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SPECIAL EDITION

WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS

2021-22 / ₹ 100

Hilton Weddings
with
Pooja Hegde
in Goa

TOP 10

- ▶ Bachelorette Parties
- ▶ Honeymoon Getaways
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in India and Abroad

EXPERTS
SPEAK

Rahul Mishra
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TARAS TARAPORVALA; COURTESY OF CARTIER; COURTESY OF FLORAL BOUTIQUE/CAKES BY GULDASTA; COURTESY OF ANDHRA PRADESH TOURISM; COURTESY OF NYKAA; COURTESY OF SHIVIN JEWELLERS



Pooja Hegde feels the modern Indian bride is changing, as weddings transform into relaxed affairs.

ON POOJA: Lehenga, Debyani; jewellery, Curio Cottage.

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ON THE COVER: Actor Pooja Hegde basks in a morning of marigolds at Hilton Goa Resort.

ON POOJA: Lehenga, **Gazal Gupta Couture**; jewellery, **Birdhichand Ghanshyamdas Jewellers, Jaipur**.

PRODUCED BY: Rashima Nagpal
PHOTOGRAPHED BY: Taras Taraporvala
ASSISTED BY: Meetesh Mirchandani
STYLIST: Meagan Concessio
ASSISTED BY: Humaira Lakdawala
HAIR BY: Suhas Shinde
MAKE-UP BY: Kajol Mulani
LOCATION: Hilton Goa Resort



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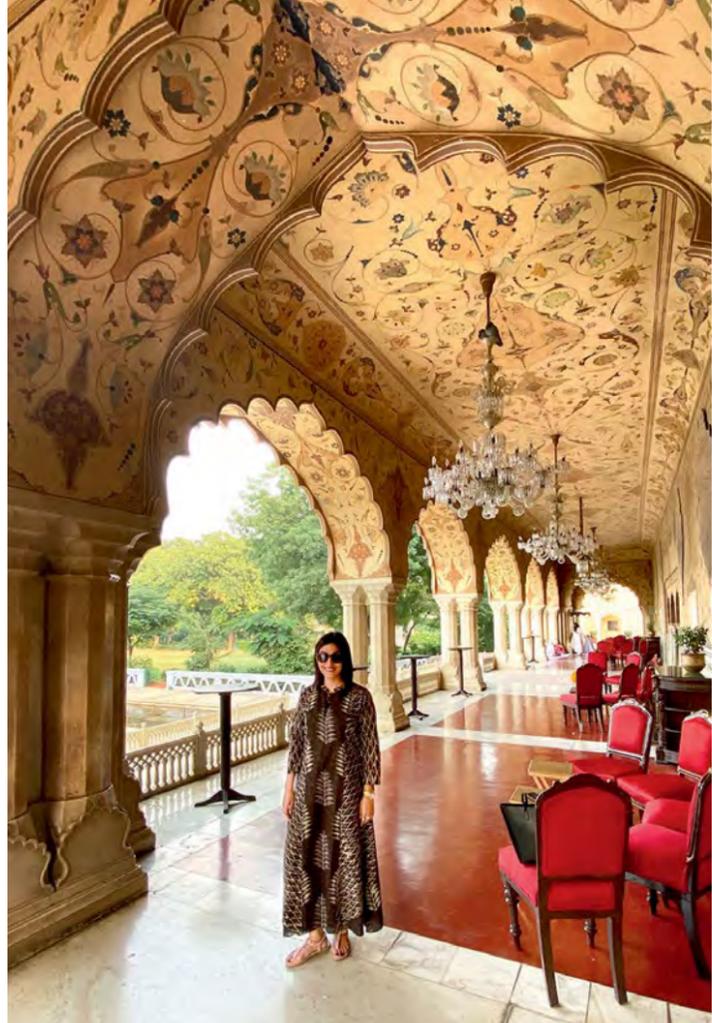
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LETTER from the Editor

THE YEAR MAY be drawing to a close, but India's biggest wedding season is here in full swing, in all its colourful glory. *Travel + Leisure India & South Asia's* special annual edition of *Weddings & Honeymoons 2021* is everything you need to plan, probably, the most important day of your life. Our carefully curated sections on the best of bridal jewellery, couture, and accessories will help you design the perfect trousseau. From the latest in beauty products and bridal make-up trends—this issue lets you in on the au courant flavour of Indian weddings. Whether you are planning a destination wedding in India or abroad, make sure you don't miss our concise list of venues that will bring festive vibrancy to your postcard-perfect wedding celebrations. From the best of luxury hotels (p. 70), boutique properties (p. 60), international destinations (p. 75), and more—we have you covered when it comes to your wedding checklist.

As a part of our cover story spread, we take the lovely Bollywood actor Pooja Hegde to Hilton Goa Resort to experience a slice of 'Hilton Wedding Diaries' (p. 44). Read more about Hegde's dream-wedding destination and how she perceives herself as a bride. In addition, bridal couturier Rahul Mishra (p. 54) and celebrity stylist Tanya Ghavri (p. 56) share the latest bridal-fashion trends, as well as tips and tricks for brides- and grooms-to-be, ensuring they look their very best on their special day.

The pandemic has been tough on the wedding industry, especially when our shaadis entail a long guest list. The new brides and grooms, however, have adapted to the current situation of limited capacity, just as the world has. Find out all about digital influencer Juhi Godambe's beautiful wedding



during the times of COVID-19, and what she did to ensure everyone was safe, without compromising on fun and laughter (p. 52). Food is the pièce-de-résistance of any desi wedding, and our feature on regional cuisine will throw light on what makes a wedding menu the talk of town (p. 88). There's plenty more to savour, especially if you're planning the wedding of your dreams, followed by an idyllic honeymoon (p. 81). So, enjoy the read!

Aindrila

Aindrila Mitra
aindrila.mitra@burda.in

FROM MY TRAVELS

Jaipur is one of the most popular wedding destinations in Rajasthan; and the City Palace, Jaipur has been witness to some of the city's most lavish weddings.

Please Note: Some of the destinations and businesses mentioned in the magazine may be closed at the moment due to COVID-19. Refer to the rules and guidelines issued by your state government and those in place at the destination of your choice before making travel plans.

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Marion Badolle-Feick
T. +33 1 72 71 25 24
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ITALY
Mariolina Siclari
T. +39 02 91 32 34 66
mariolina.siclari@burda-vsg.it

GERMANY
Julia Mund
T. +49 89 92 50 31 97
julia.mund@burda.com

Michael Neuwirth
T. +49 89 9250 3629
michael.neuwirth@burda.com

AUSTRIA
Christina Bresler
T. +43 1 230 60 30 50
christina.bresler@burda.com

SWITZERLAND
Goran Vukota
T. +41 44 81 02 146
goran.vukota@burda.com

UK/IRELAND
Jeannine Soeldner
T. +44 20 3440 5832
jeannine.soeldner@burda.com

USA/CANADA/MEXICO
Salvatore Zammuto
T. +1 212 884 48 24
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BURDA INTERNATIONAL HOLDING GMBH

LEGAL ADDRESS Hubert Burda Platz 1, 77652 Offenburg, Germany
POSTAGE ADDRESS Arabellastrasse 23, D-81925 Munich, Germany

TRAVEL + LEISURE (USA)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **Jacqueline Gifford**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLISHER **Jay Meyer**

MEREDITH INTERNATIONAL, LICENSING & SYNDICATION
(syndication@meredith.com)

VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS AFFAIRS **Tom Rowland**
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ADVERTISING

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Top Must-Haves for BRIDES & GROOMS



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Wedding Couture 101

This year, it's all about rethinking one's fashion choices, while simultaneously living in the moment. Here is a list of designers whose advice can come in handy—not just for winter brides, but grooms, too. **BY ANUPAM DABRAL**



ABHINAV MISHRA

Intricate mirror-work over a spectrum of bright colours defines Abhinav Mishra's take on bridal couture. Picture tones of yellow, orange, greens, and blues. "My sole advice to all brides is to not wear something just because other brides are also wearing it. Try to be understated rather than going over the top. Subtlety speaks volumes," advises Mishra. abhinavmishraofficial.com



TARUN TAHILIANI

Think of decadent drapes and the first name to come to mind is Tarun Tahiliani. When it comes to his rendition of bridal couture, think lightweight, yet exquisitely crafted lehengas. "Love and re-love is a constant theme of our campaign. Choose clothes that you can repurpose. Use the most beautiful clothes again and again, and have a wardrobe of exquisiteness rather than numbers that have no meaning." taruntahiliani.com

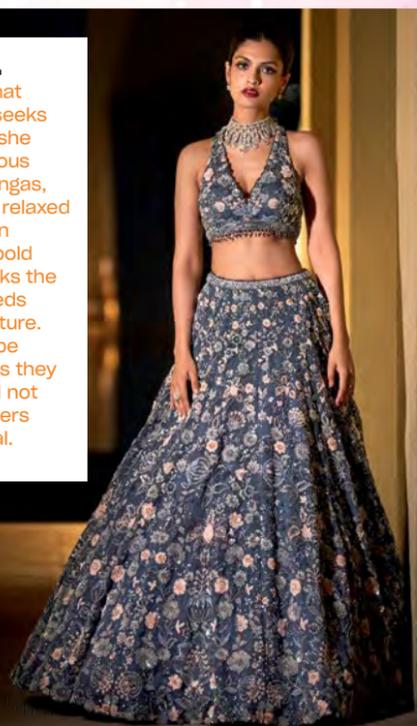


SHYAMAL & BHUMIKA

A seamless confluence of varied hand techniques and striking contrasts is how one can best describe designer-duo Shyamal and Bhumika's work. Nothing is off limits: elegance and extravagance come packed together. "[Opt for] traditional wedding lehengas and saris embroidered with age-old techniques of aari, zardozi, and pitta in tumbling vines, floating flower bouquets, delicately appliquéd petals, and gilded, vintage-crest motifs," suggests Shyamal. shyamalandbhumika.com

SEEMA GUJRAL

Comfort is something that designer Seema Gujral seeks to imbibe in everything she creates. With her gorgeous saris and exquisite lehengas, modern brides can feel relaxed and elegant. "I believe in going bold and picking bold colours because it breaks the stereotypical cycle of reds and pinks for bridal couture. I suggest all my brides be themselves, pick clothes they feel comfortable in, and not simply go with what others are wearing," says Gujral. seemagujral.com



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#TLPicks Fashion (Bride)



ARPITA MEHTA

If you are looking to move away from traditional couture choices on your big day, then Arpita Mehta may just have what you are seeking. Think glamorous pieces that make heads turn. While confidence and charm are two important aspects for any bride, Mehta also suggests, "[Choose] a lehenga that makes you feel special and like a princess; do not settle for anything lesser!" arpitamehtaofficial.com

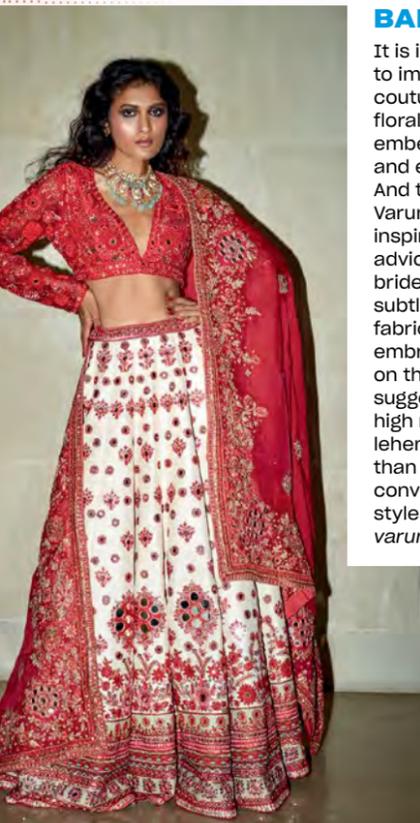


EKAYA

When it comes to bridal handlooms, one name that resonates with excellence is Ekaya. If you're looking to veer away from lehengas, their repository of saris won't disappoint. Palak Shah, CEO of Ekaya, says, "Think of functional, comfortable separates. The idea is to build a timeless trousseau that'll hold your wardrobe in good stead through many winters to come. I suggest pairing a traditional drape with a relatively contemporary outerwear piece." ekaya.in

VARUN BAHL

It is impossible to imagine bridal couture without floral patterns, embellishments, and embroideries. And that's where Varun Bahl finds his inspiration. "My advice for winter brides is to go for subtle colours and fabrics with good embroidered work on them. I would suggest going for high necks and lehengas, rather than going for the conventional styles," says Bahl. varunbahl.com



MANISH MALHOTRA

The Czar of Indian maximalism needs no introduction. His signature spectrum of bright hues, embellished with a variety of surface techniques, makes his creations truly special. Malhotra suggests, "Winters are beautiful and it's the best time to work with materials that not only keep you warm, but [also] exude regality. Some of my favourite fabrics to work with during this weather are velvets, raw silk, Dupion, and satin. You can add a finishing touch with an intricately embroidered shawl that translates into a treasured part of your trousseau." manishmalhotra.in



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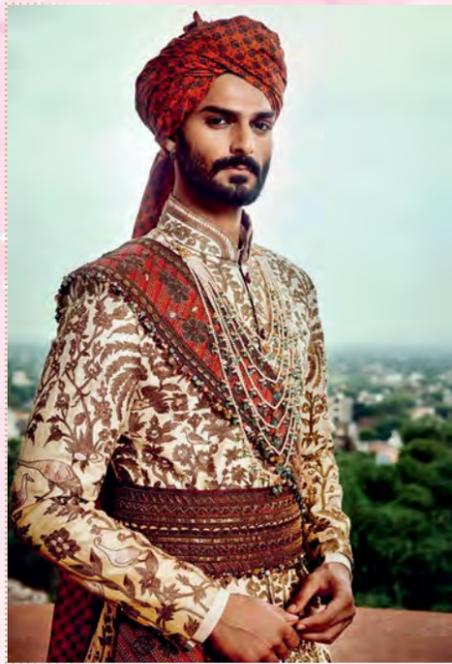
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Fashion (Groom)



JJ VALAYA

Inspired by India's regal past, JJ Valaya adds a distinctive touch to his grooms' wear—rich, coloured, and punctuated with embellishments. "India is maximalist at heart, and its weddings, too, follow that spirit. Look and feel the part, but excess has to be elegantly balanced. Pay attention to detail. Accessories, including shoes, cufflinks, belts, and jewellery play a special role on your big day," says Valaya. valaya.com



ABU JANI SANDEEP KHOSLA

Be it mirror-work or *chikankari*, this designer-duo's take on Indian techniques is simply resplendent. "Grooms can experiment with rich fabrics, such as silks, velvet, and wool. The colour palette can also expand to rich jewel hues and dark tones like burgundy, emerald green, royal or midnight blue, greys, and noir," advise Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla. asal.co.in



ANTAR-AGNI

If minimalistic designs with a twist are what you desire, then Antar-Agni is perfect for you. This menswear label creates silhouettes that keep the technical tailoring intact, while introducing a hint of fluidity and movement in the garments to add a unique touch to the outfit. Ujjawal Dubey, founder of Antar-Agni, recommends layering for winter grooms. "[It] becomes the key. One can choose to layer kurtas, waistcoats, and jackets; and even add final touches with shawls." antar-agni.com



