

WHERE TO *marry away*

Don't wait for the honeymoon to mix travel and romance. Here's how to plan a celebration at the most popular wedding destinations around the globe.

BY CELIA SHATZMAN PHOTOGRAPH BY KT MERRY



tuscany medieval towns meet in a Renaissance romance • *florida keys* a blast-from-the-past landing dock for underwater and seaside celebrations • *las vegas* chapel elopements take on a chic appeal in the wedding capital • *jamaica* a cultural journey down the aisle begins here • *napa valley* the heart of American wine country is the perfect romantic getaway • *costa rica* take your pick of exotic adventures at this paradise • *riviera maya* international waters made for beachfront bliss • *oahu* an idyllic retreat for nature lovers >>



tuscany

lina & danielle • september 8

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KT MERRY

WHY GO There's a reason Tuscany tops everyone's travel list. Set in Italy's blissful western coast, the area encompasses charming medieval towns, incomparable wine country and, of course, Florence, where you can find Renaissance masterpieces, fountains and sculptures filling postcard-perfect piazzas as well as some of the best cuisine in the world. **WHERE TO WED** Housed in a former 15th-century monastery with a facade attributed to none other than Michelangelo, Belmond Villa San Michele (Belmond.com) sits in the hills overlooking historic Florence. It's also surrounded by traditional Italian gardens, which provide the ultimate romantic ceremony backdrop with distant city views. Wed in the heart of Tuscany at 800-year-old Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco (RosewoodHotels.com) with more than 5,000 picturesque acres perfect for exchanging vows. The resort, located within the UNESCO world heritage site Val d'Orcia valley, is a historic winery and the fifth-largest producer of Brunello di Montalcino, and it hosts weddings that can be customized for up to 120 guests.

florida keys

WHY GO Whether you're looking for adventure, serene nature or a blast from the past, all three can happen here. Certified divers can exchange vows in an underwater ceremony in Key Largo, animal lovers can tie the knot with dolphins by their side at Marathon's Dolphin Research Center, or American history buffs can say "I do" at the Ernest Hemingway Home & Museum. **WHERE TO WED** Opt for variety at the Pelican Cove in Islamorada (PelicanCoveHotel.com), which boasts four on-property spots available for beachfront ceremonies of all sizes, ranging from smaller parties of up to 30 guests at Pelican Point or bashes for up to 100 on South Beach. For more seclusion, marry at Sunset Key Cottages (SunsetKeyCottages.com), a resort on the 27-acre island of Sunset Key, just a ferry ride away from Key West. Then, take to the water for cocktail hour on a chartered catamaran and end with a reception at the Westin Pier.

las vegas

WHY GO It's no wonder Sin City is known as the Wedding Capital of the World—it issues more than 80,000 marriage licenses annually. And it's truly where any type of wedding can happen, from a secret elopement at a drive-through chapel officiated by Elvis to an elegant soiree at a luxe resort. **WHERE TO WED** Go international while staying domestic and exchange vows on the top of the Eiffel Tower at Paris Las Vegas (Caesars.com). You can host an intimate ceremony for 12 guests on the observation deck—460 feet above the Las Vegas Strip!—complete with an accompanying guitarist. Or, get married like a celebrity at A Little White Wedding Chapel (ALittleWhiteChapel.com), one of the most famous venues in the world. With options from small gatherings to lavish receptions, the Mandarin Oriental resort (MandarinOriental.com) offers floor-to-ceiling views of the desert and city.

jamaica

mike & winnie • december 14

PHOTOGRAPH BY KT MERRY

WHY GO Whether you're looking for romantic outings for two or entertainment for 200, Jamaica has it all. Get a taste for the culture with a tour of a rum distillery, coffee farm or even Bob Marley's hometown, or simply take advantage of the nearly 700 miles of pristine coastline with a range of both relaxing and more daring beach activities. The island's laid-back attitude is the perfect vibe for a stress-free wedding, plus with so many amazing places to choose from, you can pick a region that truly suits your style. Montego Bay is the buzzing tourist hot spot with fun nightlife and white-sand beaches; Ocho Rios is packed with resorts that offer adventures like zip-lining through the rain forest and climbing waterfalls; and Negril and Treasure Beach have a local, authentic vibe, thanks to fewer tourists. **WHERE TO WED** With more than 700 rooms, you won't have to worry about fitting all your guests at Moon Palace Jamaica Grande Resort & Spa (MoonPalaceJamaicaGrand.com) in Ocho Rios. The terrace, multiple gazebos, beach or two indoor ballrooms can all be transformed to fit your guest count. Whether you opt for poolside or beachside, the wedding coordinators at Half Moon, a RockResort (HalfMoon.com), will help with planning or setup. >>



An oceanfront ceremony makes for a great photo op.

napa valley

iris & colin • august 30

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DELBARR MORADI
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WHY GO As one of only eight Great Wine Capitals around the world, it's no wonder Napa Valley attracts so many couples as a wedding destination. **WHERE TO WED** For a downtown wedding venue convenient for your out-of-town guests, consider The Westin Verasa Napa (WestinNapa.com). It's situated by the celebrated Oxbow Public Market and is a short drive away from some of the best wineries. The luxury hotel offers 7,000 square feet of space, both inside and out, for up to 180 guests. For a more lush setting, consider Charles Krug Winery (CharlesKrug.com), the first commercial winery in Napa and one of the few in the area to allow weddings on winery property.



