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INDIA
& SOUTH ASIA
SPECIAL EDITION

WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS

2022-23

*Aditi Rao
Hydari*

Lives a Fairy Tale on
**Saadiyat
Island**

**Exclusive
Wedding Photos**

**Richa Chadha
& Ali Fazal**

**Arpita Mehta
& Kunal Rawal**



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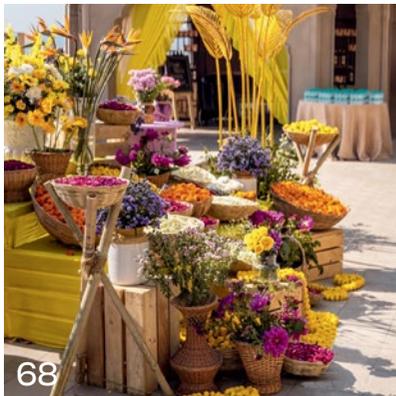
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Hydari pulls off Boho bride vibes with panache at the private villa in Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island.

Red Nurekha saree, price on request, **Bhumika Sharma** Gold Mirror Elaborate Matha Patti, **Ritika Sachdeva**; Mossanite meenakari studs, price on request, **MotifsBySurabhiDidwania**; Uncut diamond Victorian ring with a beaten gold broad band, ₹8,240, **Neety Singh Jewellery**



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ON THE COVER: Actor Aditi Rao Hydari in an outfit by Bhumika Sharma in Saadiyat Island.

ON ADITI: Black Bahaar anarkali, **Bhumika Sharma**; Gold Mirror Elaborate Matha Patti, **Ritika Sachdeva**; Mossanite meenakari studs, **MotifsBySurabhiDidwania**; Uncut diamond Victorian ring with a beaten gold broad band,

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COUTURE PARTNER: Bhumika Sharma

LOCATION: Saadiyat Island

LETTER *from the Editor*

T

HE WINTER SHAADI SEASON is all set to start in India, and we are back with *Travel + Leisure India's Weddings & Honeymoons Special*. This year, while big, fat, Indian weddings are back in full swing, there's also an equal emphasis being put on conscientious choices. Our issue focuses on how to pull off a grand wedding, sustainably. Go through our handy guide on everything you need to know to organise a sustainable and memorable wedding (p. 62).

For our cover shoot, we take the ethereal Bollywood star Aditi Rao Hydari to play bride against the gorgeous backdrops of Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi (p. 52). In addition, don't miss out on the exclusive details from Ali Fazal and Richa Chadha's recently concluded sustainable wedding (pg 49); while designer duo Arpita Mehta and Kunal Rawal's much-awaited wedding was a class in understated glamour (p. 50).

How can a wedding ever be complete without the shopping paraphernalia? So, we have curated everything you need to make your wedding trousseau look spectacular. Whether it's bridal jewellery (p. 12), outfits (p. 8), or accessories (p. 16)—take your pick according to your taste.

As travel comes back in our lives post pandemic, destination weddings are seeing a major comeback after the two-year lull. Find out the hottest wedding destinations that should be on your radar right now, whether in India or abroad (p. 76). And after the hectic social gathering, the favourite part awaits the bride and the groom—the honeymoon. Our carefully



curated list of these honeymoon destinations is sure to make your party end well (p. 86).

Before I RSVP for the innumerable wedding invites lying on my table, a little food for thought—a mindful wedding can well become your mindful journey of a lifetime, so why not start now?

Aindrila

Aindrila Mitra
aindrila.mitra@burdaluxury.com

FROM MY TRAVELS

A snapshot from Six Senses Fort Barwara, a 14th-century fort-turned-resort, that hosted the famous Katrina Kaif-Vicky Kaushal wedding in December 2021.

Please Note: Some of the destinations and businesses mentioned in the magazine may be closed at the moment due to COVID-19. Refer to the rules and guidelines issued by your state government and those in place at the destination of your choice before making travel plans.

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GREEN *Alliances*

Glam up for your big day using these must-have mindful picks to put your best face forward.

BY BAYAR JAIN

1. Royal Purple—Colorful Desire Eyeliner, **Belora Paris**, ₹499; beloracosmetics.com
2. Limitless Lash Mascara, **ILIA**, ₹2,269; illabeauty.com
3. Oh-So-Luxe Tinted Liquid Lip Balm—Berry Red, **RAS Luxury Oils**, ₹1,090; rasluxuryoils.com
4. Gulaabi Noor Nikhaar Cheek Tint, **Forest Essentials**, ₹1,350; forestessentialsindia.com
5. BB Cream—Rich Honey, **SoulTree**, ₹1,195; soultree.in
6. Glaws Gloss—Blossoming, **FAE Beauty**, ₹499; www.faebeauty.in
7. Skin-tint Mattifying Foundation, **Ruby's Organics**, ₹1,650; rubysorganics.in
8. Studio Fix Powder Plus Foundation, **M-A-C Cosmetics**, ₹2,950; maccosmetics.in
9. Crème Highlighter—Natural Looking Glow, **TRUDIANCE**, ₹645; www.trudiance.com
10. Glow Goddess Illuminator, **Daughter Earth**, ₹975; daughter.earth

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WEDDING CLASSICS RETHOUGHT

A special occasion calls for a mindful and memorable outfit, and this year, we're rethinking wedding wear inspirations! The spotlight is as much on the bridesmaids as it is, on the bride. Here's a selection of a few stunning collections to make your wedding prep a breeze. **BY RALAN KITHAN**



ANITA DONGRE

Anita Dongre blends sustainability, Indian crafts, and designs like no other. If you are thinking of wearing conscious fashion without compromising on grandeur, Anita Dongre is your go-to designer. The lehengas are hand-crafted in the finest traditions, with motifs that blend the old with the new. Dongre's creations exude quirkiness—like lehengas with pockets, that give a modern touch to the Indian bride. Using age-old techniques like *zari* and *gota patti* embroidery, in which gold is used as an embellishment, or hand-painted motifs, the outfits are a fusion of the finest materials and India's opulent crafts. anitadongre.com

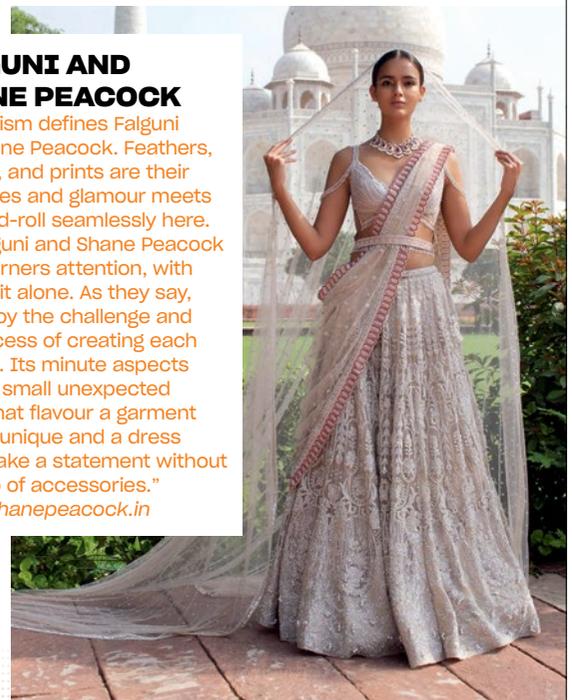


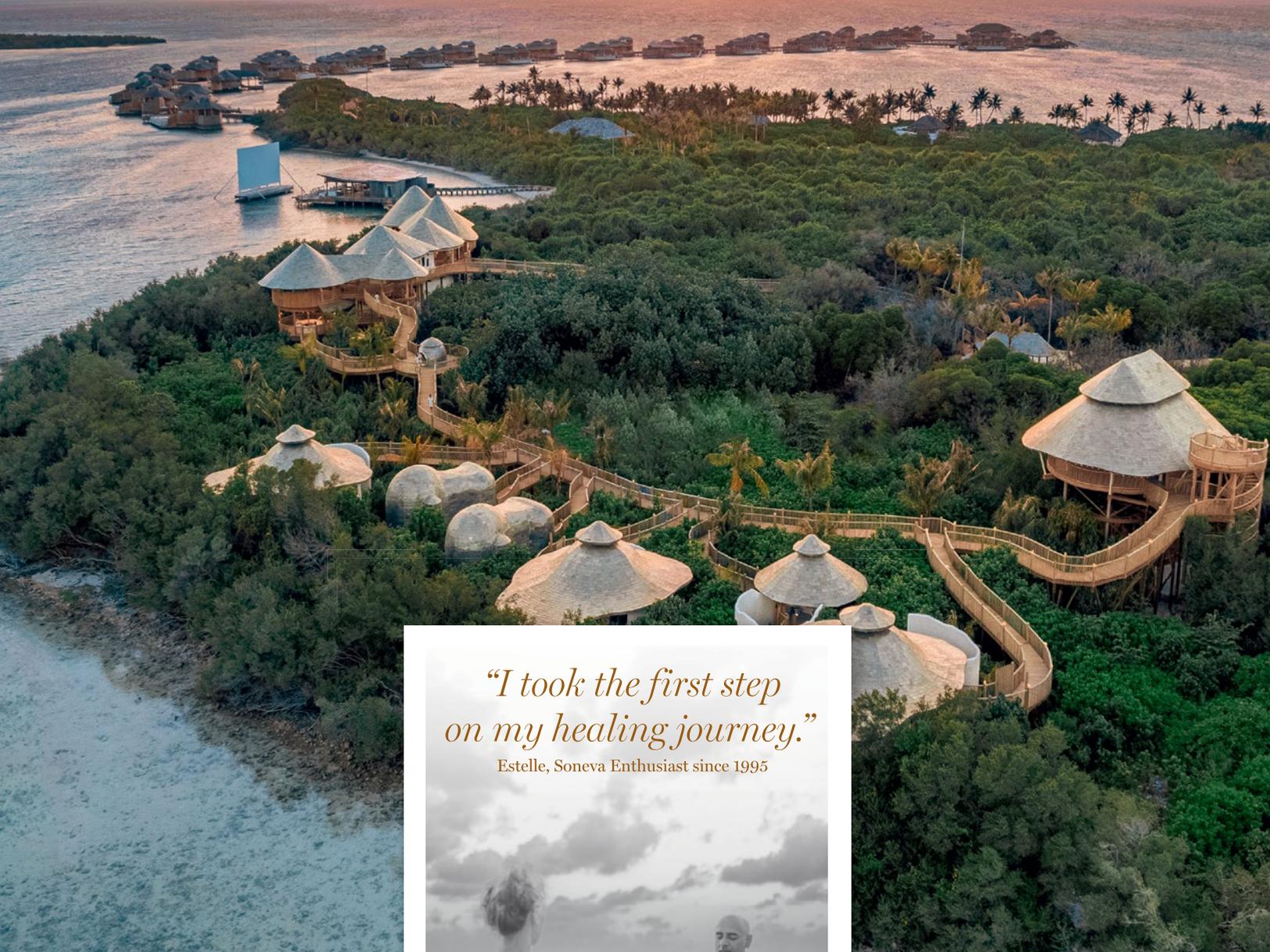
RAW MANGO

One name that spells perfection, when it comes to blending comfort and Indian heirloom-style is Raw Mango. The design house draws its inspiration from the colours, philosophies and cultures of India. Through a variety of garments, the design house continues to spark new discussions about politics, culture, and textiles. Raw Mango embraces comfort, ease, and tradition, something that resonates with a special occasion. They play with colours, using exquisite weaves from Varanasi silk brocade, *zari*, tissue silk, to more ornate embroideries and classic designs that are a recollection of celebrations from a more regal era. rawmango.com

FALGUNI AND SHANE PEACOCK

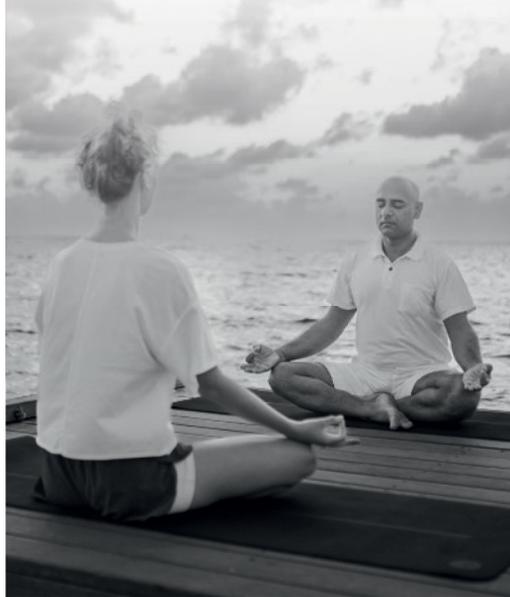
Maximalism defines Falguni and Shane Peacock. Feathers, sequins, and prints are their signatures and glamour meets rock-and-roll seamlessly here. The Falguni and Shane Peacock bride garners attention, with her outfit alone. As they say, "We enjoy the challenge and the process of creating each product. Its minute aspects and the small unexpected twists that flavour a garment make it unique and a dress must make a statement without the help of accessories." falgunishanepeacock.in





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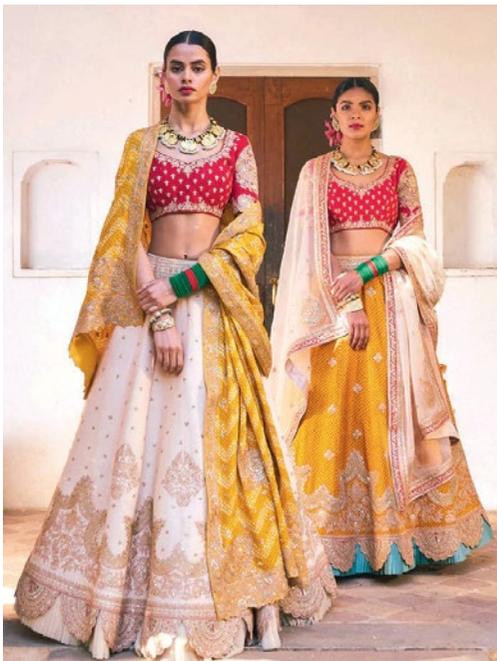
RIDHI MEHRA

If you're the bride seeking fairytale allure, Ridhi Mehra's wedding outfits fit the bill. Her creations imbibe a contemporary beauty that is effortless, light, and incredibly feminine. From ruffles, to chiffon drapes and organza capes, Ridhi Mehra plays it all up very beautifully along with clean lines, delicate details, and a dash of drama—her signature. The label blends Indian workmanship, while adding touches of the Parisian and Greek cultures with excellent tailoring, sophisticated cuts embellished with traditional Indian embroidery. ridhimehra.com



JADE BY MONICA & KARISHMA

Unabated couture in India comes in the form of JADE, which tells the story of Indian crafts through its garments. From unique colour palettes to Indian artisanship, JADE merges classics and contemporary silhouettes. Emphasising on handcrafted luxury, the label maintains attention to detail. Monica Shah, the lady behind the brand says, "A bride's ensemble reflects her dreams, her story and her journey. And our vision is to help her achieve that." jadebymk.com



RITU KUMAR

Ritu Kumar's wedding couture embodies the quintessential bride. The label values textiles with understated luxury. With knowledge of vintage designs and traditional crafts, the label produces fresh creations. Drawing inspiration from the Sultanate era, Mughal to Persian style, Kumar blends Indian heritage in her designs. The bold colours, intricate embroideries, and opulent fabrics best define the brand. ritukumar.com



NIDHI THOLIA

Not every bridal ensemble has to be in monotonous, it can also feature a multitude of colours without going wrong, and Nidhi Tholia shows us how. Her design aesthetics come largely from Rajasthan, her native place. The age-old technique of *gota patti*, which was only used by royalty is interpreted uniquely in her line. The label creates unconventional craft cocktails featuring complex *gota* work, colourful *bandhani*, elaborate *marodi*, and *zardozi* details. nidhitholia.com

TORANI

Whether it's using dark colours, striking embroidery, delicate materials, or pastel hues, Torani understands how to do it. The brand's aesthetic is influenced by the memories of the founder Karan Torani's grandmother's fables and the days he spent in Bhopal with her. For Torani, the stories of Indian mythology and its legendary figures have a special resonance, something that's reflected amply in the collections. Torani celebrates Indian looms, like the *madhubani* of Bihar, the *bandhej* of Gujarat, and the exquisite *mulmul* of Kolkata. torani.in



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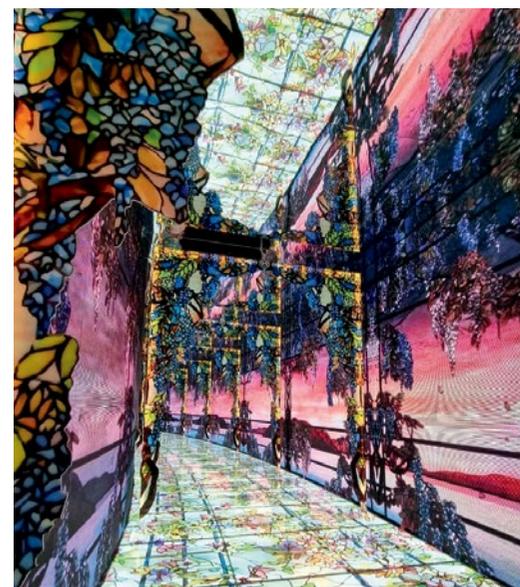
Qatar's preferred choice for destination weddings, The Ritz-Carlton, Doha, is favored by families looking to make an unforgettable impression in a luxurious, private island setting.

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THE BEJEWELLED Bride

A woman's jewellery is her pride and joy. Sometimes handed down, and others created especially to add sparkle to a wedding—these carefully curated pieces will make you look like a million dollars. **BY NUPUR SAILANI**



1. Striking polki-encrusted statement necklace with pearls; **Shivin Jewellers**; Price on request; IG: @shivinjewellers
2. Alekhya collection inspired by glorious Indian art forms of Miniature and Pichwai paintings; **Tanishq**; Price on request; tanishq.co.in
3. Jadtar Jewellery for Women, a 22k Antique Nose Pin; **Jewelegance**; ₹56,589; jewelegance.com
4. Crowning glory of the Carnival of Crimsons bridal suite, this maang tika is over 62k; **Aulearth**; ₹35,000;
5. Opulent gold necklace. A 22k yellow gold piece with filigree work, **Senco Gold & Diamonds**; ₹5,17,371; sencogoldanddiamonds.com
6. Diamond-studded earrings with a dash of green; **Rare Heritage**; Price on request;
7. Multi-coloured earrings in gold; **Rudradhan**; Price on request; rudradhan.com
8. BAROQUE, a modern and elegant jewellery line inspired by baroque floral motifs; **PAKSHA BY TARINIKKA**; Price on request; paksha.com
9. Ruby and diamond hand-cuff; 18k white gold; **Rose**; Price on request; therose.in

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HERE COMES THE Groom

It's not just the brides, men too grab eyeballs on their big day. Here are some gorgeous accents to crank up the style quotient. **BY NUPUR SAILANI**

1. Circular pendant set with rose-cut diamonds and rubies; **Aurus Jewels**; price on request; aurusjewels.in **2.** Vedaanth Kada for men; **BlueStone**; ₹2,76,866; bluestone.com **3.** Uncut diamond necklace featuring charms and pendants on strings of pearls and gold balls; **Aurus Jewels**; price on request; aurusjewels.in **4.** Green Ramgarh cufflinks for men; **Jaypore**; ₹6300; jaypore.com **5.** Heron cufflinks featuring natural Chinese freshwater Feather Pearls, and multi-hued sapphires; **Naomi Sarna**; Price on request; naomisarna.com

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CONSCIOUS ELEGANCE

On your big day, a timepiece is all about making every moment count. We've curated a collection of sustainable and elegant timepieces to make your wedding a meaningful occasion. **BY RALAN KITHAN**

**Datejust 3
ROLEX**

This timepiece was designed to appeal to everyone. The Datejust was the world's very first self-winding wristwatch to feature a date window that would automatically change over at midnight. This 31mm oyster perpetual in 18k white gold is fitted with a diamond bezel and is driven by the calibre 2236, a new generation self-winding mechanical movement. *Price on request; rolex.com*



**Da Vinci Automatic 36
IWC**

A sleek timepiece, its simple and classic design is as appealing as the 18k 5N gold case of the Da Vinci Automatic 36, which complements the white dial. With Sapphire crystal glass, the bracelet features 54 pure white diamonds. What's even better? The gold used in the timepiece is fully traceable and made from recycled sources. *₹30,81,000; iwc.com*



**L'Heure du Diamant
CHOPARD**

This number marries watchmaking ingenuity with luxury. The dial is carved from precious materials – proportions, colours, and textures create a sublime diamond jewellery watch. Made from ethically-sourced 18k rose gold and encased with diamonds, the 30mm rose gold L'Heure du Diamant showcases Chopard's watchmaking and gem setting craftsmanship. *Price on request; chopard.com*



**Seamaster Aqua Terra 150m
OMEGA**

White represents divinity and purity, and the Aqua Terra 150m illustrates a timepiece apt for a wedding day. The timepiece brings a sporty essence, added functionality and above all, elegance. This 38.5mm 18k red gold watch has 12 diamond indexes and a diamond set bezel presented on a white leather strap. In addition to its lovely collections, Omega is dedicated to conservation efforts. *₹25,56,600; omegawatches.com*



**Chronomat 32
BREITLING**

Elegant and beautiful, the Chronomat 32 features two-tone 18k red gold and stainless steel with a classic yet modern design. The circular dial has a diamond-set bezel and markers. Breitling is known for its technical aviation watches and chronographs, but has a minute collection of daily wearable, smaller-sized watches. The chronomat line fills the gap. *₹8,04,900; breitling.com*





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Chronograph 43**
BREITLING

Cased in 18k red gold, the 43mm Navitimer houses a black dial with matching red-gold hands and markers and contrasting white subsidiary dials. Breitling's most iconic timepiece, it was named the official timepiece by the Aircraft Owners Pilots Association in 1954. The use of ECONYL, a watch strap produced from 100 per cent recycled ocean waste spells sustainability. ₹29,26,850; breitling.com



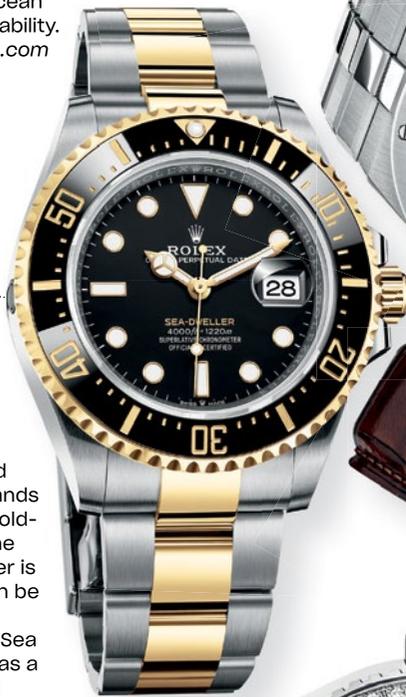
**Alpine Eagle Flying
Tourbillon**
CHOPARD

Executed in striking Aletsch Blue, the textured dials of the Alpine Eagle Flying Tourbillon are stamped to resemble an eagle's iris. The 41mm watch is made partially of recycled stainless steel and the movement is engraved with a 22k gold micro-rotor. It is a rare watch that bears the Poinçon de Genève (seal of Geneva). Price on request; chopard.com



Sea Dweller
ROLEX

From the yellow gold surrounds on the hands and indices to the gold-coated numerals, the two-tone Sea Dweller is a timepiece that can be worn with almost anything. The Rolex Sea Dweller started out as a tool for professional deep-sea divers. The 43mm is more focused towards function and has been slightly redesigned as Rolex has been defending the environment by implementing initiatives around the world. Price on request; rolex.com



Portofino Chronograph 39
IWC

A perfect dress watch, the Portofino has been one of IWC Schaffhausen's most famous collections since 1984. It features curvaceous lugs and a pump-style chronograph pusher. IWC has committed to promoting sustainability with Timber-tex straps, made from 80 per cent natural plant fibre. The absence of a date complication and blend of applied batons and roman numerals gives it a neat and unsophisticated look. ₹5,03,000; iwc.com



Seamaster Planet Ocean 600m
OMEGA

This unconventional 39.5mm stainless steel case watch features a black ceramic dial with Arabic numerals and a scratch-resistant sapphire crystal. The diamond-set bezel with black ceramic triangle pays homage to Omega's dive watch heritage. For its ocean conservation efforts, Omega has partnered with Nekton, a non-profit research foundation committed to protect the world's oceans. ₹10,01,000; omegawatches.com





Magical Weddings in Istanbul

A magnificent setting, flawless service and elegant details come together to make your dream wedding come true in magical Istanbul.





