

# Get set, wed!



A newly wed couple in Seychelles

**I**n 2017, Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli chose a heritage hotel in South Italy to tie the knot. In the same year, Samantha Prabhu and Naga Chaitanya exchanged vows in Goa. And now, Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh are rumoured to get married in Italy. These celebrities are not the first, and definitely not the last, to choose a destination wedding.

**Foreign locales**  
It is estimated that India witnesses about one crore weddings annually and "the demand for destination weddings is growing at a steady rate of around 18-20%," says Karan Anand, head, relationships, Cox & Kings. Affluent Indian families continue to opt for lavish destination weddings, where elaborate functions and long lists of guests and services grace the celebrations. Says co-founder of Marry Me Weddings, Candice Pereira, "Unique live acts that will wow the guests — aerial acrobats, table magicians, international musicians are crucial considerations, apart from the most important factors — accessibility, affordability and local infrastructure, vendors and facilities."

"We have been hosting weddings onboard our cruise from the past many years, and the queries have gone up now," says Ratna Chadha, chief executive, TRUN Travel Marketing. Anand states, "Overseas destinations such as Bali, Greece, Italy, Dubai, Macau, Thailand and Australia are all-time favourites." He also

The trend of exchanging vows in an exotic location continues to grow amongst Indians. Destination weddings are the perfect blend of travel and celebration, writes **Amrita Das**

includes emerging destinations like Bahrain and Seychelles. "Locations where visas hassles are minimal for Indian travellers are high on the cards," concurs Balu Ramachandran, head, air and distribution, Cleartrip.

Tourism Malaysia's director-India west, Mohamed Hafiz, says Indians spend anywhere between 25 lakh to crores for destination weddings. "As time goes, many more families, couples consider Malaysia for destination weddings or a pre- or post-wedding celebration. Malaysia's connectivity, hospitality and cultural connect with India makes it an accessible destination."

#### Go domestic

But does this mean that domestic destinations are losing out? Darshan Shroff, co-owner, Momente Wedding Planners, notes, "Rajasthan continues to be a favourite. Mahabalipuram and Andaman with its beautiful beaches and coastline are also popular; Mussoorie is the perfect hill station venue for an amazing wedding."

Industry experts unanimously declare Rajasthan, Goa and Kerala as the most sought-after Indian wedding destinations. Trishant Sidhwani, partner, DreamzKraft,

who has organised weddings of Shilpa Shetty and Preity Zinta, says, "People have started paying attention to entertainment that enhances the ambience. Having artists blending into the theme of each function has become a trend today."

For many wedding planners, weather is the worst nightmare. Dome Entertainment, an indoor venue, gives full-service packages. "An indoor wedding is an excellent choice if the surrounding area is prone to dust, bad weather and noise among other inconveniences," emphasises Mazhar Nadiadwala, managing director.

However, for those seeking an intimate gathering, the hospitality industry facilitates various requirements of the flourishing industry. Many wedding planners like Pereira offer "a bespoke service which is customised for every client."

Hotels like Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty and Narendra Bhawan Bikaner are ideal places for couples with contrasting tastes. The former, a waterfront hotel, boasts of three helipads and pillar-less ballrooms, while the latter is the erstwhile palace of the last king of Bikaner, and a perfect pick for those who wish to usher new beginnings in royalty and style.

On the other hand, points out Vijai Sin-

gh, general manager, InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram, "As we are in the south and temple weddings are a huge part of the culture here, we also offer temple weddings," in addition to food and services being the main factors in the selection. In a supporting statement, M Balaji, CEO, Clarks Exotica Convention Resort and Spa, Bengaluru, adds, "Considering we provide excellent Jain food, we are a favourite in the Marwari and Jain communities."

Nakul Hada, general manager, Suryagarh, Jaisalmer, adds a unique observation to weddings in India's most loved destination — Rajasthan. "The most important thing for couples these days is the venue being insta-worthy. They look out for places at the property which would add to the overall charm of the theme."

Aiding the industry, initiatives like Shaadi by Marriott — an all-inclusive wedding planning service — have further simplified (destination) weddings. With venues all over the country, Shaadi by Marriott connects India's most popular destinations for weddings. Their venues include Courtyard, Jaipur Marriott Hotel, Le Méridien Jaipur Resort & Spa, The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Bri-

### Before the wedding vows

- Choose a destination keeping accessibility, weather, cultural similarities and budget in mind.
- Plan much in advance to get the best venues and rates.
- Realistically plan your guest list and the number of functions.
- Hiring an expert like a wedding planner is a good idea to delegate a majority of the work.
- Spend smartly by keeping separate budgets for the venue, food

and services, decor, entertainment, attire and styling, vendors, and every other requirement.

- Rece the venue and arrangements at regular intervals, if possible, to keep up with the ongoing preparations, and suggest changes, if any.
- Send out regular communication to guests to keep them in the loop and build the excitement.
- Be optimistic, enjoy the wedding.

gade Gateway, Le Méridien Kochi, and many others.

Less than two years old, JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata has hosted about 230 weddings. "One of the reasons could be due to the support of the Shaadi by Marriott campaign that has done remarkably well across India, and the constant activation of the campaign through various platforms has allowed guests to connect with the Marriott hotels as the perfect wedding destination," states Rahul Mishra, director of sales.

Neelam Vasava, a wedding specialist at JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru, says, "Whenever anyone looks up destination wedding planning in Bengaluru, they inevitably run into Shaadi by Marriott because

of how large a phenomenon it is. It is the only comprehensive wedding programme that assures the couple and their family of having everything under control."

As the trend of destination weddings grows, exotic locations themselves continue to inspire. Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Turkey, France, New Zealand and even Iceland. Surreal underwater experiences, flamboyant aerial entrances, or saying 'I do' on jet skis — the choices are limitless.

### FEEDBACK

We'd like to hear from you. Do mail us at [dthraive@deccanherald.com](mailto:dthraive@deccanherald.com)