



BY DEBBIE SELINSKY

The Lure of the Destination Wedding

{and how to make it your own}

[feature]



destination weddings don't necessarily mean everyone has to get on a plane. the beaches and mountains of the Carolinas are beautiful and easily accessible.

In 1992, when Susan Breslow Sardone had a destination wedding in Las Vegas—a “tasteful” one with no Elvis impersonator, she insists—she was a bit ahead of her time.

But in 2009, Sardone, the author of “Destination Weddings for Dummies” (John Wiley & Sons, 2007) and guide to honeymoons/romantic travel at about.com (<http://honeymoons.about.com>), estimates that about 16 percent of all U.S. weddings are taking place away from home and hearth.

The reigning expert on destination weddings attributes that trend to a number of factors, including the fact that the typical destination wedding is smaller than a home wedding and can be less expensive for the couple. She also sees many second marriages taking place on romantic islands and beaches in the Carolinas, Hawaii and the Caribbean to distinguish them from more traditional first weddings. And “a destination wedding gives couples the opportunity to combine their celebration and a vacation for guests with a honeymoon for them—all rolled into one if they like,” Breslow says.

In “Destination Weddings for Dummies,” Sardone goes through the entire process of planning a destination wedding, including much discussion about whether you really want one or prefer to be married at home.

For example, she says, a destination wedding usually means that everyone you know and love can't attend. “They may not be able to afford the travel and hotel expenses, or perhaps they're not well enough to make the trip—that's why this decision is different for every couple.” (Affluent couples can offer to

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pick up the tabs for the guests, but it is generally understood that guests will pay their own way, according to Sardone. The couple would pay for the rehearsal dinner, the reception, the farewell breakfast and any planned group activities.)

Island and beach weddings are the most popular, and North and South Carolina offer many beautiful venues for them. For example, Ocean Isle Inn (www.oceanisleinn.com/weddings.html) at Ocean Isle Beach, N.C., offers several wedding packages, ranging from the "Elopement" package, which for \$400 (plus tax) provides a Monday-Thursday wedding in the garden or on the beach, including the minister, the witness and event coordinator, to the "Lovely Beach Wedding," which features a wedding arbor in the gardens or on the beach, a decorative package (in which the bride selects the color of tulle used on the gate, stairs and arbor), 20 white wedding chairs, minister, legal filing of the marriage license, the event director, the bridal bouquet and one for a bridesmaid, boutonnieres for the groom and best man's bouquet, photographer, reception and a one-night first anniversary stay for the newlyweds. The grand

Ocean Isle Inn — Fred Clanton



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total—\$3,500 (plus tax), which is considerably less than the average home wedding costs today.

Lynda Saunders Walker of Ocean Isle Inn reminds that “in planning a wedding at the beach, you must be flexible, because you are dealing with weather, heat, sand and wind.” That’s why it’s a good idea to select a site where you have an alternative, indoor site, she adds. (There are other beautiful Outer Banks locales for destination weddings, and of course, in neighboring South Carolina, Myrtle Beach and its environs provide plenty of options, too.)

And don’t limit yourself to beach weddings, says Sardone. “I don’t know if they allow it, but I think a great site for a wedding would be in the Charleston Aquarium in that beautiful spot overlooking the water. And how about Fort Sumter—is that available?” she grins. “Use your imagination. And of course, there are mansions and plantations that rent themselves out for weddings, and even some museums will close for a private party.” There are also gorgeous hotel facilities at places such as the 150-year-old Mills House Hotel and elegant Charleston Place in downtown Charleston. (Check out some of the other historic locales available in Charleston at www.thebridesbook.com.) If the majesty of the mountains speaks more to you

and your groom, beautiful Asheville offers a wide variety of sites for a destination wedding, ranging from small, elegant bed-and-breakfasts to upscale and scenic hotels such as the Inn at Biltmore Estate and the Grove Park Inn.

Sardone believes that the best value in a destination wedding right now is one that takes place on a cruise ship. “A cruise already has everything you need—chef, florist, live music, the private rooms. And a couple has the choice of inviting guests to see them married on the ship in port and then disembarking or having them sail along on the honeymoon trip.”

*cruise ship
wedding packages
are one of today's
best values*

Most cruise lines offer some sort of wedding package, and some even hold special vow renewal ceremonies. Check out the selection at cruise websites for Princess, Carnival, Norwegian Cruise Line, Celebrity Cruises, Holland America and others.

