



Brilliance in Boracay

SONYA & SHAUN

Fridays Boracay resort came alive on 20th February 2016 as 80 guests joined this couple from Hong Kong to celebrate their nuptials and then dance the night away.



I'm Canadian, my husband is South African and we live in Hong Kong – so with our friends and family all over the world, we really had to choose a destination wedding. Boracay Island in the Philippines was an easy choice for us because it's where we first met. Our guests flew to the Philippines from more than six countries, and although the journey wasn't particularly easy for some of them they said they'd do it again in a heartbeat.



Why did you choose Fridays Boracay?

"Fridays has a lovely atmosphere, a sprawling beachfront location, and it offers something for everyone. The beach at Boracay is one of the most beautiful in all of Asia, and the sunset over the beach is truly captivating."

Traditional Rituals

"After saying our vows and having a Champagne toast we held a Chinese tea ceremony to pay respects to our parents and other senior family members."

The Music

"We had a first dance specially choreographed for the two of us. This was followed by a playlist of our own music that spanned decades of memories along with some modern hits to get all the generations dancing."

The Dress and Suit

"My dress was custom-made by Pier 94 and was based on an image I found. I adored the bling around the neckline and insisted on it having pockets. Shaun's suit was custom-made by Sam's Tailor – the Hong Kong tailor of choice for many celebrities. His shirt and the groomsmen's shirts were custom-made by JJ Threads – a great online shirt maker with lots of customisable options. My bridesmaids' dresses were gorgeous designs by Adrianna Papell."

The Menu

"We ordered a 'lechon', which is a traditional Filipino-style suckling pig, served alongside a medley of barbecued seafood, fresh salads and hot side dishes. Waiters gave silver-service when plating the mains, while all the sides were served family-style so everyone could help themselves."

The Accommodation

"Many of our guests stayed at Microtel by Wyndham, which is located at the quieter end of the beach. It has a perfect pool for the kids, a ping pong table and a great on-site restaurant – not to mention it was very reasonably priced."

Guests Loved

"All of our guests commented on how the ceremony and celebration really reflected our personalities. As a professional wedding planner, I really appreciated hearing how much our guests enjoyed themselves and that they noticed the little details like the chevron wave theme carried through our stationery suite, gift packs, the wedding cake and the stubby holder party favours. They also loved the fun touches which included a mini treasure hunt, a pinata and a giant sandcastle!"

Advice for Brides

"Stay in touch with what's truly important and the reasons why you chose that particular location. And, remember to have fun!"

fridaysboracay.com



Spotlight on Wedding Planners

Destination weddings are big business as more and more couples ditch tradition in favour of escaping to paradise for a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Someone who knows this first-hand is Sonya Yeung, owner of Bliss Creations – a successful wedding planning and events business in Hong Kong that has been creating gorgeous, bespoke destination weddings in exotic locales for almost 11 years. We caught up with Sonya to find out about the unique weddings she's planned and get some expert advice.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO WEDDING PLANNING?

I started out working for an events company in Hong Kong planning corporate events, fashion shows and glamorous gatherings, but I always knew I wanted my own business one day. After planning a wedding in Hawaii, I noticed a gap in the Asian market for destination wedding planning services, so in 2005 Bliss Creations was born.

TELL US ABOUT A MEMORABLE WEDDING YOU CREATED

Every wedding we've worked on has been extremely special and unique, but one of the most memorable is a wedding we planned in Cambodia inside the World-heritage temples of Angkor Wat. While working in a country with limited available resources had its challenges it was well worth the effort. Guests were in absolute awe when they learnt they'd be dining amongst ancient ruins.

DESCRIBE SOME UNIQUE WEDDING STYLING YOU'VE DONE

Creative styling is our specialty, and I particularly loved one wedding we planned at a remote mountain tea farm in Hong Kong. Using vintage elements inspired by local history, along with specially designed, hand-painted plates that matched the wedding stationary, we were able to create something truly next level.

HOW DID YOU STYLE YOUR OWN WEDDING RECENTLY?

We seated our guests at one long table furnished with succulents at each place setting, while vases brimming with white orchids, cream roses and pink lisanthus dotted the length of the table. Round white lanterns hung overhead to create a sense of intimacy, and more than 100 candles were scattered around the beach to add a romantic tropical ambience.

