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YOUR BIG DAY SIMPLIFIED

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# the plan



DESTINATION WEDDINGS  
**A**List  
Q&A  
& HONEYMOONS

## DETAIL ORIENTED

**Where do you go for answers, expert advice and inspiration? Straight to the desk of an A-List Planner.**

Working with vendors from afar: It's the daily reality of preparing for a destination wedding. How do you do it? We asked Mexico-based planner **Sarai Flores** of **Signature, Event Consulting & Design** (that's her workspace shown above) to share how she and her clients communicate their vision long-distance. Get her helpful hints, plus more insight from other experts.

by ERIKA HUENEKE





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# theplan



Forget numbers and create a memorable weekend for those who attend.

**QUESTION** → *Our planner is based in Mexico, where we're getting married. How and when should we communicate?*

— *Email Stalking in Eagleton*  
**THE PRO:** Saraí Flores is the founder and creative talent behind Mexico-based planning firm Signature, Event Consulting & Design.

“As soon as we begin working with a client, we determine the best means of communication. Email remains the preferred channel, but I spoke with a bride via Skype recently, which enabled me to show her fabric samples, vases, little Mexican trinkets and other decor options. At the earliest planning stage, correspond at least twice a week, as you're still deciding on venues and vendors. During the second stage, production is underway, so one email or phone call a month should suffice. Two months prior, lots of final numbers come up, so communication should begin its regular flow again — then daily during the last two weeks.”

**QUESTION** → *In what ways can a destination wedding be less expensive than a traditional one?* — *Pinching Pennies in Pennsylvania*

**THE PRO:** As founder and director of Chic Bahamas Weddings, Marva Munroe has designed countless weddings over the past 10 years.

“A wedding away can cost less in many respects. For one thing, the setting tends to be naturally beautiful, so

you can get away with simple, less formal decor. After looking at New York vendor prices, it didn't take one of my clients long to decide a destination wedding would be more affordable. Many of their guests would have had to travel anyway, and then deal with expenses like tolls and parking — not to mention the rentals and catering the couple would have had to cover. Having a wedding at a resort in the Bahamas eliminated these concerns.”

**QUESTION** → *We're worried no one will come. What percentage of guests will actually make the trip?*

— *Fretting in Fresno*

**THE PRO:** Alyssa Brown travels the world producing destination weddings with San Francisco-based planning and design firm Alison Events.

“If you have lots of friends who travel regularly, you're more likely to have a larger turnout. Guest attendance also depends on the accessibility and affordability of your destination. One of our couples was struggling with the length of the trip to the small island they had in mind. After talking to a few loved ones to see how comfortable they were with the 12-hour journey, the couple ended up deciding on Saint Lucia instead because direct flights were available. That being said, try not to get overwhelmed by the numbers game, and instead focus on creating a weekend that will be memorable for all those who are able to attend.”

# Wedding Three Ways JAMAICA

“One Love” may be Jamaica’s anthem, but there’s a whole lot to love about this Caribbean island, from 700 miles of white sand to romantic wedding venues for every budget.



**UNDER \$10K**

**TENSING PEN**

Tucked away in the cliffs of Negril (read: the kind of secluded hideaway you’ve only dreamed about), this intimate boutique sleeps just 43 people in its cottages and suites. Wed on a terrace perched directly above the Caribbean, followed by a poolside reception in the resort’s acclaimed restaurant. *Rooms from \$120; weddings from \$900.*



**\$10K TO \$20K**

**GRAND PALLADIUM LADY HAMILTON**

This Montego Bay all-inclusive offers 10 restaurants, 13 bars, a spa, a shopping area and the largest pool in Jamaica. Outdoor-ceremony options include a pergola on the beach and the garden gazebo. Or move the celebration indoors to the new Angel’s Atrium — the perfect spot for cocktail hour and a dance party. *Rooms from \$157; weddings from \$1,000.*



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Racking up award after award, this Montego Bay stunner boasts 36 Ralph Lauren-designed oceanfront rooms, plus 27 villas with private swimming pools and staff. Hosting just one event per weekend, the hotel gives your wedding VIP status. Swap vows on the beach, in the Georgian Room or on the Hanover Terrace. *Rooms from \$389; weddings from \$1,695.* — Allyson Reedy

FROM LEFT, COURTESY OF TENSING PEN; JORDAN BRIAN PHOTOGRAPHY; COURTESY OF ROUND HILL HOTEL AND VILLAS; HOMEAWAY.COM

# VIVA LA *villa* VOWS

GET SECLUSION AND MORE WITH A VACATION RENTAL.

