



Babymoon bliss

Holiday downtime before the arrival of your baby can be a beautiful way to relax into parenthood, JESSICA JANE SAMMUT finds

There's no better time to take a holiday as a couple than when 'we' is about to become 'three'! A pre-bub getaway is the perfect occasion to reflect on becoming parents, to mentally and physically recharge for the impending life shift that's about to take place and to spend some precious time alone with your partner. It's also a fantastic way to reward yourself for all your hard work in creating your new little family member. So put your feet up and relax – it's time for some babymoon bliss.

A HOLIDAY IS GOOD FOR YOU!

Having a babymoon can be a special way to mark a moment in time prior to your child's arrival and offers many benefits. "Getting away is a great idea when pregnant," says John Aiken, psychologist and co-author of *Making Couples Happy* (Allen & Unwin, \$29.99). "It gives a couple a chance to spend some quality time together before the baby arrives – to be intimate, to connect and to create a shared vision for the future."

As well as bonding as parents-to-be, it also offers a break in the pregnancy schedule

where you as a mama can totally unwind, treating yourself to a little bit of indulgence and pampering, escaping the all-consuming baby planning. In this way, it can leave you feeling rested and primed for the arrival of your bundle of joy, helping prepare you for being the best mummy that you can be. "Your babymoon memories will also keep you going when you're sleep deprived and knee-deep in dirty nappies!" John adds. Now that's a good enough reason, if any.

WHEN'S THE BEST TIME?

Though every pregnancy is different, for many women the second trimester is a favourite time to travel, as the critical 12-week first trimester is over (hopefully along with the morning sickness and fatigue) and the uncomfortable and heavy third trimester has not yet begun. If you're considering an overseas trip, it's also a safer time to travel compared to the end of your pregnancy, as you're less likely to go into labour. You don't want to end up having your baby away from home!

If you're enjoying a healthy pregnancy flying is fine, although your doctor will be able to advise you on the most suitable time. "In

Australia, most airlines will carry a pregnant woman on domestic flights up to about 36 weeks, although internationally this can vary," explains obstetrician Dr Gino Pecoraro, of the Australian Medical Association. "Generally though, pregnant women should only really fly after 28 weeks if it's absolutely necessary. Either way, a doctor should always be consulted before taking any holidays."

When picking the perfect time, you'll also want to consider whether a travel insurance policy will cover you, advise the folks at Travel Insurance Direct, whose policies cover up to week 26 of pregnancy.

YOUR DREAM DESTINATION AWAITS...

Whether you're a bird-spotting enthusiast or a spa-junkie, your babymoon is an opportunity to enjoy what floats your boat.

"Couples usually book babymoons surrounding the theme of relaxation, with a dose of luxury thrown in," says Kirsty Labruniy, general manager of lastminute.com.au. "Many hotels now offer babymoon packages, which can be a cost-effective and easy way to get the holiday you want." >

It doesn't have to be all lazing about, either. Your babymoon can be a wonderful opportunity to explore a new locale while keeping active and healthy – though it's best to stick to an activity level you're used to at home to avoid strain or injury. There are certain activities that should probably be avoided on your trip, too. "Horse riding, skiing and mountain climbing aren't really suitable in pregnancy at any stage," Dr Pecoraro advises.

Some couples may wish to do something low-key while remaining close to home within an easy drive, while others may want to jet off to devour mocktails in exotic climes. If it's an overseas trip you're dreaming of, there may be additional things to consider, depending on the country you want to visit. Some parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands, for example, can carry medical risks such as malaria and risks related to the safety of food and water. Also keep in mind that in some countries the quality of health care may not be as high as it is back home. For these reasons, "knowing the language and being confident about water and food standards is very important when travelling while pregnant," says Renee Walsh, general manager of travel.com.au.

Whether you're holidaying near home or away, it's also best not to venture anywhere too remote, Renee says, in case medical assistance is required. ☆

TOP TRAVEL TIPS

There are lots of things to consider before leaving for your babymoon. These are Renee's top bits of advice...

1 Going on a road trip? To avoid an uncomfortable road journey, ensure you've completed a safety check on the car before you set off and take extra pillows to ensure you're comfy, lots of water to keep you hydrated and snacks to keep your energy levels up.

2 Leaving on a plane? Before purchasing your ticket, check the flying restrictions with regard to pregnancy with the carrier, as these can change from airline to airline. You may need to obtain a letter from your doctor confirming your due date and that you're safe to fly if you're 28 weeks or more. When booking seats, try to get an aisle seat to make it easy to get to the bathroom and notify the airline that you're pregnant so the staff on board will be able to help you. Always make sure you wear your DVT socks on the plane and move around at intervals as advised by your doctor. Also take snacks and plenty of drinking water for the flight.

3 Check your travel insurance. Travel insurance is advisable when going overseas. Not all countries share a reciprocal agreement with Australia when it comes to health costs and having pregnancy complications or delivering a pre-term baby overseas can leave you with a bill of thousands of dollars. Check your policy coverage carefully though, as some companies will only insure a pregnant woman until a certain stage of pregnancy (such as 24 weeks) and others may not cover for an overseas birth at all. Some policies will cover the cancellation of travel arrangements in case you're not well enough to travel when the time comes.

4 Medical must-haves. If you're considering an overseas location, talk to your doctor about whether any vaccinations will be necessary. When you head off, be sure to take your GP/obstetrician/midwife's contact details, any prescribed medication, a list of any allergies, your maternity health record (noting any conditions) and details of the closest hospital to your accommodation.

LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION?



TROPICAL TREAT:

Thailand awaits...

If luxury and tranquillity are what you're after, waking up to the peace of your own private villa before taking a dip in your sparkling private pool is where it's at! Banyan Tree Phuket has been voted the world's best spa resort and the best resort hotel in Asia, and it's easy to see why. The secluded, romantic villas are the ideal escape from the world,

but if you choose to venture out there's the Banyan Tree Spa to indulge in a super-relaxing treatment or two, the easily accessed beach, and of course all the excitement and colour of Phuket to explore beyond. We give this a two-thumbs up for a babymoon to remember.

Prices start from \$535 a night for a deluxe villa.

See www.banyantree.com/en/phuket/ for more.



HOME COMFORTS:

Blue Mountains escape

For a luxurious break closer to home, take a step back in time with a stay at Mountain Whispers' 'Leura Rose' self-contained accommodation. Nestled within the Blue Mountains village, the restored historic home features a mix of decadent old-world décor and modern luxuries. Treat yourself to a soak in the enormous spa bathroom (complete with heated floors and gas log fireplace),

cosy up together on one of the many comfy couches, or whip up a hot breakfast in the well-stocked kitchen. If you need a break from all that relaxation, take a short stroll to Leura village, brimming with quaint cafés, restaurants and stores. For a romantic meal, dinner at Darley's at Lilianfels in nearby Katoomba is a must.

Prices start from \$300 a night per couple.

See www.mountainwhispers.com.au