

DESTINATION ALASKA

10 REASONS TO HONEYMOON IN ALASKA

The absolute wilderness of Alaska makes it a thrilling honeymoon destination, suggests Yvonne Gordon, with its spectacular scenery and wildlife plus cosy, romantic lodges, some of which can't be reached by any road...

1 The first thing you'll notice about Alaska, whether you arrive by air or by sea, is the **miles and miles of remote and untouched landscape**. With 663,000 square miles and just 736,000 people, the North American state is perfect for honeymooners as there's plenty of space and lots of opportunities for private adventures and for stays in secluded accommodation.

2 Alaska is full of **adventure**. Summer brings warm weather and lots of daylight for exploring everything from glaciers to forest and mountain trails, as well as hiking, cycling, kayaking and fishing, while winter offers snowy adventures like skiing, dog sled rides and chances to see the Northern Lights before cosying down in a log cabin.

3 For the ultimate in romantic escapes, **Talkeetna Adventure lodge** (talkeetnaadventurelodge.com) is not on any roads so guests can only get there by float plane. The rustic lodge overlooks Stephan Lake, so you can relax by the water or enjoy adventures like backcountry hiking, boating and fishing in summer, and snowmobiling, ice fishing and dog sledding in winter. Perhaps a cooking class will be a good investment for married life. There's complimentary kayaks, canoes and fishing gear and the more adventurous or romantic can choose to stay at self-contained cabins reached via a hike from the main lodge.

4 For glaciers, fjords, islands, coves and bays, you'll love Southeast Alaska which is set on the **Inside Passage** waterway which runs north from Washington State through Canada. The Alaska portion has huge areas of rainforest as well as glaciers, vast icefields and long fjords which are perfect for romantic boat trips and cruises. Most towns, including Juneau, the state capital, can't be reached by road so be prepared to travel around by water or snuggle up together on a breath-taking float plane trip.

5 With around **100,000 glaciers** in Alaska, you will have the chance to view them from all angles. One memorable day is a boat trip to the Sawyer Glaciers in Tracy Arm fjord (adventureboundalaska.com) where you'll pass icebergs and might see huge chunks of ice calving from the glacier. You'll also see all sorts of wildlife in the fjord from seals, sea lions, whales and porpoises to bears, goats and eagles. Ask your hotel to organise a picnic box with champagne so you can celebrate the day on the boat ride back to base.

IB HONEYMOONS

9 Each cabin at the **Knik River Lodge** (knikriverlodge.com) has a northern panorama with a view of Denali (on a clear day) and the Northern Lights in winter. Take a helicopter tour from the lodge to Knik Glacier and, during summer, you can meet a musher and his dog team who live on the glacier and will demonstrate dog mushing on the snow in warm summer weather for lodge guests.

10 Seeing a humpback whale fluke its tail, a bear catch wild salmon from a river or a moose with her young offspring are the experiences of a lifetime. You'll see lots of **wildlife** in Alaska – on the water, there are opportunities to see whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions and eagles and more – while you can marvel at bears, moose, deer, and wild goats on the shore. Organise your excursions with specialist guides who know where and when to spot a perhaps elusive species, and you'll have memories of some special encounters for years to come. For more information, see travelalaska.com and traveljuneau.com ■

6 If you're looking for both adventure and luxury, check into **Pearson's Pond** (pearsonspond.com) for an exclusive retreat in a boutique-type hotel set in a rainforest garden near Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau. Their romance packages include candlelight, champagne, rose petals and soft music on arrival, and some rooms have Jacuzzis, rainfall showers, fireplaces and kitchenettes. There are star-lit hot tubs in the gardens, plus a waterfall and massage room. Honeymoon packages include glacier cruises, kayaking, dogsledding and whale watching and there are complimentary bikes and boats on the pond.

7 With 5,000 miles of coastline and pristine waters, you can tuck into some of **Alaska's tastiest seafood** during your honeymoon – whether it's salmon, chowder or shrimp. Crab is a speciality too – in particular king crab and Dungeness. Try the giant king crab legs at Tracy's King Crab shack in Juneau. You won't find white tablecloths and silver cutlery here, but nothing says romance more than seeing the love of your life wrestling with some messy crab legs while trying to get at every last morsel of that delicious white meat, at a waterside shack.

8 Travel inland to see some of Alaska's spectacular mountain scenery with a romantic trip on the Alaska Railroad from Anchorage to **Denali National Park**. The park is home to Denali mountain which, at 20,310-feet, is North America's highest mountain and even has its own weather system so is often surrounded by clouds. The journey takes eight hours and the Alaska Railroad trains have dome cars with windows up to the ceiling, as well as dining cars and lounges.

