

## ***Babymoos: Pampering before the Pampers***

by Suzanne Koup-Larsen

Some say Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie started the babymoon trend. Actually, the idea of getting away one last time before becoming a parent is not new. The term "babymoon" first began appearing in pregnancy publications earlier this decade.



Celebrity couples like "Bran-gelina" have made the term and the idea of taking a pre-partum trip into a 21st century phenomenon. The travel industry says some 2 million parents-to-be now plan babymoos each year.

Typically, babymoon trips last two to four nights, and are more focused on pampering and relaxation than the typical vacation. According to Lisa Petrocelli of Allentown, PA, founder of Babymoonguide.com, babymoos are a bit more indulgent than the typical trip a couple takes.

Babymoos are about "taking care of yourself and your relationship," rather than site-seeing, she says.

"Our generation wants to truly be pampered before the Pampers," says Ashley King, founder of Babymoonfinder.com.

To some, babymoos include travel with a newborn, a sort of get-to-know-you bonding trip. The success of this type of trip really depends on the temperament of your little one, says King. Traveling with an infant can create luggage and security hassles. The diapers and formula alone can require you to carry extra luggage (which could cost extra money, depending on the airline). Carrying more than 3 ounces of liquid aboard a plane becomes a security issue.

### **Babymoon Packages**

The travel industry has recognized the babymoon trend. The advertising agency JWT lists babymoos as one of the top travel trends for 2008, and research conducted by Liberty Travel and BabyCenter.com show that 59 percent of new parents took a babymoon vacation that included at least one night away from home. As a result, many hotels, resorts, and inns now offer packages specifically designed for babymoon vacationers.

Particularly resorts in tropical locations often offer babymoon packages, says Sandy Babin, vice president of marketing for Apple Vacations West. Destinations at locations such as Jamaica, Hawaii, and Mexico offer incentives such as couples' foot massages and parenting classes.

But you don't have to travel so far to find a great babymoon. Creative babymoon packages are available at hotels and inns in the Northeast. Bells and whistles can include prenatal massage, prenatal yoga, baby books, parenting magazine subscriptions, in-room refrigerators stocked with sparkling pickles or other munchies, or actual gifts for the baby such as onesies or receiving blankets.

### **Health Factors**

Medical experts say the second trimester is the best time for a pregnant woman to travel, specifically between 18 and 24 weeks when the risks of miscarriage and pre-term birth are lowest. Often morning sickness and the exhaustion of the first trimester have subsided, and the overall discomfort of the third trimester is yet to arrive.

According to Maria Henry, the co-owner of M&J Travel in Newtown Square, many women get a "burst of energy around the fourth month and want to travel."

Comfort and energy issues aside, travel is safe during nearly all of a healthy and uncomplicated pregnancy, up to about 35 weeks. To be sure, discuss your travel plans with your doctor. However, some modes of transportation and

activities come with restrictions for pregnant women.

- Many spas will not give prenatal massages in the first trimester.
- Cruise ships do not allow passengers in their third trimester.
- Airlines may not allow women more than 35 weeks pregnant to fly.

Medical experts advise staying within 300 miles of home during the last trimester in case of sudden changes that require medical attention. Regardless of your stage of pregnancy, short walks to increase blood circulation and frequent bathroom breaks are recommended.

There are still options if you've reached your third trimester and you want to get away. Hotels in New York City, Baltimore and Washington, DC have babymoon packages, as do many locales in between. Many B&Bs and inns in the Delaware Valley or within a 1-2 hour drive offer babymoon packages.

### **Planning Your Babymoon**

Henry regularly books babymoon trips. She says that couples often seek a place with nice beaches, warm weather and good specialty restaurants. A short flight and the availability of spa services are definite bonuses.

"The most popular destination for U.S. babymoons is Florida," says Babymoonguide's Lisa Petrocelli. She cites Florida's many beaches, warm weather and relatively short distance. There is also comfort in staying in the U.S. in case urgent medical care is needed. The Caribbean is a close second.

Babymoonfinder's Ashley King cautions against planning strenuous activities such as rock climbing, horseback riding or skiing on a babymoon.

"Babymoons are for doing as little as possible for as long as possible," she says. "Time is running out!" In addition, she recommends staying away from locations that are too remote to find good medical care.

The cost of babymoons ranges from approximately \$100 for services at a day spa to near \$4,000 at an all-inclusive resort. For couples on a budget, King suggests creating your own babymoon package. Any romance package will do nicely (perhaps minus the champagne), as will any spot that is agreeable to you and your mate.

Sandy Babin of Apple Vacations recommends going "anywhere where you can just relax and enjoy each other." Her ultimate advice for a good babymoon for the mom-to-be: "Relax and eat lots of fresh fruit!"

*Suzanne Koup-Larsen is a local freelance writer.*

### **Online Research**

To get started planning your babymoon, think about how far you'd like to travel, then where you'd like to go. For ideas:

- Go to <http://www.google.com/> and search: babymoon.

- Visit <http://www.babymoonfinder.com/> and <http://www.babymoonguide.com/>. Both sites were started by moms who were frustrated when they tried to plan babymoon trips.

- To find bed-and-breakfasts, go to <http://www.google.com/> and search: bed breakfast.

