

Making heartfelt vows to your beloved in front of family and friends ranks for most couples as one of the happiest moments of their lives. But planning a wedding has to be high on anyone's list of stress-inducing experiences.

Bridezillas, overbearing parents, warring relatives, spiralling budgets; they can all add a few grey hairs before you've even had a whisper of a chance to grow old together.



Unsurprising then that an increasing number of couples choose not just to take their honeymoon abroad but say those two time-honoured words there too (that's 'I do' by the way). A marriage made in holiday heaven: Going abroad for your nuptials can not only be cheaper but less stressful 'Getting married abroad is becoming more and more popular,' says Megan Barker, a wedding consultant at travel firm Kuoni, which offers packages in 27 countries around the world. 'Our number one destination is Sri Lanka. This is because you can get five-star luxury and a beautiful unique wedding for great value. Our other top destinations are the USA, Mauritius and Italy.'

Cost benefits aside, booking with a tour operator can also relieve some of the pressure. Wedding coordinators in the UK and at your destination will be there to make sure everything runs as smoothly as possible. Getting married abroad can also simply be more exciting, Barker adds. 'It is a wonderful way to combine your wedding with your holiday or honeymoon and a wonderful way of spending time with your nearest and dearest.'

One newlywed who would agree is 25-year-old mortgage administrator Sara Lawson who married insurance claims supervisor Chris, 28, in November last year at St Barnabas Anglican Church in Limassol, Cyprus in front of 23 guests.



Rather than booking with a tour operator the pair, from Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, pulled together the trip themselves with the help of Limassol-based wedding planner Dinah Martens. 'The cost of the wedding was a large part,' says Sara, explaining why they made the decision to go abroad. 'We were looking to get married within roughly a year after the engagement so didn't have a lot of time to save up. A family member mentioned getting married abroad. 'I got some travel brochures to have a look at some ideas, and combined with the fact that we had access to a timeshare at Le Meridien Spa & Resort in Cyprus, we thought "why not!"'

She added: 'After all, sun, sea, sand and a week to celebrate your wedding instead of just a day

sounded great.' Sara found a wedding planner (www.cypruscelebrations.com) after browsing on the internet who organised the legal side of the marriage, church, evening reception, flowers, a chocolate fountain instead of a cake and transport.

Sara describes her big day as 'perfect'. She said: 'You have the combination of a holiday to relax you, a beautiful setting for the pictures and a variety of venues to choose from. 'People seem to automatically assume you get married on the beach or in a hotel, but we chose a lovely Anglican church, so you have the combination of a traditional ceremony and then the evening is a bit more relaxed.'



Sounds easy but where on earth do you begin?'The best way to start planning is to pick up a wedding brochure and find a destination that suits you,' says Barker. 'Then decide which type of wedding you desire, such as a traditional hotel package or something more unusual.' Kuoni offers just that - you can say your vows from what claims to be the world's first 'over-water' chapel in Tahiti, in a shark reef aquarium in Las Vegas or perched on Sydney's Harbour Bridge.

Wild romantic gestures aside, there are a range of practicalities to consider beyond swapping your morning suit for a swim suit. But don't worry, TravelMail is here to help. Prices are correct at time of publishing...
COST. Overseas weddings tend to be cheaper than in the UK. Like any holiday, the cost can vary wildly depending on how much you are willing to spend.

MAKING IT LEGAL

The legal requirements for marriage or civil partnerships vary from country to country, so planning in advance is essential.

Foreign Office advice recommends contacting the embassies of where you plan to marry to find out what documentation you will need.

You should also check regarding visas or if you need proof of residency in that country before you can get married - in some countries it is a necessary requirement that you spend a certain number of days there before making your vows.



You may also need to take a Certificate of No Impediment (CNI) or a Nulla Osta (in Italy), which is a document confirming that there is no reason that you cannot marry.

There is also the question of whether your marriage is legal when you return to the UK. The FCO advises speaking to a lawyer to find out if your marriage is recognised.

For more information, including foreign embassy contact details, visit www.fco.gov.uk

TOP TIPS

* 'Dont leave it too late to book the wedding' says Barker. 'We recommend a minimum of six months to plan a perfect wedding.'
* Beware of too much sunbathing - remember your wedding photos.
* Don't get a dress that is likely to get creased easily or ruined in your bag or in resort.
* 'Make lists of everything that you need,' says Sara. If you forget to pack something, it can have a big impact on your day, particularly, if it's your wedding dress.

Daily Mail