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destined *for love*

Looking to tie the knot at a fabulous faraway locale? With so many resorts and hotels offering exceptional bridal packages and programs, exchanging vows at your dream destination can easily become reality.

By Isabelle Gullö



Long gone are the days when a destination wedding meant eloping. Now an ever-growing number of brides and grooms say “I do” on stunning far-flung beaches, at romantic wine country resorts and in historic hotel ballrooms surrounded by family and friends. Exchanging vows at an exotic locale not only adds adventure and fun for the bridal couple and their guests, it can actually simplify the process of getting married, reducing stress, costs and potential family drama. Another draw: Your honeymoon begins the moment you arrive at your destination. Turn the page for more reasons to wed away.



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Easy Does It

Imagine spending the days before your big event relaxing poolside, scuba diving or hiking waterfalls rather than frantically dealing with last-minute preparations. No doubt, this is partly what inspires so many bridal pairs to trade the hometown affair for a faraway celebration.

What takes the pressure off? Most of today's resorts and hotels offer a range of wedding packages that allow you to create your own dream day. They also typically have professional coordinators or catering teams onsite to help organize anything from the ceremony essentials and reception decor to guest accommodations and recreational activities. Many planners even orchestrate the specific marriage license requirements of the country you're heading to, leaving brides and grooms more time for each other.

Having someone at the wedding location to handle the bridal essentials can spare you a lot of stress. If your chosen property does not have a full-service on coordinator on staff, ask the catering manager to recommend local wedding planners along with a list of professional vendors in the area. You can also contact the local tourist bureau for information. Once you've found the right person, be sure to discuss your specific wedding style, your goals and desires for the big event as well as your budget.

Ultimately, you decide what's important on

your special day. For example, a destination ceremony and reception can be simple or extravagant; your guest list can be trimmed to include just your immediate family; formal suits may be traded for tropical shirts and sarongs. With a getaway wedding, it's easy to do things your way.

Family Friendly

Another allure of a destination event is that it allows the bride and groom to spend more time with their guests. A fabulous locale can become a family vacation or reunion where you and your loved ones enjoy each other's company snorkeling, horseback riding, shopping and exploring local attractions. If you want time alone with your sweetie, arrive a few days ahead of the wedding party or plan fun, daylong activities to occupy your family and friends while you sneak away to a secluded beach or gourmet restaurant.

Far-flung affairs can also help keep the family squabbles to a minimum. Sure, your nearest and dearest will likely still offer ideas and advice, but in the end, you and your spouse-to-be call all the shots.

Sum it Up

Compared to a traditional to-do, which typically averages around 150 guests, your fantasy destination wedding may actually cost less—

even after you add up the airfare, reception and accommodations. For one, the guest list is usually whittled down to about a third—remember, you decide the budget and level of intimacy for your special occasion and invite accordingly. Also, many resorts and hotels offer all-inclusive packages that cover meals, drinks and activities under one rate. Some places even offer kickbacks on guest accommodations if the couple brings in a certain number of people for their event.

With a “weddingmoon,” couples avoid footing the bill for a grand reception and honeymoon, which may make possible the trip of a lifetime to a dream locale. These days, honeymoon packages are surprisingly affordable and may include such special touches as accommodation upgrades, complimentary champagne, en-suite massage and romantic dinners for two.

A popular alternative is to follow an elopement or small wedding away with a formal celebration back home. With the help of wedding webcams provided by some resorts, family and friends get to enjoy the ceremony live from home.

So, whether you fantasize about a tropical island escape, luxurious mountain retreat or cosmopolitan hideaway, enjoy the planning process and remember, if you can dream it, you can do it.