



The Digital Bride

By Annette Burden

IF YOU'RE JUST STARTING to plan your destination wedding, you're probably feeling overwhelmed by the number of things you need to decide and organize on your journey to the aisle. Take heart. This is not your mother's wedding. Today we have the Internet—truly the destination bride's best friend—and a range of smart, user-friendly mobile applications, or apps for short, that



put a seemingly bottomless toolkit of ideas and services right at your fingertips. Start researching your options now. If you break the journey into manageable chunks, you'll be coasting to the finish line well before the big day.

Select Your Destination

Start by going to tripbase.com, where you input departure date and airport and adjust sliders by interest. Up come brief descriptions, average costs and weather for spots that suit your profile. Now cruise wedding-specific sites like weddinglocation.com (companion to this magazine) and the travel pages of brides.com, weddingchannel.com and theknot.com. Along the way, be sure to bookmark pages with lists of handy links and free planning tools, from budget calculators to checklists and guest-list managers.

After finding a destination that strikes your fancy, Google properties in the area. Some will offer online video tours, and all can help you pinpoint key facts like distance from airport to hotel and bridal amenities. For details on foreign wedding requirements, search on travel.state.gov. While there, get ready to renew

or apply for passports by downloading the forms and following the directions.

Register for Gifts

Go to the registry center at brides.com, weddingchannel.com or theknot.com and select the registries of your favorite major retailers—anyone from Bloomingdale's to Target to Home Depot. Or sign up with an aggregator like myregistry.com. Just about all the large department stores, and many of the smaller ones, make it incredibly easy for friends and family to send the perfect gift at the click of a button.

Like everything else online, registries now come in a wide variety of flavors. Sites such as travelersjoy.com, thebigday.com and honeyluna.com allow your guests to

give you anything from a portion of your flight to a couples massage. Prefer cash? Sign up at depositagift.com. Or request donations to your favorite charity via sites like justgive.com and idofoundation.org.

Create a Wedding Website

For some couples, this is the No. 1 secret to a stress-free event. Posting the details of your wedding and events online generates excitement for the trip and keeps all your guests on the same page, literally. RSVPs, travel packages, maps, photos, a link to your registry, an itinerary of events once you get to the hotel—it all goes in one place that's accessible around the clock and easy to update.

Weddingwebsites.com will help you compare a few of the countless companies offering custom sites and hosting services. On the other hand, all the major wedding sites will set you up and host your site for free or a reasonable charge for premium services. Or ask your travel agent or resort. Some host personal wedding websites that allow guests to book their trips right there and then. (Turn the page for a guide to three great bridal sites.)

Style Your Wedding

Gather inspiration for your wedding style and colors by studying examples shown on countless sites, starting with brides.com, weddingchannel.com and theknot.com. Then order save-the-dates, invitations and so forth online at sites like elegantbridalinvitations.com and weddingpaperdivas.com.

Now that you've nailed down the event's look, it's time to seek inspiration for your wedding dress—and even order online if you're so inclined. Give yourself a head start by going to companies that specialize in gowns that travel well, such as sites like alfredangelo.com, demetriosbride.com, maggiesottero.com, moncheribridals.com, dessy.com, winniecouture.com and jcrew.com.

Of course, Google can point you to a whole universe of wedding rings, jewelry and accessories. Not to mention goodies for your welcome baskets, reception favors and thank-you gifts for parents and attendants. Think of it as the best buddy a bride ever had, the one who's always ahead of the curve, on call and eager to please, making wedding planning as easy as the click of a mouse.

Apply Ever After

Today's smartphones keep you up to speed on your wedding plans 24/7 thanks to the brave new world of mobile apps. The App Store at iTunes beats the competition by miles with more than a

quarter-million apps—a virtual mountain of resources growing exponentially by the hour.

For the best of the wedding planner apps so far, check out the Brides Wedding Genius designed by *Brides* magazine for the iPhone. The free download gives you hundreds of dresses and pieces of jewelry to choose from, as well as wedding and honeymoon locations, all searchable by category. A \$2.99 upgrade includes a binder to gather and organize images, a tracker to manage to-do lists and the ability to sync everything with the tools online at bridesweddinggenius.com.

