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Thinking of popping the question on holiday? Here's how not to do it

When did holidays become the go-to place to propose? What are the right and wrong ways to do it? We weigh in on the great debate

By Amanda Hyde

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You may recognise Lee Parsons and his fiancé Leah Louise King. They made the papers when he got down on one knee and proposed in the aisle of a Ryanair flight to Reus. And she said yes.

The flight crew gifted the happy couple two bottles of Prosecco while other passengers gave them a round of applause – though when Parsons tweeted his efforts to the airline's notoriously snarky Twitter account, the reply came, “Leah, blink twice for random seat allocation”.



Lee Parsons and his fiancé Leah Louise King, after he proposed on a Ryanair flight

Parsons fully expected the response (“they’re quite brutal, aren’t they?” he told me. “You know what you’re going to get”), but the couple are happy with their big moment. They regularly travel the world and document it for their [website](#) so popping the question mid-air felt right, with the added bonus that they got to celebrate on holiday with their family afterwards. “It’s got to mean something to you and it meant something to us,” King says.

Though an in-the-aisle Ryanair proposal remains something of a novelty, popping the question on holiday has become de rigueur. A '21st Century Bride' survey commissioned by the wedding website Hitched in 2017 found that 38 per cent of brides were proposed to during a trip, far more than at a restaurant, on Valentines' Day or on their birthdays. "Even if it's not a planned proposal, you're already in the right mindset on vacation," says Moraya Seeger DeGeare, the Inhouse Relationship Expert for the couples app, Paired.

Rock and royal

Proposing on holiday has the royal seal of approval, too. Back in 2010, Prince William asked Kate Middleton to marry him by whisking her off to the slopes of Mount Kenya. Shortly afterwards, he told journalists, "We had a little private time away together with some friends and I just decided that it was the right time really".



Proposing on holiday has the royal seal of approval, too: back in 2010, Prince William asked Kate Middleton to marry him by whisking her off to the slopes of Mount Kenya | CREDIT: Above & Beyond Luxe and Melody Sky Photography

Hotels have long been savvy to the trend. You can set the stage for a big ring reveal with a private beach dinner at The Palayana Hotel in Hua Hin, a picnic in a folly at the edge of Lake Windermere with Storrs Hall hotel, or a Riva boat trip from Venice's Gritti Palace. The world's best restaurants are also geared up for proposals and will often ramp up the romance – though things don't always go to plan.

Niki Gifford was in Chantilly, France when her now-husband took her to “one of those marvellous local Michelin-starred restaurants, where you get served ten courses and it's all very French”. Unbeknown to her, her partner was preparing to propose – but then things took a turn for the bizarre.



A survey commissioned by the wedding website Hitched in 2017 found that 38 per cent of brides were proposed to during a trip | CREDIT: Above & Beyond Luxe and Melody Sky Photography

“Just at the point when he was about to do it, a customer in the restaurant ended up having a full argument, and then [there was] a brawl in the kitchen. Pots and pans were being smashed everywhere and we were told to leave for our own safety,” she recalled.

As a result, her rattled husband-to-be opted for a more low-key proposal at the chateau where they were staying the next night. “It was just the two of us,” said Ward. “It was actually probably more romantic because nobody was watching”.

If in doubt, delegate

These days, you can attempt to divert that kind of disaster by hiring a ‘proposal planner’. Kiss Me in Paris organises proposals in the City of Light, though it suggests you need at least £2,000 for one of its packages, which include getting down on one knee on a private rooftop with a bird’s-eye view of the Eiffel Tower. Alternatively, clients can take their partners on a casual stroll, ostensibly bumping into a street artist who has secretly already been tasked with painting a ‘will you marry me?’ picture.



These days, you can attempt to divert kind disaster by hiring a 'proposal planner' | CREDIT: Above & Beyond Luxe and Melody Sky Photography

Meanwhile in the Swiss Alps, Sophie Barletta of Above and Beyond regularly helicopters clients and their engagement rings to mountain glaciers or arranges for them to paraglide off a Swiss Alp with their newly betrothed. "Proposals are, without a doubt, my favourite thing to organise," she says. "They throw money at you and say 'get creative'. And one person is really happy because they've got the day of their life, and the other person is happy because they're happy. Everyone's happy and it's great".

The minus to this, of course, is that you might spend the amount it costs to host a small wedding, only for your chosen bride to say 'I don't'. "I always check with clients that they're absolutely sure in order to gauge the situation first," said Barletta.

“I think more and more people do actually talk to their partner about doing it,” agrees the novelist Lucy Vine, whose next book features an ‘engagement concierge’. “You don’t want somebody to be blindsided by a proposal, do you? It used to be more about the surprise and it’s the same in novels. It seems more romantic in theory, but I think it’s a terrible idea,” she says.

Flash mob

As well as worrying about whether they’ll say yes, there’s another, very 21st-century problem to contend with if you’re attempting a holiday proposal: whether or not to hire a photographer. “It’s something I try and push,” says Barletta. “It’s not about showing other people. It’s something to have just for you”.

Nevertheless, Instagramming the moment is a must do for some, with professional pictures adding gloss to the grid. Research by holiday lettings company [holidu.co.uk](https://www.holidu.co.uk) found that Paris was the most popular European destination from which to share a proposal on social media, followed by London and Santorini.

Vine baulks at this idea. “It’s become a bit performative at times, hasn’t it? Sometimes it feels like it’s not really about the person being proposed to, it’s about the likes”.



A proposal on holiday could mean the trip of a lifetime, or one to forget | CREDIT: Above & Beyond Luxe and Melody Sky Photography

Avoiding disaster

But if you really want to be sure that a big overseas proposal will go down well? There’s no substitute for asking outright. Whether you want the big Paris proposal or the Ryanair

one; a professional videographer or a quick Facetime with your mum, Seeger DeGeare recommends letting your other half know what you have planned ahead of time.

“I think a lot of times, people just hint at what they want: they think the specialness goes away with saying what you want. But in every other area, people say ‘ask for what you need, and you get what you need’”.

It could make the difference between the trip of a lifetime, or a holiday to forget – so perhaps she has a point.

Were you proposed to on holiday, or did you do the proposing? Please share your experience in the comments section below

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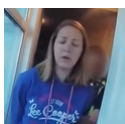
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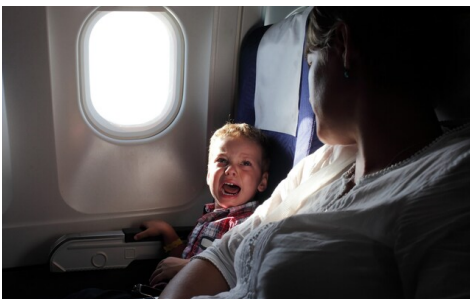
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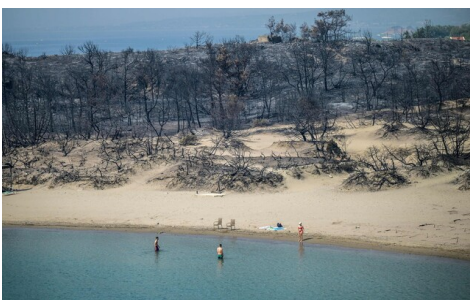
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