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WEDDED BLISS

WITH SOUTH AFRICA FAST BECOMING THE WEDDING CAPITAL OF THE WORLD, *INDWE* EXPLORES WHY THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE THE RAINBOW NATION TO TIE THE KNOT

AS WEDDINGS GO, it takes some beating. At the top of Table Mountain, with the Indian and Atlantic Oceans shimmering in the distance, a bride and her groom exchange vows while their loved ones look on. It is an extraordinary ceremony that makes it easy to understand why South Africa has become one of the most popular destinations in the world for people to stage their big day.

And a wedding where the table and tablecloth is provided by Mother Nature is only one of the many choices when it comes to memorable nuptials in the Rainbow Nation, with beach weddings, bushveld weddings and even weddings on top of an elephant all proving extremely popular.

“South Africa can’t only offer world-class accommodation and excellent value for money for your perfect holiday, but also host your

day of love and commitment in one of the most dazzling places you could imagine,” explains experienced wedding planner Kirsty Marmarellis of Weddings Out Of Africa. “Whether it’s on the white sands of a remote beach, in the vineyards of a world class wine estate or in the shaded privacy of a magical forest, the country can offer a truly unique experience.”

Great venues and the exchange rate are not the only favourable draw cards to the Republic.

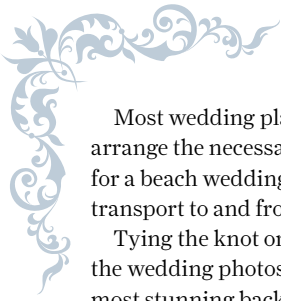
“You will enjoy the exceptional quality of world-class service,” explains Marmarellis. “The legalities of your marriage will also be recognised the world over and there are no requirements to enter the country for any period prior to the day. This makes marrying in South Africa a completely stress free experience from beginning to end.”

Beach Weddings

There are few things more romantic than tying the knot to the sound of waves breaking against rocks. With South Africa boasting some of the most beautiful, pristine beaches in the world it allows for the most idyllic of settings for a couple to say their vows.

“Most weddings today take on a more spiritual ceremony than a traditionally religious one, and therefore the informality and beauty of a beach is the perfect choice,” explains Marmarellis.

Couples are truly spoilt for stunning beaches with Llandudno Beach, Horn Bay Beach and Windmill Beach in the Western Cape, Umhlanga north of Durban, Sardinia Bay near Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape and Shelly Beach on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast, proving especially popular.



Most wedding planners will arrange the necessary permits needed for a beach wedding and organise transport to and from the ceremony.

Tying the knot on a beach means the wedding photos always have the most stunning backdrops. "A beach wedding really allows for spectacular photographs," says Marmarellis. "The couple and guests cannot help but feel inspired and in awe of the elements that surround them."

“ A WEDDING COUPLE CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL INSPIRED WHEN THEY ARE ON A BEACH ”

As important as getting the right beach for your wedding is choosing a nearby venue for the reception. Here are a few hotels and restaurants that are ideal for your big day:

→ Twelve Apostles Hotel - With its namesake mountain range as a backdrop, 12 Apostles Hotel and Spa stands at the very edge of the Atlantic, surrounded by acres of marine coastal nature reserves. www.12apostleshotel.com

→ Prana Lodge - This five-star luxury boutique hotel and spa is located on a 21km unspoilt stretch of beach in Chintsa East on the Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape. www.pranalodge.co.za



→ Tintswalo Atlantic - Positioned at the base of Chapman's Peak, Tintswalo Atlantic overlooks the quaint fishing village of Hout Bay. www.tintswalo.com

Winelands Wedding

"There is a unique charm to getting married on a winefarm," says Nevina Swartz, manager of the Le Manoir de Brendel Estate in Franschhoek, one of the most popular spots in the Boland

for tying the knot. "When people look at their wedding photos years from now they will see this dramatic backdrop of vineyards and mountains and have some great memories."

Le Manoir de Brendel is particularly well equipped to put together a wedding. To ensure that the bride and groom have everything they need in one spot, the wine estate has erected a romantic chapel right



next to a dam and with a gorgeous mountain backdrop (above).

"Everything is catered for to ensure the best possible day," says Swartz. "The couple get married in the chapel and can then walk to a great spot for a photo-shoot before heading off to the reception. On one of the those beautiful sunny days you get in the Boland, strolling around surrounded by vineyards is incredibly romantic. It is what getting married on a wine farm is all about."

For more information see www.le-manoir-de-brendel.com or try these other options:

→ In the Vineyard - Nestled at the foot of the Helderberg Mountain Range, in the heart of the gorgeous Stellenbosch winelands, In the Vineyard is a lifestyle farm that has a stunning Cape Colonial structure

as a centrepiece. www.inthevine.co.za

→ Cascade Manor House - The imposing Cascade Manor offers large function venues indoors and out. www.cascademanor.co.za

→ Bakenhof Guesthouse - A tree lined driveway that leads guests through manicured vineyards sets the tone for an enchanting getaway. www.bakenhof.co.za

Bushveld Weddings

"There is definitely a degree of romanticism attached to the notion of going on a safari," explains wedding planner Kirsty Marmarellis. "The landscapes are beautiful and enchanting, and there is most definitely a feeling of connecting with the heart of the continent when you witness animals in their natural habitat. A bush wedding is attractive



