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## THE WEDLEY GUIDE TO DESTINATION WEDDINGS

*Co-authored with Lelian Chew, Principal of The Wedding Atelier*



Photo Credit: Axioo, Bali | Venue: Conrad, Bali

Destination weddings seem to be the choice du jour among couples these days – it’s a chance to get away with the ones you love, get hitched, and maybe even throw what they call a weddingmoon in there. Planning one however can be less than fun, so we thought to give you all a little insight into the ten things you’ll need to think about when planning a destination “I Do.”

We also figured we should tap on our network of exceedingly talented vendors to put together this guide – turns out that the best person to ask is Lelian Chew, Principal of The Wedding Atelier, a Hong Kong-based but Asia-wide boutique bridal agency best known for their beautiful work in many of the region’s most desired destinations.

Below you’ll find Part 1 of the list of things she asks brides and grooms to think about when she works with them to create their big day.

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## *1. CONSIDER YOUR DESTINATION*

While this sounds fairly obvious, there's quite a number of things that fall into this catch-all category, here's a few to think about

- Who among your friends and family will be in attendance?
- Do your guests need a visa to visit the destination?
- Are there direct flights from most of their home countries?
- Do they require special arrangements for transport and lodging? (here we're thinking of the grandparents, but the same may apply for parents with young children)
- Have your guests attended various other weddings in that destination?

In short, you want it to be an easy place for guests to get to, yet still be a place that has a draw.

## *2. THE GUEST LIST AND VENUE*

Unlike a wedding back home, you can't assume all your invited guests will be able to spend the money and vacation days to attend, so have a sense of rough numbers before you choose a venue. Also give people an indication on whether the invites extend to their children – many couples choose to make destination weddings adult-only affairs, this has an impact on your choice of venues (no children often equates to more options).

While considering different venues, please remember that the place you pick to tie the knot will impact later decisions such as bridal attire, décor and theme. So if you have a dream wedding look, you might want to start there, and then find a location that fits.

Some things I ask my clients to think about as we scope for locations together include

- Beach-front weddings will mean the bride cannot wear heels, and it's advisable to have an updo as the weather will make hair look limp and flat
- For cliff-side weddings, I normally advise my clients against wearing long veils as the winds tend to be quite strong, and you wouldn't want to spend the ceremony trying to tame a veil gone wild
- I love lawn weddings, but it usually means the bride cannot wear a dress with a long train because it will be brown by the end of the day.

Destination weddings are delightful for the breathtaking views, but it's important to envision your dream wedding look before you select a venue so that everything can tie in together nicely.

## *3. GO EASY ON THE BANK ACCOUNTS*

Destination weddings are a lot more expensive for guests than something back home, so try and go easy on their bank accounts. Guests are already taking time off and spending money to be there, so make the rest of it as wallet-friendly and hassle-free as possible. Everything should be mapped out, from the time they touch down to when they leave, provide suggestions for places to eat, where to shop, and things to see.

Some of the things you can do to help

- Have a travel agent or wedding planner secure preferred rates for travel fare, accommodation and airport transfer costs.
  - Provide suggested itineraries to include budget-conscious places to eat, shop and sightsee.
  - And it would also be a really nice gesture if you insist that guests do not buy you gifts.
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#### *4. DO YOUR HOMEWORK!*

My must do for any couple wanting to hold a destination wedding is for them to visit the destination at least once, after they decide on their destination. Even if you have visited it before, visit it again this time with the purpose of seeing things through the eyes of your intended guests. You'll notice things like 'how long will it take for my guests to clear immigration?' or 'how accommodating are locals when it comes to large wedding parties?'

Getting married in a far off foreign land is extremely romantic, but it will require lots of research before hand. Please also look out for the following

- How to fulfil the marriage requirements of the country in which you wed (and how long the process takes)
- Whether or not civil ceremonies can be conducted on the weekend
- If local permits are required to get married in public spaces (e.g., beach/park/mountain top)

Having a contact point experienced in weddings in your location of choice really helps. It can be a wedding planner, coordinator, or someone from the hotel assigned to take care of your event.

#### *5. WHICH BRINGS US TO THE NEXT POINT, HIRE A PLANNER*

If you're one for a flawless fairytale wedding, the chances of this happening in a location you're not familiar with are very slim, unless you have someone in the know on your side. This can be someone from your home country, or someone who specialises in weddings at the destination of choice. There are pros and cons to hiring a planner from your home country or the destination.

Hiring a planner from your own country means it's easier to meet up, they tend to be more credible as you can check their reviews, and communication is made a lot easier as they speak the same language. A planner from your destination however is much more likely to have local knowledge and expertise on your venue.

Personally, I've noticed that brides from big cities tend to prefer working with planners from their home countries, there are higher standards of quality and commitment, as well as professionalism, as the planner will count on the bride to refer them to friends. Whereas planners in destination countries often view the wedding as a one-off event.

Either way, having a planner on hand to help with everything from forecasting a budget to sourcing for venues to securing wedding licenses to arranging accommodation and liaising with local vendors takes a huge burden off the couple.

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