Sardone definitely believes a bride can make her own arrangements for a destination wedding. “It can be completely turn-key—unless you’re obsessive-compulsive you can do everything by email and just go.”

Walker sees benefit in working with a wedding planner at the other end. “Select a destination that has held weddings before and, if possible, has an onsite wedding planner. An onsite planner can save you many hours of legwork, and time is money. A good planner has information on hair salons, bridesmaids’ luncheons, golf or fishing trips for guests, DJ info for the ceremony and the reception and, of course, where to get that wedding dress pressed,” she says.

Another advantage to a destination wedding is that, since they’re still pretty new, there is little hard-and-fast etiquette attached as it is to home weddings, Sardone says. “Have fun and make it your own,” she adds.

“Know yourself and your groom” is Walker’s best advice to brides who plan to wed in exotic locales. “If you don’t like sand between your toes, don’t plan a beach wedding,” she grins.

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Destination Wedding Planning Guide

	Asheville	Charleston	Crystal Coast	OBX	Wilmington	Pinehurst
CATERERS	Cucina 24	Good Food Catering	Beau Catering	Beau Catering	Beau Catering	Kitchen 14 Catering
EVENT PLANNERS	Shay Brown Events, Palettes Of Perfection	A Charleston Event, A Charleston Wedding,	Bridal By The Sea	Bordeaux Events	A Carolina Wedding, Pamela's Wedding's & Events	Pamela's Wedding & Events
CAKES	Icing On The Cake	Virginia's On King St	Divine Desserts	Great Cakes Of the OBX	Crumb De La Crumb	Cake Dreams By Sally
FLOWERS	Palettes Of Perfection	A Charleston Event, A Charleston Wedding,	A Carolina Wedding, Ikebana, Kim Fisher Designs	Blooms	A Carolina Wedding, Ikebana, Kim Fisher Designs	
MUSIC	McSound Productions, C'leb Entertainment, Life's A Party, Melon Belly Music					
VENUES	The Venue, Rumbling Bald, The Farm	Folly Beach Holiday Inn	The Ocean Club Resort	The Sanderling	The Henrietta, NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher	The Fair Barn
ACCOMMODATIONS	Doubletree At Biltmore	Folly Beach Holiday Inn	The Ocean Club Resort	Hatteras Realty, Stan White Realty, The Sanderling	Hilton Wilmington Riverside	Pinehurst Resort
VIDEOGRAPHY	Digital Memories, Life Stage Videography, Flying Flounder, Eye Candy Digital Video					
PHOTOGRAPHY	Weddings By Tuesday's Frog, Penny Noell Photography	Abigail Seymour, D & J Photography	Logan Wallace, Bella Rose Photography	Ocean Edge Photography, Logan Wallace Photography	Bella Rose Photography, Tamara Lackey Photography	Dwa Photography, Abigail Seymour

	Raleigh	Charlotte	Triad	Columbia	
CATERERS	Beau Catering	Side Porch Catering	Visions Catering	Side Porch	
EVENT PLANNERS	Your Special Day Weddings & Events, Milestones & Memories		Charlotte Arrangements, Ivy Robinson	Association of Bridal Consultant	Association Of Bridal Consultants
CAKES	Cake Dreams, Edible Art		Tizzerts	Maxie B's	Cake Dreams By Sally
FLOWERS	Kim Fisher Designs		The Place for Flowers	Kim Fisher Designs	Cote Designs
MUSIC	McSound Productions, C'leb Entertainment, Life's A Party, Melon Belly Music				
VENUES	The Hall & Garden at Landmark	RoofWith A View, Cedarwood Country Club, Charlotte Museum Of History, Blue Restaurant	The Penn House, Grassy Vineyard	Corley Mill House	
ACCOMMODATIONS	RDU Doubletree	Embassy Suites	O'Henry Hotel, Proximity Hotel, Grassy Vineyard & Klondike Cabins	Marriot Columbia	
VIDEOGRAPHY	Digital Memories, Life Stage Videography, Flying Flounder, Eye Candy Digital Video				
PHOTOGRAPHY	Jeffery Minnish, DWA, Penny Noell, Tamara Lackey	D&J, Stephanie Chesson	Abigail Seymour, Elizabeth Larson, Renee Naveah Photography	Southern Wedding Photography	

For contact info see our Resource guide on Pg 105 - 107

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