

TRAVEL

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IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Happy honeymoon tip: don't scrimp

"There are several things that couples don't think about when they are planning a honeymoon. For example, they never realize how exhausted they will be when the wedding is over."

That is the voice of Risa Weinreb, author of Frommer's Honeymoon Destinations. I wrote a honeymoon story for Risa many years ago when she was travel editor of Modern Bride magazine, so I wasn't surprised to find her in town last week promoting honeymoons in Puerto Rico.

Risa is not married, but she takes several honeymoon trips a year to research destinations for Modern Bride and can always be counted on to have current honeymoon information at her finger tips.

Lots of couples still get married in June, but weddings are now spread out from May to October, according to Risa.

"Some people get married in January, February and March but it's hard to plan an expensive wedding for 400 people when you are not sure whether they can make it through the snow to the church," she said.

"The Modern Bride surveys show that most couples want warm sunny weather, beautiful natural scenery and outdoor sports and sight-seeing attractions, in that order."

Do people still go to those heart-shaped bungalows in the Poconos? "They were designed for another generation, but a certain segment of the honeymoon population still goes there. They were the first all-inclusive vacation resorts."

Risa says that the number one honeymoon destination is the Caribbean. Another very popular destination is Florida, where the "in spot" for honeymooners is Walt Disney World.

"That shows that newly married couples are looking for something quite different from what we have always imagined. The popular image is a young couple who check in, hang a Do Not Disturb sign on the door and are not seen again for eight days."

"That image is not true. They are looking for fun. Where they go and where they stay depends on their budget."

Risa's survey indicates that the average honeymoon costs \$3,000 for eight days. Inside the continental United States it averages \$2,200, outside the continental United States it averages \$4,000. Hawaii: \$4,500. The Caribbean: \$3,800. Puerto Rico: \$3,400.

The three components of honeymoon travel are the same as any travel: transportation, hotel, food. All-inclusive resorts can often be bought to cover all three, so that you only need to pay for incidentals. Jamaica is the best-known island for couples resorts, but there are others.

It is increasingly popular to get married at a resort. If Mom and Dad give you the honeymoon as a gift, your costs are almost completely covered. "If the bride comes from Buffalo and the groom comes from Denver, and they met in Detroit, it's easier to take 20 close family and friends to the Caribbean than it is to gather 300 cousins from around the country for a Michigan wedding."

Recession-weary newlyweds should not give up the honeymoon. If you can't do anything else, Risa suggests you at least splurge on a night or two at a local hotel, drink champagne and take a limousine to the baseball game.

If your budget is under \$2,000?

• Drive to the Poconos to stay seven nights in a moderately priced room.

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Golf among the gators at Kiawah

South Carolina resort built with nature in mind

By Iris Sanderson Jones
special writer

KIAWAH ISLAND, S.C. — An alligator moves slowly across a lagoon toward a Great Blue Heron, which stands 3 feet tall on the bank beside a group of modern villas. That was one of my first images of Kiawah Island, although the real alligator stories come from the golf courses, where the gators snooze beside the greens.

I press a periwinkle against my neck while standing in a low marsh beside the sea, with naturalist Mark Madden instructing his walking tour participants: "Turn, and the periwinkle will come out of his shell."

I walk the long strand of sand between the surf and the dunes, enjoying the illusion that I have the world to myself at sunset. The chimneys and rooftops of Kiawah Island Inn and Villas are visible amid the palmetto trees beyond the dunes, but I share the beach with one lonely jogger, one kayaker and a pelican diving 30 feet straight down into the sea for his supper.

Those are just three of the many scenes that imprint the mind on Kiawah Island, an interesting combination of resort life and nature 21 miles by road from Charleston, S.C. I emphasize "by road" because for 200 years the Vanderhorst family traveled by tidal river to the plantation house sagging gently against the reeds on the marsh side of Kiawah.

Kiawah is one of the dozens of barrier islands that

border the Atlantic coast of America. It is part of the estuary that surrounds Charleston, where the Ashley and Cooper rivers come together to form the Atlantic Ocean."

