

HONEYMOON-DIARY SPECIAL

# Trips of a Lifetime

A honeymoon is no ordinary vacation—it's the adventure that launches your new life together. With that in mind, we found couples who made the most of their getaways, from relaxing in the Greek islands to tracing family heritage in Japan to logging thousands of motorcycle miles in the U.S. and Mexico. Read on and be inspired for your own epic trip.

TEXT BY BROOKE PORTER KATZ



The view from *Mystique*, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Santorini.



A seafood pasta dish at *Sunset Ammoudi Taverna*



Lauren and Danny in Oia, Santorini

## Greek-Island Getaway

### TRIP STATS

**LENGTH:** 13 days  
**BREAKDOWN:** Five nights at *Mystique*, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Santorini; three nights at *Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort*; three nights at *Casa Delfino Hotel & Spa* in Crete; one night at *King George*, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Athens.

**ITINERARY ADJUSTMENT:** Lauren and Danny were glad to have spent the most days in Santorini. ("Although it's small, there's so much to do," she says.) But they could have used more time in Crete. ("We saw the western side. You probably need a week to see it all," he says.)

**The Couple:** Texans Lauren and Daniel Rash, who recently moved to New Orleans.

**The Plan:** Thirteen days in Athens, Mykonos, Santorini, and Crete. "We thought Greece would have a nice balance between relaxation, sightseeing, and adventure," says Lauren, a resident in internal medicine.

**Hotel Hits:** In Santorini, the couple stayed at *Mystique*, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Santorini (from \$533 per night; [luxurycollection.com/mystique](http://luxurycollection.com/mystique)), which is built right into the cliffs and within walking distance of the town of Oia. "We got a suite that was carved out of a cave, and had an infinity pool overlooking the ocean," says Danny, a management consultant. "It was the nicest hotel I've ever stayed in." Lauren, meanwhile, loved the resort-style *Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort* (from \$315 per night, [mykonosgrand.gr](http://mykonosgrand.gr)). "It was quieter, because it wasn't right next to town, and it had a secluded beach," she says. "And at breakfast, they served honey that dripped from a honeycomb that you could collect to put on your yogurt."

**Fresh Catch:** In Santorini, they had dinner one night at *Sunset Ammoudi Taverna* ([sunset-ammoudi.gr](http://sunset-ammoudi.gr)), on the bay and accessible by climbing down a long switchback of stone stairs (or via car). "We picked the fish we wanted prepared for us, which had been caught that day," Danny says. "Then the waiter filleted the cooked fish for us at the table. It was a such cool experience."

**It's a Hike:** The main inspiration for Lauren and Danny's visit to Crete was to hike the Samaria Gorge, something a friend had done a few years back. "A bus takes you to the top, and from there it's a 10-mile trek on a narrow trail to the bottom," Lauren says. "Along the way, you see Byzantine churches and beautiful cypress trees." It ends at the small village of Agia Roumeli on the Libyan Sea, where they had a late lunch and soothed their sore feet in the cool water. Their hotel back in the city of Chania—*Casa Delfino Hotel & Spa* (from \$170 per night, [casadelfino.com](http://casadelfino.com)), a dreamy 17th-century mansion—arranged the guided all-day excursion through *Diana's Travel* ([dianas-travel.com](http://dianas-travel.com)).

**Honeymoon Highlight:** Danny arranged a sunset cruise in Santorini through *Viator* ([viator.com](http://viator.com)). They joined 10 or so other couples for a catamaran ride to the center of the island's volcano (which last erupted in 1950). "There's a chef and an open bar on board, and you stop to go swimming and snorkeling on the way," he says. "We also took a dip in sulfur mud." The return trip takes place at sunset, which "was the prettiest we've ever seen," Lauren says. "This was our favorite activity of the whole trip."



*Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort*

OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF THE LUXURY COLLECTION; THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF SUNSET TAVERNA BY PARASKEVAS; COURTESY OF KIMONAS PATINIOTIS; COURTESY OF MYKONOS GRAND HOTEL & RESORT



Overwater bungalows at the InterContinental Moorea Resort & Spa. Inset: Todd and Annie at Le Méridien Tahiti.



