

## DESTINATION WEDDINGS: ESCAPE TO EXOTIC LANDS

Celebrate your love, relax with friends and family and save money. All-inclusive deals often prove cheaper than the average \$40,000 urban American wedding and honeymoon. And even if you decide to splurge with Cerulean Villa's elite \$90k bundle, for example the convenience and camaraderie are worth the expense. As one Seattle bride commented: "The beauty is that everyone is on vacation together!"

Each year, 57% of couples plump for plane tickets and wedding packages. "It's a trend that has been growing for the past 15 years or so, and probably will get bigger," said Jerry Monaghan, president of the Association of Bridal Consultants. And according to the Travel Industry Association of America, Honeymooners outspend the average traveler by more than three times. On average, they spent \$1,402, while the average trip expenditure in 1994 for all travelers was considerably less at \$421.

Here are nine destination ideas, perfect for brides and grooms who want to celebrate, not coordinate:

### PRIVATE PARADISE, COMPLETE WITH MANOLOS

Cerulean Villa: Anguilla

Let the professionals fret over the caviar and Cristal champagne orders. They'll smoothly attend to every detail, right down to the Manolo Blahnik shoes, Vera Wang dress and Louis Vuitton Epi Luggage. This \$90,000 bundle marries exclusive products and exquisite pampering. Meanwhile, the wedding party relaxes at a private, seven-bedroom estate, the Cerulean Villa, designed by world-renowned architect Deborah Berke. The grounds include a tennis court, gym, freshwater pool, waterfall and tropical gardens. Chefs, butlers, maids, a concierge and other staff provide five-star-resort comfort in a secluded setting. [www.cerulean-villa.com](http://www.cerulean-villa.com)

### FREE WEDDINGS -- FROM CHAMPAGNE BRUNCHES TO CLIFF CLIMBS

Elite Island Resorts: Antigua, St. Lucia, Tortola, St. Kitts and The Grenadines

Exchange vows on a white sand beach. The only tough part is choosing among these resorts. Will you relax at the exclusive Galley Bay or the more informal Grand Pineapple Beach? Sail into the sunset at St. James's Club, St. Lucia? Take advantage of the low introductory rates at the Sugar Bay Club, St. Kitts (from \$130 per person, per night) or Mango Bay Resort and Spa, Antigua (from \$107)? Discover why Palm Island is ranked among the world's best resorts by affluent travelers? Or take advantage of the free wedding offer?

Wedding packages start at \$630, including a planner, license and registration, decorations, cake, officiant, flowers and more. Add-ons include sunset cruises, rock-climbing, horseback riding and intimate dinners on the beach. The resorts also feature three fabulous honeymoon choices: Romance & Private (think champagne and candlelight), Pampered & Indulged (massages and manicures) and Action & Adventure (island tours and outdoor sports). [www.eliteislandresorts.com](http://www.eliteislandresorts.com)

### LOVE IS A NATURAL THING

Sunset at the Palms: Negril, Jamaica

Whimsical stilt houses are scattered throughout the ten-acre tropical garden, bordering the Negril Royal Palm Preserve. Guests enjoy homegrown fruit, birdwatching and daily nature walks at this eco-friendly, all-inclusive resort. Just 85 "treehouse-style" rooms are tucked among the palms and flowers, steps away from the azure Caribbean Sea. The wedding package even includes a celebratory breakfast in bed the morning after! [www.sunsetatthepalms.com](http://www.sunsetatthepalms.com)

## BARGAIN FOR LOVEBIRDS ON A BUDGET

Sunset Beach at Montego Bay, Jamaica

Add spa pampering, a keepsake video, folk band or limousine service to this fabulous wedding deal, which already spoils couples with sparkling wine, a one-tiered cake, music, flowers and a private dinner.

Sunset Beach offers three nights from \$345 per person: making it Jamaica's best value all-inclusive resort. The sleek modern complex provides the serenity of a private peninsula just minutes from the action of downtown Montego Bay. After all the excitement, unwind with tennis, beach volleyball, windsurfing or just lounging on the pristine beaches. Or try the group's newest acquisition, the legendary Sunset Jamaica Grande in Ocho Rios, complete with a casino and disco.

