



Vows with value

Make your clients' wedding budget stretch further with the best-value deals around, says **Katie McGonagle**

In any other year, this would have been prime wedding season, but with nuptials on hold for now, whether at home or abroad, countless couples have been forced to reschedule their ceremonies.

For those getting married overseas, that might be as simple as switching existing arrangements to next year, but others might find themselves going back to square one as they seek out a destination that suits family and friends but won't cost the Earth.

With that in mind, we've rounded up a handful of places offering excellent value, so you can give them a helping hand in getting their big day back on track without blowing the budget.

CYPRUS

The island of Aphrodite, goddess of love, has always been a hit with couples wanting to tie the knot abroad, and is Tui's most popular wedding destination. There are atmospheric venues – Larnaca's medieval castle, or the Troodos Mountains' olive groves among them – but beaches still hold sway, according to Planet Weddings' managing director, Mathilde Robert. She says: "There is no doubt that, for the past three decades of helping agents sell weddings abroad, the most

popular request by far is a beach wedding. For UK couples, it is also about the party after the wedding, so there are venues by the seaside such as Atlantida Beach Weddings in Paphos, which can deliver most requests."

MEXICO

Mexico's Caribbean coast might be known for value, but the Pacific is just as easy on the bank balance, and with fewer tourists adding to the appeal. If couples want to say 'I do' with sand between their toes, recommend Playa de Amor, aka Love Beach, in Marietas Islands National Park, which is exclusive to guests of Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit. They will be whisked to the beach by catamaran, with guests able to join via livestream from a drone, before toasting their marriage with champagne on the journey back to the hotel, followed by a reception with live music and a wedding cake.

MAURITIUS

The main advantage of a destination wedding is wrapping the ceremony and honeymoon up together, and where better to have both a legally recognised wedding and dream Indian Ocean escape ➤

DESTINATIONS

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✿ Make it an intimate wedding with just close family and friends – the most expensive weddings are often due to the number of guests.

✿ Consider a non-exclusive venue such as a taverna for your reception. This works well for small groups and some tavernas are happy for you to have entertainment.

✿ Check if rates are lower in April, early May and October. And if booking an outdoor venue, make sure there is a covered back-up option in case of inclement weather.



Jane Palikira,
owner,
Ionian
Weddings



LEFT: Blue Waters, Antigua

BELOW LEFT: 'Island Chic' ceremony at a Sandals property

BELOW: Zilwa Attitude, Mauritius

PREVIOUS PAGE: Over-the-Water Wedding Chapel, Sandals South Coast, Jamaica

PICTURES: JR Delia; Sandals; Shutterstock; Steve Dunlop



than Mauritius? It's the best-selling wedding location for Kuoni, which recommends four-star resort Zilwa Attitude. Here, couples can take their pick from a simple beachfront service or Robinson Crusoe-style ceremony on private island Gran Zil. Guests must pay £488 in government fees but can then make the most of the hotel's free wedding package, which covers a wedding planner, decoration, witnesses, music, gifts, sparkling wine, wedding cake, candlelit dinner and 20% spa discount.

JAMAICA

Sandals made its name on romance, and the brand's free wedding offer is a cornerstone of that reputation. It offers a complimentary ceremony to couples staying three nights or more, covering the wedding planner, bouquet, and reception with cake, cocktails and canapés. Guests still pay for the marriage licence and administration fees, but Jamaica's charges are among the lowest in the region at just \$95. Most British guests stay at least a week, so they also qualify for 'Premium Perks' such as resort credit to put towards legal fees, a higher room category, photographer, candlelit dinner or upgraded venue such as an Over-the-Water wedding chapel (\$750 supplement), representing even better value.

GREECE

The Greek islands are another wedding wonderland, whether clients want to channel *Mamma Mia!* vibes with a tiny white chapel in Skopelos or make their vows before Santorini's caldera at sunset. Olympic Holidays marketing director Carl Catterall says: "We've seen a

nice increase in enquiries for same-sex ceremonies. Also, since civil partnerships for heterosexual couples have come into law in the UK, we have had requests for blessings in the Greek islands. Santorini is the most popular, and now the minimum stay in Rhodes has been reduced, we've seen an increase in weddings there too."

ANTIGUA

With no waiting period or minimum residency requirement for a marriage licence, Caribbean island Antigua is one of Caribtours' top picks for a hassle-free, well-priced wedding abroad. The operator points to the package at Blue Waters Resort & Spa as a good example of the value couples can expect. It includes a wedding coordinator, bouquet and buttonhole, gazebo, wedding cake, bottle of champagne, dinner and private champagne breakfast the next morning for couples staying a week or more in a Deluxe Beachfront Room or higher room category. **TW**

BOOK IT

Planet Weddings offers a package at Atlantida Beach Weddings in Paphos, Cyprus, from €882, which includes marriage licence, registrar fee, gazebo hire and reception with DJ (with a minimum spend of €300), plus a £450 admin fee covering legal assistance and wedding co-ordinators. The price is based on Planet Weddings arranging the flights, transfers and accommodation.

planetweddings.co.uk

A week at **Sandals'** Ochi Beach Resort in Jamaica, staying all-inclusive in a Riviera Bamboo Grove Premium Room, costs from £1,669. The price includes basic wedding, butler service, Virgin Atlantic flights from Gatwick and transfers, and is valid for travel between September 1 and October 16, 2021.

sellingsandals.co.uk

Caribtours offers seven nights at Blue Waters Resort & Spa, Antigua, from £1,649 for a Deluxe Beachfront Room with breakfast, flights, private transfers and access to a UK airport lounge, for travel in October 2021. A marriage licence is payable locally.

caribtours.co.uk