# French-Polynesian Paradise

**The Couple:** Annie Jean-Baptiste and Todd Bullock, of San Francisco.

**The Plan:** The ultimate far-flung beach getaway, with stops in Tahiti and Moorea. Since high school, Annie's Facebook cover photo has been a picture of overwater bungalows in the Tahitian islands—so it's no surprise that's where the couple ended up. "We could see wildlife, sit back with a cocktail and read a book, or go listen to live music. It was the perfect pace for a honeymoon," says Todd, who supervises air and ocean shipments for an exporting company.

**Moorea Magic:** The couple found their overwater bungalow paradise at the **InterContinental Moorea Resort & Spa** (from \$395 per night, [moorea.intercontinental.com](http://moorea.intercontinental.com)). "They were made for honeymooners," Todd says. "You could focus on each other and feel like you were in a completely different world." The lush property is home to more than 200 kinds of tropical plants, a dolphin center, and the region's first

spa. Annie, who works for Google, was especially fond of the poisson cru—a ceviche-like staple made from raw fish in coconut milk and lime—served at lunch and dinner. "I could eat it every day," she says.

**Up Close to Marine Life:** If there's one thing Annie and Todd don't agree on, it's the afternoon they spent swimming with stingrays and sharks, booked through **Voilà Moorea** ([voilamoorea.com](http://voilamoorea.com)). "It was so cool to be up close with these huge, majestic creatures," he

says. "The water was warm and so clear, and to be able to reach out and touch them was amazing." Annie's take? "I realized I had a fear of stingrays. They were massive!"

**Dancing Under the Stars:** Thankfully, they're on the same page when it comes to the trip's most romantic moment: spontaneously slow-dancing on their deck. "We were drinking cocktails and taking in the constellations, with help from the Sky Map app. We could see them for miles," Annie says. A mix of music that played at their wedding (including lots of Stevie Wonder) helped set the mood.

**Out and About in Tahiti:** The duo made a point to explore during the first two days, visiting open-air markets to buy fresh fruit, and bar-hopping at night. If not for their taxi driver, they never would have gotten to hear live music at the pub **Les 3 Brasseurs** ([3brasseurs-pacific.com](http://3brasseurs-pacific.com)). "She didn't like our concierge's recommendations, so she took us there instead," Annie says.

**TRIP STATS**

**LENGTH:** 15 days.  
**BREAKDOWN:** Four nights at Le Méridien Tahiti (two each at the beginning and end of the trip); 10 nights at the InterContinental Moorea.  
**NOT PARTY CENTRAL:** Moorea is a destination where you can completely relax. "We didn't realize it was so tranquil at night," Annie says. "Our days started earlier than usual because we went to bed so early."

## ESCAPE TO ARUBA

**The Couple:** Michelle Rossman and Jeremy Hayes, of Annapolis, Maryland.

**The Plan:** Ten days at **Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort** (from \$350 per night, [bucuti.com](http://bucuti.com)) at Eagle Beach. "In 2015, we decided to visit a different Caribbean spot every year," Michelle says. (They'd already checked the Dominican Republic and Mexico off their list.) Michelle and Jeremy, who work in finance and IT, respectively, spent their days on the adults-only property's quiet, spacious beach and on activities like a UTV excursion via **ABC Tours Aruba** ([abc-aruba.com](http://abc-aruba.com)), as well as hotel-arranged catamaran and snorkeling trips. Off-property meal highlights included **Yemanja Woodfired Grill** ([yemanja-aruba.com](http://yemanja-aruba.com))—and its herb-crusted cauliflower steak and thyme-gin lemonade—and fresh-caught grouper and barracuda at **Wacky Wahoo's** (011-297-586-7333), which requires advance reservations.  
**Bottom Line:** "Sometimes you see photos on travel sites, and you get there and it's disappointing," Michelle says. "But Aruba was more beautiful than we could have imagined."



COURTESY OF IHG (BUNGALOWS); ANNIE JEAN-BAPTISTE (ANNIE & TODD)