KUNAL RAWAL

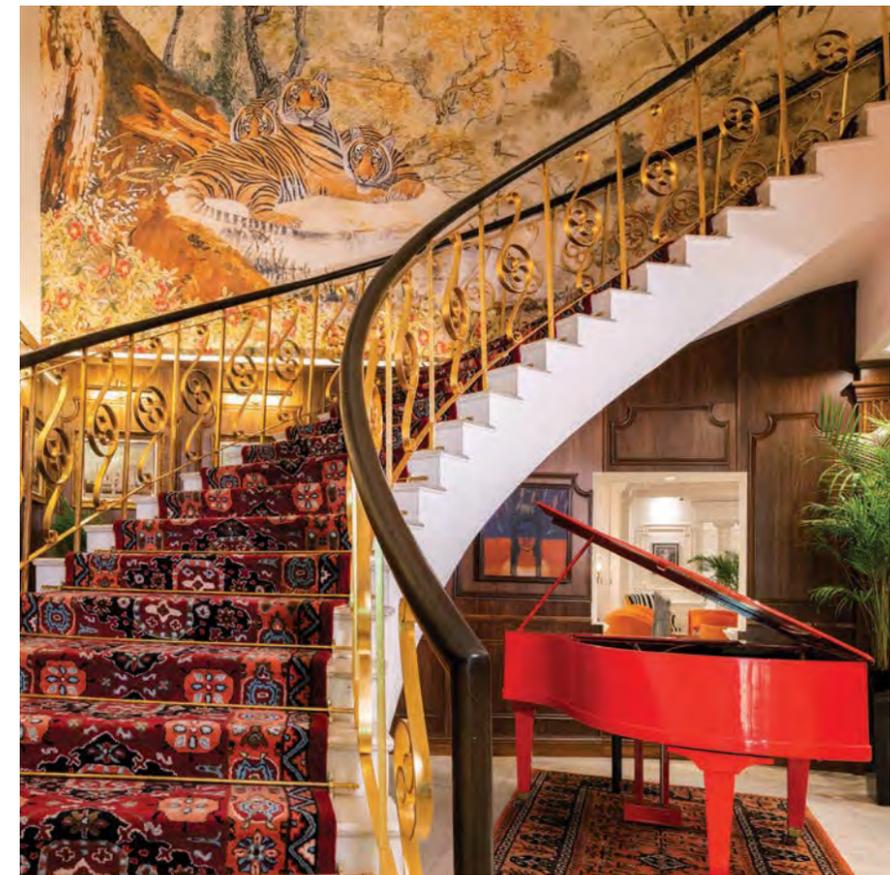
As a menswear designer, Kunal Rawal doesn't require an introduction, thanks to his expansive database of Bollywood fans. But it is his attention to detail that make him one-of-a-kind. "A winter groom has the opportunity to play around with layers to create a unique occasion to wear silhouettes. For a winter groom, it boils down to playing with fabrics," says Rawal. kunalrawalofficial.com

SHIVAN & NARRESH

Immaculate tailoring with a pop of colour is what makes designer-duo Shivan & Narresh stand out. Their tailored suits and sherwanis in bright hues can elevate any groom's style quotient. "There are many diverse options one can choose from in winters—from the finest of wool, structured suiting fabrics, to the deep jewel tones of soft velvets. We feel a silk *saafa* does the trick of protecting one from the heavy winter and keeps you stylish, as well," informs the duo. shivanandnarresh.com



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Gracefully Bridal

The inherent grace and age-old charm of *jadau* jewellery remains unmatched. Here are our top picks of some exquisite pieces for the bride.

BY ANUSHKA GOEL



Polki bridal choker featuring a latticework design, embellished with blue sapphires and emerald drops, **Birdhichand Ghanshyamdas Jewellers**, price on request; bgjewellers.in



Unique polki bracelets, **The House of MBJ**, ₹14,50,000 (approx).



Striking polki-encrusted necklace, with green talaf stones and Russian emeralds, **Raniwala**, price on request; raniwala1881.com



Bracelet studded with uncut diamonds and a pear-shaped emerald, **Dillano**, price on request; dillano.com



Gold choker embellished with exquisite stones, **Tanishq**, price on request; tanishq.co.in

Kundan maang tika with emeralds and pearls, **Parekh Ornaments**, ₹3,00,000 (approx).



Gold jadau bracelet, **Narayan Jewellers**, price on request; narayanjewellers.com



Antique-gold-finish necklace with coin motifs and imprints of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesh, **Tanishq**, price on request; tanishq.co.in



Mughal heirloom earrings, **Amaris**, ₹1,86,000; amarisjewels.com



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A World of Solitaires

Make your engagement and wedding ceremonies perfect with the ring of your dreams. Here's a selection of solitaires that will make you fall in love all over again. **BY ANUSHKA GOEL**

Limitless Solitaire Ring Set

These two geometric rings can be worn together or separately. The ring features an exquisite GIA-certified, princess-style, brilliant-cut diamond centre, offset by trillion-cut faceted diamonds. **Her Story Jewels**, price on request; herstoryjewels.com

Abstract Flat-Cut Diamond Solitaire Ring

This polki-solitaire ring features double-cut diamonds set in 14k white gold, making for the perfect, edgy piece for you to don on your big day. **Shivin Jewellers, Jaipur**, ₹2,00,000.



Solitaire Ring

Beautifully crafted in rose gold with a stunning 0.35 cent solitaire diamond in the centre, this ring is a timeless gift for your lady love. **Candere by Kalyan Jewellers**, price on request; candere.com



Mystique Magnificence Solitaire Ring

Sculpted in 18k gold with three diamonds, all with VS-GH clarity, this ring is certain to make your special day even more memorable. **Limelight Diamonds**, ₹17,119 (mined diamond: ₹36,809); limelightdiamonds.com

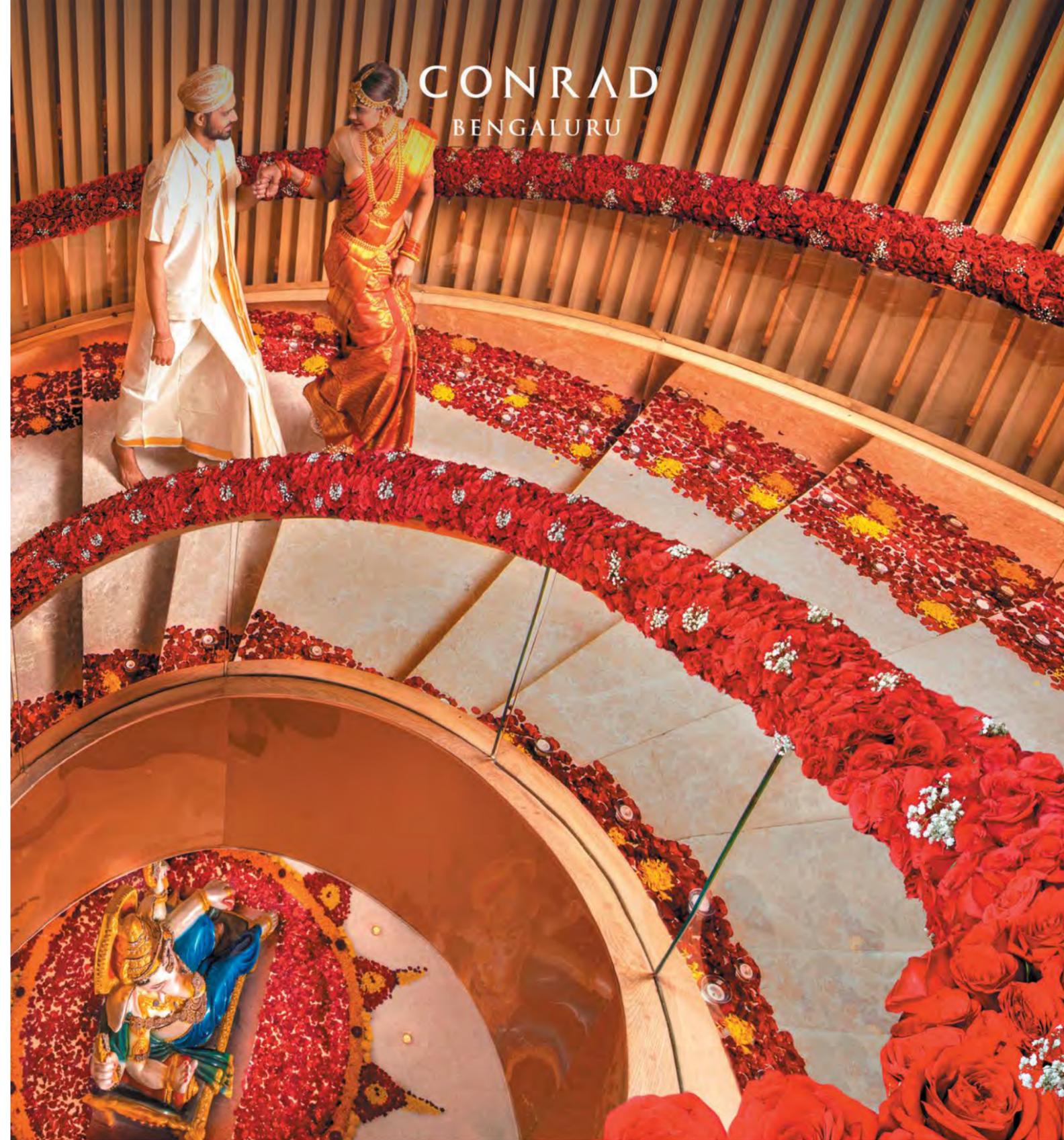


Denise Diamond Engagement Ring

An elegant creation with a single diamond set in gold, this ring is sure to make you look and feel loved on your engagement. **Candere by Kalyan Jewellers**, price on request; candere.com



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All About the Groom

Exuding elegance, these tasteful pieces will enhance the style quotient of the groom. Choose your favourite from our picks below. **BY ANUSHKA GOEL**



▲ The Forevermark Setting® men's wedding band's unique, four-pronged mount and secret piercing are inspired by the shape of the Forevermark icon and also symbolise the north, south, east, and west of all-encompassing love. **Forevermark**, price on request; forevermark.com

This dragonfly brooch adorned with diamond-studded pearl clusters is perfect for your wedding reception or sangeet, ensuring you stand out on your big day, **Amrapali Jewels**, price on request; amrapalijewels.com



▲ These druzy emerald and diamond cufflinks are inspired by the starry gaze of the cosmos, making them the perfect addition to your wedding outfit, **Amrapali Jewels**, price on request; amrapalijewels.com



▲ Vishnu-coin buttons in hand-drawn 18k rose-gold wires feature rare and collectible, certified high-karatage gold coins minted during the Dutch-India occupation in the 1700s; **Studio Renn**, ₹5,50,000; studioren.com



▲ Rajwadi groom kantha necklace is made with natural pearls, and adds the perfect touch to your wedding sherwani, **Mirana**, ₹20,000; miranajewels.com



▲ Celestial, black-onyx carved cufflinks in 18k white gold, **Prakshi Fine Jewellery**, price on request; prakshi.com

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The Beauty Memo

India's top bridal make-up artists have shared some of their best-kept secrets with you! Make notes to get that perfect bridal glow on your big day. **BY ANUSHKA GOEL**



OJAS RAJANI
Top three make-up must-haves for a winter bride.

A winter bride should pick a good illuminating skin serum to brighten her skin during gloomy days. Also, a smooth, dewy-finish foundation and concealer is a great buy. Choose a tinted liquid blush in peach or pink hues for flushed cheeks, lips, and eyelids. (@ojasrajani)

CHERRY DEOL

Flowers or hair jewellery?

Flowers add a breath of freshness to a bride's look; they enhance the hairdo more than the usual hair accessories. For multiple functions, a bride can create different hairstyles just by adding a variety of fresh flowers—baby's breaths along with daisies for the mehendi ceremony; roses and carnations for the wedding day; and artificial accessories with an open hairdo for cocktail night. (@makeupbycherry)

Pakshi P Siroya

Top three lipstick picks.

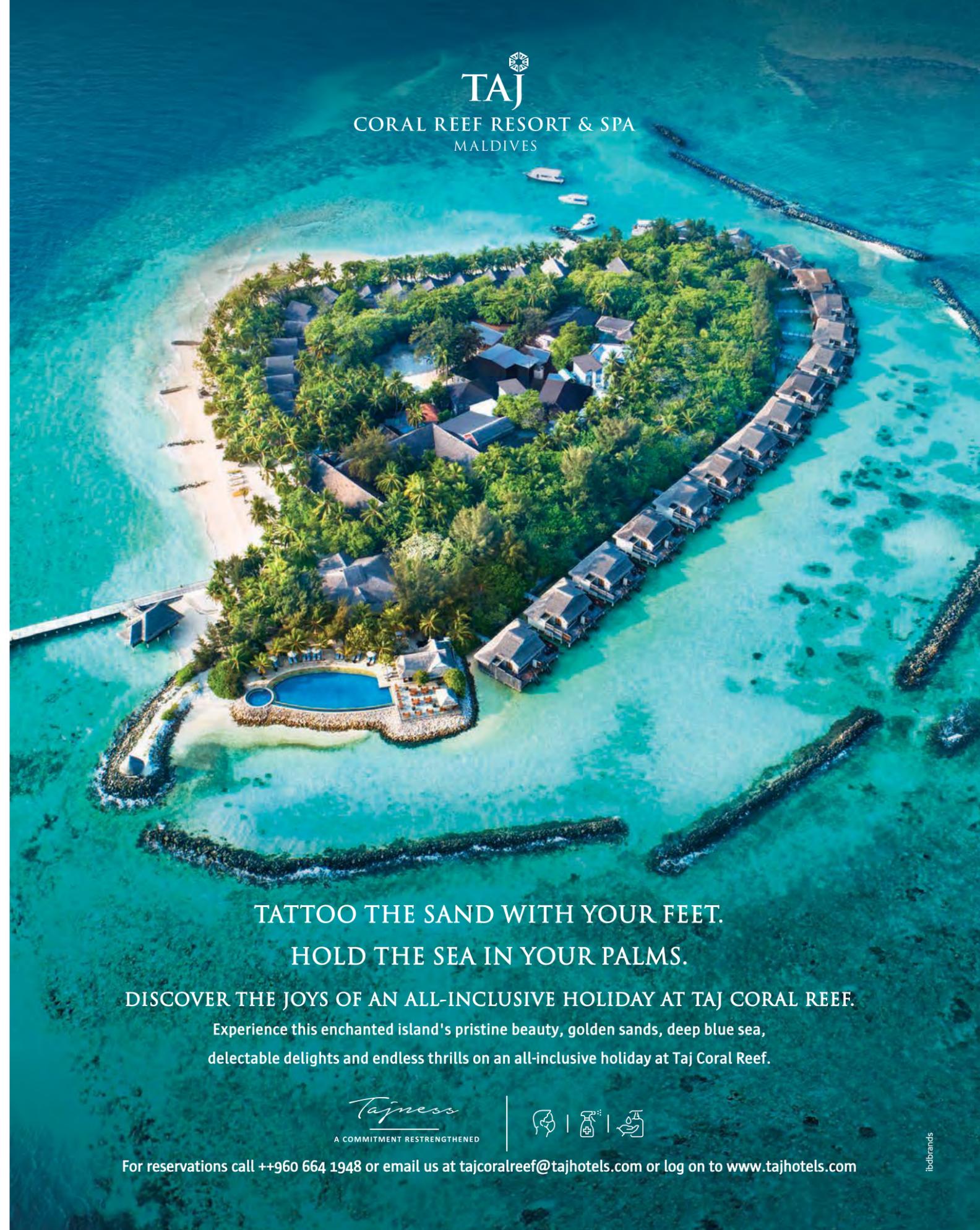
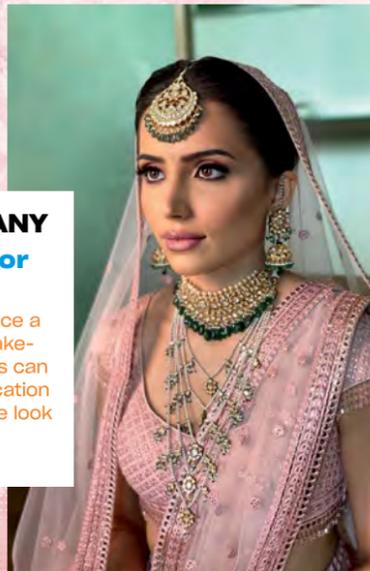
I like nude and soft tones. However, my top three choices would be an oxblood-red lipstick, a taupe lipstick (these pair well with smoky eyes), and a dusty-rose shade that gives a hint of rosiness (this is perfect for brides who want to don the no-make-up look). (@pakkhi)

CHANDNI SINGH
Latest sustainability trends in wedding make-up.

