

# MOONSTRUCK

## FIVE DREAMY “MINI MOON” DESTINATIONS, ALL WITHIN ABOUT 400 MILES OF MILWAUKEE

**LET’S FACE IT,** your wedding is probably going to be expensive, and at least a little stressful. Do you really want your honeymoon to be the same?

A flight to Tuscany, Italy (tops on a recent U.S. News & World Report ranking of honeymoon destinations) can cost nearly \$2,000 – not to mention multiple transfers and many hours in an

airport. Plus, planning the trip of your dreams could take as much time and foresight as planning your wedding.

For those reasons, couples are increasingly opting for “mini moons,” low-key trips to romantic destinations within driving distance, with the idea of taking a bigger trip later. Here we share five of our favorite destination ideas.

# HONEYMOON IN Lake Geneva

**THIS LAKESIDE** town was originally named for the Potawatomi chief Maunk-suck, or Big Foot. It's unclear whether postcards and T-shirts emblazoned with the words "Greetings from Beautiful Maunk-suck" would sell as well as their Lake Geneva counterparts, but the rolling hills and sparkling blue-green water that surround the picturesque town would certainly still charm, and you can admire both while strolling along the aptly named Lake Shore Path, a 26-mile walking trail that's not to be missed.

Other must-see outdoorsy stops in the area include Big Foot Beach State Park, a 271-acre park on the shores of Geneva Lake, and the Yerkes Observatory, which houses the largest refracting telescope ever used for astronomical research. The observatory is no longer open for tours, but you can still walk around the ornate 19th-century building and admire its vast domed roof. And the nearby Kishwaukee Nature Conservatory – a sprawling nature preserve with several miles of walking trails and a two-story observation tower – is worth a visit on your way back to town.

Tourism drives Lake Geneva's economy, so you'll see plenty of

upscale boutiques and art galleries lining its wide-sidewalked streets. Galerie Matisse represents a small but mighty selection of artists, including Thomas Arvid, whose photorealistic paintings of wine and spirits go down as easily as a balanced glass of vino. And at Studio Winery you can actually sip local wine while admiring art made by husband and wife team Doug and Kathy Jackson.

After drinking a glass or two, you'll probably want something to eat. Fortunately, Lake Geneva's restaurant scene is surprisingly robust, given its small size. Hunt Club Steakhouse, an upscale restaurant located in a Palladian-style mansion built more than a century ago, ages each of its steaks a minimum of 28 days. And Mars Resort, which has been open in one form or another since 1923, serves up a mean slab of ribs and an even better view of Lake Como – if you go around sunset, you'll be able to watch the last rays of sunlight slant across the water while you eat.

There's no shortage of entertainment options in the area, either. One of the quirkier offerings has got to be The Tristan Crist Magic Theatre, which identifies itself as "the world's smallest permanent magic show

devoted to large-scale illusion." At the end of each performance, a magician conjures a helicopter onto the stage, à la David Copperfield. If the weather is good, opt to spend an afternoon or evening aboard one of the Lake Geneva Cruise Line's lushly appointed boats, admiring the Gilded Age mansions that rise above the shoreline. One of the most impressive homesteads, the 1888-built Black Point Estate, is well worth a visit of its own, too.

IF YOU  
GO

**WHERE TO STAY:** If you and your partner are looking for an indulgent experience, try the aptly named Grand Geneva Resort & Spa or The Abbey Resort. In addition to luxe accommodations, both offer a variety of spa services, including facials, massages, manicures and pedicures.

**WHEN TO VISIT:** There's plenty to see and do all year, but the town is at its prettiest from late spring through early autumn.





City Museum

# HONEYMOON IN St. Louis

**LONG CALLED** “The Gateway to the West,” St. Louis became a more literal gateway in 1965, when the 630-foot Gateway Arch that now dominates the city’s skyline first opened to the public. No trip to the city is complete without a visit to the top, which offers spectacular views in every direction.

Northwest of the Arch, you’ll find the City Museum, a vast warehouse filled with architectural and industrial objects that have been fashioned into idiosyncratic pieces of playground equipment – a 10-story slide, a gigantic rope swing suspended from the building’s domed roof, a human-sized hamster wheel made from machinery used to create airplane fuselages – designed to appeal as much to adults as kids. Continue venturing west, and you’ll eventually hit Forest Park, a 1,371-acre urban oasis and the site of the 1904 Summer Olympics. It’s also home to the St. Louis Zoo and several museums.

