

Summer Weddings



Top Destination Weddings

Getting out of dodge to say I do is back in a big way after the COVID-19 pandemic all but shut down the destination wedding industry. Here are some top places for your nuptials in 2023.

PLAYA MUJERES, MEXICO

Playa Mujeres is a resort community just north of Cancun and light years away from its spring-break style party. It's an easy ride from the Cancun airport, though, and there's plenty of resort accommodations. For excursions for the couple or for visiting family and friends, there are archaeology tours to nearby Chichen Itza and Tulum, as well as plenty of cenotes, beaches and wildlife tours to explore.



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MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA

Jamaica's third-most populous city boasts sandy beaches, glittering caves, stunning waterfalls, restaurants, golf, nightlife and more. The center of action is Gloucester Avenue, where you can visit Usain Bolt's sports bar. The city is also close to major attractions Ocho Rios, Negril and St. Elizabeth. There are plenty of historic houses, chalets, hotels and resorts to host your I-dos.

GUANACASLE, COSTA RICA

This tropical paradise shows off a pristine shoreline with mountains and volcanoes to boot. Playa Hermosa is a good choice for travelers who want to get away from it all and explore the natural world. It's near Rincon de la Vieja National Park, Palo Verde National Park and Santa Rosa National Park. Liberia is the capitol of the province and maintains a native Tico atmo-

sphere while still accommodating travelers. The White City would be a great choice for a white wedding.

PARADISE ISLAND, BAHAMAS

Just offshore of New Providence in the Bahamas, Paradise Island is home to popular Cabbage and Paradise beaches. It's also where the sprawling Atlantis resort is located. It's connected to New Providence by a

pair of bridges crossing Nassau harbor, so you and your guests can enjoy all the islands have to offer.

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

If you're looking to stay stateside, this city dripping with Southern charm and tropical hues makes for a stunning wedding backdrop. You can still get your beachfront and your history, too, and the vendors have plenty

of experience with destination brides, raising the chances your wedding will go off without a hitch.

PARIS, FRANCE

Go intercontinental to the most romantic city in the world. Paris is fully of luxury and boutique hotels that can cater to your every wish and whim. Start with your ceremony in the City of Lights and then move on to the Alps or Riviera for the honeymoon.

Beach Weddings Checklist

Sometimes, putting your toes in the sand is all that you need. And a minister, and some flowers, and some paperwork, and seating, and a band, and lights

Don't get too stressed. We've got a checklist that's got you covered for a perfect beachy wedding.

- **Pick your beach:** Consider if it's open for weddings, if you need a permit, if there's parking and if it's accessible for everyone.

- **Find vendors:** You'll need a florist, a baker and more. Work with local companies who know the area and its limitations. They can advise you on vendors you might need that you haven't even thought of.

- **Choose beach-friendly décor:** This means windproof, wave proof and sand proof. Before you set your heart on anything, consider if it can hold up to ocean breezes (which can be more like cyclones), sudden showers and ocean spray. Don't go overboard. Remember you chose the beach for a reason – the gorgeous vistas. Too much décor will just be clutter.

- **Arrange for shade:** The beach is a hot, sunny location and if there's no shade nearby, you'll have to bring some to keep both you and your guests comfortable. Talk to local



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event planners to find the best solutions for your ceremony.

- **Settle on an appropriate menu:** Keep your beachside reception fare light. Not only will it keep your guests from wilting, it will also stand up better to the sun, wind and heat. Also consider this when it comes to your cake. Choose a style that will hold up to the elements.

- **Pick proper attire:** Choose a lighter dress that will keep

you cool and comfortable. Longer gowns may look great, but they're going to be heavy with sand before you know it. Either go shorter or ensure that you can bustle your dress. You also want to forego the heels. The fashionable soles are sexy, but impossible to wear in sand. The groom should choose lightweight cotton suits or even Bermuda shorts. You might consider a flip-flop station for guests that

didn't think ahead.

- **Arrange for sturdy seating:** Your guests should be comfortable, and that means chairs that can handle shifting sands and are sturdy enough to stand up to beach winds. If you're keeping your ceremony short and sweet, consider just providing seating for the elderly and children and having your other guests stand.

- **Choose a palette that compliments the beach's sand and**

water hues. Go bold and tropical with green and hot orange, coral or magenta tones.

- **Things to have on hand:** Cold beverages, and plenty of them, to help guests beat the heat. Sunscreen. Bug repellent. Sunglasses. Towels.

