





# your A-Z to Z

## Guide to a Simply Blissful Bash

When it comes to destination weddings, if you can dream it you can do it—but why reinvent the wheel?

Here are 26 tried-and-true tips for planning a carefree trip no matter where you wed.

By Annette Burden • Photographs by We Love Pictures



**A** is for **After Party** If not every VIP on your guest list can join the wedding, plan to host a second reception at home.

**B** is for **Budget** The sky's the limit when it comes to details for a destination wedding. Therefore, your budget is your friend. Once you determine your priorities, it's easy to narrow the choices to a few key decisions.

**C** is for **Coordinator** Look for a hotel with an in-house coordinator. You won't have to hire a wedding planner, and you won't have to do everything yourself.

**D** is for **Dress** Make sure your dress suits your locale. A gorgeous ball gown might be perfect at a Scottish castle, but you'll be miserable if you wear it in the tropics.

**E** is for **Early** Try to arrive a few days early. This gives you time to fix any hitches, get over your jet lag and, most importantly, relax.

**F** is for **Flowers** Unless specific flowers rank high on your priority list, rely on local flora. Flying in flowers can be tricky—and expensive—in remote locales.

**G** is for **Gratitude** Show guests how grateful you are that they traveled to your wedding. Plan at least one shared meal or activity a day.

**H** is for **Hair** Short of time for a run-through at the salon? Ask your most stylish friend to do your hair. Or choose something simple and do it yourself.

**I** is for **Invitations** The invitation comes *second* for a destination wedding. Send a save-the-date notice

first, including R.S.V.P., as far in advance as you can.

**J** is for **Jewelry** Sparkles, pearls or puka shells—whatever you choose, the theme should run throughout.

**K** is for **Kids** You'll have to make special arrangements for children to attend your wedding if it's an adults-only resort. If the families stay at a property nearby, include them in everything or join in special activities just for them.

**L** is for **Leverage** Group travel gives you leverage with airlines and hotels. Be ready to propose discounts, upgrades or freebies to sweeten the deal.





**M** is for **Music** Hire local musicians for the cocktail hour, but switch to a DJ or iPod for dancing. With a band, you may not know what you're getting.

**N** is for **Nonstop** Maximize the number of guests who say "yes" to the invitation by choosing a destination most can reach by nonstop flight. The cheaper and easier it is to get there, the more likely they are to attend.

**O** is for **Official** Pay close attention to the marriage requirements of your destination. Do the paperwork as far in advance as possible.

**P** is for **Perks** Tell everyone you're getting married, whether checking

in for your flight or your room at the hotel. You may score an upgrade. The same goes for restaurants—management will often spring for drinks, a bottle of wine or dessert.

**Q** is for **Quiet** Factor in quiet time with your sweetie. Now and then, every bride needs to steal away for a little romance and reflection with the groom.

**R** is for **Rehearsal** Don't skip the wedding rehearsal. Book your trial run for the same time of day as the real thing. This gives you a chance to fine-tune the timing for sunset, tide or glare in the eyes.

**S** is for **Small Stuff** Don't sweat it. (See Z is for Zen.)

**T** is for **Transportation** Things will run a lot smoother if you plan ahead for group transportation. Remember snacks and drinks for half-day excursions.

**U** is for **Unconventional** Think beyond traditional for the wedding wear. Groomsmen may look just as handsome in linen suits or even chinos and *guayabera* shirts. What if your bridesmaids picked their own dresses—in your color theme—or you chose stylish sundresses they could actually wear again?

**V** is for **Vendor** View a portfolio and check three references for every vendor you consider. Use a credit card.

**W** is for **Welcome** Place a welcome bag or basket in every guest room. Go as simple or elaborate as you like, but musts include a greeting from you, a map and an itinerary.

**X** is for **X Marks the Spot** You chose your wedding site in part for its beauty, right? Don't cover it up. A gorgeous place needs little embellishment. Besides, who's the star of this show, anyway?

**Y** is for **You** Everyone's counting on your happiness, so take care of yourself. Wear sunscreen. Drink enough water. Get your beauty sleep.

**Z** is for **Zen** Let it go. Remember, many of the world's most desirable destinations run on their own time. Things will happen when they happen—and minor glitches often make for the best memories.