



Weddings on water

Like the sound of marrying at sea? **Laura French** looks into the best options for a cruise wedding

There's something undeniably romantic about tying the knot in some remote corner of the Earth, waves gently lulling, sun setting over the horizon.

Enter the wedding at sea – an oft-underrated option that can have your clients marrying, sleeping and honeymooning all in the same place, friends and family on board for the ride, music and other add-ons available on the side – all at a fraction of the cost of a UK ceremony. The average cost of a wedding in 2018 was more than £32,000 according to hitched.co.uk; you can marry on a ship for less than half of that, with cruise, flights and wedding package included.

But not all cruise lines offer weddings and with various legalities to consider it can be a tricky one to navigate. To help simplify things, we've put together a list of some of the best options, with all the finer details you need to know to sell – whether clients are looking to marry at sea, in port or ashore.

PRINCESS CRUISES

Why: Princess Cruises is one of only a handful of lines that offer legal weddings at sea, since it operates under Bermudan law. The line works with Royal Ocean Events to create bespoke packages, and guests get a wedding coordinator before they leave and while on the

ship to help them navigate the nitty gritty. Harbourside weddings in port and ceremonies ashore are also available (legalities depend on the country).

Where: Some ships have a dedicated wedding chapel; on others, couples can say their vows in the atmospheric

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library, or in another location on board. Shore weddings range from exotic beaches and tropical gardens to huge, icy glaciers.

The deal: A Tie the Knot at Sea package costs from \$2,500, plus a \$498 licence fee, including a candlelit ceremony officiated by the captain, live music, wedding coordinator, floral arrangements, photographer with prints, wedding cake, champagne and more. princess.com ➤

DESTINATIONS

WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS | WEDDINGS AT SEA

THE SMALL PRINT

At-sea weddings follow the laws of the country the ships are registered in: Princess, P&O and Cunard are under Bermuda; Celebrity Cruises comes under Malta; and Disney Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean International and Norwegian Cruise Line come under the Bahamas.

Legal at-sea ceremonies have to take place in international waters – at least 12 miles from land.

Weddings in port or ashore come under the laws of the country they're in, and couples will need to obtain a marriage licence from the country and check it's legally recognised in the UK (wedding coordinators can help with this).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Princess Cruises onboard wedding; chapel on Half Moon Cay, the Bahamas, with Holland America Line; beach wedding with Celebrity Cruises

BOOK IT

Couples can wed on **Celebrity Cruises'** 11-night Amalfi Coast and Greek Isles fly-cruise on *Celebrity Edge*. Prices are from £3,659 per person for a September 9 departure, based on an Ocean View cabin, including transfers and flights from Gatwick. Wedding package extra. celebritycentral.co.uk

Guests can get married on **Royal Caribbean's** seven-night Eastern Caribbean and Perfect Day cruise on *Oasis of the Seas*, sailing round-trip from Fort Lauderdale from December 13-20. Prices start at £572 per person cruise-only, based on two sharing an interior stateroom; Ocean View upgrades cost £74 per person. Wedding extra. royalcaribbean.co.uk

CELEBRITY CRUISES

Why: Legal weddings at sea, in port and ashore are all available on Celebrity Cruises' itineraries under Maltese law (bar those with *Celebrity Xpedition*), and it was the first US cruise line to offer same-sex weddings at sea. Symbolic ceremonies, vow renewal and engagement packages are also available.

Where: Couples can choose from a range of indoor locations, and on Solstice-class ships they can say their vows on a lawn on the top deck, against the backdrop of a glistening ocean.

The deal: Celebrity's Nautical Nuptials – At Sea Package, available on all itineraries, costs from \$2,995, including legal ceremony performed by the Master of the Ship, pre-sailing and onboard coordinators, live music, an hour's photography, champagne, cake for two and more. celebritycentral.co.uk

ROYAL CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL

Why: Royal Caribbean allows passengers to tie the knot legally at sea under the Bahamian maritime marriage licence. Up to 75 non-sailing guests can join its harbourside ceremonies, making it a good option for bigger parties. Destination weddings are also available.

Where: Options on board include the Hollywood-

“Suggest a destination wedding on private island CocoCay, where they can tie the knot on a hot-air balloon as they float above the tropics

inspired Dazzles lounge bar or the plant-filled Central Park (both on Oasis-class ships). Couples who want something a bit different can opt for the Solarium, where whirlpools, cascading lagoons and lush-green canopies form the backdrop (available on all ships).

If they really want to push the boat out, suggest a destination wedding on private island CocoCay, where they can tie the knot on a hot-air balloon as they float above the tropics.

