

editor's notes

Well, here it is. As promised last month, we're presenting our yearly overview of resources relating to the wedding and honeymoon market, which has racked up in excess of \$125 billion in annual sales. That's a lot of commission out there waiting for you to scoop up, and the more you familiarize yourself with that market, the bigger the piece of that \$125 billion pie for you to enjoy. And make no mistake, this is a fluid and rapidly expanding market.

What's telling is the extra resources and efforts the industry puts toward it every year. More and more hotels and resorts are adding onsite wedding planners or developing special concierge services and packages for honeymooners. Tour operators specializing in this market are popping up everywhere and their offerings are becoming more and more creative. One creates programs geared specifically to the client's interests, such as designing an Italy itinerary so the newlyweds can shop for classic and designer furniture for their new home. More mature and well-traveled newlyweds have created a demand for more exotic honeymoon destination experiences, while second marriages with children have created a unique, new niche—family honeymoons geared toward bonding new families.

The creativity you see in this market segment is extraordinary. One French company—you can read all about them on page 60—came up with the idea of developing romantic scenarios for couples visiting Paris that a client purchases to surprise his or her partner. For example, while strolling through the romantic streets of Montmartre, a street artist "convinces" your client to purchase a black-and-white portrait of the partner, which in reality has already been created from a photo supplied by the client. When it's presented to the partner, he or she can't help but notice that there's only one detail drawn in color—a key-shaped pendant. As the couple continues their stroll through Montmartre, they then come upon a gypsy woman selling jewelry who, upon seeing the pendant colored in on the drawing, gasps in surprise and extricates that very same pendant from her own wares, insisting they take it because it was fated to belong to your client's partner. As they continue their stroll with the partner no doubt pondering these strange circumstances, the plot thickens even more. An obviously frightened and furtive man, repeatedly looking behind him in fear of someone following, is scurrying toward the couple hiding a package in his jacket. He quickly approaches and hands the partner a wrapped package, whispering, "This is for you," before running away. Needless to say, the couple is ready to head for a nearby bistro to unwrap the package, which contains an attractive, but padlocked wooden box that can only be opened by—what else—the key pendant. When the partner finally opens the box, *voilà*, there's a parchment inside with your client's written message of love—more often than not, a pretty creative proposal of marriage. So sell a dozen of those programs this year and next year you'll be finalizing your very lucrative wedding destination programs from the front seat of your brand-new Mercedes.

Become a Curaçao Specialist

Still another major bonus awaits you this month—the opportunity to become a Curaçao Destination Specialist. It's certainly one of the most sophisticated and cosmopolitan of the Caribbean islands and one of the most diverse in terms of market segments—everything from active/adventure vacation experiences to cultural and historical. But to maximize those sales, you've got to know what you're talking about, and when you participate in and complete this course—whether it be out of this month's issue or in **Recommend's Member Education Center at recommend.com**—those sales will start adding up.

Correction

In our May issue, in the *Accommodations in El Peten* story on page 84, we mistakenly said that the **Camino Real Tikal** was a **Westin** and part of the **Starwood** portfolio. But we were in error. For more information on the property, visit caminoreal.com.gt.

Next Month

We're taking you around the world next month from Europe by Land & Sea, to Touring the U.S.A. In keeping with that global emphasis, you're also going to be able to enjoy onsite adventures in Mexico, Israel and China, just to name but a few. In the meantime, settle back and have a good read.—Rick Shively

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