

Heart of the matter

Janine Kelso heads to Jamaica to see how Sandals' new Aisle to Isle weddings can let a couple craft the day their way

The scene is set for a dream wedding: a gospel choir is belting out Stevie Wonder's *Signed, Sealed, Delivered*, while a couple exchange vows in an overwater chapel in one of Jamaica's dreamiest resorts.

It's one of several ceremony choices brides and grooms can make as part of Sandals' newest wedding offering, Aisle to Isle. Forget set wedding packages, these shiny new wedding experiences offer couples the chance to customise their nuptials so that their big day can truly stand out from the crowd.

I'm attending the launch of Aisle to Isle at the gloriously unspoilt and secluded Sandals South Coast (formerly Sandals Whitehouse), where we are given a first-hand view of the exceptional wedding experiences on offer at Sandals' 16 resorts across the Caribbean.

RESORT RATING

Set on a 500-acre nature reserve on a spectacular two-mile



From the simplest to the most extravagant wedding, anything is customisable to suit your bride and groom

beach with pristinely manicured gardens, Sandals South Coast has plenty to offer couples looking to get hitched in the Caribbean in an adult-only environment.

The resort has already embarked upon a Caribbean first just last year: an overwater chapel with a glass floor aisle for those wishing to tie the knot with the ocean not just as a backdrop but in full surround sound. It also has new overwater bar Latitudes, the perfect setting for a sunset drinks reception with its romantic fire pits, cantilevered hammocks and heart-melting sea views.

Ideal for well-heeled clients are the resort's 12 plush Over-the-Water Bungalows that form a heart-shaped wharf in the Caribbean Sea. We are given a sneak peek of these newly opened thatched bungalows that ooze romance with their 24-hour butler service; glass floors that allow guests to goggle at the marine life below; outdoor shower; overwater hammock for two; hot tub; and steps down to the water (snorkel gear is provided in every bungalow).

Unsurprisingly, there is a long waiting list for this blow-the-budget option, with bungalows selling out more than a year in advance, so encourage interested clients to book ahead.

DESIGN THE DAY

From the simplest to the most extravagant wedding, anything is customisable to suit your bride and groom's budget.

Couples who book a three-night stay or more at any Sandals resort are entitled

to a free wedding, including a bouquet, a two-tiered cake, champagne and a cocktail reception. Beyond that, there are plenty of opportunities to upsell by encouraging couples to get creative.

To help ignite the imagination of brides and grooms-to-be, Sandals has created a range of eight 'inspiration' themes: islands, tropics, sophistication, gardens, nature, romance, sand and sea, and passion. These provide suggestions on everything from tabletop designs and bouquets to chair covers and altar decorations, all of which can be mixed and matched according to taste.

Whether your customers want a bohemian sand-between-the-toes ceremony with a driftwood altar and shabby chic white lanterns, or an exchange of vows in an elegant garden setting, they can design a service to suit their style.

"No bride wants a replica of another couple's wedding →

TOP TIP

Earn 10% commission on Island Routes excursions, available at all Sandals resorts

festivities,” says Marsha-Ann Brown, who boasts possibly the world’s best job title as Sandals and Beaches Resorts’ director of romance. “The ability to customise every facet of the experience, so that it truly reflects the unique personality of the individual couple and their style, is paramount.”

THE AFTER-PARTY

During our stay, we are treated to a glittering showcase of glitzy receptions and parties that couples can plump for. Sunset cocktails on the beach are a real highlight, with tipples given lovey-dovey names, such as Appley Ever After. And couples can of course custom-make the cocktails to suit them.

Perfect for couples who want their bash to go with a bang is a bonfire party on the beach with toasted marshmallows and other sweet treats, plus entertainment on an epic scale.

For newlyweds seeking something more sedate, recommend that they celebrate their union in a magical garden setting with lanterns, twinkling fairy lights, chandeliers hanging from the trees and a violinist providing a sultry soundtrack.



Entertainment options include drummers, dancers, fire-eaters, DJs, violinists and even Michael Jackson impersonators!