◀ Clockwise: The Emirates Palace Wedding specialists weave magic with regal wedding set-ups; Strike a pose at the grand staircase of the hotel; Host a memorable beachside wedding under the starry sky or a royal soiree at the palatial Ballroom, options are a plenty



A Royal Affair

The picture-perfect **Emirates Palace** in Abu Dhabi makes for a regal setting for magnificent marriage festivities or a romantic honeymoon in the desert capital. **BY SHIBANI BAWA**

IF YOU'VE ALWAYS dreamed of saying “I Do” in a royal setting, this is the one-stop destination for you. With all its shimmer and sparkle, Emirates Palace is a new-age palace hotel. From award-winning dining options to an array of magical venues combined with traditional Arab and world-class hospitality, you and your guests will be spoiled like true blue royalty. It is no wonder that it has played host to some of the world's most rich and famous celebrities, royalty and a host of dignitaries.

The team at the Emirates Palace pulls out all the stops, when it comes to pampering you for your special day. Luxurious accommodation, intimate settings, lavish theme parties—they will honour your requests by executing them exquisitely. You can literally see your dreams take shape while you lay back and enjoy it all. Did we mention that the bridal couple have a 24x7 personal butler to cater to their demands?

A memorable beachside wedding under the starry sky or a royal soiree at the palatial Ballroom, Emirates Palace's Wedding specialists are famous for recreating fairy-tales. From setting up a romantic gazebo in the lush gardens to creating the right vibe for a glittering pool party, they offer a selection of options that are better than anything your whimsical imagination can come up with. The beautiful Ballroom is laden with ornate marble and gold, blending timeless architectural features with modern design, enriched by three Swarovski crystal chandeliers. Spread over 2,183 square metres, it can accommodate up to 2,400 guests or be divided into three smaller spaces, if so needed. Then there are elegant terraces and 1.3 km of pristine private beach, where a beautiful alfresco ambience is matched by superlative service and delectable food. Customised menus and bespoke flower arrangements ensure that your wedding is a one-of-a-kind event. To top it all, the team is well-acquainted with wedding customs from the Indian subcontinent, the Arabian Gulf region and beyond, enabling them to cater to finer details.

The accommodation is equally opulent from the ultra luxurious royal suite to two- and three-bedroom palace suites. The latter includes three interconnected suites and a magnificent *majlis* for a small group wanting privacy amidst all the ceremonies and rituals. There are also beachfront suites offering a panoramic view of the palm-fringed Gulf.

After all the hectic partying, the newlyweds are indulged with the ultimate romantic treats. A personal butler to attend to them—drawing up a leisurely, milky bath strewn with rose petals or laying out amorous candle-lit dinners and, of course, giving them ample privacy for newly-wed bliss. The spa offers a range of signature treatments, and the top-of-the-line royal couples' treatments are especially designed to treat you like a king or queen. mandarinoriental.com ✦



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A Portuguese Beach Escape

Celebrate your love amidst sunshine, sea and sassy nightlife, while discovering a variety of venues at the **W Algarve** in Albufeira.



W Algarve brings the distinctive energy of the W brand to Portugal

IF YOU FANCY A EUROPEAN wedding, then a cool contender is Albufeira—the largest and perhaps the most vibrant resort town hemming southern Portugal’s stunning Algarve coast. This fishing village of yore is now a fun holiday destination with an enticing climate and buzzing nightlife, making it a great



All the rooms feature custom-made furniture and local cultural touches.

choice for couples, both looking to tie the knot or spend quality time together, post their wedding madness. The Marriott International group has launched the W Algarve, its new boutique property that brings the distinctive energy of the group’s W brand to Portugal.

The sophisticated 134-rooms feature custom-made furniture and cultural touches such as filigree lamps at bedside tables inspired by the region’s churches and mosaics made from authentic Algarve ceramics. Besides, all rooms offer spacious balconies, facing hotel gardens and the Atlantic coast—perfect for honeymooners!

If you are selecting W as your wedding venue, there are six studios spreading over 515 square metres and more than 2,000 square metres of outdoor area. The hotel adds on great music, signature scents, and more to make your big day a memorable affair.

Dining choices are aplenty and range from the Market Kitchen, which offers modern southern Portuguese fare to Paper Moon that serves Italian food. For al fresco enthusiasts, there’s the W Lounge and SIP @ WET sun deck, for quick bites. Right next door, Sea Sky is the right spot for cocktails backdropped by Armação de Pêra bay. marriott.com —**LUBNA SALIM**

An Arabic Oasis

A gorgeous beach and regal hospitality make **Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas**, Qatar, the best desert destination to celebrate the wedding of your dreams.

LOCATED IN THE HEART OF QATAR, the Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas offer an array of luxe experiences before and after the wedding. From romantic rituals for the couple to lavishly pampering your guests, the hospitality team knows how to make celebrations truly memorable.

With a private beach spreading over 3.5 km and elegant interiors showcasing the region’s finest architecture and design, the resort has a range of venues offering different themes and settings. From outdoor sundowners overlooking the sea to palatial Arabic splendour, no two events are alike. While the property’s luxurious ballroom can host up to 1,200 people, the expansive resort has 246 spacious rooms and suites, 84 beach villas and a signature Arabian village of 31 villas to accommodate a large guest list.

The culinary options match up to the magical surroundings. With more than 20 restaurants serving everything from traditional Italian to modern Oriental fare, your wedding party will



The resort offers an array of luxe experiences before and after the wedding.

certainly be well fed! For the young ones in your troupe, there is the Desert Falls Water & Adventure Park, where one can experience all the thrill and adventure in-between the traditional ceremonies. And after all the dancing and merry-making, the eforea Spa ensures that everyone is refreshed and rejuvenated for the ongoing celebrations.

A rose-adorned beach villa, the picturesque backdrop of the perfect Qatari sunset and a beautiful lighthouse overlooking the marina are the perfect ingredients for a fairytale wedding. Add to that world-class services and an array of wonderful sensory experiences and you’re covered for the dreamiest nuptials. hilton.com —**SHIBANI BAWA**



Dream WEDDING AT *Dreamy* DESTINATION

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CROSSROADS
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THE
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Hard Rock
HOTEL
MALDIVES

Saii Maldives
LAGOON
CURIO COLLECTION BY HILTON



From left: A glimpse of the Chao Phraya Ballroom at Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort; experts at the properties curate tailor-made experiences for the bride and the groom.

Water Haven

Whether it's a dreamy island wedding or a romantic urban retreat, **Anantara** makes your special occasion in Thailand a memorable affair.

BE IT PARTY-LOVERS or those in search of calm, Thailand is a one-stop destination that caters to the needs of one and all. And weddings and honeymoons score high on the country's tourist itineraries.

The Anantara Koh Yao Yai Resort, perched on one-kilometre white sandy beach set against a backdrop of the towering limestone formations rising from the waters of Phang Nga Bay is ideal for both a cozy wedding and a tranquil island retreat.

The 148-key Anantara Koh Yao Yai offers one- and two-bedroom beachfront pool villas and spacious suites housed in four low-rise buildings, all with ocean views, overlooking a freeform swimming pool.

An ocean-facing dining restaurant, an all-day lobby restaurant and bar, and an organic onsite farm onsite cater to the diverse culinary needs.

Another option for your special day and getaway is the Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort, which is ideal for a tranquil romantic urban retreat. Celebrate your love in this resort, perched on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River, amidst eleven acres of lush tropical gardens. Add to that, contemporary Thai interiors, and world-class cuisine and venue options from a grand ballroom to an al fresco terrace shrouded in orchids, and you get the perfect settings for your rituals and ceremonies.

The resort's dedicated wedding coordinator help tailor your wedding to your taste. There are six special wedding packages to choose from too. anantara.com —**LUBNA SALIM**

Unforgettable Celebrations of Love

Just a 45-minute speedboat ride from Male takes you to **Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi**, a tropical haven of love and luxury.



An in-villa floating breakfast the morning after the wedding are few of the romantic gestures that the couple can enjoy.

WHITE SANDS, swaying palms and turquoise blue waters are nature's glorious signs of welcoming you to the magical world of Waldorf Astoria Maldives. The swanky accommodation includes 119 beach, reef and over-water villas. The resort goes above and beyond to host memorable weddings. Celebrations can be organised at a soft, white sandy beachside overlooking the glistening Indian Ocean or at the over-water wedding pavilion as the waves lash gently below. You can rest assured that each moment will be blissful as the dedicated team will attend to every imaginable detail on the most special day of your life. A decorated wedding buggy, customised wedding cake, floral bath drawn on the wedding night, an in-villa floating breakfast the morning after the wedding are just a few of the romantic gestures that the couple can enjoy.

No two days will be alike at this tropical paradise with intimate dining on the beach one day or at a nearby sandbank another. There are eleven fantastic dining venues, including

Michelin-starred options. Tuck into the finest fare at Zuma or be one with nature among the private hand-crafted bamboo pods at Terra, or simply dream away with the love of your life under the velvet night sky with the signature Starlight Ocean Wave treatment.

The hidden gem at Waldorf Astoria Maldives is the private island at Ithaafushi. Spread over 32,000 sqm—the largest in the Indian Ocean and ideal for intimate celebrations. It accommodates up to 24 guests across two villas and one four-bedroom residence, with a range of bespoke culinary and wellness offerings.

Honeymoons at Waldorf Astoria Maldives are equally extraordinary. Tranquil days and nights, lounging in the comfort of your villa, being pampered by the finest food and drinks, relaxing treatments for the couple at the spa and a range of complimentary tokens from the resort like a champagne bottle, floral bath, couple's personalised bathrobes and more. waldorfastoriomaldives.com

—**SHIBANI BAWA**



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Picture Perfect

A white sandy beach, crystal clear turquoise waters and the choice of two resorts make **Crossroads Maldives** the best pick to tie the knot or enjoy a romantic honeymoon on an idyllic island.

THE PICTURESQUE MALDIVIAN islands are ideal to celebrate some memorable life events. But more often than not, you have to pick one resort as you are literally marooned on an island. Crossroads Maldives has sorted that dilemma for you! With its two fabulous resorts, Hard Rock Hotel Maldives and SAii Lagoon Maldives, Curio Collection by Hilton, Crossroads Maldives offers an extensive choice of venues and



From a dreamy proposal to a grand wedding, the team of experts at Crossroad Maldives take care of the finest details.



dining options to enjoy special moments with your loved ones.

With two different vibes at each resort, you can create varied ambiances and moods for each event. The Hard Rock Hotel Maldives, with 178 spacious villas, offers two prime locations - the Pavilion with a panoramic view of the Indian Ocean is ideal for a reception, while the Beachfront offers flexibility in packages with comfortable add-ons and personalised touches. SAii Lagoon Maldives, Curio Collection by Hilton has a lovely, casual, tropical vibe through the resort. It has 198 boho-chic designed villas, blending a modern chic design with an island atmosphere. Take your pick from the different tropical settings or enjoy an expansive view of the beach and the ocean beyond.

Right from planning a dreamy proposal to a grand wedding, an intimate renewal of vows or a fancy anniversary celebration, their team takes care of the finest details. They can even add some Maldivian magic with Bodu Beru, the traditional Maldivian drums, to make your celebrations extraordinary. If you like to keep it small, start a romantic evening with a sparkling wine, indulge in fine, customized food and end with relaxing a massage. If you like to include lots of friends and family in your revelry, attractive special occasion benefits are also provided to get the best value for your celebrations. crossroadsmaldives.com —**SHIBANI BAWA**

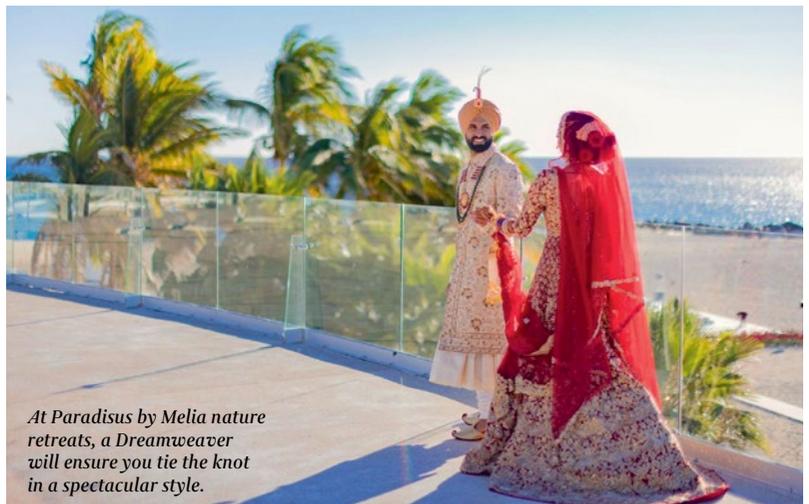
Your Moment, Your Way

Celebrate the most magical moment of your life at **Paradisus by Melia**, a paradise for nature lovers.

NATURE LOVERS NEED LOOK no further than Paradisus to celebrate their nuptials in the paradisiacal settings, luxurious environs and responsible, all-inclusive resorts across Mexico.

At any of the Paradisus by Melia nature retreats, a Dreamweaver will assist you at every level to ensure that you tie the knot in as spectacular a style as you can imagine. In keeping with their ethos of acting responsibly towards nature and their surroundings, Paradisus offers immersive guest experiences that adapt the authentic local culture with the luxurious service of the brand. They also ensure that each wedding package is specially curated to embrace the specific needs of the couple.

Paradisus Los Cabos by Melia is especially suited for a traditional South Asian wedding. What remains constant is the gorgeous surrounding of a stunning blend of desert and waterfront views, and the only swimmable beach of the destination. A wedding here includes all the fun for the bride, groom and their families.



At Paradisus by Melia nature retreats, a Dreamweaver will ensure you tie the knot in a spectacular style.

Catering especially for South Asian weddings, they have a new chef, Somenath Dey, who was born and raised in India. Travelling to different countries to follow his culinary passion has added immensely to his repertoire and he specialises in creating South

Asian culinary experiences for meetings, events and weddings, especially creative Indian food. The best part, the resort keeps it extremely exclusive by hosting only one South Asian wedding per year! paradisusloscabosresort.com —**SB**



INTERCONTINENTAL
CHENNAI MAHABALIPURAM RESORT

A STYLISH DESTINATION WEDDING BEGINS WITH US

Let us bring to life your perfect destination wedding by weaving your every request, detail, and dream.

As you promise to love and cherish each other for the rest of your lives, InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort promises to make every moment of your wedding exquisite and memorable. Whether taking a stroll down the aisle on the pristine sands of our famed beach or choosing to celebrate your union on the tropical edges of our luscious surroundings, ensuring the preparations for that special day are seamless and relaxing, so that you may focus on the things that truly matter to you to make your dream come true.

Starting from bespoke destination wedding packages, scintillating decor options to delectable menus, and set ups for your guests.





Left: Brides and grooms are spoilt for choice when it comes to wedding packages at Paradisus Los Cabos; below: Couples can opt for a beautiful honeymoon by the beach.



Your Marriage, Make It Magical

The exquisite nature retreats and all-inclusive luxury resorts, Paradisus Los Cabos by Melia, offer the best space and hospitality for your nuptials.

PARADISUS Los Cabos is synonymous with some of the most beautiful nature retreats across the Pacific of Mexico. Living up to their name, the resort offers a slice of paradise, enhanced with luxurious accommodation and fine service. An added plus is that the resort offers personalised packages, so once you reach there you can simply avail of all the offerings and enjoy an indulgent holiday.

Paradisus Los Cabos by Melia is also becoming increasingly popular in our part of the world for hosting a lavish and exotic wedding. Everyone is looking to host a celebration unlike any

other. Paradisus Los Cabos offers a great choice as it is vibrant, culturally rich and also shares a connection with our traditional Indian heritage. Nature lovers need look no further than Paradisus to celebrate their nuptials in the paradisiacal settings, luxurious environs and responsible, all-inclusive resorts.

Paradisus Los Cabos by Melia is a gorgeous offering by the brand, especially suited for South Asian weddings. While Mexican food is hugely popular all over the world, a traditional wedding requires some traditional food as well. Especially when guests fly down all the way from India, they are particularly thrilled to know



that their gastronomic needs are well taken care of. The ace addition to the fantastic team at Paradisus Los Cabos is Chef Somenath Dey. He was born and raised in India and subsequently travelled to different countries to pursue his culinary passion. This experience and blend of his heritage makes him understand the unique requirements of his guests. He specialises in creating South Asian culinary experiences for meetings, events and weddings. He also specializes in creative Indian food that he presents with a modern flair.

Additionally, a Dreamweaver is assigned to you to take care of all the logistics and managing a grand event, allowing you to enjoy every moment of this special celebration. They ensure that each wedding package is specially curated to embrace the specific needs of the couple. In keeping with the brand's philosophy of acting responsible tourism, Paradisus offers immersive guest experiences that adapt the authentic local culture with the luxurious service of the brand.

The gorgeous surroundings of Paradisus Los Cabos include a desert combined with waterfront views, and the only swimmable beach of the destination. A wedding here includes all the fun for the bride, groom, their parents and friends. From delicious meals at different restaurants, a chance to sit back to enjoy relaxing sundowners at the most stunning beaches, vibrant nightlife of Los Cabos and group events such as cocktail lessons for a group, they'll help you create memories together that will last a lifetime!



Clockwise from left: Chef Somenath Dey takes care of guests gastronomic needs; hosting a traditional wedding; Or, simply having an intimate reception party. Paradisus Los Cabos by Melia tailor-makes traditional South Asian Wedding packages for an elegant and exclusive experience.





Indulge in a rejuvenating treatment at Ciel Spa to brush off pre- or post-wedding fatigue.

IT'S NO SECRET THAT Dubai, the city of skyscrapers, luxury shopping and hotels, and the most happening nightlife attracts tourists all year-round. And wedding and honeymoon tourism is no exception. With world-class facilities and myriad attractions, Dubai spoils all visitors for choice.

For couples looking to formalise their commitment at a hotel that offers breathtaking panoramic views of Dubai, SLS Dubai Hotel & Residences is a great option. Nestled in the Downtown district, this property allows unobstructed views of the Burj Khalifa and Dubai Creek.

Among one of the tallest hotels in the area, this property has 254 hotel rooms and 321 hotel apartments. There are six contemporary spaces for hosting events and ceremonies. Besides, SLS Dubai's dedicated catering services team makes your big day extra special with great attention to detail and makes sure every ceremony is impeccably wrapped up from start to finish.

Treat your guest to specialties from the kitchen of Michelin Bib Gourmand 2022 awarded restaurant Fi'lia, or steaks from Carna or throw your bachelorette at the urban-chic S Bar. Sneak away to Smoke & Mirrors for a heavenly meal or hang out with your tribe at Privilege, the signature rooftop venue on the 75th floor and take your party scene to a whole new level.

Couples can indulge in a rejuvenating treatment at Ciel Spa to brush off pre- or post-wedding fatigue. Or, soak in two of world's highest infinity pools atop the 75-storey tower enjoying the 360-degree panorama of Dubai. The possibilities are superlative! sbe.com —LUBNA SALIM

Jewel of the Gulf

Make your wedding and honeymoon super glam and fun at this SLS Dubai Hotel & Residences.

Mayan Magic

The sun, sand and sea, unique Mayan culture and bespoke offerings make **Hilton Cancun** an all-inclusive wedding and honeymoon destination.

THE HILTON CANCUN ticks all the right boxes for tying the knot with the love of your life. Panoramic views of the Mayan coastline, lush mangroves and soft sands at the pristine beach make the place utterly magical. With over 70,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space, superb dining options and a buzzing cocktail scene this is a fab pick to celebrate your special day.

The hotel offers a range of bespoke packages to suit a variety of styles, ideal for Indian guests. The basic Signature package includes a traditional celebration officiated by a bilingual, non-denominational minister. It comes with additional accoutrements—a beautiful wedding cake, and a bouquet and boutonniere for the couple. Plus, an array of extras for the big day like bridal hair and make-up and a three hour private reception are included in the hotel's Devotion package. You can go a notch higher with Cherish, and to the earlier offerings add a wedding arch, aisle runner and one and a half hour rehearsal dinner the night before



The Hilton Cancun is tucked behind a mangrove preserve and set against 100 acres of Mayan coastline.

the wedding for up to 30 people. Then there's Cherish Captured, that includes a ceremony photo shoot and a three-hour reception photo coverage. And finally, the Mayan package—a colourful Mayan ceremony officiated by a Mayan shaman, followed by a one-hour reception with the chef's selection menu. The couple can put

their feet up and enjoy a late check-out.

Besides, Hilton Cancun also offers vow renewals to reconnect with your significant other, and a range of honeymoon and anniversary revelries. They'll organise the most fun bachelor-bachelorette parties, too! hilton.com

—SHIBANI BAWA

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Priceless Memories

Enjoy your dream wedding celebration at **The LaLiT Hotels, Palaces and Resorts.**

WITH A LONG LEGACY in hospitality and a portfolio of 12 bespoke hotels, resorts and palaces spread across the country, weddings at The LaLiT are nothing short of extraordinary. Let these bespoke settings play the perfect host for your dream nuptials. Choose from a variety of venues, from stunning beach locales to heritage palaces with iconic architecture and city hotels that are ideal for a big, fat celebration. Whatever your choice, the LaLiT signature experiences



◀ From top: Have a lakeview wedding at The LaLiT Laxmi Vilas Palace in Udaipur; make your nuptials a memorable affair at The LaLiT Jaipur.



and hospitality will elevate your wedding for an experience to remember.

The chain has properties in major cities across the country. Traditionally modern, yet luxurious, each property offers a distinctive and unique setting, representing the spirit of the destination where it is located. So, if you're looking for that serene beach wedding as you tie the knot surrounded by close friends and family, or a larger-than-life celebration as you mark a new chapter in your lives, there is a LaLiT property for you.

