

October 31, 2025 • The Journal / Travel Inspiration

# Insider's Guide to Destination Weddings

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Image courtesy of Hyatt Ziva Cap Cana

Destination weddings aren't just about saying "I do" somewhere beautiful, they're about creating memories that last a lifetime. A European setting offers centuries-old romance, from

vineyard receptions in Tuscany to castle celebrations in the Scottish Highlands. Across the Caribbean, each island offers its own version of paradise, while Mexico adds flair and color, with oceanfront vows in Cabo and coastal romance in Riviera Maya. In the US, choose from beachside bliss in Hawai'i and California, mountain charm in Montana or Vermont, Southern charm in Georgia and Tennessee, or sophisticated city weddings in New York or Texas. For couples who want a destination without all the logistics, cruises are a great option.

No matter the setting, destination weddings balance logistics, beautiful scenery, and experiences designed to bring everyone together. Read on for where to host, how to plan, and what makes destination weddings unforgettable.

## Need to know



Image courtesy of The Balmoral Hotel

When planning a destination wedding, start with a vision—a beachfront ceremony, vineyard nuptials, or a clifftop vow exchange. Once the venue is set, everything else follows. Focus on the essentials, but leave space for spontaneity as the unscripted moments are often the most



memorable. Wherever you celebrate, respect regional etiquette, and honor local traditions and customs.

### **Planning lead time:**

- **Domestic weddings:** Begin 12–18 months out to guarantee availability, especially for peak seasons and popular destinations. Off-season and smaller weddings can be planned in 9–12 months.
- **International weddings:** Start planning 12–24 months out due to travel logistics, vendor selection, and guest decision-making. Luxury venues and European destinations may need closer to 18–24 months to coordinate.

**Transportation:** Group transfers can simplify airport pickups and venue moves, or sightseeing excursions. Some destinations limit large vehicles or have access challenges.

**Ceremony requirements:** Some countries require translated or apostilled documents, licensed officiants, or venue requirements. Verify marriage or recognition laws for a destination. Many couples choose a symbolic ceremony abroad with a legal wedding at home.

**Time of year:** Shoulder months can offer better pricing but may come with weather risks or limited availability. Research seasonality for closures, storm seasons, or fire weather.

**Venues:** Confirm your venue can host your full guest count and desired setup. All-inclusives simplify logistics, while remote or historic hotels may have restrictions (noise, décor, or more).

**Locations:** Remote islands or countryside venues may require extra transportation logistics, delivery time, or décor transport surcharges. Historic sites or public spaces may need photography restrictions and event permits.

**Passports and visas:** Ensure passports are valid for 6+ months beyond travel dates. Double check visa and travel authorization requirements. US territories like Puerto Rico and USVI, as well as some closed-loop cruises, don't require passports for US citizens.

**Guest coordination:** Designate one point person to manage RSVPs, room blocks, and communication. Clarify early who is responsible for extras like flights, excursions, or meals. Use a shared wedding website or group chat to keep guests informed and organized.

**What to wear:** Carry wedding attire onboard, never check it. Remember to pack for other wedding events and sightseeing excursions.

# Italy



Image courtesy of Caruso, A Belmond Hotel, Amalfi Coast

Italy is known for its vineyard estates, historic palaces, and coastal cliffs made for cinematic “I do’s.” The canals of Venice and terraced gardens of Lake Como are perfect photo ops, and Tuscany’s rolling hills set the scene for ceremonies amid olive groves and Chianti vineyards. The Amalfi Coast’s sun-soaked coast overlooks the sea, ideal for a sunset ceremony. Couples can exchange vows in medieval villages or grand villas, followed by candlelit dinners of handmade pasta and local wine. Between celebrations, sail across Lake Como on a vintage wooden boat, take a Vespa through the Tuscan countryside, or toast with Prosecco over beautiful sunsets. Whether you’re drawn to the elegance of Venice or the seaside splendor of Positano, Italy captures *la dolce vita* in every moment.

## Where to stay



**Borgo San Felice Resort (Tuscany):** Set within a beautifully preserved medieval village surrounded by Chianti vineyards. Restored stone houses with views of olive groves and rolling hills, a private chapel, and open-air courtyards for an elegant yet authentic Tuscan wedding.

**Passalacqua (Lake Como):** An 18th-century villa turned intimate grand hotel overlooking the waters of Lake Como. Terraced gardens, frescoed salons or the Hall of Mirrors create a setting of timeless romance and cinematic beauty for the ultimate destination wedding.

