

Every Bride's Guideline For Planning the Perfect Destination Wedding

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Everyone knows that planning a wedding is not only exciting and exhilarating, but also a little bit stressful. Add the factor of trying to plan a wedding from afar and the stress level definitely rises. Have no fear! There are guidelines that all destination brides can follow to ensure that their big day goes off without a hitch.

6-9 months

1. Decide on a wedding budget. It is important that you know your boundaries and stick to them. Weddings can definitely take on a mind of their own if guidelines aren't followed.

2. Develop your wedding style. Do you want a beachy/tropical feel or do you want to go more traditional? Nowadays, the options are endless. Don't let anyone try to dictate your style to you. Odds are you have been dreaming about this day since you were a little girl. Follow your gut.

3. Announce your engagement. Friends and family will be thrilled to hear the wonderful news.

4. Choose your wedding date. Remember that most destination locations have different "seasons." This refers to the time when tourism is at its lowest and highest. Keep this in consideration when picking your date. If you want something more intimate and less crowded, you may opt to hold your wedding during the low or mid-season.

5. Choose a wedding location and research it. Some resources to consider would be looking online, perusing books on the area, and contacting local tourist bureaus. You can also contact resorts and ask them to send you literature on their venues, such as package deal information, honeymoon/wedding offers, etc.

6. Research the local wedding license requirements. Find out if the area has a grace period before you are allowed to obtain the license. Knowing this will allow you to schedule your arrival time to accommodate the waiting requirements.

7. Hire a local wedding coordinator. He/she will be your eyes & ears. Since you are not familiar with the area, you need someone to make recommendations and take care of any necessities.

4-6 months

1. Work with your wedding coordinator to book your other vendors (florist, musicians, photographer, caterer, and officiant.) You may also wish to book services with a hairstylist, makeup artist and nail salon. Ask your coordinator to send copies of the signed contracts to you so that you can keep them on file.

2. Discuss with your caterer options for your wedding menu. Decide if you would like to have a sit down dinner versus heavy hors d'oeuvres. The time of the wedding ceremony will help to dictate what kind of food to serve.

3. Order wedding invitations. But first remember to check on the sunset. Most people who have a destination wedding want sunset pictures. Make sure to schedule the ceremony time so that you will have ample time to take these shots after the ceremony. Your photographer will help you decide when the best time to have the ceremony is.

4. Register for wedding gifts.

5. Buy your wedding rings. If you choose to have them engraved, begin talking about what to engrave in each ring.

6. If you need to fly to reach your destination wedding, now is the time to purchase your airline tickets and negotiate discounts with the airline and hotels.

7. Since all of your guests will be traveling to attend your wedding, it is a good idea to create a wedding website or newsletter to share travel and wedding information with them.

8. Finalize the groom's attire. If you are renting tuxedos, research local tuxedo rental shops.

9. Finalize the bridal party attire. Research local seamstresses, should you need a last minute steam or stitch after everyone arrives for the wedding.

2-4 months

1. Mail your wedding invitations. Remember to include hotel lodging information in the invite.

2. Talk with your wedding officiant regarding choosing or writing your wedding vows.

3. Shop for your shoes and other accessories. If you are marrying in the sand, don't forget about the flip flops! Bridal stores carry very fashionable beaded flip flops made just for you destination brides.

4. Confirm that your wedding party and family members have made their travel arrangements.

1-2 months

1. Order wedding favors and welcome baskets. Since all of your guests will be traveling, it is a nice gesture to have welcome baskets at their hotels when they check in.

2. Have your final dress fitting. Bring all of your accessories and undergarments to the fitting. Certain undergarments might change the way your gown fits.

3. Shop for your vacation wear. One of the perks of having a destination wedding is getting to enjoy the sand and sun in addition to getting married. Be sure to shop for swimsuit(s), a rehearsal dinner outfit, and sun protection. You don't want tan lines in your wedding photos!

2 weeks

1. Talk with your wedding coordinator regarding confirming details with your other vendors.

2. Arrange guest seating, if necessary. It is time consuming but it does stop any confusion as to where your guests will sit.

3. Assemble favors and/or welcome bags.

Final preparations upon arrival

1. Apply for your marriage license.

2. Meet with your wedding coordinator. It is a good idea to do a walk through at the ceremony and reception sites. Go over any last minute details with him/her regarding the wedding day.

3. Meet with your wedding officiant. At this time, you can give him/her your marriage license.

4. Distribute the welcome bags to the guests' hotels.

5. Unwind and have fun! The big day is almost here. Now is the time to sit back and let everyone that you have hired take over. They are professionals and have done this hundreds of times.

Wedding day:

Relax, enjoy the day & take pleasure in being The Bride!



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