

Traditional weddings

The word for weddings today is "traditional," and anyone who attends a nuptial '80s style can see why right away.

The barefoot-in-the-park ceremonies of the '60s and '70s have disappeared as completely as flower children and love beads. Elegant clothes, age-old ritual and a spirit of nostalgia are the rule.

But does this swing-back mean that all innovation is out of style? Does the bride of today really have a wedding that is indistinguishable from the one her mother or grandmother had?

"You need to look more closely to see what's happened," says Barbara Tober, Editor-in-Chief of *Bride's Magazine*. "Today's weddings do seek out the best and most beautiful traditions of the past—in contrast to a few years ago, when anything old was automatically suspect. But, at the same time, they're very, very modern in that they express new ideals."

The working bride may have helped pay for that Victorian gown herself, and the ritual phrase of "love, honor and obey" has largely disappeared from the ceremony.

The "giving away," a part of some ceremonies in which the celebrant asks, "Who gives this woman in marriage?" has also changed with the times. Today, a couple might rewrite the question to read, "Who blesses this marriage," with both the bride's and groom's parents answering "We do."

The same kind of thinking has likewise revised the idea of who pays for a wedding. Traditionally, the bride's parents shouldered the whole bill.

"But for the first time," says Tober, "there's a definite trend toward the sharing of expenses by the groom's family."

Finally, equality means a new role in the wedding for today's groom. In the past, a groom often felt like a spectator at his bride's "big day." Modern couples simply take for granted that it's *his* wedding too!

Grooms have new responsibilities: They help pick the wedding site, choose china patterns, address invitations and write thank you notes. And, they bask in a larger share of the limelight: Some men wear engagement rings, appear with their fiancées in newspaper announcements, and even have showers thrown in their honor.

The romance of a faraway wedding is exotic

Romance seems to go hand in hand with exotic locales: A deserted tropical beach, a windswept Irish moor, an elegant Parisian restaurant.

If your fantasies transport you to some far-off land, but getting married in paradise sounds too difficult, think again. More and more American couples are finding ways to say their vows in the far-away lands of their dreams.

The major attraction for many of these couples is the spontaneity and adventure of marrying abroad.

Some, who want an intimate wedding—surrounded by only their closest friends and family—find it easy to keep the guest list small when the event is thousands of miles from home. Others want to celebrate their big moment in

paradise with all their loved ones (including children of former marriages).

For everyone, the economics of a far-away wedding are appealing. Although travel and accommodations are the biggest expenses involved, these often cost less than a traditional ceremony and reception.

Explore your options. Some romantic spots have made it simple for Americans to be married—others don't allow foreign weddings at all.

Before you get your hearts set on a particular location, find out whether or not your fantasy is within reach.

Among the exotic locales that have made it very easy for Americans to get married are Barbados, the British Virgin

Islands, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Nassau, Hawaii and some parts of Mexico.

Pay attention to the legal details. The rules for getting married away from home will be different from those of your home town.

Contact the consulate or tourist board of the country you've chosen, or the license bureau of the state where you'll be married.

They'll be able to tell you how to obtain a marriage license, what documents you need to provide, and how long the whole process will take.

Allow at least six to eight weeks for planning. Remember: Paperwork takes time, and overseas mail and phone calls

only add to the delays.

Pick a simple, easy-to-pack wedding ensemble. Don't settle for less than your dream wedding dress when you plan to say "I do" in paradise.

Just be sure to choose fabrics and styles that suit the setting and travel well: Opt for a light, breezy dress for a care-free ceremony on a tropical beach; select a smart suit for an elegant Parisian wedding; indulge in a frothy, fairy-tale gown if you plan to say your vows in a castle.

Decide with whom you most want to share this special occasion: Perhaps just your parents and closest friends, or perhaps a whole gang of friends and relatives.

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