ECOTOURISM

Kiawah Island was at peace with nature for millions of years before the developers came and could easily have lost its innocence then, as so many resort islands have done. The Indians never lived here, because there is no fresh water, but they hunted



Photo by IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Beachcombers walk the long strand between the water and the dunes at Kiawah Island, S.C.



Photo by IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Looking across the dunes from Kiawah Island Inn at Kiawah Island, S.C., one of the dozens of barrier islands that border the Atlantic coast of America.

red fox, elk and woodland buffalo amid the magnolia and loblolly pines that now line the woodland trails. Dig your fingers under the matted forest floor near the Vanderhorst Plantation and you can still feel the ridges where indigo and cotton were planted by slaves in the 18th century.

British soldiers occupied the plantation house during the American Revolution and if they ever restore and open the house to tours you'll see graffiti left behind by Union soldiers during the Civil War.

The island was sold to Kuwait Investment Co. in 1974. The Kuwaitis commissioned an environmental inventory from the Environmental Research Center Inc., of Columbia, S.C., so that resort development would not disturb the natural barrier island setting. It was ecotourism ahead of its time.

Resort buildings were built behind the dunes, so the loggerhead turtles still lay their eggs near the beach. They protected the marshes, so shrimp babies still feed on the tidal flats and the periwinkle can still climb up his own piece of spartina grass when the tide comes in and down again when the tide goes out. Hold him against your neck and hum, and the periwinkle will come out of his shell because he thinks he is covered by seawater.

The Kuwaitis are gone now, although Saleh and Saad Alzouman still live in Charleston, but the environmental philosophy remains: nature comes

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Photo by IRIS SANDERSON JONES

The Kiawah Island Inn and Villas are built among the palmetto trees and lagoons at West Beach. The villas they manage for owners are spread out along the beach in either direction behind the dunes.

Couple rebuilds old farmers' mill into 'bonny' inn

By Phyllis Kreger Gillman
special writer

Walking through the leaded glass front door of the Bonnyhill Inn in Chesaning is like stepping into a Victorian greeting card. The usual Victorian frills are there — lace, ribbons, bows, flowers. They create a romantic, fairy-tale feel to a place that helps you look at life, for a little while, through rose-colored glasses.

We arrived in the evening. Tiny lights outlined the building and made us feel like they'd left the lights on for us.

The inn is in a restored Chesaning Farmers Cooperative Elevator built in 1920. Howard and Bonnie Ebenhoeh, owners of

the Heritage House Restaurant across the street, bought the mill in 1988. It was in such bad shape that they rebuilt most of it, keeping as much as possible to the lines of the original mill. Photo albums show various stages of rebuilding.

Bonnie Ebenhoeh served as interior decorator. It took her a year to plan what she wanted for the inn. During that year, she and Howard collected antique furniture and accessories; then, when they were ready to start, it took only six months to rebuild.

The Ebenhoehs were able to do it so quickly because they had a lot of help. "It was our family and friends that came in here to do it. Everybody had the goal to

make this place look good," said Bonnie. That goal has certainly been met; the inn looks great.

The atrium area of the lobby is one of the most striking parts of the inn. Along each side of the lobby's long hall are guest rooms, each with its own bay window. Behind each spotless window is a lighted Tiffany lamp hanging over a table and chairs. When a room is vacant, the shades are left open so you can see into the room.

Susan Felice of Waterford stayed in one of the bay window rooms. "It was gorgeous," she said. She warns, however, that staying in one of the atrium rooms has its risks. "There were people walking through there all the time; everybody wanted to

see the rooms." The atrium area also contains tables where you can have breakfast or an afternoon snack.

The rest of the guest rooms are reached by climbing an antique, oak staircase which Howard Ebenhoeh rescued from a store in Illinois. Each room is unusual. Many of the rooms have fireplaces, some have two-person Jacuzzi tubs, some have old-fashioned claw-foot tubs. "I didn't want to make this predictable. Each room is different," said Bonnie.

"All the rooms are named after our kids, their spouses and our grandkids," said Bonnie. Each room has a picture of the

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Honeymooners can go to Puerto Rico for a week, spend a few days in San Juan and then stay out-land.