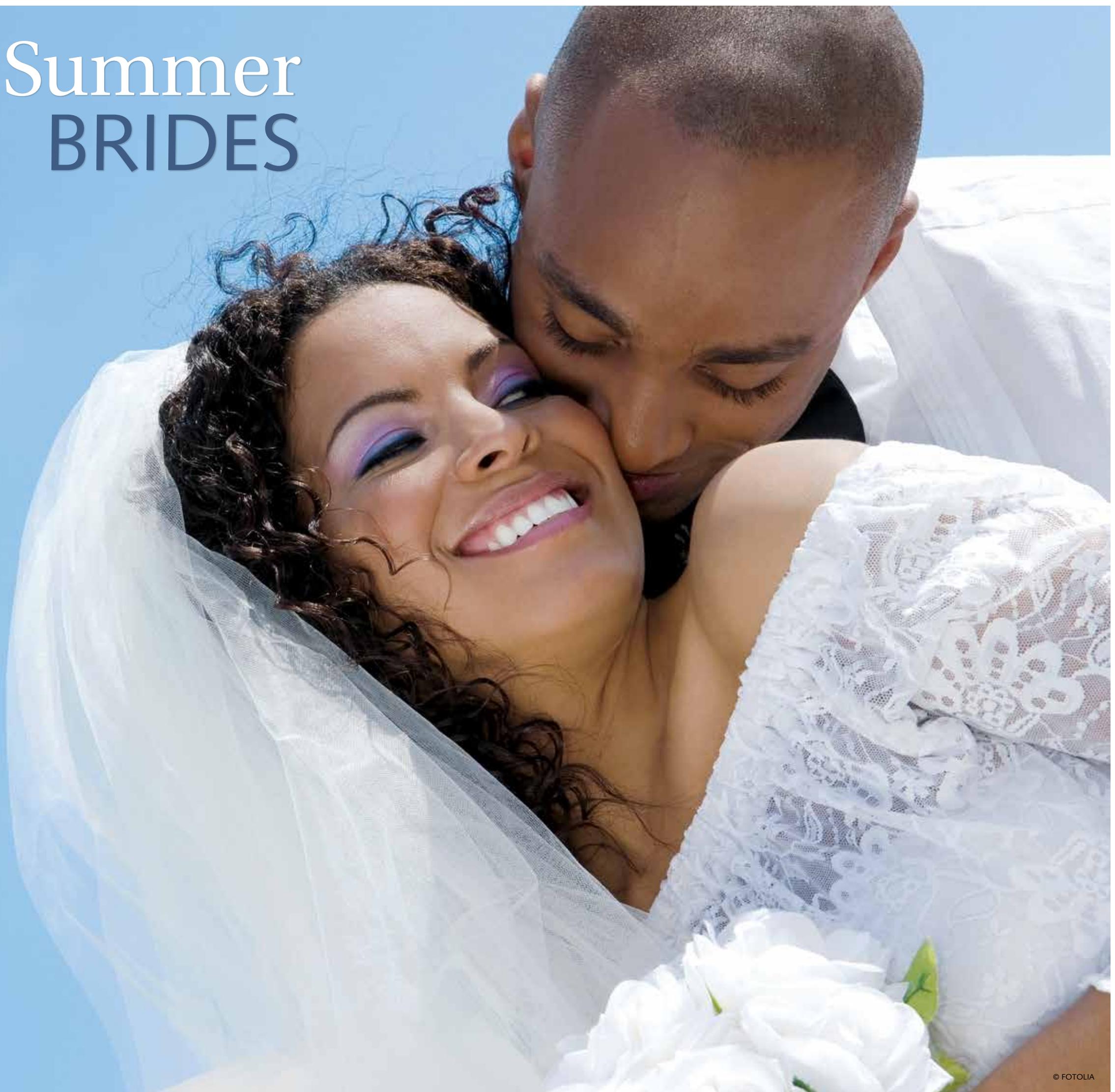


# Summer BRIDES



# Taking It Outdoors

While holding weddings in a church remains the most popular venue for marriage celebrations, more and more brides are seeking alternative settings. Summer can be a great season to embrace the great outdoors and work with the beauty of nature for your wedding.

Consider the pros and cons of the following options.

