

# Where to Wed

## 12 ROMANTIC SPOTS IDEAL FOR VOWS

Sure, a destination wedding is a no-brainer, but picking a location might not be so easy. Not to worry! *DWH* has canvassed the globe to find great destinations, unveiling a slew of new venues and celebrations, making them ideal for nuptials right now. Choose away!

by JACKIE CARADONIO



### HOT LOCALE #1

## Aspen COLORADO

Aspen's reputation as a chic snow-covered paradise draws slope-savvy celebs like Kate Hudson and Owen and Luke Wilson, but a wave of new wedding-worthy venues in the area is proving snow bunnies aren't the only ones who look good in white. Those who say winter vows at Wildwood Snowmass hotel and The Westin Snowmass Resort (both opened in November 2012) enjoy larger-than-life vistas of snow-capped Aspen Mountain. Come summer, the Rockies and surrounding pine forest make for an epic backdrop. Couples can make a dramatic entrance at Viceroy Snowmass' new mountaintop venue, the Vista Lawn (pictured), and galas in the Grand Astor Ballroom of The St. Regis Aspen Resort (redesigned in December 2011) are always in season. Looking for something more cultured? The Aspen Art Museum is expected to open in early 2014 with a stunning rooftop event terrace.





HOT LOCALE #2

## Todos Santos MEXICO

Fiestas don't get any more authentic than in this **laid-back surfers' town** just 45 miles north of Cabo San Lucas. Festive vibes are on reserve at the rooftop terrace at Hotel Casa Tota. Since debuting October 2011, it's the perfect spot to welcome guests with **icy margaritas**. On the big day, exchange vows at one of the beach's coolest resorts: Rancho Pescadero can be bought out for up to 60 guests and accommodates receptions of up to 100. No soiree here is complete without a mariachi band, celebratory tequila shots and a *tres leches* wedding cake. More intimate weddings take place under a **driftwood gazebo in the sand** (pictured) at charming four-suite Villa Santa Cruz, opened March 2011.



## Amsterdam

THE NETHERLANDS

Known as "the Venice of the North," this iconic Dutch capital oozes Old World charm — think meandering waterways, arched bridges and cobblestone streets. Hold a ceremony above the city's famed canals — which celebrate their 400th anniversary in 2013 — at the Magere Brug "skinny bridge." Legend has it a kiss here promises eternal devotion. For a reception that taps into Amsterdam's high design, plan a shindig at one of the city's most fashionable new hotels, such as the Conservatorium Hotel, launched December 2011 in the museum district, or the Andaz Amsterdam Prinsengracht, which opened October 2012 near the trendy Jordaan neighborhood. Can't wait for the honeymoon? Head straight to Amsterdam Airport Schiphol and be among the first to book one of the airport's new aviation-style wedding packages, replete with a quickie ceremony in the top-floor terminal, followed by a champagne toast at the airport lounge. Even travel-savvy couples with layovers in Amsterdam (KLM's flights between the United States and Africa and Asia make frequent stops here) have time to say "I do" before saying "bon voyage."

BOTTOM: JEAN-PIERRE ESCOURREY/CORBIS; OPPOSITE: RETRO CANALI/SIME

HOT LOCALE #4

## Amalfi Coast ITALY

This Mediterranean oasis — with its historic *duomos*, hillside villas and crystalline waters — has been the pinnacle of romance for centuries, attracting couples from Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton in the 1960s to Reese Witherspoon and Jim Toth in 2011. Tap into your inner celeb with a clifftop ceremony at the new Monastero Santa Rosa, a restored 17th-century monastery that reopened in May 2012 as a stunning 20-suite hotel. Wed on the verdant lawns overlooking the Bay of Salerno, or, for something more traditional, tie the knot in its 12th-century chapel. If sailing is more your style, hop on board the *Oceania Riviera*, *Seabourn Quest* or *Crystal Symphony*, three new luxury cruise ships that will feature stops in Sorrento, Positano and Capri this year. Weddings take place ashore on most ships, though onboard ceremonies can be held on *Quest* if you bring your own officiant. On land or sea, don't forget to toast your new life with Limoncello, the region's famed liqueur made from Sorrento lemons.