Going natural and organic is the best thing a bride can do. I advise brides to use cleaner, greener products as much as possible. It's important for winter brides to stay hydrated and to have healthy, glowing skin. Also, say yes to using refills, recycling empty bottles, avoiding the use of make-up wipes, and sticking to biodegradable things. (@chandnisinghstudio)

JASMEET KAPANY
Make-up look for day weddings.

A day bride can embrace a subtle, pastel-hued make-up look. The right tones can add a certain sophistication that will make the bride look naturally radiant. (@jasmeetkapany)



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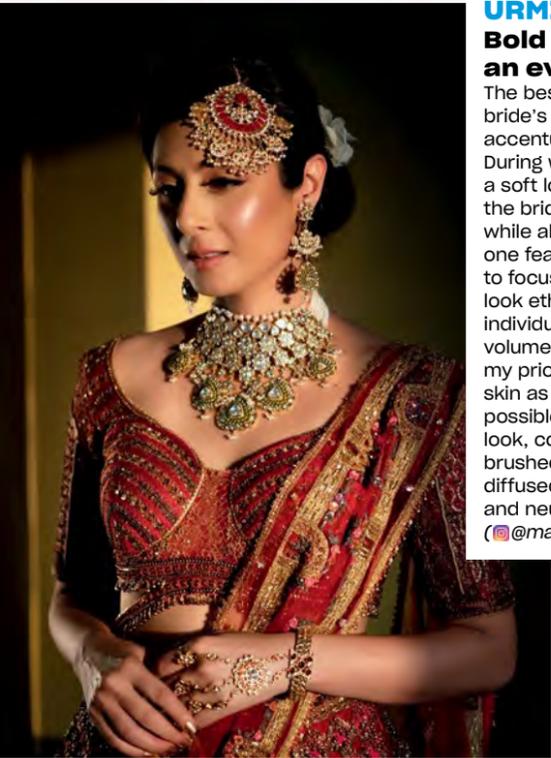
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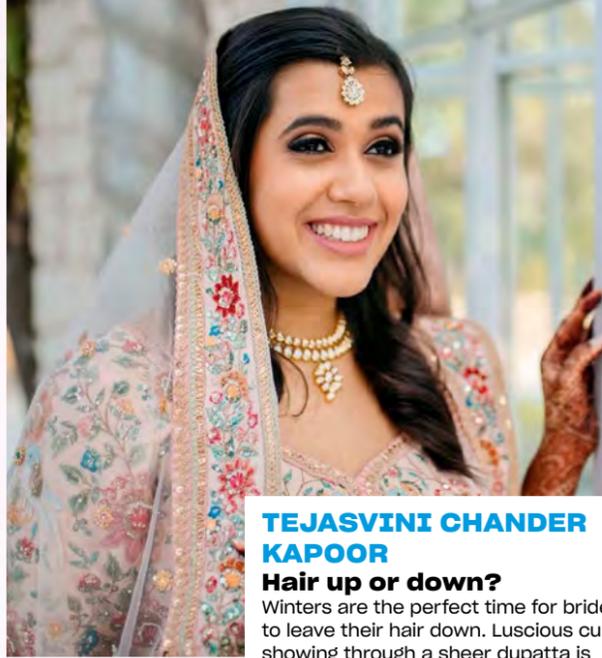
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#TLPicks Make-up Artist



URMI KAUR Bold or soft for an evening look?

The best way to make a bride's face stand out is by accentuating her features. During winters, I opt for a soft look that enriches the bride's natural beauty, while also glamming up one feature that I want to focus on. I keep the look ethereal by using individual lashes for extra volume. For a winter bride, my priority is to keep the skin as fresh and dewy as possible. For a soft-glam look, consider radiant skin, brushed-through brows, diffused eyeshadows, and neutral lips. (@@makeupbyurmikaur)



TEJASVINI CHANDER KAPOOR Hair up or down?

Winters are the perfect time for brides to leave their hair down. Luscious curls showing through a sheer dupatta is a great winter-wedding look. All you need is a light dupatta that is easy to drape over the head without a bun. (@@tejasvinichandermakeup)

Sandhya Shekar

Cream or powder blush?

I prefer a moisturising-cream blush for winter brides. This adds an extra layer of hydration and suppleness to the skin, which gives a flushed glow to the bride. (@@sandhyashekar)

NAMRATA SONI

Bold, smoky, or soft eyes?

It depends on what the bride is wearing and her vibe. For darker shades of red, blue, or green, I prefer a soft-glam look because of the contrast it creates. But if the bride chooses to wear ivories or lighter pastel tones, I would pick bronzy browns and smoky eyes, which casts an interesting contrast with the outfit. (@@namratasoni)



ANJALI MANCHANDA How to keep bridal make-up intact?

Choose a professional make-up artist—he/she will know how to make the make-up last longer. Secondly, the bride should start following a basic skincare routine (cleansing, toning, and moisturising) every night, at least 15 days before the functions. This way, make-up artists get healthy skin to work on. To make the base or foundation last longer, make sure not to add too many layers of foundation. (@@anjalimua)



Life isn't always about moving forward;
sometimes it's about staying still...



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soneva.com

#TLPicks Beauty



Powder Blush (Dreamy Rose 09), **asa beauty**, ₹1,950 (5g); asabeauty.com



Aqua Bomb Jelly Cleanser, **belif**, ₹2,390 (160ml); belifindia.in



Ex-Folator, **LipHue**, ₹602 (10ml); liphue.com



Skin Repair Serum, **Beaumarck**, ₹1,200; beaumarckbeauty.com

Vanity Essentials

Working on that bridal glow? Add these luxuriant beauty products to your kitty to look your radiant best on your D-day. **BY PRIYANKA CHAKRABARTI**



Keratin & Wheat Protein Shampoo, **Atulya**, ₹499 (300ml); healthmug.com



Run For Radiance – Goji Berry Face Mask, **Navah**, ₹725 (50g); navah.in

Soothing Lip Oil, **Shankara**, ₹590 (3.5ml); shankara.in



Limited Edition Heritage Calendula Herbal-Extract Toner, **Kiehl's**, ₹2,800 (230ml); kiehls.in



Mon Cherry Brightening Foam Cleanser, **Quench**, ₹499 (100ml); quenchbotanics.com

Glass Rouge Tint (Sunset Glow), **Etude House**, ₹850; nykaa.com



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Weddings at Hard Rock Hotel Maldives are not your run-of-the-mill romance ballads. They are timeless classics. Say I do as you dig your toes into spotless beaches.

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Weddings

#TLPicks

Watches (Bride)

The Greatest Hour

For your wedding day, choose from an array of bejewelled watches or timeless classics that are certain to stand the test of time. **BY ANUPAM DABRAL**



▲ Piaget Limelight Gala High Jewellery Watch

If your idea of a timeless jewel is something vividly colourful and pop, then turn your gaze towards this Piaget offering. With a case and bracelet crafted in 18k white gold, it is studded with 91 brilliant-cut diamonds. The dial is a work of art. This decadent piece of haute horlogerie is meant to be paired with a glamorous gown for reception night. *Price on request; piaget.com*



▲ Chopard Imperiale

Although green may stand out as an unconventional colour choice for a bridal timepiece, the Chopard Imperiale's soothing tone certainly makes a statement. Showcasing a rose-gold case studded with diamonds, the watch is a visual delight. Moreover, its openwork, sword-shaped hands and Roman hour markers accentuate its design sensibilities. ₹34,82,855; chopard.com



▲ Carl F Bucherer Pathos Diva

Crafted in 18k rose gold, Carl F Bucherer Pathos Diva pays tribute to the tradition of wearing gold at weddings. Featuring 54 diamonds arranged around its case, this watch radiates pure glamour with undertones of old-school sophistication. Needless to say, its intricate craftsmanship speaks to every discerning bride. ₹20,80,339; carl-f-bucherer.com



▲ Panerai Piccolo Due MadrePerla

A beautiful melange of style and refinement defines the ethos of Panerai's Piccolo Due MadrePerla. Crafted in Goldtech—a proprietary alloy of the brand—this timepiece exudes a sense of subdued luxury. Think white mother-of-pearls with luminous, golden Arabic numerals and hour markers; to add a bit of an edge, it comes attached with a shiny-red alligator strap. ₹12,47,000; panerai.com

▲ Cartier Panthère Songeuse Enamel Watch

Cartier's Panthère has become an insignia of excellence and craftsmanship. At a single glance, the panther mounting the case attracts attention. Its rhodium-finish, white-gold body incorporates a medley of bright hues, along with 711 brilliant-cut diamonds. The navy-blue, alligator-skin strap adds an extra touch of colour. *Price on request; cartier.com*



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#TLPicks

Watches (Groom)



Vacheron-Constantin Métiers d'Art

Nothing makes an impact like a clean 18k pink gold case and a dark blue alligator strap, and you can always count on Vacheron-Constantin for that. Part of their Métiers d'Art collection, this watch features a dial made in white gold, with an imprint of Africa in brightest hues. Belonging to a limited-edition collection of just 10 pieces, this exquisite timepiece personifies versatility. ₹95,50,000; vacheron-constantin.com



Longines Heritage Classic Sector Dial

If you love all things vintage, then the Longines Heritage Classic with the black sector dial is a must-have. Drawing inspiration from the 1930s collection, the new version boasts a sleek, graphical design, set in a stainless steel surface. The piece houses a latest generation movement, the L893 calibre, developed exclusively for Longines Heritage timepieces. ₹1,78,000; longines.com



Bulgari Octo Finissimo Automatic

Bulgari has been luring men with their smooth timepieces for decades. The Octo Finissimo Automatic epitomises the brand's commitment towards clean lines, textural interplay, and sophisticated engineering. The deep-blue, lacquered dial, along with the steel bracelet, is everything a man can ask for on his big day. ₹9,97,000; bulgari.com



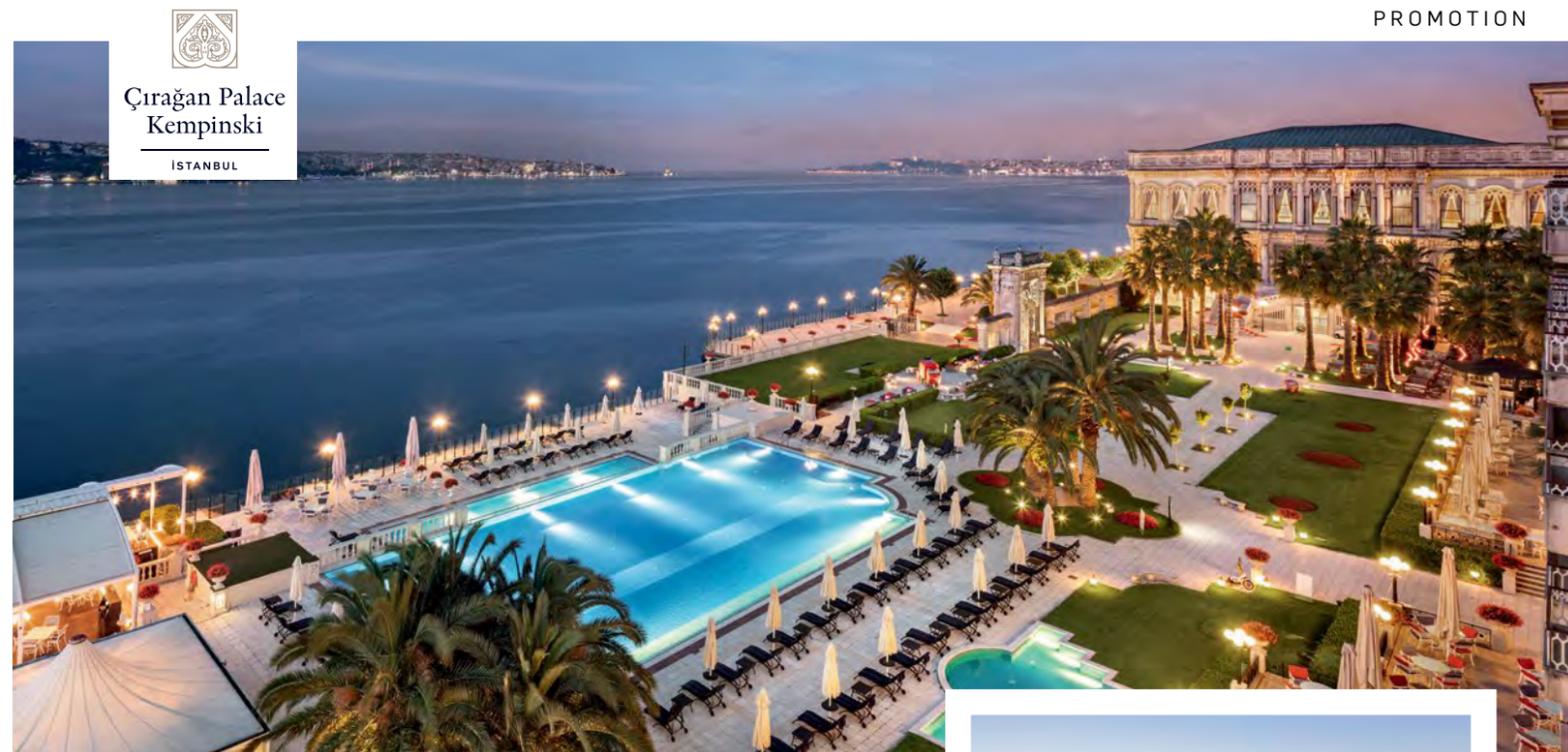
Breitling Navitimer Automatic 41

If you're looking for a watch that's classy yet cool, pick Breitling's Navitimer Automatic 41. With its signature beaded case and minimal silver dial, this timepiece exudes a sense of understated luxury. Plus, its stainless steel and 18k red-gold body create a striking contrast along with its brown leather strap. ₹3,42,700; breitling.com



Patek Philippe Nautilus

How about going completely decadent with your timepiece? This Patek Philippe Nautilus conjures a sense of timelessness with its rose-gold body, sunburst-blue dial, and an embossed, horizontal pattern. Furthermore, its gold-applied hour markers with luminescent coating create a striking contrast against the blue dial. This timepiece is a modern heirloom. Price on request; patek.com



A Royal WEDDING

You deserve a regal experience on your special day, no less than the royals of yore. And **Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul** understands this well. **By Bayar Jain**

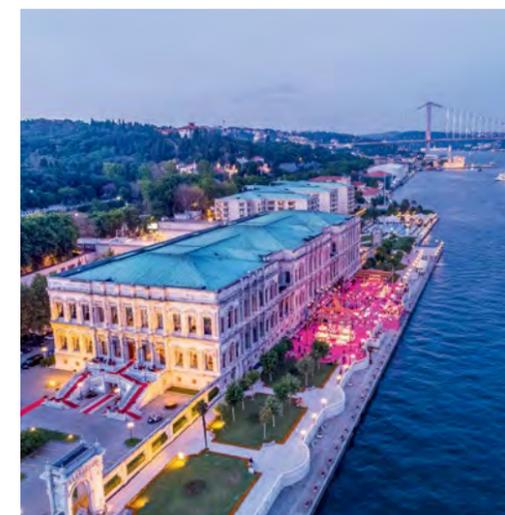
Dating back to the 17th century, Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul embodies royalty in each of its offerings. An erstwhile residence of sultans, this majestic property now holds the enviable status of being the only Ottoman imperial palace and hotel on the mighty Bosphorus.

