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YOUR BIG DAY SIMPLIFIED

REGISTER FOR THIS P34



MANLY TRAVEL P36



WELCOME BAG SWAG P32

the *plan*



DESTINATION WEDDINGS
A List
Q&A
& HONEYMOONS

PRETTY PLEASE

From customizing a hotel's decor to flying in (and paying) a photog, our wedding pros help you do it all.

by ERIKA HUENEKE artwork by NEIKO NG

NEIKOART.COM



Despite getting married in paradise, you still have a vision that entails vintage vases, Mexican paper banners or flowers dripping from every surface. Will your resort let you have this without charging a premium? "I try to work only with hotels that allow me to provide the services my clients need without incurring an extra charge," says Denise Courtney of Eventos Euforia. Get tips on decor and more from Courtney and other wedding experts.

QUESTION → How open are

hotels and resorts to couples adding personal touches to on-property wedding sites?

THE PRO Denise Courtney, a lead planner and designer at Eventos Euforia, has organized weddings in Cancun since 2001.

“Most large chain hotels want you to pick their packages and providers, as they have previously negotiated a 40 percent commission with those providers. All-inclusives typically charge clients anywhere from \$150 to \$1,000 per category (floral, decor, etc.) for outside providers.

I once attended a meeting with a hotel where I was told that our mutual client had already been charged the outside-vendor fee, and if we wanted to operate this wedding in their hotel, we would need to pay the hotel 25 percent commission on floral and 35 percent commission on any decor that we supplied. If personalization is a priority, I recommend looking into more high-end or boutique properties because, while sometimes more expensive, they offer more privacy, better food and the freedom to use whatever providers you'd like.”

CHRISTIAN GARCIA DESTINATION WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER (CHRISTIANGARCIA.WE) (3)

QUESTION → We're big partyers. How can we find a reception venue that will let us celebrate late into the night?

THE PRO Owner and founder of Just Marry!, Susan Southerland has spent the last 20 years helping thousands of couples around the world plan their dream destination weddings.

“One of my recent couples had a stunning party after their reception that had a completely different look and feel from their wedding. We switched from a band to a DJ and had edgy decor,

and the couple even unveiled different attire at the after-party! Planning a party into the wee hours of the night isn't difficult, but it takes some forethought. If you simply want to hang out with a small group, a casual gathering in your hospitality suite could be perfect. Order beverages and a few snacks, and you're good to go. If you want a bigger celebration including entertainment, be sure to discuss this upfront with any potential venues. Ask if they have limitations on how late you can celebrate because of local noise ordinances, the proximity of sleeping rooms to your party, or restrictions on how late they can serve alcohol. Another option: Move the after-party offsite to a local club.”

QUESTION → If we bring in a photographer, how does the pricing work? Do we pay for his or her travel expenses and lodging?

THE PRO Currently based in Miami and California, KT Merry is a fine-art wedding photographer with a background in fashion and specializes in shooting destination weddings worldwide.

“Every wedding is different, and each situation needs to be evaluated individually, so discuss travel early in the planning process and prior to booking your photographer. When working with our clients for a destination wedding, prior to booking the wedding and signing a contract, we provide them with a custom quote inclusive of all travel expenses, which is added to their chosen photography package. We then make all of our own arrangements unless otherwise agreed upon with our client. Recently, we traveled to the Banyan Tree Lang C6 resort in Vietnam for a wedding, and we provided a travel fee to cover our visa expenses, meals and travel time. In this case the client provided accommodation (as they already had a room block), airfare and transfers.”

HOTEL B COZUMEL



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Because you will have an original and intimate wedding, you can choose your setting reception, menus and decor completely to your liking, and you will have the best natural decor.



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love it

WELCOME BAG of SWAG

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR CREATING THE WELCOME GIFT YOU'D WANT TO GET.



GO LOCAL ➔ "Shipping can be expensive, and packages can get held up in customs, so source most items locally if possible.