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HOT LOCALE #5

# Newport

RHODE ISLAND

One of the nation's oldest resort towns, this quaint seaside escape is like a postcard from another era, with its **Gilded Age mansions**, majestic sailboats and historic former guests (Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy both established "summer White Houses" here). Stay at one of the town's newly renovated hotels, such as the circa-1910 Attwater, whose bright and colorful rooms, revamped in June 2012, are just a short walk from the beach. Other gems: the Cliffside Inn, a Victorian mansion restored in August 2011 and featuring wraparound porches and **romantic gardens**, and the Vanderbilt Grace hotel, housed in a circa-1909 mansion originally built by Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt and reopened in April 2011. Newport rehearsal dinners dazzle at **new restaurants** like Jamestown Fish and Midtown Oyster (the latter opening early 2013). Then hold a stately ceremony inspired by the nuptials of Jackie and JFK, who wed in St. Mary's Church in downtown Newport in 1953. Afterward, a new sailcloth event tent, installed spring 2012 at Castle Hill Inn, calls for a nautical-theme reception fit for Jackie O. herself.



HOT LOCALE #6

## Phuket

THAILAND

One of the world's best-known beach destinations, Thailand's largest island seems to be on everybody's bucket list. The reason is hardly a mystery, given the region's jaw-dropping landscapes filled with dramatic rock formations, emerald coves and golden beaches hugging the Andaman Sea — plus once-in-a-lifetime attractions like elephant trekking. And though the distance may seem daunting, Phuket International Airport is served by multiple airlines, so flight bargains can be had. Outdoor nuptials are a must at the new Crowne Plaza Phuket Panwa Beach Resort, whose three beachfront swimming pools and two restaurants overlook picturesque Makham Bay. Looking for a grand entrance you and your guests will never forget? Arrive at your ceremony atop an eight-ton pachyderm escorted by a long drum procession at the posh Surin Phuket, where 103 cottages and suites come bedecked with private terraces, plush daybeds and handcrafted silk throw pillows. If the beating pulse of Phuket proves too high-octane for you, head 30 miles offshore to Phi Phi Island, where the newly rebranded Outrigger Phi Phi Island Resort and Spa (pictured) offers traditional Thai ceremonies complete with Buddhist monks chanting prayers and a tree-planting ritual to symbolize the start of your new life together.

PUNTA CANA: SARA WIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY; ONTARIO: ALAN COPSON/GETTY IMAGES; OPOSITE: LAURIE BAILEY PHOTOGRAPHY



HOT LOCALE #7

## Punta Cana

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Caribbean islands are blessed with all the trappings for a spectacular destination wedding: powder-fine sand, crystal-clear waters and romantic resorts aplenty. But lately the tropic sun seems to shine brightest on the resort area of Punta Cana, thanks to new direct flights from wallet-friendly airlines like JetBlue, AirTran and Frontier that make getting to this breathtaking (and affordable) stretch of paradise a cinch. The plethora of choices extends to lodging as well. No matter your style, there's a resort for you: All-inclusive ease awaits at Grand Palladium Punta Cana Resort & Spa, updated in 2012, while the family-friendly Sirenis Hotel promises excitement for all ages with a sprawling new three-acre water park, introduced in March 2012. Prefer to sit on the beach sipping *caipirinhas* instead of stressing over seating charts? Resorts in this popular wedding locale come with staff planners to handle the work and packages that make pricing a breeze. You can even enlist the help of celebrity wedding guru Colin Cowie, who in 2012 debuted a series of nine signature wedding-design collections at the all-inclusive Hard Rock Hotel Punta Cana (pictured). Couples in search of ultraluxe digs for their big day should head to the boutique hotel Eden Roc at Cap Cana, which just opened in December 2012 next to Caletón Beach Club.



HOT LOCALE #8

## Ontario

CANADA

Can't decide between a big-city blowout and a romantic country affair? Either way, the Canadian province of Ontario has you covered. City slickers should head to Toronto, where countless sophisticated hotels have sprung up in recent months, including the glitzy Trump International Hotel & Tower (opened January 2012 in the heart of downtown), the stylish Shangri-La Hotel (launched August 2012 in the entertainment district) and the glamorous Four Seasons Hotel (rolled out October 2012 in trendy Yorkville). Want something really unique? Treat your guests to an over-the-top event at one of the city's striking new art-museum expansions, whether the Frank Gehry-designed Art Gallery of Ontario or the avant-garde addition at Royal Ontario Museum. Brides in search of a more pastoral setting should look no further than the province's burgeoning wine region, home to myriad wineries, inns, B&Bs, spas and culinary experiences, many located within 60 minutes of Toronto. Rows of grapes make the perfect backdrop for outdoor nuptials at new winery venues like Cooper's Hawk Vineyards, which opened its doors in summer 2011. Meanwhile, bucolic stays like Inn on the Twenty, Grand Victorian and Riverbend Inn & Vineyard ensure your guests are never more than an arm's reach away from another glass of *vino*.



