

Green weddings

With hotels and operators working to meet demand for more eco-friendly destination weddings, Yolanda Zappaterra gets some tips from the experts

Recent travel trends have consistently shown that for many couples planning their perfect destination wedding, sustainability is high on the list of considerations. With an increasing number of operators, destinations and resorts responding to those trends, we offer some tips for clients looking to make their weddings as sustainable as possible.

FLY GUESTS SHORT-HAUL

Virgin Atlantic and Etihad are just two of the airlines committed to net-zero emissions by 2050, using more sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and fuel-efficient aircraft such as the Airbus A320neo family, A350-900, and Boeing 787-8 and 787-9.

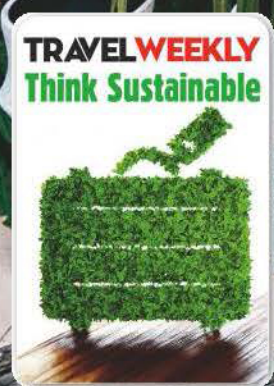
Prue Stone, director of sustainability at Hotelplan UK, advises using an aggregator such as Skyscanner to measure the carbon footprint of flights, and considering more eco-friendly options in short-haul destinations. On the popular Greek island of Santorini, for example, the carbon-negative hotel Carpe Diem and The Dunes wedding venue run on 100% certified renewable wind and solar energy, just one of a plethora of sustainability incentives.

EMBRACE THE GLAMOUR OF RAIL

"The time difference between many short-haul flights and rail journeys can be surprising," says Stone, who links a growing desire for no-flight travel with an increase in better and faster connections across Europe. The new Orient Express La Dolce Vita, booking for journeys in 2024, offers a luxury start to a wedding in dream destinations such as Tuscany, where the elegant eco farmhouse Borgo Pignano's strong commitment to sustainable tourism is reflected in its 2020 Green Globe Certification.

MAKE A DIFFERENT KIND OF PLEDGE

Remi Giromella, head of sustainability at The Datai Langkawi in Malaysia, advises agents to work with clients to "make sure resorts are implementing a genuine conservation and regenerative programme or initiative." She adds: "Being part of EarthCheck or B Corp (or being recognised by other environmental certification bodies) is a good way to measure their real impact on the environment and community." Its own The Datai Pledge has been awarded a range of conservation and sustainability accreditations since its launch in 2019. ➤



The Datai Langkawi, Malaysia

DESTINATIONS

WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS | SUSTAINABILITY



ABOVE: Stand-up paddleboarding at Blue Safari

PICTURES: Anthony Grote; Miguel Juarez

ADD LOCAL TOUCHES

Sustainable travel is as much about local engagement as it is the wider environment. "Whether it's a holiday or a wedding, if you're looking for a sustainable experience, when you get there, be there," urges Stone. "Really engage with the destination and the people. And stay longer." Eleanor Karhu, ecology and sustainability manager at Blue Safari, which includes the Alphonse Island Resort in the Seychelles Outer Islands, adds: "The theme of your wedding should reflect where you want to have it." The resort's own commitment to sustainability is echoed in a wedding package that uses only flowers and vegetation sourced on the island.

CHOOSE PLANT-BASED OPTIONS

Many resorts are addressing the issues of food waste and miles by using more local produce, donation programmes and composting leftovers. In the Maldives, Lux South Ari Atoll's Keen on Green concept sees every restaurant at the resort, which holds a Green Globe certificate, offer a variety of plant-based dishes from locally sourced ingredients. It's just one of the many sustainable initiatives that helped it win the Best Eco-friendly Resort 2022 in the South Asian Travel Awards.

"Sustainable travel is a constant evolution, and eco-certification is still a minefield," says Stone. For clients who find the complexities bewildering, she identifies three broad areas to focus on when planning and researching: "Have a lighter footprint, reinvest in nature, and make sure that wherever you have your wedding, there is community involvement, awareness and connection." **TW**

SUSTAINABLE *weddings*



The Dunes, Carpe Diem, Santorini, Greece

With 10 suites set around an infinity pool overlooking the Aegean Sea, the carbon-negative Carpe Diem is a perfect option for short-haul destination weddings.

Book it: A two-night minimum stay in the Alba Suite starts at £1,072, based on two sharing on a B&B basis. Venue hire for weddings, for a seven-and-a-half-hour ceremony and reception for up to 50 guests, costs £3,828.

carpediemsantorini.com/weddings



Borgo Pignano, Tuscany, Italy

Set in a picturesque 750-acre organic estate, this beautiful Tuscan resort offers a range of accommodation, including an 18th-century villa featuring frescoes and antique furnishings.

Book it: Three nights' B&B in the Artist's Studio maisonette costs from £1,669 per person, including flights from Gatwick on May 27. Wedding prices vary.

elegantresorts.co.uk



The Datai Langkawi, Malaysia

A natural setting of sea, mangroves and ancient virgin rainforest set

against the backdrop of Mount Machincang, along with a pledge to create a sustainable environment for the future, are just two reasons to consider a wedding here.

Book it: Red Savannah offers a seven-night private journey in Malaysia from £2,887 per person. The price includes seven nights' B&B in a Deluxe Canopy Room, return flights from Heathrow via Kuala Lumpur, and private airport transfers. Based on travel in June and two sharing. Wedding prices vary.

redsavannah.com



Andaz Mayakoba, Mexico

The 214 rooms are filled with bright, local motifs in a resort that's been awarded the country's highest-level

certification in environmental performance for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Development. The weddings and operations team are certified by Playa Pride, a local non-profit organisation that supports the LGBTQ+ community.

Book it: Elegant Resorts offers seven nights' B&B in a King Room at £1,969 per person, based on two adults sharing, travelling on September 5. Includes return BA flights from Gatwick, private transfers and UK Lounge passes. It can be combined with a wedding package from £7,370.

elegantresorts.co.uk



Alphonse Island, the Seychelles

Located 250 miles southwest of Mahé, Alphonse Island offers a range of laid-back weddings that reflect

its commitment to sustainability.

Book it: Prices start at £7,285 per person for seven nights' full-board based on two people sharing a Beach Bungalow, including internal flights and economy flights from London with Etihad Airways. Valid for stays until December 31. Wedding packages start at £5,576.

lussotravel.com/hotels/alphonse-island



Lux South Ari Atoll, the Maldives

A zero-waste wedding funding the education of a child at a local care home is just one reason to consider a planet-

friendly wedding at this resort.

Book it: Rooms start at £268 per night on a B&B basis in June, based on two sharing, excluding seaplane transfers. The Boho wedding package starts at £3,073.

luxresorts.com