

Wedding

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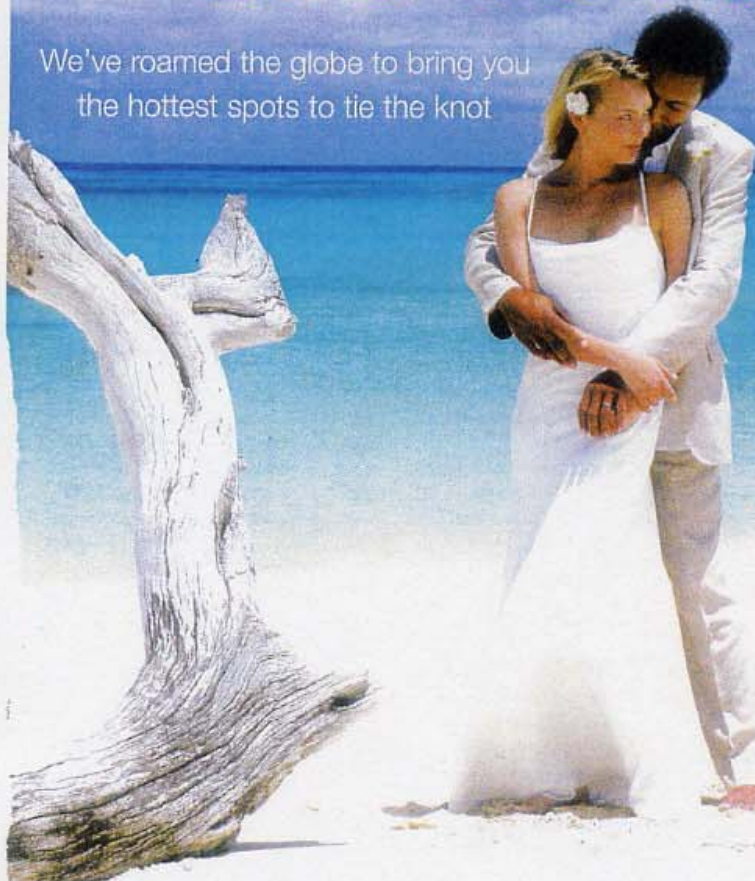
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WHERE TO START PLANNING YOUR WEDDING

5 Wedding HOTSPOTS

We've roamed the globe to bring you the hottest spots to tie the knot



ANTIGUA SANDALS GRANDE RESORT & SPA

Couples in search of a luxurious wedding can create a once-in-a-lifetime experience with top names in the wedding industry at Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa (sandals.co.uk). Preston Bailey, the internationally celebrated event designer has created bespoke events for celebrity clients including Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones, Donna Karan and Oprah Winfrey. Guests can choose from one of his four unique packages, each of which includes island inspired wedding settings and decor. Furthermore, Sandals also has its own personalised wedding accessories by Beverly Clark, wedding cakes by Sylvia Weinstock, and an exclusive line of gowns by Dessy Creations. **Get married:** Kuoni Travel (01308 747008, kuoni.co.uk) offers seven nights at the Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa from £1407 per person (for May 2008) in a Garden of Eden deluxe room on all-inclusive basis, including flights with Virgin from Gatwick with transfers to the resort. Preston Bailey Water Lily Collection wedding package is an additional £1330 per couple.

THAILAND THE SAROJIN

On a secluded white sand beach in Khao Lak, Thailand, The Sarojin is a stunning setting for weddings with a hint of luxurious adventure.

Designed in a contemporary Asian style, an age-old Ficus tree stands at the heart of the resort, along with a soul-soothing reflective lotus pond. The 56 guest residences nestle within the grounds with private access to an expansive white sand beach and the crystalline waters of the Andaman Sea. A dedicated team look after all the wedding arrangements including music, flowers, entertainment, hair and make-up, photography and any other

requirements – from fireworks to elephants. Spa treatments are arranged for the bridal party in the sensational spa, floating over an estuary and hidden from view by mangroves. For further relaxation, you can board the Lady Sarojin luxury boat.

