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*101 best
planning tips*

Ideas that work wherever you go

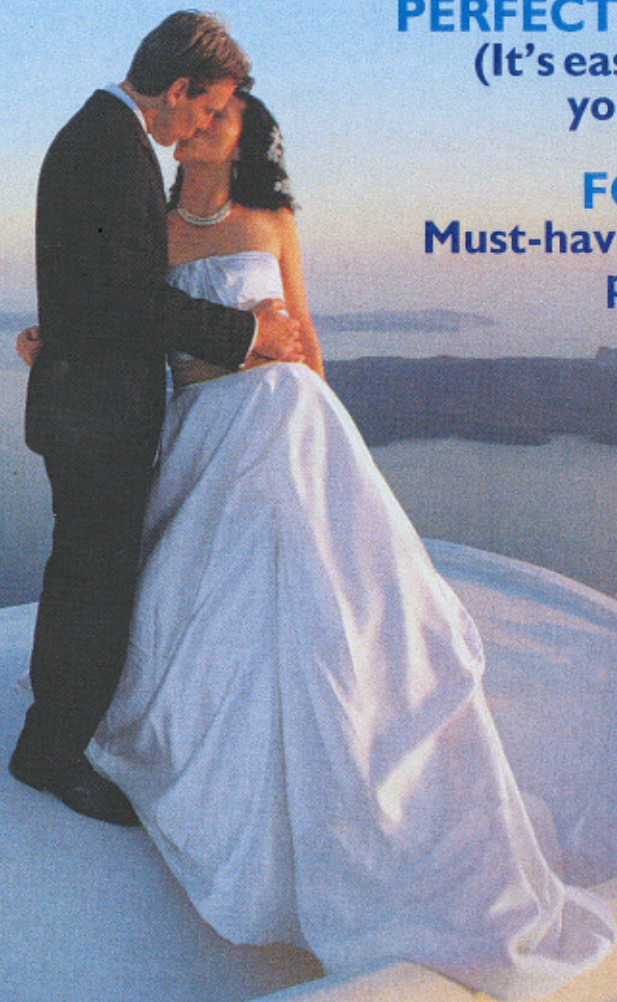


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101 Top Planning Tips

We polled the experts, and here's the result: great advice that works wherever you wed

written by lisa milbrand illustrations by edwin fotheringham

You're gathering your favorite people in the world for one of the biggest celebrations of your life — no wonder you feel a bit of pressure to ensure every detail is absolutely perfect! We've compiled 101 pieces of advice to help you every step of the way, from deciding on a destination to showing your guests a good time. Follow these tricks, and you'll plan an amazing event that guests will still be raving about years after you tied the knot.

Picking a Place

Think about your priorities.

1 Is it more important that the destination fits your budget, that it has certain attributes or that it's easily accessible for you and your guests? "Even if you know you want a beach or a historic inn, you can truly find yourself all over the map," says Karen Bussen, author of *Simple Stunning Weddings*. "Once you decide what your priorities are, you'll be able to narrow it down to a few key options."

Study your site's personality.

2 Nearby locales can vary greatly in geography, culture and amenities. "Every island here is unique — Bora Bora is very different from Taha'a," says Laura Nicolas, guest relations manager at Bora Bora Pearl Beach Resort and Spa in French Polynesia. "People who come here without having done research can be very surprised."

Get the scoop on a potential location.

3 Look on websites like *epinions.com* and *tripadvisor.com* for real-people opinions of resorts. Read through the reviews to get an overall impression, and take any raves or pans with a grain of salt.

Keep your guests in mind.

4 If a friend or family member is flight-phobic, even your wedding may not be incentive enough to get her halfway around the world.

Watch your numbers.

5 Many sites require you to have a certain number of guests to book the space; if you don't have enough, you could end up paying for meals or rooms for guests who are no-shows. Conversely, if you're marrying at a rural B&B, you may need to keep your guest list small so everyone can be accommodated.

Do your research to ensure you get what you want.

6 A hotel's claim of "luxury" may not match your idea of the word. Study the details to get a truer sense of what to expect.

Get a guarantee.

7 If you chose your villa for that mega hot tub or elaborate barbecue grill, get a written guarantee that everything will be in working order when you arrive or you'll get a significant savings on the rental.

If you can, scout it.

8 The cost is well worth the peace of mind you'll feel after meeting with your vendors in person and seeing how the site works.

Factor in all the costs when you're determining affordability.

9 In some parts of the world, hotel taxes and resort fees can add 20 percent to the room cost.

Know the marriage rules.

10 If there are residency requirements or paperwork needs you can't fulfill, consider having a legal union at home and a nonbinding ceremony at the site.

Remember the currency rates.

11 As the dollar's value fluctuates, so does the cost of your wedding. Currently, hosting an event in Europe can tack on an extra 50 percent, while South America may be a bargain.

Find out exactly what's included in the package price.

12 Some resorts include just the location fee, and you'll pay extra for flowers and food; others will include decor and even photography in their price.

Have a plan B.

13 Ask what options are available if the weather doesn't cooperate. Your resort may have an indoor location you could use, or they may allow you to postpone things until later in the afternoon or even the following day.

Find out what happens if your guests stay off-site.

14 Some resorts require a day fee for visiting guests from other hotels.