[www.sunsetbeachresortjamaica.com](http://www.sunsetbeachresortjamaica.com)

## HIS AND HER HOT TUBS

Villa Premiere Hotel and Spa, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

Splurge on a suite, boasting not one, but two, Jacuzzis (the turquoise-tiled balcony tub overlooks the beach or bask in the bathroom by candlelight). This serene five-star boutique hotel just north of the statue-studded malecón and cobbled centro has white walls, terracotta roof tiles and several pools, fringing Banderas Bay. Every detail here is exquisite, right down to the soothing music and aromatherapy scents wafting in the halls.

The Villa Premiere serves a "good morning, my love" breakfast as part of its \$679 wedding deal (not to mention fresh flowers, a personal planner, chairs for guests at the ceremony and more). The \$361 honeymoon package also includes a candlelit dinner and room upgrade, where available. Add on luxurious spa treatments like a Cleopatra bath for the bride and paraffin treatment for the groom.

[www.premiereonline.com.mx](http://www.premiereonline.com.mx)

## TUXEDO SERVICE WITH SAND IN YOUR SHOES

Daiquiri Dick's, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

Puerto Vallarta's grand dame restaurant also offers wedding catering and coordination from fine food to fireworks and freesias in the bouquet. Let Daiquiri Dick's legendary style tuxedo service with sand in your shoes infuse your big day with casual elegance. The cuisine is without borders, a rollicking joyride of international flavours not normally found in a Mexican resort. The proprietors, Peter and Tari Bowman, also own several artisan galleries and are happy to advise on mementos and wedding gifts with local flair. [www.ddpv.com](http://www.ddpv.com)

## ' SECRET' SOPHISTICATION

Secrets Resorts & Spas: Dominican Republic and Mexico

Indulge in serene seclusion in Riviera Maya, Mexico or Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. The "Secrets in Paradise" complimentary wedding package goes the extra mile with a personal dressing assistant, plus tuxedo and bridal-dress ironing, and a free chamber for the groom the night before (based on availability).

A \$1,500 upgrade includes a champagne toast for the wedding party, a personalized cake and 24-image keepsake album. The elite "Capri" option, priced at \$1,750, features a bridal beauty spa package and garden massage for the lucky couple. Please note: The booming AMResorts group also caters to families at the luxurious Dream retreats and lively Sunscape resorts.

[www.secretsresorts.com](http://www.secretsresorts.com)

## BRING A CROWD AND GET A FREE WEDDING AT "THE MAHO," ST. MAARTEN

Sonesta Maho Beach Resort & Casino: St. Maarten

Book ten rooms (or more) and receive a complimentary ceremony on this chic Dutch-Caribbean island. Sonesta Maho Beach Resort & Casino provides an on-site coordinator, marriage license, cake, champagne, corsage and boutonniere, plus a one-category upgrade for the lucky couple. The redesigned resort features a romantic promenade, refreshing pools, forty-odd boutiques, a casino and elegant rooms: some with balconies overhanging the sea, others in the suave Sky Tower.

[www.mahobeach.com](http://www.mahobeach.com)

## IMPROVISE WITH APPLE VACATIONS

Want more control over your destination wedding? Book a basic package from Apple Vacations, then arrange the ceremony and reception yourself. This leading tour operator specialises in Hawaii, the Caribbean Mexico, Costa Rica, the Bahamas and Bermuda, as well as ski destinations in Canada and the United States. Apple' s large size gives it mighty buying power translating into high-quality holidays at great prices. [www.applevacations.com](http://www.applevacations.com)

## MYRTLE FOR LUCK

El Arrayán, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

A sprig of myrtle in a bridal bouquet brings good fortune, according to some traditions. So a wedding reception at El Arrayán, named after the tree, is an auspicious way to celebrate. Savour pre-Hispanic cuisine and dance to the music of the high Sierras in the central patio.

Owner Carmen Porras reveres indigenous ingredients, such as plantains, cactus paddles and myrtle. The unfussy, eloquent dishes match the bohemian spirit of the setting, as comfortable as soft, sun-bleached linen. El Arrayán' s natural elegance and warm welcome extends to children. Young guests receive unbreakable glasses and plates, coloring materials and an easy-to-eat, less spicy menu.

[www.elarrayan.com.mx](http://www.elarrayan.com.mx)

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