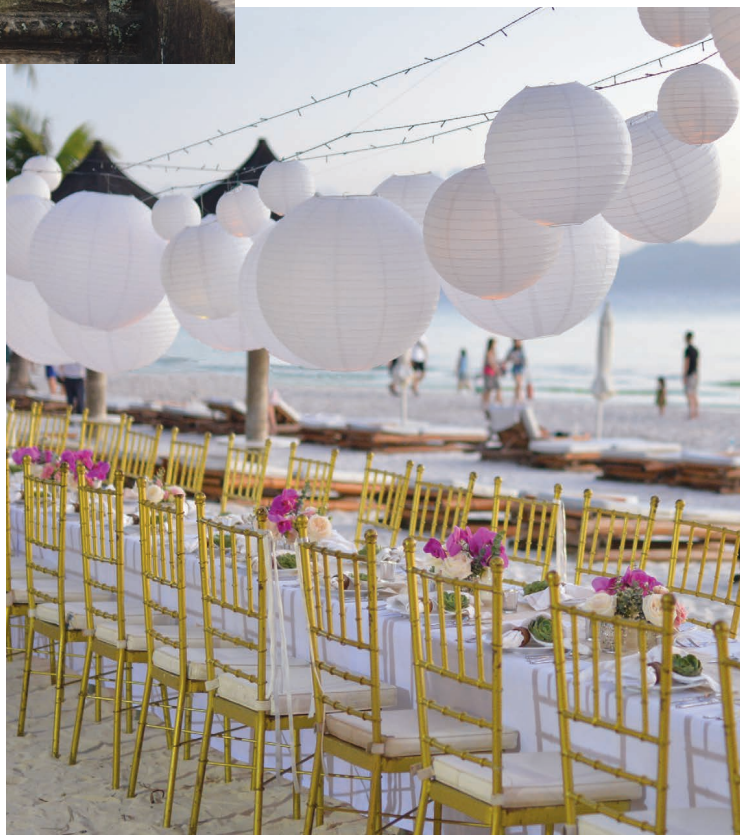
(Go to page 156 to get a peak inside Sonya's luscious wedding to husband Shaun at the Boracay Beach Resort in the Philippines last February.)

CAN YOU WORK WITH A WEDDING COORDINATOR IF A VENUE ALREADY HAS ONE?

We love working with wedding coordinators as they know their venues intimately. This, combined with our experience working with a diversity of suppliers in multiple countries and our understanding of each client's needs, enables us to create beautiful weddings together. Often a local wedding coordinator doesn't offer all the services we do, so they're usually happy to collaborate and produce something really special.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO MAKE DESTINATION WEDDINGS REALLY MEMORABLE FOR GUESTS?

Greet guests on arrival at the airport, as this makes them feel special. Organise for them to receive a gift pack on check-in at their accommodation. Include in it a personalised note and an itinerary for the days ahead, along with a small gift or snack for weary travellers. Kick off celebrations with some welcome drinks, preferably somewhere different to your wedding venue to keep things interesting. You may also like to plan a relaxed, recovery party for the day after your wedding, so that departing guests can drop in and say their goodbyes.



Sonya's Tips For a Hassle-free Wedding

- Plan to have your wedding during the best time for travel to that destination as it will help to reduce anxiety about the weather.
- Enlist the services of a wedding planner that you communicate well with. Choose someone who understands destination weddings and knows your location of choice inside out.
- Be flexible! While some destinations might not have the selection of services, decorations or flowers you were hoping for, there are always creative alternatives that can surpass your expectations.
- Ensure your wedding attire is appropriate for the climate at your destination – especially your shoes. A change of shirt for the groom, and a party dress for the bride, will work wonders in making you feel refreshed throughout the day.

November 14, 2016 • Planning

Getting married abroad? This is your essential checklist

Let's not beat around the bush, weddings are notoriously hard to plan and can be even more so when you've decided to jet set across the ocean to say 'I do'. But for all the planning and preparation and dare I say stress, comes a truly magnificent experience, and honestly there is nothing more romantic and magical than a destination wedding. Check out our top ten tips and enjoy a stress-free destination wedding overseas!



[Madeline Kate Photography](#)

Manage expectations

You're planning an amazing wedding and of course you want to share it with all your friends and family, but remember overseas travel does make a dent on the hip pocket. I'd advise being very candid on what you're organising. Plan ahead and send out invites at least 12 months in advance and you'll find that more of your favourite people will be able to attend! Understand that some guests will simply not be able to make it, due to either work, family or budget. Don't be upset, make sure you let them know you understand!

