified boyfriends. Necker, Mastique et cetera: unimaginative, but fair enough. Or, intriguingly, the Hebridean Princess, the Scottish ship chartered by the Queen this year to sail the Western Isles, possibly on an unswerving trial run.

We'll see. Meanwhile, my first-night suggestion is the £140-million penthouse at the Candy Brothers' new building, One Hyde Park; dead handy for a London wedding, six bedrooms in case the group honeymoon thing kicks in, bullet-proof windows, SAS-trained guards and unlimited room service from the next-door Mandarin Oriental hotel.

And a panic room, just in case it all gets too much.

10 heavenly hideaways for a royal honeymoon

1 WILD THING

Namibrand Desert, Namibia
Boulder Camp is one of several properties on the Wolwedans Estate, formerly a collection of sheep farms in southern Namibia. Four luxury tents (you'd take the whole thing, obviously) nestle in the lee of huge granite boulders with views across the sand sea and to the soaring Great Namibia Escarpment; four-wheel drives full of pups would raise a plume of red dust visible for miles.

© Casnovè & Loyd (0200 7384 2332; www.casnoveloyd.com) offers five nights at Wolwedans Boulder Camp from £2,200 per person, fully inclusive.

2 ISLAND LIFE

Isles of Scilly
A 28-mile helicopter or boat ride from the Duchy of Cornwall, the Flying Boat Club on Treco is a collection of 12 newly built cottages, each large enough for eight, so generously spacious for two, based on old sheds with tongue-and-groove and bleached wood detailing, local artwork and high ceilings. Install staff and security in neighbouring cottages and, when you get bored of eating alone, stroll across to the bar and restaurant in The Club (membership included).

© From £1,375 per house per week, including Club Membership, Treco Abbey Garden entrance, bike hire and other benefits from Treco Estate (0171 20 422849; www.treco.co.uk)

3 FINAL FRONTIER

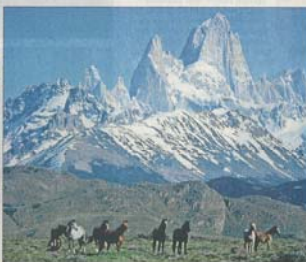
Chilean Patagonia
William spent some of his gap year teaching in Chile and this is a magical escape: the Secret Ranchito is a little wooden cottage high in the Andes, perfect for a cosy two-person; no way to get there but on foot, boat, horse or helicopter, the cook hikes in for meals and supplies come by oxcart. There is walking for miles around, and fly fishing and kayaking on request.

© Escape (0117 942 8476; www.escape.com/thesecretanchito) charges £1,619 per person per week, including flights but including full board, riding and hiking.

4 SLICE OF HEAVEN

Peter Island, British Virgin Islands
Private 1,800-acre Peter Island, next door to Necker, accessible only by boat or helicopter, offers a buy-out option whereby you can have the whole place to yourself – and up to 135 guests – and even arrange a no-fly zone over the island. There's a private spa, two restaurants, every imaginable spot on and off the water, and staff are happy to arrange themed parties.

© Island Bay Clubs from Peter Island Resort & Spa (021 800 346 495; www.peterisland.com) start at £200,099 for five nights, including all rooms, visas and taxes, subject to certain minimum requirements. Alternatively, CTC Classics (01244 355527; www.ctcclassics.co.uk) offers seven nights at Peter Island from £2,400 per person based on two adults sharing an Ocean View Room, including full board, flights and transfers.



Clickwise from top, Lewa Safari Camp in Kenya, where Prince William proposed to Kate Middleton; Chilean Patagonia offers complete seclusion; the Isles of Scilly have some suitably spacious cottages

5 CASTAWAY BLISS

North Island, Seychelles
Take a seven-night private cruise around the inner islands of the Seychelles on a Silhouette Schooner – including visits to the giant tortoises and mangrove forests, swimming and snorkelling – and follow up on land with a week's exclusive hire of North Island, staying in the Presidential Villa 11 with diving, fishing, the island to explore and a spa for pampering.

© £52,000 per couple from W&O Travel Tropical Locations (02045 277 3310; www.wandoo.co.uk) including business class flights, all meals and waterports.

6 OUT ON A LIMB

Baros, Maldives
The Maldives do it for Penelope and Javier, who escaped to the stunning island of Baros, where the new private Pool Villas have their own swimming pool decks and a

dedicated member of staff to attend to your every need. William and Kate can dine alone on a sandbar, eat at three restaurants set over the water, dive or snorkel on the house reef, or order en-suite spa treatments.

© Kuoni (01206 747008; www.kuoni.co.uk) offers seven nights at the five-star Baros Maldives from £1,648 per person, staying in a deluxe villa with breakfast, including flights from Heathrow and private transfers in resort.

7 SUGAR AND SPICE

Montpelier Plantation, Nevis
This 19-room hideaway on the chic Caribbean island of Nevis would not be new to William: the young prince's came here with their mother on holiday, something the Hoffman family – who run it – remember very well. It sits in the middle of 69 acres of sugar plantation and hilly landscape, with a private beach and views of Nevis and St Kitts.

© Digart Resorts (01244 897538; www.digartresorts.co.uk) has seven nights in the two-bedroom Villa Suite, slightly set apart from the hotel, and with its own plunge pool, from £5,400 per person including return business class flights, breakfast and private car and speedboat transfers.

8 CLASSICAL SPLENDOUR

Zakynthos, Greece
Porto Zante Villas & Spas is an old hand at celebrities; it sits on a private beach on a secluded bay and each villa has its own