Begin your journey of togetherness with blissful experiences, fine cuisine and handcrafted moments—all tailored to perfection. Expert culinary teams will curate a feast for your guests, from authentic Indian fare to a range of international cuisines, while dedicated teams are available to help ensure your celebration is pulled off seamlessly. Brides can indulge in pre-wedding rituals for that perfect bridal glow with specially-curated treatments at Rejuve-The Spa. Contact a LaLiT wedding expert on +91 7042934499; www.thelalit.com —ARZOO DINA

Newlyweds enjoy breakfast by the beach at the InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort.



Paradise Found

Skip those done-to-death destinations and personalise your wedding or honeymoon at at the **InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort.**

IMAGINE A COSY wedding ceremony in a garden with the sound of the ocean waves as your background score. Then, picture yourself saying your vows in a *mandap* or a canopy decked in pretty pink and white flowers in the middle of that garden fenced by emerald palms overlooking the golden sands of a private beach.

If that's something that makes your heart flutter with joy, a destination do in Chennai, where the tranquillity of the beaches meets the serenity of nature and culture, is definitely worth considering as is the InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort.

Perched on the shores of the beautiful Bay of Bengal, this property is an excellent choice for that

bucket-list beach nuptials ceremony. Adding a hint of heritage to the mix is the overarching design of this resort that sits amid casuarina groves. To tailor your big day (or honeymoon) to your taste, there are specialists, who curate a theme or tradition-based wedding.

A part of the InterContinental Hotels and Resorts, this beach resort—located 45 kms from Chennai International Airport has a 15,000 square feet garden space with a private beach. There are 105 rooms, including Ocean View Suites, an exclusive kids' facility and three award-winning restaurants in addition to a luxurious spa and salon. Contact an expert at +91-44-71720101, ihg.com

—LUBNA SALIM

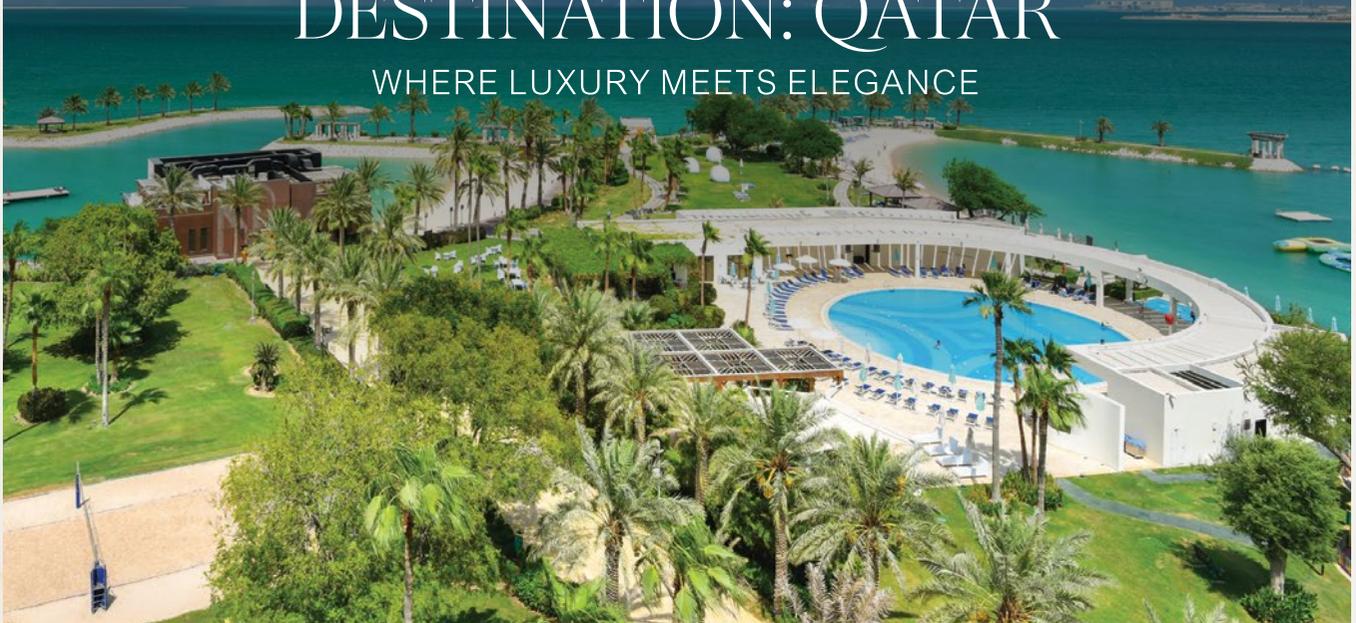


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DESTINATION: QATAR

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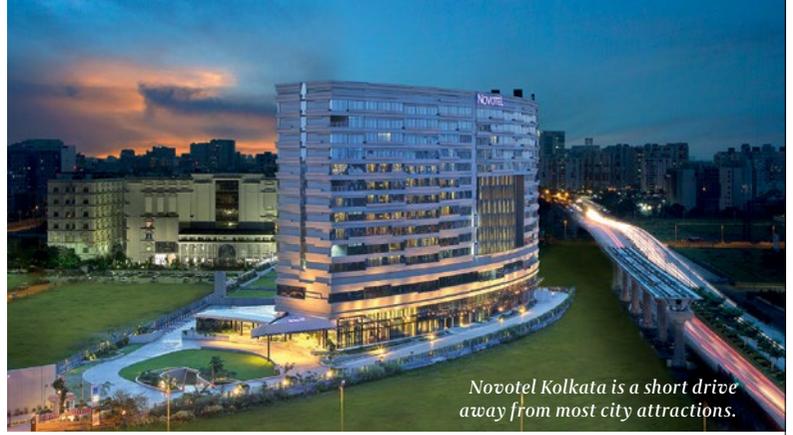
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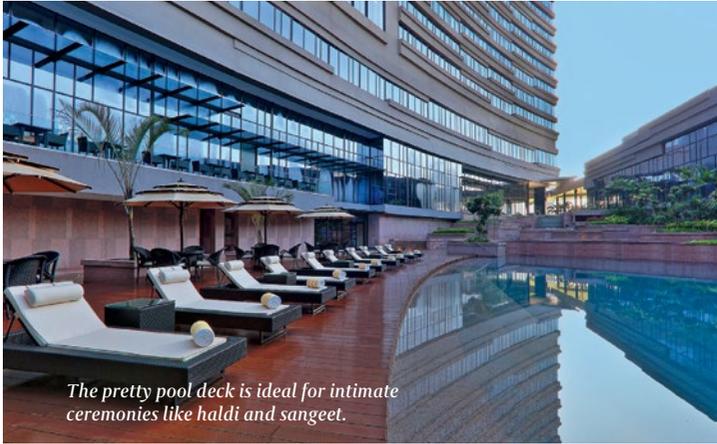
 [sheratongranddoha.com](#)

Novel Nuptials At The City Of Joy

The wedding of your dreams can be executed perfectly at the **Novotel Kolkata**.



Novotel Kolkata is a short drive away from most city attractions.



The pretty pool deck is ideal for intimate ceremonies like haldi and sangeet.

LOCATED IN THE NEW TOWN area of the city, Novotel Kolkata is a short drive from most of the popular attractions of Kolkata, yet conveniently away from the chaos. The hotel is large and features 340 stylish rooms, suites and serviced apartments. The serviced apartments are pet friendly, so your furry friends can also be part of all the revelry.

Novotel Kolkata is adept at hosting groups as small as 50-60 guests to as large as 1,200 guests and more. The range of venues offers enough flexibility to adapt to your specific requirements. Sprawling over 30,000 square feet, Le Jardin Open Terrace is an al fresco space overlooking the hotel façade with a pool view. It is ideal for a lavish wedding and reception. The beautiful Pool Deck is better suited for intimate ceremonies like *haldi* and *sangeet*, and can accommodate about 150 guests in a casual setting. The space also doubles as a chic party venue for the younger gen. Located in a separate convention block, with an exclusive entry and exit, the Eiffel Ballroom, spread over 5,400 square feet, can accommodate up to 700 guests, including the spacious foyer. It can be segregated into three smaller spaces, Eiffel I, II and III. Finally, the Pierre Hall is ideal for 250 guests in a wedding format. Needless to say, all the venues can be dressed up as per your requirements, creating an ambience fit for you and your guests.

While Vivaah By Novotel ensures meticulously planned *daawat*, *shagun* or the main *vivaah* celebration, Novotel Kolkata also works well as a heavenly escape for a luxurious honeymoon after all the hectic celebrations. all.accor.com/novotelkolkata.com — **SHIBANI BAWA**



Pullman Aerocity offers an open courtyard set-up for an outdoor wedding.

A Dream Come True

Enjoy a fairy-tale wedding at **Pullman Aerocity, New Delhi**, and let their expert team give shape to your fondest memories.

SIGNATURE WEDDINGS by Pullman are legendary in creating the most memorable moments to celebrate the love of your life. From choosing the perfect colour of flowers to creating an extraordinary setting and serving the finest fare, they take care of the tiniest details. Rather than merely offering you what they have, the team will incorporate all your whims and desires to suit your inimitable style.

The spacious 40,000-square-foot, pillarless banquet hall at Pullman Aerocity, New Delhi, ensures you can joyously include all those you want to celebrate the special occasion with. The beautiful Peacock Ballroom is easily accessible from the lobby and when combined with the large pre-function area, it can host up to 1,500 guests! While the hotel is ideal to cater to a big fat Indian wedding, they do an equally good job for smaller affairs as well. The ballroom can

easily be partitioned into three separate halls— perfect for smaller functions like the *mehndi*, *sangeet* or cocktails. The state-of-the-art AV technology complemented with lights installed on trusses that drop down from the ceiling create the perfect mood for each occasion. Beautiful outdoor settings can also be arranged at the pool area or at the lavish courtyard that can accommodate up to 500 guests. A close proximity to the airport is an added advantage for out-station guests.

Special services for the bride and groom include hair and make-up artists at the Pullman Wellness Spa & Salon, relaxing pre-wedding spa treatments and beautiful bridal suites to be your most gorgeous self on your special day. In a nutshell, let Pullman Aerocity's superior hospitality set the tone for a remarkable celebration. pullman.accor.com — **SB**

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Fairmont Jaipur is perfect for a pre-wedding photoshoot amidst palatial backdrops and royal settings.



A Splendid Celebration

Nothing spells royalty like the land of maharajas. Create your own royal wedding in an extravagant style at **Fairmont Jaipur**.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A magnificent venue for your wedding, or pre-wedding festivities, we have you sorted! With dreams in your eyes, step towards your happily ever after with an iconic wedding celebration at Fairmont Jaipur. Designed like a grand Mughal palace of the region, complete with shining chandeliers, large murals, beautiful frescoes, silver artefacts and traditional Shekhawati furniture, the hotel combines the rich heritage of Rajasthan with the immaculate

service of their hospitable team. You can simply revel in the whimsical festivities at royal venues tailored for joyous celebrations. All you need to do is arrive in style with your bridesmaids and have the time of your life at your magnificent destination wedding.

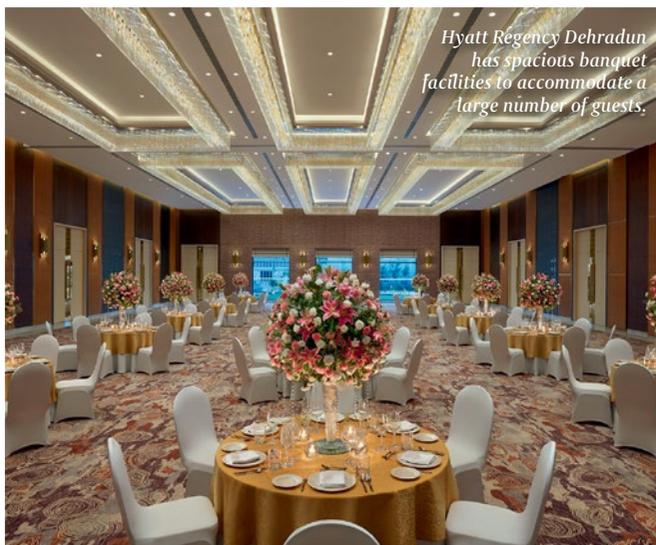
Brides are thoroughly pampered and made to feel like a maharani on their special day amidst majestic surroundings. As you create memorable moments of your royal fairy-tale wedding, amidst the Grand Ballroom's imperial splendour, your guests will be treated to the finest cuisines and impeccable service. Add a regal charm to your celebrations amidst magnificent architecture and exquisite set-ups, the ideal setting for your palace wedding.

Freeze-frame the special celebrations with a pre-wedding photoshoot amidst palatial backdrops and royal settings. Moments will turn into cherished memories as your intimate engagement ceremony unfolds in a regal style. Begin a brand-new chapter of your life with curated festivities set against the palatial backdrop of Fairmont Jaipur, where curated celebrations at royal alfresco venues bring your dream wedding to life. fairmont.com

—SHIBANI BAWA

Yehi Hai Right Choice

The luxurious **Hyatt Regency Dehradun**, nestled in the mountains of Uttarakhand, makes a picture-perfect venue for your nuptials.



Hyatt Regency Dehradun has spacious banquet facilities to accommodate a large number of guests.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT venue for tying the knot is crucial for hosting the perfect destination wedding. Nestled between the foothills of the Himalayas and adjacent to the scenic Malsi forest, Hyatt Regency Dehradun is located on the Dehradun-Mussoorie Road. The gorgeous views from everywhere in the hotel and easy access from major cities makes it the best choice for fairytale festivities.

Spread across seven storeys, the property features 263 well-appointed rooms and suites designed in a contemporary elegant style. The panoramic vistas are but the icing on the cake. With 33,500 square feet of event space, you may choose from various venues to have different ceremonies, hosting about 700-800 guests. The Regency Ballroom is a magnificent space filled with abundant natural light, and it opens on to the Regency Lawn overlooking the verdant Mussoorie hills. Wedding

phas can take place at the charming Vista Lawn that offers the gorgeous backdrop of lush forests and hills. While the Sky Pool is ideal for sundowners, the Pinnacle Lounge is well-suited for smaller events. The culinary team lays out a gastronomic extravaganza. From authentic Indian to international favourites and regional specialties like Rajasthani, Marwari, Tibetan and Pahadi cuisine cooked by regional chefs, it is sure to leave your guests raving about the food. Then there's Camp Hyatt that keeps the little ones engaged in fun recreational pursuits between the various ceremonies.

A particularly thoughtful gesture by the hotel is to involve the newlyweds to partake in a tree-planting ceremony before they leave. This may also be the perfect excuse to visit the property again, to relive your special moments and seeing your very own tree blossoming over the years! hyatt.com —SB



PROMOTION

From left: Sun yourself by the pool post hectic evening dos; Brides can make the most of the hotel's location along the gorgeous coast of Southern Portugal with amazing photos; Below: At W Algarve couples can be themselves.

An Affair to Remember

Take your wedding vows at the newest W hotel to join the family of W Escapes. **W Algarve** blends the free-spirited vibe of the brand with Portuguese heritage and the most gorgeous sunsets over southern Portugal. **BY SHIBANI BAWA**



THE MAGIC of Portugal lies in its Moorish culture, ancient traditions and vibrant crafts. The latest property to join the Marriott International group, W Algarve, incorporates all this with the brand's own distinctive energy to create an inimitable hotel.

Located on a clifftop along the gorgeous coast of Southern Portugal, we'd recommend this hotel for the most magical sunsets on the golden bay of Armacao de Pera! From the breathtaking location on the rooftop at Sea Sky to the expansive W Lounge Garden, W Algarve offers some of the most scenic settings for an amorous celebration. Air is an exclusive venue that offers some of the best sunset views from a clifftop. This one is particularly recommended for wedding ceremonies and receptions.

As your guests enter the hotel through an entrance inspired by ancient local traditions, they'll be escorted around a fluid wall adorned with mirrors and green and blue Portuguese handmade ceramic plates. This sets the tone for the vibe through the hotel – casual and mystical. A connection to the underwater is also evident, especially at the W Lounge, which features an artistic 'wave' shaped installation made of glass panels, inspired by oceanic bubbles and exotic Moorish jewellery. The glamorous bar is decorated with custom-made Moorish tiles, hand-blown glass lamps and a striking 20-metre long

onyx counter that extends from the indoor bar to the terrace.

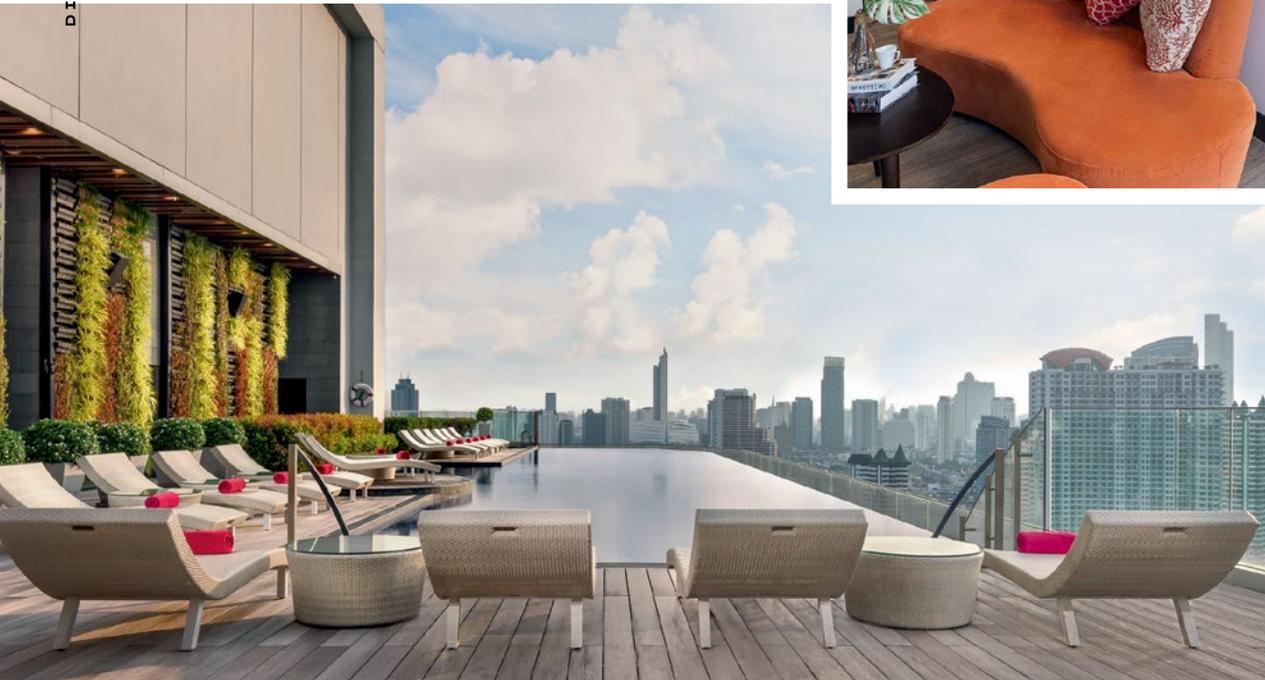
The W offers couples to organise wedding revelries at six different studios spread over 51 square metres and in over 2000 square metres of outdoor space. The adept team of W Insiders takes it a notch higher by recommending the newest experiences in Algarve – local gems that are off-the-beaten-track. Whether you want to tie the knot, pop the question or renew your vows, W Algarve makes it all happen in the most memorable style. From curated catering options to intimate nooks and large spaces to accommodate a lavish wedding party, it can all be arranged. Customising includes playing music that lifts your spirits and resonates with you, using signature scents. Guests can mix and mingle in a laid back way or amp up their energy to rev up the party vibe.

The 134 rooms are maximalist in style, with custom-made furniture and filigree lamps inspired by the region's churches and mosaics made from authentic Algarve ceramics. The highlight though is the azure view from all the rooms with spacious balconies facing the hotel gardens and the Atlantic coast. While the AWAY® Spa is the perfect space for some blissful downtime, the hotel also offers an array of gastronomic destinations. Sip signature cocktails, indulge in delicious bites and enjoy the unparalleled views of Armação de Pêra bay.

For more information, call at +351 289 372 357 faowh-sales@whotels.com

A Wedding By The Beach

An island wedding with crazy pool parties and decadent celebrations can be made a reality at Koh Samui in Thailand.



From top: Spend time socialising with your guests by the pool; Lounge all day in the hotel's retro-chic rooms and soak in the island vibe.

THAILAND HAS been an eternal favourite of Indian couples, whether it's for planning a destination wedding or a fun honeymoon. Besides, the removal of pandemic-imposed travel restrictions has put the country back on the wedding-planning itineraries and how!

Koh Samui or Samui, Thailand's second largest island, is counted among the country's most visited ones in both summertime as well as winters. Those who look for calm can explore south Samui and party lovers can hop over to the Chewang and Lamai beaches.

The island, characterised by clear blue waters and white sand beaches, hemmed by lush green forests, caters to the whims and tastes of every kind of couple. The Avani Chaweng Hotel & Beach Club is one particular place that stands out from the others—catering to everyone from barefoot elopers to show stopping party animals. Avanihotels.com

The brand-new Avani Chaweng adds a touch of retro flair to its clean lines and photogenic design with 80 chic rooms



and suites as well as direct access to the island's hottest beach club—SEEN Beach Club. Seenbeachclubsamui.com

Organise groovy pool parties or your honeymoon inside sultry private pool villas or customise your wedding

by a striking bay to curate that perfect Instagram-worthy ceremony.

You can simply take over the property, with multiple restaurants and the AvaniSpa to get your glam on or soothe away any pre-ceremony jitters. —LUBNA SALIM

LA DOLCE VITA: Living the Extravagant Life

A magical destination wedding awaits you at the medieval century **Castel Monastero**.



Clockwise: Couples can exchange vows amidst panoramic views; The medieval building lends a fairy-tale charms to all celebrations here

FEW LUXURY HOTELS can top the unbeatable location enjoyed by Castel Monastero. The unmatched beauty of the Tuscan countryside, expanse of the Chianti vineyards and rolling hills lush with wheat fields are just the natural wonders here.

While the surroundings are steeped in centuries of history, an 11th century medieval hamlet entirely devoted to the art of hospitality make Castel Monastero the perfect pick for an Italian style wedding. Castel Monastero's special layout and Medieval charm lend themselves to create the most beautiful settings for special celebrations. Its panoramic views and a large, natural open-air theatre, make it a fantastic venue to host remarkable events and to entertain in a grand style. You can even choose to

celebrate the grand occasion with a wonderful firework show in the square.

The trained staff cater to every whim be it a private ceremony in the little church or a reception at their elegant restaurants. From the finest produce to the expert cooking of their chefs you will revel in tasting the unique flavours of the menus offering Tuscan and international cuisine.

