



More Popular Than Ever, Cruise Ship Weddings Offer Value, Reduce Hassles - and Enhance Romance

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MIAMI, March 8, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- When planning your dream wedding, here's a tip: You don't have to limit yourself to your own back yard. For the ultimate in romance, consider getting married on a cruise ship at sea or in an exotic cruise port of call.

Cruise destination weddings are an increasingly popular choice for couples seeking both value and hassle-free planning. They are also a great way to stand out from the crowd, as in "Wow! You're getting married where?"

There's a reason that thousands of couples each year are holding their nuptials on cruise ships. Everything you need to plan and customize your wedding is already onboard from the florist to the caterer and bartenders to the hairdresser to the photographers – a floating creative team at your service.

Whether you go intimate, just the two of you or over-the-top with all your nearest and dearest, tying the knot on a cruise is about beautiful views, bonding and togetherness, with your honeymoon a built-in bonus.

It's also about getting a great deal. Compare, for instance, a \$25 per person luncheon at an intimate cruise ship specialty restaurant to what you'd pay for a topflight, multi-course meal on land.

More than 2,600 couples each year say their "I Dos" on Carnival Cruise Line ships alone. You can get married on embarkation day while your ship is in port – an option that allows non-sailing guests to help you celebrate without actually going on the cruise – or tie the knot in paradise, choosing from beach destinations in the Bahamas and several beautiful ports of call in the Caribbean.

Or for something completely different, consider a dream wedding at sea. Princess Cruises debuted the first-at-sea shipboard wedding chapel on the Grand Princess in 1998, and has been offering weddings onboard (and on shore) ever since. A "Love Boat" Captain – coined after the famous "Love Boat" TV show, which was filmed on a Princess Cruises ship – or other senior officer will conduct your at-sea ceremony, your commemorative marriage certificate detailing the coordinates of where you said your vows.

British line P&O Cruises is celebrating 10 years of shipboard weddings this year – the first couple married in April 2006 while cruising the Canaries. In the past decade, the British line has helped couples celebrate their shipboard nuptials with more than 7,000 bottles of champagne and thousands of wedding cakes.

On Cunard's three oceanliners, shipboard weddings take place on sea days, including during transatlantic crossings. Wedding packages packed with niceties include a White Star Bellman to escort the bride to the ceremony venue and a bottle of Veuve Clicquot Champagne.

Do your wedding on Holland America Line and happy couples become one in such exotic destinations as the pretty little white wedding chapel at the cruise line's private Bahamas island of Half Moon Cay. Or start your journey together at Bluebeard's Castle on St. Thomas; overlooking the sacred pond of King Kamehameha on Kona, Hawaii; or on top of a glacier in Juneau, Alaska.

Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, Cairns, Newcastle, Fremantle and Auckland are places where passengers on P&O Cruises Australia ships can romantically tie the knot pierside on embarkation day.

The German line AIDA Cruises arranges wedding ceremonies shipboard in 10 ports, with backdrops including the spectacular beaches in Dubai, under the Greek sun or amidst the natural splendor of Norway.

Same sex couples will find options including commitment ceremonies and legal weddings. Carnival Cruise Line, for instance, can arrange legal ceremonies in select ports of call.

If you're already married, consider gathering your family and friends to witness a romantic vow renewal ceremony. For those not yet engaged, cruise lines can help you arrange and elaborate a surprise proposal.

It's all about creating memories of a lifetime.

Cruise Ship Wedding Planning Tips

Here are 10 tips for those considering a cruise ship wedding:

Take a cruise. Start by test-driving the cruise experience, preferably on the ship you are considering for your big day. This is especially important if you have never been on a cruise.

Survey your friends and family. See if your important people in your life will join you for your cruise wedding. With enough guests you may qualify for discount fares.

Think about venue. Shipboard options may include the wedding chapel, library, clubs, lounges, restaurants, the open deck or other public spaces. Pick the venue that's right for you.

Reserve space early. With cruise weddings an increasingly popular option, you'll want to start your planning as far in advance as possible.

Use a travel agent. You'll need to reserve a block of staterooms, plan activities for diverse ages and make sure everyone gets to the ship on time. Consider calling in a pro.

Listen to your wedding planner. Your cruise line will assign a wedding planner. She's your new BFF, the expert who is able to see the big picture and assure hassle-free planning.

Make your wedding your own. Wedding packages outline the basics, but the sky is the limit in terms of custom-crafting your experience. Want ice sculptures and a string quartet? No problem. There's a shipboard creative team at your disposal.

Reserve playtime. With family and friends along for the cruise, plan in advance so your party can dine together. Also consider booking everyone on a celebratory shore excursion.

Share with others. Put your cruise on your bridal registry, so that friends and family back home can be part of the action. They may purchase onboard credits, which you can use for perks such as his-and-her massages (great for eliminating any pre-wedding jitters).

Choose the right stateroom. You are celebrating a special event, so go with the best you can afford. A private balcony for your stateroom is worth the splurge.

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