- **Have a backup plan.** The beach is amazing, but it can turn wild in a second with weather. Or seaweed. Or a fishkill. Have a plan B that you love just as much.

Invitation Trends

While wedding invitations may seem straightforward, there can be even more options when it comes to sending your invitations as there are blooms for your bouquet.

Wedding invitations set the tone for your ceremony, and the colors, fonts and feel of your guest's first inkling of your intentions is important.

THE ONE WITH THE WEDDING

Serious stationery will never go out of style, but nowadays more brides are starting to have fun with their invitations. The Knot says that the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought on more intimate ceremonies, also saw an uptick in more playful wording, and that the trend has stuck around. "Couples want to tell their unique love story and aren't afraid to break traditions by infusing humor and/or pop culture into their invitations and décor," says Leah Conroy, associate director of merchandising at The Knot Invitations.

CELEBRATING CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

Opt for invitations that honor your family's heritage or that of your soon-to-be spouse's. Couples are opting for bilingual invitations, The



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Knot says, or using colors, motifs and icons in a nod to their heritage.

PETS FRONT AND CENTER

First comes love, then comes the dog. More and more wedding invitations and accessory stationery, such as save-the-date cards and thank you notes, are including references to the happy couple's

four-legged or feathered or finned friends.

ART NOUVEAU

Turn-of-the-20th century Art Nouveau motifs are en vogue on invitations, The Knot says. Characterized by flourishes, intricate detailing and often opulent botanical themes, it's a big left turn from the more recent years of minimalist aesthetic.

'70S STYLE

Also back are the funky, groovy designs of the 1970s and its avocado-forward color palette. This is another rebellion against sleek design that has fans of the bold celebrating.

BITS, BYTES AND I-DOS

More and more, stationery is going digital in some way. If

not the whole invitation, couples may opt for a printed invitation with a QR code or website for people to RSVP. That saves the couple money because there are no self-addressed stamped envelopes to include and saves the guests time. Many invitation printers offer digital options to go along with their printed versions to keep the look cohesive.

The Ins and Outs of Registries

A decade ago, no one would get married without a registry. Or six. Nowadays, though, with more couples living together or in their own households before getting married, there's more likely a problem with having too much stuff than not enough.

Today's newlyweds are more likely living in a smaller space than couples of yore, and they also just don't need many of the common registry items, such as sprawling sets of fine china or silver. Eco-friendly couples may also opt to go sans registry to keep more items out of landfills. Whatever the reasons, registries aren't required anymore.

NO REGISTRY AT ALL

For the couple forgoing gifts of any kind, enlist the help of the parents and bridal party to spread the word that no gifts are required. Make sure to include that wording on all of your wedding stationery and communications, and plan for when people show up with gifts anyway. That means you still have to order some thank-you cards.



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CHARITY DONATIONS

An alternative is to ask your guests to donate to a charity. You can ask your guests to choose a charity they support, or you can pick a handful that are dear to your hearts. Don't settle for a single charity; there may be something about that charity that's off-putting to at

least one of your guests. Let them choose where their donation goes.

HONEYMOON FUND

Another option is to have guests put money into a honeymoon fund. There are several websites out there that will set this up for you. You can also

pay for the honeymoon yourselves, but ask guests to buy you experiences while on your trip, such as a wildlife excursion or a dinner at a restaurant.

CASH FUND

Some newlyweds would just prefer cold, hard cash. It can be for a new home or maybe

they plan to start a family right away. The couple should give some explanation so that guests can feel warm fuzzies when they contribute, but there's nothing wrong nowadays with just asking for money. Just like with honeymoon registries, there are websites that can walk you through setting up a cash registry.

Out of Town Guests

Long gone are the days when everyone on the wedding guest list lived just down the road. Today's couples are planning for most, if not all, of the wedding guests to come from out of town. Because out-of-town guests are going through a lot of expense and effort to attend, couples often feel like they need to help them out.

MAKE A GIFT BASKET

Some couples will give out-of-town guests a wedding itinerary and package it in a clever gift basket that highlights the perks of your town. You can do this in print and on a website so that guests can access the information on the go. Give them ideas of how to fill their free time with things to do for a range of budgets and ages. If you've also arranged for a hotel block for your guests, you can ask the hotel to leave the baskets in their rooms.

OFFER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND TRAVEL

It's not your responsibility to secure a hotel block or book any travel for your guests, but you can offer suggestions. Put



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together a list of hotels or other accommodations near your wedding venue, along with your favorite restaurants, cafes and coffee shops. Share what you know about your town's airport to make travel easier – for instance, if it has epic security lines or if parking is a challenge – or include

nearby airports that guests can fly in to. Try to choose options to fit every budget.