When envisioning a celeb-worthy wedding spot, a vacation rental may be your dream destination. “Couples choosing a villa wedding often get more value and privacy versus a hotel,” says Ryan Jacks, Luxury Retreats’ senior villa specialist. “Also, the freedom is very appealing — it’s all very personalized.” Check out these four trusted rental sites to find the right villa for your I do’s. — Marla Cimini

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**JETSETTER.COM /HOMES**

Featuring 200-plus vetted properties worldwide, this site lets couples choose wedding villas with the help of professional experts. *From \$1,500/night.*

**LUXURY RETREATS.COM**

Luxury Retreats has 2,000-plus locations that live up to its name. Specialists help couples select exclusive villas and chateaus for the big day. *From \$2,000/night.*



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for the groom

# MEN'S WEAR

myth busters

WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE DUDE'S DESTINATION-WEDDING DUDS

by JAKE EMEN  
artwork by NEIKO NG



➔ We men already know exactly how we're supposed to dress for a destination wedding, right? Throw on a guayabera and a pair of linen pants or Bermuda shorts, maybe some flip-flops, and you're set. Not so fast. Here are five myths about your attire that can change your perspective for the better.

**1 There's only one tropical-groom uniform** ➔ The guayabera-and-linen-pants combo has become the go-to look at destination weddings for good reason: You're relaxed and comfortable but not overly casual, you won't get too hot, and it's a cinch to pack. If that's you and it matches your personality and destination, go for it. But if you're more Bond than *Blue Lagoon*, be yourself, and feel free to change it up.

**2 Formal suits are off-limits** ➔ "Even at a destination wedding, you're still dressing for a wedding," reminds photographer **Jason Miller of Procopio Photography** in Washington, D.C. That means you can go more formal than you may have realized. That's particularly true when you opt for an ocean lawn or garden versus toes in the sand. "Formality is a choice," says **Michael Andrews**,

owner of custom-suit shop **Michael Andrews Bespoke**. Avoid synthetics and consider natural, lightweight fabrics like mohair and linen. "Mohair is very cool stuff — literally," Andrews says. "The fabric actually breathes."

**3 Accessories are only for the bride** ➔ Don't be afraid to inject personality into your attire. "You want to look like you," Miller says. Think about pocket squares, bow ties, suspenders and — we're going there — fedoras as ways to separate yourself from the masses. Softer accent colors work well: Miller warns against going too bold and looking dated in your wedding photos years down the line. Adds Andrews, "A beautiful boutonniere — and I'm talking a real one, not those fabric flowers — is an elegant touch."

**4 Perfectly tailored suits are for celebs** ➔ You remember your buddy's wedding — all the dudes in

generally sized, off-the-rack suits, either too tight or swimming in fabric. A custom suit adheres to your every angle, muscle and limb: Andrews takes roughly 30 measurements on his clients. Bespoke suits aren't just for the elite either. Keep in mind that while your blushing bride will never wear that dress again, you absolutely can, and should, continue wearing your bespoke suit: It's an investment into the classiest threads in your closet. (Bonus: Andrews' D.C. shop has leather couches, a stocked bar and a flat-screen TV.)

**5 Groomsmen have a free pass** ➔ You may trust your groomsmen with your deepest, darkest secrets (what happens in Vegas ...), but don't trust them to pick out their own attire for your wedding. Still, have mercy and prioritize their comfort — and their budget. Andrews offers that a clean, white dress shirt, sans tie, and a sandy or heather-gray jacket is the perfect mix of classy and comfortable for the fellas.

