

In Search Of The Perfect Aisle

Decisions, decisions. Every engaged couple is faced with lots of them, and now the rising popularity of destination weddings has added another biggie: Where to get married? These days, nearly 20 percent of American couples choose to wed in a place that neither they nor their families have ever lived.

San Diego couples chose to wed at one of the coastal resorts in Laguna Beach. Of these, Montage is a popular choice — in part because they guarantee that no more than one wedding will take place per day. Here, Jaime Puffer and her staff “never say no” to a bride’s idea. They have been known to recarpet, change the

best — a sunny day, a gentle breeze — but prepare for the worst by also reserving indoor space nearby.”

Breslow also cautions, “Before you settle on a place, find out if you can have a legal wedding performed there. If it turns out that you can’t — France, for instance, has a 40-day residency requirement — you can get the marriage license at home and hold a symbolic ceremony at the destination.”

That would be the case in French Polynesia, which requires a 30-day residency. However, you could go to Huahine, my favorite island, and enjoy a symbolic Tahitian wedding ceremony on the beach at Te Tiare Beach Resort. Dressed in traditional pareos and adorned with flowers, the bride and groom are serenaded with chants and songs of Polynesia. My advice: reserve one of the deep overwater bungalows for the best sunset views. (www.tetiarebeachresort.com)



On the Island of Huahine, deep overwater bungalows provide direct access for snorkeling

Unlike elopement, friends and family are encouraged to attend.

According to many experts, a destination wedding:

- gives the bride’s family and the groom’s family a chance to connect away from either’s home base
- is often more intimate because fewer guests attend
- is often less expensive because of fewer guests, and, in the case of a foreign location, an exchange rate that favors our dollar

Of course, not every wedding will be in an overseas location. Many

chandeliers, and engage sky writers upon request. One bride, renowned for her love of Hostess Twinkies, asked that these be served as a late-night snack — the staff happily complied. (www.montagelagunabeach.com)

Puffer cautions brides to avoid getting too many opinions and to just do what they want. “It’s got to be all about them.”

Susan Breslow, author of *Destination Weddings for Dummies*, adds her advice about beach weddings: “Hope for the

You can easily get legally married in Australia, especially if you



The Pacific Ocean provides a breathtaking backdrop for weddings at Montage Laguna Beach



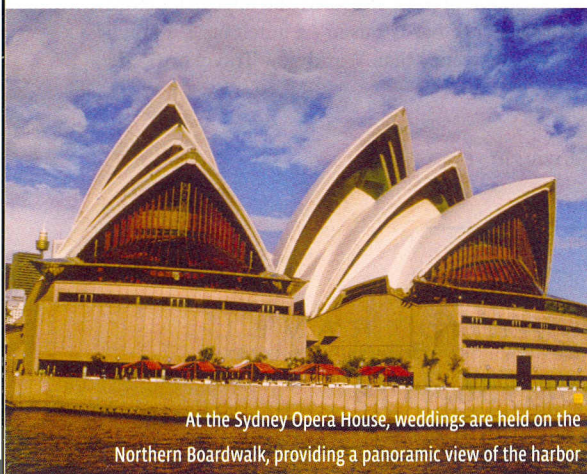
The wedding chapel at Turtle Bay Resort on Oahu overlooks a popular surfing spot

➔ start your planning with a call to Kleon Howe at Get Hitched Down Under in San Diego. He and his team of planners can arrange your wedding at the Sydney Opera House, in a colonial home on the Sydney waterfront, or in the Royal Botanic Gardens. They can also make arrangements for weddings in Victoria or Tasmania. And “no worries” about the requirements. They know them all. By the way, at press time, US\$1 = A\$1.40. (www.gethitcheddownunder.com)

For an exotic atmosphere without leaving the country, Hawaii is a sure bet. One beautiful spot is Turtle Bay Resort on the North Shore of Oahu. A la carte weddings can be arranged, but many couples opt for a wedding package that starts with private limousine service from the Honolulu airport. En route to the North Shore, the driver stops to obtain the marriage license, and from there you enjoy an hour-long coastal drive around Oahu’s windward side. Fresh leis await your arrival at Turtle Bay. The package also includes lodging in a luxurious beach cottage, a day of pampering at Spa Luana, and flowers, a lei, an officiant, and a photographer for the oceanfront ceremony. (www.turtlebayresort.com)

Destinations don’t get much better than this. For more ideas on exotic weddings please visit www.ranchandcoast.com.

ELIZABETH HANSEN



At the Sydney Opera House, weddings are held on the Northern Boardwalk, providing a panoramic view of the harbor

Closer To Home

At Rancho Valencia, 40 acres of lush landscaping, bubbling fountains, and dramatic views create an intimate setting for wedding day celebrations. In addition, newlyweds qualify for significantly discounted honeymoon rates at other Auberge properties, including Auberge du Soleil and Calistoga Ranch in Napa Valley, Esperanza in Cabo San Lucas, The Inn at Palmetto Bluff in South Carolina, and Encantado in Santa Fe. (www.ranchovalencia.com)

The Grand Del Mar’s onsite chapel makes this resort the perfect choice for those seeking a church wedding and the facilities offered by a luxury hotel. The Elizabeth Capella — resplendent with rustic wood-beamed ceilings, imported Italian marble and vibrant stained glass — is a non-denominational sanctuary that can seat up to 250 guests for a wedding ceremony or 350 for a reception. (www.thegradndelmar.com)

At L’Auberge Del Mar, an on-site director of romance oversees all things sentimental and shares a wealth of ideas with brides and grooms to be — from planning a private dinner in a poolside cabana to placing rose petals on a turned-down bed to skywriting a love message over the ocean. (www.laubergedelmar.com)

Imagine being married on the new arena stage currently under construction at The Old Globe in Balboa Park. The theatre will accommodate 250, and the Education Center on the second floor will seat 150 for a dinner reception or 200 for cocktails. The bad news? You have to wait until June 2010. (www.oldglobe.org)