## A BACKYARD

**Pros:** If you know someone with a large backyard or have one yourself, this location can be a great option for keeping costs low. There will be almost no rules for how you can decorate and who you can work with. (Be respectful of your host, of course.) Stringing lights across the yard? Go for it. In love with a certain caterer? Book them without worrying if they are on a preferred vendors list.

**Cons:** Be aware that outdoor venues don't hold the same acoustics as many indoor venues; this can make it hard for guests to hear the ceremony. Consider small microphones that can be worn discreetly, or be prepared to feel like you're shouting in order for the back row to hear the nuptials.

## THE BEACH

**Pros:** The beach can be a magical place to get married. Imagine walking barefoot toward your significant other, a gentle breeze blowing through your hair, all with the sound of waves crashing softly against the shore behind you.

**Cons:** Of course, the gentle breeze could be a strong wind, depending on the day. And this might not be the venue for



you if you are worried about your dress getting untidy and perhaps a bit wet.

## INNS AND B&BS

**Pros:** Probably the best aspect of hosting an outdoor wedding at an inn or bed and breakfast over the backyard of a loved one is that there is an

option to stay. Don't want your guests to worry about transportation? They can book a room and stay the night. The celebration can continue for as long as you wish.

**Cons:** You may have to rent out the entire place in order to host the ceremony or reception at a bed and breakfast.

While incredibly beautiful, bed and breakfasts are usually on the smaller side, so if you have to move the party inside for any reason, it can start to feel cramped very quickly.

## VINEYARDS & WINERIES

**Pros:** These venues also normally offer stunning

indoor options in case of inclement weather, making your investment feel more secure.

**Cons:** Wineries and vineyards can be very expensive. These locations have gone vogue for wedding venues in the last decade, so expect to pay top dollar for the privilege.

# Seasonal Touches

Whether you're planning outdoor nuptials or a reception in the comfort of air conditioning, there are a lot of things to consider while preparing decor.

While details feel important, don't get lost in them. Pick just a few areas and concentrate your efforts there. If you invest your labors in concentrated areas, your guests are sure to notice your hard work.

## CREATE A FOCAL POINT

If you are having an outdoor ceremony, the area you will definitely want to focus on is creating an altar. This can be done by choosing a location that already provides a landmark, such as a live oak.

Consider hanging a large piece of luxe fabric behind the officiant, or standing between two large planters filled with flowers or greenery. Other places on which you might want to concentrate could be the dance floor or head table, if you choose to have one.

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

Paying special attention to lighting at your event can be a great way to punch up the style of your summer wedding. Cafe lights are great for illuminating an outdoor ceremony or reception, and any type of



strung lighting complements white paper lanterns hung at varying levels.

Mason jars can be found on the cheap at many flea markets and yard sales and are the perfect vessel for containing small votive candles. You can create dimension by placing lanterns

of various heights on tables or lining doorways. If you are after a real “wow” factor, plan a send-off with sparklers.

## HAVE FUN COMMUNICATING

Guests are there happiest when they are informed.

Everyone likes to know what to expect, where to go and what they need to do. Have fun communicating to your guests. Sandwich boards (the two-sided chalkboards commonly seen in cafes) are a great way to point guests in the direction of seating, the

dance floor or the ceremony space if you are hosting the ceremony and reception in the same location.

Easels are fantastic for displaying menus or placards, and chalk board hangtags add a special touch to drink stations and buffet tables.

# Dress Trends

Choosing a wedding gown can be one of the hardest decisions a woman makes. It is built up through history, through the media and through the sheer fact that it is most likely one of the most expensive garment purchases she will make in her lifetime.

Choosing a gown for a summer wedding can add to the stress, as a bride must consider how the heat might come into play. Here are a few dress options that pair perfectly with a summer wedding.

## ETHEREAL

Ethereal wedding gowns have soft and feminine silhouettes. Romance is the name of the game with ethereal dresses. They're ideal for the bride who covets billowing tulle or admires a beaded sleeve. Ethereal dresses also pair well with nature and are a fantastic option for the beach bride, or brides choosing to marry outdoors.