The elegantly designed rooms and suites spread throughout the this ancient noble residence are divided into Contradas, giving enough privacy and space to the couple as well as their guests. There are two country houses devoted to the spa for total wellbeing to relax and rejuvenate amidst all the partying. castelmonastero.com —**SHIBANI BAWA**

COURTESY OF CASTEL MONASTERO (2)

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To start planning your destination wedding at Hyatt Regency Sydney, phone +612 8099 1234 or email sydney.regency@hyatt.com

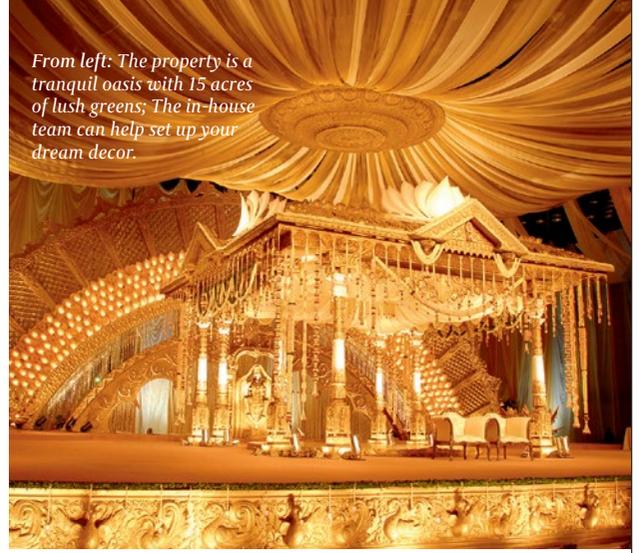
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hyattregencysydney.com

161 Sussex Street, Sydney NSW 2000, Australia



From left: The property is a tranquil oasis with 15 acres of lush greens; The in-house team can help set up your dream decor.



The Big, Fat Hyderabadi Wedding

One of the most sought-after destinations in Hyderabad, **Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre** makes for a stylish venue for your nuptials.

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, this large-scale property has been hosting weddings in the city of Nizams, becoming a key destination for high-profile celebrations and events. So, if you're looking to say 'I do' amidst landscaped gardens, stylish indoor venues, coupled with personalised service and fine cuisine, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre ticks all the boxes. Located in the city's IT hub, the

288-room hotel is a tranquil oasis offering a resort-like ambience with 15 acres of lush greens - ideal for a larger-than-life celebration or even an intimate affair. Adjacent to the hotel is the Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC), an expansive space that is home to a pillarless hall that spans 65,000 sq. ft. This can further be partitioned into six smaller halls, making it a versatile space for different celebrations.

Leave it to the in-house expert event and catering teams to curate bespoke meals and a delightful spread for your guests and family to savour. Whether it's a cocktail and canapés soiree or a large-scale buffet, you're spoilt for choice with the variety on offer. As for the rest of the planning, you have a dedicated team to assist you every step of the way, from setting up an awe-inspiring *mandap* for your *pheras* to flawlessly executing decor, live music and ensuring that your wedding truly is a celebration to remember. With Novotel, weddings are that much more magical. novotelhyderabad.com

—ARZOO DINA



From left: The lawns at the property are ideal for magical sundowners; The banquet and event venues are fitted out with state-of-the-art technology.

Band, Baaja, Baraat In Bengaluru

Weddings at **JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru** are more than just a celebration. Make yours an event to remember with the luxury hotel's bespoke, personalised experiences.

PICKING OUT THE PERFECT location for your wedding is one of the first things you want to check off your to-do list. Conveniently located in the heart of the city and overlooking the lush greenery of Cubbon Park, the property features 281 rooms and suites done up in plush tones, an expansive pool and several dining options. At the JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru,

all you have to do is let the expert team of Marriott-certified wedding planners execute every detail for you - from the decor, table settings and food to the entertainment and bespoke experiences for the couple.

The hotel's magnificent ballrooms, spread over 8,500 sq. ft, are apt for elegant receptions or a fun-filled sangeet, while the

outdoor spaces spanning 7,000 sq. ft lend themselves well to a whole host of functions, from magical sundowners to *pheras*. The banquet and event venues are fitted out with state-of-the-art technology to ensure your wedding arrangements go off without a hitch. An expert culinary team is available to prepare the choicest of cuisines, be it Indian, regional specialties or international favourites. Brides can be rest assured that their every whim can be catered to. Right from spa and salon services to putting together an intimate luncheon with the bridesmaids. So, whether you're planning the quintessential big fat Indian wedding or a more intimate affair, let the hotel tailor-make your wedding experience for a celebration to remember. marriott.com —AD



Clockwise from left: Castel Monastero was originally a country retreat for the noble Chigi Saracini family; it retains the countryhouse's rural architecture; three outdoor pools cascade gently into one another; the hotel offers a real and natural retreat; experience fine Italian hospitality at the restaurant; the rooms offer amazing views.



Where Time Stands Still

The uber luxurious **Castel Monastero** is a haven for an aristocratic Tuscan way of life. Its **Aquae Monasterii Spa**, offering highly effective futuristic treatments, is a huge attraction for wellness enthusiasts.



FROM AN ancient monastery nestled amidst the peaceful Tuscan hills back in the 11th-century, Castel Monastero became an epitome of style amidst the verdant expanse dotted by cypress trees just a short drive from Siena. Originally a country retreat for the noble Chigi Saracini family, this is where you'll get to experience true Tuscan life from another era. As time slows down, sunlight floods the palace, the piazza, the church (tying the knot at Castel Monastero has a real royal charm) and the two country houses crowned by the Chigi Saracini family's emblematic star and coat of arms.

Today, this luxury resort is a member of The Leading Hotels of the World, and attracts celebrities as well as discreet guests from all over the world. The property has 74 rooms

and suites plus a villa. A sensitive restoration has conserved the country houses' authentic character and rural architecture. The Villa Lavanda is a magnificent 17th-century country house surrounded by a large garden and a thriving Chianti vineyard. Then there are various suites offering superb views across Castel Monastero's fields, vineyards and piazza.

Two restaurants, the gourmet Contrada and the Tuscan La Cantina in the 13th-century cellar, showcase fine Italian hospitality and excellent food that is paired with exquisite local DOC wines. The Aquae Monasterii Spa is spread out and has eight treatment rooms, a water wellness zone and three outdoor pools cascading gently into one another. The gurgle of flowing water completes the picture-perfect surroundings. But the highlight remains

the futuristic therapies executed by trained therapists. From the Aemotio detox, anti-age and slimming range exploiting the magical power of water combined with chromotherapy, to the sublime Aquae Monasterii, where an invaluable blend of salts and oligoelements are used on your body, these therapies are known to restore health and vitality. Whether you take the detox programme, with its combination of treatments using LPG machines with detoxifying vapour clouds, Thalasso Detox hydro-aromatherapy compresses, and super-draining massages or the weight-loss programme or an anti-age programme, these treatments are scientific and yield great results. As befits its noble origins, Castel Monastero offers a natural retreat to help you live your life with full vitality.



From top: Couples can have a wedding fit for royalty; the luxury resort's majestic facade and opulent interiors are a tribute to Marwar design and architecture.



Recreating A Royal Repast

Wed like royalty in the scenic Blue City, at **The Ummed Jodhpur Palace Resort & Spa**, surrounded by magnificent vistas and heritage architecture to truly make your special day memorable.

WHETHER IT'S A GRAND wedding celebration or an intimate affair, this palatial property ticks all the boxes for a wedding fit for royalty. Located in the Blue City and spread over an expansive 28 acres, the luxury resort's majestic facade and opulent interiors are a tribute to traditional Marwar design and architecture, complete with *jharokhas*, domes, latticed windows and intricate detailing. With 88 well-appointed rooms including eight grand suites, more than 10,000 sq. ft of banquet and event spaces and a choice of delectable cuisines whipped up by an expert team of chefs, you're sure to have a regal wedding to remember.

The resort offers a choice of different indoor-outdoor venues, perfect for wedding festivities that range from elegant receptions in the palace lawns, to an intimate *mehendi* party at the poolside lawn or a cocktail evening with curated offerings. And who can forget the food? Dining at the resort is nothing short of experiencing the life of a royal, whether you want to savour grills and tandoors as you dine al fresco at the specialty cuisine restaurant or enjoy a private dining experience curated especially for the couple. The hotel can even accommodate requests for hosting your *phasas* at picturesque spots around the property. All you have to do is let The Ummed Jodhpur, Palace Resort and Spa facilitate your dream wedding. ummedhotels.com —**ARZOO DINA**



The Wow Factor

Your wedding needs to be extraordinary and the **The Leela Palace Bengaluru** ensures that it is exactly that, plus extremely effortless and enjoyable for you!

THE GRANDEUR OF THE The Leela Palace Bengaluru needs to be experienced to be believed. It is magnificent in every which way. It's no wonder then, that it is a much sought after venue for high-profile weddings. From opulent décor to gorgeous flower arrangements, from a scrumptious array of culinary magic to the finest attention to detail, personalised services are extended by a team that truly cares. The expert team of Weddings by The Leela ensures that your special day is filled with charm and romance.

Encapsulating the essence of the Garden City, this modern day palace is nestled amidst seven acres of lush greens fringed with swaying palm trees. Add to that the idyllic Bengaluru weather that is especially well suited to enjoy the lovely outdoors. The architecture of The Leela Palace Bengaluru is inspired by the erstwhile Vijaynagara empire—you'll find intricately ornate pillars combined seamlessly with the art deco arches and domes. Taking

their vows at this beautiful property makes any couple feel truly royal. And the service team ensures that they are treated no less than royalty!

The 357 plush rooms and opulent suites provide a comfortable stay for a big fat Indian wedding. And for wedding revelries that extend over days of festivities, there are 18 venues to choose from for different occasions and ceremonies. A lavish terrace, grand ball room, royal ball room and other smaller halls can cater to groups of all sizes. The special cuisines prepared by the expert chefs ensures that everyone is treated to indulgent meals. Finally, the bespoke entertainment arrangements set the mood for creating fun and memorable moments for all. theleela.com

—**SHIBANI BAWA**

Newlyweds hold hands as they walk down the elegant corridor of the beautiful property.





Clockwise: The Hassler Penthouse offers the most scenic views of Rome's city centre; Rooms are luxurious, spacious and elegant; the hotel is located on the top of the Spanish Steps.



Inimitably Italian

A romantic setting in Rome and the incomparable service at the Hotel **Hassler Roma** makes it the perfect place to say "I Do".

IF ITALY is the epitome of romance, the Spanish Steps in Rome is the epicentre of an Italian sojourn. Locally known as *Scalinata della Trinita dei Monti*, this is one of the most famous staircases in Europe. But despite all the fame and the buzz in the surrounding areas of *Piazza di Spagna* and *Piazza Trinita dei Monti*, in an attempt to preserve this historical structure it is now illegal to sit on these steps and people violating that law can be fined up to 400 euros! This makes the Hotel Hassler Roma even more special and exclusive.

Located right at the top of the famous Spanish Steps, the Hotel Hassler Roma enjoys one of the most coveted spots in the entire city. The breathtaking views from the hotel are matched with its superlative hospitality. Owned by the sixth generation of a famous Swiss dynasty of hoteliers – Roberto Jr. & Veruschka Wirth, this hotel has earned a reputation of being one of the finest hotels in the world.

Of the 87 rooms, 21 are suites, and all are designed individually and luxuriously. The Hassler Penthouse is top of the line and offers

the most scenic views of Rome's city center from the Spanish Steps to *Via Condotti*, the high-end shopping street. Located on the 8th floor of the hotel, the lavish accommodation includes two terraces, a well stocked bar area, living room with a dining area, two bedrooms with king beds and a single bedroom, three spacious bathrooms and a kitchen. Besides the junior, classic and executive suites, and other deluxe and grand deluxe room categories, there are also the Penthouse Villa Medici Suite, Presidential Suite San Pietro, Presidential Suite Trinita dei Monti that are ideal to pamper the bride and groom and their special guests.

The elegant and inimitable service offered by the Hassler makes it the preferred destination of the glitterati from across the world. The common areas are also as grand as the exclusive suites. During spring and summer, the verdant garden outside the Palm Court makes it a green oasis, while the *Salone Eva*, is ideal for a tea-time break or a light meal. The Michelin starred rooftop restaurant, *Imàgo* is located on the 6th floor and offers delicious

contemporary Italian cuisine by well-known Chef Andrea Antonini along with the most sumptuous views of Rome.

Given its special location and stylish design, Hotel Hassler makes for a perfect venue for the most memorable wedding reception. Wedding services offered by the events team includes customised arrangements for floral decorations, bespoke menus, individual place cards and table plans to make your guests feel special. You can take your pick of live entertainment from a classical string quartet to a jazz band. A specially designed wedding cake and dining options that incorporate your special requests make sure that your wedding is as unique as you! The hotel also provides a photographer or videographer to capture the special moments. Make-up and hair-styling services for the bride and guests can be organised in suite or at the *Amorvero SPA*.

As you soak in the beauty and magic of Rome, the utterly romantic Hassler also makes for a dreamy honeymoon venue.

—SHIBANI BAWA

Vedika Mohan

CREATIVE DIRECTOR,
THE WEDDING DESIGN COMPANY

MAKING BRIDAL DREAMS COME TRUE

Celebrity wedding planner **Vedika Mohan** reveals the hottest wedding trends this season. **BY ARPITA KALA**



What is your take on sustainable weddings?

Conscious weddings are chosen, not enforced. Wanting to reduce the carbon footprint is something we, as a company and even couples today, are propagating. Whether it's reusing and repurposing fabrics or donating flowers to NGOs and organisations that can recycle the floral installations used in a celebration, sustainable, conscious weddings are something that we as wedding planners and wedding designers should definitely stand for.

Indian weddings have been intimate and sustainable, and that's become more popular after the pandemic. Do you see this trend last?

Definitely. Couples and families today have become more eco-conscious and the mindset of people is ever evolving. Following the path towards a green wedding is something that's here to stay.

What inspires you the most while planning a wedding?

Life, in all forms. From architecture, and romantic novels to fantasy movies, restaurants and museums, the list is endless.

Planning weddings is a taxing, creative process. Do you have any de-stressors for rejuvenation?

One of my biggest de-stressors is working out. Another one is binge-watching.

And your most memorable moment while planning a wedding was...

Having planned a sunset wedding and making it to the *mandap* at sunset to catch the golden-hour light for those beautiful, stunning pictures!

What are the hottest wedding trends this season?

Contemporary *mandaps*, storytelling through food and beverage, and a lot of revenge travel is happening with families now wanting to host destination ones.

Finally, what makes a wedding truly sustainable and eco-friendly?

Working with artisans, craftsmen and other such suppliers and their workforce local to the city you're in. Paperless invites, dry flowers and foam-free floral arrangements, biodegradable confetti. wcdindia.com +



◀ Clockwise: To make weddings eco-friendly, The Wedding Design Company donates used flowers to NGO's and organisations that can recycle the used floral installations; dry flowers, foam-free floral arrangements and biodegradable confetti make weddings truly sustainable.



An island wedding like no other at the Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay



NESTLED on its own private island in the heart of Manama, Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay is the perfect address for a dreamy destination wedding with its lush lawns, white-sand beach, two opulent ballrooms, and scenic outdoor terraces. The Hotel, located only fifteen minutes from the Bahrain International Airport, presents the privilege of taking over an entire island for a bespoke Indian wedding.

While the expansive lawns and gardens with swaying palm trees provide an unforgettable backdrop with beautiful views of the bay, the private white-sand beach, complete with sea breezes, sets the perfect setting for outdoor ceremonies with an option to put the toes in the sand.

Al Bahrain Ballroom offers an exclusive entrance for a memorable Baraat procession and dinner seating for up to 500 people among sparkling chandeliers. The ballroom's terrace, boasting views of enchanting gardens and the sea, also provides seating for 180 guests. A unique Four Seasons touch, the tastefully designed Bridal Suite, featuring multiple

changing rooms, and its own photo studio, is designed to enjoy the pre-wedding hours ensconced in luxury with family members or close friends. Located next to the Al Bahrain Ballroom, the Bridal Suite offers special access to the event venue allowing the bride to make an awe-inspiring first appearance.

Weddings here are also elevated journeys into immersive Indian Cuisine. The Four Seasons' culinary creativity shines forth in an extensive array of customized menus which can be further enhanced by fly-in chefs upon the couple's request. The two award-winning signature restaurants by worldly-renown chef Wolfgang Puck, with crowd-pleasing menus, will also be favoured by the refined palates.

At Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay, destination weddings seamlessly transition to honeymoon bliss. Designed with influence from luxury voyages of the art-deco era, the Hotel is a cosmopolitan oasis combining opulence with elegant colors. The 230m² Royal Suite, crowned on the top floor and boasting unprecedented views of the Manama skyline, is designated as the Honeymoon Suite

in buyout weddings. And, every corner of the property is a place to celebrate love, whether for a leisurely hand-in-hand walk at the white-sand beach; a romantic afternoon under the swaying palm trees of the Azure Pool, or a private dinner by the beach for immersing in the idyllic island times.

With thoughtfulness in every detail and the most attentive Four Seasons service, the Hotel promises a Bahrain wedding of unforgettable beauty in its romantic island setting. To turn this once-in-a-lifetime occasion into a dream-worthy wedding experience, Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay is the ideal address to say 'Yes.'



Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain

For inquiries or reservation, please call +973 1711 5000 or visit fourseasons.com/bahrain



Ritu Kumar

FASHION DESIGNER

HEIRLOOM WEDDING WARDROBE DECODED

From timeless bridal ensembles to ethereal home furnishings, veteran couturier **Ritu Kumar** shares the art of assembling a sustainable bridal trousseau. **BY ARPITA KALA**

Pastel shades never go out of style and make for an ideal pick for a minimalistic wedding trousseau



Sari blouses with statement sleeves are an integral part of your collections. How can sustainability-focused brides-to-be style these pieces?

Over the years, we have seen the sari blouse evolve and transform into a trendy piece of clothing. What once used to be a basic essential to style your sari has today become a primary piece of clothing. Extravagant blouses are very popular these days and

re-purposing them is even more exciting. You can pair your statement blouses with a number of outfits—high-waist skirts, dhoti pants, palazzo pants, a contrasting lehenga. If you really put your mind to it, the possibilities are endless. Statement blouses have become an essential for women, who like to experiment with their wardrobes.

Say Your Vows Under the Mayan Spell

From hen parties and honeymoons to a Mayan wedding ceremony officiated by a shaman, the **Hilton Cancun** resort is armed to cater to the needs of every kind of couple with attention to creativity and detail. **BY LUBNA SALIM**



IMAGINE WALKING down the aisle in the midst of the lush Mayan coastline and exchanging rings in one of Mexico's most romantic spots—Cancun – reconnecting with the significant other and rediscovering yourself while relishing every moment. Or, do you wish to celebrate your love against the drop-back of moonlit waves, relive your carefree childhood savouring scrumptious ice-cream at an in-house shop, or simply spend quality time in a luxurious suite overlooking the Mayan coast or strolling amid the tranquil landscape dotted with gently rustling mangroves? If you are already dreaming about these romantic scenarios, consider the Hilton Cancun. An exclusive beachfront escape, this dreamy resort includes everything from signature dining to the stunning panoramic views.

For one, a warm wedding ceremony on a pristine sand beach beneath sublime summer skies can be made a reality at the Hilton Cancun (hilton.com/en/hotels/cunqrhh-hilton-cancun/). Add to those 70,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space for enjoying great drinks, food and conversation and you have the recipe for life's most meaningful moments.

Besides being a super romantic setting for honeymoons and anniversaries, what with intimate dinners under the stars and long couple massages, there are options for a whole lot of celebration packages (cunqr_concierge@hilton.com) such as elopement and vow renewal where you can celebrate your commitment with a romantic getaway. Arrive to sparkling wine and enjoy dinner under the stars, breakfast can be enjoyed in the suite.

The resort helps plan a bachelor or bachelorette here complete with welcome



theme party favors for the entire group. The package includes welcome margaritas or beers on arrival, a Latin dance experience as well as a private dinner with wine or tequila tasting for the full party.

There are as many as five exciting packages to pick from for the Wedding Day. For one, the Signature deal offers a traditional celebration officiated by a bilingual non-denominational minister. Expect a wedding cake, white folding chairs for guests and bouquets or boutonnieres for couple. Add to this an array of extras for a big day like hair and make-up, and a three-hour private reception and you get the Devotion deal, which you can upgrade to a Cherish with add-ons like a wedding arch, aisle runner and a rehearsal dinner the night before the wedding for up to 30 people. You can go the extra mile and ask for a ceremony photo shoot and a reception photo coverage by availing the aptly-named Cherish Captured package.



Clockwise from top: Soak in the stunning views of the Mayan coastline from the property; a glimpse of the Ocean View Suite; couples can choose from unique experiences on offer; the team of experts can arrange for a romantic beach wedding.

Alternatively, turn your desire for a vibrant Mayan wedding ceremony into a reality at this property with an authentic Mayan shaman for officiation! The wedding coordinators (CUNQR_WEDDINGS@hilton.com) can make all this (and more) happen.



As brides opt for more minimalistic weddings, what colours do you think will dominate this wedding season?

While deep, earthy tones are always more preferred during winter weddings, pastel shades never go out of style. Picking a minimal outfit in a stunning shade could instantly uplift your look.

What are some things to keep in mind while picking a wedding outfit for a sustainable and eco-conscious wedding?

One thing that lies at the centre of sustainability is the idea of reusability. I always encourage brides to opt for evergreen silhouettes that can be easily transitioned into more wearable pieces down the line. Apart from that I also urge brides to explore sustainable handloom fabrics like silk, where not only are these pieces sustainably

sourced and ethically manufactured, they are also very durable, making them ideal for transitioning later on.

According to you, what is the quintessential sari in the trousseau of a sustainable bride, that will be timeless and can become a family heirloom?

Gorgeous Banarasi silk is a wedding wardrobe staple—the richness of the fabric and the way the cloth picks up its colour makes it the perfect choice of textile while considering a bridal look.

What would you suggest as the perfect wedding gift?

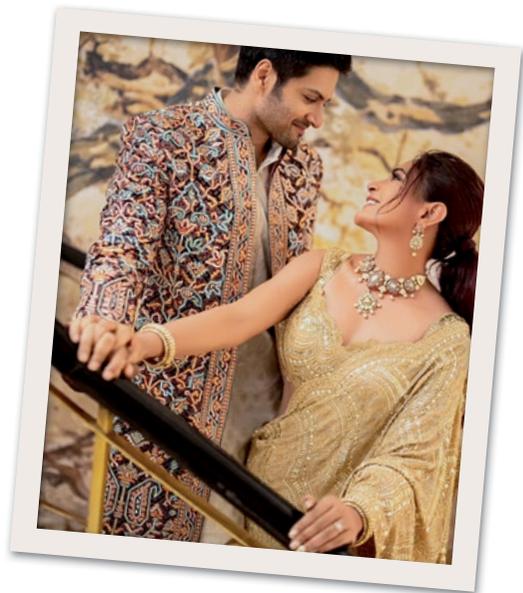
I feel a beautiful dining set with classic patterns or prints will always make for a lovely wedding gift. It also is a very thoughtful and functional present since the newlyweds will be starting their journey together at a new home. ritukumar.com †



▲ From top left: Brides-to-be can pair statement blouses with everything—from high-waist skirts to dhoti pants; Kumar's *La dolce vita* collection merges Italian glamour with Indian sensibilities; Models flaunt creations by Kumar.

A SUSTAINABLE AFFAIR TO REMEMBER

The dream designers aka wedding planner Tailor Made take us behind the scenes of Richa Chaddha and Ali Fazal's nuptial bliss. **BY ARPITA KALA**



like confidentiality, how much and what we can reveal to the media and when, as well as so many other stakeholders like designers, PR, decor and more.

