

■ **CONTEST:** Melanie Piche is finalist in Ultimate Job vote

Woman a finalist in honeymoon contest

QMI Agency

ESPANOLA — An Espanola native is just a few votes away from a chance at winning an international contest.

Melanie Piche, originally from Espanola, and her new husband, Brendan Powell, are currently in the running for a place in the Top 10 finalists of a contest being staged by an Irish travel agency called Runaway-BrideandGroom.com.

The prize: a six-month gig traveling to the globe's most exotic and opulent honeymoon destinations, "testing" and writing about the world's most romantic locations. Piche and Powell so far have beat out 30,000 applicants to the contest from around the world.

Now based in Toronto, the couple met in an Irish pub in that city. According to their profile site, www.runawaybrideandgroom.com/ultimatejob/user/profile/800, where you can submit your vote for the top-ranked Canadian couple, their ideal wedding would have taken place on the Emerald Isle. One of several hitches to that plan: the mother of the bride is terrified of flying.

With this contest, the couple has a chance at reliving a storybook honeymoon experience over and over again. According to Piche, the couple has been to almost 60 countries either together or separately. But the locations in the contest, including Thailand, Jordan, Hawaii and Ireland, represent several places neither has been yet.

"We've been bouncing between second and third for a while, but we got about 200 votes in 10 minutes after a story about us appeared on the CTV news," Piche said. "The couple with the most votes after April 17 gets into the Top 10 automatically, so we're



QMI Agency

Espanola's Melanie Piche and husband Brendan Powell are in the running for a dream job: six months traipsing the globe, testing out some of the world's most romantic honeymoon getaways.

really hoping for that Espanola vote!"

As Piche said voting is open until April 17. The vote limiter is based on ISP, or computer location, not e-mail, so if you have more than one computer in the household, perhaps another family member in the house could cast their own vote.

The Top 10 couples are treated to a gala evening in Dublin at the end of this month, where the winner will be crowned. Within days from that evening, the couple is off to the races.

The couple seems well suited to the job. Powell describes himself as a veteran travel tour guide, freelance writer and photographer and blogger. The

couple's travel blog has more than 50,000 followers and they have written a book together called *The Brel Chronicles: Party of Two*.

Both newlyweds are real estate agents in Toronto. It's a job they say is relatively easy to pop out of for half a year, which the contest requires.

"We have the right experience and a really entertaining blog," Powell said. "I think we're the right couple for the job. I feel like I've been training for this my whole life!"

The link to view the couple's entry and vote, again is www.runawaybrideandgroom.com/ultimatejob/user/profile/800.