



Grand Velas Riviera Maya

# Honeymoon haven

Grand Velas Riviera Maya is an easy honeymoon escape to beachy paradise.

by Michael J. Solender

With the delightful chaos of the wedding safely behind, honeymoon time is the cherry atop the newlywed sundae, and the ideal fresh beginning for your married days together.

It's time to be pampered, spoiled, sleep late and ditch your watches — all of which you can do at the all-inclusive Grand Velas Riviera Maya. Here, you're guaranteed a sun-soaked recharge, fueled by Mexico's finest cuisine and libations, eco-touring, spa therapies and a pristine beach.

After a three-hour nonstop flight from Charlotte to Cancun followed by a 40-minute drive along the coast, you'll be enjoying beach-side cocktails by midday. Here's what you'll find:

## SUITE LIFE

Beach-front or tropical jungle suites are the standard at Grand Velas, with each of the 539 accommodations offering more than 1,100 square feet of luxury living on the resort's verdant, vast grounds. For those favoring the bold, consider the secluded, romantic Zen Grand suites, where private terraces overlook waterlily ponds and the flora and fauna of the Yucatan jungle, surrounding you with natural wonder at every turn.

Fans of "Love is Blind," the Netflix romance reality show, may recognize the enormous lobby palapa area, the secluded infinity pool, and the natural beauty found in this lush mangrove area of the resort.

*Zen pool*

Beach lovers will want to make their home in Grand Class suites, oceanfront digs and an ultra-luxe refuge. Each suite features a large terrace with a private plunge pool and lounge area adjacent to the beach. There are massage tables for in-suite spa treatments, interior whirlpools (large enough for two), a fully stocked fridge, and plenty of sweet and salty snacks. There's artisanal mezcal, distilled specifically for Grand Velas, in your suite — an extra special treat when paired with house-made chocolates.

## MEMORY MAKING

Couples are assigned a personal concierge who sees to all requests, and, for the intrepid, can recommend some truly unique newlywed experiences to tempt you with.

Want to explore Mayan ruins and visit one of the world's most venerated ancient capitals? Your concierge will see to an unforgettable micro-adventure to Chichen Itza, one of the greatest Mayan centers of the Yucatán peninsula.

How about swimming and exploring in a nearby cenote, followed by lunch under-

*Zen Grand lobby*

## WEDDING TRAVEL



ground? Diving or snorkeling trips can also be arranged, or evening stargazing.

If spiritual celebration is more to your liking, book a Mystic Mayan spa evening, complete with a live performance from dancers dressed in traditional Mayan garments with music from snail drums and a copal auric cleansing by Mayan shamans.

Just chilling on the beach is always an option too, and there's plenty of shade umbrellas and an ever-attentive team to see to your libation needs.

## DINING

Breakfast in bed? Of course! There's 24-hour in-suite dining and a focus on genuine hospitality, earning Grand Velas Riviera Maya a 2023 World's Best award from *Travel + Leisure*.



Mayan ceremony

## GRAND VELAS DESTINATION WEDDINGS

Options and high-touch service are the watchwords for couples planning distinctive destination weddings or vow-renewal celebrations at Grand Velas Riviera Maya. Offerings include:

- Instagram-ready photobooths, colorful smoke bombs and TikTok transitions, with a dedicated social media concierge to capture it all.
- A hand-painted personalized dance floor to reflect your love story and personality.
- Festive Frida and Diego Second Line festivities with extra-large Frida and Diego mojigangas (puppets) and a mariachi band to lead a musical parade of guests.
- An authentic YAAK UN (Fall in Love) ceremony – A Mayan purification ritual that opens the heart, unblocks energy channels and aligns the wedding party with the true intention of love. To protect the marriage from negative forces, a Mayan shaman blesses the couple.



Piaf

When it's time to venture out, romantic evenings mean lingering over special meals in luxurious venues. There are eight restaurants, and while regional Mexican fare plays a starring role, there's an emphasis on international cuisine that takes full advantage of the bounty of local produce, proteins and dairy the Yucatán is known for.

A couples' favorite is Piaf, with its French flair, contemporary light touch and elegant Parisian-style ambience. The restaurant pays homage to legendary French chanteuse Edith Piaf with dramatic crystal-lined curtains, retro chandeliers and red-and-black-accented décor. Start your meal with crispy oysters with mayonnaise foam or a foie gras terrine served with apple purée, gingerbread ice cream and toasted brioche. Chef Mario Soto's touch includes specially crafted dishes for two like the roasted rock Cornish hen, stuffed with barley and veal and served with roasted vegetables and sherry sauce.

Global tastes are on tap every evening at Grand Velas. Frida, a contemporary Mexican kitchen, honors the extensive repertoire of regional cuisine and beyond. Chaka presents an international take on grilled meats, seafood and pasta. Standout Cocina De Autor takes diners on a creative gastronomic journey with eight to 10 small dishes and delivers a sensory tour of one of Mexico's most acclaimed kitchens.

For a nightcap, venture to the Sky Bar, a rooftop lounge with an ocean view and an ideal place to toast new beginnings. **W**

## HONEYMOON HOT SPOTS

Here are three additional easy-to-reach honeymoon destinations from the Queen City.

**Savannah, Ga.** – Honeymooners will find this Georgia peach an easy four-hour drive from Charlotte, with plenty of charm alongside contemporary offerings. Couples making the **Hotel Bardo Savannah** their luxe home away from home are rewarded with blocks of walkable Historic District treats like neighboring Forsyth Park, the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist (often referred to as the “Sistine Chapel of the South”), Girl Scouts founder Juliette Gordon Low's birthplace, and *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil's* fabled Bonaventure Cemetery. Acclaimed Lowcountry dining venues like Husk Savannah and The Grey are worth the splurge.

**Longboat Key, Fla.** – After a two-hour flight to Sarasota/Bradenton from Charlotte, Longboat Key is less than a 30-minute drive but a world away from the buzz of the wedding day. Here, the **Zota Beach Resort** is the perfect sunny honeymoon escape. Perched along the powdery sands of Longboat Key, there's a laid-back island ambience and easy access to the Bradenton area's museums, arts, shopping and outdoor adventures. Honeymooners are spoiled with private beach access, a poolside bar and waterfront Florida-Caribbean fusion dining.

**Finger Lakes, Sodus, N.Y.** – Newlyweds looking to get away from it all will love Maxam Hotels' **Finger Lakes Treehouse** just outside of Rochester, N.Y., and a two-hour nonstop flight from Charlotte. Adventure, nature and relaxation await couples in an A-Frame treehouse. Luxury amenities include traditional Swedish spa experiences like a cedar-planked sauna and bubbling hot tubs.