

More couples say 'I do' in paradise

The hassles of organising a Chinese banquet in Hong Kong, and the associated costs that go with it, are enticing a growing number of couples to look at destination weddings, with beach getaways in Asia proving to be most popular.

Flora Ng, a wedding planner at Your Overseas Wedding Company, says business has grown significantly since last year, when she set up the firm. Couples are increasingly drawn to romantic and beautiful locations that offer something new and different to the nuptials, she says.

"With fewer blue skies due to the city's worsening air pollution, many

couples are considering overseas weddings as an alternative. It allows them to get married in a romantic setting and take a honeymoon at the same time," she says.

Your Overseas Wedding Company primarily focuses on arranging weddings in the picturesque getaways of Koh Samui, Thailand, and Bali, Indonesia.

"The direct flights and the affordability [are attractive]. For example, a three-night, four-day hotel stay inclusive of flights can cost about HK\$3,000 per person, and has made Koh Samui an especially popular option for couples."

The company tailors each destination wedding, using its basic package of HK\$22,000 as a starting point. The price includes hair and make-up for the bride, flowers, rental of the venue, a three-tiered wedding cake, a native English celebrant, a photographer, a bottle of champagne and an onsite wedding co-ordinator.

Additional requests, such as the release of fire lanterns and fireworks, traditional Thai dancing with elephants and an elephant ride for the couple, can also be arranged.

Thanks to strong partnerships forged with local operators in Koh Samui and Bali, clients can choose from a network of hotels that best meet their needs.

"The couples have ideas of what they



A marriage ceremony on the beach in Koh Samui which was organised by Your Overseas Wedding Company.



want already when they approach us, and can contribute lots of good ideas to their special day," Ng says.

Though couples from Hong Kong typically prefer to get hitched alone, Ng has also arranged large-scale wedding parties that include a celebratory dinner and a post-wedding cruise excursion, among other activities.

At the top of the anxiety list is the bride's make-up, she says, adding, that's

why every effort is made to help with the dialogue between the client and the make-up artist long before the big day. Information and discussions on the bride's expectations are gathered, and photos of the wedding gown are sent to the make-up artist in Thailand or Bali in advance. At an additional cost, the bride can also opt for a make-up trial.

To avoid legal complications, Ng advises couples to register their

marriage in Hong Kong either before or after their overseas wedding ceremony and to allow plenty of time for the preparations. The couple should ideally be confirming their wedding details nine months before their big day.

The trend of destination weddings is likely to continue, Ng says, as getting married overseas interjects a sense of freshness and charm into the celebrations.