Another top-dog planner, iWedding Deluxe (\$9.99), operates on the iPhone as well. Like the Brides Wedding Genius, it organizes, guides and inspires through customizable features that range from budget to seating plans. Android users can count on similar tools from Wedding Plan-it (\$2.99), while BlackBerry users look to Wedding Organizer (\$2.99) as their go-to app. Below, find just a sampling of other smart downloads to consider, all from the iTunes App Store.



FOR MORE GREAT PLANNING TIPS & TOOLS, VISIT
ELITEWEDDINGCOLLECTION.COM.



FareCompare When-to-Fly Airfare Alerts

This free app pushes alerts on airfare deals you've requested directly to your iPhone in real time, up to six times a day. You can then share the potential savings with family and friends via Twitter, Facebook or e-mail.



MyRegistry.com

Myregistry.com's mobile version lets you use your iPhone as a barcode scanner to add any item to your gift list. It also lets you compare prices, manage your registry on the fly and send customizable e-cards. \$99.



Color My Wedding

A tap of the screen changes the colors of dresses, flowers, cakes, table settings and much more on this magical app. Millions of colors, two photos in the free version and 10 for \$4.99 help you fashion the perfect palette for your wedding day.



500 Wedding Cakes Photo Sampler

Round, square, hexagonal, stacked, tiered, fruit, flowers, classic, avant-garde—it's everything you ever needed to shape your own idea of wedding cake perfection. \$4.99.



Wedding Dress Look Book by The Knot

This free app searches thousands of gowns by style, shape and price and lets you bookmark your picks for later. It also lists salons that carry your favorites.



Do You Know Your Groom/ Do You Know Your Bride

For a break from planning, download these two quizzes, with scoring scale, loaded with questions about you and your spouse-to-be. Get them wrong, and you know what to ask. \$99 each.

Site Savvy

A wedding website is perhaps the destination bride's most important planning tool. But with so many sites to choose from, how do you know which one will work best for you?

Here are three custom sites that stand out with multiple easy-to-use templates, useful planning tools and nifty special features. —Isabelle Gullö



Glosite.com

PRICE From \$99/18 months

FREE TRIAL 21 days

NO OF TEMPLATES 50

NO OF WEB PAGES Unlimited

PERSONAL BLOG No

NIFTY FEATURES Unlimited online stationary

WHAT COUPLES SAY "An organized and efficient way to manage the admin and logistical side of wedding planning. Plus, it's helpful for guests to obtain info and respond; saving time for all parties." ~Karen & Gerben



Weddingwindow.com

PRICE \$79.99/year

FREE TRIAL 10 days

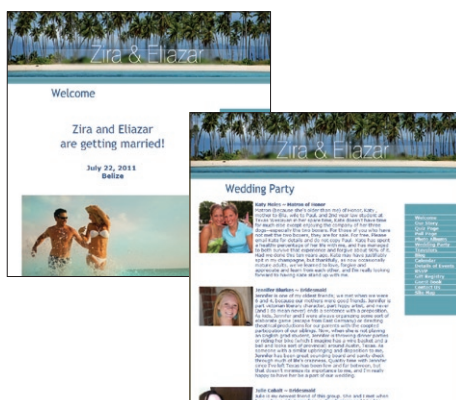
NO OF TEMPLATES 30

NO OF WEB PAGES 40

PERSONAL BLOG No

NIFTY FEATURES Extensive planning tools, such as budget and gift trackers

WHAT COUPLES SAY "We love Wedding Window's website. It is flexible, and you can customize everything to your personal style. It was so easy to create and use." ~Juliet & Derek



Weddings.myevent.com

PRICE \$99/year

FREE TRIAL 7 days

NO OF TEMPLATES 59

NO OF WEB PAGES Unlimited

PERSONAL BLOG Yes

NIFTY FEATURES Online donations, family trees

WHAT COUPLES SAY "We get compliments all the time on how great the site looks. Everyone thinks it must have taken forever, but it was so easy!"

~Allyson & Troy