## MINIMALIST

Forgo the complicated bustles, layers of tulle and overly embellished details in favor of a simple stunner. Remember, you want to wear the dress, the dress shouldn't wear you. Dresses that stick to simple lines and luxe fabrics allow you to shine. Make sure it fits like a dream and you will feel like you're in a fairytale all evening.

## OFF THE SHOULDER

Open backs and plunging necklines are everywhere in bridal fashion these days, and while both are alluring options for flashing some skin, don't overlook their more demure and classic,

“off-the-shoulder” sister. Off-the-shoulder dresses scream romance but give more detail than strapless gowns. The best part? So many designers are incorporating the trend that you are guaranteed to find one in your style — whether covered in lace or a more structured satin fashion.

## BLUSHING

This is the time of year when the days are longer and the sun kisses the sky at dusk, throwing a pink haze over everything. Why not have your dress match the long summer nights in a blushing shade of pink? Blush-colored dresses range in hues of a whispery light pink to a deeper rose. Ombre dresses — or dresses that layer color to start lighter and deepen with the length of the dress — embrace the summer season with gusto and really allow a bride to flaunt some personality.

## SHORT

Audrey Hepburn and Mia Farrow both went short on their big day, and you can't get more iconic than that. Embrace the summer heat, show some leg (tastefully, of course), and evoke a chic, old Hollywood style. Whether you choose a mini or a dress that shows your ankles but no more, you are guaranteed to have all eyes on you.





# Embellished Invitations

Invitations are more than just pieces of paper. Adding details to your paper products is a great way to add personality and originality to your wedding in a budget-friendly way. Think outside the box by adding or changing traditional elements for something more unexpected.

Invitations give guests a preview of the style of your wedding, as the invitation is the first piece of it they will see. Make your invitation one to keep by considering the following embellishments.

## ADD A BELLY BAND

A belly band (a thick piece of paper that wraps around your invitation) is both beautiful and functional. You can use bands printed in a complementary print or for a pop of color, all the while keeping your invitation and coordinating inserts organized.

## LINE THE ENVELOPES

Belly bands aren't the only place to incorporate some pattern or color to your invites. Consider lining the envelopes. This can be done inexpensively by investing a little time, a lot of patience and scrapbooking paper from your local craft store.

## MIX PAPER COLORS

Contemplate using different, complementary colors of paper for each piece of your invitations. Instead of white for everything, maybe choose cream-colored invitations but a brightly colored envelope. Or

use a solid color for your invitation and a muted print for your RSVP cards.

## CONSIDER TEXTURE

Try out different paper samples, as not all are created equal. Linen paper provides a thicker feel and sense of luxury. Or forgo paper completely and transfer your invitations to another surface, such as wooden slats or vintage handkerchiefs.

## PLAY WITH THE EDGING

While traditionally invitations have had sharp, square edging, this does not have to be the case. Think outside the box and give your invitations rounded corners or scalloped edges.

## CREATE A SUITE

There is so much more to invitations now than envelopes, RSVP cards and the invitation itself. Create a separate card for each piece of information: a card for the reception, one for directions and even a separate card for your wedding website. Expanding your invitations into a suite can make your wedding feel like the event of the season. Pocket fold envelopes can keep your invitation suite neat and organized.

# Ask the Photographer

Choosing a wedding photographer can be a tricky business. Start by finding a photographer to whom both you and your fiancé are drawn through their personal style. But what else do you need to know? There are several questions you need answered before you hand over a check.

## How many weddings have you shot, and how many do you shoot in a year?

*Why to ask:* This will tell you several things. You want to know that this is his profession, and he has shot enough weddings to be sufficiently experienced to deal with the pressures that come on the big day. You also want to know you will be prioritized on your day. You don't want a photographer that overloads himself.

## Will you be my photographer, or will it be one of your partners (or assistants)?

*Why to ask:* If you are booking with a group (or anyone that is more than a one-person show) make sure you speak with the person who will actually be shooting your wedding.

## What is your favorite part of a wedding?

*Why to ask:* This can tell you a lot about how your photographer approaches weddings and what she might inherently pay more attention to. It is important that you find someone who shares your priorities and helps you see the beauty in moments you might overlook.

## What type of packages do you offer?

*Why to ask:* You cannot compare photographers if you don't know what is included for the price. Prints? Digital copies? Do they put together an album or include an engagement shoot for free? How many hours of coverage do you get?



