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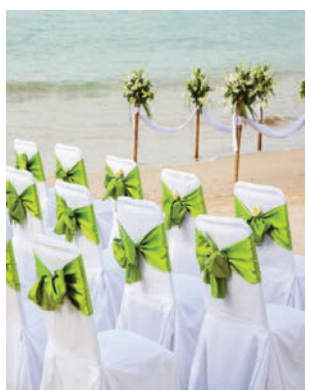
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Popular Destination & Honeymoon Wedding Locales

Couples are increasingly tying the knot in romantic locales. According to a The Knot Real Weddings Study, US brides and grooms are choosing some stunning places for couples to say their "I dos."

- **Dominican Republic:** Home to 800 miles of sandy beaches, the Dominican Republic features a host of all-inclusive resorts, many of which offer wedding packages. Couples who want to tie the knot under the warm sun need look no further than the Dominican Republic, which boasts average temperatures in the 70s and 80s year-round.
- **Costa Rica:** A popular honeymoon destination, Costa Rica also makes a great place to host a tropical wedding. Couples can take advantage of stunning mountaintop views or enjoy their weddings on any of Costa Rica's many white sand beaches. Dense rain forests, numerous nature preserves and national parks make Costa Rica a great place for guests to explore, especially during the



dry season between December and April (rain falls throughout the year on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica).

- **Maine:** Couples who want waterfront weddings with a little something different may want to consider Maine. Lighthouses might provide the perfect backdrop for couples' nuptials, and guests can indulge in fresh lobster and various outdoor activities. Maine's tourist season is July and August, but Maine's famous fall foliage can be used to create a beautiful look for couples who tie the knot in September.
- **Jackson Hole, Wyoming:** Another destination that won't require couples or their guests to dust off their passports, Jackson Hole is nestled in the awe-inspiring Teton mountain range. Summer and early fall are the best times to tie the knot in Jackson Hole, which is home to numerous rustic ranches that can make for ideal wedding settings.
- **Ireland:** Couples who don't mind a rain shower here or there may want to tie the knot in Ireland, where weather is usually most welcoming between May and September. Idyllic seaside villages dot the Irish landscape, as do rolling green hills and towering cliffs that can make for beautiful backdrops for honeymoon pictures or wedding ceremonies. Castles can be found throughout Ireland, giving couples unique spaces to host their weddings and receptions.
- **Italy and Greece** are other awesome considerations for honeymoons and nuptials!

What Various Flowers Can Represent...

Flowers are popular as various blooms can signify love and affection. Roses are one of the most popular flowers to gift. Some gift-givers may want to deviate from the standard bouquet of roses and offer flowers that are more in tune with their recipients' preferences. Flowers have long been used to convey certain feelings in many cultures. Folklore, poetry and mythologies have played a role in defining the various meanings associated with certain blooms.

Understanding the meanings behind various flowers can help to more accurately express their feelings toward the special people in their lives or convey at their wedding. Read on to learn more about what certain blooms may symbolize.

- **Amaryllis:** This flower symbolizes splendid beauty and can be given to indicate worth beyond beauty.
- **Aster:** The popular aster symbolizes wisdom and devotion.
- **Bird of Paradise:** The interesting shape and rarity of these blooms symbolizes joyfulness and magnificence. It can be an exciting flower, and one that evokes feelings of anticipation.
- **Black-eyed Susan:** These vibrant blooms represent justice and can be ideal for the person who works in the legal profession.
- **Carnation:** A less expensive alternative to roses, carnations represent pride and beauty. Furthermore, the colors of carnations represent different meanings. Red symbolizes love, while pink is for a mother's love and white represents inno-

- **Daisy:** Innocence and purity are the meanings behind the yellow and white daisy. This can be the perfect pick for new, young love.
 - **Freesia:** Those wanting to evoke passionate feelings can choose freesia, which is also said to mean "joy."
 - **Hydrangea:** Hydrangeas symbolize heartfelt emotions and can be used to express gratitude for being understood. This may be the perfect "making amends" flower.
 - **Lilac:** Couples seeking tranquility and passion can turn to lilacs. The calming lavender hues also can be a welcome change in floral arrangements.
 - **Rose:** Of course, no Valentine's flower roundup would be complete without roses. Roses represent love and passion, and, like carnations, their colors symbolize different things. Red roses represent desire, pink roses suggest happiness and white roses symbolize worthiness. Avoid yellow roses, which suggest fading love.
 - **Zinnia:** Zinnias symbolize thoughts of distant friends and can make a thoughtful friendship arrangement to send to a faraway comrade.
- Flowers are part of many celebrations. By learning the meanings behind different flowers, one can make their feelings better known.



Tips For Buying Jewelry

Wedding and Engagement Rings are most always part of engagement and wedding purchases. The following tips, courtesy of the Better Business Bureau®, can help shoppers as they navigate the potentially confusing process of buying jewelry.

DIAMONDS: The BBB notes that diamonds' value is based on color, cut, clarity, and carat. Often referred to as the "4 Cs," this criteria refers to the grade of the color (color), the way the diamond is finished (cut), how flawless the diamond is (clarity), and its weight (carat). When shopping for diamonds, the BBB advises asking jewelers if they have the most up-to-date testing equipment, which makes it easier for them to distinguish between diamonds and lab-created gemstones. That's important, as lab-created gemstones resemble diamonds and may not be detectable if jewelers are using testing equipment designed to identify cubic zirconia.

COLORED GEMSTONES: are very popular, and the BBB notes that various new stone treatments have been developed to improve their appearance and durability. However, the BBB also notes that such treatments may adversely affect the value of the gem and necessitate special care in order to maintain the gem's appearance. When shopping for colored gemstones, ask the jeweler if an item has been treated and if there's any special maintenance required.



Imitation or assembled stones may look like natural stones, so shoppers should ask if a stone is natural, synthetic or imitation before purchasing anything.

GOLD: When used alone, the word gold implies an item is all gold or 24 karat gold. But the BBB notes that gold is naturally soft and, as a result, is typically mixed with other metals to improve its hardness and durability. The karat-quality marking indicates what proportion of gold is mixed with other metals. For example, the most common mark for gold jewelry is 18K of 750, which signifies an item is 75 percent gold. Lower-karat gold jewelry may include copper, silver, zinc, or other metals. Consumers should ask about these alloys and determine if the item's ultimate recipient is allergic to certain metals or if he or she has a high acid content in their bodies. People with high acid content in their bodies may have their jewelry turn black as a result.

Buying jewelry can be intimidating. However, jewelry buyers can work with their jewelers to find a beautiful piece their sweethearts will be proud to wear. More information on buying jewelry can be found at www.bbb.org.