The 310 rooms here—which include 279 rooms and 20 suites in the main hotel, and 11 more suites in the imperial palace section—personify opulence at their core. Take the Sultan Suite, for instance. Located on the second floor of the historical palace, this sprawling room has clinched the title of being one of the largest suites in Europe. The suite's large hall segues into a living room with a dining area large enough to seat 12. This is accompanied by a kitchenette, two bedrooms, a guest bathroom, and panoramic views of the Bosphorus beyond the sash windows. The opulent Pasha & Presidential Suite, situated on the top floor, features a lavish lounge with a writing desk—signing your thank-you cards for the wedding will seem like a royal affair here. The swimming-pool-facing Asian section, with a private garden dotted with lush palm trees; and the Grand

Deluxe Bosphorus View Room, with a 180° view of the Bosphorus, the Old City and Maiden's Tower are the other spectacular accommodations on offer here.

Stays aside, a celebration is made truly special with its food; and Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul doesn't disappoint. Embark on a culinary journey at the fine-dining restaurants Tuğra, the Gazebo, or Laledan. Or continue with the after-party in the bustling bars and quirky pop-up venues—The 47, Le Fumoir, and Berthold.

When here, trust the lavish venues to make every fairy-tale wedding a reality. Whether you're seeking pure romance, a grand celebration, or an intimate family reception, the wedding professionals here seamlessly orchestrate the perfect setup, down to the gorgeous wedding cake. The legendary Palace Terrace, overlooking the Bosphorus, creates the ideal background for stunning photographs, while the elegant function rooms—with their high-ceilinged grandeur—cater to large-scale events. For an outdoor celebration, head to the expansive, beautifully landscaped, green gardens. No matter the setting you choose, a memorable nuptial here is guaranteed. kempinski.com/istanbul



Clockwise from top: The imperial Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul holds a place of pride on the Bosphorus; a newlywed couple enjoys the beautiful view from the Palace Terrace; the brightly lit grounds of the palace serve as the perfect setting for an unforgettable wedding.



◀ The grand staircase of the Leela Palace Bengaluru is ideal for a striking photo shoot.

One with Opulence

Shimmering with enthralling beauty, **Leela Palace Bengaluru** ticks all the right boxes to serve as a one-stop wedding destination in the Garden City.

WHEN IT COMES to tying the knot, dreaming of a magical experience is natural. And Leela Palace Bengaluru promises precisely that, skillfully mastering the art of crafting bespoke celebrations to suit couples of all kinds.

Embodying the magnificence of the erstwhile Vijayanagara Empire, this conveniently located palatial abode is all about opulence. Taking inspiration from the Mysore Palace, the majestic hotel sits amid seven acres of lush greens and a glimmering lagoon, amidst bird-perched palm trees. The 357 rooms and suites here assure a comfortable stay for each guest, while the multiple dining options and extensive banqueting venues accentuate this regality. The 18 venues here—including the Surya Terrace and the customisable Grand Ballroom—cater to groups of all sizes; the special cuisines and beverages prepared by in-house chefs promise indulgent meals; and the idyllic Bengaluru weather creates just the right ambience for a grandiose celebration.

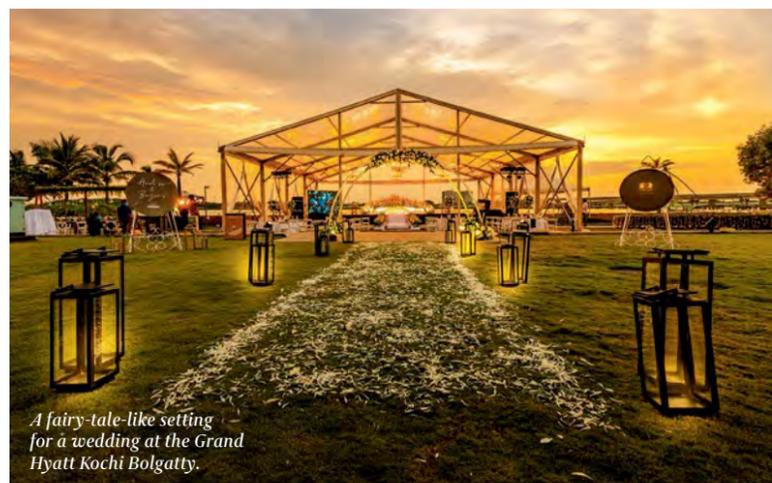
To make the process easier, Leela Palace Bengaluru also offers the services of their wedding planners, including personal attendants for the to-be-weds. On the special day, dance the night away, courtesy state-of-the-art audio and video equipment that echo customised entertainment requirements. Or opt for an intimate luncheon comprising a personalised food-and-wine menu served on flower-adorned tables. While the wedding experts resolve all the ceremonial stresses, allow the salon and spa to add some much-needed bliss before the D-day. theleela.com

COASTAL CELEBRATIONS

Set on picturesque Bolgatty Island, **Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty** sets the mood for a dreamy destination wedding in Kerala.

FEATURING MULTIPLE indoor and outdoor venues across 1,00,000 square feet, Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty, and the adjacent Lulu Bolgatty International Convention Centre, are perfectly suited for a big, fat Indian wedding in a tropical setting. The expansive property offers comfortable accommodation in 222 rooms, 38 suites, and four villas with private access, as well as 44 interconnected rooms. Three premium dining destinations, a spacious lobby lounge, stunning pools, and an award-winning spa further promise a successful gala. No surprise then that your celebrations come alive with exquisite menus, elegant décor, and heartwarming experiences.

The serene backwaters of the surrounding Vembanad Lake are one of the highlights of hosting a wedding here—you can even host your wedding reception or cocktail dinner on the Lulu Eventboat. Expect a lavish spread of world cuisines on board as you celebrate



A fairy-tale-like setting for a wedding at the Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty.

your special day. The resort's leisure houseboat, Nattika, and waterfront lawns are desirable spots for pre- and post-wedding photo shoots. Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty also offers tours of the city, including quaint village visits, heritage walks through Fort Kochi, and more.

Rest assured, you will be welcomed with all hygiene measures in place. Thoughtful seating layouts enable socially distanced set-ups. And every detail, big or small, will be taken care of by a dedicated team of wedding planners, ensuring you have the time of your life. hyatt.com

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF LEELA PALACE BENGALURU; COURTESY OF GRAND HYATT KOCHI BOLGATTY



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Like a Breeze

With **Conrad Bengaluru's** bespoke offerings, dream nuptials come to life gracefully.

LOCATED IN THE heart of the Garden City's central business district, overlooking Ulsoor Lake, Conrad Bengaluru is a plush 24-storey hotel. As part of the innovative Wedding Diaries by Hilton initiative, the hotel offers bespoke wedding services, and doubles as an elegant venue for a modern wedding—one that you are sure to remember for a lifetime.

"Stitching every memory together with the Hilton hospitality and experiencing luxury in [its] true sense [is] what makes your dream wedding a reality," says Srijan Vadhera, general manager, Conrad Bengaluru. Be it a bridal shower, an engagement, or the wedding itself, the well-equipped hotel promises a memorable experience for all sorts of celebrations. In-house experts and the ease of having everything tailor-made to your needs make hosting a wedding akin to a cakewalk. Add to that Bengaluru's quintessential cool breeze—the perfect cherry on top.

Conrad Bengaluru takes care of the culinary feasts in style. Besides a team of experts who can curate the menus the way you want them to be, the property offers a separate kitchen dedicated to vegetarian meals. Specialising in Marwari, Jain, Gujarati,



▲ A bride and groom share a special moment by the beautifully decorated pool at Conrad Bengaluru.

and Rajasthani cuisines, the in-house *maharaj* (head chef) works magic with myriad ingredients, recipes, and flavours. The hotel has a room ideal for a nikah ceremony, while the gurudwara next door is a convenient option for those looking to include a Sikh ceremony with their lavish celebrations at the hotel.

What's more, each carefully curated experience by Hilton EventReady is underlined by the CleanStay initiative, which means that every celebration will not only be unforgettable, but safe, secure, and socially responsible, too. [hilton.com](https://www.hilton.com) —**BAYAR JAIN**

MEMORIES ARE FOREVER

Weddings, anniversaries, and special events—**Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport** caters to them all with a touch of brilliance.



▲ The expansive Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport is an ideal location for city galas. The property offers versatile venues with separate entrances, world cuisines, and impeccable hospitality to cater to all your

needs. Be it welcome dinners, sangeet, cocktail parties, or the main wedding ceremony, the functionality of the venues makes it possible to host different events in myriad ways, complete with individual styles and preferences.

The Crystal Ballroom, which can accommodate up to 800 people, is ideal for grand weddings, while the Ebony meeting rooms are well-suited for smaller functions. All the event spaces include audio-visual equipment and free Wi-Fi for tech-savvy celebrations. To top it all, the food at Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport is highly recommended.

Neung Roi serves critically acclaimed Thai dishes; The Great Kabab Factory, as the name suggests, brings finger-licking kebabs from six different cultures to the table; NYC whips classic American delicacies; The Pastry Shop gets you started with baked goods and coffee; the elegant Savannah Bar boasts a fine



collection of liquors, wines, and liqueurs from across the world; and The Orb is a circular pub with a chilled-out vibe that is perfect for a cocktail night.

A legacy of 22 years and a team of experts allow a seamless experience for you to throw a party at this welcoming property. [radissonhotels.com](https://www.radissonhotels.com) —**BJ**

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF CONRAD BENGALURU; COURTESY OF RADISSON HOTELS (2)



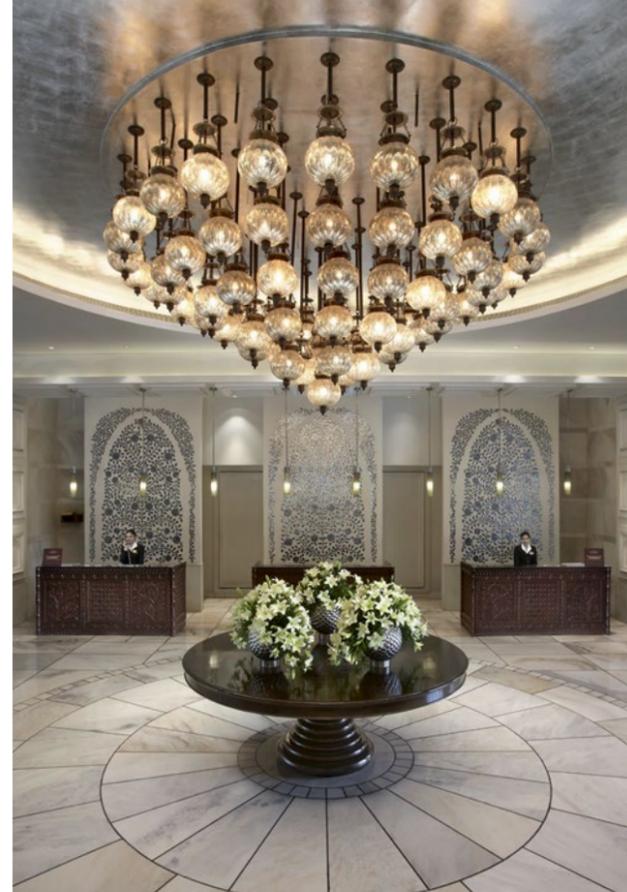
Your Wedding, Your Way

Offering over 100 hotels, 70 destinations, and decades of experience, the **ITC's Hotel Group** is a titan when it comes to Indian hospitality. With its signature award-winning cuisines, hand-picked destinations, luxury services from Kaya Kalp Spa, dedicated planning team, and comprehensive safety and hygiene protocol, the brand hosts celebrations that are hassle-free and memorable. You get to live your moment, your way.

Regal, classic, lavish, cosy, or grand—weddings are a memorable affair. There is no denying that beautiful backdrops make our special days all the more unforgettable. The pandemic may have dampened spirits and altered plans, but there's no stopping the great Indian wedding. Leading hospitality icons such as ITC Hotels have adapted to new tricks of the trade—and how. Besides offering a wide range of vibrant venues complete with state-of-the-art facilities, the brand comes with the promise of WeAssure, a health and hygiene protocol committed to build a safe environment for you to indulge and celebrate.

From above: The palatial grandeur of ITC Grand Bharat in Gurugram is ideal for regal ceremonies; ITC Grand Goa Resort & Spa's picturesque setting imparts a touch of romance and charm to special occasions.





Clockwise from left: The glittering lobby of ITC Mughal Resort & Spa in Agra reflects the ornate opulence of the royal property; ITC Rajputana, Jaipur features luxury accommodations overlooking a traditional courtyard; expansive, verdant-green gardens of ITC Mughal offer a princely setting for a large, daytime ceremony.



Vibrant Venues

Make your dream wedding come true at any one of the ITC Hotels in the country. The imperial ITC Rajputana in Jaipur is perfectly suited for a modern royal wedding. ITC Grand Goa Resort & Spa is ideal for an exotic beach wedding along the pristine shores of South Goa. The towering ITC Royal Bengal, Kolkata offers an elegant venue for an opulent wedding. So does ITC Mughal Resort & Spa, Agra with its sprawling lawns and regal architecture. ITC Maurya, New Delhi is an evergreen venue for a city wedding in the heart of the national capital. Set on the outskirts of Gurugram, ITC Grand Bharat is another convenient option for city dwellers looking to host a serene wedding. The impressive ITC Kohenur, overlooking the scenic Durgam Lake, features 274 smart rooms and suites to accommodate a long list of guests, and then some.

