

TheTipSheet

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TRAVEL

THE 'WEDDINGMOONERS'

BY DEBRA A. KLEIN

WHEN KARL AND Kimmie Kemberling tied the knot last August, they managed to avoid many of the usual wedding hassles. Then again, the Kemberlings had to make an 800-mile trek across New Zealand before boarding a helicopter that whisked them 8,000 feet up a snowcapped mountain. There, dressed in formalwear and hiking boots, they exchanged their vows.

The entire guest list: the chopper pilot, a photographer and the shepherd who officiated.

If a wedding without bridesmaid dresses and seating charts sounds like bliss to you, join the party—just don't throw one. A growing number of couples now fold their wedding and honeymoon into one far-flung event. There are no hard statistics on the trend, but travel professionals say the number of "weddingmooners" is rising steadily. At Unforgettable Honeymoons in Portland, Ore. (unforgettablehoneymoon.com), bookings for destination weddings have increased tenfold in the past two years, according to owner Renee Duane.

Some couples just don't want a traditional ceremony. (Kimmie Kemberling was creeped out by the idea of everyone's staring at her.) But there's another incentive for the peripatetic wedding party: it can be a lot cheaper. For about what you'd shell out for fancy floral arrangements and hors d'oeuvres back home, you can say your vows inside Florence's 14th-century Palazzo Vecchio (

SWEPT AWAY: Get a lift to your Fijian wedding, or tie the knot on a mountaintop in New Zealand

Italy.com) or at a villa on a Greek island (theweddingexperience.com). If you plan ahead, you can even get the mayor of Santorini to officiate. New Zealand Wedding Services (nzweddingservices.co.nz), which organized the Kemberlings' nuptials, charges between \$2,000 and \$2,500 to arrange local transportation, flowers, photography and legal documentation at jaw-dropping locations like the Tasman Glacier. And for \$4,000 to \$6,000, Duane's company coordinates Fijian wedding



ceremonies (weddings-in-fiji.com), featuring costumed warrior escorts, elaborate bridal boats and choirs.

Certainly, money isn't everything when it comes to planning a wedding. Rick Hernandez, 50, a Washington, D.C., financial-services executive, was more interested in reducing his stress than cutting the

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