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(Jim Smith Photography)

Expectant Couple looking for 'one final get away for just us' usually pick destinations with warm climates like Florida and the Caribbean. Mohonk Mountain Resort, located in the Hudson Valley region of New York, also offers 'babymoon' packages.

By Senitra Horbrook
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A growing number of couples with a baby on the way are packing their bags and opting for a quick getaway.

More and more expectant couples are partaking in one of the travel industry's newest trends -- the babymoon vacation.

According to a 2005 survey from Liberty Travel, more than two million babymoons are taken by U.S. parents-to-be each year. The survey found that 43 percent of couples are looking for rest and relaxation while 41 percent take this trip as "one final getaway for just us."

"A good babymoon, from conversations I've had with people, is a place that allows you to relax and spend some time as a couple," said Lisa Petrocelli, founder of babymoonguide.com.



(Jim Smith Photography)

An expectant couple relaxes on a 'babymoon' vacation,

Susan Shunk, owner of Bon Voyage Travel Service in Woodbury Heights, had never heard of the term "babymoon," but said she often gets inquiries from expectant parents who want to plan a vacation.

"They want to get away and relax prior to the infant arriving," Shunk said.

Shunk has noticed warm climates like Florida and the Caribbean tend to be the most requested destinations.

"This might be the last time they can get away for a while with a new baby," Shunk said.

That is exactly the reason Petrocelli and her husband took a babymoon vacation prior to adopting their first child in 2005.

"My husband and I like to travel. We figure we don't know how having a child is going to affect our ability to travel in the future," said Petrocelli, who resides in Allentown, Pa.

Back in 2005, Petrocelli and her husband went to Boston and "did the whole tourist thing."

"Sightseeing, dining out, took in a baseball game -- all those things aren't quite as easy to do with a child," she said.

Babymoons are primarily taken by new parents, but can also be taken by parents who already have children. The Petrocellis enjoyed their first babymoon vacation so much that they decided to go on another before adopting their second child. That trip was much more low key -- relaxing and spending time together in Cape May.

"With our second daughter we knew how having kids changes you, so we said 'Let's get some time away,'" she said. "We appreciated the babymoon even more the second time."

Petrocelli's experiences led her to create babymoonguide.com in 2006, an online resource that compiles information from hotels and resorts offering packages catering to parents-to-be.

"When expecting a child there is so much you have to do," she said. "Putting together a vacation shouldn't have to be work."

Most experts say the best time to travel while pregnant is in the second trimester because the morning sickness is usually over, but women's bellies are not so large

that it's uncomfortable.

"Check with a physician to make sure it's OK to travel," Petrocelli said. "If you're going to be flying somewhere, check with the airline. Sometimes airlines require a note from a physician."

One of the listings on Babymoon Guide is Mohonk Mountain Resort, a family owned and operated resort, located in the Hudson Valley region of New York.

"According to the American Pregnancy Association, 4,058,000 women give birth annually in the United States. We recognized that the responsibilities that come with raising a family can be overwhelming," said Nina Smiley, director of marketing and member of the Smiley family that has owned and operated the resort for 139 years. "Mohonk Mountain House introduced the 'Hello Baby!' BabyMoon package to encourage expectant parents to rest, relax and reconnect before their newborn arrives."



(Photo courtesy of Little Palm Island Resort and Spa)

Warm climates, like Florida, attract expectant couples.

Mohonk created "Hello Baby!" in 2006 as a midweek (Sunday through Thursday) escape for expectant couples. The rate of \$374 per person includes three meals daily, afternoon tea and cookies and most resort activities.

This package also includes time side-by-side in the Couples' Treatment Room, which features a fireplace. Moms-to-be are nurtured by a 50-minute Maternity Massage, which is designed to enhance lower back comfort, relieve leg and foot tension and promote a sense of well-being. Dads-to-be have a choice between a deep tissue massage or revitalizer facial. Guests also indulge in chocolates delivered with their turn-down service each night. Along with a spa gift for the new parents, Baby will also receive a "welcome" gift.

"Couples enjoy knowing that this package takes care of all the details -- including everything from meals, to spa treatments to overnight accommodations and more," Smiley said. "It provides them with the opportunity to be pampered before the baby arrives and gives them time to enjoy the shared moments as they focus on one another in a romantic and beautiful natural setting."

TIPS FOR TRAVELING PREGNANT

Helpful hints that apply to any mode of travel (car, air or cruise)

-See your doctor before you plan to travel late in pregnancy. You don't want to go into labor far from home.

-Take a copy of your health record with you if you'll be far from home.

-In case of emergency, ask your doctor for the name and phone number of a doctor where you are going to travel.

-Keep your travel plans easy to change. Problems can come up at any time. Buy travel insurance to cover tickets and deposits that can't be refunded.

-While you are en route, try to walk around about every hour. Stretching your legs will lessen the risk of blood clots and make you more comfortable. It also will decrease the amount of swelling in your ankles and feet.

-Wear comfortable shoes and clothing. You may want to wear support or pressure stockings.

-Carry some light snacks with you to help prevent nausea.

-Take time to eat. A balanced and healthy diet during your trip will boost your energy and keep you feeling good. Be sure to get plenty of fiber to ease constipation, a common travel (and pregnancy) problem.

-Drink plenty of fluids to help prevent urinary tract infections. Take a bottle of water or some juice with you.

-Don't take any medication not prescribed for you. Don't take any medicine -- including motion-sickness pills, laxatives, diarrhea remedies, or sleeping pills -- before checking with your doctor.

-Get plenty of sleep, and rest often.

-Stretch your back muscles from time to time.

-Don't do too much. It's tempting to squeeze in as many sights as you can, but it's vital to adjust your pace when you are pregnant.

Source: The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

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