Every ITC Hotel has a distinct personality inspired by the soil it stands on and the culture of the region it belongs to. Each venue is rooted in tradition and equipped with modern comforts. Build your wedding functions around different themes or tie them all together with an overarching concept—the hotel you choose dresses up the way you like. Expansive, pillar-free banquet spaces with adjoining smaller rooms are intuitively designed for comfort and convenience. The celebration can move to huge lawns, gardens, and pool sides to experience the outdoors under sunny or starry skies. Be it floral arrangements, lighting, dance floors, or any other ambience-related requirement, each wedding venue can be customised as in-house wedding specialists tend to your every need. Kick back and relax as your guests are well taken care of by ITC Hotels' expert teams.

Flavourful Feasts

As a pioneer of luxurious and innovative dining concepts like Bukhara, Peshawri, Dum Pukht, Dakshin, Kebabs & Kurries, Pan Asian, West View, Tian, and Royal Vega, ITC Hotels assure

From above: Palm trees and lush gardens set against blue waters create the perfect backdrop for outdoor ceremonies at ITC Grand Goa Resort & Spa; the elegant timelessness and tasteful interiors of ITC Royal Bengal offer an exceptional setting for a wedding in Kolkata.



a culinary extravaganza that is certain to add a magical touch to your ceremonies. Every ITC Hotel brings to the table cuisines from all over India and the world. Regional dishes depending on the destination you choose find their way in, as well. Choose one of the menus carefully curated by your wedding venue or get one tailor-made to suit your palate and preferences—as is popularly said, the way to people's hearts goes through their bellies. Now that intimate weddings are part of the norm, ITC Hotels is committed to host smaller functions without compromising on anything. Newer concepts for buffets, re-imagined sit-down meals, dedicated service staff, and other unique measures make sure your guests are satiated and safety guidelines are maintained.

Conscious Luxuries

In today's day and age, a proactive response to climate change is a necessity, and the discerning traveller must use every opportunity to be more conscious of the environment. When you make ITC Hotels a part of your celebrations, you contribute towards helping the planet heal.

With 'Responsible Luxury' as the brand's core philosophy, ITC Hotels is one of the world's first hotel chains to be awarded the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum Certification. Every signature ITC Hotel adheres to the highest global and national green building standards to ensure that energy, water, and solid waste efficiencies are maximised. From optimising the use of natural light to meeting their electrical demand through wind and solar energy; conserving water by harvesting rainwater, as well as treating and recycling it; and recycling and reusing more than 99 percent of the solid waste generated in the hotels, every effort is made to preserve the ecosystem around them. At the same time, equal emphasis is given to sustainable sourcing, be it in terms of building materials used or edible produce.


#TLRECOMMENDS
Tie The Knot At
ITC Grand Bharat, Gurugram
ITC Grand Goa Resort & Spa, Goa
ITC Rajputana, Jaipur
ITC Mughal Resort & Spa, Agra




For more information, call at 1800-419-6444, write to reservations@itshotels.in, or visit itshotels.com



◀ The charming Beau-Rivage Palace offers scenic views of Lake Geneva. Below: The magical setting of Badrutt's Palace Hotel.

A Swiss Affair

Take inspiration from some of the most unique destinations in **Switzerland** for a truly unforgettable wedding and honeymoon.

THE CHARMS OF Switzerland need no introduction. Blessed with surreal landscapes, an inviting culture, quaint cobbled streets, and breathtaking experiences, it is unarguably one of the most sought-after destinations in Europe. Add to that its Bollywood connection and you will understand why Switzerland tops the list of dream-wedding and honeymoon destinations for couples in India.

Bordering Italy, France, and Germany, Switzerland offers a wide range of locations and backdrops of choice. Consider a mountain wedding in the meadows of the Great Aletsch Glacier, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the heart of the Jungfrau-Aletsch protected area. In Ticino, the five-star Villa Orselina (villaorselina.ch) above Lago Maggiore

is a stylish wedding venue known for its Mediterranean cuisine. Also in the canton of Ticino, the charming Brissago Islands double as an exotic botanical garden where couples can exchange vows. The legendary Badrutt's Palace Hotel (badruttspalace.com) in St. Moritz continues to be a popular venue for classic yet extravagant weddings. Similarly, the Lake Geneva region in the French-speaking part of the country presents a picturesque backdrop for a wedding; the Beau-Rivage Palace (brp.ch) here offers a four-hectare park with a magnificent view of Lake Geneva and the Alps, along with exceptional service. Lucerne, with its mountains and an aquamarine lake, is fit for a fairy-tale wedding; Bürgenstock Resort (buergenstockresort.com), set high above Lake Lucerne is an extraordinary venue to host a wedding, be it grand or intimate, classic or contemporary. myswitzerland.com



Magic in the Middle of Nowhere

Fly far from mainstream destinations and tie the knot amid the dramatic landscape of **AlUla** in Saudi Arabia.

HOME TO SAUDI ARABIA'S first UNESCO World Heritage Site, AlUla has been a hidden gem all these years. The historic town is fast emerging as an offbeat destination for world travellers. Its newest wonder—a multi-purpose entertainment venue called Maraya, which translates as 'mirror', features 9,740 square metres of mirrors, making it the largest mirrored building in the world according to Guinness World Records. Literally reflecting the surrounding desert landscape, including the unique cliffs, Maraya serves as a stunning backdrop and is ideal for hosting a destination wedding.

Together with a magical skyline that changes from a brilliant blue in the day, rosy pink at twilight, and star-studded at night, the destination offers the honeymoon experience of a lifetime. Try stargazing near the exceptional

rock formations of Gharameel, far from the city lights. Dine at the site of the famous Elephant Rock; the on-site café, Key, offers delicious sweets and warm beverages while you take in the sunset. Catch a session of tribal drumming, an energising experience in the middle of the desert. Float above ancient landscapes in a hot-air balloon, ride an Arabian horse across the dunes, see celebrities perform at a world-class concert, and more—there's more than one way to feel time stand still, when in AlUla.

The luxurious accommodation options here include Habitas (ourhabitas.com), a five-star resort featuring sustainably designed villas in Ashar Valley; Shaden Resort (shaden-resort.com) nestled amid magnificent rock formations; and Sahary AlUla Resort offering 80 spacious rooms and suites with private terraces. experiencealula.com



▲ The unique Shaden Resort sits amidst spectacular rock formations. Left: Elephant Rock creates a memorable backdrop for a relaxing meal.



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF BEAU-RIVAGE PALACE; COURTESY OF BADRUTT'S PALACE HOTEL; COURTESY OF ALULA (2)

The Royal Treve



A Modernist Traditionale Luxury Designer Brand

Narayan Jewellers is a milieu of 80 years of a rich tradition and the post modernist contemporary designs in luxury. Narayan redefines global luxury from limited edition to one in a million as every piece is unique, just like our customers.

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A LEGACY OF
AMBALAL CHATURBHAI CHOKSHI

Romantic Shores

A honeymoon, wedding anniversary, or pre-wedding getaway with your partner—**Thailand** is now open for that romantic holiday you've been waiting for.

THAILAND HAS FINALLY opened its doors for fully vaccinated Indian travellers. With direct flights, a seamless visa process, world-class accommodation options, and an amazing range of destinations and experiences, the Southeast Asian country has always been an immensely popular go-to holiday destination for Indians.

From buzzing Bangkok and fascinating Chiang Mai, to the pristine shores of Phuket, picturesque Phang Nga,



cultural Chon Buri, the stunning plateaus and mountains of Ubon Ratchathani, and more—Thailand's landscape is as vivid as it is diverse. In fact, there is something to engage the varied interests of every couple. If nature and heritage delight you and your beloved, head north, where national parks, including the stunning Doi Phu Kha National Park, and historic temples such as Wat Thampla make for immersive excursions. The southern part of Thailand is a favourite among water babies, thanks to coastal destinations such as Koh Samui, Koh Phi Phi, Koh Lipe, and Koh Tao; enjoy a romantic dinner cruise under the stars, a luxury-yacht sail, fun kayaking trips, or go spa-hopping. Central Thailand with its endless plains, agricultural landscape, and idyllic hamlets charms in more ways than one; a boat ride on the Chao Phraya River is a not-to-be-missed experience here.

No matter where you are in Thailand, the amazing hospitality combined with heart-warming traditions, soulful food, bustling markets, and pleasant weather is sure to win you over. tourismthailand.org



A couple strolling along sandy shores at JW Marriott Phuket Resort. Above: Intimate dinner in scenic Phang Nga.

Embracing Ikigai

Japan's southernmost prefecture, **Okinawa** is a chain of islands blessed with the perfect setting for weddings and honeymoons.

HOME TO THE ruins and restored castles of the Ryukyu kings, pristine beaches, and coastlines with a wide variety of coral and marine life, rare flora and fauna, and more surprises, the archipelago of Okinawa gives you the island life you didn't know you needed.

It's easy to envision a destination wedding at Okinawa Main Island, given its surreal locales, themed chapels, private gardens, and well-equipped luxury resorts and event spaces. The destination is also famous for youthful pre-wedding events and after-parties with friends and family alike. Honeymooning couples find solace on the island's untouched white-sand beaches, and in hidden coves and beautiful boutique hotels. Be it a long walk on the beach against the setting sun, an underwater dive, a race on a sea scooter, or a culinary adventure, Okinawa offers a touch of romance in everything it does.

Newlyweds pose at a resort in Okinawa. Left: Okinawa Main Island's seascape is truly mesmerising.



The UNESCO World Heritage sites on the main island, including Shuri Castle and the ruins of Tamagusuku Castle, are a must-visit when here. Check out whale sharks and the other aquatic life at Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium, or head out on a kayaking trip through the mangrove jungle of the far-flung Iriomote Island.

Fly here from mainland Japan; most flights to Okinawa's Naha Airport depart from Tokyo or Osaka. There are also direct international flights to Okinawa from China, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. japan.travel

TOP: TOURISM THAILAND (2). BOTTOM: OKINAWA CONVENTION VISITORS BUREAU (2)



A Timeless Experience, A Timeless Journey.

Housed in a conserved colonial building that dates back to 1904, The Barracks Hotel Sentosa presents an atmospheric space brimming with Old World élan and luxe sophistication. Marque at the Barracks Lawn provides the ideal venue spanning over 500 square metres of sprawling green outdoor space suitable for your dream romantic garden wedding.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

www.thebarrackshotel.com.sg/en/Weddings

THE BARRACKS
HOTEL
SENTOSA





From left: Calm elegance of the lobby at Oasis Resort Sentosa; the Wellness Suite inspires serenity.



Celebrating Tranquility

The post-wedding burnout is real. And the road to recovery leads one to Far East Hospitality's brand-new tranquil retreat in Singapore, the **Oasia Resort Sentosa**.

NESTLED DEEP IN THE HEART OF Singapore's Sentosa Island, Oasia Resort Sentosa by Far East Hospitality is the ideal destination to refresh, refuel, and recharge after your dream wedding.

The resort's white façade maintains the old charm of its conservation building, while the new lobby is reminiscent of the tropics—the entire ambience instinctively instills a sense of calm. The in-house Oasia Spa's curated scent, 'The Recharge', wafts

through the air, accentuating the venue's serenity, while a specially created playlist fills the air with harmonies, setting the tone for your honeymoon.

The resort's elegant Wellness Rooms are done up in earthy tones and come with bespoke amenities that include yoga mats, minibars stocked with wellness drinks, on-demand wellness and guided-meditation videos, customised healthy snacks, and a personalised wellness journal.

Oasia Resort Sentosa has also collaborated with various local wellness and fitness studios, including Les Mills, Ufit, and Active Fitness, allowing guests to avail their workout activities. You and your loved one can also sign up for the Wellness Hours workshops held by trained professionals. Or check out the Oasia Spa that offers all-rounded treatments to revitalise your body and mind. Indulge your palate at the signature restaurant, Bedrock Origin, which presents an evolved cuisine reflecting the elements of the coastal locale. oasiahotels.com



From left: A couple shares an intimate moment, gazing at the horizon; quiet relaxation is the vibe aboard an Ocean Independence yacht.

SAILING INTO LOVE

Nothing spells romance like sailing towards the horizon with your loved one on a luxury yacht. **Ocean Independence** offers you the opportunity to do just that.

IT'S BEEN DAYS of hectic wedding ceremonies. Now it's time to kickstart your new life with your partner on a peaceful holiday at sea. And Ocean Independence, the world's largest luxury-crewed charter fleet, is the ideal choice for making this romantic journey.

Step aboard any of Ocean Independence's full-serviced super-yachts to experience an unparalleled level of welcoming comfort, personal attention, and quiet privacy. This incomparable level of service, however, is just the beginning of the sojourn.

From the Mediterranean to the Caribbean (and beyond), honeymooners can explore a host of destinations with dreamy, customised itineraries. Picture anchoring in a secluded cove and swimming in the crystalline waters of the Bahamas, or enjoying a lavish dinner on deck under the star-studded sky. The luxury charter also comes equipped with advanced technology, such as high-grade audio-visuals, Wi-Fi, and entertainment systems.

Founded in 2005, Ocean Independence has gained marine expertise over the years, and has expanded to employ approximately 115 employees who speak 23 languages, across 13 offices around the world. oceanindependence.com

TOP: COURTESY OF OASIA RESORT SENTOSA (2); COURTESY OF OCEAN INDEPENDENCE (2)



Clockwise from left: The towering ramparts of the Alila Fort Bishangarh rise majestically against the night sky; wedding rituals at the scenic Nazaara; the aesthetically designed pool, set amidst lush greenery and panoramic views.

A Legacy to Remember

There's something very warm and enchanting about intimate weddings. And **Alila Fort Bishangarh** offers the perfect venue to create that special magic, ensuring you have the best time of your life on your special day.

By Anushka Goel

What could be more romantic than a 231-year-old warrior-fort as the setting for your momentous day? Located in the Aravalli Hills, the historic Alila Fort Bishangarh—with its majestic columns, arches, jalis, turrets, granite stonework, and intricate detailing—provides the perfect royal background for your intimate wedding. With 59 rooms and suites, the hotel preserves the natural beauty of the region while recreating the Mughal and Rajput aesthetic that is integral to Rajasthan. Set amid lush greenery and expansive spaces, including a courtyard and pool, the fort offers stunning views of the surrounding valley.

Raise the elegance quotient of your wedding day at Darbar, a classic ballroom that can host 75 to 100 guests. For larger functions of up to 1,000 guests, the manicured greens of Aravalli Lawn are the ideal venue. The dramatic setting of Baori, an amphitheatre inspired by the Rajasthan's stepwells, is ideal for mid-sized celebrations of up to 200 guests. For your exclusive cocktail dinner, head to Nazaara, the open-sky, rooftop venue, offering panoramic views of the Aravallis. And for the after-party, make a beeline to Madhuveni, a beautifully lit bar, or opt for a bonfire night at the Aravalli Sands.