Get married: ITC Classics (01244 355 527, itcclassics.co.uk) offer seven nights at The Sarojin in a Garden Residence on a room only basis and including flights with British Airways and transfers from £1610 per person – and honeymooners receive an In Residence Thai dinner including a bottle of sparkling wine.



MEXICO LAS VENTANAS

For an ultra-extravagant wedding, Las Ventanas al Paraiso (rosewoodhotels.com) offers the ultimate nuptial experience. Set on the coast, right on the tip of Mexico's Baja Peninsula, this five-star resort has Mediterranean-Mexican style architecture and just over seventy suites, all featuring butler service, spacious living areas and wood-burning fireplaces. Weddings are usually held on The Terrace, a magnificent rooftop setting, perched above the beach with sensational panoramas along the coastline and out to sea. Ceremonies are held at sunset, when the sky is emblazoned with brilliant colours, providing a magnificent backdrop. Alternatively, you can exchange vows on the beach with your feet in the sand. For the reception, a

private banquet room opens on a beautiful inlaid-pebble terrace, of you can celebrate at La Cava, an enchanting private wine room, filled with bottles of the world's finest vintages. A traditional Mexican beach barbecue, right on the sand, is also a popular option. **Get married:** ITC Classics (01244 355 527; itcclassics.co.uk) offer seven nights at Las Ventanas Al Paraiso, A Rosewood Resort in a Garden View Junior Suite on a room only basis and including flights and transfers from £2096 per person. Weddings are individually tailored, but for parties of 8 to 12 guests, a minimum of 10 rooms needs to be booked.



ITALY CASTELLO DEL NERO

Perfect for lovers of Tuscany with a desire for luxury, Castello del Nero (castellodelnero.com) is beautifully positioned in the heart of the Chianti wine region, within striking distance of both Florence and Siena. A fully restored twelfth-century castle, Castello del Nero has been transformed into a state-of-the-art hotel with fifty stunning rooms, including the Galway Suite, named after the world-famous flautist who stayed here on the opening night. The suite features frescoed ceilings, original beams, marble sinks and a spectacular private roof terrace with 180-degree views over the hotel's 400 hectare-estate. The terrace can be used for small wedding receptions (comfortably seating up to 30 guests for dinner) and for a romantic breakfast the following morning. For the wedding itself, the private chapel,

San Michele is consecrated for ceremonies. With original vaulted ceilings and frescoed walls, the chapel oozes historic charm and is perfect for an intimate wedding. As the finishing touch to your big day celebrations, why not enjoy a morning flight in a hot-air balloon – a totally romantic and unforgettable way to see the Tuscan landscape?

Get married: Kuoni Travel (01306 747001; kuoniworldclass.co.uk) offers five nights at Castello Del Nero from £1324 per person (for July 2008) in an executive double room on bed and breakfast basis, including flights with British Airways from Gatwick with private transfers. Weddings are tailored to individual requirements with a reception gala menu, based on 100 guests, starting from £60 per person.

AUSTRALIA HAMILTON ISLAND

One of Queensland's top destinations, Hamilton Island (hamiltonislandweddings.com) is a heavenly wedding hotspot whether couples are looking for a casual barefoot ceremony on a deserted beach, a pontoon wedding on the Great Barrier Reef or a traditional chapel. For something quite different, why not don your wetsuits and opt for an underwater wedding at the Reefworld pontoon where guests can look on from the underwater observatory and hear the vows through a PA set up. With an impressive selection of restaurants and outdoor venues, weddings of any size and budget can be catered for, ranging from beach-based extravaganzas for 300 guests to intimate weddings at Hamilton Island's signature restaurant, The Beach House. Wedding

consultants are on hand to assist with the local paperwork as well as all the wedding details from transportation (Rolls Royces to decorated golf buggies!) to photography, flowers, entertainment, make-up and more. **Get married:** Austravel (0844 4124620; austravel.com) can organize weddings on Hamilton Island from £2140 per person, including Qantas economy flight from the UK via Sydney, overnight accommodation at the Four Points Sheraton in Sydney, seven nights at the Reef View Hotel on Hamilton Island, services of wedding co-ordinator, marriage fees, chapel or outdoor venue, photography, luxury car transfer, bridal bouquet and a bottle of Australian sparkling wine with two embossed glasses.