**Caruso, A Belmond Hotel (Amalfi Coast):** Set in an 11th-century palace above Ravello with sea views, terraced gardens, and an infinity pool. Ceremonies can take place in the rose gardens or on panoramic terraces, for a refined yet relaxed Italian wedding experience.

**Ca' di Dio (Venice):** A reimagined 13th-century palazzo at the edge of the lagoon, blending Venetian heritage with modern elegance. Tranquil courtyards, light-filled Pergolas, or the terrace overlooking the Arsenale make it an idyllic retreat for a refined wedding celebration.

## France



Image courtesy of Abbaye des Vaux de Cernay

France is synonymous with romance. In Paris, rooftop terraces and historic salons offer iconic city views. The Loire Valley invites ceremonies amid manicured gardens and centuries-old castles. Along the French Riviera, Saint-Tropez, Cannes, and Èze are where to find coastal elegance with hidden beaches, seaside cafés, and boutique shopping. Toast with Champagne on a private cruise, host a garden reception, or enjoy hands-on experiences like pastry classes, perfume-making, or wine blending. Between celebrations, wander medieval villages, stroll bustling markets, and explore the sun-drenched countryside.

## Where to stay

**Hôtel Plaza Athénée - Dorchester Collection (Paris):** Elegant and modern, with luxurious rooms, Eiffel Tower views, and on-site Dior Spa. Ceremonies can be held in beautiful salons or on private terraces for a stylish and classic Parisian wedding.

**Abbaye des Vaux De Cernay (Île-de-France):** A 12th-century abbey surrounded by dense forests and a tranquil lake. Couples can exchange vows in the abbey's cloisters, vaulted stone halls, or lakeside gardens for a timeless, elegant wedding experience.

**Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat, A Four Seasons Hotel (French Riviera):** Situated on a private peninsula with Mediterranean views, landscaped gardens, and Belle Époque design. Sea-facing terraces, a refined ballroom, and infinity pool make for a truly memorable destination wedding.

# Scotland





Image courtesy of The Gleneagles Hotel

Scotland's dramatic landscapes create a storybook backdrop. Couples can wed in a grand castle near Edinburgh or host a *ceilidh* celebration, complete with bagpipes, whisky toasts, and local fare. The Highlands invite adventure with scenic drives, windswept beaches, and whisky distilleries. The Borders brim with fairytale estates and manicured gardens, perfect for intimate ceremonies steeped in history. Between festivities, explore medieval fortresses, ride vintage trains through the countryside, or take a helicopter flight over rolling glens.

## Where to stay

**The Balmoral Hotel (Edinburgh):** Landmark city-center hotel with views of Edinburgh Castle, Old Town, and the city skyline. Couples can exchange vows in the grand ballroom or an intimate private salon for an iconic, elegant wedding experience that is distinctly Scottish.

**The Gleneagles Hotel (Perthshire):** A grand, countryside estate featuring on-site spa, golf course, falconry, and horseback riding. Wed in an elegant ballroom, historic chapel, or outdoors overlooking the Scottish Highlands for a scenic wedding that is distinctly Scottish.

**Inverlochy Castle (West Highlands):** A 19th-century baronial castle with just 17 rooms, and 35 more across the estate for an intimate destination wedding. Vows can take place in drawing rooms or on manicured grounds, for a secluded, historic Scottish Highlands ceremony.

**SCHLOSS Roxburghe (Scottish Borders):** A wooded estate boasting a historic manor, elegant cottages, and championship golf course. Exchange vows in classically appointed halls or in the landscaped gardens for a destination wedding that feels both regal and intimately memorable.

## Ireland



Image courtesy of Dromoland Castle

Ireland's emerald landscapes, windswept cliffs, and fairytale castles are popular for weddings. From Dublin's stately architecture and lively pubs to the wild beauty of Mayo and the coastal charm of Galway, every region offers its own magic. Couples can wed in restored manors or centuries-old castles, then toast with craft whiskey or gin beneath candlelit halls. The Cliffs of Moher and Connemara's untamed hills invite breathtaking photo moments, while Limerick and Clare blend history with a warm, local welcome. Before or after the celebration, explore



grand gardens at Powerscourt or Kylemore Abbey, drive the Dingle Peninsula for Atlantic views, or hike through Wicklow's glacial valleys. End the journey with live music in a seaside pub or a scenic train ride across rolling green countryside. Romantic, soulful, and steeped in legend, Ireland turns every wedding into a story worth telling.

