

RESEARCH

## Honeymooners look for action, not just romance and relaxation

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*St. Regis Aspen, CO wedding ceremony*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Newlyweds are no longer traveling with the idea of staying in bed, according to a new study conducted by StudyLogic.

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While a lazy vacation at a relaxing resort on a sunny beach is the stereotypical idea of a honeymoon, it is no longer rooted in reality for North Americans. Changes in marriage habits and increased access to travel have led to honeymooners seeking more adventurous affairs.

For the study, conducted in conjunction with Starwood's Westin brand, 4,060 respondents in a relationship or marriage with incomes between \$50,000 and \$500,000 were surveyed.

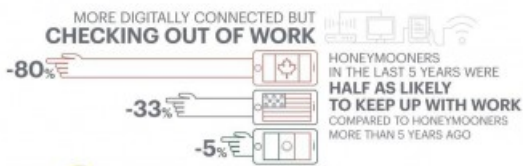
"With the wellness industry booming and significant year-over-year growth in wellness tourism, it is no surprise that couples want to keep their well-being routine on the road; and specifically throughout their honeymoon," said Bob Jacobs, vice president of brand management for Westin Hotels & Resorts, North America. "This is complemented by a shift in spending mindset, with consumers prioritizing experiences over material.

"Finally, with days out of the office at a premium, people are doing whatever they can to make the most out of their vacation days, aiming to spend as much time as possible on vacation and less time getting there," he said. "This means traveling closer to home, being more active on vacation, and making a commitment to tune out from work."

### Ready for action

Changes both direct and indirect have had an impact on travel in recent years. On the most obvious level, rising wealth among upper classes, cheaper flights and, most recently, home sharing services have spurred travel.

# Westin Hotels & Resorts Lifts the Veil on Honeymoon Trends and Truths in North America



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## Newlywed infographic

Concurrent to these changes, people are marrying later in life. Put the two together and couples are more likely to have traveled together before marriage, meaning the honeymoon is not what it used to be.

Additionally, it is now getting harder to find time away from the office, meaning every moment of vacation counts. Consequently, the rate of consumers who have visited more than one destination on a honeymoon has doubled in just five years, reaching 70 percent.

For many of the same reasons, honeymoon destinations are now closer to home than they used to be, with three-quarters of travelers staying in the country as shorter travel means more time. Travel to Canada has tripled, while travel to the Rocky Mountains, Sierra Nevada and Cascades has quadrupled.



*Four Seasons Maldives wedding*

Indeed, skiing as a whole has emerged as a honeymoon priority, doubling over the last five years. Cycling, hiking and mountain climbing have also seen interest hikes.

As an increase in bookings at ski resorts alongside the recent craze for health and wellness would lead one to expect, honeymooners also see traveling as a reason to get healthy. Eighty percent of respondents report that on their honeymoon they were more active and health-conscious than at home.



*St. Regis Aspen, CO*

While the survey does not cover North America's wealthiest, who may not be tethered to the office and can therefore spend time at further destinations, marriage still occurs before wealth peaks, meaning that many honeymooners are future or recent luxury consumers.

"The trends found through the Westin survey lift the covers on a much broader trend, which is that in the last five years, rising wealth, digital connectivity and an increasing global demand for wellness have changed the way people are traveling, and in this case, the way couples are booking, planning and experiencing their honeymoon," Mr. Jacobs said. "While we did not poll household incomes over \$500,000, we know anecdotally across our resorts portfolio that these trends hold true for higher-income newlyweds."

For a long time, the idea of the honeymoon was a uniform and clichéd one, and many marketers continue to respond to it as such. However, given that the occasion leads many to splurge, targeting new honeymoon trends could help a hotel implant itself on one of a happy couple's most memorable excursions, which will pay dividends down the road as income increases and travel continues.

The new newlyweds

Hotels have occasionally taken a creative approach to getting involved in a honeymoon.

For example, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts boosted the amount of post-wedding getaways booked with the brand by creating a new honeymoon registry so that consumers can buy activities and amenities for a couple instead of typical wedding gifts.

The Fairmont Honeymoon Registry Program is available for couples that book their honeymoons at a Fairmont hotel. Couples can still create a wish list of items, but instead of household items, guests can purchase a round of drinks or a spa treatment for the newlyweds ([see story](#)).

Newlyweds are targets for brands across several sectors, as the chance to associate itself with a joyous occasion is a strong opportunity to generate customer loyalty.

Recently, British jeweler De Beers began a journey alongside brides-to-be with nuptial-themed content, placing its engagement rings at the campaign's center.

Housed on De Beers' social media accounts, the jeweler has embedded its engagement rings' styles into various types of weddings to help brides use their ring as a guide for planning their ceremony. From venues and bouquets to hairstyles and invitations, De Beers' wedding content allows the jeweler to be a part of the celebration after the ring has been purchased and the planning begins ([see story](#)).

"Couples are increasingly seeking truly original and custom honeymoon experiences," Mr. Jacobs said. "Gone are the days when a room upgrade and a cookie-cutter package will cut it.

"Today, our hotels and resorts are catering to couples by helping them craft itineraries and excursions tailored to their interests that make it easy for them to maintain their wellness-driven lifestyle even while on their honeymoon," he said. "Helping couples find the perfect balance between activities and relaxation is important: pairing a fly-fishing excursion with a river-side meal or arranging for First Tracks on the mountain with an afternoon at the spa."

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