



When Weddings and Honeymoons say "I Do"

By E.T. Robbins

Maybe you always wanted to get married on the beach. Or by Cinderella's Castle. Or say "I do" with Italian vineyards as the backdrop. Maybe you don't want a big wedding with extended family you haven't seen in years, heated debates over bands versus DJs, and the realization that everything from photographers to flowers is so awfully expensive.

According to The On-Line Massachusetts Wedding Guide (www.maweddingguide.com), the average cost of a wedding in the Bay State is between \$20,000 and \$24,000. That's before the honeymoon.

So what are a bride and groom to do?

How about uniting the two? By combining the nuptials and honeymoon to one exotic location, you cut costs on what's typically the most expensive part - the reception. After all, how many of your guests can afford to travel to Jamaica or Italy for your big day?

There are many options (and things to remember) for your destination wedding. Let's take a peek at this exciting and affordable trend in holy matrimony.

WeddingMoon™ Bliss

Susan McCarley from MK Travel, a certified Sandals specialist, says expense and ease are two of the main reasons why more and more couples are opting for Sandals Resorts International's WeddingMoons™ (www.sandals.com).

Sandals' Basic WeddingMoon™ Package is complimentary with a five-night minimum stay (certain restrictions apply). The only costs not included are government and license fees (ranging from \$150 to \$250). What you do get is just about everything else; from a justice of the peace to a champagne and hors d'oeuvres wedding reception for four to a continental breakfast in bed the morning after - even a best man or maid of honor if you need one.

Maybe there's something extra you'd like - make-up services, rehearsal dinner, or more photographs - all of this can be arranged for a modest price. Whether it's Jamaica, Bahamas, Antigua, or St. Lucia, exactly what "type" of wedding you have is up to you. McCarley notes, "It can be romantic with no family or fun if you want your family and friends to attend." And with white sand, sea breezes, and those drinks with the little umbrellas, who cares anyway?

It's a Small World After All

Don't worry - you won't be surrounded by screaming kids waiting to go on Space Mountain. Instead, you're made to feel like Cinderella in Disney's Fairy Tale Weddings and Honeymoons (www.disneyweddings.com).

Walt Disney World® Intimate Weddings combine romance with pure Disney magic. Say "I do" in Disney's Wedding Pavilion. As part of this Premium

Package (starting at \$3800 per couple), you'll enjoy a minimum of four nights at Disney's Moderate Resort plus two Ultimate Park Hopper Tickets (admission to Walt Disney World Theme Parks, Water Parks and Pleasure Island - some restrictions apply) among other amenities.

Want something more tropical? Disney's Deluxe Package has just the spot. From Sea Breeze Point at Disney's BoardWalk to Sunset Pointe at Disney's Polynesian Resort, there are several options to choose from. Package includes five days, four nights at Disney's Moderate Resort, the Ultimate Park Hopper tickets, and additional amenities. Cost? Starting at \$3,000 per couple.

But what if you have more than eight guests (one of the guidelines for an Intimate Wedding)? Korri McFann, Brand Marketing Manager for Disney's Fairy Tale Weddings & Honeymoons, says, "You may want to consider a Custom Wedding. We offer discounted room rates and special theme park tickets - we make it easy for wedding guests to attend. Most importantly we take care of all the planning. It's truly a one-stop shopping experience and the sky's the limit."

Not to mention you'll have a Disney Wedding Certificate signed by Mickey and Minnie.

That's amore!

Jim and Vicki DiBernardo were married in 1999 by an Italian magistrate in the Palazzo Cavalli, a palace overlooking the Grand Canal in Venice. The theme from *The Godfather* played while Jim and Vicki's two guests, the wedding coordinator and a harpist, looked on. The locals waved and applauded. Then the newlyweds enjoyed a three-week vacation in Italy. Price tag when all was said and done? About \$12,000.

Theresa M. Jackson, vice president of Euroevents and Travel LLC (www.destination-weddings-in-Italy.com) - the same company that set up the DiBernardo's destination wedding along with Roseanne's Tours - says, "A destination wedding in Italy allows a couple to marry and honeymoon in one of the most romantic and esthetically

beautiful countries in the world. Italy offers mountains, ocean (Riviera), rolling countryside, ancient cities, or medieval hill town settings. There is something for every taste and budget."

Planning your dream Italian wedding and honeymoon is just a mouse click away. Jim DiBernardo says all his wedding plans were done via the Internet. "We never met or spoke on the phone. But every minute detail - from legal paperwork to getting the wedding dress shipped to our hotel to the flowers to the music - went perfectly."



Disney's Fairy Tale Weddings & Honeymoons
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Ten things to remember when planning your destination wedding:

1. Only work with a travel agent that is experienced with destination weddings.
2. Don't think "cheap trip" equals economical wedded bliss - while you may be able to get a complimentary wedding package, the cost of the actual honeymoon will be pretty standard - be suspicious if it's not.
3. Make sure your passport is valid.
4. If you want to be in charge of all the planning, this is not for you.
5. Beware of licensing fees and regulations for the state or country you're getting married in.
6. Ask your travel agent or wedding coordinator for references from other couples.
7. Don't expect all of your family and friends to be able to attend your destination wedding.
8. Expect some friends and family to be hurt by your decision. Compromise. Consider having a small celebration upon your return (like a BBQ) where you share your videos and photographs.
9. Airfare is not included. Don't forget to factor in this cost.
10. Expect some glitches - what wedding plans don't have any? But overall, the planning should be fun - enjoy the process. ■