## Will touch-ups happen before or after I see the proofs?

*Why to ask:* Touch-ups are how photos become magazine-worthy. Some photographers will perform this technique on all your photos, while others only want to spend time doing this on photos you choose.

## What is your deposit and refund policy?

*Why to ask:* Know the particulars.

When is the money due and what happens if catastrophe strikes and you have to postpone or cancel?

## Do you prefer to work off a shot list or capture events and festivities as they unfold?

*Why to ask:* It is good to find a photographer who works on a mixture of these two approaches. While a shot list provides a guide (and guarantees that you get at least one photo with grand-

ma) you are hiring a photographer for his expertise. Allow him to capture the events while you focus on living them.

## How long after the wedding before we see the photos?

*Why to ask:* You will be wanting to see photos of your wedding the very next day. While this is impossible, knowing when you will get to clasp eyes on them will help you manage the waiting.

# There's an App for That

Planning and celebrating your wedding has never been easier thanks to the technology of smartphones and other handheld devices. There are mobile and digital applications for every aspect of the wedding process, from planning to communicating with your guests to reveling in the fun after the big day has come to an end.

Here are just a few worth taking a closer look at:

## FOR DRESSES

The Knot Wedding LookBook lets you research through major designers and current trends to help you narrow down your wish list before ever stepping foot into a salon. The app lets you refine your search by style, shape and price point, as well as shop for others in your bridal party, including the mother of the bride and attendants — both adult and pint-sized. Perk? The app also will make suggestions to you based on your saved favorites.

## FOR DECOR

Pantone Studio app is perhaps one of the most useful applications but is easy to overlook. This app is extremely helpful in helping you curate the perfect color palette.

When you find something you love and feel the color must be incorporated in your wedding, Pantone Studio allows you to upload a photo of it (whatever “it” is), and show you other hues that perfectly complement your color. No more wondering if colors match, or what “goes” with what.

## FOR PLANNING

Wedding Happy allows you



to keep track of your to-do list and add tasks, while syncing with your phone's calendar and address book to help you keep track of appointments with potential vendors or dress fittings.

Wedding Happy also keeps

all your vendors and costs in one place, keeps track of payments and will adjust your remaining budget and cost per guest when you enter an expenditure or payment. It's never been easier to stay on budget.

## FOR PHOTOSHARING

Wedpics is a modern take on passing out disposable cameras to your guests. This app allows all your guests to share their photos of your special day with you. You just need to create a wedding ID and share it

with your guests. This is great information to include on your wedding website and at your reception to remind guests to use it. You can even download high-resolution copies of your guests' photos and order prints directly from the app.

# Caribbean Honeymoon

Continue the “fun-in-the-sun” style of a summer wedding by relaxing beachside on your honeymoon.



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The Caribbean Islands are a popular honeymoon destination for a reason: They are close to mainland United States, but still out of the country (unless Puerto Rico is your destination of choice), offer an exotic culture without robbing your wallet and offer up the white sand beaches and clear blue waters of your dreams.

## ALL INCLUSIVE

**Pros:** This is just the ticket if you are looking for the maximum amount of

comfort and relaxation for a minimum amount of effort. Think beach chair and colorful drink in hand for as many days as you’d like. These all-inclusive resorts are usually decked out with other amenities that we associate with American luxury, such as a golf course and full-service spa. Not a shabby way to spend a week. Or two.

**Cons:** You won’t be seeing much, if any, of the local culture. All-inclusive resorts tend to isolate themselves from their settings, which lends to the

“world away from everything” feeling.

## ISLAND-HOP

**Pros:** Improvements in transportation make it easy to hop from island to island, allowing you to see multiple locations during your honeymoon. Indulge in the food of Saint Martin before jetting off to the beaches of Anguilla.

Play up your adventurous side with a small jaunt to Saba, a Dutch island that makes up in amazing dive sites

and a rain-forest covered volcano what it lacks in sandy beaches. Just be sure to always have your passport on hand, as you will be hopping countries — along with islands.

**Cons:** Adventure can be exhausting, especially after the stress of a big event such as a wedding. (This is it. There are no other cons. Go!)

Consider a honeymoon in the Caribbean, where the sun always shines (except during hurricane season).