

# Wedding bay

As Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa unveils its newest destination wedding package, Kavi Shah jets to Saint Lucia to find out what clients can expect for their big day

A dozen palm trees sway in the wind alongside a rustic driftwood arch and curving boardwalk aisle. Beyond is the most spectacular backdrop: deep blue waves crashing and a wide open blue sky. There's soft, warm sand between my toes and a sweet breeze whipping at my hair; it's unapologetically romantic.

This is Eternity Beach, one of two beachfront options for a wedding at the all-inclusive four-star Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa – yet, it feels a million miles away from a resort setting. It's set above a stretch of the property's mammoth one-mile beach, offering a secluded escape; you feel as if you're on a private beach.

"We always say there's 'something blue' included in your wedding day here," says Mia Chin, event sales manager at family-owned Coconut Bay, gesturing to the azure sea and sky. "It's the perfect backdrop for a wedding abroad."

The other serene setting for weddings is an oceanfront gazebo, while for those who prefer air-conditioned comfort there's the Bougainvillea banquet room. Both venues are in the resort's adult-only

area. "We only host one wedding a day, so the bride and groom enjoy exclusive use of the facilities," adds Mia.

## CARIBBEAN PEARL

With the market for destination weddings looking more positive for 2022, the resort – four-time winner of 'Best Destination Wedding Venue' at the British Wedding Awards – has released a new Pearl Wedding Package. Priced \$10,499, it includes a three-day celebration with rehearsal dinner and private sunset cruise, among other perks, for 40 guests. More-intimate packages are available too.

Natalia Greene, director of marketing at Coconut Bay, says: "With the cost of weddings spiralling, our packages are very budget-friendly [from \$799]. What's more, we can accommodate guests of all ages; so the couple can bring their flower boy and their grandpa."

"Pre-Covid, we'd host between 175 and 200 weddings a year, and our busiest time was April to June."

Now that flights with British Airways and Virgin Atlantic have resumed, travelling from the UK to Saint Lucia ➤

Something blue:  
wedding couple at  
Coconut Bay Beach  
Resort & Spa

PICTURE: Kiker



TRIED  
&  
TESTED

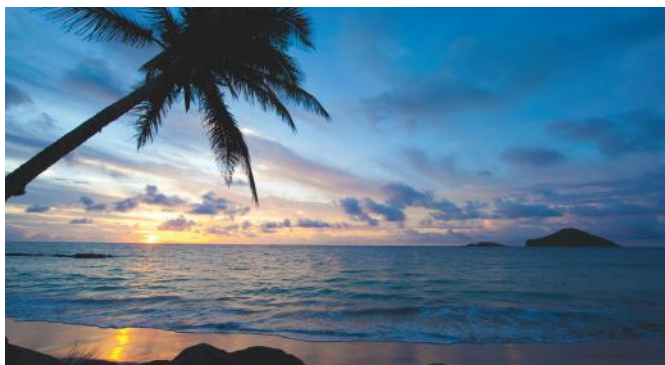
### SERENITY AT COCONUT BAY

Once clients have signed on the dotted line, they can check in to one of the 36 suites at adult-only all-inclusive Serenity at Coconut Bay for some honeymoon pampering. Saint Lucia is, after all, voted the Caribbean's Leading Honeymoon Destination.

Despite it being just a few steps across from the entrance of Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa, Serenity feels like a world away – intimate and utterly relaxed.

The VIP treatment starts immediately: think champagne ice lollies and fruit skewers delivered to your sunbed, bubble baths run by the butler, and meals delivered to the door.

Suites are spacious, with a private plunge pool, hammock, outdoor bar and outdoor deck. Guests have access to all the facilities at Coconut Bay Beach Spa & Resort too, making for a double whammy.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa; view from the beach; wedding ceremony on the resort's Eternity Beach PICTURES: Richard Hallman

is much easier, while a Covid travel insurance policy for around £30 for guests staying five nights or more covers medical or quarantine expenses in the event that Covid-19 disrupts a stay. Coconut Bay has also adopted a flexible approach to wedding bookings amid the pandemic. "We had one couple whose parents were elderly and didn't feel comfortable flying, so we've pushed their wedding date back," adds Natalia.

### BAREFOOT BEAUTY

The oceanfront resort has a relaxed, casual vibe and a lived-in feel. Its charm lies in its laidback Caribbean style. Formerly a coconut plantation, the resort is spacious – it shares 85 acres with sister property Serenity at Coconut Bay, a separate all-inclusive luxury suites resort just for couples.

Coconut Bay has a total of 250 rooms in mid-rise blocks – split across two 'wings', one for adults, the other for families – plus five swimming pools, nine restaurants, seven bars, a fitness centre, kids' club and waterpark. Note that the waterpark isn't just for children. Kids at heart can grab a cocktail – do try the Dirty Banana – and take it in hand for a ride on the lazy river.

As the hotel is located in the southeast coast, it does attract a lot of seaweed, but the Coconut Bay tractor team get to work every hour, so the beach stays clean.

Mia shares an insider tip: "If you book the wedding date close to one of the resort's full moon parties, you'll enjoy an incredible night of celebrations on the beach with glow sticks, a DJ, flowing drinks and a bonfire." But

there's always lots going on, from twice-weekly themed dinners with entertainment (don't miss the Caribbean night!), to silent discos, formal dinners and foam parties.

The all-inclusive offering for wedding groups takes the stress out of paying for drinks, leaving everyone free to enjoy themselves without restrictions.

The best verdict comes from those who have tied the knot there. Michala Mackay, 42, a senior care worker, married her partner of 14 years, Ashley, 38, at Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa in January 2022.

"The team answered all our many questions, and nothing was too much trouble," says Michala. "Kiki in the spa did my hair and make-up. The oceanfront ceremony was beautiful and we had all our 16 guests in the gazebo with us, so it was very intimate. After the ceremony, we had cocktails on the green while a steel band played. We were then transferred down to Eternity Beach for our reception. Every one of our guests said it was the best wedding they'd been to." **TW**

### BOOK IT

A week's stay at **Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa** for two adults on a premium all-inclusive basis starts at £1,468 per person, including flights from Gatwick with British Airways, based on travel from October 4-11. The Pearl Wedding Package costs \$10,499 and includes wedding planning, a three-day celebration for up to 40 guests, food, cake, flowers and entertainment.

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