



IMAGE / TIM MARCUS PHOTOGRAPHER

wed in paradise

HAVING A DESTINATION WEDDING SURROUNDED BY YOUR CLOSEST FRIENDS AND FAMILY ISN'T THAT DIFFICULT, AS **KAMINI RAJARETHNAM** FINDS OUT.

Picture yourself in a tropical island, the wind blowing through your hair and the sun beating down on your skin. The waves wash up on the sandy beach where you exchange vows, your closest family and friends watching on. Or perhaps you prefer the amazing backdrop of a waterfall in a rainforest and a cavalcade beating drums and blowing horns announcing your arrival. Whatever you decide, every detail will be accounted for from the music and food to the cake and flowers.

Effortlessly and without breaking the bank, you can have your dream wedding and what's even better is that after the wedding ceremony, you won't have to leave the beautiful location because the honeymoon awaits you.

The concept of destination weddings has become a very popular trend these days with the benefit of having your wedding and honeymoon all in one. What's more your guests get to enjoy a mini vacation of their own and you have a truly unique memory to be the talk at everyone's tea parties for years to come.

Usually no more than 40 guests are invited and this sets an intimate tone for your wedding. You will also be able to avoid the interfering mother-in-law and the constant debate over whether to have lilies or roses at the reception.

Hiring a planner to take care of all the details on the other end means you won't have to worry about a thing. Just figure out the finer details such as the venue, flowers, cake and menu and turn up and your wedding planner will take care of all arrangements and bookings.

The best part? You can begin your honeymoon as soon as you cut the cake.

Global Weddings is a market leader in the field of destination weddings, specialising in Bali, Fiji, the Cook Islands, Samoa, Mauritius and

Santorini. Creator Narelle Williams established *Global Weddings* three years ago and business has gone from strength to strength ever since. With extensive knowledge and experience in the travel industry, it all began 9 years ago when she organised a wedding in Italy for a couple.

The average Australian wedding can set a couple back by about \$35,000 so it's not wonder more couples are looking towards an offshore celebration. With an average price range of just \$8,000, you can have the wedding of your dreams in an exotic location with memories to last a lifetime.

This growing trend with couples works because it is cost effective in the long run. Apart from the relaxed and luxurious setting, there is also the added advantage of having a holiday with family and friends as well as your honeymoon rolled into one package.

Another independent company that specialises in destination weddings specific to a popular honeymoon spot for Australian couples is *Take Us To Thailand*. Launched just a year ago by Anna Robinson and Natalie Doherty, the response has been phenomenal, where they have already secured 12 weddings for the coming year, highlighting

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- 1) Consider how many guests they anticipate may attend
- 2) Consider any budget constraints
- 3) Think about what is important to them for their wedding and group holiday.

IMAGES COURTESY OF TAKE US TO THAILAND |

the increasing popularity of luxury destination weddings in Thailand for Australian couples today.

Thailand has recently become one of the most popular overseas holiday destinations for Australians. For example, in 2007, 375 000 people visited Thailand on holidays from Australia – an increase of 86 000 people or 30% on 2006 figures.

Directors Natalie and Anna choose their hotels based on a stringent set of factors that meet their high standards. Every location and its facilities and amenities are road tested and are then deemed suitable for different styles of functions or accommodation options for any budget.

"Once a client retains us, we work with them to establish exactly what style they are after and to be aware of any budgets they have. Of course we take into account their group size, where their guests are travelling from and what their group is interested in before considering the best options for their holiday accommodation and wedding particulars."

From taking care of the venue and preparing an information package for all guests regarding accommodation options with special rates, *Take Us To Thailand* also organises the airport collections, invitations, flowers, menu options, entertainment, photography as well as the legalities of a couple's wedding.

Extra services such as a 'Welcome to Thailand' cocktail party for the wedding group a few days before the wedding, at a different resort to see another area of a particular island to Hens and Bucks days can be arranged, as can a post-wedding day brunch to farewell everyone.

Unfortunately, these dreamy wedding visions are often clouded over with the forgotten details and hidden hassles involved in getting hitched outside of the country. Don't get swept away with the idea of an exotic marriage that you fail to make sufficient plans, turning your dream wedding into a nuptial nightmare.

It is important to note that getting married overseas, although recognised by the Australian government, cannot be registered here. It is common for couples to be hesitant about getting married overseas due to the legal requirements. However, a capable agent will be able to handle the legalities of an overseas wedding and provide you with the necessary information needed to get any paperwork in order. Once you return to Australia, all you need to do register your name change according to each state's regulations by filling in a simple form.

"There is no set pattern when it comes to a destination wedding. We get first or second marriages, young couples or older ones, people who love to travel and those who have never been overseas," says Narelle. Organising a destination wedding can take as quickly as four weeks.

However, because of the location, couples usually book up to a year in advance in order to give plenty of notice for guests to save up and organise time off work to attend.

From just the bridal couple to having a hundred guests show up, anything is possible with a destination wedding. Using an agent will save you money, time and the stress. All you will have to do is show up!

For more information on getting married overseas, contact:
Global Weddings
 (03) 9763 3090 or www.globalweddings.com.au
Take Us To Thailand
 0417 030 654 or www.takeustothailand.com