TRANSPORTATION

If guests would be better off renting a car, let them know up front. Help relatives and guests organize carpools amongst themselves and plan for a way

to get nondrivers to and from the airport and other event venues. If you're already working with a hotel, they may be willing to provide a shuttle or bus for your party.

KEEP THEM ENTERTAINED

While you don't need to plan

every second of the trip, you should offer things to keep your guests in the party mood. Think about having a welcome party prior to the more intimate rehearsal dinner, or a cocktail hour or even a pizza party to show your guests how much you appreciate their efforts.

Choosing a DJ

Receptions are when it's time to bust a move, and a really great DJ can make sure everyone at the party is having a good time.

The DJ can also take the stress off the bride and groom by not only planning the party's playlist, but a really experienced DJ can spot when something's about to go south and cover it up by spinning a new song.

FINDING DJ OPTIONS

Start by asking friends and family about wedding DJs they've seen and heard. If you come up empty, turn to your other vendors. They've often all worked with each other before and can give you great recommendations. Once you've narrowed it down to a top three, schedule a call or in-person meeting to talk.

Some questions to consider:

- **Availability:** Make sure they're available for your date and in your budget.
- How long have you been a DJ? Get an idea of their experience and make sure they can work professionally.
- How many weddings have you worked? Weddings are different than, say, nightclubs. Make sure you and this DJ are on the same page.
- How do you get a shy crowd moving?
- Do you have references?



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MUSIC CHOICES

DJs should give you a feel for the types of music they play – and they should ask plenty of questions about the types of music you and your families prefer. Ask how often they update their music catalog and if you can make requests. You also want to find

out if the DJ will also act as emcee or if you need to assign that role to someone else. If you end up choosing someone else to emcee, announcing the father-daughter dance and toasts and such, then you need to have them meet with the DJ beforehand to work out timing.

LOGISTICS AND EQUIPMENT

Find out how much equipment the DJ requires and how they'll get it to your venue and set up. Ask if you'll need to provide any separate equipment and how they handle equipment malfunctions (they do happen).

Find out if they've worked in your reception space before and, if they plan to use lighting or special effects, make sure those are cleared with the venue beforehand. Also find out what they plan to wear and make sure it fits in with your idea of your reception.

Making It Legal

Paperwork isn't romantic, but there is a fair amount of it involved in getting married. Most of it takes place before the big day, which is good news, but much of it is time limited. Here's what you need to get hitched.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

Before the big day, you need to apply for a marriage license. This usually takes place at your county's clerk of court's office. To get a marriage license, you usually need your Social Security numbers or any other available identification numbers, such as your driver's license. You may also need a certified copy of your birth certificate, sometimes called the raised-seal copy. If you've been married before, you'll also need your date of divorce, death or annulment. In some states, you may have to take a premarital preparation course or wait a certain amount of time before getting married. Once issued, most marriage licenses are only good for a certain period of time before they can be recorded. Your officiant will usually take care of that after the ceremony.

OFFICIALLY CHANGING YOUR NAME

If either party in the mar-



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riage is changing their name, you will need to get a certified copy of your marriage license. The county you got married in can provide you with a certified copy that will be accepted by government entities and financial institutions as proof of your marriage.

You should also update your Social Security card. You can do this by mail or at your nearest Social Security office. You'll need to bring your proof of name change (your certified marriage certifi-

cate), proof of citizenship, valid photo identification and your current Social Security card.

Once that's done, you'll also need to get a new ID. For most people, this is a driver's license, but you may also need a new state-issued ID or military ID. You should wait at least 24 hours after changing your name with Social Security to attempt to change your name on your other IDs. That will give everyone's system time to update.

To update your ID, go to the

DMV or other ID office and bring your new Social Security card or your receipt from the Social Security office, proof of address, a certified copy of your marriage certificate, and options for payment that include cash, card and check.

You should then update your passport. If your honeymoon is international, wait until after you're home to update your name; the names have to match on the passport and the boarding pass.

Mail a completed DS-5504

or DS-82 form from the U.S. Department of State, a certified copy of your marriage certificate and your current passport to the National Passport Processing Center. You may also incur fees; check with the U.S. Department of State.

Finally, once you have your new passport, update your Global Entry and TSA PreCheck, if you have them. For Global Entry, you will need to visit a local office, but PreCheck users can call (855) 347-8371.