NEIKOART.COM; OPPOSITE BOTTOM: SHUTTERSTOCK

## ONE-MAN BAND

MARK KEENEY, VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING FOR RITANI, SHARES RING PICKS BY GROOM TYPE.



**PEACOCK**  
"Diamond bands are the perfect accent for the man who wants to strut his stuff."



**MIDDLEMAN**  
"A soft satin finish is tailored and conservative, but a coin-edge accent adds a little flair."



**MINIMALIST**  
"A narrow band with a bright finish is clean, subtle and very unassuming."  
ritani.com

## House of Cards

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<b>CITI HILTON HHONORS RESERVE CARD</b>	\$95* annually	Spend \$1,000 to earn 10,000 points**	A free room costs 20,000 points***

\*Some cards waive annual fees the first year. \*\*Sign-up bonuses or elite status may increase points earned. \*\*\*Free room in the same chain in Orlando, Florida; points needed vary by location and season.



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# LET THEM EAT *cup* CAKE

HAVING A DESTINATION WEDDING IS ALL THE MORE REASON TO SERVE UNCONVENTIONAL GOODIES.



**→** The average couple spends \$419 on their big-day dessert, according to the 2013 Wedding Report. Blow it all on one cake, or get guests talking (and munching) with something new and fresh. **Marisa Manna Ferrell** of **So Eventful** dishes on the trendiest treats. **SPOT WHAT'S HOT** → Manna

Ferrell has gotten requests for ice-cream-sundae bars, s'mores stations, gelato carts, milkshake bars and candied-apple bars with colorful toppings. "Also, doughnuts are a huge hit right now, along with sweet-and-savory bacon bars." **SET THE (DESSERT) TABLE** → "We're seeing more and more, especially with couples who

want to offer guests a variety of sweets — cupcakes, snickerdoodle bars, individual pumpkin pies, cake pops and so on." **SALUTE YOUR SETTING** → For a rustic farm location, offer homemade pies, "naked" cakes (no frosting) or short-cake bars. For tropical events, use fresh fruit. Macarons fit a French theme. "In California,

we've done cheese wheels in the shape of a wedding cake, which complements our local wines really well." **SWEET TALK** → Communicate with your vendors to pull off a wedding dessert with wow factor. "With the help of Pinterest, we can really capture the couple's vision and be sure to execute it on the wedding day."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 1. Heart-shaped doughnuts lend a playful feel to a reception in Groton, MASSACHUSETTS. 2. A tower of profiteroles in the U.K. nods to the country's neighbor, FRANCE. 3. A naked fruitcake by BLUEBERRY HILL CAKES is oh so rustic. 4. A gelato cart, arranged by SO EVENTFUL, keeps guests cool at a summer soiree. 5. A display of "homegrown" British cheese doubles as decor in the U.K. 6. Mini strawberry-rhubarb pies lend a country vibe to a wedding in WASHINGTON STATE.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MATT MILLER/DIAMOND EYES; MCKINLEY-RODGERS.CO.UK; KAREN FLOWER PHOTOGRAPHY; AREEN STUDIOS; MCKINLEY-RODGERS.CO.UK; SHELBY BRAKEM; MCKINLEY-RODGERS.CO.UK; OPPOSITE: KIM KUHN (3)

## Fine Print

Three new stationery lines complement an array of settings.



Heirloom-quality, artisanal, vintage-inspired: **BHLDN** now infuses its signature aesthetic into a new invitation line available exclusively through **Wedding Paper Divas**. Expect one-on-one design and etiquette expertise as you customize one of 10 distinct suites.



More prep than period? **Sugar Paper** for **J.Crew** features 13 crisp stationery essentials, including note sets, place cards, coasters and gift tags.



Also from **Wedding Paper Divas**, new invites in collaboration with **Claire Pettibone** recall 18th-century paintings and the gown designer's ethereal runway fashions. — *Bridget Murray*

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