

Wedding Sells

Laura French rounds up hassle-free destinations for Brits getting married abroad

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Excellent value, idyllic surroundings and guaranteed sun; tying the knot overseas sounds great in theory, but where do you send clients seeking a hassle-free wedding abroad that minimises red tape and maximises value, all without being a mission to get to?

We've waded through the paperwork to find the answer, so all you have to do is match the category with your client – and whether it's a big fat family wedding or a just-the-couple getaway you're after, there's a solution to suit.

▶ THE SMALL WEDDING

Where: Mauritius

Why: The Indian Ocean is in demand when it comes to wedding bells, and the most popular choice is Mauritius (UK couples can't legally marry in the Maldives). Guests need to stay in resort three working days prior to the wedding and seven nights overall, but it's relatively easy on the paperwork front, and the surroundings – sugar-sand beaches, emerald mountains and verdant plantations – are as romantic as they come.

Stay: For a secluded luxury wedding, Kuoni recommends Maradiva Villas Resort & Spa, sandwiched between the mountains and the beach. Couples can marry on a jetty over the water, in the privacy of a luxury villa or in cloistered gardens, and those keen to push the boat out can opt for the Diamond Package for added extras such as a rose-strewn red carpet and eight-course, in-villa meal.

Book it: Wedding packages at Maradiva Villas Resort & Spa start at £1,366, including administration fees, wedding planner, ceremony, hair styling, wedding cake, photography, three-course in-villa meal, champagne breakfast and more. Kuoni offers a week's half-board in a Luxury Suite Pool Villa from £2,899 per person for selected departures in January and February 2018, based on two sharing and including Emirates flights from Gatwick.

kuoni.co.uk

Or try: Thailand. Nothing beats

the Thai islands for romance and Rocky's Boutique Resort in Koh Samui is among the cream of the crop, offering weddings on a private beach with an optional drum parade and Buddhist blessing. It's worth noting that couples need to stay in Bangkok for three days to sign an affidavit, register at the British embassy and legalise the marriage prior to the wedding, but it's worth it for this peaceful, couples-only escape.

rockyresort.com

▶ THE RELIGIOUS WEDDING

Where: Cyprus

Why: The island is a safe bet for British couples, as the paperwork is in English. Couples need only arrive three working days in advance to get it all sorted, and it's an especially popular choice for Anglican weddings with a handful of chapels scattered across the country.

Where: For religious weddings in Paphos, Planet Weddings recommends Ayia Kyriaki, ideal for large parties (and offering wheelchair access); Saint George, which accommodates up to 35; or St Nicholas, a whitewashed church



TOP TIP

AMResorts properties offer complimentary wedding packages to couples staying for a minimum number of nights

PICTURE: MARADIVA VILLAS RESORT/MICHAEL GRIMM



LEFT:
Annabelle,
Cyprus

RIGHT: Ayia
Kyriaki, Kato
Paphos

BELOW:
Dreams Tulum
Resort & Spa,
Mexico



→ by the sea seating up to 44.
Book it: A church wedding at Ayia Kyriaki in Kato Paphos costs from £1,382 with Planet Weddings. A week's B&B at the five-star Annabelle, nearby, starts at £668 per person, with return flights from Gatwick and transfers in resort, based on an April 15, 2018, departure.

planetweddings.co.uk

Or try: Prague. Religious weddings are available at churches and castles across this history-rich country and it's light on admin. UK couples are advised to arrive two to three days before to sort the paperwork (Catholic weddings require more prep).

▶ THE BIG FAMILY WEDDING

Where: Crete

Why: For couples looking to go all out with family and friends in tow, Greece is an excellent option, and with its southerly position, Crete promises shoulder-season sun. Couples must stay for at least eight days prior to the wedding, so

“ For couples looking to go all out with families and friends in tow, Greece is an excellent option

they'll need about two weeks spare, but it's a relatively simple process and there's a wide variety of venues available – from rustic tavernas and beaches to extravagant resorts and sprawling estates.

Stay: The five-star Aldemar Royal Mare in Anissaras is a popular choice for weddings thanks to exotic gardens, a private beach and an excellent Thalasso spa for those looking to prep for the big day. It's also easily accessible for larger parties, thanks to a short

transfer from Heraklion airport.