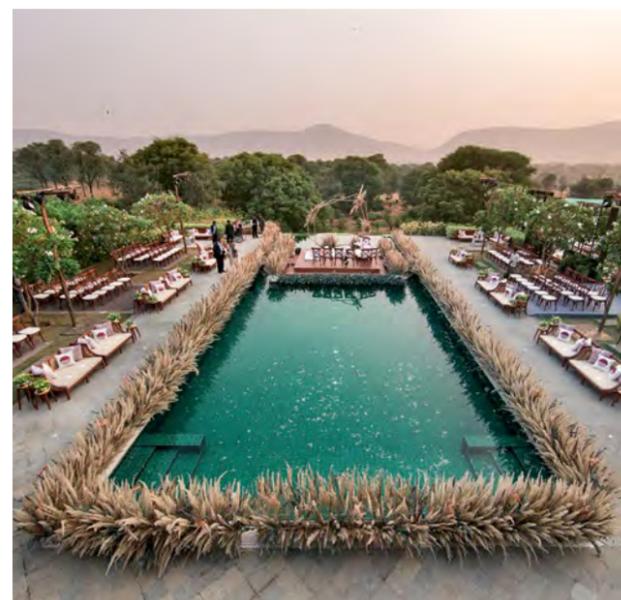
Committed to an eco-friendly future, the fort encourages guests to make sustainable choices for their wedding by choosing handcrafted furniture from local vendors, and using local fabrics and homegrown produce from nearby

farms or AFB's organic farm. The hotel, with its meticulously curated menus and dedicated professional team, will ensure that the couple and their guests have a memorable culinary experience.

Saji Joseph, general manager at Alila Fort Bishangarh, says, "As responsible hoteliers, we need to ensure we stay aligned with government norms and guidelines. While maintaining the warmth and comfort of our guests, safety is paramount and we have embraced the new normal with clean, exclusive spaces and revised hygiene and sanitation standards to adjust to the current situation."

The hotel also curates many unique wedding experiences for the to-be-weds, including a 50-minute helicopter ride that'll take the couple on a scenic aerial tour of the Aravallis; a vintage car to make a classy entrance at your wedding; a hot-air balloon ride to enjoy the breathtaking view of the surroundings; a private session at the Spa Villa to unwind while taking in the mesmerising sunset views; the specially curated Silver Night under the stars at Aravalli Sands, with a delicious meal cooked over a wood fire, complete with Rajasthani folk performances; and a regal dinner as part of Hunter's Camp at Aravalli Sands, where the couple can enjoy a royal lifestyle and indulge in old recipes pulled from the written memoirs of the royalty.

For details, please call +91-7230058015 or email at pragya.rathore@alilahotels.com





Blue Seascapes

The **Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa** and **Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru** elevate this stunning destination by giving it a bespoke romantic twist.

OUR SEASONS RESORTS' two properties in the Maldives—Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa and Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru—repackage romantic escapades by infusing them with bespoke attractions. Not only are the two island-resorts just a 35-minute seaplane ride apart—a journey made even easier aboard the luxury, 11-cabin, three-deck catamaran, Four Seasons Explorer—but they also assure customised wedding nuptials in picture-perfect venues made possible by in-house wedding specialists.

Take Kuda Huraa's magical white-sand beach, or their open-air deck set amid the shimmering waters of the lagoon—both ideal for sunset vows and a ceremony on secluded sandbanks. Add a slice of adventure to your getaway with dolphin and fishing cruises, surfing safaris with on-site Tropic Surf coaches, Maldivian cooking classes, or even PADI courses led by a marine maestro. Plus, trust Baraabaru, the country's finest Indian restaurant, to

An intimate wedding ceremony in the middle of the ocean at **Four Seasons Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru**. Below: Gazing into the horizon at a private infinity pool, **Four Seasons Maldives at Kuda Huraa**.



cater to all hunger pangs and bring forth a feeling of culinary familiarity amid the celebrations.

The sky meets the sea at Landaa Giraavaru, while the alluring beauty of the Baa Atoll UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve adds to the charm. The Overwater Wedding Pavilion, accessible only by boat, blends natural beauty with comfort, and the pristine beach, with a meandering sandspit, guarantees a memorable sojourn. This seamless blend of sea and sky continues at the vast indoor-outdoor villas where infinity pools and sea-gazing lofts create the ideal honeymoon haven. At the heart of every Landaa moment is the Resort's 'Planetary Wellness' ethos—from the pioneering new jungle-to-lagoon wellness haven, AyurMa, to life-changing conservation experiences like rehabilitating turtles, regenerating coral reefs, and swimming with manta rays. fourseasons.com —**BAYAR JAIN**



Tied Down in Maldives

Cocooned by azure waters and enveloped in serenity, Maldives' **Taj Exotica Resort & Spa** and **Taj Coral Reef Resort & Spa** make for ideal post-wedding getaways in the lap of luxury.

LOCATED A SHORT 20-MINUTE speedboat ride from Velana International Airport on Emboodhu Finolhu Island, **Taj Exotica Resort & Spa** offers 64 sea-view villas and suites—each with a promise of luxury, such as private pools, outdoor showers, suspended sun decks, and more. A selection of world-class restaurants, too, entice: set over the water, Deep End offers candlelit tables and Mediterranean dishes; international cuisines tempt at 24 Degrees; enjoy a range of cocktails, spirits, cigars, shishas, and wine at Equator Bar's sunset patio; and the poolside bar-and-restaurant serves healthy snacks, oven-fresh pizzas, and tropical cocktails.

Similarly, **Taj Coral Reef Resort & Spa**, just about an hour by speedboat from Velana International Airport, sits on Hembadhu Island. Here, 62 luxurious, thatched-roof villas embody the tropical vibe. The culinary delights on offer include the multi-cuisines at Bokkura; appetising South-American fare at the al fresco Open-The Grill; wood-fire,



From left: Couple renews their vows on the beach at **Taj Coral Reef Resort & Spa**; aerial view of the spectacular **Taj Exotica Resort & Spa**.

oven-baked pizzas at Pizzeria; and the vibrantly indulgent beverages at the open-air Reef Bar.

For added romance, each resort allows couples to savour these dining experiences at a secluded beach, treetop deck, floating ocean pavilion, moon deck, or even a beach lounge carved out of sand. Plus, both offer a host of romantic experiences, such as seaplane tours, sunset cruises, beachside vow renewals, water sports, shipwreck diving, submarine experiences, and more. tajhotels.com —**BAYAR JAIN**



Pose as a couple in the golden-hued foyer of the opulent palace.

A REGAL ROMANCE

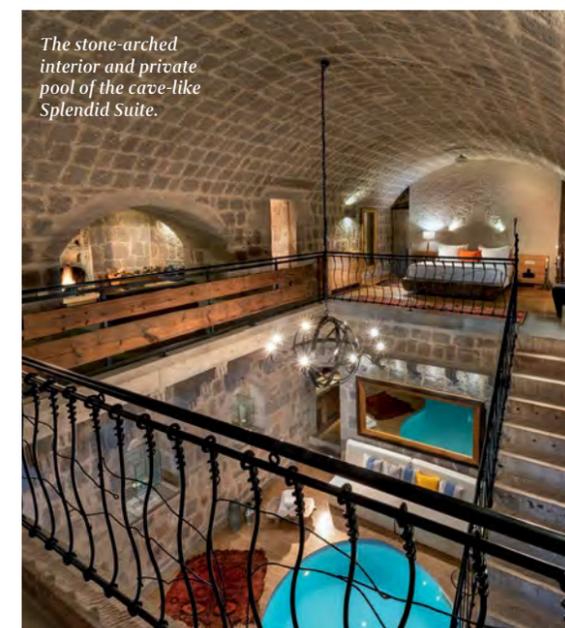
A wedding at a 17th-century imperial residence for sultans is, of course, an opulent event. At **Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul**, however, it elevates into an enriching affair to remember.

SIMPLY PUT, THE PALATIAL Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul is designed for a royal wedding. Formerly an imperial residence of sultans, this 17th-century hotel has embodied its regal past to craft luxurious weddings even today, that too by the Bosphorus—the only Ottoman imperial palace and hotel at this picturesque location.

With 310 lavish rooms on offer, this sprawling space has accommodations large enough to host groups of all sizes. Choose from the Sultan Suite, the largest of its kind in all of Europe; the Pasha & Presidential Suites, each of which offer spectacular views of the city; the pool-facing Asian section with a private garden; or

the Grand Deluxe Bosphorus View Room, with a 180° view of the majestic river, amongst others.

Dive into a fine-dining extravaganza of Turkish and international cuisines, as well as delicious breakfast spreads at the Tuğra, the Gazebo, or Laledan. Follow it up with colourful cocktails and innovative snacks at the lively bars and pop-up venues—The 47, Le Fumoir, and Berthold. Leave it to the experts here to transform the already lavish spaces into fairy-tale backdrops—be it the legendary Palace Terrace facing the Bosphorus, the grand Palace function rooms, or the picturesque green gardens. kempinski.com —**BJ**



The stone-arched interior and private pool of the cave-like Splendid Suite.

WHERE FAIRY TALES COME TO LIFE

Whimsical with a dose of history, **Argos in Cappadocia** is a haven for couples looking to organise intimate weddings, renew vows, or simply soak in romantic moments of togetherness as newlyweds.

WITH ITS BLUE SKIES studded by a series of multi-coloured, hot-air balloons floating over fairy-tale-like chimneys and honeycombed hills, **Argos in Cappadocia** is synonymous with magic and romance. An ancient settlement revived through a 25-year restoration process, this hotel has 51 rooms that boast rustic niches and corners shaped by volcanic rocks, modern furniture embellished by Turkish handicrafts, and the option of rooms with private pools. The pet-friendly destination offers historical venues, ideal for close-knit weddings: Vadi, a garden space dotted with caves and the naturally acoustic ambiance of Pigeon Valley; Bezirhane, a 2,000-year-old monastery with a

dramatic flair; The Chapel, a striking chamber that once served as a place of worship; Monks, an outdoor space on sloping terraces overlooking fairy chimneys; and an impressive, repurposed Museum Hall. At each venue, the resort's experienced staff assures a seamless celebration.

An exclusive honeymoon package of three nights at the resort includes a stay in rooms with private plunge pools overlooking the mountains, breakfast in bed, and an hour-long couples' massage. A candlelit dinner at Seki Restaurant adds to the mysticism; a glass of the house wine as you stroll through the UNESCO World Heritage Site's wonders enhances the romance. argosincappadocia.com —**BJ**

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS RESORT MALDIVES (2); COURTESY OF ÇIRAĞAN PALACE KEMPINSKI ISTANBUL

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF TAJ EXOTICA RESORT & SPA AND TAJ CORAL REEF RESORT & SPA (2); COURTESY OF ARGOS IN CAPPADOCIA

Blissfully Romantic

Idyllic islandic vacations come to life at **Atmosphere Kanifushi Maldives**, making it the ideal destination for a dreamy honeymoon, romantic holiday, or a vow-renewal ceremony.



ESTLED ON LHAVIYANI ATOLL, Atmosphere Kanifushi recreates a delightful Maldivian holiday right from the get-go. A 35-minute seaplane ride from Velana International Airport in Malé, this resort is set amidst white-sand beaches, lush-green palm trees, and crystal-blue lagoons. The 172 spaciouly designed villas offer direct access to the beach or lagoon. The Sunset Beach Villa with Pool adds easy check-in at the villa and a welcome bottle of champagne to the tempting mix.

Choose the scenic, over-water Pier Six for an eclectic seafood menu and Japanese teppanyaki grills; Just Veg for contemporary Mediterranean, Arabic, and Indian vegetarian fare; and the aptly named Ceylon Bliss for Sri Lankan offerings served under a banyan tree. Done with these culinary indulgences? Then unwind with a cocktail in a super-comfortable beach cabana at The Liquid, a poolside bar; or wrap up the day at the adults-only, beachside venue, The Sunset Pool Bar.

Epitomise moments of togetherness with snorkelling excursions, kayak rides, sunset cruises, and strolls along



▲ From top: Gorgeous view of Atmosphere Kanifushi's water villas, set amidst azure-blue environs; couple enjoying a jet-skiing excursion.

the wooden jetty under star-studded skies. Opt for the Atmosphere Kanifushi Plan for a well-rounded, stress-free vacation. It includes all-day dining; unlimited premium wines, spirits, and cocktails; speciality fine-dining; water sports; and complimentary excursions to the Indian Ocean. atmosphere-kanifushi.com —**BAYAR JAIN**



▲ Newlyweds hold hands as they walk down the elegant staircase of the beautiful palace.

ROMANCE PERSONIFIED

While Venice has already captured the hearts of love-struck couples, the historical **San Clemente Palace Kempinski** takes this fascinating magnetism a notch higher.

PERCHED ON SAN CLEMENTE, a private island situated 10 minutes from Piazza San Marco by the resort's complimentary boat, San Clemente Palace Kempinski and its charming environs exude an unparalleled air of tranquillity. The island that once served as the resting area for guests visiting the Palazzo Ducale also houses an old, privately-owned Romanesque church dating back to the year 1131. There's a sense of timelessness here that extends to the resort, too.

The lavish property's 197 rooms, including 63 suites, feature high ceilings and stunning views of the lagoon or the centuries-old park. Food enthusiasts are sure to appreciate the refined cuisine at

Acquerello, an Italian restaurant set on the terrace of the ancient church; savour Asian flavours at the chic, poolside Buddha-Bar Beach; or devour breakfast spreads at Insieme, amongst other dining options. To enhance the post-wedding, stress-free state, embark on a relaxing spa experience, with offerings that include a couple's suite, saunas, and steam baths.

The resort's historical gardens with ancient trees, natural lake, three-hole golf-training course, tennis court, and sunset views make for breathtaking attractions. Adding to the many charms, an experienced staff promises utmost attention and special care towards the couple. kempinski.com —**BJ**



Clockwise, from above: The dazzling Cabuchon Ruby Necklace is a beautiful amalgamation of rubies, pearls, and diamonds set in gold; Mary J Blige wore the brand's earrings for her performance at the Oscars; Shraddha Kapoor, the showstopper for Falguni Shane Peacock at the FDCI Couture Week 2021, poses in Narayan Jewellers' Cabuchon Ruby Necklace and matha patti; Mr Jatin Chokshi, Mr Narendra Ambalal Chokshi and Mr Ketan Chokshi of Narayan Jewellers.



NARAYAN JEWELLERS Classically Modern Luxury Designs

Combining the rich cultural heritage of India with a touch of modernity, Narayan Jewellers is the preferred designer brand among new-age brides and celebrities alike. **By Anushka Goel**

Narayan Jewellers by Ketan and Jatin Chokshi is a rich legacy of 80 years of exquisite traditional and post-modernist contemporary designs. Redefining global luxury from limited editions to 'one in a million', every piece designed by them is unique. Integrity, Narayan believes, is mandatory to be a sustainable brand.

The heritage label associated with Falguni Shane Peacock as jewellery partner to unveil their new bridal line, The Royal Trove, at the 2nd Digital FDCI Couture Week 2021. The new collection showcased luxe fine-jewellery designed using rare raw materials with timeless design aesthetics and exquisite craftsmanship. Actress Shraddha Kapoor turned showstopper for Falguni Shane Peacock and was accessorised in Narayan's exclusive cabochon-cut, ruby plastron necklace set and a *matha patti* (ornamental headband).

Narayan Jewellers is established as a global icon of luxurious designs, legendary style, and heirloom masterpieces, keeping with sustainable practices. Their Royal Trove collection is rooted in Indian culture and heritage

with a touch of modernity, and transforms the modern bride into a royal princess on her special day. Ranging from a choker and multi-layered *jadau* pieces for the wedding, to delicate designs for the sangeet and mehendi celebrations, and modern and western statement-diamond pieces for the reception, this new collection has options for every occasion.

