

# USA WEEKEND

March 15, 2009  
Circulation: 23,000,000

## Travel



**D**ON'T LIKE WEDDINGS? As a guest, does the prospect of schlepping to a nondescript event hall and spending hours glued to a folding chair lack appeal? Or, as the bride and groom, do you want to plan nuptials that are a break from the ordinary? How do sunset vows and a beach party sound?

Enter the destination wedding. Considering that many guests travel to attend weddings, a wedding in the Caribbean is a great way to turn an obligation into a ready-made vacation, says Rebecca Grinnals, who tracks destination wedding trends. "It's the ever-present dream of sun, sea and sand," she says. "A Caribbean wedding takes on an exotic, offshore feel but only takes a half-day of travel for people on the East Coast." Plus, most islands lend

themselves to plenty of activities for everyone in attendance: You can ride horses on the beach, kayak, parasail, swim with stingrays, stretch in a Pilates class and afterwards relax in the spa.

### FOR THE COUPLE

Island weddings are easy to arrange because direct flights to the Caribbean are common, and island weddings almost guarantee good weather, says Joann Delgin, chief romance officer for Royal Plantation and Sandals resorts. "For couples, it's one-stop shopping, with photographers, catering,

florists and reception at hand," Delgin says. Couples also could see a savings because fewer people typically attend a destination wedding.

Make no mistake, destination weddings aren't just for barefoot bohemians on the beach. Wedding packages can be personalized to suit individual tastes. Some resorts, like Royal Plantation Ocho Rios in Jamaica and Royal Plantation Island in Exuma, along with Sandals resorts, have hired marquee talent such as Preston Bailey (wedding planner for Donald and Melania Trump) and Sylvia Weinstock (New York wedding cake designer) to craft signature packages. Others, such as the One&Only Ocean Club in the Bahamas, can arrange a horse-drawn carriage or a fireworks display to celebrate your "I do's."

### FOR THE GUEST

If you are invited to a destination wedding, don't immediately check the "regrets" box. See what a resort offers in the way of accommodations, on-site and nearby activities and tours.

Colleen Devine, an Austin book publicist, attended her best friend's wedding on Grand Cayman. "It's a vacation I wouldn't normally have taken, but in a way it was liberating because I didn't choose the destination; it was chosen for me," she says. Devine, who tacked on a few days before the vows, snorkeled, walked along the white sand beach and toured a turtle farm with her husband, Jim.

"When guests go away for a destination wedding, they have the chance to experience all the great things that the couple gets to experience during their honeymoon," says Nikheel Advani, COO and principal of Grace Bay Club in Turks and Caicos Islands. Guests there can try their hand at bonefishing or hop aboard a jet ski and visit some of the 32 uninhabited islands throughout Turks and Caicos. On Barbados, guests at Sandy Lane resort can showcase their inner Tiger Woods on 45 holes of championship-level golf — just be sure to get a tee time that doesn't interfere with the ceremony. **K**