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Wedding Destination Tips From Two Gurus

By Norm Goldman

Wedding Destination Tips From Two Gurus by Norm Goldman, Editor of

Sketchandtravel.com & Bookpleasures.com

Today Norm Goldman, Editor of Sketchandtravel.com & Bookpleasures.com is pleased to have as a guest, Denise and Alan Fields, authors of BRIDAL BARGAINS and the BRIDAL PASSPORT WEDDING PLANNER. Both are in bookstores nationwide or you can order online at WINDSORPEAK.COM.

The Fields have been featured on the TODAY SHOW, OPRAH and DATELINE NBC.

Thanks Denise and Alan for accepting our invitation to be interviewed.

Norm:

Please tell our readers how you started writing about weddings and why did you want to write about this subject matter?

Denise and Alan:

We began writing in 1989 as we were planning our own wedding; yep, we are still married today. As two starving college students in Austin, Texas, we quickly realized planning a wedding was a darn expensive endeavour. We wanted to know how to save money but still have a nice wedding without getting ripped off. We heard the horror stories from our friends and decided the world needed a consumer's guide to tying the knot. Bridal Bargains, our first wedding book, was the result of that effort it was first published in 1990 and now is in its 7th edition, with 500,000 copies sold. Our latest book, the Bridal Passport wedding planner (the Dollars & Sense Guide to Planning a Wedding) was published in December 2004.

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Norm:

What in your opinion makes for a wonderful and unique wedding experience, where everyone would be left with fond memories? As a follow up, do you have to spend a great deal of money to have such a memorable experience?

Denise and Alan:

Think about the best weddings you have ever attended and what made them so memorable? Chances are it was a FUN event first and foremost. That might have been a combination of several factors, a unique setting, a great band, and so on. Focus on those factors when planning your own wedding. Conversely, realize there are many parts of a wedding that are expensive, but contribute little to the fun aspect of a wedding flowers, for example.

No, you don't have to go bankrupt to plan a memorable wedding! Yes, you may have to make a series of trade-offs to pull it off, but you can save and still have a fantastic wedding. Example: instead of a fancy downtown hotel, you can rent a historic home that lets you bring in your own caterer. That enables you to hold the total cost down, way under what the hotel would charge. The key: you save money in ways your guests don't see. A bottle of house wine from a hotel might be \$50; that same bottle from a wholesale club like Sam's or Costco would run \$10. Do you guests know the difference? No.

A destination wedding is another great way to save and you have a special setting for your wedding, without all the cost of a domestic affair.

Norm:

What tips would you have for destination brides who plan to bring along a wedding party? It's a growing trend for destination weddings to now have a fairly sizeable wedding party sometimes about 50, so it would be great to get their tips on group airline discounts, hotel blocks.

Denise and Alan:

Good news: the travel biz has awakened to the destination-wedding trend. As a result, many airlines and resorts have special discount packages for those planning a wedding. Airlines, for example, are courting destination weddings with special group discounts. Many resorts now have on-staff wedding planners to ease planning; and special discount rates for blocks of rooms.

The best advice: work with the airlines group booking department and/or the resort's meeting planners. And always double check to make sure any special rate you get is really a deal and simply price the same stay or fare on a travel web site. Most travel companies honestly offer groups a better deal than regular travelers; but it always makes sense to double check.

Norm:

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Could you tell us something about the advantages and disadvantages pertaining to different unique venue weddings as: beach, park, museum, mountain ski lodge, tent, train, yacht, and other sometimes off-the-wall sites? (Perhaps you can add a few of your own.)

Denise and Alan:

Name a destination and you can get married there—ski buffs can take their vows on a mountain top in Telluride, beach fans on the white sands of Aruba and so on. The key advantage of a destination wedding: you are already in the place where you will honeymoon. That cuts down on the travel, as you just travel once to both the wedding and honeymoon.

With all unique venues and destination weddings, the biggest trade-off is control. You will have to trust a wedding planner at the venue to help coordinate the details. And that means not being a control freak. Many tropical venues may offer a stunning setting, but slim pickings when it comes to finding a photographer (there may just be one or two on an island). Ditto for other remote locales, like a ski resort.

Norm:

If you had to choose 5 ideal geographic wedding destinations from the point of view of ambiance, costs, etc, which ones would you chose and why?

Denise and Alan:

Hawaii is probably the best combo of both ambience and ease of use and no changing dollars into a foreign currency, a very developed tourist biz and so on. Specifically, we would recommend the north shore of Kauai in the summer; Maui or the Big Island in the winter.

Mexico offers the best value for the dollar. A falling dollar has made foreign travel pricey just about everywhere, but the peso remains a relative bargain for Americans. Resorts like Cabo, Cancun and Puerto Vallarta offer that beach wedding (and Caribbean water) at a discount price. Top pick: Cozumel, for its excellent snorkelling.

Telluride is our favorite mountain resort to tie the knot, summer or winter. Winter lets you enjoy a world-class ski mountain; summer is hiking, white water rafting. A selection of the top restaurants makes this a winner year around.