At the Grand Palladium Resort & Spa in Jamaica, we offer Blue Mountain coffee and Appleton Estate rum that couples can purchase for guest gift bags." **PERSONALIZE** ➔ "We had a couple add snacks that were tied to special places in their lives — pretzels from the town where they met in college, popcorn from Indiana where

the groom grew up." **PAPER OR PLASTIC?** ➔ "On a budget, use a paper bag with a great tag tied to the handle. If you're delivering to your guests' hotel rooms, boxes are good if they're closed and can be stacked, since they'll be stored ahead of time." **THINK REUSABLE** ➔ "Many websites, from 4imprint.com to

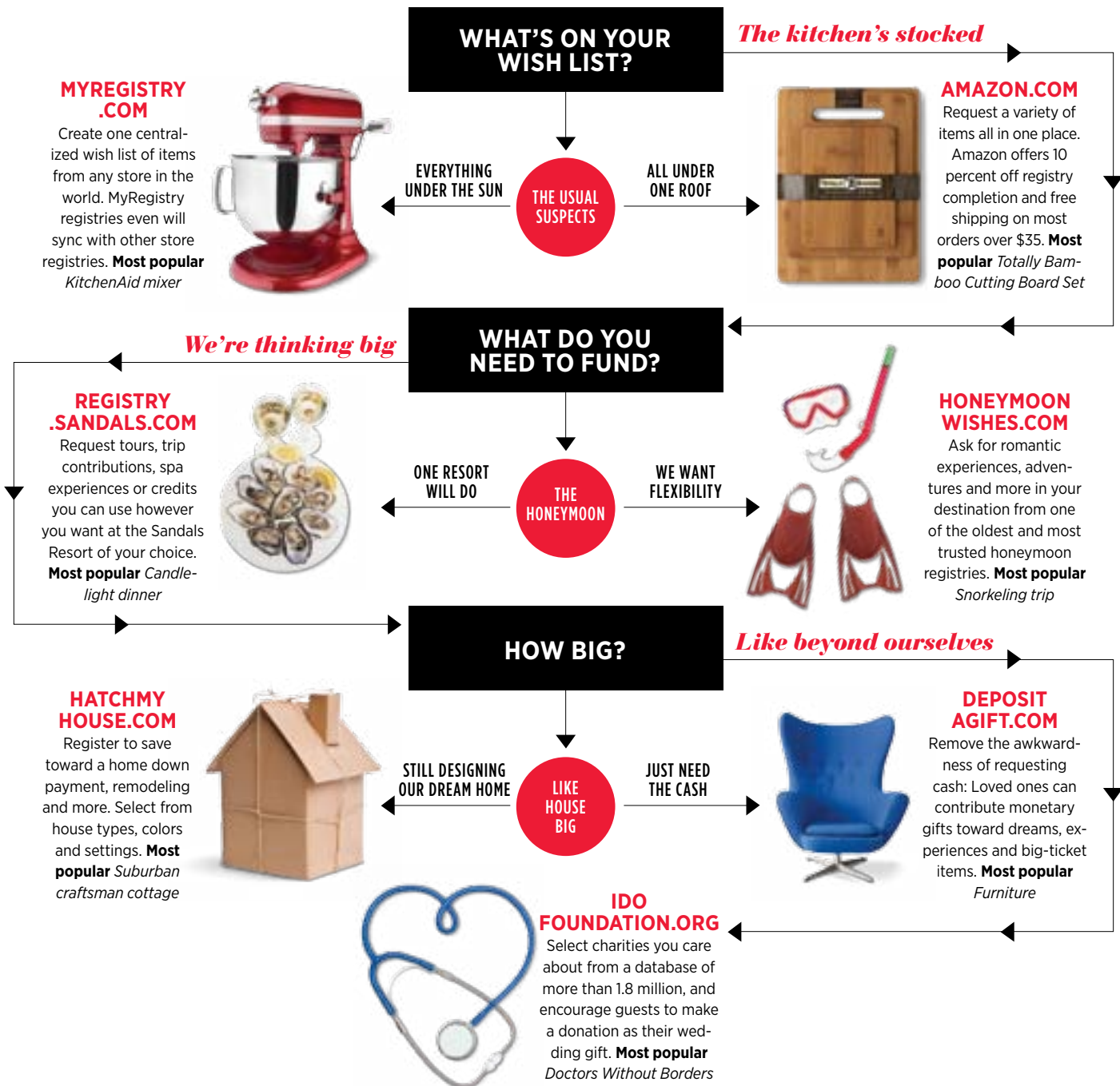
llbean.com, offer stylish canvas and nylon bags that guests can use before and after the event." **MAP IT** ➔ "Contact your destination's local tourist office — they will often give you free maps of the area to promote local attractions and sites." **KEEP IT SMALL** ➔ "Avoid bulky or breakable items — they'll get left behind." — *EH*