The deal: An Intimately Yours package for a couple marrying at sea with up to 10 guests costs from \$1,950, including non-denominational wedding officiant, pre-cruise and onboard wedding coordinators, a bottle of Moët et Chandon, recorded music, two-tier cake, an hour's photography, couple's dinner at a speciality restaurant, mimosa breakfast in bed the next day and more. Additional fees apply for legal weddings. royalcaribbean.co.uk ➤

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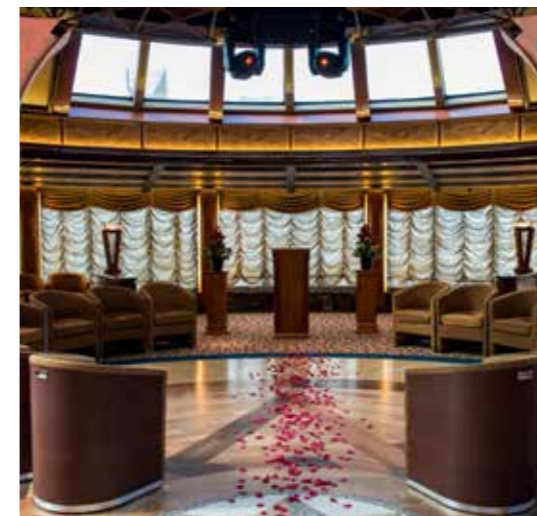
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LEFT AND ABOVE: Carnival Cruise Lines; the Yacht Club on Cunard's Queen Victoria PICTURE: Daniel Freese

HOLLAND AMERICA LINE

Why: Holland America's at-sea ceremonies are symbolic only, but the line offers legal weddings in port or ashore in various destinations. For harbourside ceremonies, couples who want to bring friends and family can take up to 10 non-sailing guests on board at no extra cost (more if they purchase a reception), with pre-cruise weddings available at any home port.

Where: Those looking to marry mid-cruise and ashore have a choice of venues, including a Bahamian chapel on private island Half Moon Cay, a glacier in Alaska, a beach in Sydney and a villa in Santorini. Guests can also marry in the company of an eight-piece Memphis band at the BB King's Blues Club.

The deal: The Ashore Package costs from \$2,000 (depending on the destination), and includes non-denominational officiant, wedding coordinator, bridal bouquet, transport, wedding cake, sparkling wine and more. An additional coordinator fee of \$150 applies for every 25 guests over the first 25. Book with Royal Ocean Events. gohal.co.uk

CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE

Why: Carnival's weddings at sea are also symbolic, with legal ceremonies available in port or on land (depending on the destination), including on embarkation day. Up to 50 non-sailing guests can come on board for harbourside weddings under its Grand Ceremony and Carnival Classic packages, so it's ideal for those who want to bring the whole clan.

Where: Couples can say "I do" legally in a selection of US ports, as well as in port or on land on various Caribbean islands including Barbados, Grand Cayman, Jamaica, Half Moon Cay, Grand Turk, the Bahamas and St Thomas.

The deal: An Intimate Gold package including precruise wedding planner, ceremony, local officiant, two-tier cake, sparkling wine, couple's honeymoon dinner, recorded music, photography and more costs from \$1,450, valid for up to 10 people (including the couple). The Grand Ceremony Gold package for up to 50 non-sailing guests costs from \$1,852. Platinum and Diamond options include added extras. carnival.com

MSC CRUISES

Why: MSC offers some of the most affordable ceremonies on the market, with three packages to suit different budgets. All are symbolic and take place at sea. Clients need to bring a marriage certificate from an official shoreside ceremony.

Where: Onboard venues include the futuristic, glass-walled Atrium on Seaside-class ships and the monochrome Sky Lounge on Meraviglia-class ships.

The deal: A silver package including symbolic ceremony attended by the ship's officers, pre-wedding consultancy, bridal bouquet, boutonniere, recorded music, sparkling wine and two-tier cake costs from €520, valid for eight guests including the bride and groom. Gold and Platinum packages add champagne, photography, in-cabin breakfast and more. Live music, hair, make-up and food cost extra. mscruises.co.uk TW

BEST OF THE REST

CUNARD: Offering weddings (at sea only) on all its ships, Cunard has a one wedding per day policy, meaning no sharing the limelight; prices start at \$2,800.

NCL: Norwegian Cruise Line offers legal ceremonies at sea on *Breakaway*, *Epic*, *Escape* and *Getaway* ships, and harbourside ceremonies in Greece, Hawaii, Mexico, Honduras and the Caribbean; both packages start at \$3,099. Symbolic at-sea ceremonies start at \$2,059.

DISNEY: For those who want a touch of magic, suggest Disney Cruise Line. Venues range from the art-deco-style Atrium to private island Castaway Cay in the Bahamas, with optional Disney-themed music performed by a pianist or keyboardist. On-board packages start at \$3,500.

DESTINATIONS

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