Orlando is among the best bargains going and most airlines offer deals on air/hotel packages here and the raft of entertainment options is second to none. And its more than just Disney . . . you will find Universal, Sea World and a plethora of water parks.

Norm:

Do you have any tips as to how couples can get the best value for their dollar when they are

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honeymooning?

Denise and Alan:

Two words: shoulder season. The shoulder season is the space between high and low seasons. No, you probably don't want to go to a tropical isle in August. How about April? In the Caribbean, you can find great deals in the shoulder season after Easter but before summer vacation times.

Hawaii is cheapest rate after New Year's until mid March, when spring break crowds end deals. Deals also abound in Hawaii in the fall, from Labor Day until just before Christmas. Hence, November would be a great time to go for a honeymoon.

Fall is also a great time to visit the wine country of California or the Rocky Mountains on a honeymoon.

Norm:

What are the 5 most important factors, cost-wise, a future bride and groom should bear in mind when planning their wedding and why?

Denise and Alan:

Location, guest count, time of day and wedding style are the most important budget factors. Some thoughts:

Location: Where do you envision the wedding? Reception? The location will drive much of the cost. A hotel reception is much more expensive than a home wedding, for example.

Guest count. A no brainer this clearly impacts the budget!

Time of day. A 2pm wedding is much less expensive than an evening affair, Why? Guests already

have had lunch and are not expecting dinner! Brunch or lunch reception are also less expensive than dinner.

Wedding style: Do you have envision a garden wedding? A beach-side ceremony? Or a formal Catholic mass? The style of your wedding is a major driver of costs.

Norm:

How does one go about finding out about the different marriage regulations around the world? Is there a web site that we can click on et voilà we have the answer?

Denise and Alan:

Wish there was! Unfortunately, it takes a bit of surfing. Start by identifying which countries you are

interested in: then Google their official tourism site. Most tourism bureaus now have wedding links on their front page . . . in a few clicks, you can find out the marriage requirements. Another idea: ask the concierge of the hotel or resort you are considering to be married at. Many now have wedding planners on staff.

Norm:

How does one go about checking on the reliability of a hotel or resort when it pertains to service, food, etc especially if the hotel or resort is located in another state, province or country?

Denise and Alan:

The web! Most wedding sites (including ours, bridalbargiansbook.com) have online message boards. You can chat with other brides and find other couples who have been married where you are considering . . . yes, that is possible! Of course, you can always ask for references from the resort, but

this can be unreliable. Sites like tripadvisor.com have detailed reviews of resorts by travellers and that can be very helpful.

Best wishes,

Alan & Denise

Norm Goldman is the editor of the travel site, sketchandtravel.com and bookpleasures.com. Norm and his artist wife Lily are a unique husband and wife team. They meld words with art focusing on romantic destinations and hospitality properties. Norm and Lily are always open to receive invitations from romantic destinations and hospitality properties in the USA.

Destination Weddings

By Kirsten Hawkins

No matter where you and your future groom are wed, your wedding will have the same meaning and give you the same new start to a beautiful beginning together, however destination weddings can add a little extra touch to the wedding of your dreams.

When planning a destination wedding talk about different places where you would like to be united. An advantage to having a destination wedding is being able to have your ceremony and honeymoon in the same location. One way to get some ideas about where to hold your destination wedding is to check out some of the different resort locations on the internet. Most resorts offer wedding packages that have everything included, even a wedding planner. All you need to do is provide the bride and groom! If you want more control over your big day use these tips and ideas for planning one of the biggest days in your life.

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As with every wedding, prepare a wedding planner or organizer. This will keep tasks organized and remind you of dates that certain tasks need to be accomplished by. Remember that by having a destination wedding, you will be planning your event long distance, so it will be important to have a list of things that need to be done before you arrive.

When inviting guests to your destination wedding, send out announcements early, letting them know which hotel to call to reserve rooms, as well as dates and times for plane tickets so they can be purchased in advance. You may also think about having a large reception when you return home for those who cannot attend your wedding. Send out separate announcements for this and let them know they will have a chance to congratulate you at a later date.

For destination weddings it is important to check on regulations and laws. If you are being married outside of the United States, be sure to have passports, blood tests, a U.S. marriage license, if needed, and any other paperwork that will need to be completed. Stay ahead of the game so when you arrive at your destination everything is in order.

Also consider how you will get your attire to your destination wedding. Rather than trying to check everything in at the airport on the day you fly out, ship everything separately two weeks in advance. Call the destination and confirm that everything arrived in a peaceful state. This will also give you two weeks extra time in the event that something is damaged in travel.

Do not forget to hire a photographer, clergy, wedding planner and bakery to complete your wedding. For information on different services offered, you can contact the destination's Visitor Bureau.

A few of the more popular destination wedding spots include Jamaica in the Caribbean, the Florida Keys, the blue waters of Hawaii, and Las Vegas, with its hundreds of wedding chapels.

As long as you plan ahead and expect a few challenges, your destination wedding is sure to be day to remember.

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

for more

event planning tips, strategies, and resources.

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