Keep in mind that it’s almost never Miller Time here, and don’t let the ubiquitous Budweiser, Michelob and other Anheuser-Busch taps interfere with your enjoyment of the many excellent bars and restaurants in town. Food Network named Pappy’s Smokehouse the best barbecue rib joint in America, and you won’t regret waiting in one of its notoriously long lines for a slab and sides. The wait to get into Blueberry Hill, the restaurant and club where Chuck Berry played monthly until he was well into his 80s, can be nearly as

IF YOU  
GO

**WHERE TO STAY:** The Moonrise Hotel is every bit as dreamy as its name implies. The hotel’s Honey Moon Package gets you a room with a jacuzzi tub, Champagne, strawberries, valet parking and more. Be sure to check out the rooftop deck, the perfect spot to while away evening hours, relaxing under the stars.

**WHEN TO VISIT:** St. Louis summers are hot and muggy, but its winters are far milder than Milwaukee’s. And when most of our country’s northern lakes start to freeze over, thousands of bald eagles fly south to roost along the mighty Mississippi River – if you visit in January or February, there’s an especially good chance you’ll see them.



Forest Park

long, but you’ll love its delightfully kitschy décor and classic American comfort food (order the burger!). And if you sign up for Budweiser’s free General Brewery Tour, you can wash what you’ve eaten down with some watery beer, after getting a glimpse of the Clydesdales.





## HONEYMOON IN THE NORTHWEST TWIN CITIES

IF YOU  
GO

**FEW WOULD** consider the Elm Creek Park Reserve in sleepy Maple Grove, Minnesota – about a five-and-a-half-hour drive from Downtown Milwaukee – a romantic destination. But that’s a shame, because there are enough outdoorsy activities in the area to keep you busy for days, especially if you like golf or skiing.

If the weather’s warm, book a tee time at Edinburgh USA, a course in nearby Brooklyn Park that was named the second-best new public course in America by *Golf Digest*. If it’s not, spend a leisurely long weekend at Elm Creek Winter Recreation Area, where you can ski, snowboard, sled and even – if you’ve brought your pups along with you and they have a lot of energy – hook them up to a harness, strap on a pair of cross-country skis and practice the sport of skijoring. Then head to the Elm Creek Chalet to enjoy a cup of hot cocoa in front of a roaring fireplace. If you’re feeling adventurous, you could make the half-hour drive for a day trip to the Saint Paul Winter Carnival (Jan. 24-Feb. 3) to snap photos of the gigantic ice palace and ice sculptures that are created for the carnival every year.

Once you’ve worked up an appetite, head to Pittsburgh Blue Steakhouse and order a 24-ounce mountain of herb-crusted prime

rib served with au jus and horseradish sauce. Or, you know, just a nice salad. Breakfast is the star of the show at Fat Nat’s Eggs, where nearly a dozen omelets can be found on the menu, along with other diner fare. And OMNI Brewing, which maintains a spacious taproom, offers up a varied selection of beers, from German hefeweizens to New England IPAs.

**WHERE TO STAY:** Most of the hotels in the immediate area are ho-hum chains, but the Cambria Hotel in Maple Grove has a boutique vibe that makes it stand out, and some of its suites come with whirlpool bathtubs. If you prefer your romance served up rustic-style, rent a log cabin at Baker Campground.

**WHEN TO VISIT:** You can hit the slopes in winter or the links from late spring through early fall.





# HONEYMOON IN THE APOSTLE ISLANDS

Sea kayaking



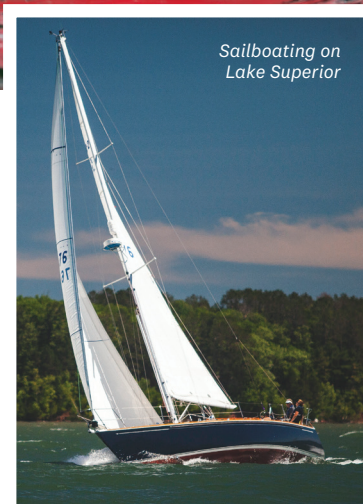
**MORE THAN A** thousand years ago, Native American tribes first settled a chain of islands along the southern coast of Lake Superior. Today, the Apostle Islands comprise one of four national lakeshores protected by the National Park Service. If you're willing to make the roughly six-hour trek north to reach them, you'll see why they're held in such high regard by conservationists and nature lovers.

