

Your Perfect Wedding In Paradise

By: *Kirk Elliott*

So congratulations are in order on a wedding proposal that has been made and accepted, and also on choosing St. Lucia as the perfect place to “*tie the knot*”.

However, once the euphoria subsides, the reality of the task at hand can appear quite daunting. Can the bride find the perfect bouquet in paradise, how much will flying in friends and family cost, who will get upset for not being invited, will I get good photographs, who will do my hair and make up?...and the list can go on and on and on.

Well sit back, relax and read on to discover the simple formula to a hassle free wedding here in Paradise.

As a destination, St. Lucia has been so exemplary in its vacation wedding offerings that for three years straight, in 2002, 2003 and 2004, and again in 2006, we have been voted #1 World Wedding & Honeymoon Destination by the World Travel Awards!*

It all begins with our laws that quite easily facilitate those wishing to marry here in Paradise. The legal requirements are as follows**:

- Passports or original birth certificates with picture identification, or drivers' licenses and stamped immigration cards of both petitioners.
- Statutory declarations, if name on petition/affidavit, is spelt differently on passports or birth certificates or drivers' licenses.
- Original decree(s) absolute of one or both petitioners who have previously been married. Also, copies of decree(s) absolute, certified **ONLY** by the court, can be presented.
- If either party is widowed, original death certificate of the deceased spouse should be presented, along with marriage certificate.
- Statutory declarations, if name on petition/affidavit is spelt differently on passports or birth certificates or drivers' licenses.
- For an Ordinary Marriage License a 2 to 7 day residency is required and there is an East Caribbean (EC) \$335.00/U\$127.00 stamp duty applicable.

- However a Special Marriage License can be obtained within 24 hours at a cost of EC\$540.00/U\$204.00
- Registrar's Fees - EC\$150.00/U\$57.00
- Marriage Certificate – EC\$8.00/U\$3.00

All of these details are generally taken care of by your hotel and occur seamlessly behind the scenes. So here is an end to what you, up till now, you feared would be a hassle.

Your hotel will generally cater to all of your other special requirements such as bridal bouquets, button holes, other floral arrangements, steel band, photos and videos, your choice of wedding cake and champagne, etc, etc. I have even known of a resort that flew in a rabbi from a neighbouring island to officiate at a Jewish wedding because there were no rabbis in St. Lucia.

Not only can your hotel arrange your hassle free wedding, but now there are a number of reputable independent wedding planners based in St. Lucia who can cater to your every desire and arrange a wedding for you that can only be described as a tropical adventure. Such a wedding may find you being picked up from your hotel by a horse drawn carriage and taken to one of our National Parks for a wedding ceremony that is nothing short of magical. Your horse drawn carriage will take you right down to a shaded seashore where you can exchange your vows to the rhythmic melody of the surf lapping at the seashore, while a St. Lucian steel drum ensemble softly plays “Unchained Melody” in the background. Or how about one of our indigenous bands playing the most interesting looking banjo, violin and tambourine that you ever did see? Ah, how melodious the music!

Also, for the more discerning couples who may wish more than their resort may offer, you can consider alternative options for your all important wedding photography and videography. While most couples opt for our local videography, be it hotel supplied or independently procured, there is a move afoot by more and more couples to either fly in their own photographer, or to hire an independent photographer in lieu of their hotel's offerings. This is due to the fact that in many instances the independent wedding photographer utilizes superior equipment and knowledge of lighting, composition, facial analysis etc, in the execution of his/her art.

A good place to start is online. Read through the forums and investigate the reviews. Enquire of a friend who has gotten married in the islands, or better still, in St. Lucia. Check out the websites of independent St. Lucian photographers, then call or email a few to get a feel for what they offer. Ask to see a complete wedding so that you know that you are not being shown a few great selected shots. Ask if the pictures you are shown were shot by the photographer who will be shooting your wedding. The truth is that

while all of this may be a bit of effort, this due diligence can pay handsome dividends in helping you get the pictures that you dream of. And remember that it's hard to pay too much for a product that you love, while annoying to discover, after the fact, that you paid too little for pictures that you hate, with no option for a second chance to get it right.

Here are some additional matters to consider that can help you have the perfect wedding here in Paradise:

- Resist the urge for a sunset wedding. Because we are close to the equator, twilight is very short and your photography will be ruined. Instead have your wedding ceremony earlier and then have your photographer come back and make sunset pictures with you.
- While a wedding right on the seashore sounds truly romantic, bear in mind that it can be hot, sweaty and otherwise uncomfortable standing out on the sand for the duration of your wedding ceremony. Again, consider photography that takes you down onto the beach after the wedding ceremony and these memories will be more reflective of your ideal Caribbean wedding.
- Establish whether or not you will be granted the rights to make personal reproductions of your wedding photographs, as many labs will not make copies without this authorization.
- Meet with your resort hairdresser to decide upon a hairstyle, however, avoid styles that leave little wisps of hair hanging, as they often fall right over the eyes and can spoil your pictures.
- Brides should try on their wedding dress, and grooms their suit, at least 24 hours before the wedding. Discovering that a zipper is tight or broken ten minutes before you are due to take your vows is a recipe for disaster.
- Allow extra time to get ready.

Having considered all of the above, ensure that your vacation leaves a few days after your wedding for you to relax and unwind. Do a day excursion as Mr. & Mrs. Ecstatic, spend the day building a sand castle on the beach, or just ask us for one of our magic **“Just Married - So Do Not Disturb!”** signs, hang it outside your door, and we promise to not check up on you for the next 48 hours!

*Information obtained from the St. Lucia Tourist Board

**Information obtained from the Attorney General's Office – Government of St. Lucia