Top tip: Create a list of possible travel costs and provide recommendations for accommodation so they are armed with all the info!

It's not all about you

I would shout this from the rooftops if I could – think about your bridal party! And I don't mean just considering their opinions on dress colour and heel height. I mean wholeheartedly thinking of them. Each member of your party should be made aware of the costs before saying yes and committing. Let them know the budget for the dress, shoes, hair and makeup and any other little extras you're expecting to have. Being a part of the bridal party is an honour but remember not everyone can afford it so try to remain considerate to their budgets and feelings!

Organise a quickie

Now this is a lot to ask, but if you can, take a separate trip to your chosen destination. Money and time will obviously come into play, but this trip could mean your wedding could be organised in one short week! You'll find your decision making will be on-point when time is not on your side. Organise the venue, caterer, hotels, florists and everything in between!

The event planner

The key to a successful destination wedding is hiring a skilled professional to help with the logistics. I know what you're thinking, it will cost you the earth, but this is further from the truth. Wedding planners and event stylists are now providing more affordable services. They are no longer just for the rich and famous! The beauty of a planner is they go above and beyond, and they are in the 'know', which means you can expect every element of your wedding to run smoothly and if by chance it doesn't, you won't need to worry because the planner will be there to save the day! Because you are on the other side of the world, they truly are your eyes and ears. Sonya from [Bliss Creations](#), a professional and much-loved wedding planning company states, "Hiring an experienced destination wedding planner means that they will have contacts with the local suppliers to be able to handle all your various requests. Trying to do this yourself, especially when language may differ can be added stress." Wedding planners can help with organising venues, photographers, accommodation, floral arrangements, catering and more! Even if you choose to marry at a resort that includes a wedding planner, it may pay to have your own separate wedding planner to work with the resort and to convey your needs, personality and generally be your guardian angel watching over the whole event.



Wedding packages

You can't beat an all inclusive wedding package! Many destination wedding hot spots have wonderful deals for couples and their friends and family. These include the organisation of the ceremony, reception and, often, the accommodation for you and your loved ones. These packages will help make the planning process a whole lot easier and there is a good chance you'll secure great accommodation rates for your friends and family! Just be sure you research every element. If the package lists a florist look them up, same goes for the chef, photographer and the hotel. Be savvy and do some stalking and don't be afraid to check with travel agents to see if they can provide extra feedback on the accommodation or restaurants before confirming.

Get there early

Please get there early! I'd recommend at least three days – and in fact, some countries require at least this time as a prerequisite to the marriage license (note: of course, check out the legalities for the country you are choosing to marry in!). This gives you time to get settled, kick the jet-lag and to foresee any last minute planning. You will also have enough time to make any changes if need be. Be nosey and introduce yourself to the staff. Build a positive connection, kindness goes along way and it will pay off come wedding day.

Protect the dress

The dress; often the most important aspect of a bride's big day! This is one element that needs to be organised well in advance! Remember to think of the climate when choosing your gown. When travelling, make sure you pay extra special attention to the dress. Take the gown on as hand luggage to avoid any disasters or creases! Gill Hulse, one half of the dream team from the couture label [Paddington Weddings](#), Bertossi Brides, shares her expert advice: "It is important that the gown is easy to travel with, as there are a lot of planes and transfers that you have to go through, our gowns come in a garment bag that you can take on any plane and they are hung where the suits go, or if there is a spare seat the crew will often drape it over the seat (this happens a lot)."



[Paddington Weddings](#), Bertossi Brides Collection 2017

Trial and error

You've made it to your destination, with a few days to spare before the big day. Make sure you make use of this time! Organise to meet with your hair and makeup artist. Have a trial and work out exactly how you'd like to be styled. Collect some images so you can provide the creative team with some visual examples of what you're after. Although this will take some time out of your day it's well worth it, not only for you, but also for your team. Remember practice makes perfect!

Make sure it's legal!

It's a pretty scary thought, travelling all the way to a stunning destination to get married, to then come home and it not be recognised. Don't let this happen! Remember every country has different legal requirements. Research your chosen country. When you arrive you may need to visit the council or your home country's embassy to ensure all the papers that you'll be provided with are accurate and valid. If you're feeling unsure I'd advise giving a call to Births, Deaths and Marriages before flying. They should be able to provide you with more information and advice.

Making memories

Your destination wedding is about fun, friends and love! So don't let it stress you out too much. You're planning will pay off, and once the day is here, the little hiccups along the way will be distant memories.

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