A soft color palette fits a vineyard setting perfectly.



first planning to-dos

1 pick the perfect location
Consider the mood you're looking to set, as well as travel, time of year and budget.

2 plan accordingly
Send save-the-dates 10 to 12 months out, and book hotel room blocks immediately.

3 take a trip
At least one planning trip is recommended to meet with vendors and ask questions in person.

4 factor in the extra expenses
Consider the cost of importing any key vendors or paying for guest activities.

5 research local marriage requirements
Check out and plan around the country's residency laws.



Have a barefoot ceremony at one of Costa Rica's sandy beaches.

PHOTOGRAPH BY RENASCENT PHOTOGRAPHY

costa rica

WHY GO You can have a chic, intimate wedding on the beaches of Manuel Antonio, or invite several guests to a rain forest resort with a jaw-dropping jungle backdrop. **WHERE TO WED** Manuel Antonio National Park in the Central Pacific Coast boasts some of the most stunning beaches in the world. If you're both nature lovers, head to Si Como No Resort, Spa & Wildlife Refuge (SiComoNo.com), which offers a barefoot ceremony for up to 70 guests. If you're more traditional, the JW Marriott Guanacaste Resort & Spa (JWGuanacasteSpa.com), a luxe oceanfront hacienda-style resort on the northwestern coast, has several outdoor venues with room for 600 people, as well as ballrooms that fit 240 and a chapel that holds 60. >>

riviera maya

WHY GO Pristine white-sand shores, gorgeous reef waters and archeological sites have people flocking from all over the world to this stretch of the Caribbean coastline on Mexico's northeastern Yucatan Peninsula. Avoid hurricane season, which runs from June to November, and September, which is sometimes a rainy month because of the season change. Otherwise the weather is beautiful all year long and ideal for an outdoor wedding weekend. The most popular resort towns here, perfect for beachside affairs, include Tulum, Puerto Morelos and Playa del Carmen, all within a quick drive for you and your guests. The area is also home to the Mesoamerican Reef—the second-largest barrier reef in the world—so you and your guests can go snorkeling to spot hundreds of types of coral and species of fish.

WHERE TO WED Your nuptials can be a green dream at Sandos Caracol Eco Resort (Sandos.com) in Playa del Carmen, with a ceremony on the deck of the cenote (a natural water hole) with live drums, dinner at a resort restaurant and a Temazcal spa ritual for the couple. Or, opt for the inclusive Caribbean Fantasy package (\$3,750), which involves a vow exchange in the oceanfront gazebo, private dinner on the beach, wedding cake, DJ and breakfast in bed for the newlyweds. If you're hosting a larger wedding, you can literally rent a village at the just-opened El Pueblito (starting from \$5,000), the newest addition to the Mayakoba resort community made up of the Fairmont, Rosewood and Banyan Tree (Mayakoba.com) hotels. El Pueblito is designed to look and feel like a Mexican town and is inspired by historic plazas and the old colonial cities of Mérida and San Miguel de Allende. Ceremonies are performed in the white chapel or on the plaza, which includes a stage in the center for an orchestra or mariachi band. To keep guests entertained, there are boutiques, restaurants and an art gallery that they can explore.



Rows of palms is all you need for a ceremony backdrop.



oahu

brian & david • august 30

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ASHLEY GOODWIN PHOTOGRAPHY

WHY GO Few places are as revered for their natural beauty as Hawaii, making Oahu an idyllic backdrop for a wedding. And the ways to celebrate are nearly as diverse as its striking landscape. Let a lush canopy of trees serve as your altar in a rain forest ceremony, or hike to one of the many points with a view to say "I do." The most daring of couples can even exchange vows 10,000 feet in the air over Ko'olau and Waianae mountains in a skydiving ceremony. And there's plenty for you and your guests to do before and after the wedding, from outdoor adventures, like horseback riding, parasailing, diving, kayaking and snorkeling, to cultural attractions. **WHERE TO WED** Have the officiant perform one of the traditional wedding rituals, such as an exchange of leis or a lava rock offering, in which a lava rock signifying your lifetime commitment to one another is wrapped in a ti leaf and left at the ceremony site, marking the place of your union. If a taste of Hollywood is more your style, consider Dillingham Ranch (DillinghamRanchHawaii.info), a private Hawaiian-plantation-style estate that has been the film location for *50 First Dates* and *Lost*. Finally, Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort (HiltonHawaiianVillage.com) offers the perfect place for a wedding ceremony in a chapel setting for up to 40 guests.



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