## Where to stay

**Ashford Castle (Mayo):** This 13th-century lakeside castle once belonged to the Guinness family. Ceremonies take place in the elegant Connaught Room, candlelit wine cellar, or outside under ancient trees for a historic and elegant fairytale Irish wedding.

**Adare Manor (Limerick):** 800-year-old neo-Gothic country estate with championship golf, La Mer spa, and whiskey tastings. Ceremonies can unfold in the chandelier-adorned grand ballroom or outdoors beneath ivy-covered stone walls for a regal and romantic wedding.

**Dromoland Castle (Clare):** This historic lakeside castle set on a 450-acre estate offers horseback riding, archery, and golf surrounded by woodlands. Weddings can unfold in the grand drawing rooms or outdoors on manicured lawns for a mix of heritage, luxury, and warmth.

**Ballynahinch Castle Hotel (Galway):** Riverside 18th-century estate with a storybook setting that feels both secluded and comfortable. Ceremonies can take place beside the water or in the castle's charming interiors for an unforgettable countryside destination wedding.

# Caribbean Islands



Image courtesy of Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort

Caribbean islands have that picture perfect turquoise water, white-sand beaches, and tropical breezes. Each island has its own personality—Jamaica’s soulful rhythm, Saint Lucia’s dramatic Pitons, and Aruba’s golden shores. From boutique hotels to all-inclusive resorts, ceremonies can unfold beneath swaying palms or on clifftop terraces with sweeping ocean views. Before or after the wedding, couples and guests can sail along coastlines at sunset, snorkel among coral gardens, or enjoy treatments at the spa. Wander Old San Juan’s colorful streets, tour family-run rum distilleries in Jamaica, or ride horseback along Aruba’s Eagle Beach. The Caribbean captures the essence of barefoot luxury and island romance in every detail for a perfect destination wedding.

## Where to stay

**Round Hill Hotel and Villas (Jamaica):** Iconic resort featuring ocean-view rooms and villas, with watersports and on-site Elemis Spa. Ceremonies take place on the Spa Lawn overlooking the Caribbean or along the secluded beach for a luxurious and timeless destination wedding.



**Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort (Saint Lucia):** Dramatic yet intimate, offering a mix of villas and hillside suites with private pools and ocean views. Weddings can take place on the beach or on a cliffside terrace overlooking the Caribbean, for a secluded luxury experience.

**Hyatt Ziva Cap Cana (Dominican Republic):** A contemporary all-inclusive resort set on the white sands of Juanillo Beach. Weddings unfold at the Zilara Beach Gazebo on palm-framed beaches, with tropical scenery and effortless luxury designed for celebration and ease.

**Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort and Casino (Aruba):** Vibrant beachfront resort with modern rooms, multiple pools, and lively amenities. Ceremonies can take place on the white sand beach or in elegant indoor venues for a fun, stylish, all-in-one destination wedding escape.

## Mexico



Image courtesy of Rosewood San Miguel de Allende

Mexico is where to go for vibrant culture, sunny coastlines, and historic charm. From rooftop terraces in San Miguel de Allende to beachside resorts in Cabo, Riviera Nayarit, and the Riviera Maya, couples can exchange vows amid energetic cities, beautiful jungles, or beachside. Before

or after the ceremony, explore hidden cenotes or zipline through the trees. Enjoy a tequila or mezcal tasting, join a chocolate workshop, or take pottery class. Whether celebrating amid historic streets, jungle canopies, or endless beaches, Mexico brings vibrant romance and unforgettable experiences to every corner.

## Where to stay

**Atelier Playa Mujeres (Cancun):** A sleek adults-only, all-inclusive resort with a championship golf course, private cabanas, and world-class NUUP Spa. Weddings can take place on the white-sand beach or an ocean view terrace for a chic, laidback destination wedding.

**Viceroy Los Cabos (Baja):** Minimalist architecture, reflecting pools, and open-air spaces create a cinematic destination. Ceremonies can unfold beside the ocean or on the panoramic rooftop terrace for a bold, contemporary wedding site.

