

COVER STORY

# Have bump, will travel

Our savvy mum shows you how  
to babymoon with peace of mind



The babymoon has become increasingly popular for many parents-to-be, and it's not hard to see why – it's a well-deserved getaway and a celebration of your new life ahead with your little one. However, many parents are rightly concerned on how they should go about planning for their babymoon, and whether they should even travel at all with a baby bump. Fret not! Our mummy and medical consultant have the answers.

#### It pays to plan well

Mdm Abby Phung, 28, and hubby Andy, 29 – who are enrolled in Thomson Medical's Childbirth Education Course – went on a babymoon in August 2016, when she was four months pregnant.

Her destination of choice? "We went to Hanoi, because it's my hometown, and we wanted to surprise my family with the news!" says Abby. "We also wanted to have some couple time before the baby arrived."

Both Abby and Andy work as management consultants in Singapore, and travel frequently around the region for work. Abby was still travelling for work in her first trimester and went on their babymoon in her second trimester before putting a stop to her travelling plans.

This is largely in line with what the experts recommend (see sidebar). "The best time to travel is in the second trimester," says Dr Ong Xiaohui, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist with Thomson Medical Centre. "Many airlines also do not allow pregnant women to fly during their third trimester, and you will need a memo from your gynae to indicate fitness for air travel."

If couples are planning a babymoon, Dr Ong advises taking short flights to reduce fatigue. Road trips may allow for more rest stops, but may be inconvenient if toilet access is limited. In addition, while it might seem romantic to go on a leisurely cruise, getting to a hospital could be a problem in the event of any emergency, and motion sickness may worsen nausea during early pregnancy.

As a pregnant traveller, Abby always made sure she brought more nutritious foodstuff with her.

"Even when I travelled for work, I packed vitamins, supplements, bottled bird's nest, and fruits and vegetables such as oranges, which make good snacks while you're on the go," she says. "I'm also more careful with the toiletries I use. Instead of using the ones in the hotel, I prefer to bring milder products that do not contain salicylic acid, parabens or sodium laureth sulphate."



## TRAVEL BY TRIMESTER

### 1ST TRIMESTER

- Studies show that 10–25% of pregnancies result in miscarriage, which often occur in the first trimester. However, travelling theoretically does not increase the risk of miscarriage.
- Best to travel after 14 weeks of gestation when pregnancy is deemed more stable.

### 2ND TRIMESTER

- This is generally the best time to travel, as the pregnancy is usually more stable.

### 3RD TRIMESTER

- There is a risk of going into labour early. Most airlines do not allow pregnant women to fly beyond 34 to 36 weeks of gestation. Check with the airline before flying.
- Travel insurance may be an issue.



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#### Stay safe abroad

Abby is a huge fan of Hanoi's street food, but she had to watch what she ate while on her babymoon.

“For me, no raw vegetables, such as lettuce, herbs and bean sprouts, as well as raw meat, raw eggs, ice and alcohol,” she says. “When I'm travelling, I always make sure I have one to two bottles of water in my bag, because you never know if you will have access to clean water.”

It helps to stay comfortable too. Abby sometimes wore compression stockings at night when she slept, and put her feet up whenever she could, to help relieve swelling in her legs. “I also make sure I have two pairs of comfortable shoes, and I leave the high heels at home,” she says.

When abroad, do take it easy and leave your worries at home. Fill your itinerary with leisurely activities, avoid exerting yourself, keep your gynae's memo on you and make sure you plan access to the nearest hospital. Have a great babymoon!



#### TRAVEL TIPS

- Do get a travel medical certificate from your doctor. Some airlines have their own documents that need to be completed - contact the airline if unsure.
- Check if any relevant vaccinations are required and if it is safe during pregnancy.
- Check if your travel insurance covers pregnancy and care for the newborn baby if there is unexpected early birth.
- Compile a list of medical facilities at your holiday destination in the event of an emergency.
- Remember to pack the medications and supplements that you are taking.
- To reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis on long journeys, keep yourself well hydrated, wear loose clothing and comfortable shoes, and exercise your legs as much as possible.