

Destination Weddings in Hawaii:

Expert advice on planning your big day from afar



I S L A N D E V E N T S



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Most brides dream of their wedding day – the dress, the floral arrangements, the string quartet, the magic of the day – years before their actual walk down the aisle. They have clipped pictures from magazine, downloaded web pages and arranged them by category in a three-ring, tabbed binder. To these brides, the success of the ceremony lies in the details and her ability to have every aspect of her day organized and executed perfectly. For many, the wedding ceremony is much more than a commitment of love between two individuals; it is also a major life milestone signifying the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. Therefore, the bride and groom should be free to enjoy every moment with each other, friends and family while the intricate details are expertly handled by a professional, luxury - acuminated wedding planner.

According to expert romantic travel writer and past panel moderator at The New York Times Travel Show,

Susan Breslow Sardone notes that “16 percent of marriages are destination weddings... [and] the destination wedding marketing accounts for \$16 billion in annual spending.”¹ Second only to Las Vegas, Hawaii is the top-preferred destination wedding location.² Although “destination weddings are becoming increasingly popular and have seen a 30% rise in the recent past,”³ planning a luxury destination is still considered by many to be a daunting task due to the logistical challenges of being thousands of miles away.



Furthermore, despite the fact that Hawaii is part of the United States, it is very culturally different from the Mainland. In some cases, the expectations of a well-heeled Mainland bride from Los Angeles or New York

City may be interpreted another way than originally intended. Therefore, when choosing a planner for your luxury destination wedding, it is essential that he or she understands the couple at a personal level and can interpret their style into the ceremony’s and reception’s ambiance and relay those expectations into results within the local culture.

With this in mind, there are several guiding principles that every bride planning a destination wedding in Hawaii – or elsewhere – should be familiar with in order to have a successful and stress-free experience.

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Communicating Your Style

In some instances, a bride will have an image of her dream wedding and all the elements visualized and decided upon long before the wedding making the planning process an easier one for the planner and the bride. While another bride may not be able to articulate her personal style, but when presented choices can narrow down the selection. An expert luxury wedding planner will appreciate both types of brides, analyze their personalities through conversation and accordingly lead them in the right direction to meet their needs. Conversely, an inexperienced planner will interject their ideas on the bride - creating stress for the bride and the planner when these two sets of expectations do not run hand in hand.



The beauty of a destination wedding is that it tells a story of how two people fell in love and reflects the hosts' personalities. To achieve a wedding of this caliber, the planner must take the time to get to know the bride and groom personally – even before the first wedding-related question is ever asked or any decisions made. The following are the types of questions an expert luxury wedding planner will ask the bride and groom to depict their individual style:

- Tell me about yourselves
 - What do you like to do on a date night?
 - What is romantic to you
 - Where do you like to shop for clothes, furniture, etc.?
 - Are there particular clothing designers that you like
- How did you meet your spouse-to-be? Describe the setting and all the details.
- How would you describe your personal style?
- Tell me about your family and how you all get along.
- Tell me about a wedding you went to that you loved and why.

The most telling question a wedding planner should ask is, “Provide me with five words to describe your wedding. Sophisticated? Colorful? Tropical?” From those five words an experienced luxury wedding planner will know precisely the direction to guide the bride and groom, and begin to build-out an extravagant event filled with lasting memories .

Interviewing Your Wedding Planner

“More than 21,000 couples responded to [The Knot’s 2009 Real Wedding Survey] and about 1 percent of them got married in Hawaii. Of those...62 percent [(married in Hawaii)] came from the Mainland...”⁴ Yet many of Hawaii’s luxury destination wedding planners do not have Mainland luxury wedding management experience. So, just as the planner must interview the bride to pinpoint her personal style so too must the bride interview the potential planner to be sure they will understand the expectations that will be forged as the planning commences It is essential that three questions are asked of the planner:

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- 1) Do you have a mixture of past experience on both Hawaii and the Mainland
- 2) Tell me about a past luxury wedding you planned.
- 3) What types of elements do you think are needed to have a truly extravagant and lavish wedding?

Because of the distance and commitment of funds, a bride must feel completely comfortable and trust her wedding planner. The best planners will know the right vendor partners to work with in order to match the level of luxury expected for the celebrations including all of the pre- and post-wedding events. He will know the logistics of Hawaii (or the given destination wedding location), understand the challenges of the location such as weather, tides, location for the optimum sunset photograph and traffic flows between the ceremony site and the reception location. Being sure that all of his event partners are properly insured is vital to the experienced wedding planner - especially in an island culture. As with any event - the experienced destination wedding planner has a back -up plan for everything from wedding dresses to tents so your guests will only see a seamless wedding celebration from the moment they arrive.



a few components one should consider:

- Personalized welcome gifts and notes in the hotel rooms of family and friends that have traveled hundreds or thousands of miles to be a part of your wedding day. Gifts could include monogrammed beach towels and beach bags (guests' initials) or local couture chocolates, soaps or personalized travel kits with sun block , hats, maps and wedding-branded bottled water.
- Lei greetings at the Honolulu International Airport and guided service to assist in getting guests to a luxury transfer to their hotel via limousine car service.

The Difference is in the Details

The largest differentiating among planners factor lies in the planner's ability to manage the details – and more importantly, the unexpected details. When arranging the minute details of a luxury destination wedding, here are



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- A bottle of champagne awaiting the parents of the bride and groom in their hotel rooms with a ‘Thanks for Everything’ note.
- Planning unique pre- and post-wedding events such as a groom’s golf tournament, bridesmaids’ and ladies’ afternoon tea, or a pre-wedding sunset catamaran cocktail cruise.

The planning of a destination wedding should be an exciting time for any soon-to-be-married couple and as stress-free as possible. The key to a successful

destination wedding is having a planner on location that communicates at the level expected and delivers what is promised. Open and frequent communication is “a must,” and a professional destination wedding planner will be more than familiar operating with high-end vendor partners and exceeding his clients’ every expectation.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Susan Breslow Sardone, “Facts and Statistics about Engagement, Wedding and Honeymoon Events,” About.com *Guide to Honeymoons and Romantic Travel*,” <http://honeymoons.about.com/bio/Susan-Breslow-Sardone-244.htm>, Accessed: May 5, 2010.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Chris Jaegar, “Wedding Industry Statistics: Trends in Average Cost of a Wedding,” *Wedding Industry Statistics*, <http://www.marketingtobridesonline.com>, Accessed: May 6, 2010.
- 4 Erika Engle, “Hawaii attracts couples who prefer casual ‘I dos’,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, Honolulu, HI, February 18, 2010.

ABOUT ISLAND EVENTS

Island Events, LLC is Hawaii’s most distinctive, innovative full-service event management and production company. We are dedicated to providing creative vision and logistical expertise for events with measurable results. We specialize in delivering excellence to high profile corporate, private social, wedding and fundraising events with unsurpassed, high-touch client service. Island Events is the eminent choice of distinction for events in Hawaii.

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