**Susurros del Corazón, Auberge Collection (Riviera Nayarit):** Barefoot luxury set between jungle hills and a secluded beach in Punta Mita. This Auberge resort feels intimate and effortlessly elegant, where ceremonies unfold beneath palm trees overlooking Banderas Bay.

**Hotel Escondido Oaxaca (Oaxaca):** A design-forward 12-room retreat blending minimalist architecture with artistic heritage. Ceremonies take place in serene courtyards or on rooftop terraces framed by city views, creating an intimate, contemporary destination wedding.

**Rosewood San Miguel de Allende (San Miguel de Allende):** Timeless and romantic, set amid cobblestone streets and colonial architecture. Weddings in elegant courtyards, flower-filled gardens, or rooftop terraces combine old-world ambiance and Mexican hospitality.

# United States (West Coast)





Image courtesy of The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara

The Western US gives you a choice of coastal cliffs and mountain peaks, plus upscale city destinations. In Southern California, sunlit terraces and oceanfront resorts pair perfectly with vineyard receptions and sunset backdrops. Napa Valley's vineyards are home to romantic estates for dinner and dancing under the stars. Hawai'i's beaches and tropical gardens set the stage for barefoot beach ceremonies framed by palm trees and lava landscapes. For a rustic twist, Montana's lodges and ranch-style resorts in the Desert Southwest sit under wide skies and tall mountains.

## Where to stay

**Montage Big Sky (Montana):** Luxurious mountain lodge with spacious suites, multi-bedroom residences, and expansive mountain views, perfect for celebrating together. Elegant, rustic weddings can take place in one of the grand ballrooms or on the manicured lawn.

**The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara (Southern California):** Oceanfront escape on 300 acres, with ocean-view rooms, spacious suites, and multi-bedroom villas. Terraced lawns and indoor ballrooms make for a timeless yet relaxed coastal destination wedding.

**Solage, Auberge Collection (Northern California):** Laid-back spa-inspired retreat blends vineyard views, olive trees, and mountain backdrops for a naturally elegant setting. Ceremonies unfold on the Solstice lawn or in a lavender-lined garden for an elevated wine country wedding.

**1 Hotel Hanalei Bay (Hawai'i):** A nature-immersed eco-luxury retreat on Kauai's North Shore that blends high design with Hawaiian soul. Terraced ocean-view lawns and indoor salons create a wedding experience that feels romantic, elevated, and deeply connected to the land.

## United States (The South)



Image courtesy of Commodore Perry Estate, Auberge Resorts Collection

Southern states blend hospitality and heritage into warm, welcoming wedding destinations. In Texas and Tennessee, chic barn venues and countryside estates host celebrations framed by rolling hills and oak trees. Florida's beaches bring a tropical flair, from oceanfront resorts on the Gulf Coast to glamorous hotels in Miami. Mountain lodges, historic mansions, and boutique farm hotels offer timeless settings that balance comfort and charm.



## Where to stay

**Commodore Perry Estate, Auberge Collection (Texas):** Historic, intimate, and luxurious Southern boutique property blending classic architecture with modern elegance. Beautifully appointed event spaces and courtyards made for refined, distinctly Southern weddings.

**The Cloister at Sea Island (Georgia):** Southern elegance and five-star polish along the scenic Golden Isles, with sweeping marsh and ocean views. Exchange vows in the intimate chapel, the oceanfront garden, or the grand ballroom, for a mix of heritage, hospitality, and coastal beauty.

**The Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans (Louisiana):** Grand and soulful, set within a restored Beaux-Arts building in the heart of the French Quarter. Weddings unfold in elegant ballrooms, green courtyards, or the rooftop terrace, blending historic charm with timeless luxury.

**Faena Hotel Miami Beach (Florida):** Glamorous and bold, this retreat feels more like an art museum meets beach club. Ceremonies can unfold on the private beach, at the extravagant Forum, or other on-site venues all dripping with drama and sophistication.

# United States (Northeast)



Image courtesy of Wildflower Farms, Auberge Collection

The Northeast offers classic sophistication across cities, coastlines, and the countryside. New York City sets the scene with rooftop terraces and landmark hotels overlooking the Manhattan skyline. Retreats in the Hudson Valley or the Berkshires lend their rolling hills and historic barns as backdrops to outdoor receptions. Massachusetts combines coastal beauty and old-world heritage, from Cape Cod's beach resorts to historic inns. Rugged cliffs and intimate escapes make Maine perfect for coastal ceremonies.

