

I do, take two

Recreate the joy of the big day with a renewal of vows ceremony abroad, writes Aby Dunsby

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She wears a white fairy-tale gown and carries a fragrant bouquet. The guests smile and lean in as she walks towards him, keen to get a better view of the happy couple. It sounds like a wedding, especially with the pair about to say 'I do'. But this won't be the first time they will have uttered those words to each other.

Renewal of vows ceremonies are a trend with celebrities – couples who have retied the knot include Jay Z and Beyoncé, and David and Victoria Beckham – but they're popular with mere mortals too, particularly the over-50s.

A recent study by Saga found one in 14 people aged 50 and older have already renewed or are considering renewing their wedding vows. For many, it's a great way to celebrate a landmark anniversary; the study found that renewing vows is most popular with those who have been

married for 30 years or more. It's not just for the old-timers, though. Couples can renew their vows as soon as they like once they're married, and some will choose to do so several times in their lifetime. It can also be a positive way to reaffirm their commitment to each other after a rough patch in the relationship, while others do it to reignite the romance.

Whatever the reason, with their popularity on the rise, here is all the information you need to offer clients an unforgettable renewal of vows experience, giving you the perfect chance to upsell a couple's holiday in the process.

PERFECT MATCH

A renewal of vows typically has the same format as a wedding: often there's a ceremony followed by a reception, a meal for the guests, a photographer, flowers and a cake.

However, unlike an actual wedding, a renewal of vows isn't legally binding, which opens up a world of possibilities to clients. For starters, they can have the ceremony wherever they like, from a beach in the Maldives to a castle in the Highlands.

"One of our most unusual renewal of vows destinations is Mara Bushtops in the Masai Mara in Kenya," says Samantha →

TOP TIP

Ensure couples bring their marriage certificate as they might need it for a renewal of vows



ABOVE: Layana Resort & Spa, Thailand

→ Berry, Kuoni weddings team leader. The luxurious camp is raised above the remote plains for spectacular views, and the package includes quirks such as exclusive use of a safari vehicle on the day, a Maasai wedding dance at the ceremony and a private dinner on the tent veranda (from £3,538).

Alternatively, those who missed out on a traditional church wedding can fulfil their dream – it still won't count legally, of course, but the sense of religious experience will remain. Or for something more exotically spiritual, Thailand's Layana Resort & Spa offers a wedding-style package that involves a drum dance procession, chanting and a blessing by five Buddhist monks (renewal of vows package from £1,238).

FREE AND EASY

The symbolic nature of a renewal of vows ceremony also means



A renewal of vows gives couples the chance to relive their big day with children and even grandchildren

that destinations where it's tricky to legally marry are firmly on the cards, such as France and Spain where residency requirements can make getting married a lengthy process.

"You can renew your vows anywhere in the world," says Stephanie Bishop of Marry Abroad, which says enquiries for renewal of vows shot up by 400% last year. "European countries like Italy and Greece are popular for the romance factor, while unusual options

include Cambodia and Vietnam, as it's difficult to legally marry there. Indonesia and the Maldives are both Muslim countries and you can't marry legally there unless you live there, so they are good for vow renewal too."

Many Maldives hotels offer tailor-made packages for couples, including Park Hyatt Maldives Hadahaa, which offers a dedicated wedding planner, a choice of venues, and a couples' massage in the Vidham spa to prepare them for their big day (from £572 a night).

The Caribbean also remains a firm favourite for renewal of vows ceremonies, with many choosing to retie the knot on one of its myriad paradisiacal beaches. Sandals offers ReTie the Knot packages, which include pre-travel consultation with a coordinator. Kerrie-Anne Ford, weddings manager at Sandals, says: "Sandals Grande Antigua



has won numerous awards for being the most romantic resort in the Caribbean, and it boasts a vast variety of stunning ceremony locations for weddings and renewal of vows, from the long stretch of beach to the luscious botanical gardens and gazebos that decorate the property."

IN THE FAMILY

For clients hoping to book a renewal of vows escape, another key difference the second time around is the guest list. "It's usually just a few close family members who attend," says Mathilde Robert, managing director at Planet Weddings. "All of our destinations are short-haul, so it is easy for family and friends to join in. Greek islands such as Crete are popular, as the cost of flights and packages is very competitive, and often the couple wishes to pay for all the members of the family to attend."

For many couples, a renewal of vows allows them the chance to relive their special day with children and even grandchildren, making it all the more poignant the second time around. The lack of legal limitations means a family member can even officiate the ceremony, while the couple are free to pen their own vows.

For clients with children in tow, AMResorts' family-oriented Dreams Resorts & Spas properties are a great option for renewal of vows. In Mexico, clients can opt for the Dreams Ever After

renewal of vows package, which is complimentary for the couple when booking at least five nights in a higher room category.

PARTY SIZE

While some couples might choose to keep the ceremony small, others opt for a more lavish occasion than the original in an exotic destination.

"If a couple got married very young and didn't have much money for their ceremony, then often they will have a more opulent vow renewal," says Bishop from Marry Abroad.

Luxe options include the Maritim Resort & Spa in Mauritius, where renewal of vows ceremonies can take place in the lush gardens or on the beach beneath the gazebo;

BELOW:
Maritim
Resort & Spa,
Mauritius



packages start from £653.

Kuoni also offers the option to tailor-make all its packages, ensuring the ceremony is as personal and unique as possible whatever size the congregation might be.

Those that want the ceremony to involve just the two of them are probably even more likely to splash extra cash, and fuse the renewal of vows with a honeymoon-style holiday.

Robert at Planet Weddings says: "If couples want to renew their vows on their own – as a special moment for each other – then they can also push the boat out and stay in a top-class hotel or boutique property with butler service and simply spoil themselves; after all, they've probably earned it!" **TV**

FAR LEFT:
Sandals
Grande
Antigua

LEFT:
Dreams
Puerto
Aventuras
Resort & Spa,
Mexico



Funway offers seven nights at Dreams Tulum Resort & Spa, Mexico, including BA flights from Gatwick and all transfers, from £1,259, departing on September 12. The Dreams Ever After package is \$499. **funway4agents.co.uk**

Sandals offers seven nights' all-inclusive in a Caribbean Club Level Veranda Suite at Sandals Grande Antigua from £1,499, including flights and transfers, for departures from August 31 to October 20. The ReTie the Knot package costs \$300. **sellingsandals.co.uk**

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ABOVE: Park Hyatt, Maldives