



Best-in-ation Weddings

Our groom shares 10 great reasons to get married away.

Two years ago I had a destination wedding in Cayucos, California, a small beach town four hours from my home in Los Angeles. It was perhaps the best moment of my life, and I continue to write about it on my blog, Temple of Groom. I know I'm not a typical guy (I actually care about weddings!), but I'd like to state my case. For any groom intimidated at the thought of being thrust into the world of centerpieces, guest lists and three-tier cakes, a destination wedding will be your new best friend. Here's why.

by **DAVID SOLDINGER** illustration by **BY MAX SAVVA**

[1] IT'S EASIER The only thing better than burying your toes in the sand is burying your wedding-task checklist in the same sand, some 2,000 miles away. A destination wedding is the “set it and forget it” of the wedding world. Many venues offer wedding packages and onsite planners that take all those monotonous wedding-to-do's off your plate. You don't have to schlep around town in search of the perfect ribbon to tie around your centerpieces or visit dozens of vendors to figure out who has the best rate on chairs. Instead, think of all those precious hours you can spend devoted to your fantasy football team. If you have a destination wedding, you won't have to play fantasy florist, and, trust me, there's no way to win that game.

[2] IT'S MORE FUN Our distant site transformed our wedding into a weekend event rather than just a great Saturday night. Our guests arrived early enough to sightsee and/or get drunk. They were relaxed and ready to party!

[3] IT'S A BUILT-IN BOUNCER You know that socially awkward and embarrassing relative you see only once every few years? The wild-card family member you have to invite or you risk looking like a bad guy? Well, your destination wedding has got your back. That uncle (I'll assume it's your uncle; it's always an uncle) will not come to your wedding. In fact, 25 to 50 percent of your guest list won't come. We invited 150 people and ended up with exactly 75. Don't worry, though — the loved ones you consider closest to you are the ones who actually go.

[4] NO KIDS? NO PROBLEM Do you feel bad telling your guests you don't want a choir of babies screaming over your vows? Let your destination wedding break the news for you. If you don't want kids at your wedding, there's a strong chance your guests won't want to trek to a distant location with their offspring.

[5] IT'S CHEAPER The choice to host our wedding in a quaint beach town wasn't initially because we wanted a destination wedding; we simply couldn't afford venues within a 200-mile radius of LA. Additionally, because our locale was so picturesque, we no longer needed to blow our budget on costly decor. And, because we had only half of our guest list present to enjoy that picturesque destination, it put cash right back into our pockets.

[6] NO STIFF TUXES My newly cash-filled pockets didn't even have to be tuxedo pockets. Most destination weddings don't call for such formality, so you can dress up *or* down, your call.

[7] IT PROMOTES ROMANCE Is wedding stress killing your domestic bliss? Take a romantic trip to your wedding venue to solidify details. My fiancée and I took several scouting trips to plan and explore the area. They served as great breathers and reminded us why we decided to get married in the first place.

[8] YOU CAN BREAK FROM THE NORM We've all gone to a nonspecific, standard wedding that we can't fully remember. Why should that be your wedding? Give your guests something they'll never forget by taking them somewhere exciting.

[9] NO RUBBER CHICKEN A destination wedding is a great excuse to nix generic wedding fare and instead serve local flavors: tacos, beach barbecue, whatever. The same goes for drinks: Toss out those big-brand generics and offer local craft brews and regional wines instead.

[10] LET THE HONEYMOON BEGIN Your wedding location may not be your honeymoon spot, but there's no reason you have to rush back to reality with your guests when the wedding ends. Spend a few extra days in paradise relaxing; you've earned it. ■

// DO'S & DON'TS

What to avoid and what to pull off on your big day.

DO your research before you commit — investigate the logistics and the costs of travel, lodging and the wedding itself.

DON'T plan to take on a lot of DIY projects. For a stress-free wedding, use reputable local resources.

DO add in extra travel time — you'll be much more relaxed when you can settle in at least two days before your guests arrive.

DON'T forget to bring along passports, vendor contracts and any other legal documents.

DO let the backdrop of your destination inform your style, and use it as the main part of your decor.

DON'T make your wedding too large to take advantage of intimate experiences.

DO offer unique activities for guests, and create memorable moments using local customs.

DON'T plan out every minute. Some of the best memories come from being spontaneous.

DO purchase travel insurance; it will give you peace of mind if something unexpected happens.

DON'T tell your guests about all the activities ahead of time — let some things be a surprise.

DO get appropriate vaccinations, and share this info with your guests too!

— *Wayne Gurnick, LA-based planner and founder of Moments by Wayne*