What was your most memorable moment from the Richa-Ali wedding you designed?

Memorable moments for us always are when our clients turn around and say 'thank you'. If you see the recent pictures of the wedding of Bollywood actors Richa Chaddha and Ali Fazal, you will see what we mean. There has been such an outpouring of love and thanks on social media and on leading online Bollywood platforms that extensively featured the work that we did, with a special focus on the decor. That really was a high point for us, especially since we spent over two years planning it and keeping it under wraps till just before the wedding.

What is your take on sustainable weddings?

Sustainability is now a keyword in the curation process as many couples have started thinking in that direction. From using eco-friendly materials in decor, reusing and recycling things, and giving out things to organisations that might use



Clockwise: Sweet moments from the wedding of Richa Chaddha and Ali Fazal; Snapshots from the wedding—natural elements like repurposed wood and flowers was used for the décor, recyclable plastic was used and food wastage was reduced by curating sustainable food experiences.

them, we are trying all options. We also use materials that lessen the carbon footprint. For instance, donating leftover food to NGOs. Flowers are collected after events and donated to organisations like Phool, who, in turn, reuse them.

Do you create an inspirational mood board for each of the weddings that you work at?

Yes. For us, every wedding and every couple is unique and curating a TailorMade experience for each individual is what we specialise in. As a process, we get a questionnaire filled out by each couple. Based on inputs received from the couple, we give them ideas to start collating their thoughts on their ideal wedding. ✦

What is the creative process to plan a celebrity wedding?

While we are overwhelmed by the trust that couples place in us, there is also a sense of responsibility and tension that creeps in. But as we progress with planning for the wedding, we get confident. Planning a celebrity wedding requires us to juggle so many more aspects than a non-celebrity couple. We need to keep in mind aspects

COURTESY OF STORIES BY JOSEPH RADHIK



“I HAD A COMPLETE BLAST AT MY WEDDING!”

Arpita Mehta, the Mumbai-based designer who recently tied the knot with long-time beau and menswear couturier Kunal Rawal, reveals intimate details of her subtle-yet-stylish wedding. **BY ISMAT TAHSEEN**

IT'S BEEN A FEW weeks since designers Arpita Mehta and Kunal Rawal got married and the new bride is still getting congratulatory messages with the question, “How did you manage to keep it all understated and so aesthetic?” smiles Mehta. The couple tied the knot on August 28, 2022 and their cream-and-gold affair saw everyone perfectly in sync from their customised clothes to the jewellery, make-up and décor, making people wonder whether months of planning had gone into it. But 30-days is all they had says Mehta, as she opens up about all that went into her beautiful nuptials...

“Kunal and I were extremely involved in everything from the clothes to the décor.”

Looking back on her big day, Arpita says, “I have never had so much fun than on our wedding weekend. It was very intimate, just 70 of our near-and-dear ones and as a bride, I had a complete blast! It wasn't easy, of course, to plan it all in one month. Kunal and I were involved thoroughly in the look and feel of everything.”

The wedding clothes were naturally a big part of the planning as both Mehta and Rawal are powerful names in fashion. “Being designers, one thing we knew for sure was, the boys would have to be dressed in Kunal and the girls, in Arpita. We decided on a cream-and-gold theme as this is our favourite palette and something we do a lot in our lines as well,” she says.

“We sat down with every guest and asked them, ‘What do you want to wear?’”

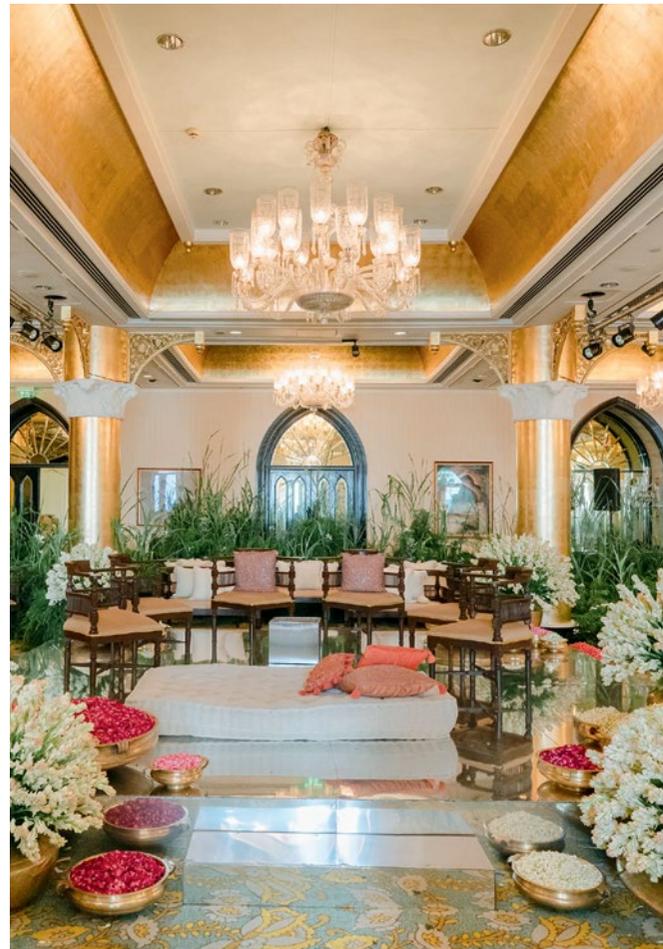
Mehta wanted to customise outfits for each girl, who was invited. She shares, “Usually at weddings, all eyes are on the bride and groom and so, guests dress up as they wish. But the pictures end up looking uncoordinated. In this case, it wasn't just about customising each outfit, but also about putting together each individual's look with the jewellery, hair, etc. and it wasn't easy. For one, everyone's body type is different, and you can't fit everyone into the same style. A sari may work for one, but a *sharara* would be apt for someone else. We sat with every guest and asked them what they wanted to wear. I ended up having in-depth make-up, hair and jewellery discussions to match each outfit, too. The whole month pre-wedding was when all the execution had to happen. I'd wake up at 5.30am to be in my office right, until the last day. Finally, on the wedding day, it was a sheer joy to have everyone wear our clothes. Similarly, for the décor, Kunal and I selected every cushion, plant, light and rug by ourselves.”

“I made the lehenga of my dreams to not change into something else post *phas*.”

On D-Day, Mehta made for a stunning bride in her cream-and-gold *cutdana lehenga* detailed with 18,700 mirrors, that had a beautiful four-metre-long tulle veil with dainty 3-D mirrorwork flowers and thread work. “You may



From the flowers to the cushions, each aspect of décor was carefully planned by designer and newly wed duo Arpita Mehta and Kunal Rawal.





▲ (From Above) Designer Arpita Mehta worked meticulously to curate the complete look of every woman at her wedding; Arpita and Kunal unanimously chose a creme-and-gold-theme for their big day.

see your outfit in a picture any number of times, but seeing it on you is another feeling,” she shares. “I remember doing five samples of the same piece to get it exactly as I wanted.”

Mehta was certain she did not want one element that is cliched. “As much as I love beautiful, fully hand-embroidered lehengas, I don’t enjoy them as it can get heavy and uncomfortable. I prefer softer, free-flowing numbers. So, while the *ghera* remained, I added soft tulle to my lehenga. In spite of it being heavy, I could still be in it from 6am to 6pm, as I did not want to be that bride, who wears it just for the *pheras* and then changes into something else. I had decided, if I am going to be making the lehenga of my dreams, I might as well be in it for a long time on D-day,” reveals the designer.

Mehta’s veil also had a special touch. She adds, “It had to look Indian because a veil can be passed off as a borrowed tradition. To tie it within my look, I added the same mirrorwork flowers from the lehenga and made them 3-D. I wore minimal make-up for a soft glam look for the morning. Being petite, I feel less is more.”

“When I walked in on the bridal entry song and saw Kunal dancing, my gait changed.”

She recalls the bridal entry as being one of her best moments. “Everyone loved it and I remember how I

decided my song just five minutes ahead. It was from a movie we had gone to watch, when Kunal and I had just started dating. I walked in slowly, assuming it would be a quiet and serious scene and there I saw Kunal, dancing in the mandap. Naturally, my walk changed and from treading in a straight line, I started swinging a bit! This changed the mood to a fun and lively one. Kunal lifted me off my feet – it was the most impromptu moment, which turned out to be our favourite moment from the wedding. With somethings, you’ve to go with the flow.”

Did Rawal get a peek beforehand of what she was wearing and vice versa, we ask? “No, he only saw glimpses of the outfit, when it was in the process of swatches. On the D-day, when I walked into the hall, I could just see what he felt in his eyes, in his dance and all over his face, and it was the same for me,” she reveals.

“It’s like marrying your best friend...”

For the newlyweds, their equation has only gotten stronger. Says Mehta, “I’ve known Kunal for very long and we know one another inside out. So, it’s literally like marrying your best friend and it’s the same for him. It’s about unfolding a new chapter with a best friend and partner, for life.”

When we prod Mehta to divulge their honeymoon plans, she says: “We haven’t decided on that yet. We’d just treat it like a trip or a holiday, keeping work in mind as we both have hectic days. We will figure out where to go soon.” +





Hydari pulls off Boho bride vibes with panache at the private villa in Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island.

Red Nurekha saree, price on request, **Bhumika Sharma**; Gold Mirror Elaborate Matha Patti, **Ritika Sachdeva**; Mossanite meenakari studs, price on request, **MotifsBySurabhiDidwania**; Uncut diamond Victorian ring with a beaten gold broad band, ₹8,240, **Neety Singh Jewellery**

Saadiyat Island

Home to Picture Perfect Weddings

The picturesque island in Abu Dhabi boasts some of the dreamiest wedding destinations in the UAE. We take our cover star, the ethereal Bollywood beauty **ADITI RAO HYDARI** to play bride at some of Saadiyat's most beautiful settings.

By Chirag Mohanty Samal

Produced by Aindrila Mitra

Photographed by Tarun Khiwal

Assisted by Abhishek Verma

Styled by Divyak Dsouza

Assisted by Sneha Marie

Hair and Make-up by Elton J Fernandez

Assisted by Pratiksha Muchandika

Couture Partner: Bhumika Sharma

Location Saadiyat Island

AS

I REACHED THE SAADIYAT ISLAND, 20 minutes away from Abu Dhabi International Airport, the stunning views of the glittering turquoise waters of the Arabian Gulf, the never-ending expanse of white sands and the elegant, luxurious resorts—each strikingly stood out like prominent monuments in a setting perfect for an epic wedding.

You could very well imagine Elizabeth Taylor exchanging her real-life vows with one of her eight husbands here or Jennifer Lopez swapping Ben Affleck's Georgia Estate for this island as their wedding backdrop—the reason: **Saadiyat Island** offers captivating natural surroundings and most importantly exclusivity. The island spells romantic escapism, glorified in the poems of Percy Shelley and John Keats or in Ingmar Bergman movies.

Little surprise that **Saadiyat Island** served as the destination for our cover shoot this special issue. Along with Bollywood actor Aditi Rao Hydari, we took a tour of this dreamy island as we captured some gorgeous locations.

Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort

Hydari along with the rest of the crew put up at Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island resort, an oasis of understated luxury. Offering panoramic views of the cerulean sea and a vast private beach, the contemporary property has been designed in a minimalist way to reflect its commitment to sustainability—be it the earthy tones of the interiors or the natural materials used for the upholstery. A glass-blown installation suspended from the ceiling in the lobby draws inspiration from drops of the ocean and the colour palette reflects the seven colours of the Arabian Gulf. Each of the 296 rooms, suites and villas have been done up in the same white and

beige tones with floor-to-ceiling windows offering panoramic views of the ocean. The stretches of white sandy beaches look the most appealing at sunset as the sky dons different hues ranging from pink, orange, golden to purple. And the pool bar or the Italian restaurant Mare Mare are the best places to catch the sunset with a delish cocktail for company. If you have always wanted a sunset wedding, the beach terrace or the beautiful, landscaped garden are stunning locations that can turn a simple wedding into a fairy-tale.

One of the highlights of the property is the spa that spans 2,700sqm, with 13 treatment rooms that include sauna, hydrotherapy pools, steam room, salt room, experience showers, traditional Arabic Rasul room and the largest hammam in the city. So, if you want to calm the most jittery of nerves before the big day, book an appointment at the spa here.

The exclusive villas at the resort offer an exceptional experience with tastefully done up interiors. Minute attention to detail has been paid to each aspect of the villa—from the art works framed on the wall to the bed canopies and rugs. We shot with Hydari at the five-bedroom villa, which had a private terrace, pool and lawn. On being asked what impressed her most at the property, Hydari was quick to reply: “The tranquillity and the laid-back vibe is going to stay with me for a while.” jumeirah.com



▲
Mare Mare restaurant at Jumeirah at Saadiyat, offers stunning sunset views; Park Hyatt blends subtle elegance with regional charm



FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF JUMEIRAH AT SAADIYAT ISLAND RESORT; COURTESY OF PARK HYATT ABU DHABI

*Hydari strikes a pose
at Saadiyat Beach Club.*

Red tara cape, hand-embroidered bustier & skirt set, price on request, **Bhumika Sharma**; Ashki Studs, ₹8,000, **Sheetal Zaveri**; Hand cuffs in pure silver, price on request, **Sheetal Zaveri**



Saadiyat Beach Club

Next door to Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort is the popular Saadiyat Beach Club that serves as a relaxing dining place in the afternoon and turns into a bustling party place in the evening with DJs belting out foot-tapping numbers from across the globe. We, however, headed early in the morning to the club, to catch a few stunning shots on the beach with our cover star. The pearly white sand is perfectly juxtaposed with the bluest waters of the Gulf and as the sun rose casting its magical light, the scene, one of the most beautiful that I have seen till date, remains etched in memory. Hyadri dressed in a flowing red outfit looked like a stunning boho bride.

The beach club is an ideal location for couples looking for a chilled out, seaside wedding. Cabana 9 Lawn at the club, spans an area of 655 square metres and serves as a blank canvas for a memorable wedding. To help out with the preps, the club provides dedicated event planners, tailor-made menus, banquet set up and five-star service and culinary staff. saadiyatbeachclub.ae

Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Villa

Another popular wedding destination at **Saadiyat Island** is this 5-star luxury resort with 306 luxuriously appointed rooms, suites, and villas. It skilfully blends subtle elegance with regional charm and offers bespoke wedding services. The in-house team of experts take care of the needs of the guests—be it intricate floral decorations or a menu comprising local Emirati, as well as global cuisines prepared by the executive chef or live entertainment by local artists. Couples can choose from both indoor and outdoor function spaces. The beach lawn can turn into the altar and for a dinner dance reception, the beautiful 523-square-meter Alyazya Ballroom serves as an ideal location. What's more, you can stay on post the wedding to unwind with indulgent spa sessions at the award-winning Atarmia Spa. hyatt.com

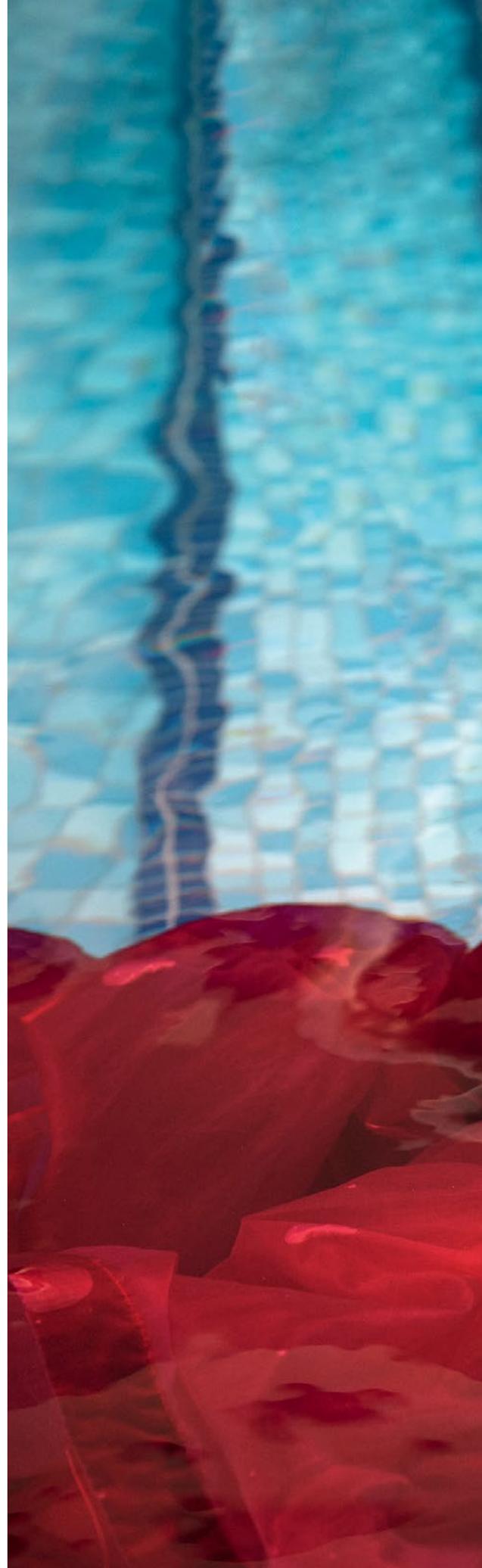
Saadiyat Rotana Resort & Villas

Saadiyat Rotana Resort & Villas stands out among other properties for its modern Arabic architecture. To those looking for an island getaway wedding with elements of local culture, the property is a great venue. The resort has 327 rooms and suites, and 13 beach villas. The swaying palms dotting the property and the beautiful, landscaped gardens overlooking the sea add a verdant green touch to the otherwise blue and white backdrop. The resort offers several exquisite venues for weddings - from three fully-equipped banquet and event rooms and an elegant ballroom to The Lawn, a large outdoor event venue. There are interesting dining options as well. From Si Ristorante Italiano & Bar, the first Italian restaurant on **Saadiyat Island**, Hamilton's Gastropub, a lively nightspot to Turtle Bay Bar & Grill, a stunning rooftop bar--couples can easily choose one of the venues for cocktail parties or for intimate dinners. Rotana also offers customised wedding packages for the guests to choose from. saadiyatrotanaresort.com

St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort

Imagine a classy Bridgerton setting, but in the UAE instead of the English countryside. We are talking about the the Lady Astor Afternoon Tea served every day at The Drawing Room at St Regis. The ritual is inspired by Mrs Astor, the founder of the first St. Regis in New York, who hosted intimate gatherings with her closest friends. How charming it would be to make this a part of your wedding celebration! The menu includes classic dishes from the St. Regis High Tea, while the 'Local inspired' menu includes regional desserts.

The rooms and grand suites also follow the same philosophy of blending classy with local influences—Mediterranean-influenced architecture are peppered with thoughtful décor elements like Calcutta marble floors,





The actor likes the tranquility and laid back vibes at Saadiyat Island.

Fuchsia Zoya Bahaar embroidered kurta and gharara, price on request, **Bhumika Sharma**; Kyro Earrings, ₹33,300, **Sheetal Zaveri**, IG @ sheetalzaveribyivithaldas; Hand cuffs in pure ₹92.5 silver, price on request, **Sheetal Zaveri**, IG @ sheetalzaveribyivithaldas

Hydari loves being near the sea, she finds it romantic, beautiful and musical.

Paisley jaal blouse and black Bahaar embroidered skirt, price on request, **Bhumika Sharma**; Dual tone peacock earrings, ₹3,450, **Urbanthesaurus**; Elias Ring, ₹12,900, **Sheetal Zaveri**





sustainable furniture made from petrified wood to sustainable teak, woven cane and resin rattan.

The resort is also home to nine kilometres of majestic white beach and crystal blue island waters, making it one of the most picturesque destinations in Abu Dhabi for a wedding. There are several wedding venues both indoors and outdoors to choose from including the 3,000-sqm Regal Ballroom with its ocean view terrace. The hotel staff is trained to ensure all your expectations are met. Additionally, you can hop in to the Saadiyat Beach Golf Club and Iridium Spa for pre or post-wedding recreation and relaxation. marriott.com

Nurai Island

This secluded but beautiful island, which is a 12-minute boat ride away from **Saadiyat Island**,

offers endless possibilities for a romantic wedding—surprise your friends with a palm-fringed party next to the beach, plan dinner by the shore with fireworks for your partner or turn one of the gourmet restaurants into your exclusive venue.

The luxurious, barefoot resort has a variety of ocean-facing villas. The aesthetically built water villas are ideal for intimate weddings. Set on top of the sea, they offer uninterrupted views of the ocean and lush green flora around. The palatial water villas with floor-to-ceiling windows and private swimming pools looking out on to the sea are apt for an intimate party with one's closest of friends and family. The wedding planners, skilled butlers and gourmet chefs pay exceptional attention to detail to create experiences that last a lifetime. nuraiisland.com ✦



Clockwise from top: The Saadiyat Beach Club is an ideal venue for chilled out, seaside nuptials; the luxurious, barefoot Nurai Island resort offers a stunning backdrop for romantic weddings; the outdoor lap pool at St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort serves as an ideal spot for pre-wedding functions.



Hydari feels any place you travel to with your partner becomes a romantic getaway.

Black Bahaar anarkali, price on request, **Bhumika Sharma**; price on request; Gold Filigree Oversize Baalis with pearls, ₹4,000, **Ritika Sachdeva**



“I’d prefer an intimate, destination wedding”

Our cover star, actor **Aditi Rao Hydari**, gets candid about her idea of a romantic getaway, an idyllic honeymoon spot and why she likes close, intimate weddings **By Chirag Mohanty Samal**

Rapid fire

WHAT’S ON YOUR TRAVEL BUCKET LIST?

South America and Korea for their beauty industry.

A PLACE IN INDIA YOU REALLY WANT TO EXPLORE?

The Northeast and Madhya Pradesh.

FIRST THING YOU DO ON REACHING A NEW PLACE?

Figure out where to eat!

MOST MEMORABLE HOLIDAY TILL DATE?

Each holiday I took as a little girl with my mum, grandparents and cousins in Mangalore and Ooty.

How hard is it to always be your best version? What do you do for your glowing skin and fit body?

I’ve studied and become nerdy about it now. Earlier I wasn’t, I just relied on genetics. But, over time I have become more mindful because as actors we have erratic schedules and odd sleeping hours. A lot of directors that I have worked with, have wanted me to be on screen without makeup. So, it’s about the little things that add on over time—like not abusing your body.

But at the same time, you need to understand what works for you and what doesn’t. You need to eat healthy, but once in a while give in to your cravings - eat those chocolates! It’s all about balancing things out.

Most importantly you need to stay happy, then you can channel that happiness into whatever it is that is happening around you. Happiness is infectious and people latch on to it. You could be the most beautiful person in a room, but if you’re unhappy, you aren’t going to make anyone happy.

How do you stay fit while travelling?

The simplest thing would be to do a 10–15-minute functional routine. I feel that if you have behaved with your food and maintained your timings, then just 15 minutes is enough to keep you feeling good.

I’m not a gym fanatic and I don’t want to be dependent on that kind of thing because it’s addictive. I want to be able to work out when I can and not feel terrible when I don’t. I really love yoga and dancing, so I try to do that whenever I can.

How does travel inspire you as an actor?

Travel expands your mind, and it makes you less judgmental. It makes you accepting of different people and cultures. To me, travel is about

celebrating differences and diversity. I feel like a five-year-old when I’m travelling because there’s so much to take in. There’s a sense of adventure in the unknown and I love that.