HOT LOCALE #9

# St. Vincent & The Grenadines

## THE CARIBBEAN

This elite string of cays and islands has long been the **secret hideaway** for British jet-setters like Kate Middleton, Victoria Beckham and Mick Jagger. Luckily for the rest of us, however, the region will soon become more accessible thanks to the projected January 2014 debut of a \$240 million airport. Featuring longer runways and larger terminals, it's expected to attract direct international flights from major North American and European gateways. Once in paradise, picking just one of SVG's 32 jaw-dropping islands may prove a challenge; choose between ultraexclusive Petit St. Vincent, a **private-island resort** that completed a top-to-bottom makeover in November 2011, and secluded Palm Island, located along the chain's southern tip and featuring villas and suites that got a face-lift in August 2012. Or stay on the main island of St. Vincent, where the all-inclusive Buccament Bay Resort, opened in late 2011, offers expansive wedding packages (including ESPA spa treatments and **catamaran cruises**) and one- to four-bedroom suites ideal for groups. Looking for something more intimate? Book a catered affair at one of the newest private villas on Mustique Island, such as the palatial Sienna, which completed construction in January 2012 and flaunts two swimming pools, an extravagant marble courtyard and panoramic Atlantic Ocean views.

JUSTIN LEWIS/GETTY IMAGES





HOT LOCALE #10

## Ecuador SOUTH AMERICA

This South American paradise is the **ultimate adventurer's outpost**. Base yourselves in the colonial capital of Quito for a fancy fete at its newest, chicest hotel, Casa Gangotena. Opened in October 2011 and set in a 1920s-era mansion, it overlooks the historic Plaza San Francisco (pictured). Wed outdoors in the Andean cloud forest among howler monkeys and butterflies at Mashpi Lodge, opened in April 2012, or along a scenic Andes Mountain traverse aboard the Ferrocarriles del Ecuador's new luxury steam train, debuting this summer. In the Galapagos, Pikaia Lodge, also opening summer 2013, spans 75 acres on Santa Cruz island; with a mere 14 guest rooms, it promises **absolute privacy**.



## Ireland EUROPE

HOT LOCALE #11

With its misty hills, centuries-old castles and quaint countryside villages, the Emerald Isle was made for fairy-tale weddings. If you crave something magical, say I do in front of a water cascade or a medieval-style tower (complete with a moat and drawbridge) at the magnificent Ballyfin Demesne resort (pictured). Opened in May 2011, this 19th-century estate boasts 600 acres of land and lakes at the foot of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Or keep it romantic at the Bridgehouse Hotel's Secret Garden venue, unveiled in June 2011 and filled with Irish wildflowers, marble sculptures and a photo-ready loveseat. Melt away prewedding jitters with a group tasting at the Tullamore D.E.W. visitor center — new as of September 2012 — and be sure to snag a bottle for a traditional Irish wedding dessert of whiskey-laced fruitcake and almond icing. Infuse even more character into your big day with an Uilleann pipe-band performance ("The Irish Wedding Song" is perfect for the procession) and multiple toasts of Guinness.

BOTTOM: BARRY MOORE PHOTOGENIC; OPPOSITE: WILLA KVETA PHOTOGRAPHY

HOT LOCALE #12

## Santa Barbara CALIFORNIA

Less than 100 miles north of Los Angeles, the scenery suddenly changes from skyscrapers and freeways to rolling hills, verdant vines and pristine beaches — the perfect outdoor wedding setting. Naturally, couples flock to the region's top vineyards for idyllic ceremonies. Swap vows in a romantic garden filled with Diana, Princess of Wales roses at the award-winning Fess Parker Winery, which completed renovations on its cozy inn in April 2012. The result: a new swimming pool, Mediterranean restaurant and 19 rooms decorated in hues reminiscent of pinot noir and sauvignon blanc. For an oceanfront ceremony, head to the beach at the Hyatt Santa Barbara, whose circa-1931 Spanish-colonial grounds also underwent a stunning makeover in April 2012. The garden-filled El Encanto, another coastal escape, reopens March 2013 as an Orient-Express property. This Californian wine mecca is also known for its fresh cuisine; foodies can throw an unforgettable fete at the Pierre Lafond Montecito Wine Bistro, where the farm-fresh menu (think duck confit paired with local wine) began wowing gourmands in November 2011.

