

BRIDES & GROOMS

Agents offer tips for budget honeymoons

By Edith Decker
of the Daily Courier

Whether you're planning a honeymoon to a far-away place and just want to save some money, or planning no honeymoon at all because you think you can't afford one — you might want to reconsider.

Three local travel agents have some tips for saving money and planning a really low-cost honeymoon, too.

Since air fare can account for a large portion of a honeymoon budget, consider a location in driving distance:

Prudence Hoffman of AAA Travel Agency in Grants Pass has some ideas. "There are some beautiful hotels and resorts within a day's drive from Grants Pass. Check out the Willows Lodge which is in Woodinville, Wash. (www.willowslodge.com). Spend your money on a beautiful room, a spa treatment, wine tastings, or a hot air balloon ride. Two other places I like are The Salish Lodge and Spa in Snoqualmie, Wash., (www.salishlodge.com) or the Skamania Lodge, which is just 45 minutes east of Portland on the Washington side of the Columbia River (www.skamania.com)."

Leslie Spalding at Redwood Travel says, "I think Vancouver might be a very good destination. It's all spiffed up for the Olympics and once the Olympics are over, it will be a great destination. And there's the Victoria Clipper to get you there" from Seattle.

The Bend area is another idea. "My daughter got married last June up there and there's hiking and biking, a lot to do. They have a lot of festivals and concerts," Spalding says.

Of course, the Oregon Coast is a popular destination nearby, both add.



Courtesy of Sandals Resorts

Newlyweds share a moment after their wedding at a Sandals destination. All-inclusive honeymoon destinations can save money, travel agents say.

Don't rule out a destination that requires an air flight, though. Spalding and Caveman Travel owner Brian Mein both note extremely good airfares to Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Lake Tahoe.

"Book early," Mein advises. "The farther out you go, normally, the better deals you get. Mexico right now is a real bargain," he says.

Waiting until the fall for your honeymoon can also save money. "In the fall, there are

some great rates to Hawaii," Spalding notes. "Hawaii is begging for tourists after kids go back to school."

Both also say that package deals will almost always save money. These would include cruises and resorts that specialize in couples vacations like Sandals. In fact, Sandals recently opened a new resort called Emerald Bay on the island of Great Exuma, in the Bahamas, and a Sandals representative says they're offering introductory deals right now.

A final idea that will save everyone money — get someone else to help you pay for the honeymoon.

Most modern couples don't need to set up a household with gifts like toasters and sheets. They're often trying to get rid of things as they combine two households. So set up a honeymoon account with a travel agent and let your guests and relatives know you'd love to have a contribution in lieu of a gift for the wedding.

Or, if you have a good friend or relative who owns a vacation home, ask if they'd consider allowing you to use it in lieu of a gift.

If you're an active couple and not looking to lay on the beach for your honeymoon, think about a biking tour, golfing vacation, culinary tour or even camping — especially if your wedding is in the summer. If you're not up for a tent experience, borrow or consider purchasing a used trailer or motor home. You can buy one for the price of a honeymoon — and still have it to camp in for the coming years of your marriage.

Bridal fair scheduled Sunday at fairgrounds

Josephine County's major bridal fair is Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with over 30 vendors expected.

The event once again will be at the Josephine County Fairgrounds in the Floral Building. It's free.

A few spots for more vendors are available. Would-be vendors may call Cindy at 541-941-1620 or e-mail to cembedding@charter.net.

The event will feature

give-aways, tastings by cake bakers and caterers, plus information about beauty, honeymoon travel, local venues for weddings and receptions, jewelry and florists.

Rather than a fashion show, this year apparel displays will give brides and grooms to be (and their parents) a chance to see the latest in gowns and tuxedos.

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