What is your idea of a romantic getaway?

When you’re with the person you love, any place becomes beautiful. It’s about two people being comfortable and happy in each other’s company.

But with the work that I do, it would be good to go away to a place where you can just be a part of another environment seamlessly. Where you can just chill, let your hair down and not worry about someone identifying you. I crave for that anonymity.

What according to you is an idyllic honeymoon destination?

Tuscany and some places in Portugal are beautiful. I generally like Europe because I love history and the culture is quite varied in different parts.

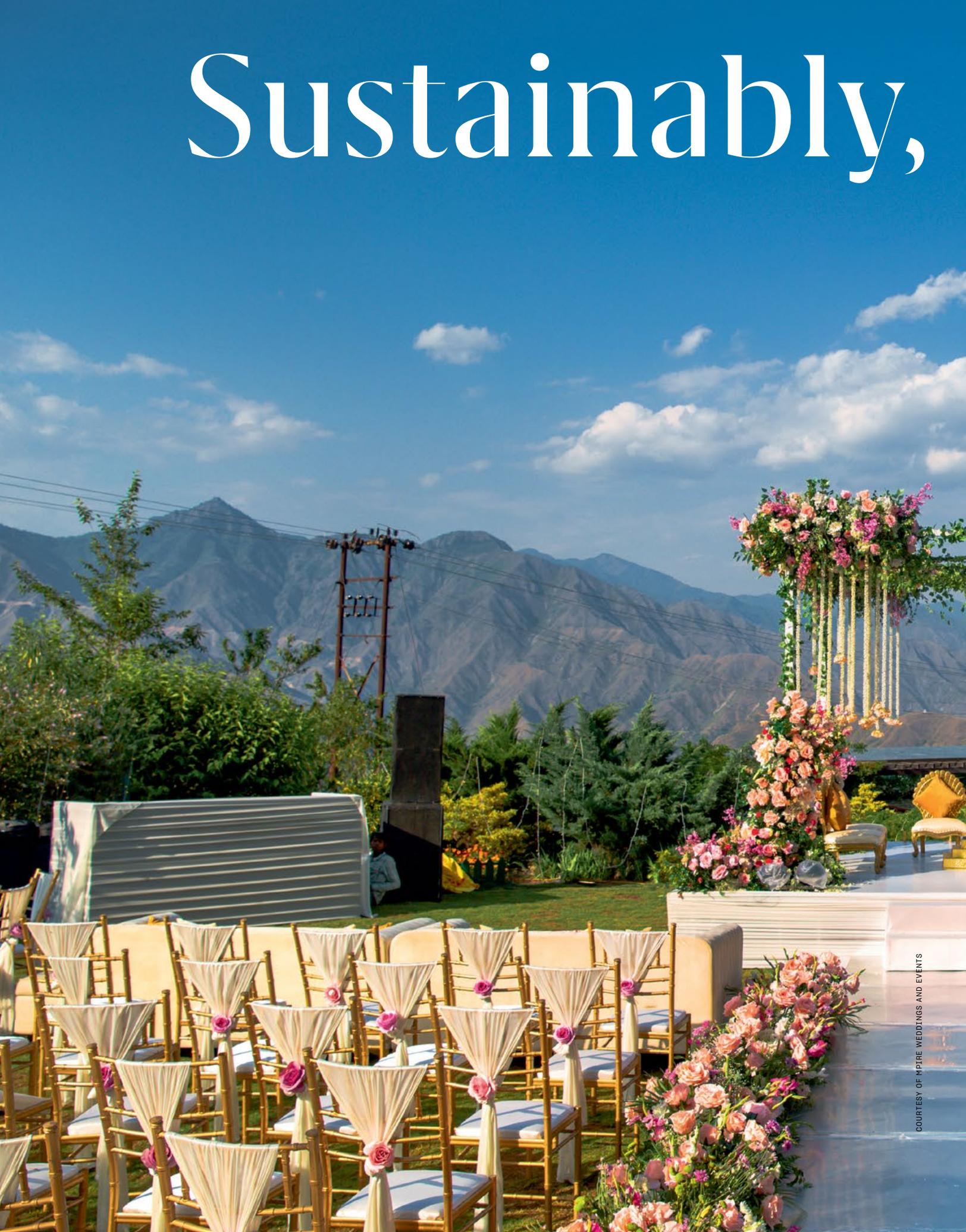
You shot at Jumeirah Sadiyaat, what did you like about the property?

The expanse of an empty, private beach and the blue sea. I love being near the sea—I find it very romantic, beautiful and musical. I love the sound waves. Just being here (at the property) made me breathe easy and it felt peaceful. Everything was moving in slow motion, I enjoyed that feeling.

What kind of wedding would you prefer—a lavish destination wedding or a close intimate affair?

I’d prefer an intimate, destination wedding, which is a close affair because I feel celebrations need to be done with your closest people. It’s their blessings that matter the most, and it’s about feeling the love at that point. ✦

Sustainably,



Ever After

As zero-waste weddings become the new normal, brides- and grooms-to-be are resorting to creative and nouvelle ways to celebrate their love stories, without ignoring their Insta-perfect moments. From wedding illustrations painted in real-time, to farm-to-table wedding menus and local handcrafted decor, green nuptials are revolutionising the wedding market. Here's a crash course on how to plan a zero-waste, minimalist *shaadi*, while still making sure your special day is truly memorable. **BY ARPITA KALA**



10 Eco-friendly Wedding Invite Ideas

When it comes to sustainable, intimate nuptials, wedding cards are more than just another way to extend your warmest welcome to your loved ones for your big day. Virtual or sustainably handmade, your creative wedding invitation is the perfect way to provide your guest a sneak-peek to your upcoming celebrations, as well as to set the tone for your big day!

INTIMATE NUPTIALS with smaller guest-lists are all about personalising your D-day to match your sensibilities. As more couples stray from sending out traditional, ornate wedding invitation cards, many brands are introducing creative ways to cut down on paper and plastic usage.

“Sustainable weddings, albeit still a micro-trend, have picked up pace among discerning brides and grooms, who are extremely sensitive about the environment. Many planners have found a middle-ground between luxury and sustainability through wedding hampers, gifts, invitation cards, and even the service of beverages in a way, where we can benefit the environment, at large, in our own little way,” says Vikram Mehta, founder and executive director of Mpire Events.

Digital wedding invitations

While using recycled paper is a decent way to send out your save-the-dates, you can also go the paperless route by opting for digital invitations. Paperless Post (paperlesspost.com) and Greenvelope (greenvelope.com) are a few of the websites, where you can make your digital-wedding-invite dreams come true. With a wide range of designs, colour palettes and even customising options, you can pick a wedding card to suit your individual theme and send it out with just a click. Yes, no trees will be harmed in sending these invites out.



Wedding caricatures

Engaging local artisans is an integral part of a sustainable wedding. From graphic designers to artists and illustrators, take the help of social media to get in touch with your favourite creators to design a wedding illustration unique to your celebrations. The Entertainment Design Co. (edc.co.in), Woodle Doodle Designs (woodledoodledesigns.com) by Sumouli Dutta, The Effeminare are some of the many such creators, who specialise in wedding caricature invitations.



Wedding

Calligraphy

Another way to take your wedding invitations up a notch is by adorning your recycled paper invitation card or digital invitation with the ancient art of calligraphy. From bevelled Arabic to meandering Devnagari or one of the many regional scripts personal to you, choose a local calligrapher to craft a stunning wedding invitation.

Coffee-table book

Shared memories and deep familial bonding characterise an intimate wedding. It can also be a wonderful opportunity to create family coffee-table books that double as an invitation, but can be read and re-read in the years to come. From sharing your love story to family histories, your wedding invite book can be filled with beautiful pictures and be a valued family keepsake.

Plantable invitations

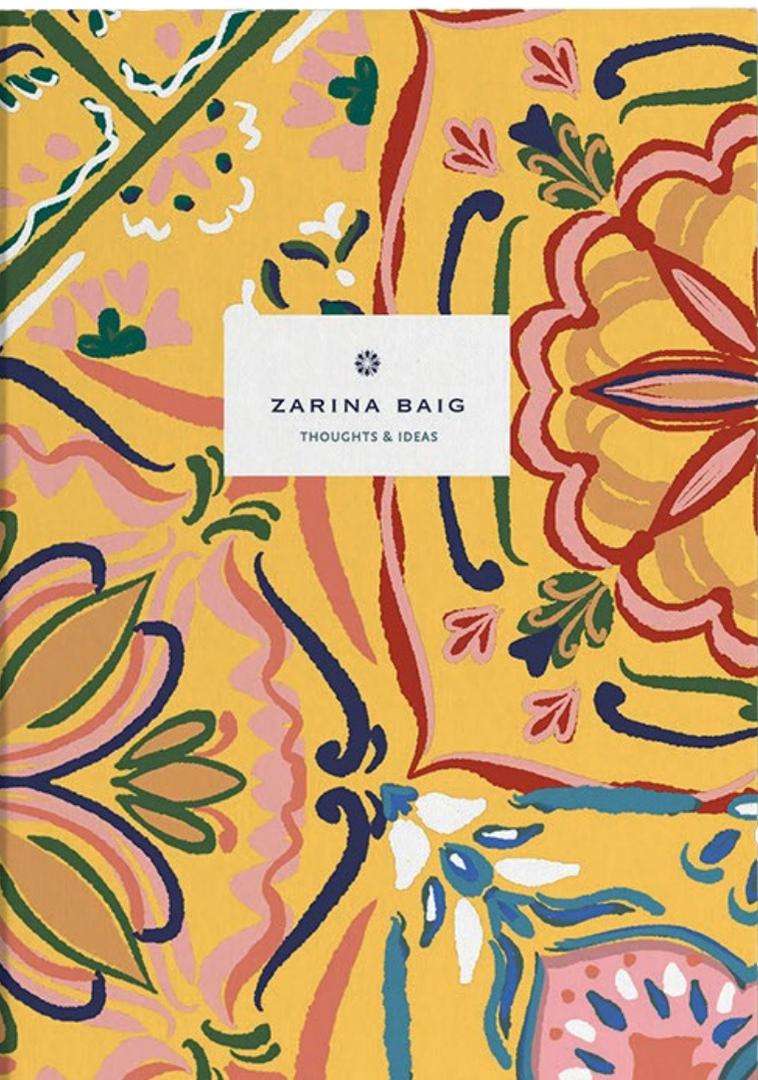
Can you imagine a wedding invitation that blooms into a beautiful flower when planted? Well, this is indeed a practice, as eco-friendly ventures such as 21Fools (21fools.com), Reign Green (seed-balls.in) and Plantables (plantables.store) offer wedding invitation services using seed paper that can one day blossom into a pretty bloom.



Potted plants

And... those who can't wait for their invitations to one day blossom, can always opt for potted plant ones. Just visit your local nursery to pick up your choice of succulents or snake plants to send out your save-the-dates with a breath of fresh air, literally!







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF DHRUVI DOSHI DESIGNS; COURTESY OF YEAST INDIA COMPANY; COURTESY OF CRAFTSLANE; COURTESY OF DOTS & DOODLES; COURTESY OF CRAFTSLANE



VR invitations

With Metaverse weddings, NFT wedding gifts and more, as the wedding industry becomes more digitally inclusive, Virtual Reality (VR) wedding invitations are the cool stuff. VR-based invites and video invitation boxes are a great way to add a touch of digital maximalism to your sustainable celebration. If you do decide to go this route, you can check out brands such as Puneet Gupta Invitations (puneetguptainvitations.in) to add a dash of virtual reality to your nuptials.

Bespoke stationery

Reuse, recycle and repeat—this is the mantra of many new-age minimalist, eco-friendly weddings. Take a cue from some creative couples and invest in some wedding stationery that also doubles as save-the-date invitations for your guests. From printed pens to monogrammed reminders and notepads, this is one wedding invite your guests will truly appreciate.

Cloth scrolls

A wedding invite printed on biodegradable fabrics such as organic cotton and hemp is quite the regal way to celebrate your special day. Think old-school scrolls, hand-delivered by messengers back in the day, and you get an idea of what to expect with these fancy, yet eco-friendly invites.

Wedding blog

Create a wedding blog and furnish it with your love story, family photographs and wedding details. You can also include interactive sections, where guests can share their stories about the couple and more. Send out the link to the blog as your wedding invitation and watch the fun unfold!

Green Wedding Decor

Be it a nature-inspired woodland wonderland or a homage to your favourite local artist, wedding planners share what sustainable wedding decor dreams are made of.



WITH A SLEW OF CELEBRITIES opting for no-waste, sustainable nuptials, the era of over-the-top, larger-than-life weddings have been replaced by something more subdued. Modern weddings seem to echo ‘the less is more’ ethos of the traditional Indian weddings of yore and are all about mixing style with utilitarianism – especially when it comes to wedding decor.



FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF DIA MIRZA X AASH STUDIO; COURTESY OF PEXELS

Sustainable superstars

Wedding designer Aashna Saran, who designed actor Dia Mirza’s unforgettable sustainable nuptial, says, “We loved creating Dia Mirza’s wedding as it was completely sustainable and consciously executed. There was no compromise on the grandeur but it still remained a zero-waste wedding. Everything was either reusable, eco-friendly or upcycled. There was also no plastic used in the cutlery or decor. We also upcycled all the furniture and added beautiful flowers on the chairs.”

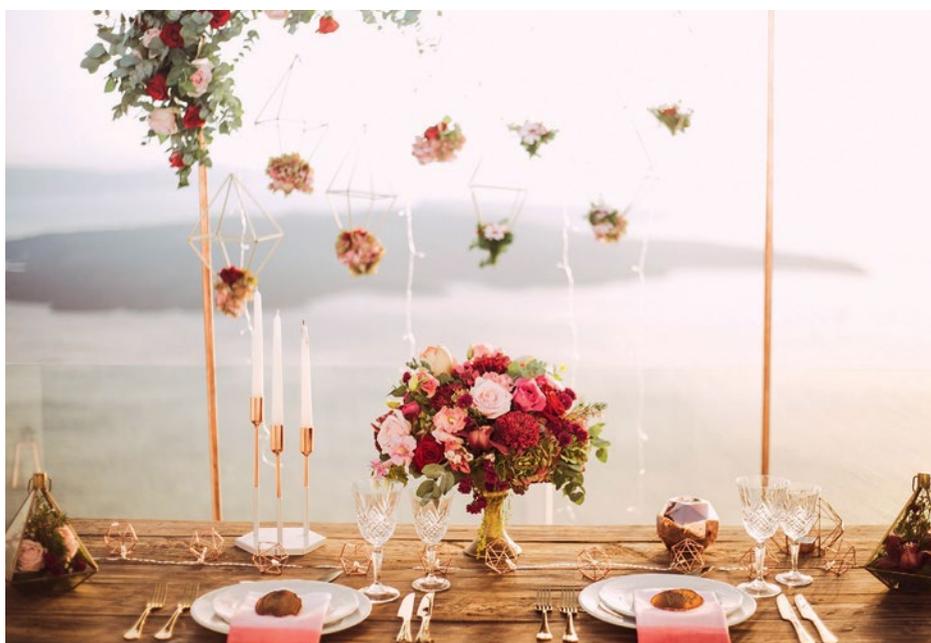
Bollywood’s bad boy Ranveer Singh and his lady love Deepika Padukone also opted for biodegradable tableware for their nuptials that were crafted from sugarcane fibre. While Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor’s recent intimate home wedding featured lots of flora, potted plants and fairy lights with nary a piece of plastic confetti in sight.

It all begins with a venue

From lovingly tended family gardens to sprawling patios of heritage properties, nature-inspired venues are intrinsic to intimate, sustainable weddings.

“Garden themed weddings where venues lend themselves to be a part of the decor are a popular choice for hosting a sustainable wedding. Such venues don’t require much to leave a good impression on the guests,” says Darshan Shroff of *Momente Weddings* (*momente.in/*). Sustainable weddings are all about being one with nature and so, open venues remain a popular choice for such nuptials.

The natural theme also allows more scope for creativity when it comes to decor. “When we’re working on a sustainable wedding, it’s about enhancing the venue and letting nature do the talking. The decor remains an accent element that is minimalist yet





COURTESY OF MIRE EVENTS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF AASH STUDIO (2); COURTESY OF INSTAGRAM; COURTESY OF GLASSWARE





subtly impactful,” says Aashna Saran, founder of Aash Studio (aashstudio.com). Reusing, repurposing and using biodegradable accents is also an important part of a green wedding.

Beauty in biodegradability

“We once curated a wedding for an extremely environmentally-conscious couple that was quite a lesson in sustainability,” shares Vikram Mehta, founder of Mpire Weddings and Events (mpireweddings.com), adding, “The plastic water bottles in every room were replaced with glass ones. We encouraged our decorator to source locally-grown flowers and dress our ceremonies with reusable decor. There were non-toxic candles, biodegradable confetti and glitter for the big day. We reduced surplus paper wastage and used seed paper to encourage guests to use it to plant trees. It was a huge wedding with a high profile guest list and to be able to pull that off shows that you do not have to make compromises to be sustainable.”

Finding your light

All sustainable endeavours come to a naught if your wedding is being powered by fossil fueled guzzling generators. So, it is important to opt for a venue that is eco-friendly and/or has a good LEED rating.

Darshan Shroff adds, “Many guests are oblivious to the fact that such experiences can be luxurious, enriching and inspire them to consider the same for future celebrations. We recently decorated a sangeet with absolutely no single-use materials such as flowers and plastic. So, we went down the lights and mirrors route. The entire venue was made using an array of lights, mirrors and beautifully personalised LED displays of the couple’s favourite quotes.”

Flower power

Materials such as jute, cane, local handicrafts, and natural methods of dying fabric are some popular choices for green wedding decor.

“We often prefer using plant decor instead of centrepieces. I believe we can create something long-term by avoiding materials such as flex in favour of natural products to create wooden flooring for example, and reusing what we have with recyclable materials, and repurposing furniture so that we can achieve a new look and also feel great about our choices,” says Aashna Saran.

While flower garlands are the mainstay of a traditional Indian weddings, floral wedding decor does not need to be single-use. You can get your wedding flowers framed as home decor, dry the bouquets to create home furnishings and more. Or better still, engage your local tailors to create silken cloth flower garlands that can last happily ever after too.



Of Zero-waste Menus

Local delicacies, fresh produce, Insta-famous charcuterie boards and more... Here's how you can make your wedding menu a no-waste affair.

INDIAN WEDDINGS are celebrations that combine two of our greatest loves—romance and food. And, even though our appetite for love stories is insatiable, the same cannot be said about wedding food. According to Feeding India, about 10 to 20 per cent of the food served at Indian weddings go to waste. To put that into perspective, it is estimated that there are almost 10 million weddings held in the country every year.

So, curating a wedding menu to ensure minimal or zero-waste becomes crucial for a sustainable wedding. Wedding planner Darshan Shroff agrees, “There has always been a subvert pressure to make any Indian wedding into a big, ostentatious event. However, the last couple of years have shown us that weddings can be sustainable and intimate without compromising on the entire experience of a big fat Indian wedding.”





Bye bye buffet

A no-waste wedding menu caters to the needs of your guests and cuts down on gigantic food stations. You can also opt to confirm the dietary preferences of your guests prior to the event and plan accordingly with your caterers. Many sustainable wedding planners prefer to serve individual plated food rather than the buffet-style spread.

Local love

Adding traditional local delicacies or even favourite family recipes to your menu can add a personal touch to your wedding food curation. You can also explore the farm-to-table concept for your wedding festivities, to support your local agricultural community or food vendors.

Traditional tableware

From using silverware, glass or steel utensils for beverages to serving food the traditional way in earthenware and on banana leaves, many couples are opting for an eco-friendly dining experience for their guest. This cuts down the use of plastic drastically and also creates an interactive, fun experience for your bridal party.

Extra sharing

Another way to manage the surplus wedding food is to share it. You can coordinate with many non-profit foundations to manage the excess food and distribute it among those in need. Meanwhile there are also organisations that can help you decompose your food waste efficiently. †

Top Spots to Tie the Knot in India

From luxury beachfront properties to mountain resorts and slick city hotels, here's where you can host your dream nuptials. **BY ARZOO DINA**

ITC Grand Goa, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa

WITH SUN-KISSED VIEWS overlooking the tranquil Arossim beach in South Goa, this expansive beachfront property is ideal for hosting a destination wedding with all the works. The luxury resort's architecture is inspired by Indo-Portuguese designs and traditional Goan elements—quaint waterways, lagoons, cobbled pathways, a village square and a host of dining options, be it barbecues by the beach or fine dining. Make the most of the beachfront setting to say 'I do'. You also have the choice of several indoor and outdoor venues such as ballrooms, gardens and manicured lawns, for pre and post-wedding functions.

The accommodations at this 246-room property are equally plush. Wake up to a stunning lagoon, pool and sea views framed by swaying coconut palms, or, for the ultimate pampering, book yourselves into the lap pool suite featuring a private pool and deck. The swish spa is a tranquil oasis offering relaxing and rejuvenating treatments. So, whether you're looking for a pre-wedding detox for that surreal bridal glow, or simply wanting to soak in your wedded bliss, the spa will curate the best options for you. The resort also focuses on sustainability across its operations. itc-hotels.com/in/enlitcgrandgoa-go



Andaz Delhi

THIS LIFESTYLE CONCEPT by Hyatt sits in the heart of Aerocity, New Delhi, and is also equidistant from Gurugram. Stylish and contemporary, each of the 401 rooms and suites pay homage to the city's vibrant culture, with curated pieces of art celebrating all reasons to fall in love with Delhi and weddings have definitely got to be one of them! For one, the hotel is ideal for hosting a large city wedding, the property boasts expansive indoor-outdoor spaces, starting with the pillar-less oval-shaped ballroom, which also features a dedicated pre-function area and a courtyard. The hotel has a unique entryway for the *baraat*, known as the elephant path, which leads into the central courtyard and goes up till the ballroom entrance. Chic studios are ideal for smaller functions and there's a seasoned events team that can help guide through the process, while the hotel's in-house team of expert chefs can cater to all your culinary whims, in keeping with the property's market-to-table food philosophy. Host your bachelorette, book a spa getaway with the bridesmaids or simply unwind in luxury at this art-studded hotel. hyatt.com

Radisson Blu Plaza, Delhi Airport

CONVENIENTLY LOCATED close to the international airport and at a short distance from Gurugram, this upscale hotel is apt for an urban wedding. A mix of indoor and outdoor venues makes it a versatile pick, where a dream celebration can be tailored to your preferences. For the traditional *baraat* procession, the hotel even offers designated entryways that lead directly to the venue. Choose from options like the stately crystal ballroom, perfect for cocktail soirées or a wedding reception. There's also a pre-function area and the smaller spaces are ideal for a *mehendi* or bridal shower. A team of chefs curate great menus featuring different cuisines and regional specialties.