Catering to all palates, there are a whopping 45 food menus for couples to pick from, including a delicious lobster barbecue. They can choose from one of 32 tempting wedding cakes, including a timeless white cake adorned with pearls, a beach-themed cake dotted with seashell designs and a chic cake encircled with macaroons.

And the entertainment options are endless and memorable: think drummers, dancers, fire-eaters, opera or reggae singers, piano music, violinists, DJs and even Michael Jackson impersonators!

When it comes to capturing the experience, there are several photo and video packages on offer, including drone capture, a wedding day photo booth and photography tours to exotic locations in the Caribbean.

HEN AND STAG IN THE SUN

If there’s time before the big day, suggest couples enjoy their stag and hen do at a Sandals resort too. The bridal party can indulge in cocktail-inspired hand and foot treatments while sipping on champagne and cocktails at Sandals’ Red Lane Spa.

Stags and hens with a thirst for adventure can enjoy Sandals’ inclusive water sports, including waterskiing and paddleboarding, while large groups can set sail on a catamaran cruise with music, cocktails and food, available for hire with the Sandals-owned excursion provider Island Routes.



**SAMPLE
PRODUCT**

A seven-night stay at **Sandals South Coast** in an Italian

Honeymoon Beachfront room costs from £1,665 per person, with Luxury Included accommodation,

flights and transfers. Valid from April 9 to July 1. The same stay in an Over-the-Water Honeymoon Butler Bungalow costs from £6,845 per person.

Prices valid until February 28. sellingsandals.co.uk



LEFT AND ABOVE: Overwater wedding chapel at Sandals South Coast, Jamaica

Sandals
Love Is All You Need

LUXURY CARIBBEAN Weddings

As leaders in destination weddings, we have completely unpackaged our offering, transcending inspirations into experiences. From personalised wedding décor to authentic events, our latest Aisle to Isle concept is fully customisable and will deliver any couple's dream wedding in paradise.



WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS AISLE TO ISLE DESTINATIONS



LEFT AND RIGHT: Two of Sandals' table setting options

BELOW: Set-up for an 'Island Chic' ceremony



▶ HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Many couples getting married in the Caribbean will wish to extend their celebrations by combining their nuptials with a honeymoon.

There's plenty to keep honeymooners occupied at Sandals South Coast – and every other Sandals resort – with complimentary water sports including windsurfing, waterskiing, paddleboarding and scuba diving; not to mention premium food and drink options, all of which are part and parcel of the hotel group's Luxury Included package.

Couples in search of a less high-octane break can bliss out on the beach's powder-white sands, where it's easy to find a peaceful spot among the palms.



What better way to kick off married life than by cruising along Jamaica's gorgeous coast in a Mini Cooper?

Relaxation can also be found at the Red Lane Spa, offering beachside massages for two. As night falls, candlelit dinners under the stars with gourmet food and wine can be arranged in a slew of romantic settings, from the beach to the private terrace of the couple's suite.

And couples with kids in tow can opt to say their vows at a family-friendly Beaches resort and then leave the little ones behind with family to honeymoon in style at Sandals.

Clients who fancy a twin-centre stay in Jamaica can wed at Sandals South Coast and then spend their honeymoon at another Sandals resort, such as the laid-back Sandals Montego Bay or the colonial-style Sandals Royal Caribbean, both around a 90-minute drive away.

Ramp up the romance and boost your commission by booking honeymooners staying at Sandals Montego Bay on the Mini-Routes to Negril road trip with Island Routes. What better

way to kick off married life than by cruising along Jamaica's gorgeous northwest coast in a Mini Cooper?

Following an expert guide and in touch by radio, there's no need to worry about getting lost, but driving around the island still feels like an adventure. We stop to chat to a local coconut vendor, eat lunch at Negril's Seven Mile Beach, visit the iconic Negril Lighthouse, watch an authentic jerk chicken demonstration and are wowed by the cliff-divers at the legendary Ricks Cafe (daredevil honeymooners can take the plunge themselves if they're feeling brave).

It's the perfect way to conclude a dream wedding break. **TV**



PICTURES: SANDALS, JRDEJUA.COM

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