To fully explore the islands, you'll need to rent seaworthy kayaks from a licensed outfitter, such as Living Adventure or Trek & Trail in Bayfield. Most of the outfitters offer guided half-day, full-day or overnight tours of the sea caves and rock formations that surround the islands. If you're feeling particularly adventurous, you can also rent wetsuits and scuba gear from a few local boating companies, which will motor you out to the sites of submerged caves and shipwrecks – like the Lucerne, which sank in 1886 – for a few hours of underwater exploration. Or you can stay warm and dry at Big Bay State Park, taking in views of its lakeside dunes, sphagnum bogs and sandstone bluffs.

IF YOU  
GO

**WHERE TO STAY:** The vibe at the Old Rittenhouse Inn in Bayfield, situated in a Queen Anne mansion with a huge, wraparound porch, is thoroughly opulent, especially if you book one of its lushly appointed suites. For an additional \$250, you can purchase the hotel's Honeymoon Package, which includes a \$150 voucher for a five-course candlelight dinner, a bottle of champagne, homemade sweets and other goodies.

**WHEN TO VISIT:** Lake Superior is the coldest of the Great Lakes, so if you want to enjoy peak season, visit in mid to late summer. Or, for a very different experience, consider making the trek in the middle of winter, when the lake has frozen over enough to allow travelers to explore ice caves that form along the mainland.



Sailboating on  
Lake Superior

You can reach Madeline Island, the largest and only inhabited island in the Apostle chain, via ferry from Bayfield. There, you can indulge in a little retail therapy at the Bell Street Gallery and Madeline Island Candles. Or stop by Cafe Seiche, which has been featured in *Bon Appetit*, for hearty farm-to-table fare.

In Bayfield, The Fat Radish and the Manypenny Bistro serve up excellent seafood dishes and wood-fired pizza, respectively. And though there aren't many bars in the tiny town, two local vintners – the Bayfield Winery and the Seven Ponds Winery – share a tasting room in a charmingly ramshackle farmhouse overlooking an orchard and vineyard. The former specializes in apple-based wines, while the latter explores more traditional grape varieties.



APPROXIMATELY 420 miles from Milwaukee, Traverse City, Michigan, is further afield than any of the other destinations included here. But if you book passage aboard the Lake Express, you'll cut down on your drive time and give yourself a chance to rest up on your way there.

As soon as you've arrived, you'll realize that the locals are a little obsessed with cherries. More cherries are harvested around Grand Traverse Bay than in any other region in the country, a fact you'll doubtless hear if you attend the National Cherry Festival (June 29-July 6), which draws roughly half a million people each year.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are nearly as many vineyards in the area as cherry orchards, and you could easily spend a day traipsing from winery to winery. Two favorites are Brys Estate, where visitors can sample award-winning wines in a beautiful brick and mahogany tasting room, and 2 Lads, a strikingly modern steel and glass facility perched atop 58 acres in the heart of the Old Mission Peninsula. Further along the peninsula, you'll find the decommissioned Mission Point Lighthouse, which now serves as a historical museum with enviable views of the surrounding countryside.

When you get hungry, head to downtown Traverse City, where elegant restaurants like Trattoria Stella vie for visitor attention with decidedly more lowbrow offerings like Little Fleet, a colorful assortment of food trucks that parks along Front Street in the warmer months. And consider Alliance Restaurant, a buzzy bistro that received a glowing review in *The New York Times*, proof positive that great food can be found outside large cities.

You can walk off some of those wine and food calories by taking a day-trip



Pups at Little Fleet

to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, which was dubbed "The Most Beautiful Place in America" by "Good Morning America" in 2011. Or really lean into the spirit of vacation-time indulgence and spend an afternoon soaking up some sun at Clinch Park or Bryant Park Beach. ■

## HONEYMOON IN

# Traverse City



Chateau Chantal wine



Mission Point Lighthouse

IF YOU GO

**WHERE TO STAY:** Traverse City has become something of a tourist hot spot in recent years, meaning that you'd be hard-pressed to throw a cherry pit in town without hitting a hotel or inn. Chateau Chantal is particularly swoon-worthy, for its stunning views of Old Mission Peninsula and its on-site winery and tasting room. And many of the lakeside suites at Hotel Indigo come with fireplaces and spa showers.

**WHEN TO GO:** Traverse City is best enjoyed in the summer, when the cherry orchards and vineyards are at their most verdant and the sun is shining brightly on Lake Michigan.