

Weddings 3 ways

save, spend, splurge

Let's face it, weddings don't come cheap – in fact, the average UK wedding now costs around £27,000. Ouch.

Tying the knot abroad can mean slicing that to barely a quarter of the cost, with the average spend for Kuoni coming in at £7,500 – and that includes a holiday in paradise too.

With that in mind it's little surprise more betrothed Brits are flocking overseas; by the end of 2017, wedding bookings were up 14% year on year for the operator.

That's good news on both sides. For you it means high-value, commission-heavy bookings, while for your clients it means hassle-free planning and idyllic ceremonies beneath blue skies.

To help tailor it to the right client, we've put together a guide to some of the best options to fit different budgets, with everything from quaint little chapels to grand Italian castles offering something to suit the keenest bargain-hunter or the next Meghan and Harry.

▶ SAVE

Croatia is something of a saviour on the bargain-hunt front. For an option that includes loads of added extras, Jet2holidays recommends the four-star Hotel Amfora Grand Beach Resort in Split, set in a secluded bay close to the cobbled streets of Hvar.

It offers a wine reception, three-course dinner, dedicated

wedding coordinator and round table set-up from €129 per person when at least 50 guests attend. But that's not all: the bride and groom also get a free night and breakfast thrown in when they stay at least three nights, and all wedding guests get a room discount. Seven nights' B&B with Jet2holidays costs £1,039 per person based on a July 12 departure.

Over in Cyprus the four-star Mediterranean Beach Hotel offers decent value too, with a ceremony available for €935 for up to 30 guests (plus a £289 admin fee) through Olympic Holidays. Ceremonies take place in an idyllic gazebo, and the couple can choose to have a

reception in either the gardens or ballroom afterwards. There's also a spa on hand for couples wanting some pre or post-wedding pampering, and extras available including cake and dining packages, which range from €50 to €65 per person.

But if it's a more traditional affair clients are after, look no further than Peyia Town Hall, just outside Paphos, where Planet Holidays offers a basic package for £932 including wedding fees, licence, coordinators in the UK and Cyprus, and all paperwork. Civil ceremonies take place under a wooden gazebo in the courtyard with gardens and historic stone steps as a backdrop, plus

Weddings don't have to cost the earth, unless the happy couple want to go all out, finds Laura French

@laurafrench121

→ commissionable extras available including flowers, photography, cake, reception, dinner, accommodation and musicians to add a little va-va-voom.

► SPEND

For those willing to splash a little more cash, suggest going farther afield. The Caribbean comes high on the list for overseas weddings thanks to relatively light paperwork on several of the islands, but it still doesn't have to mean spending the earth.

Sandals and Beaches Resorts offer a free wedding for couples staying more than three nights, with a ceremony, cocktail reception, wedding planner, entourage, cake and free manicure for the bride all part of the deal.

Those staying more than six nights qualify for 'premium perks' including credit to put towards room upgrades, government fees, videography packages, decoration and scuba diving. Locations include an overwater chapel – think colourful fish swimming beneath the couple as they say "I do" – at Sandals Grande St Lucian and Sandals South Coast, plus a Jamaican chapel at the latter too.

All AMResorts brands – which include Zoëtry, Secrets and Dreams Resorts & Spas – likewise offer a free wedding package for guests staying more than a week. Funway Holidays recommends Dreams Delight Playa Bonita in Panama for a private beach wedding on the Punta Bruja Nature



Overseas weddings mean high-value bookings for you, idyllic ceremonies and hassle-free planning for your clients

Reserve. "The weddings offered by the resort here are beautiful, overlooking the ocean with stunning sunrise views," says Malcolm Davies, product destination manager.

Even if couples opt for an upmarket resort, there are still savings to be made on the ceremony. In Saint Lucia, the iconic Jade Mountain offers couples staying five nights or more a free wedding package covering the basic legalities plus decorations, wedding arch, bouquets, buttonholes and a cake, with locations ranging from the outdoor Celestial Terrace to an 18th-century colonial plantation.