1. Avoid printing your names and wedding date on your bags — instead, opt for a cute theme, like this "Hola!" bag for a MEXICO fiesta. 2. These welcome gifts, by WelcomeBagShope.com, contained the couple's favorite snacks, plus playing cards as a nod to the VEGAS setting. 3, 4. Illustrated maps make for a great motif, like these totes for events in ANGUILLA and OAHU. 5. Follow the example of this HAWAII bride and create special, individualized bags for your wedding party. 6. Accent a plain bag with a custom hangtag, as this couple did for a FLORIDA fete; get tags printed at 4yourparty.com.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JILLIAN MITCHELL; WELCOME BAG SHOPPE; JEN@JENHUANGPHOTO.COM; SARA + JASON / CONCEPT PHOTOGRAPHY; CHRISTIE PHAM PHOTOGRAPHY (2)

The Registry Roster

BATH TOWELS OR BUTLER-DRAWN BATHS? TODAY'S COUPLES HAVE THEIR PICK OF EVERY TYPE OF REGISTRY UNDER THE SUN. FOLLOW OUR GUIDE TO DETERMINE WHICH ONES BEST SUIT YOUR FANCY.



OYSTERS, SNORKEL, FINS, HOUSE, CHAIR AND STETHOSCOPE: SHUTTERSTOCK

for the groom

FINDING *middle* GROUND

YOU WANT THIS; SHE WANTS THAT.
HERE'S HOW TO COMPROMISE.

by JAKE EMEN
artwork by IKER AYESTARÁN

➔ In destination-wedding planning, as in marriage, sometimes you'll have to duke it out. Hear me now: Differing opinions as to the where, what and who of your event will surface — and there's nothing wrong with that.

Of course, coinage is a factor too. "Unless you have unlimited funds, everyone has to compromise," says planner Jamie Chang of Mango Muse Events. But don't fret, big fella. Keep a level head, and use this go-to guide for smooth sailing.

1 Invite everyone vs. keep it intimate ➔ Pare down your guest list by honestly evaluating your relationships. "Ask yourself whether you see these people being a part of your lives 10, 20 or 30 years down the road," suggests Chang.

Your choice of destination can also work some magic for you. "The odds are in your favor here," says LA wedding photographer Brian Leahy. "Not everyone will be able or willing to travel."

You don't have to say goodbye to that intimate vibe either. "Host events outside the wedding with different groups of people, so you'll get a chance to spend time with everyone in smaller settings," says Chang.



2 Pull out all the stops vs. keep the budget in check ➔

Prioritize. "Choose three elements of the wedding you care most about, and spend your money there," suggests Leahy. Of course, your top three probably aren't your partner's. Create separate lists, and see if you share any top priorities. If not, man up and offer that your bride gets two of her top three, as long as you get your No. 1.

Chang also suggests encouraging your better half to forgo additional decor, instead letting the natural beauty of your destination do the talking. And consider going green with e-vitations — Paperless Post offers hundreds of design-forward options.

3 R&R vs. action ➔ You may have entirely different ideas about the locale and its overall vibe. The good news is that most destinations offer something for everyone. "Remember, she can have the beach, as long

as you can go off to the golf course with the boys in the morning," offers Leahy.

Chang also recommends striking a deal: You'll attend the cooking class together if she'll join you at the blackjack table one night. "Learning to enjoy what the other likes is a great way to start a marriage."

4 Plan every detail vs. just do it! ➔

Hiring a planner can eliminate much of the burden of planning. Similarly, "if you really want to make it simple, all-inclusive resorts offer that to you with little to no thinking involved," says Chang. You may lose some personalization, but it eliminates many logistical considerations.


And hey — problems may arise whether you planned every last detail or not. "Have a sense of humor about all of this," urges Leahy. "Learn to compromise, but more importantly, learn to laugh in the face of conflict and adversity."