Book it: Wedding packages for up to 30 people at Aldemar Royal Mare Thalasso start at €680, including witnesses, wedding arch, bouquet, buttonhole, champagne, cake, room upgrade, spa treatment and coordinator. Two weeks' B&B costs from £861 with Olympic Holidays, including lounge passes, private transfers and Gatwick flights on May 9, 2018.

olympicholidays.com

Or try: Large parties after a longer-haul option should look to Sandals, whose resorts offer complimentary additions when multiple rooms are booked. With 12 or more rooms, enjoy a private pre-wedding dinner and two-hour reception, plus a free room upgrade for the happy couple; 20 or more rooms adds a private catamaran cruise; and 35-plus

earns the pair a Love Nest Suite with butler. The wedding itself is free if the couple stay more than three nights, and if they stay at least six, they'll get credit towards their wedding and have their government fees waived.

sellingsandals.co.uk

▶ THE SAME-SEX COUPLE

Where: Mexico

Why: For legally recognised same-sex weddings, Portugal, Croatia, Cyprus, Iceland, Hawaii and South Africa are good options. But for a luxury, good-value celebration in stunning surroundings, suggest Mexico. All couples need to hand in documentation three working days before the marriage and have a blood test, so it's recommended they arrive at least five days before they are due to wed. The certificate will need to be validated locally afterwards, but a wedding coordinator can arrange the nitty-gritty, so assure clients it's simpler than it sounds.

Stay: Unico 20°87° in Riviera Maya should be high on



PICTURE: CARLOS BOLANOS

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*All times **Offer valid for travel within 30 days of wedding date. Further terms and conditions apply.



LEFT: Celebrity Cruises



RIGHT: Jade Mountain, Saint Lucia

PICTURE: CJ WALKER PHOTOGRAPHY

→ the list, with pristine shores making for an idyllic beach wedding. Creative wedding designer Marylen Exposito is on hand to take care of the details, with extras available including saxophone soloists, in-room hair and makeup, and private dining. The nearby 5T-rated Tui Sensatori is also a worthy recommendation, offering beach and rooftop weddings for a wallet-friendly price and packages for every budget.

Book it: Unico 20°87° offers a complimentary basic wedding package including ceremony, rose bouquet and boutonniere, minister, cake, sparkling wine and wedding coordinator. Wedding packages with extras including decor, two-tier cake and an events consultant cost from \$5,800. Thomas Cook offers seven nights' all-inclusive at the hotel from £1,775, flying from

“**Celebrity Cruises' guests can tie the knot wherever in the world they please – at sea, in port or on shore**”

Manchester on June 16, 2018. thomascookworld.com

Or try: Celebrity Cruises offers same-sex weddings on its ships, so guests can tie the knot wherever in the world they please – at sea, in port or on shore, with coordinators to create the perfect customised package. celebrityweddings.eweddingcalendar.com

▶ **THE CARIBBEAN ESCAPE**
Where: Saint Lucia

Why: The Caribbean is generally pretty easy to navigate on the wedding front, with Barbados and Antigua among the most popular choices. Kuoni recommends Saint Lucia for one of the simplest. Guests usually need to arrive three working days before the wedding (and stay for at least a week in total), but for an extra fee, those in a hurry can apply for a special licence from the government, which enables them to marry in 24 hours.

Stay: Suggest Jade Mountain for a secluded, personalised wedding surrounded by towering rock formations, infinity-edge pools and 250 hectares of lush green grounds. Guests can choose their own location, from the Treehouse to the resort's colonial plantation, and the hotel makes things a doddle by taking care of all the legalities.

Book it: Wedding packages start at \$1,095 including a justice of the peace, registrar, wedding licence, coordinator, decoration, bouquet, cake and champagne. Optional extras include a private champagne sunset cruise, spa packages, entertainment and photography. Nightly rates at Jade Mountain start at \$1,110, based on double occupancy. jademountain.com

Or try: The Bahamas. The minimum stay pre-wedding here is only two nights, documents don't need to be legalised and there's a string of wedding-friendly resorts available. Among them is Atlantis Paradise Island, where couples can choose from more than 20 venues including the Royal Deck, Dolphin Cay, indoor pavilion and a plunging waterfall in the gardens. atlantisbahamas.com



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