## Where to stay

**Cliff House Maine (Maine):** Classic, coastal charm set on dramatic cliffs, offering individually styled rooms and suites. Ceremonies can be held on the lawn overlooking the ocean or in cozy indoor event spaces for a destination wedding that is unmistakably New England.

**Woodstock Inn & Resort (Vermont):** Historic inn turned luxury resort with classic New England architecture, modern comforts, and cozy rooms. From manicured lawns and terraces, to elegant ballrooms and salons, weddings here are charming and full of character.



**Wildflower Farms, Auberge Collection (New York):** A sprawling property surrounded by rolling hills and wildflower meadows, featuring modern cabins and suites that are rustic yet refined. Spaces like gardens, meadows, or airy barns create a destination wedding that's intimate and tranquil.

# Cruising



Image courtesy of Windstar Cruises

Cruise weddings bring together travel, celebration, and romance in one journey. Many cruise lines offer affordable packages that simplify planning and include details like flowers, photography, and the cake. Couples can exchange vows at sea with the ship's captain officiating, or harborside with a local officiant that may also allow non-sailing guests to join. Whether in the Caribbean, Mediterranean, or South Pacific, a cruise wedding transforms the journey into an extended celebration.

## Popular destinations

- **Caribbean:** Sunny islands, turquoise waters, and relaxed elegance make the Caribbean a favorite. Sail to tropical gems like the Turks and Caicos, Dominican Republic, and USVI. Many itineraries include stops at private islands, allowing an intimate choice for a destination wedding setting.
- **Mediterranean:** Journey through history, cuisine, and coastal beauty, with sailings that blend Old World romance and modern luxury. Western Mediterranean routes visit Spain, France, and Italy, while Eastern itineraries sail to Greece, Croatia, and Turkey. Couples can exchange vows in Santorini, the Amalfi Coast, or cities like Barcelona.
- **South Pacific:** Exotic and serene, the South Pacific offers dreamy backdrops. From Hawai'i's volcanic cliffs to the coral-fringed lagoons of French Polynesia, offering barefoot ceremonies by turquoise lagoons. Itineraries balance adventure and tranquility, with snorkeling, sailing, and cultural immersion woven through every moment.

## Notable cruise lines

**Princess Cruises:** The “Love Boat” cruise line embodies classic cruising, where couples can be married by the ship's captain at sea. Elegant ships, timeless style, and itineraries from Europe to the Caribbean make it a favorite for traditional weddings.

**Windstar Cruises:** Intimate, yacht-style voyages with open-air decks, personalized service, and lesser-visited destinations. For an extended experience, opt for a land and sea package in French Polynesia that includes a hotel stay in an overwater bungalow in Moorea.

**Virgin Voyages:** Modern style, high-energy entertainment, and adults only flair. Sleek design, world-class dining, and a social atmosphere make for a unique celebration. Opt for vows in neon lit interiors onboard or on beaches from the Caribbean to the Mediterranean.

**Royal Caribbean:** Family-friendly favorite on megaships that combine fun and adventure for couples celebrating with guests of all ages. From surf simulators and zip lines to Broadway-style shows, multigenerational gatherings blend romance with excitement.

# If not a destination wedding...





Image courtesy of Viceroy Los Cabos

**Destination engagements:** Plan a proposal amid breathtaking backdrops and historic landmarks. From Paris rooftops to sunsets in Phuket, curate the moment with private photographers and floral setups designed for the big “yes.”

**Bachelor and bachelorette trips:** Party in style with villa weekends in Mexico, wine tastings in Napa, or yacht days in the Caribbean. Complete the trip with private chefs, spa days, and celebratory nights out to remember.

**Honeymoons:** From secluded overwater villas in the Maldives to Tuscan countryside retreats. Romance can be tailored for relaxation, adventure, or any style to create the perfect honeymoon in any corner of the world.

**Babymoos:** Unwind before your next chapter begins with a wellness-focused retreat in Hawai'i, Costa Rica, or Caribbean cruise. Prenatal spa treatments, beachside dining, and plenty of downtime can make it a restful, rejuvenating way to start a new chapter in life.



**Vow renewals:** Reaffirm your love in a setting that reflects your journey. Enjoy a sunset ceremony in a California vineyard, a castle courtyard in Scotland, or aboard a private yacht sailing through the Mediterranean.

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Please provide some details about your trip.

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