



# *Dreamy Destination* **WEDDINGS**

Why wait till the honeymoon to travel when you can host your entire wedding overseas? This month, we celebrate Valentine's Day with three couples from around the world who went the extra mile to make their storybook destination weddings a reality

WORDS ■ **AKANKSHA NAIR**





## ■ HITCHED IN HAWAI'I: CHIHIRO AND YUKI

Japanese couple Chihiro and Yuki met four years ago through work in Tokyo, and soon decided to tie the knot. To mark their special day, the couple chose to head to a very special destination: all the way to the beach paradise of Hawai'i!

### WHAT MADE YOU PLAN A DESTINATION WEDDING IN HAWAI'I?

"The first international trip we took together was to Hawai'i. It was the most incredible experience – we made so many great memories on that trip. Even on our very first trip to Hawai'i, we talked about getting married there and even planned out some of the details!

We knew we didn't want a conventional Japanese wedding. We wished for a relaxed, open location where we could be surrounded by our close friends and family. We chose the beautiful Ko Olina for our wedding, just half an hour away from Honolulu."

### WHAT LOCAL FLAVOUR DID THE LOCATION LEND TO YOUR WEDDING?

"Ko Olina is a bit away from Waikiki beach and sits right on the ocean, surrounded by lush greenery. We hosted our wedding at Four Seasons Oahu, which turned out to be the perfect location for an elegant ceremony. The spirit of *Aloha* prevailed through our wedding. Not just us, but every one of our guests who travelled from Japan left with a bunch of lasting, happy memories and a deep sense of serenity."

### WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT THE WEDDING DAY?

"Everything! But our venue particularly stood out. We hosted both the ceremony and the reception in the open lawn that faces the ocean. We were facing the most beautiful sunset as the evening progressed – everything was just so pretty!"



### ADVICE FROM THE COUPLE:

"Your wedding is one of the biggest events, and will make one of the best memories of your life. Planning from a distance can be difficult and needs you to be extra careful. We highly recommend checking out your wedding venue in person. Prepare to do this as many times as you need. There are some venues that are portrayed well online, but may not be ideal for your specific taste and requirements."



## THE MAGICAL GREEK WEDDING: LEVA AND JUSTIN BUDNICK

Leva and Justin Budnick are from Connecticut, USA, but Leva was originally from Lithuania. The two met as competing parties from the insurance industry at a business networking event, but ended up falling in love at first sight. Both bitten by the travel bug, they always had their heart set on a destination wedding. After two years of dating, the couple finally got betrothed at a perfect ceremony in Mykonos Island, Greece.

### WHAT MADE YOU PLAN A DESTINATION WEDDING IN GREECE?

"We opted for a destination wedding for our special day because we felt it would allow us to have more quality time to spend with friends and family in a new locale. We were delighted that they travelled from all over to join us on our special day.

Specifically, Mykonos was the perfect destination for two reasons. First, it formed the perfect middle ground for both our families travelling from the States and Europe. Secondly, we both wanted to pick a place that we hadn't been to together. The history, architecture, and calming shades of blue and white made it akin to paradise.

When picking the accommodation, we chose Villa Hurmuses which reflected all that we love about the island. We arrived earlier than the wedding date, and took our time to settle in. We spent quality time with our guests and just enjoyed taking in the million dollar views."

### WHAT LOCAL FLAVOUR DID THE LOCATION LEND TO YOUR WEDDING?

"Both of us love celebrating cultures. For our wedding as well, we chose to incorporate elements of Greek culture into the ceremony. We had Greek dancers perform at our wedding, and they even taught us some moves! We even broke plates as is customary in Greek weddings. And of course, we had all our guests groove to Greek music. Apart from the locale, these were the nuances that made our wedding all the more memorable."

### WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT THE WEDDING DAY?

"We felt blessed to be in such a beautiful place surrounded by our closest friends and family. But more than that, I never felt nervous on my wedding day. Everything was peaceful. On the day of the wedding, we were blessed with no wind and perfect picture-taking weather, which we thoroughly took advantage of."



### ADVICE FROM THE COUPLE:

"We recommend choosing a location you are in love with. It is also important to choose a venue with enough space to accommodate all your closest friends and family as well as carry out the ceremony. We chose Villa Hurmuses, and it was perfect. Our wedding became very easy to plan in terms of logistics, and the place had the perfect blend of modern amenities and traditional touches. It was spacious yet intimate. Looking back, I wouldn't do anything differently, except perhaps stay a week longer!"





**BY THE SUNSET AT BORACAY: MERAB CAMACHO AND GAMALYEL GO**

Canada-based couple Merab Camacho and Gamalyel Go met in two different countries, where they each acted as a city guide for the other. Merab was in Manila when she showed Gamalyel around, and Gamalyel returned the favour when she visited his hometown in Ontario, Canada for her cousin's wedding. That's when their friendship deepened, and she moved to Canada three months later to be with him. Within a year, Gamalyel proposed, and the couple set off to the gorgeous island of Boracay to celebrate their union!

**WHAT MADE YOU PLAN A DESTINATION WEDDING IN BORACAY?**

"Most of our attendees lived outside the Philippines, hence our wedding gave them a chance to travel and relax. We had a bunch of friends from Canada attend the wedding. It was their first time in the country. The decision also made the wedding a lot more intimate, as only our closest friends and family made the added effort of travelling to attend.

What captivated me about Boracay was the sunset. The first time I saw the sunset was in 2010 when Gamalyel and I visited Boracay together with our friends. That was also the first time we thought about how nice it would be to experience that stunning sunset with our family and closest friends."


**WHAT LOCAL FLAVOUR DID THE LOCATION LEND TO YOUR WEDDING?**

"We hosted our wedding at Asya Premiere. We chose this resort because it was nestled far from the crowds in the midst of nature. The resort's rustic, earthy theme was very true to the local culture. Just as we wanted, we found the perfect sunset view for our wedding. We danced barefoot in the sand alongside fire dancers, with sparklers and fireworks shooting into the sky. From sunset to the stars, it was an experience we could not have had in the city.

We also conducted the Filipino wedding tradition known as the 'Prosperity/Money Dance'. Each guest got a chance to give us some advice and pinned bills on our clothes."

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT THE WEDDING DAY?**

"Merab's father passed away back in 2011. To remember him on our wedding day, all the instrumental songs we played were from his favourite band – The Beatles. Merab walked down the aisle to the instrumental version of *All You Need Is Love*. Everyone cried, because they knew this was his favourite song." **B**

**ADVICE FROM THE COUPLE:**  
 "It'll all be worth it! You get to travel and speak your vows in an unconventional way with your family and friends. Our only advice is to consider the flights and accommodation for your guests, especially for those with medical conditions or other limitations."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MERAB CAMACHO AND GAMALYEL GO