The rooms at this 261-key property are contemporary and stylish, while a big draw is the spa and wellness centre. Spread over three levels, it includes an outdoor pool, fitness centre and yoga room. Indulge in serious pampering at the spa for that post-wedding relaxation, or simply make the most of the food and beverage offerings ranging from Pan-Asian fare to Indian cuisine, among others. radissonhotels.com



The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa, Gulmarg

THE MOST PICTURESQUE setting for an intimate wedding in the mountains, this resort is a jewel in Kashmir. For, at the Khyber, you're surrounded by unspoilt beauty, with the majestic Pir Panjal Mountain ranges in the backdrop. Add to that, Gulmarg's exceptional landscapes that transition from pristine white snow in winter to lush green meadows dotted with flowers during spring. Whatever the season, you're sure to be mesmerised by the array of experiences on offer. Spread over seven acres and surrounded by coniferous forests, the resort makes for an extraordinary setting for your once-in-a-lifetime celebration, with its bespoke event and banquet spaces. From the Paradeez gardens with the lofty Himalayan peaks framing the backdrop, that's apt for a day-time affair or evening do, to warm indoor spaces that include a picturesque tea lounge, there's plenty on offer at the Khyber.

The 85-room resort features a mix of chalet-styled accommodation and plush rooms, with a facade clad in locally-sourced pine and slate, and is also home to local artwork sprinkled across the property. The pièce de résistance, however, is the hotel's heated indoor swimming pool, overlooking a forested landscape. It's definitely photo-worthy for capturing wedding memories, besides the lavish feast for guests, be it a traditional Kashmiri wazwan or favourites curated from around the world. khyberhotels.com





The Leela Palace Udaipur

EXPERIENCE RAJASTHANI royalty at this modern palace hotel perched on the banks of Lake Pichola. You can't go wrong with weddings in Rajasthan and the Leela Palace Udaipur, with its lakeside location and surreal views overlooking the Aravalli ranges, is just perfect. The property is home to versatile event spaces, from opulent ballrooms to stately terraces and gardens. If you wish, The Leela can also arrange for an intimate wedding ceremony at the Jag Mandir, located in the middle of the lake. Couples can make the most of their time at the resort with a romantic sunset cruise on the lake, in-room champagne breakfasts, customised spa rituals and private candlelit dinners. Besides, chefs are happy to whip up a feast fit for royalty for guests, from traditional Rajasthani fare to international specialties.

The 80-key property features traditional *jharokhas*, latticed windows and domes, reminiscent of royal life from a bygone era, while the rooms are sumptuous with plenty of Indian artwork, luxe accents and antiquated artefacts. Some suites even feature their own private plunge pool. theleela.com/the-leela-palace-udaipur

Hilton Goa Resort

NOT ALL WEDDINGS IN GOA need to be beachfront affairs. The sunshine state's diverse landscape means you also have views of meandering, lazy rivers and lush green hills. This hilltop property is located in the middle of buzzing North Goa, yet away from the hustle and bustle, overlooking the Nerul River and terraced slopes of Saipem Hills. Perfect for weddings, the 104-room property is a contemporary oasis that retains traditional Indo-Portuguese elements. The event spaces can be customised to your liking, be it a flamboyant affair or something more intimate, such as

a bridal shower. Raise a toast to new beginnings by the poolside with a stunning sunset for company, say 'I do' in one of the breezy lawns set against panoramic vistas or book the grand ballroom ideal for the reception.

The accommodation offers views of the river and hills, while the pretty Riverview Suite with its private plunge pool is perfect for a celebratory occasion. A team of chefs can rustle up specialties that range from traditional Goan fare to international favourites. There's also Indian cuisine and more for an inclusive wedding spread! itshotels.com/in/en/itcgrandgoa-go



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF THE LEELA PALACE UDAIPUR; COURTESY OF HILTON GOA RESORT



Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty

THE BACKWATERS OF KERALA make for some of the most enchanting wedding settings. At the Grand Hyatt Kochi, located on Bolgatty island and overlooking the backwaters of Vembanad lake, you're in the midst of an urban oasis surrounded by scenic views stretching for miles. Whether you choose a lakeside ceremony or tie the knot in an intimate manner on a luxury houseboat, the hotel will tailor the experience for you. Other event spaces include the grand ballroom, picturesque landscaped lawns and residential-styled spaces that can all be customised to your liking and are apt for cocktails, *mehendi* ceremony, etc. Expert planners

are also available to help you through the process, from your choice of cuisine to picking venues, right down to smaller details like floral decor and live entertainment.

The 264-key property includes four plush villas with private plunge pools, so couples can soak in the wedding festivities in style. Or simply, make an appointment for an indulgent spa treatment for that post-wedded bliss. There are several dining options to choose from, offering specialties from international cuisines to Malabar and Thai fare, and a pool bar, where you can enjoy sundowners savouring cocktails. hyatt.com

JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa



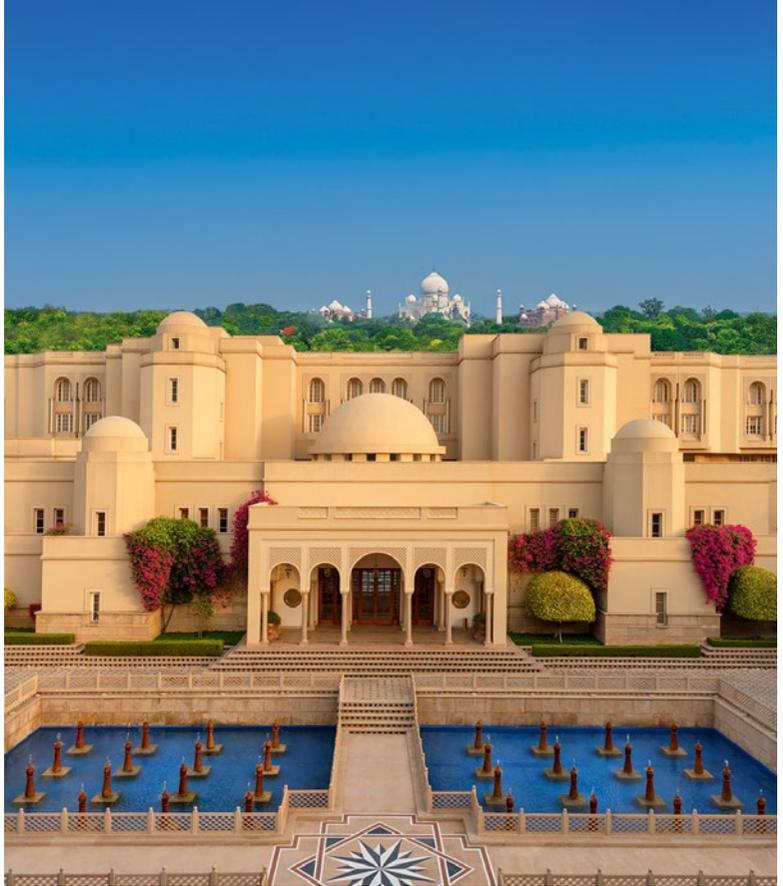
LOCATED IN NANDI HILLS, once an ancient hill fortress and a summer retreat of the royals, overlooking a man-made lake and just 20 minutes from the international airport, this 301-room resort makes for a serene setting in the lap of nature. It's also home to one of the largest venues for weddings in Bengaluru, with its pillar-less banquet hall and expansive lawns. With nearly 14 event spaces on offer, you're spoilt for choice for your wedding venues. There are Marriott-certified wedding planners to help you narrow down options for floral decor, pick out the right live entertainment or music, choose tablescapes, photographers and more.

The stylish property is done up in contemporary tones and has classy villas with private pools, terrace rooms with large patios and gardens, and suites overlooking a golf course. Plus, it is pet-friendly, so furry friends can be a part of your big day. The dining options are extensive with specialty restaurants, a swim-up bar, patisserie and more. marriott.com/

The Oberoi Amarvilas, Agra

NOTHING SPARKS ROMANCE quite like the Taj Mahal, a grandiose monument that is a testament to undying love. So, it's only fitting that if you're choosing a destination for your dream nuptials, it should be close to this romantic and statuesque heritage site. Located just 600 metres away from the historic monument, the Oberoi Amarvilas is a luxurious property offering unrestricted views of the Taj Mahal with exquisite, classic design as part of its philosophy. At this palatial property, couples can choose from a list of curated offerings, be it dining under the stars with a butler service, or an indulgent spa experience for two.

Make your wedding a personalised affair with venues that lend elegance and charm, from the Mughal-inspired landscaped gardens or serene water bodies to indoor spaces that are bedecked with sparkling chandeliers. Be it a formal reception or an intimate soirée, guests can be treated to a lavish spread, from Mughal cuisine to contemporary delicacies, traditional Indian fare and more. One can make the most of the luxe living spaces here, from opulent suites with sun terraces to rooms done up in Mughal-inspired designs, handcrafted furnishings and luxe accents. oberoihotels.com



Raffles Udaipur

TUCKED ON A SERENE island, in the middle of Udaï Sagar Lake, with the Aravalli ranges framing the backdrop, Raffles Udaipur is as luxurious as it gets with its regal splendour. Spread over 21 acres with landscaped gardens, the resort has 101 rooms and suites ideal for a grand destination wedding, paired with Rajasthani hospitality. Featuring Indo-Saracenic style architecture, the hotel features copper domes, European-style accents and large elegant windows, almost like an English countryside estate.

The opulent ballroom is an ideal reception venue and evening rituals, while outdoor spaces lend themselves well for smaller events and festivities. The island temple is said to be nearly 400-years-old and is a sacred spot for ceremonies and rituals, while five lush gardens provide ample space for intimate gatherings. The rooms and suites offer panoramic vistas of the lake and gardens, as you luxuriate in style. In the accompaniment of signature butler service to dining options ranging from Indian specialties, farm-to-table fare, the Long Bar, a hallmark of the Raffles brand and more, soak in the romance of Udaipur as you say 'I do'. raffles.com/udaipur +

Knotty Destinations For The Jet Set

As the wedding season approaches, and the world of travel throws open myriad possibilities, begin your marital journey at one of these 10 dapper destinations that are sure to set the tone for a zippy life ahead. **BY SIMRRAN GILL**

Italy

WE'RE ALL FAMILIAR with Italy's timeless charm and ability to turn every celebration into a memory of a lifetime. Nothing speaks dreamy louder than the Italian way of life—La Dolce Vita. With a rich history, magnificent landscapes, and mind-blowing culinary offerings, the country checks every box on the wedding destination list. One can truly get spoilt for choice here, what with wine tours in Lombardi, the archaeological ruins of Rome and Pompeii, the postcard-perfect villages of Tuscany, the romantic landscape of Lake Como, the spellbinding waters of Tremiti Islands—all options capable of delivering a wedding to remember. The country also has various hospitality services on offer like luxury hotels, farm holiday centres, residences, and B&Bs that are peppered across its varied landscapes, be it around beaches, cities, the hinterlands or the mountains. For a surreal and authentic Italian experience, we suggest choosing a noble home, a castle or a period villa as the destination for your big day. The country makes for a wholesome experience not just for the couple, but also the guests, who will surely remember the Italian wedding. italia.it/en



FROM TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK; COURTESY OF RAS AL KHAIMAH

Ras Al Khaimah

RAS AL KHAIMAH has stayed away from the tourism limelight for a long time. More recently, however, the lesser-known Emirate has caught everyone's eye globally and explorers can't seem to get enough. And what's not there to love? Be it history, culture, adventure, natural biodiversity and much more, this Emirate has it all. Want to pop the question like a true blue-blooded royal? The Dhayah Fort (UAE's only remaining hilltop fort) is your answer. Prefer an intimate setting? Head to the desert dunes for a personalised experience. Ras Al Khaimah also boasts of a 65-kilometre coastline dotted with mangroves, lending the area its rich biodiversity. Those who prefer more luxurious alcoves of the Emirate can choose from InterContinental Ras Al Khaimah Resort and Spa, The Ritz-Carlton Ras Al Khaimah, Al Wadi Desert, Waldorf Astoria, Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort, Longbeach Campground and The Cove Rotana Resort for a seamless and unforgettable experience. The northernmost Emirate in the UAE, Ras Al Khaimah is a year-round destination and can adapt to your wedding mood board, whether it's taking a dive through history, soaring high with adrenaline or simply soaking in the nature. visitrasalkhaimah.com/

Qatar

IF YOUR IDEAL wedding destination is a blend of sophisticated-modern meets traditional-luxurious, then Qatar is your answer. With deep-seated cultural influences, hospitality units that spell uber luxury, backdrops that make you skip a heartbeat, and sheer natural magnificence, Qatar checks all the right boxes for your dream wedding destination. The country also allows citizens of over 95 nations visa-free entry, making it easier to invite guests from all around the globe. Qatar is home to many luxurious and grand addresses such as Al Messila, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Doha, Banana Island Resort Doha by Anantara, The St. Regis Doha, and The Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas—all hotels that redefine hospitality and have backdrops to make those dreamy wedding photos even dreamier. The wedding fun in Qatar does not end with just the traditional ceremonies! The country is also home to some of the most relaxing spas offering world-class services to unwind post the quintessential desi wedding madness. Couples can then take a few days to explore the country's beaches, architecture, art and culture, culinary masterstrokes, pulsating nightlife, adventure activities and more. qatar.tourism.com/en



Sri Lanka

WITH A TOUCH OF HISTORY, an abundance of natural habitats, and hospitality at its core, Sri Lanka is a fabulous destination to tie the knot. A short flight and familiar culture make this island nation a favourite among Indian travellers. In Sri Lanka, a couple can de-stress before the wedding with the country's native healing traditions, later celebrate their love with one of the country's diverse landscapes as the backdrop, and finally, end the wedding shenanigans and unwind in the midst of palm-fringed gardens on the coastline. The country is also home to various luxe addresses including hotels such as Anantara Peace Heaven Resort and Araliya Beach Resort and Spa, boutique villas like Eraeliya Villas and Gardens and Lunuganga Estate, and many others, where one can begin the journey of togetherness on a truly original note. And for foodies and lovers of spicy cuisine, Sri Lanka is heaven. With its rich culinary history, your wedding guests will have lasting memories of fabulous flavours. srilanka.travel/



Monaco

LOCATED ON THE northern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, in Monaco time truly stands still. With a favourable climate and umpteen spellbinding vistas, the country has, over the decades, become a preferred destination for those looking to indulge in an uber luxe and classy experience. World-class hotels, luxury spas, private beaches, cocktails by the sea, lush gardens and shopping trips make Monaco an easy choice for the luxury traveller. The country is also undoubtedly the international capital of the high life and an ideal destination to shop haute couture and jewellery. Along with this, Monaco also has a deep-seated focus on sustainability and a pro-active sustainable development policy, which includes monitoring air quality, coastal water quality, resource management and reducing greenhouse gases. In Monaco, you can pop the question with the Mediterranean as your backdrop, savour the country's finest cuisine, shop at iconic fashion houses and finally say 'I do' on D-day at a private beach wedding. *C'est magnifique* indeed! visitmonaco.com/en

Portugal

WITH THE OLDEST borders in Europe, Portugal grabs eyeballs for its rich history and culture, perfect blend of tradition and modernity, and its varied cuisine and fine wines. But what makes Portugal an ideal wedding destination is the plenty of exceptional landscapes. Its hospitable population, and mild climate—think 3,000 hours of sunshine per year, make it one of Europe's most bright countries. The nation also boasts of a vast coastline, with nearly 850 kms of beaches bathed by the Atlantic Ocean, that makes for a beautiful backdrop for those dreamy wedding photos. While scouting for your ultimate wedding venue, do not forget to explore Portugal's palaces, farms, and manor houses that can serve as exceptional settings for you to say, "I do." And to do away with the pre- and post-wedding madness, the two of you can opt for a relaxing day at the spa, a ride in a horse drawn carriage, a candlelight dinner, a wine tasting session or simply enjoy a sunset over the sea. Portugal's charm will not only leave an everlasting impression on you but also your guests. visitportugal.com/en



FROM TOP: EYEEM/LAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK



Cancun

LAIID-BACK VIBES, more than enough resorts and an adventurous nightlife—Cancun in Mexico is best for a fun and unforgettable wedding. Situated on one of Mexico's easternmost points, Cancun's Hotel Zone or the Boulevard Kukulkan, where one finds the city's all-inclusive hotels, overlooking the coast along with several private stretches of sand, is the perfect choice to celebrate your big day. To go traditional and hyperlocal, the downtown area or El Centro is where you'll get a chance to taste a slice of the local life. Dotted with markets and lined with traditional restaurants, you can choose to stay at one of the many quaint hotels here. With nearly 9,000 km of pristine coastline and its 10 Blue Flag beaches, Cancun is a tropical paradise definitely worthy of a dream wedding. mexicancaribbean.travel/cancun/

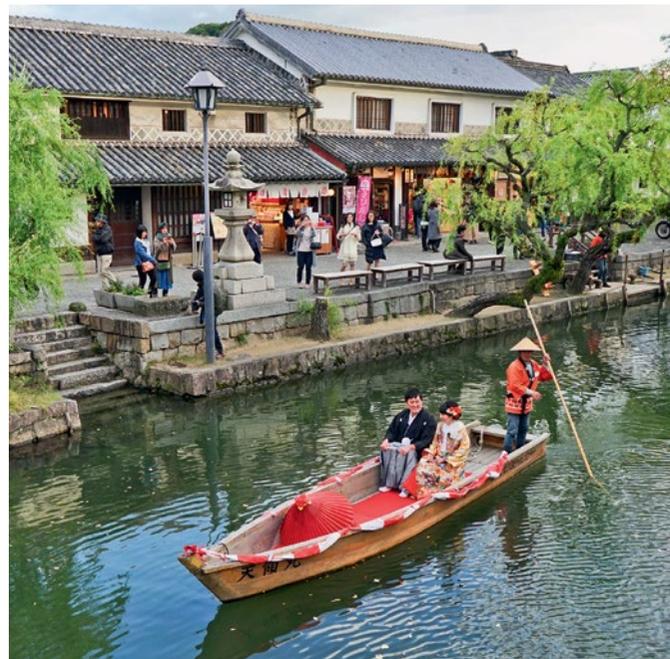
Bahrain

TUCKED AWAY IN THE Persian Gulf, bordering Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Bahrain is perfect for your lavish, cultured wedding. Famed for its heritage and rich history, the country caught the global travellers' eye thanks to the Bahrain Grand Prix and has since then been on the bucket of travel destinations list for many. With its spellbinding landscapes and a list of surreal venues, Bahrain will elevate your wedding experience to a whole new level. The country can be a dream destination, reflecting one's personal lifestyle well. And if you're the one, who dreads planning a larger than life

affair, Bahrain's many partner associates are available. Right from helping you choose the venue to hosting your wedding, catering and décor, there are leading wedding planners here, who will hand-hold you through the entire process. Besides, a range of hotels in the country, such as the Sofitel Bahrain Zallaq, The Diplomat Radisson Blu, Crowne Plaza Bahrain, InterContinental Regency and Ritz Carlton amongst others, provide a whole lot of attractive wedding packages that will help you celebrate your big day your way. visitbahrain.bh



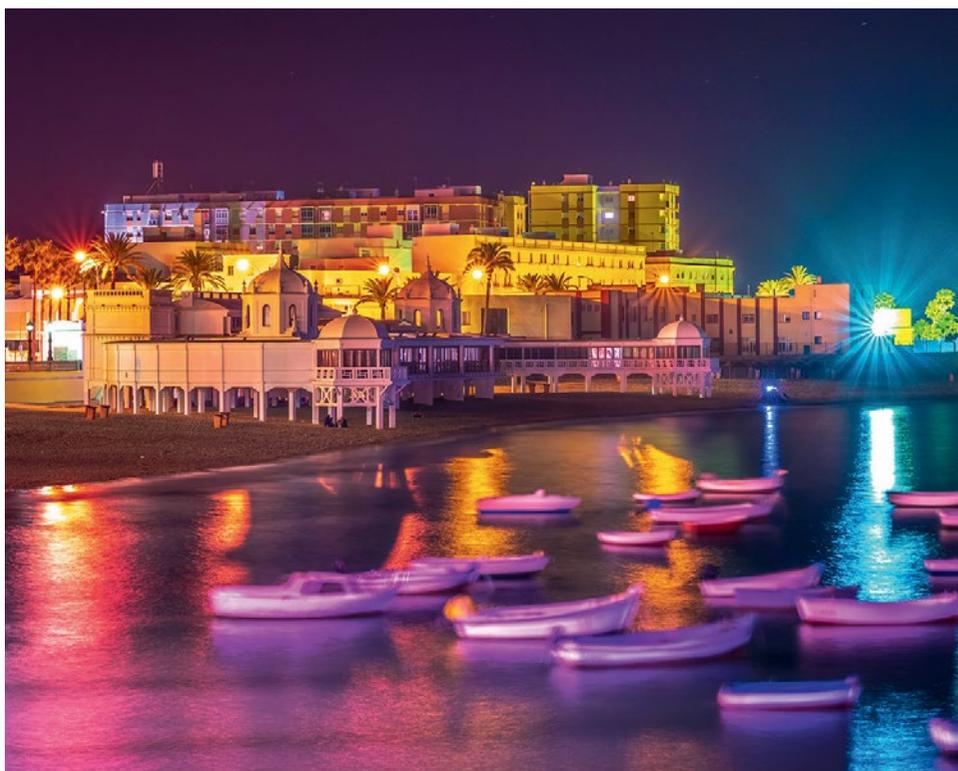
FROM TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK; COURTESY OF CROWNE PLAZA BAHRAIN



Japan

WITH ONE OF THE LONGEST covid-induced lockdowns, Japan has just opened its doors to travellers across the globe. And one can see the country in a new light post pandemic. For starters, airlines are bolstering the number of international flights to meet an increased demand. Japan also has many new openings that include museums, parks, new slopes at ski resorts and much more. When planning to tie the knot here, expect world-class facilities, a day full of surprises, and culinary

offerings like none other. Known for its natural abundance and soothing vistas, Japan makes for a calming, day-wedding destination and will continue to surprise you as you head towards your big day. The country is also deeply rooted in ancient traditions and culture, and is home to extremely warm and hospitable people. And be rest assured, you'll walk in to your venue with a sense of zen that you can only experience in Japan. jnto.go.jp



Spain

ONE OF THE MOST visited countries in Europe, Spain is magical for those who believe in romance. From its sun-soaked archipelagos to its bustling cities and splendid mountains to dusty deserts, Spain exemplifies geographical diversity. The country's extensive coastline, pristine coves and unspoilt, volcanic beaches make for ideal wedding destinations. If you're the one planning something offbeat then set off on a boat, and spend the night aboard, surrounded by your loved ones. Spain's flavoursome cuisine is another factor that draws couples to the country for their big day. The country's traditional, creative and varied culinary offerings make it a haven for food lovers, and adding on to the experience, Spanish wines are a perfect accompaniment for raising toasts. Plus, there are options aplenty to relax before or after the wedding —think exploring artistic wonders, large pedestrianised shopping areas and more. spain.info/gcc/en +

India's 10 Idyllic Honeymoon Hotspots

Ditch the stress of choosing a honeymoon package and reference this log of desi destinations, which make for memorable escapades. **BY BAYAR JAIN**