Narayan continues creating unique concepts in an inimitable style, making the brand relevant in modern times. Their designs have been featured at the Oscars, through collections designed for Forevermark, and celebrities like Mary J Blige and Olivia Wilde. They were also a part of the New York Fashion Week for five seasons. At home, they have styled Bollywood stars like Sonam Kapoor and Tapsee Pannu, and played an integral role in Indian fashion shows, including Lakme Fashion Week and FDCI India Couture Week. Having won over 25 awards, the brand has become a universal favourite over the years. Narayan Jewellers' vision is to become a global, luxury design house that sets industry benchmarks. And the future looks radiant.



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF ATMOSPHERE KANIFUSHI MALDIVES (2); COURTESY OF SAN CLEMENTE PALACE KEMPINSKI

For more information, visit narayanjewellers.com

Sunshine State of Mind

Goa is not just for beach weddings. Blessed with rivers, lush forests, hillsides, and a rich heritage, the tropical state offers plenty of backdrops for your destination wedding. We check out two dreamy locations: the sprawling Hilton Goa Resort perched on a hillock overlooking River Nerul, where actor **POOJA HEGDE** plays bride for this issue's cover, and DoubleTree by Hilton Goa-Panaji along River Mandovi. Together, they make up the Goa chapter of Wedding Diaries by Hilton.

Text by Anushka Goel & Rashima Nagpal

Produced by Rashima Nagpal
Photographed by Taras Taraporvala
Assistant Photographer Meetesh Mirchandani
Styled by Meagan Concessio
Assistant Stylist Humaira Lakdawala
Hair by Suhas Shinde
Make-up by Kajol Mulani
Location Hilton Goa Resort

Bollywood actor Pooja Hegde says her wedding would be a very South Indian-looking affair.

ON HER: Yellow vintage rose lehenga, ₹1,10,000, **Gazal Gupta Couture**; emerald and diamond necklace, and polki diamond and emerald bangles, *price on request*, **Birdichand Ghanshyamdas Jewellers, Jaipur**.



The Lounge Pool at Hilton Goa Resort is a good place to enjoy the sunset.

From big, fat and traditional to intimate, modest and modern, the great Indian wedding has come a long way. Thanks to the pandemic, destination weddings have changed dramatically too. With health and safety being people's foremost priorities, familiar territories closer to home in India are seeing a surge in demand. Not that India ever lacked the variety or appeal of venues for hosting these, but there's something to be said of necessity leading to rediscovery. Goa is one such special destination.

Hospitality icon Hilton is au courant with the latest trends. So, it is launching a bespoke wedding service called Wedding Diaries by Hilton, with a choice of several properties around the country. For this special issue, we land in Goa, where you have two river-facing properties—Hilton Goa Resort and DoubleTree by Hilton Goa-Panaji—as potential venues for big celebrations.

Hilton Goa Resort

The hour-long drive from Dabolim Airport to Hilton Goa Resort gives a glimpse of the best of Goan landscapes, from the shoreline to hillocks, mangroves, and old Portuguese buildings. Launched last year, Hilton Goa Resort falls in North Goa, but the property feels a world away from the state's popular shores. A swift left turn from the highway leads us towards the suburbs of Marra and Saipem. The meandering Nerul River keeps us company until we drive up the hillock upon which the property sits. Inspired by the heritage forts of Goa, the resort is built in rusty-red laterite stone. Elegant curves lead you to the main porch area, which is decorated with a life-size anchor that symbolises a fort. The hotel is also spread out like a fort, with

different blocks—named after the forts Aguada, Corjuem, Cabo de Rama, and Rachol—and no more than five levels interconnected with staircases.

The property charms us from the moment we set foot in it. The lobby features a conical roof with wooden planks, traditional tiled flooring, marble table tops, and panelled windows that frame the surrounding greenery. At the heart of the resort is its all-day-dining venue, @Saipe, which takes its name from the neighbourhood. Besides a long list of regional and international delicacies, @Saipe serves uninterrupted views of the sunset from its al fresco corridor—as does the pool area, and many of the rooms. @Saipe's offerings are complemented by the property's lounge bar, Coco, and its delicatessen, Doce. Goan influences, too, are sprinkled throughout the 104-room property. It doesn't take us long to envision a wedding in its regal yet modern setting. The resort's versatile spaces can be customised and dressed up to suit a variety of events: engagement ceremony, cocktail party, bridal shower, sangeet night, wedding ceremony, and reception.

You can't have a great wedding without great food. At Hilton Goa Resort, you need not worry about your guests' gastronomic needs. Executive Chef Ashley Nunes tells us that the food served here centres around local ingredients, not cuisine. This, he says, helps them tailor menus for events and

COURTESY OF HILTON



Hegde strikes a pose at Hilton Goa Resort.

ON HER: Deep-blue Mughal embroidered lehenga, ₹2,20,000, Debyani; maang tikka, ₹8,300, rings, ₹6,200, ₹5,200, ₹3,300, and ₹8,300, necklaces, ₹49,900 and ₹23,500, Curio Cottage.



The actor dreams of a destination wedding in a natural setting.

ON HER: Lehenga, price on request, **Manish Malhotra**; stone matha pattī, ₹42,000, bangles, ₹49,400, ₹17,500, and ₹10,500, ring, ₹7,600, **Amrapali Jewels**.



DoubleTree by Hilton Goa-Panaji is located 10 minutes away from Old Goa, which is home to a string of old churches and convents recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

celebrations. Since the offerings of Wedding Diaries by Hilton are not limited to any one property, Hilton Goa Resort can get chefs from its sister properties, or hire experienced local chefs, to put together the menu you desire for your celebrations.

DoubleTree by Hilton Goa-Panaji

Three-year-old DoubleTree by Hilton Goa-Panaji offers yet another gorgeous backdrop to mark your special day in the Sunshine State. Standing tall on the bank of the gurgling River Mandovi, a stone's throw away from Divar Island, this contemporary property comes equipped with a state-of-the-art ballroom and an infinity pool. It has 160 spacious rooms and suites—enough to accommodate a big gathering, and then some. This Hilton hotel highlights the cultural riches of the state in its three restaurants. Comida, Feliz, and Rio Salao—all Portuguese names—offer something for every palate. Inspired by Portuguese architecture and Goan lifestyle, Comida boasts live cooking stations and a mix of Western, Indian, and Asian fare, while putting the focus on local produce. Feliz offers a

truly romantic al fresco seating overlooking the river, and coastal dishes to feast on. In front of Feliz, there's a sunset lawn that is equally good for hosting a mehendi function in the day and a sanjeet or cocktail party in the evening. Trust Rio Salao to offer you a much-needed breather from the hectic arrangements and a relaxing cuppa between events.

Hosting a wedding with Wedding Diaries by Hilton ought to make the experience entirely seamless at whichever property you choose. Couples can book customised packages to cater to their needs. From the venue décor to photoshoots, in-room welcome hampers, a dedicated check-in desk, personalised key cards, luggage tags, bath amenities, monogrammed accessories, and more, the offerings can be tailored to every whim. To mark the launch of this service, the brand is offering Wedding Bliss, an offer available till 30 November for events until 31 March, 2022. It includes additional perks such as a bridal suite, in-room breakfast, a dedicated photoshoot venue, sparkling wine and appetisers, and triple the points on Hilton Honors that the couple can redeem on their honeymoon! [hilton.com](https://www.hilton.com) +

Dreamy Hilton Properties Around India

- ▶ **Conrad Pune**
- ▶ **Conrad Bengaluru**
- ▶ **DoubleTree by Hilton Jaipur Amer**
- ▶ **DoubleTree by Hilton Agra**

From left: You can have your mandap set up on the infinity pool at DoubleTree by Hilton Goa-Panaji; couples can avail customised venue décor and catering menus.

COURTESY OF HILTON





Hegde wants her wedding to be one big party where everyone spends time together.

ON HER: Fiery-red pastiche fit and flare-ribbed organza skirt with a puffed-sleeve crop top, ₹66,000, **Aisha Rao**; earrings, ₹32,000, rings, ₹3,000, ₹1,900, ₹4,900, ₹1,800, ₹2,950, and ₹3,100, **Amrapali Jewels**.

“My ideas may be modern, but I’m a sucker for tradition”

For this issue’s cover shoot, **Pooja Hegde** effortlessly transforms into the modern Indian bride. Between shots, Hegde talks to us about her dream destination wedding, places that evoke romance, and bridal stereotypes that she’d like to break. **By Anushka Goel**

5 Essentials for a Destination Wedding

- ▶ Polaroid camera
- ▶ Comfortable shoes
- ▶ Phone
- ▶ Battery backup
- ▶ Research about the place

What does travel mean to you?

Travelling is like finding a bit of my soul in different places, but at the same time leaving behind a part of me in every place I go to. I’ve met different people and understood cultures, and I have realised how vast the world is. I have grown so much because of travelling.

What was your favourite part about the Hilton Goa Resort?

It was the fact that you can get a view of the river, and you can really disconnect and be one with nature. I also loved the fact that you can go to the beach whenever you want to.

What does your dream destination wedding look like?

It will be something to do with nature. It will also be a very South Indian-looking affair, because I am Mangalorean. So, me in a Kanjeevaram sari would definitely be one of the things!

What is your idea of the modern Indian bride?

I think I am a modern Indian bride—my ideas on life may be modern, but I am a sucker for tradition. I feel that the modern Indian bride is changing, as weddings are becoming a relaxed affair.

Is there a stereotype you would like to break, especially in terms of the Indian bride?

High heels under lehengas! I’d contemplate wearing sneakers under my lehenga, so that I can dance the night away. And in case anybody wants to make a quick run for it, sneakers can be comfy!

An intimate gathering or a big, fat Indian wedding: what would you pick and why?

An intimate gathering, although I can’t help but have a big, fat Indian wedding because I have a big family. I want it to be one big party where everyone spends time together.

What’s your fondest memory of a trip?

I think my last *Travel + Leisure India & South Asia* cover [shoot], where we went to AlUla [in Saudi Arabia], was beautiful. It’s one of the most beautiful covers I’ve shot. Christmas in New York was a great experience, and going to Salzburg in Austria was another beautiful moment. Bali was lovely because of the energy. And I was shooting for a film in Italy for a month, so I have spent a lot of time in Turin. We went to a place called Barolo, which was beautiful, too.

Your favourite romantic destinations?

Kashmir, Paris, Bali, and Japan. ✦



Juhi Godambe Jain

DIGITAL INFLUENCER

AN INTIMATE FAIRY TALE WEDDING

Digital influencer **Juhi Godambe Jain's** wedding during the pandemic looked like a dream, with beautiful outfits, personalised décor, and a whole lot of love. She describes all that went into planning this dreamy affair, despite these strange times. **BY ANUSHKA GOEL**

What went into planning your dream wedding during the pandemic?

Honestly, it was pretty emotional. Everything was so uncertain during the pandemic. Our wedding plans had to be changed thrice. Originally, we had planned to host the ceremonies in Udaipur, but because of COVID-19, we wanted to avoid air travel. So, we moved the wedding to Mumbai.

Then, just 20 days before the wedding, the second lockdown was announced, and I, too, contracted COVID-19. Finally, 15 days before the wedding, our families came together and decided to host the ceremonies in Alibaug.

We had the most amazing planners on board, FB Celebrations (fbcelebrations.com). They managed to organise the entire wedding in Alibaug in less than 15 days! In the end, it all went well.

What are the key things one should keep in mind while planning an intimate wedding?

As you are surrounded by your dearest ones on your big day, you can add a lot of personal touches to the décor—as we did! When I walked down the aisle, Siddharth [her husband] narrated a poem he had written for me, recounting our journey together. We had pictures of the two of us displayed all over Mansion House [their wedding venue].

Pay attention to details when you have a smaller guest list. Décor, gifts, seating arrangements, etc. can be focused upon. Pick offbeat locations. You can turn your wedding into a fun holiday, where everyone stays under the same roof. Ours turned out to be a four-day-long celebration with our loved ones.

Did you face any hurdles while organising the whole affair because of the pandemic?

Many family members couldn't be a part of the wedding because of the 50-person restriction and because some members live abroad.

Besides that, there were many restrictions. We had to procure permissions from the police for every single thing. We had to adapt to the



Sweet and memorable moments from the wedding ceremonies, capturing Siddharth and Juhi's blissful celebrations. Opposite page: Resplendent in pink, Juhi Godambe Jain is a gorgeously bejewelled bride.

restrictions. A lot of planning went into ensuring that everything went according to the law. Since my wedding was going to be posted on social media, we had to be very careful because the slightest of things could upset people.

How did you zero in on your wedding destination?

Alibaug is second home for us. We have a house there; so, managing things became easier. It was a destination wedding, but at the same time, being super close to Mumbai made it a convenient choice.

What was your favourite part about having a destination wedding?

I think it was the fact that it felt like a big family holiday to celebrate an important milestone. Everyone was stress-free for those four days and had an absolute ball.

How did you select your bridalwear?

I have always wanted to be a Sabyasachi bride. However, because of the pandemic, this was also a very stressful choice. The Sabya

workshop was shut when I had to pick my lehenga. I had to choose from the limited options available. Somehow, fortunately, I managed to find the perfect lehenga; the one that spoke to me!

Your wedding functions had elements of sustainability, such as macramé décor and flowers. Tell us more about it.

We tried to be as mindful as possible. We used local flowers and embraced what was locally available. A lot of the furniture used in the wedding was revamped, rather than having new pieces created. We made sure to donate the leftover food at the end of the day.

Tell us about your honeymoon.

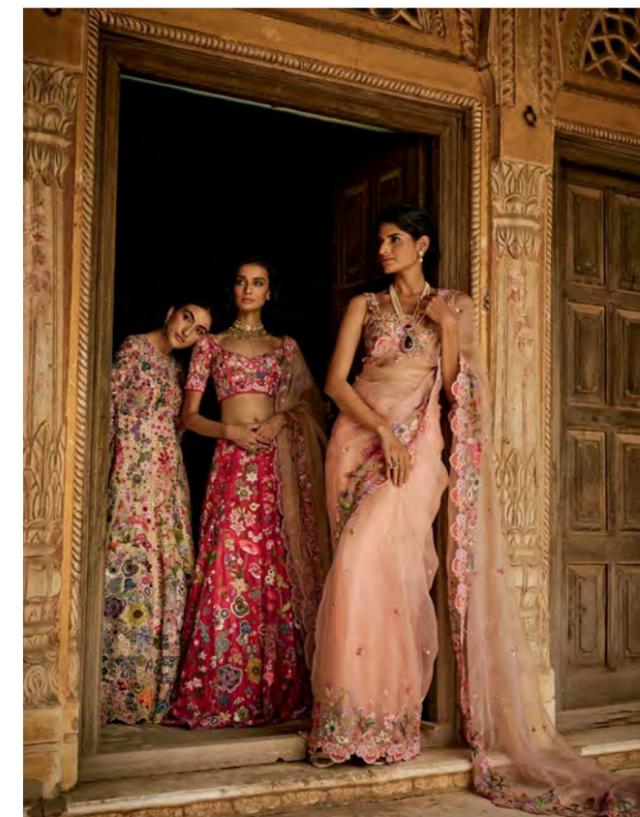
We just got back from a magical honeymoon in Russia! I contracted COVID-19 in April, so I had to wait for three months to get my first dose. I finally managed to get my first jab, and Russia was the only country allowing people with one vaccine dose to enter. Siddharth had been to Russia before, and he knew I would love it. He took charge and planned the entire trip; it was amazing! ✨

Rahul Mishra

FASHION DESIGNER

THE CRAFTSMAN

Creator of timeless couture, **Rahul Mishra** unveils the secret recipe of crafting dreamy bridalwear lines. In an exclusive chat, he takes us through his unique design process. **BY PRIYANKA CHAKRABARTI**



▲ Exquisitely crafted, Rahul Mishra's designs showcase a range of kaleidoscopic colours and intricate embroidered techniques—with each piece conceptualised to express a personalised style.

