

Couples, Businesses Benefit from Destination Weddings

Destination weddings will continue to be popular in 2013, according to wedding industry sources. They are also expanding revenue opportunities for wedding planners and travel and hospitality businesses.

“The wedding organizers benefit the most,” says Robert Curtis, Business program director at South University, Columbia. “It has also become a major source of revenue for emerging tourism areas.”

Resorts and cruise lines, especially, have made it easier for couples to get married abroad. Many have staff members who are knowledgeable about the destination’s marriage license requirements and offer wedding packages that handle the arrangements once the couple and their guests arrive.

Tourism boards have also joined in, offering information and promotional items showcasing local ceremony sites and vendors in their area.

The Dollars and Sense of Destination Weddings

Curtis says destination weddings give many places an economic boost.

“In addition to expenses associated with the wedding, there are the incidental expenses — meals at local restaurants, sightseeing tours, and souvenirs,” he says.

Tropical beaches will continue to be popular wedding destinations, but more couples are choosing sites in cities, parks, small towns, deserts, and other places that suit their individual tastes.

Amanda Assey Lewis, owner of Southern Chic Weddings, says U.S. locations, such as Charleston, S.C., where she is based, can serve as romantic backdrops for destination weddings.

Destination weddings are a great option for couples looking to get married in a beautiful and memorable location while offering their friends and family a vacation.

“Hawaii, the Bahamas, and other tropical locations are popular, but tend to involve extensive travel for families and guests, naturally limiting the attendance,” she says. “Charleston, S.C., is the ideal destination spot because of its variety of venues, including the beach, beautiful waterfronts, historical homes, and elegant plantations.”

Destination weddings can be cost-effective. To ease the financial burden of the costs of a wedding plus honeymoon, couples choose to combine them by traveling to a place where they can get married, honeymoon, and still have money left over when they get back home.

However, there are many factors that contribute to a destination wedding budget.

“Typically, when guests are asked to travel, the guest count goes down,” Lewis says. “The cost of a wedding is traditionally per person, therefore the smaller the attendance the lower the cost. However, some couples choose to assist with the travel costs of some guests — usually close family who would otherwise not be able to come. If a couple finds themselves footing the accommodation bill for several guests, the budget can easily skyrocket.”

To save money, many couples choose to marry during the destination’s off-peak times. Venues offer discounts on their rental fees during the off months and vendors, including photographers and musicians, are more willing to negotiate deals during those months also, Lewis says.

“Sometimes the off-season choice works well for a particular couple,” she says. “For example, I planned a destination wedding for a couple from Michigan a few years ago. Their guests were almost entirely from the upper Midwest. The wedding was outdoors in January, and it was quite cold here in Charleston that

day.

“Fortunately, the guests from Michigan thought the temperatures were more like spring weather. While I was freezing in the 50-degree chill, they loved it.”

Benefits of a Destination Wedding

Destination weddings are viewed as a relatively stress-free way to get married.

Curtis says destination weddings have become more popular because they accomplish a number of objectives.

“Because of demographics, people have moved from family and friends and then the issue becomes whether they travel to your location or you travel to their location,” he says.

A benefit of destination nuptials is that they can prevent some of the family drama that can accompany weddings.

“Destination weddings are a great option for couples looking to get married in a beautiful and memorable location while offering their friends and family a vacation,” Lewis says. “A number of our couples choose a destination wedding because both of their families are in different parts of the country so a destination wedding allows for a neutral spot.”

Communication is highly important in planning any event, but it’s even more critical for a destination wedding because travel is involved.

Many couples choose to create a wedding website that keeps guests up-to-date on their wedding activities and offer guests directions to events and things to do in the destination city, Lewis says.

“I recommend that all my clients use such a resource,” she says. “There are several platforms that offer the wedding website service for free or for a very reasonable fee. It is very important for guests to have access to information when it comes to destination weddings, as they will need it months in advance to begin booking their flights and hotels.”