Regal Rajasthan

WHEN A STATE COMES packed with culturally-rich offerings, mesmerising architecture, and abundant history, it's natural for it to sit high on a honeymooners' list. Crammed with ancient *havelis* and hints of royalty in every nook, Rajasthan's capital city Jaipur has long cemented its tag as a romantic destination. When here, look beyond the usual Hawa Mahal and Amber Palace, and travel back in time at the 18th century Jaigarh Fort or the 475-year-old Samode Palace, a small drive away from the city. For romance in the lap of wilderness, look no further than Bharatpur—a famed bird-watching wetland that annually sees migratory aviary friends flocking to the region. Should international vacations seem unviable, Udaipur compensates. Fondly known as the Venice of the East, the city of lakes comes hemmed by the lush green Aravalli hills—all of which are best explored on a romantic bicycle tour. Some of the other bucket list-worthy honeymoon destinations in Rajasthan are Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Pushkar, and Chittorgarh tourism.rajasthan.gov.in



Goa State-of-Mind

A HONEYMOON in Goa is the perfect option for an itinerary that has a bit of everything. With palm-fringed coastlines circumnavigating the Arabian Sea, this tiny state comes packed with abundant romantic offerings. Expect a sense of soothing seclusion in the southern part of Goa, courtesy the quiet and quaint retreats dotted all over the place. On the other side, in North Goa, an infectious pulsating energy takes over. Whether you are party animals or casino enthusiasts, this side has it all. Plan a romantic cruise night on the Mandovi river, a trek to the top of Dudhsagar waterfalls, a scooter ride through Portuguese bylanes, or even a laidback sunset from one of the many beaches here. At dawn, party away at any of the drinking holes in the state popularly known as India's party capital. Irrespective of your choice of vacation, be assured of a fun-filled trip that caters to all kinds of interests. goatourism.gov.in

Himachal High

TRADITIONALLY A SUMMER destination, over the years Himachal Pradesh has transformed itself into a 'destination for all seasons and reasons'. While Shimla, Manali, Kullu, and Dalhousie have always been a major pull for honeymooners, the state's other gems are just as alluring. For quieter souls, the green embrace of Mandi offers ideal respite. The vast green pastures of this riverside town come backdropped with snow-clad mountains and untrodden terrains. Camp by Prashar lake, which comes paired with a three-storied pagoda-like temple or at Barot Valley, where the snow-fed Uhl river is replete with exotic fish. When in Kinnaur, another hill town, savour a picnic basket amid apricot, cherry, and apple orchards. Or get lost in the serenity of Chamba, situated at the crossroads of Dhauladhar and Zaskar ranges. Adventure seekers can enjoy the rush of driving on some of the world's most treacherous roads at Lahaul Valley, while religious travellers can seek blessings on the banks of the Yamuna river at Paonta Sahib. himachaltourism.gov.in

SHUTTERSTOCK (3)



Calming Kerala

NOTHING IS MORE ROMANTIC than the backwaters of Kerala. Picture staying on a houseboat in Alappuzha surrounded by serene stretches of lakes, canals, and lagoons. Consider hopping from island to island in Kumarakom and Munroe Islands, or kickback and toast to your love with sunsets on the beaches of Kovalam, Varkala, Chowara, Chavakkad, Nattika, Cherai, Kizhunna, and Poovar. At Munnar, a hilltop destination, love blossoms on autopilot. When here, watch the sunrise at Chinnakanal, try rappelling at the Mattupetty Dam, embark on a shikara ride through Kundala Lake, or opt for an elephant safari up the rickety Munnar slopes. At Thekkady, let the overwhelming foliage shelter your romantic moments. Make time to visit the elephants of Thekkady's Periyar forests; walk through whiffs of cardamom, cinnamon, and cloves grown on the hills; and share sweet-nothings as the songs of parakeets serve as your background score. Art-loving couples can plan a trip to Kochi, where white-washed churches, colonial cemeteries, art galleries and pretty cafes fill itineraries. And don't forget to reserve time for a romantic Ayurvedic massage, a signature wellness offering of the state. keralatourism.org



Magnificent Meghalaya

DUBBED AS THE abode of clouds, this paradisiacal state wows with its lush green jungles, spellbinding cliffs, gushing rivers, windswept highlands, verdant valleys, and intriguing caves. In the capital city, Shillong, walk along the stone-lined pathways at Ward's Lake and soak in the serene atmosphere by paddle boating in the calm lake waters. Or embark upon an expedition to Elephant Waterfalls (locally known as Kshaid-Lai-Pateng), where a mountain stream cascades down three levels with a thunderous echo. Soak in the sights of the Nongriat double-decker root bridge

near Sohra or venture further to the Rainbow Falls, known for its turquoise pool and giant boulders. Summit the dramatic Lum Sohpetbneng, a revered site for the Khasis close to the Umiang Lake—a tranquil waterbody at the entrance of Shillong town and catch up on some local lore. A truly secluded outing, however, awaits at Dawki — Shnongdeng. Formed by the crystal clear waters of the Umngot River, the lush landscapes and the riverine beaches of these are a visual treat. Picture waters so clear, you can peer into the bottom and count the stones! meghalayatourism.in



Captivating Kashmir

THE CROWNING JEWEL OF INDIA, Jammu & Kashmir continues to remain a dream honeymoon destination for many. With countless gems dotted all over the land, every turn resembles a picture-perfect postcard. Take a shikara ride across the river Jhelum in Srinagar or glide down snowy slopes in a gondola at Gulmarg. Go horseback riding through Aru and the meadows at Tarsar Lake in Pahalgam. Old-school romantics can find love over day-long picnics in the forests, lakes, and flower-laden meadows of Sonmarg. At Mansar, a crystal-clear lake surrounded by pine forests, spend time boating surrounded by turtles or visit the temples located on the periphery. The Sheshnag idol here, a mythological snake with six heads, is frequented by newlyweds. This is because couples believe in performing three circumambulations of the idol for a happy marriage. jktourism.jk.gov.in



Magical Madhya Pradesh

PACKED WITH HERITAGE and history, Madhya Pradesh is ideal for culturally-inclined couples looking for a quiet escape. Trace the tenets of love and erotica at the 12th-century Khajuraho Temples or travel back in time amid ancient monuments at the 16th-century town Orchha. Enjoy soul-stirring Hindustani classical sangeet in Gwalior, home to one of the oldest and most prominent Khayal gharanas, or plan a date night under the moonlight on a boat ride across the Narmada River, in Bhedaghat, Jabalpur. The serenity of Panchmarhi—part of the Satpura National Park—crafts the ideal ambience for a romantic escapade. Picture scenic landscapes, gushing waterfalls, pristine pools and lush green forests. A truly dreamy vacation, however, awaits at Sailani Island. Spread over five acres of land in Khandwa district and hugged by the Narmada river on all sides, this secluded island escape offers the best space to spend quality and peaceful time together. mptourism.com



Astounding Uttarakhand

COGOONED IN NATURE, Uttarakhand offers all the characteristics of a well-rounded honeymoon destination. Thrill-seekers can have the adventure of a lifetime by bungee jumping in Rishikesh, paragliding over Kausani, river rafting along the stretches of Alaknanda, skiing on the undulating slopes of Auli, trekking in Roopkund, or simply gazing at the star-studded night sky at Munsiyari, Majkhali, Chakrata and Chaukori. Couples looking for a calm holiday can immerse in Uttarakhand's bountiful natural surroundings. The state also comes blessed with snow-covered Himalayan peaks; rivers fed by glaciers; and many forests adorned by oak, rhododendron, deodar, and pine trees. Lakeside picnics await at Bhimtal, Nainital, Naukuchia Tal, and Tehri Lake. A carpet of colours greets travellers at the Valley of Flowers, a Unesco World Heritage Site that plays host to 600 exotic flower and rare wildlife species like the grey langur, the flying squirrel, the Himalayan weasel, black bear, the red fox, and more. Other wildlife destinations in Uttarakhand include the Corbett National Park, Rajaji National Park and Govind National Park, among others. Make time to reconnect and reenergise at the state's many Ayurvedic spas, wellness and yoga centres. uttarakhandtourism.gov.in

Awesome Odisha

SPIRITUAL FOLKS OFTEN trot to Odisha, and justifiably so. The eastern state proudly boasts of religious wonders like the Sun Temple, Jagannath Temple and Lingaraj Temple, in Konark, Puri and Bhubaneswar, respectively. However, other types of travellers, too, can find something to suit their tastes, particularly honeymooners looking for a quiet escape. Get lost in the tranquillity of Chilika Lake, the largest black water lagoon of Asia, and watch as Irawadi dolphins frolic in the waters. Stroll along the Chandrabhaga Beach or Gopalpur Beach. Romance under the warm lights of an illuminated Konark Sun Temple. Cleanse together in a hot sulphur and Roman bath amid nature in Tatapani. Seek blessings at the Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Zirang. Or simply sit back, relax, and let the cultural colours of Odisha enthral you in every step. odishatourism.gov.in



Terrific Tamil Nadu

WHETHER IT IS an adventure trip, spiritual sojourn, a heritage outing, or a green honeymoon underlined with ecotourism, Tamil Nadu has it all! Head to Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram) to get drenched in the enigmatic old-age charm of the city. The Dravidian ancient temples at this Unesco World Heritage Site reflect the glory of the Pallava dynasty, paired with pristine beaches exuding abundant natural beauty. Get cosy in Kodaikanal, the princess of the hills, where verdant hills, cascading waterfalls, picturesque lakes, and captivating countryside await. Spiritual travellers will be spoilt for choice as the state is home to over 33,000 ancient temples. Seek blessings at Chidambaram Kapaleeswarar; Meenakshi Temple, Madurai; Rameshwaram Temple; Brihadeeswarar Temple, Thanjavur; and Kumariamman Temple, Kanyakumari, to name a few. To rekindle romance amidst nature, plan a honeymoon to any of the state's three biosphere reserves, four tiger reserves, five national parks, 15 wildlife sanctuaries, 15 bird sanctuaries and two conservation reserves. tamilnadutourism.tn.gov.in +

The World's Most Romantic Honeymoon Getaways

From picture-perfect beaches of Maldives and Mauritius to Alpine meadows of Switzerland and Singapore's eclectic vibe, these dreamy honeymoon destinations must make it to your bucket list. **BY ARZOO DINA**



Magical Maldives

WHO CAN RESIST THE charm of azure waters, white sand beaches and lush tropical surroundings, which characterise this stunning island paradise? Maldives is considered as one of the most romantic destinations in the world for good reason. Cocoon yourselves in privacy in a far-flung island resort, soak in mesmerising sunsets with a bottle of bubbly and surreal views of the Indian Ocean from a private plunge pool in your over-water villa. With the concept of 'one island, one resort,' you have a whole range of options to choose from, be it luxurious hideaways or eco-friendly, sustainable getaways. Amp up the romance with private candlelit dinners by the beach, or indulge in pampering at an underwater spa or set off on a sunset cruise on a traditional *dhoni* to be greeted by frolicking dolphins in the ocean. You can even plan a private picnic on a castaway sandbank or a movie screening on the beach under starlit skies. Go swimming with manta rays or diving and snorkelling in crystal-clear waters. With an incredibly diverse array of experiences, Maldives makes for the ultimate romantic getaway. visitmaldives.com/en

Thumbs-Up Thailand

THAILAND CONTINUES to be a top draw for honeymooners. With its stunning coastline fringed by pristine beaches and tropical islands, lush jungles in the Northern provinces to bustling cities like Bangkok known for its high-octane energy. Thailand offers a smattering of experiences suited to every type of traveller. Did we mention it's also budget-friendly? Islands like Phuket, Koh Samui and Krabi have been popular picks for romantic getaways, but there are also lesser-known destinations such as Koh Kood, known for its unspoilt beauty and Chiang Rai, filled with Siamese temples, mist-covered hills and great cuisine.

From luxury beachfront resorts to boutique hotels, the accommodation options are wide and varied. Opt for longtail boats as you go island-hopping and witness fiery sunsets on the many islands dotting the coastline. Interact with gentle

pachyderms in the jungles of Chiang Mai, and indulge in wellness and spa rituals Thailand is renowned for. The capital city Bangkok has plenty of luxury hotels dotting the banks of the Chao Phraya River and is home to Asia's best dining. From hawker fare to Michelin-star restaurants, you have it all. tourismthailand.org



Fantastic France

THINK OF FRANCE and the first thing that comes to mind is the city of lights, Paris, with its incredible food, culture and high fashion. But there is much more to this fine country. Apart from the South of France, home to destinations like Cannes, Nice and Monaco, on the exotic French Riviera, it's worth visiting other regions as well. Start off in the wine region of Bordeaux, where you can stay in a historic châteaux, learn all about wine-making and indulge in gourmet food amidst rolling vineyards. Relatively unexplored is the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, home to cities like Lyon known for its gastronomy, Chamonix for its skiing and the majestic peak of Mont Blanc, and the charming lakeside town of Annecy. The region of Provence, with its lavender fields, local markets and wines is perfect for that dose of romance, while the Loire Valley with its castles and enchanting countryside doesn't disappoint. These places are also ideal for self-drive holidays.

Top off the honeymoon with curated food and wine experiences. From walking food tours in Paris to hidden bistros and cafés, tucked away in different arrondissements, Michelin-starred restaurants and gourmet fare in the countryside, there is lots to choose from. en.parisinfo.com



Stunning Switzerland

THE ALPINE COUNTRY has typified romance in Bollywood movies and continues to draw couples for its scenic views, lush meadows, glacial lakes, fine chocolates and food. With the snow-capped Alps framing the backdrop, postcard-perfect towns and scenery that seem straight out of a storybook, Switzerland makes for a fairytale setting for your romantic rendezvous. So, where does one begin? Geneva is a charming escape, with plenty of culture and experiences. Lucerne, with its aquamarine-tinted lake, is another stunning pick with several Alpine spas and wellness retreats, medieval architecture and boutique hotels.

With the winter season approaching, head to the ski resort town of Zermatt, with its freshly-powdered ski pistes and the majestic Matterhorn framing the views. Take a ride on the Glacier Express, said to be one of the most romantic train journeys, as you cross from Zermatt to St. Moritz, another glamorous winter escape with chic ski lodges and hotels. Book yourselves experiences such as cheese making in the Alps, wine tours, picnics in the outdoors, making cider on an apple farm and much more. myswitzerland.com

Beauteous Bali

THIS TROPICAL ISLAND evokes images of lush jungles, beaches, paddy fields, temples influenced by Hindu culture and a laid-back vibe. Tucked away among Indonesia's many islands, Bali is a veritable paradise and ideal for honeymooners looking for a mix of adventure, culture, food and leisure. Stay at luxe resorts along the coast offering uninterrupted sea views, where you can indulge in pampering spa treatments, sample local Indonesian fare and go beach-hopping. While places like Seminyak and Kuta can be quite touristy, for something quieter, head to the surfer-cool destination of Uluwatu for an easy-going life, beaches and cliff-top clubs that are perfect for sundowners.

Canggu is popular, with a host of vegan eateries serving everything from hipster smoothie bowls to indulgent brunches and also features black sand beaches among its many attractions. Ubud, by contrast is bucolic and quiet, home to lush jungles, waterfalls and rice paddies, which you can explore on cycles. Get yourselves a private pool villa to make the most of the pastoral setting. Munduk in North Bali is equally scenic and if you have the time, hop over to the Gili Islands for their rustic beauty. balitourismboard.or.id/



FROM TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK; COURTESY OF ATLANTIS, THE PALM



Dazzling Dubai

THE CITY'S GLITZY cityscape and glamorous spirit makes it an ideal honeymoon destination, a short distance from the Indian subcontinent. In Dubai, nothing is too big or too small an ask. Glamp in the far reaches of the desert as you raise a toast to a new chapter in your life and experience the bedouin lifestyle amidst golden sand dunes. A tented suite that comes with a private deck and pool, is the perfect kickstart to your romantic adventure.

Book yourselves into one of the many sumptuous hotels in downtown Dubai, where you can indulge in retail therapy and fine dining, or perhaps a beachfront resort where you can enjoy strolls and candlelit meals by the beach. Dine in an aquarium at the Michelin-starred Ossiano for a unique experience at Atlantis, The Palm. Serenade your significant other with a hot air balloon ride or a cruise down the canals at Madinat Jumeirah, go skydiving over Palm Jumeirah for that bucket list experience and visit the mountains of nearby Hatta for an adrenaline rush, as you cover different hiking trails and end with a barbecue in the crisp evening air. visitdubai.com/en

Lovely Langkawi

THIS FARAWAY ISLAND destination in Malaysia is a great way to be off the radar as you enjoy your post-wedded bliss. Let the tropical shores soothe your senses, as you check into your private over-water villa, one of the few destinations apart from the Maldives, where you can enjoy this experience. There are plenty of luxury hotels to choose from as well as budget-friendly options. Spend your days exploring traditional villages, trekking and forest trails, go island or beach-hopping — the coastline is fringed with picturesque beaches and turquoise waters, take a helicopter tour for a bird's-eye view of the gorgeous landscape and indulge in candlelit dinners by the beach or in the middle of a lush rainforest. The island has also been awarded a Unesco Global Geopark status, so conservation is a top priority, with geoforest parks and biogeo trails. If you're looking for a blissful island getaway, Langkawi checks several boxes. tourism.gov.my



Magnificent Mauritius

THIS ISLAND COUNTRY in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Africa, makes for a great honeymoon getaway. Bright blue lagoons, lush coral reefs, dramatic landscapes that change from mountains and white sand beaches to jungles and volcanic caves, Mauritius is all this and more. The capital city, Port Louis, is vibrant and a melange of cultures with local street fare and markets selling fresh produce. The beaches in Mauritius are idyllic and dreamy — from the popular Belle Mare, said to be one of the longest on the island to the serene Le Morne beach, located close to the Black River Gorges National Park. Opt for a catamaran cruise, go scuba diving and snorkelling in the pristine waters, paddle in a glass-bottomed boat as you admire the lush marine life or simply unwind on a leisurely cruise as you go dolphin watching in the turquoise waters. For something more adventurous, take to kite surfing, kayaking, parasailing or zip-lining over a forest—the choices are plenty. In Mauritius, all you need to do is slow down and savour the island pace of life. tourism.govmu.org



Sassy Singapore

THIS NATION MIGHT BE tiny but packs in a punch with the sheer variety of experiences. Buzzing, eclectic and constantly evolving, Singapore, often dubbed as the gateway to Asia, lures the experiential traveller. Begin by exploring the lush gardens that comfortably rub shoulders with tall skyscrapers, from Fort Canning Park to Gardens by the Bay. Let the city lights dazzle you at night as you watch the world go by from the many restaurants and bars dotting Clarke Quay and Dempsey Hills. Explore the neighbourhoods of Chinatown and Little India, and the local Peranakan culture, from museums to traditional houses.

Each part of the city offers something different--From edgy Haji Lane and the neighbourhood of Kampong Glam filled with colourful shops, eateries and galleries to Orchard Road and Harbourfront for retail therapy. Food is a big deal wherever you go, so be prepared for flavourful excursions, whether it's sampling fiery Singaporean chilli crab or laksa at a hawker stall to some of the best Michelin-starred restaurants in Asia and globally-recognised bars. Singapore is quite cycle-friendly, so if you're looking to explore the many sights and sounds of the city, that's the way to do it. visitsingapore.com/en/



Incredible Yas Island, Abu Dhabi

LOCATED IN THE Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the capital city of UAE, Yas Island is perfect for adventure and thrill seekers. A half-hour drive from the city, the island is home to several attractions, from the iconic F1 race track, theme parks like Ferrari World and Warner Bros, an award-winning golf course to luxury beach properties and an

expansive mall, it has it all! A picturesque marina adds to the whimsical setting, where you can savour everything from Emirati cuisine to delectable food at internationally-renowned restaurants. To de-stress after all your adventures, book yourselves an indulgent spa or wellness treatment at one of the luxury resorts

and hotels dotting the island. Yas Island truly manages to pack in a lot. Pair these experiences with Abu Dhabi's many other iconic attractions and landmarks like The Emirates Palace, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, The Louvre and others for a truly culture-soaked travel experience. yasisland.com ✦



SHUTTERSTOCK (3)

A PRICELESS MOMENT

From love stories that warm your heart to romantic gestures that move you to tears, take a trip down memory lane with these memorable moments from some celebrity nuptials. **BY ARPITA KALA**



Actor Shama Sikander and beau James Milliron said 'I Do' in an intimate wedding ceremony in Goa.



The couple's wedding vows were spoken from the heart and moved everyone to tears.

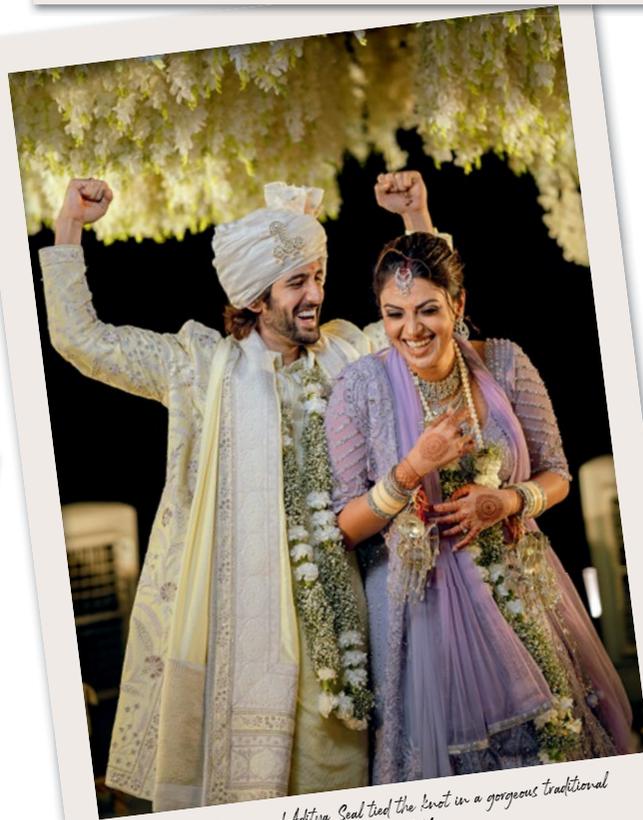
SHAMA SIKANDER AND JAMES MILLIRON

A white wedding was the vision for actor Shama Sikander and long-time beau James Milliron's nuptials. The couple brought their fairy-tale wedding to life this March in an intimate ceremony in Goa.

Sikander shares, "Each and every event of our wedding was truly special because we had an intimate wedding guest list of just 50 people. But still, if I had to choose one singular moment it would have to be the part of exchanging our wedding vows. James and I did not have much time before to write the vows because we made a decision to get married rather quickly, within one month! The whole thing was truly magical. Everyone had tears in their eyes, the sun was setting and the ambience was perfect."



The bride was moved to tears when she found out that Aditya had sung and recorded her favourite song for her bridal entry.



Actors Anushka Ranjan and Aditya Seal tied the knot in a gorgeous traditional wedding ceremony in Mumbai in November 2021.

ANUSHKA RANJAN AND ADITYA SEAL

As a curator of emotionally charged moments, a wedding photographer is privy to some of the most beautiful moments. Harjot K Dhillon, creative director, The Wedding Story shares a touching moment that made guests present at actors Anushka Ranjan and Aditya Seal's wedding shed tears of joy!

Dhillon says, "Anushka was keen to approach a certain artist to sing a rendition of the legendary Nusrat Fateh Ali song 'Kivein Mukhde' for her bridal entry and she shared the thought with Aditya. As he was about to approach the artist, he thought it'll be even better if he could sing it for her! She had no idea about this up until the point of her entry. She was overwhelmed and couldn't control her tears. That moment was priceless."



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