

Saying 'I Do' Out Of Town: Destination Weddings

Are you thinking of heading out of town for your wedding? If so, you're not alone.

Conde Nast Bridal Group's American Wedding Study (2006) reported that 16 percent of couples are now choosing to have a destination wedding.

While you may think they're for the rich and famous, destination weddings can actually be less expensive than traditional celebrations closer to home.

This may be advantageous to brides and grooms who are feeling the effects of today's economic crunch.

That's because destination weddings generally have smaller guest lists, and many of the "extras" that are tacked on to a traditional wedding are covered in the all-inclusive price of a destination event.

So you can cut down on the cost of the \$20,000 to \$30,000 average-priced wedding, particularly if guests are paying for their own tickets.

Destination weddings are for

individuals who want to put the focus on fun.

They enable you to pump up the enjoyment factor and marry a vacation and a wedding into one handy package.

They also start the honeymoon at the point of arrival at your destination.

One-of-a-kind memories are created with a destination wedding, particularly when exotic locales are the backdrop for your celebration.

Because travel is involved, destination weddings are often facilitated with the help of a travel agent or wedding planner.

This person can help you work out all of the details of the wedding, primarily when you're working with vendors that may be out of state or out of the country.

Keep in mind that if you have your heart set on all of your friends and family being able to attend your wedding, destination weddings may not be the way to go.

That's because even with the best planning, it's relatively impos-

sible for everyone's schedules to coordinate for this kind of event.

While there certainly are negatives to having a wedding away from home, the growing list of positives attracts more and more couples each year:

- * reduced fuss over a wedding that takes place at home, where most of the planning is being handled by the couple

- * budgetary factors, including lower costs for a less elaborate affair

- * informal choices for wedding attire, saving even more money

- * something different for the couples who like to stand out

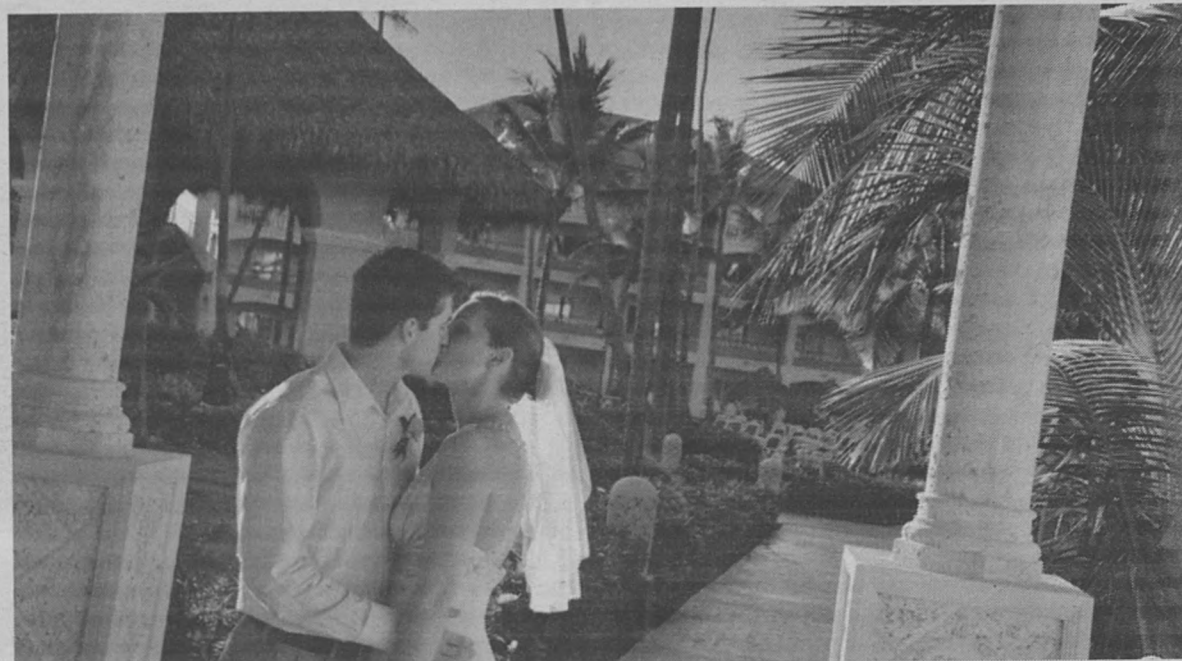
- * alternatives for second weddings or those who prefer less tradition

- * loosening of marriage laws

overseas, which make it easier for couples to tie the knot in foreign locales

- * the opportunity for "destination anniversaries," where couples can revisit their wedding site for even more memories

Couples looking to add excitement to their wedding without much fuss can turn to destination weddings when tying the knot.



Budgeting Tips

When it comes to planning a wedding, finances are first and foremost on the minds of many couples. As the costs associated with weddings continue to rise, the need for a budget only grows more apparent.

But how can a couple establish and stick to a budget? Doing so depends on each individual couple, how much they can spend and what they're willing to sacrifice for their big day.

Establishing a Budget

Wedding budgets can vary greatly depending on the couple and the type of wedding they desire. A wedding budget should be established as far in advance as possible.

When setting the budget, it's best to determine exactly how much you can spend, and then set the budget lower than that. For example, if the most you can afford is \$25,000, set your budget at \$22,000. This will allow you some wiggle room when the inevitable happens and you're forced to go over budget.

Monitor Your Spending

Once a budget has been determined, a good way for couples to adhere to that budget is to establish a separate wedding spending account. This account should be separate from personal accounts, and all wedding expenses should be drawn solely from this wedding account. This is a good way to monitor how much you're spending, and your monthly statement will provide an

itemized list of how much is being deposited and spent.

Be Ready to Spend More

Regardless of how well you've planned the wedding, you're going to end up spending more than your initial budget allowed. This happens for a number of reasons, ranging from overtime fees at the reception to tipping the vendors to larger guest lists than you might have originally intended.

Prepare for the inevitable overspending by cutting back on other expenses leading up to the big day. Rather than going out to dinner on weekends, make a homecooked meal to save some money. Instead of costly trips to a night club, invite friends over for the night. You'll be surprised how much these subtle lifestyle changes can save you.

Stick to Your Guns

While you should be prepared to spend more, that extra spending should be saved for things such as tipping the staff and possibly paying more for an additional guest or two. Where couples should be budget-cautious is when vendors try to up-sell services. For example, while a top-shelf bar might be a nice gesture, it can be considerably more expensive than just offering beer at your reception, and letting your guests pay for liquor.

If a vendor tries to up-sell, couples should not hold that against the vendor. Instead, prioritize what you want before you go visit any vendors.



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