

# the new breed of registries

If crystal goblets and sterling flatware aren't your style, and your linen closet simply can't hold another sheet or tablecloth, take a look at the latest crop of alternatives to traditional retail lists. A honeymoon registry, or one that supports a cause, may well prove to be the best gift of all.

Once upon a time, registering for wedding gifts meant just one thing—a trip to the department store for lengthy deliberations over housewares. But today's couples wed later in life, and a majority set up house long before the I dos. With no need for yet another spice rack, couples are turning to alternative gift registries, asking family and friends to donate cash toward such things as a down payment on a home, future education, a charity or—as is increasingly common among destination brides and grooms—the honeymoon.

Honeymoon registries allow wedding guests to pitch in for experiences that help create the trip of a lifetime, from surf lessons and moonlight massages to poolside piña colodas and nights in an overwater bungalow. Given the growing trend toward couples paying for their own honeymoon, these types of registries can

enable the bride and groom to take a fabulous trip they may not otherwise afford.

One of the best-known of these registries, TheBigDay.com, has signed up more than 40,000 couples in 130 countries for their dream trips. And the registry is not limited to honeymooners alone. Its clientele includes those celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, retirement and other milestone events. Recently, the company added a registry to help volunteers find funding for overseas projects.

## EASY DOES IT

Creating a registry is easy—in most cases requiring mere minutes once you've decided on the destination. On TheBigDay.com, couples simply create an account log-in, access the RegistryWizard for assistance in selecting a wish list for their dream vacation, then have family members or the maid of honor discreetly spread the word. Whenever someone buys a gift, the person's name and purchase appears on a tracker, which makes keeping a record for thank-yous easier, since all the gifts and personal messages can be printed out on a single page.

To make your registry successful, Michael Cottam, cofounder of TheBigDay.com, suggests presenting the items as specifically and personally as you can. Instead of asking for \$75 toward your honeymoon, for example, request a Waikiki sunset catamaran sail for two. Though the two may cost the same, the giver will be far more motivated to spring for the activity. Cottam also recommends loading up your registry with small ticket items in the \$10 to \$25 range. "We've found that many guests buy one big item from a registry and add on a little 'fun' item that's not much money but is more exciting and romantic than the main item they're buying," he says.

This can also be achieved by breaking big-ticket items into manageable chunks. Airfare can be broken down by miles (500 miles for \$75, for instance), while the hotel can be broken into





Capture the adventures friends and family bought for you with lots of photos. It makes a nice addition to your thank-you note and shows your appreciation.

individual nights. You also don't have to ask givers to foot the entire bill. A night in a beachside bure in Fiji might cost \$325 per night, but you could price it at \$125. Making loved ones feel they are contributing to something specific makes a huge psychological difference.

**LIVE IT UP**

Most registries distribute the gifts to the bride and groom a few days before the wedding, either as checks, direct deposits or gift cards. Although the presents come in the form of money, etiquette dictates that couples use the money for the experiences that loved ones intended for them. Courtney Ries, marketing manager of TheBigDay.com, reports that the overwhelming majority of their couples follow through with the activities purchased for them.

As you ride horses, dine on the beach or take that scuba lesson, be sure to take pictures. Photographs of you enjoying the activity someone purchased for you make a nice addition to your thank-you note. In this way, you can show your loved ones how much you appreciated the experience.

The registries available on WeddingChannel.com cover both the traditional and honeymoon varieties. Their association with Sandals Resorts allows couples to register at a dozen different Caribbean properties. The Starwood Hotels registry found on the site covers 825 properties located in 95 countries. Devotees of

the Marriott brand can register for honeymoons at more than 2,600 resorts worldwide on the company's own web page.

Or, for couples who feel inclined to dive into adventure after taking the nuptial plunge, ecotour packagers such as Adventure Life offer a registry for trips like kayaking in the Amazon or trekking Peru's Inca Trail.

**PAY IT FORWARD**

The range of gift registries reaches far beyond travel. Educational varieties, for instance, pay down student loans or save up for future education. Wine registries can help stock the wine cellar in your new house. Other types contribute to expenses related to moving into your new home.

Some couples honor their marriage by giving the planet (and its inhabitants) a gift. Trees for Life, an organization that plants fruit trees in developing nations, does just that. Whenever a donation is made, the organization presents the couple with a certificate announcing the contribution made in their honor.

Other couples see the occasion of the marriage as a chance to "pay it forward." Organizations like the I Do Foundation allow couples to create an online registry that benefits causes they care about, from hunger and literacy to conservation and social justice. Even couples who prefer the traditional department store registry can give something back. The I Do Foundation's partner stores will donate between 3 to 8 percent of the total spent on your registry to a charity of your choice—at no expense to the couple or their gift giving friends. Guests simply need to make their purchases through your wedding website at idofoundation.org.

The best thing about alternative bridal registries? Alternatives. Wherever you happen to be in life, whatever your style, the spate of registries out there offers something for everyone. SUSAN CAMPBELL

**VOW TO HELP**

Choose charity over china and register for a gift that keeps on giving.

**The I Do Foundation**

[Idofoundation.org](http://Idofoundation.org)  
(800) 783-8244

**Alternative Gifts International**

[altgifts.org](http://altgifts.org)  
(800) 842-2243

**Global Giving**

[globalgiving.com](http://globalgiving.com)  
(202) 232-5784

**Heifer International**

[heifer.org](http://heifer.org)  
(800) 422-0474

**Trees for Life**

[treesforlife.org](http://treesforlife.org)  
(316) 945-6929

**Our Voices Together**

[ourvoicestogether.org/shop](http://ourvoicestogether.org/shop)  
(202) 223-0080

**World Vision**

[worldvisiongifts.org](http://worldvisiongifts.org)  
(888) 511-6511