And in Mexico, 20° 87° Unico Riviera Maya offers a gazebo set-up,

minister, cake and sparkling wine as part of its Ultimate Wedding Package, complimentary to guests staying a week with Thomas Cook Weddings. Seven nights' all-inclusive in an Alcoba swim-up room, with return flights from Gatwick, costs from £1,984 per person departing November 19 with the operator. Couples staying two weeks at the resort also get added extras, while those wanting a little more detail can opt for one of several other packages, offering violin soloists, private dining and other bonuses.

But if it's more the Indian Ocean islands that appeal, look to the Seychelles – specifically Constance Ephelia on main island Mahé, says Kuoni. With beach and hillside villas on its elegant, beachfront complex the accommodation is top-notch, and it needn't mean breaking the bank. A light wedding package is available for £385, complete with legal fees, coordinator, cake, beach location, arrival present, bottle of sparkling wine and a wedding dinner to round it all off.



ABOVE: Mediterranean Beach Hotel, Cyprus

BELOW: Overwater chapel at Sandals South Coast, Jamaica



► SPLURGE

For those looking to really go all-out, you're not short on options.

For an extra-special ceremony in Thailand suggest The Sarojin, a 56-room retreat in the secluded resort of Khao Lak. It offers western weddings as well as Thai ceremonies in various locations – beneath an ancient fig tree in the tropical gardens, in the shadows of an almond tree on the beach, or at the Edge, an open-air restaurant overlooking rainforest



Sandals

INTRODUCING...
Our newest Wedding
Inspiration

ENGLISH ROYALTY



and white-sand beaches. Couples can see it through in style with a private barbecue on the sand. Prices for a package with up to 20 guests – including tailor-made vows, readings, music, flowers, cake, photography and breakfast the next morning – cost from around £2,820 with Kuoni, plus £616 to legally register their marriage in Bangkok prior to the ceremony.

Of course, for the ultimate in romance, nothing quite beats Italy and its historic castellos. Classic Collection Holidays says Malcesine Castle is one of its most in-demand, with rugged mountain peaks and historic ramparts surrounding couples as they say their vows above

“If clients are looking for ultimate privacy, though, there’s only one thing for it – a private island

Lake Garda. A deluxe package including wedding planner, town hall ceremony, venue, certificates, flowers, cake and sparkling wine starts from £2,590 with the operator, and they’ll get an excursion thrown in as an extra.

If clients are looking for ultimate privacy, though, there’s

only one thing for it – a private island. Castaway-style Lux Ile des Deux Cocos, set just off the mainland of Mauritius, offers just that with weddings from £2,186 per person for legal fees, wedding ceremony, set-up, wedding menu and dedicated coordinator, with exclusive hire available for an extra fee of €4,000.

Options in the Caribbean include Petit St Vincent in St Vincent and the Grenadines, ringed by white sand, swaying palms and beach villas. One of Carrier’s top recommendations, it offers a wedding programme with a professional photographer, images, cake, manicure for the bride, and champagne dinner for two, from \$7,000 per person,

and those wanting to have it all to themselves can hire the island out exclusively.

If clients want to rev that up one more gear, though, look no further than Mandarin Oriental Pink Sands Club on Canouan Island. “It offers bespoke wedding ceremonies, making sure every detail is personalised and tailored to the happy couple’s needs,” says Caribtours managing director Paul Cleary.

But the cherry on the cake has to be the ‘slice of paradise buyout’, which lets the couple take over the entire property – complete with all four restaurants, spa, beachfront and villas (price on request). Need we say more? **tw**

WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS WEDDING BUDGETS DESTINATIONS



LEFT:
Jade
Mountain,
Saint Lucia

RIGHT:
Malcesine
Castle, Lake
Garda, Italy

BELOW:
The Sarojin,
Thailand



PICTURES: LOU NETZGER; PHILIP KOSCHEL; ROLF WEISS; CH. JRDALIA.COM; SHUTTERSTOCK

Beaches

Our English Royalty Wedding Inspiration creates a fairy-tale come true. From flowing blush chiffon and blooms of blush and lavender roses to tables layered in pink and royal purple silky linens and place settings that marry romance and beauty, your client’s happily-ever-after will feel like a dream.



TO BOOK THE WORLD'S LEADING
ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORTS

Call 0808 164 3459

Visit sandals.co.uk/agents | Visit beaches.co.uk/agents

