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Wedding belles insist on paradise

Traditional Chinese weddings usually involve an intimate tea ceremony with a handful of friends and family in the morning, followed by hundreds of guests at a wedding banquet in the evening. But what if you want more?

Many couples in Hong Kong are choosing to have a destination wedding so that everyone attending the big day gets a fun holiday.

'Maui island in Hawaii has a few private plantation houses with big grounds that overlook the ocean or beach,' says Sonya Yeung, creative director at Bliss Creations (www.blisscreations.net). 'The weather is fabulous and there are wonderful activities for guests.'

Yeung says the island offers a vast range of activities, including cultural performances such as luau shows, diving, surfing, deep sea fishing and whale watching.

'The wedding industry there is very well established, so the quality of service is very high. This means the flowers, food and entertainment are going to be excellent.'

The plantation houses can accommodate a small wedding party of 20, up to larger groups of about 200.

For those on a budget, accommodation varies from backpacker hostels and condominiums to five-star hotels.

'The scenery is gorgeous and it's everything that a paradise wedding should be,' Yeung says.

She also recommends Cambodia's Siem Reap as a top wedding destination where couples can have the ceremony and reception near an ancient temple.

'Cambodia is so unique. You have the main temples at Angkor Wat that would cost you a lot of money, but there are also smaller temples,' she says. 'It's a world heritage site, so the setting is beautiful and one of a kind.'

If money is no object, Yeung suggests staying at Amansara, while the FCC Angkor Hotel is a less expensive option.

For couples who want the ultimate beach wedding, Kim Williams, chief event planner at Fete (www.fete-eventplanner.com), suggests a resort on the Philippine island of Boracay.

'Asya Premier Suites is a beachfront property with a private cove and a place where you can have a two-day celebration,' Williams explains. 'On the first night, at the cove you can have an ethnic-themed dinner, then a cruise with ethnic drummers and games. On the second night, it can be more formal with cocktails by the pool, a ceremony on the beach and then guests can move to the mid-section of the resort for the restaurant. It doesn't feel like you are stuck in one location.'

According to Williams, the resort can accommodate 50 to 80 guests. 'What makes the island nice is it has a bit of everything - seclusion and powder-white sand - but you can still have a good time at the other bars and restaurants on the island, and participate in water sports.'

Michele Li, managing director of The Wedding Company in Hong Kong (www.theweddingco.hk), names Khayangan Estates in Uluwatu, Bali, as one of her favourite destinations for tying the knot.

'We are actually planning a wedding there later this year. It's on a cliff overlooking the ocean, and it's really stunning,' she explains.

The venue is designed to suit mid-sized parties of 80 to 100 guests. The best time to go is August to September.

The only downside is that, as it is a private villa, it's quite a challenge to transform it into a wedding venue with marquees, lighting and sound, and other logistics. There is also a language barrier and a different sense of timing. Sometimes we forget that Hong Kong is a very efficient city.