DRESS TO IMPRESS

"For the bride, the dress is probably the most important part of the wedding," chuckles dress designer Elbeth Gillis, who is based in Cape Town. "It is the only part of the day that is just about her." To get the perfect dress made, brides-to-be sometimes meet with Gillis a full year before they get married. "We look at what kind of design goes best with their figure, the fabric she likes and how the dress will fit in with the sort of wedding it is – formal or informal," says Gillis. "The way the dress ultimately looks is usually a combination of the bride's personal preference and the style that is popular at the moment." For Gillis, the recent newspaper column inches devoted to Kate Middleton's wedding dress shows just how crucial the right gown is. "It is so important because every bride wants to feel beautiful on their big day," she says. "The right dress will do just that." For more information see www.elbethgillis.co.za



CAPTURING THE MOMENT

Given the fact that they have to capture memories to last a lifetime, there is a fair amount of pressure on wedding photographers. Preparation, then, is key. "We scout the location before the wedding to make sure there are no surprises," says Janine Erasmus of JTC Photography in Pretoria. "And we always have a plan B just in case it rains. So if it starts pouring and the bride is getting upset we can say, don't worry – this is a good alternative." Someone as experienced as Erasmus knows exactly when the greatest shots of the day present themselves. "When you've done a few weddings you know what to expect," she says. "You make sure you don't miss anything because you are putting together something that people will be treasuring years from now." For more information see www.jtcphotography.com

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THE WOODEN DECK AT JEMBISA IS VERY POPULAR

to a couple wishing for an intimate moment alone, or to enjoy exclusive use of a game lodge with their closest friends and family to take pleasure in as their own for a few days.”

At Jembisa lodge in the beautiful Waterberg area of the Limpopo province the bride and groom can choose several memorable locations for the ceremony.

“A favourite is the wide wooden deck, overlooking a river, home to hippo and crocodile with endless views of the African bush,” says owner Jane Whitbread. “Some couples have chosen to marry beside the river or simply under the shade of an umbrella tree in the middle of the bush. By taking only one bridal party

at a time we are able to dedicate all our efforts to the day and are flexible to fit in with the requirements of the couple.” *For more information see www.jembisa.com or try these other options:*

- Chateau Larize - Giant trees tower above the parkland gardens, setting the scene for a beautiful garden ceremony at this beautiful spot in the Limpopo. www.chateaularize.co.za
- Beethoven Lodge - Located in the Magalies Mountains, the Beethoven Lodge has a scenic panorama of the Hartbeespoort Dam valley. www.beethovenlodge.co.za
- Blaauwpoort Venue and Lodge - A popular wedding spot in a malaria free area in the North



LET THEM EAT CAKE

Designing and baking the ideal wedding cake is all about the personal touch, according to Lena da Cruz, who has come up with some incredible creations at her business in Howick, KwaZulu-Natal. “Ideally, I meet the bride a month before the wedding to make sure the cake reflects her personality,” says Da Cruz. “It also has to fit in with the theme and the look of the wedding so it’s important that you work closely with the couple to get things just right.” Da Cruz puts remarkable effort into each cake, topping off her masterpieces with edible sugar ornaments. “It gives it a certain character and a special touch to any cake,” she points out. “It is also used as a souvenir that one keeps for many years.” *For more info see lenacruz.tripod.com*



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West Province, Blaauwpoort has a bushveld chapel that can seat up to 200 guests. www.blaauwpoort.co.za

Township Weddings

The vibrancy and warmth that is so unique to South African townships forms an intoxicating backdrop to those who opt for a traditional African wedding at Liziwe's Bed and Breakfast in Gugulethu.

Since first opening its doors in 2005, Liziwe Ngcokoto's utterly charming home in Cape Town has become a great success, offering wonderful accommodation, sumptuous feasts and walking tours of the Gugulethu township, including the world famous Mzoli's Place restaurant. Liziwe will open her doors to a wedding party of no more than 50 people. *For more information see www.liziwes-bed-and-breakfast.com*

Unusual Weddings

Not a traditionalist? Fancy something a bit different? From hot-air balloons to ceremonies on a yacht, South Africa has a huge range of alternative weddings.

Some of the more unusual ceremonies in the country have seen brides arriving on elephant back, a couple tying the knot in a hot-air balloon, mountain top celebrations only reached by helicopter and festivities spanning the Cape Peninsula with vows being shared over six dramatic view points.

Cape Town has more extraordinary weddings than most cities with couples having the option of getting married on Table Mountain, boarding a luxury yacht or train or sharing their special day with penguins on a beach. *For more information see www.weddingsoutofafrica.com* ✕









DAY TRIP SAFARIS

- Welcome drink • 2-3 hour Big 5 game drive • Visit a Khoi-San bushmen Rock Art site
- Visit adjacent ARC (Aquila Animal Rescue & Conservation Centre)
- Lunch in an African Boma restaurant • Free visit to the nearby Karoo Ostrich Farm
- Browse our African curio shop • Hotel pick-up & transfer

★★★★ ACCOMMODATION • QUAD BIKE SAFARIS • HORSEBACK SAFARIS • DAILY TRANSFERS

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