

Venues with a view

Why fly long-haul when Europe has so many photogenic wedding options? Joanna Booth reports

From castles to cloisters, tavernas to temples, and with a few pretty blissful beaches thrown in, there isn't much Europe can't bring to the table when it comes to wedding venues. And with nice short flights - often from a range of regional airports - having a ceremony closer to home means clients can celebrate with family and friends, too.

Here's just a taster of what's on offer to your brides and grooms.

▶ THE CASTLE WEDDING

There's a pervasive air of vintage glamour across the Italian Lakes, but few venues can compete with Malcesine Castle for sheer wow factor. The sixth-century fortification sits on a cliff overlooking Lake Garda, above a maze of cobbled streets leading

to the water's edge. Views over the town are framed by Monte Baldo, the highest peak in the area. Ceremonies, which are performed by a local registrar in Italian and translated, can take place in rooms in the castle - one holds 40, the other, in the tower, 70, but the most popular option is on the terrace, which seats 70 and has panoramic views.

Citalia offers two wedding packages that cover the legal and administrative procedures and costs, (Classic: £2,151, Deluxe: £2,344), and can add on extras from photography to flowers.

Or try: For the full French fairytale, check out Chateau de Challain, bookable through Planet Weddings. All white walls and soaring turrets, ceremonies at this Loire Valley beauty can take place in the gardens

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or in the memorial tower.

France has strict residency requirements for foreign nationals getting married, so it's simpler for couples to tie the knot legally in the UK before having their ceremonial vows at the castle. There's a two-night minimum stay, which guarantees exclusive use. The price for a two-night Gold Wedding Package for 20 guests

starts from €22,900, including accommodation, welcome dinner, wedding morning breakfast, ceremony, photographer, flowers, music, five-course reception, canapés, cocktails, cake, evening party and morning after brunch.

▶ THE BEACH WEDDING

Picture-perfect beaches aren't just the preserve of the Caribbean or Indian Ocean. Europe can hold its own when it comes to stunning shorelines, and there are few more iconic than the Blue Lagoon beach at Oludeniz, Turkey. The water is turquoise, the sand is white, and the backdrop is of dramatic mountains - a protected area of outstanding beauty, no less.

Thomas Cook offers ceremonies performed [→](#)

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WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS EUROPEAN VENUES DESTINATIONS



LEFT: Blue Lagoon, Oludeniz

RIGHT: Chateau de Challain, Loire Valley

BELOW: Venice



by a local registrar on a gorgeous stretch of beach five minutes outside town, for up to 60 guests. Wedding packages start from £1,159, and include licence and certificate, ceremony and decoration, bouquet and buttonhole, cake and sparkling wine for eight people, bridal car, interpreter and sound system. **Or try:** Aphrodite is the Greek goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation - so who better to oversee a marriage? Legend has it that she rose from the waves at the dramatic rock formations just offshore near Paphos, Cyprus. Cyplon can

organise weddings on the beach by Aphrodite's Rock, performed by a local registrar, from \$1,600 including legal fees and venue hire. The beach is pebbly but with the rocks and crashing waves it's a theatrical spot to say 'I do'.

THE SPIRITUAL WEDDING Whether you have faith or not, there's something about a wedding venue with a bit of spirituality. Perhaps that's why the San Francesco Monastery Cloisters in Sorrento, Italy, is so popular. Or maybe it's due to their medieval good looks, with ceremonies taking place among

the vine-draped archways of the flower-filled cloisters. Packages with Thomas Cook start from £899 including ceremony, licence and certificate, bouquet and buttonhole, and a wedding coordinator. Extras can include arriving by horse and carriage. **Or try:** The early 14th-century monastery of Filerimos is set high in the mountains in Rhodes. Surrounded by woodlands and wildlife, with views of the sea, it's an incredibly peaceful spot to wed. Olympic Holidays can organise ceremonies in front of the magnificent stone cross monument from €120, with an

administration fee, plus any extras such as cakes, flowers, decoration, photography and transport on top.

THE BOAT WEDDING Sailors and landlubbers alike may be thrilled at the prospect of getting hitched on a yacht, and where better than in Cyprus, where the balmy summer season is reliably long? Cyplon offers weddings on board a luxury yacht, decorated as simply or extravagantly as the couple chooses, and in their selected colour scheme. Moored up in Paphos harbour for



OVER-THE-WATER WEDDING CHAPEL

Since December 2016, couples have had the option to tie the knot in this unique and picturesque wedding venue, which offers stunning 360-degree, panoramic water views and a glass floor aisle. Brides and grooms also have the option to make a grand entrance on their special day by arriving to the wedding chapel in style via boat.



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→ the duration of the ceremony, performed by a registrar, the couple and their guests (up to 150 of them) can sail off into the sunset for wining, dining, dancing, and hopefully a little romancing too. Prices start from £1,475 including legal fees and yacht rental.

Or try: For something more bijou, but no less romantic, why not wed on a gondola in Venice? Thomson can organise ceremonies conducted as the bride and groom glide along the iconic canals, and for an extra charge an accompanying vessel carrying a photographer and musician will travel in tandem. Packages start from £795.



▶ THE ROYAL WEDDING

We can't help clients bag a regal partner, but couples can have a wedding fit for a king and queen at Malta's Palazzo Parisio. Built as a prince's hunting lodge in the 18th century, a significant 20th-century embellishment made it truly palatial.

Think frescoes, chandeliers, statues and more gilding than



Vows are exchanged under the soaring Ionic columns of a marble temple on a cliff edge

you can shake your bouquet at. Ceremonies of different sizes can be accommodated, from simple civil ceremonies in the baroque gardens to lavish banquets for up to 1,000 in the mirrored ballroom. Packages with Thomas Cook start from £1,219 including bouquet and boutonhole, sparkling wine and cake, taxi transfers, certificate, wedding coordinator and government registration fee.

Or try: Rip up any stereotypical views about Majorca before booking Son Marroig in Deia. The estate formerly belonged to an Archduke of Austria and sits high above the sea with beautiful grounds and a gorgeous palace. It was bought by the eccentric aristocrat to save the area from development. Vows are exchanged under the soaring Ionic columns of a marble temple on a cliff edge, with the house available for receptions. Thomson offers packages starting at £2,515.

Or try: Iceland's Eyjafjallajokull volcano might be famous for screwing up everyone's travel plans when it erupted in 2010, but it's also an exciting wedding venue for adventurous couples. Thomson organises weddings on the volcano's ice-capped summit. Prices start from £3,519, including ceremony, jeep transfers, sparkling wine and cake, and flowers. **tw**



ABOVE: Ballroom, Palazzo Parisio, Malta

LEFT: Northern Lights Snow Chapel, Levi, Finland

▶ THE SNOWY WEDDING

It's always a nice day for a white wedding during the Finnish winter, and Inghams has a range of snowy venues to suit couples who want a *Frozen* feel for their nuptials. Couples travel to the snow chapel by reindeer sled, wed in the sparkling white surroundings, and then drink a toast from some truly chilled champagne! Prices start from £1,750.

New booking system

Sick of the wait to get final confirmation of venues, dates and times for weddings? A new booking system might be able to help. Bookyourweddingday.com allows agents to secure confirmed dates and venues instantly, at a cost of £100 on which 10% commission is offered. The service doesn't offer flights, accommodation or wedding services, which would compete with an agent or operator – it's merely a way of immediately reserving the ceremony. Currently the site offers reservations on venues in Greece and Cyprus, but plans to include other destinations too. bookyourweddingday.com 020 3876 6777