TAG ALONG In February 2012, men's-gift purveyor **Owen & Fred** debuted its first product: a high-quality wallet made in the USA. But our favorite item is the custom leather luggage tags, which come in three colors (gray, black and tan) and make great gifts for groomsmen on the go. \$45 each. — Jenna Lindsey

In a Flash

CHECK OUT THESE FLASH-SALE SITES TO SCORE MAJOR SAVINGS ON WEDDING ESSENTIALS, FROM THE GOWN TO THE GETAWAY.

1 IDEEL.COM hosts weeklong wedding sales mid-September and February; score designer gowns, veils, favors, 'maids dresses and more at up to 70 percent off. 

2 GILT.COM hosts wedding sales in April and October, offering shoes, accessories and gowns (even Vera) at up to 60 percent off; sister site GiltCity.com boasts discounts on photography, flowers and invitations.

3 GROUPON.COM lets you pick vendors from frequent sales on limos, DJ packages, photo-booth rentals and photographers at 40 to 60 percent off. Wedding gowns, jewelry and honeymoon excursions are also regular offerings.

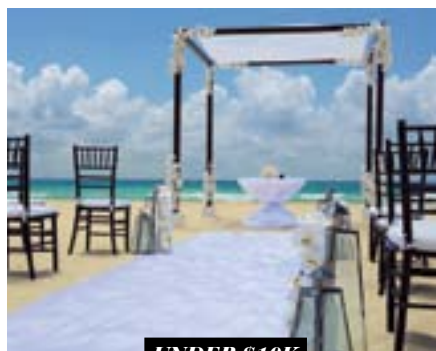
4 HAUTLOOK.COM launches new 48- to 72-hour sales each day with wedding-worthy shoes and accessories, plus dresses for the engagement party, shower and reception change.

5 JETSETTER.COM features more than 2,000 luxury resorts and specialized tours around the world at up to 40 percent off; find your perfect honeymoon spot, and work with a personal travel planner to customize your getaway. — *Ivette Manners*



WEDDING THREE WAYS *Costa Rica*

Whether you dream of a fete with native Tico flair or an elegant beachside affair, Costa Rica's 1,000 miles of coastline offers celebrations at every price point.



UNDER \$10K

OCCIDENTAL GRAND PAPAGAYO, GUANACASTE

Between rugged countryside and serene beach, this 162-room adults-only property plays on the country's natural beauty. Choose from four budget-friendly wedding packages, like Topaz Dreams, which includes a couples massage and a private dinner with open bar for up to 20 guests.

Rooms from \$100 per person, all-inclusive; wedding packages from \$1,949.

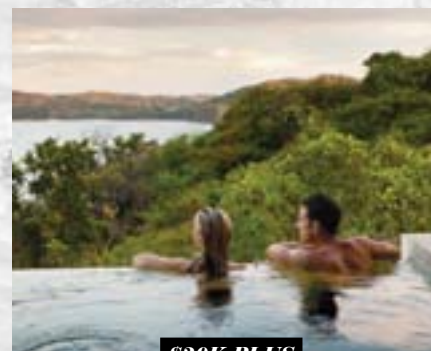


\$10K TO \$20K

JW MARRIOTT GUANACASTE RESORT & SPA

At this 310-room full-service hotel, a dozen event spaces include the Avellanas Terrace, as well as a garden overlooking the largest resort pool in Costa Rica and the palapas at Hacienda Pinilla's Bonita beach. Dance until you drop at the Beach Club's second-floor ballroom with windowed walls that provide a 270-degree view of the Pacific.

Rooms from \$199; average wedding cost, \$15,000.



\$20K PLUS

FOUR SEASONS RESORT AT PENINSULA PAPAGAYO, GUANACASTE

Wed at one of 10 indoor or outdoor spaces; then move your reception to the private Event Lawn, where a calypso or marimba band gives guests a taste of *pura vida* until midnight. After, retire to a canopy suite high in the jungle foliage or into one of 20 private residences, each with an infinity-edge plunge pool. Rooms from \$475; weddings from \$5,000; \$28,000 average. — *Holly V. Kaphern*

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OCCIDENTAL GRAND PAPAGAYO, GUANACASTE; JW MARRIOTT GUANACASTE RESORT & SPA; DON RIDDLE IMAGES