



ELITE ESCAPES

We have gathered some of our tried and true tips on how to plan a destination wedding and want to share them with you. The more you are educated and informed, the easier you will find this process to be! Please contact us with any questions about how to use our travel agency services and we will see you in the new year!

- 1. Establish a budget.** One of the first steps when organizing a wedding should be setting a budget, and that is true even more for destination weddings. It can be a rough estimate at first, but once you've gotten some quotes, decide on a fixed number (this should happen still very early on in the planning process) and then stick to it.
- 2. Do I need a wedding planner?** You will find that some travel professionals are also certified wedding planners or the travel professional works alongside a seasoned wedding planner as a team. Why does this combined teamwork benefit the couple? While the travel professional is busy making sure all your guests are booked and the resort is ready for your arrival, the wedding planner is involved in color swatches, décor, and chair covers. An on-site wedding planner or coordinator is important if you're planning a wedding abroad. Especially if it's a destination you don't know very well, and if you don't speak the language. A good coordinator will save you time, headaches, and even money. It is so worth it!
- 3. What about paperwork?** Take into account that having a wedding ceremony in a country where you are not a legal citizen can be a bit complicated, whether it's a religious or a civil ceremony. Also, you might have to have your marriage recognized by authorities in your home country afterwards, which might involve even more red tape. To avoid the paperwork, you can always opt for a symbolic ceremony abroad and do the legally binding one at home.
- 4. Make a guestlist.** Be aware that a destination wedding might shift your guestlist around in unexpected ways. Some of your closest friends and relatives may not be able to attend because of cost and inability to travel due to small children, cannot take off work, etc.
- 5. Get a website.** A website can provide your guests with a lot of valuable information about your special day: Hotel selection, a map detailing the location of the airport, outline of events and even a group activity that may have been planned in advance.
- 6. Can I bring my own wedding vendors?** This is a subject that your wedding planner and/or travel professional can answer for you. Some resorts have strict policies that you cannot bring anyone onto the property that will be providing a service. Other properties are very lax and don't mind outside vendors coming in. If you have to bring your wedding photographer with you, then this is an area that will require research.



ELITE ESCAPES

7. **Do a Save the Date and a welcome package.** Even though you aren't getting married at home, make sure you treat your destination wedding as more than a vacation for your guests. Send a formal invitation or Save the Date card. There is more planning involved in attending a destination wedding, so let them know in advance that they are invited. Once they've arrived, greet them with a little welcome package. Provide maps, sightseeing tips, water. After long travels, your friends and family will surely appreciate it.

8. **Plan in advance.** Your guests should turn to your travel professional to book their rooms and activities. Your wedding is treated as a group which comes with group room discounts. There are some properties that will not allow guests to attend the wedding if they are not on the group list, which means they need to book with the travel professional to gain access to the wedding. There are several policies and regulations that go along with a destination wedding. Turn to your travel professional for these rules and guidelines. Planning in advance makes things so much easier.

9. **Bringing your own decorations.** You won't be able to take as many little details to your destination abroad as you might have wished (that is a lot of luggage!). You might not be able to have that latest decor trend you so loved when you first started reading wedding blogs. But you have a stunning location that most likely won't need much prettying up. Focus on that and not on the sixty paper tissue pompoms you could have made yourself.

10. **Relax.** Once you've gone through the above steps, and you've lined up your travel professional and wedding planner that you feel comfortable with...lean back and relax. Have faith. You've chosen a wonderful location, you're marrying the perfect person, and that's all that really counts.