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## Destination Weddings: No Longer Reserved For The Wealthy

By **Kirsten Hawkins**

For a long time the destination wedding, a wedding combined with a vacation for the couple,

wedding party, and guests, was an exotic treat attainable only by the extremely wealthy. This is no longer the case as destination weddings have, in recent years, become an attainable and attractive alternative for more and more couples seeking to put an enjoyable romantic spin on their nuptial occasion. Destination wedding planners like to advertise that the destination wedding can cost thousands less than a traditional wedding. While this may or may not be true, depending on what a particular couple plans to spend on their traditional wedding as opposed to what they'll have to spend for a destination wedding, it is certainly a fact that a destination wedding is no longer completely out of the question for the average couple. If you're interested in celebrating your own marriage ceremony with a destination wedding, here are some helpful pointers that can have you enjoying your wedding in a vacation locale without completely emptying the coffers.

Your Destination Doesn't Have to be Distant:

One of the truly beautiful things about living in the United States is that we have vacation spots nearly everywhere. By planning your destination wedding in a place that is relatively close to home, you can save considerably on airfare or other travel arrangements. Do you live on the East Coast? Make Orlando, Florida your destination and enjoy your honeymoon with Mickey Mouse. Already in Florida and been to Disneyworld far too many times? Set your sights on the Big Apple and enjoy a destination wedding in the City that Never Sleeps. Maybe you're in the Midwest? If so a destination wedding in Chicago may have just the right romantic touch for you. You could also consider heading south to Texas to visit the Alamo. Live in the Southwest or Northwest? Then Las Vegas and Los Angeles are mere hours away by plane. The point is that your destination wedding doesn't have to be held in London, Paris, or Munich to be an event you will remember fondly and cherish forever.

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### Plan Ahead and Get Group Rates:

Everyone knows that air passage costs less when booked and purchased well in advance. Be sure to make the reservations for your destination wedding far ahead of time to get the best value for you and your guests. Also, utilize the services of a talented travel agent who can negotiate your airfare and hotel accommodations all together. Doing so can save you an amazing percentage of the overall cost of your destination wedding.

### If There's an 'Off Season,' Take Advantage of It:

Many of the vacation spots around the country have an off season where the rates for hotels, airfare, and attractions are quite lower than they are during their busier times. By planning your destination wedding during these non-peak times you can save money and enjoy your destination when there are fewer tourists getting in the way of your enjoyment.

Kirsten Hawkins is an event planner from Nashville, TN. Visit

<http://www.wedding411.net/>

for more

event planning tips, strategies, and resources.

## **Booming Wedding Market**

### **By George Meszaros**

According to a recent survey entitled "American Wedding Study 2006," conducted by The Conde Nast Bridal Group, concludes that the average amount spent on weddings has increased to almost \$28,000.

It is predicted that 2.3 million Americans will get married this year, and there will be more than 44,000 weddings each weekend with 380 million wedding guests attending.

With an average age of 27, brides are becoming more mature than ever. About 70 percent are paying, at least partially, for their own weddings. Unexpected costs are common as over one third of couples are spending more than planned.

"This authoritative survey shows that the wedding industry is not only vital but is in fact thriving," says Daniel Lagani, vice president and publisher of The Conde Nast Bridal Group. "Couples are entering this 'Wedding Lifecycle' from the engagement to the reception right up to the honeymoon in ever growing numbers flush with happiness and optimism," Lagani says.

Approximately 16 of all weddings are destination-weddings. Destination-weddings are still expensive, but, on average, cost a couple of thousand dollars less than traditional weddings.

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Destination-weddings are expected to have an average of 63 guests while traditional weddings are estimated to have 165 guests.

The most popular time for engagements are still the winter holidays with December being the busiest month of engagement. The time frame between engagement and marriage is 14 months.

In light of significant cost increases and a considerable delay in getting married, expect "The Echo Boom," children of the Baby Boomer generation who make up 71 million men and women to emerge. "They are the next big generation to move into the 'engagement zone,' as the oldest in the group will reach the marriage age of 27 in 2006," Lagani says.

The top three growth categories in wedding spending are wedding photography, attendants' gifts, and wedding rings.

Author: George Meszaros

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