What, according to you, defines 2021's bridal couture sensibilities?

Every day, I meet brides who know exactly what they want. They come with such clarity of thought! They know what colour palette, silhouette, textile, and even embroidery technique can narrate their story best. Today's brides are exceptionally evolved and are looking for mindful bridalwear. With increasing awareness towards sustainable and slow fashion, brides are asking all the right questions. They wish to invest in tradition and heritage, but with a touch of individuality. And this reflects in the way they engage with luxury, currently.

In short, brides nowadays are more connected with the sentiment that underlines a wedding attire; they know the importance of fit and fall, and they want to build a timeless narrative with their bridal outfits.

What colour palettes do you like to work with when you're crafting bridal couture?

I've been enamoured with the essence of ivory and gold for a long time, but lately, there has been an inclination towards maximalist embroideries. Besides soft, pastel hues or statement, jewel tones, I like an outburst of colours—akin to how nature is. I strongly believe that nature is maximalist and I draw inspiration from her. The way countless

wildflowers grow to create an absolute visual harmony—that's what I try to achieve through my designs.

What does it take to craft breathtaking couture pieces?

At our atelier, the intention is to cultivate luxury that is mindful and ethically sustainable—clothing that encourages participation over consumption. We work on the philosophy of the three P's when creating a product—purpose, process, and people. At first, the intention is to identify the purpose of creating yet another outfit and then determining a suitable process for creating it. When the purpose is generating more opportunities and employment, the processes are chosen accordingly. For instance, handloom and hand embroidery are integrated into the working dynamics. This allows us to encourage more people to participate and that makes the product so special.

While the inspiration comes from my first-hand experiences, I then share it with my team, and with the embroiderers and tailors so that our whole atelier sees a common dream and works towards it.

Define a Rahul Mishra bride.

The Rahul Mishra bride is an evolved, modern woman who is driven by her individuality. She is blatantly contemporary, and yet is respectful of age-old traditions. While she follows tradition, she's unafraid to add elements of her personality to the clothes that she wears. Since she's well versed with international fashion trends, she is highly cognizant of what she wants. She's particular about fit and tailoring. She refuses to follow, she commands;

she's a storyteller and she understands a good design. This new-age bride is self-sufficient and opinionated; as a brand, when we interact with her, she adds a part of her sensibilities to our idea of the Rahul Mishra bride.

What are the things to keep in mind while picking a winter wedding outfit?

Always pick an outfit that is comfortable to wear—for any season. After all, nothing brings down a look like discomfort in wearing it.

How can one transform heirloom bridalwear into a modern one?

There are many ways to achieve this. You can upcycle an heirloom sari or dupatta into a skirt, jacket, or a kurta; or you can just style it differently. It's a personal choice and once you're determined to make it a part of your story, you'll find a way.

How do you ensure your bridalwear remains timeless and sustainable?

We intend to only make clothes that are independent of trends and seasons. I see no point in creating yet another piece that exists in the world already. Each of our pieces is hand embroidered and, hence, is unique from the other. Crafted over thousands of human hours, each of our garments holds high emotional value as it is touched by many hands before reaching its resting place. We intend to create clothes that are more art than fashion, and craftsmanship just becomes a parameter of quality and aesthetic in the process. ✦

Tanya Ghavri

CELEBRITY STYLIST

STYLISH YET SUSTAINABLE

When it comes to weddings, one is often faced with the question, “How much is too much?” Celebrity stylist **Tanya Ghavri** talks about minimalism and sustainability, and how they help add glamour to a winter wedding. **BY ANUSHKA GOEL**



▲ *Bold and beautiful, ace celebrity stylist Tanya Ghavri is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to setting fashion trends.*

What are the top three bridalwear trends this year?

I think the top bridalwear trends this year have to include layering. It's something that brides should be looking at because it's trendy, cool, interesting, and makes for a different look. Whether it's cropped jackets or a long Anamika jacket under a sari, it's beautiful—especially if you're getting married in the winter.

Another bridal trend that I'd recommend has to be wearing hues of greys and blues, and deeper colours. Sticking to one statement jewellery piece is another bridal trend this year. As a bride, you're going to layer jewellery. But for other events, such as your mehendi and haldi, focus on one statement piece.



What colour palette will do the rounds this season?

I think tone-on-tone is doing really well; so are light prints—whether it's jewel tones for the night, or using the same colour for the embroidery and the lehenga. Embroidery on light prints is subtle yet classy.

Your favourite bridal outfit for day weddings?

I love beautiful ombré tones, like a light blue going into a darker blue. Colours work really well, whether it's tones of yellow, pinks, or peaches. But, honestly, I think white and gold is a classic [combination]. Sometimes, an egg-white-and-gold pairing is a beautiful day shade, too.

Which bridal look do you recommend for evening ceremonies?

I have always loved jewel tones for evening ceremonies!

When you style a bride, what are the things you take into consideration before finalising the look?

I think it's most important to figure out your jewellery. Then figure out who your hair and make-up artist is going to be, because they get booked months in advance. Then, figure out your venue—whether it's outdoors or indoors—the weather at the time of your wedding, the colours used for the décor, and who is going to do the décor so that you don't pop too much.

COURTESY OF TANYA GHAVRI



▲ *Subtle sophistication with a statement-making dash of colours and silhouettes express Tanya Ghavri's design mantra and aesthetic.*

Once you figure out your jewellery, match your outfits to it. Figure out who your top five designers are, start looking at their Instagram, figure out your edits, the colours you favour, and then meet your designers to get their inputs. If you have a stylist, figure out the styles that flatter your body type with them.

These days, brides prefer a minimalistic look. How should a bride style herself for the big day without overdoing the layers?

I agree that minimal is the way to go. I always say that when you wear a statement piece, it's about *that* piece, and you don't need to be overwhelmed by too much jewellery, hair, and make-up. You still need to look like yourself. Let your outfit stand for itself, and wear one piece of jewellery that looks beautiful. Just wear something that elevates

your outfit. If you understand how to balance your look, I think that's good enough.

How can a bride aim for sustainability without compromising on glamour?

Don't look at a lehenga that's too heavy. Maybe look at neutral colours. A lot of people like beautiful, archived, vintage pieces; that is something that you can choose, too. Use a vintage piece from your mom's wardrobe, restore it, and wear it for one of your wedding functions.

A bride you loved styling?

Without a doubt, the most special bride I styled was my sister. I was really excited to work with her on her wedding day. It was, of course, really emotional to style her. We had lots of fights but, eventually, she agreed with me on everything. ✦

PARADISE AWAITS

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#TL Recommends

As the wedding season gets underway in all its glorious splendour, multiple choices have to be made to plan the perfect nuptials. To ensure memorable, romantic, fun-filled, and stress-free celebrations, choose from our specially curated list of the best Indian and international hotels, wedding and honeymoon destinations, bachelorette party getaways, regional cuisines, bespoke desserts, and more.

CAPTIVATING CHOICES

- 60 Top 10 Indian Boutique Hotels
- 65 International Hotels for Destination Weddings
- 70 Luxury Hotels for Weddings in India
- 75 Best International Wedding Venues



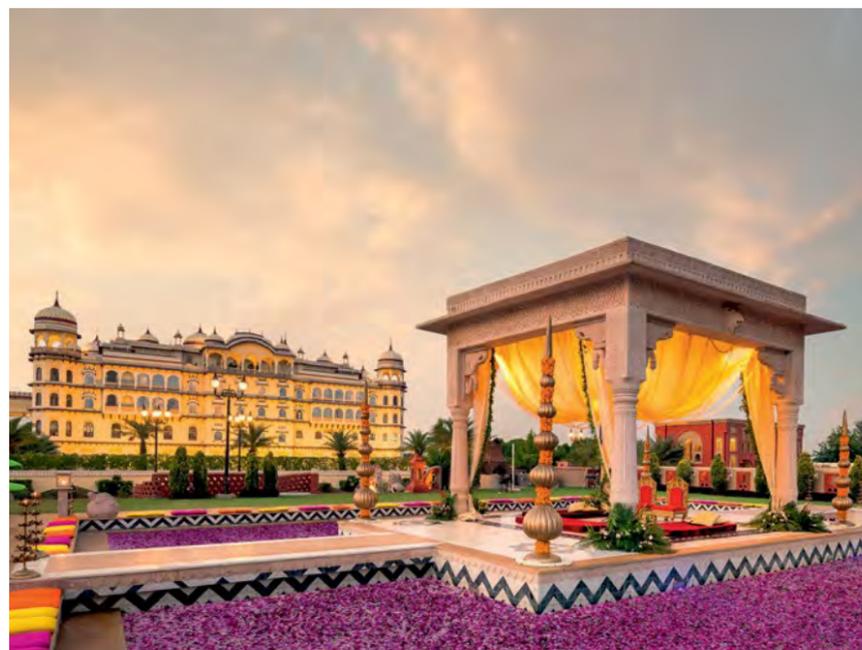
COURTESY OF ATLANTIS THE PALM

INTIMATE AFFAIRS

As smaller, intimate wedding parties take preference over large bashes, charming, designer venues offered by boutique hotels provide the perfect ambience to make your celebrations a success. Choose from these top 10 boutique properties around the country for an unforgettable destination wedding experience. **BY ANANYA BAHL**

Hazuri Bagh Karnal

SET WITHIN THE OPULENT Noor Mahal complex is the equally grandiose Hazuri Bagh, Karnal (hazuribagh.com). With a sprawling outdoor space that features two acres of elegant, green lawns, it is the ideal spot to celebrate your great Indian wedding, while taking care of any social-distancing requirements. Palm and date trees, as well as a pretty lotus pond courtyard create a dreamy vibe. Flexibility is the USP of this boutique property as wedding planners help you design a bespoke nuptial ceremony: small or large, traditional or modern. The picturesque Mandap at Dera, which serves as the setting for the *phas*, is spectacularly designed and is an Instagrammer's delight. Also within the complex are the Fateh Mahal restaurant and amphitheatre—perfect for hosting mehendi and sangeet ceremonies. Dining under the royal shamiana with its glistening chandeliers is recommended for those seeking a touch of old-school royalty. Hazuri Bagh is peppered with a lovely collection of art and antique furniture that add to its charm. Guests can stay at the adjacent Noor Mahal hotel. Smart rooms, smart controls, mobile check-ins, and the best of hi-tech solutions have been employed to ensure that COVID-19 doesn't dampen the festivities.



Rajmahal Palace Raas Jaipur

THERE IS NO DOUBT that Jaipur is the quintessential getaway for wedding festivities. The culture, colours, and Rajputana charm lend a gorgeous blend of flavours to any celebration. And encapsulating all this is the Rajmahal Palace Raas, Jaipur (raashotels.com). The former residence of Maharani Gayatri Devi, this tasteful property reflects the finesse and personality of the graceful queen. Draped in pastel shades, the Art Deco paradise houses 13 suites, including the Queen Elizabeth and Maharaja Suites, both of which can be used as individual apartments by the bridal couple. While the palace is ideally suited

for cosy, intimate stays for a limited number of guests from the wedding party, their in-house team will assist in booking accommodation at a nearby hotel of your choice for the rest of your guests. The property is also home to beautiful, expansive gardens that can host large parties, accommodating 200 to 2,500 guests for a variety of functions. The poolside is ideal for sundowners, while the in-house restaurant, 51 Shades of Pink, is perfect for elegant events. And depending on your desire for the day, the hotel's chefs can whip up cuisines and menus of your choice, including vegan, keto, and gluten-free.



Ri Kynjai—Serenity by the Lake Shillong

ONE OF THE MOST picturesque properties in India's northeast, Ri Kynjai (rikynjai.com) is ideal for couples seeking a destination that is off-the-beaten track. Overlooking Umiam Lake, about 18 kilometres from Shillong, its name literally translates to the 'Land of Serene Environs'. Featuring eco-friendly architecture and traditional hospitality intrinsic to the indigenous *Khasi* people's way of life, this hotel is an ode to its idyllic surroundings. Couples opting to tie the knot here are sure to experience the warmth

inherent to Meghalaya and an eye for detail that is particular to the staff. For weddings, the hotel recommends you book all 17 accommodation options (a mix of cottages and rooms). They also offer recommendations for the best banqueting food and beverage menus, décor, wedding planners, and a one-night complimentary stay for the couple as part of their wedding package. Ri Kynjai follows strict COVID-19 safety protocol that ensures highest standards of hygiene for all their guests.



Aramness Gir

LOVERS OF WILDLIFE and the great outdoors should head to the newly launched Aramness (aramness.com), a chic safari lodge located on the fringe of the Sasan Gir National Park in Gujarat, and the only luxury boutique hotel in the state. The property is home to 18 village-style *kothis*; each with a private pool and lovely forest views. Equipped to house 42 guests, this is the ultimate venue for an intimate wedding setup, far from the bustle of city life. Enhanced hygiene and exclusivity are guaranteed here. Guests can take a break in between functions to explore the forested area on game drives and jungle walks. The wedding fare includes farm-to-table menus by Kamini Patel, founder of Kitchen Therapy, and delicacies by Executive Chef Chetan Singh Rana. The spa offers an array of soothing massages for the couple to unwind. The lodge's name is an amalgamation of *aram*, which means 'rest' and *ness*, a word for the local villages of the area—and a deep sense of both is inherent throughout all experiences here.



Chittoor Kottaram Ernakulam

CGH EARTH'S Chittoor Kottaram (cghearth.com), home of the erstwhile Rajah of Kochi, exudes understated luxury and a vivid history, palpable even today. Tranquil solitude is the hallmark of this single-key mansion, and the serene setting is apt for those looking for an intimate marriage ceremony in the company of close family and friends. You arrive at the property by boat, which instantly makes you feel like royalty. The hotel's 'Wedded by Earth' programme is curated to reflect the close bond between nature and community, and the spectacular views of the lagoon and water lilies dancing on the backwater form the backdrop for your nuptials here. The staff at the hotel is totally devoted to your celebrations. Customised multi-cuisine menus are also on offer at this verdant oasis, ensuring a memorable experience.



Nadis Srinagar

SAY "I DO" IN Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir and one of the most romantic cities in India. And when you do, choose Nadis (nadis-hotel.com), a delightful boutique hotel, located opposite the pristine Harwan Garden. The tranquil ambience of the verdant garden permeates the hotel and its environs, and you are instantly

transported to a soothing world of romance. Best described as a modern take on a Kashmiri home, the property is inspired by alpine landscape and local hospitality. The hotel houses 18 airy, sunlit rooms, all beautifully appointed with elegant accessories. Be prepared to be bowled over by the exquisite Kashmiri cuisine, as the

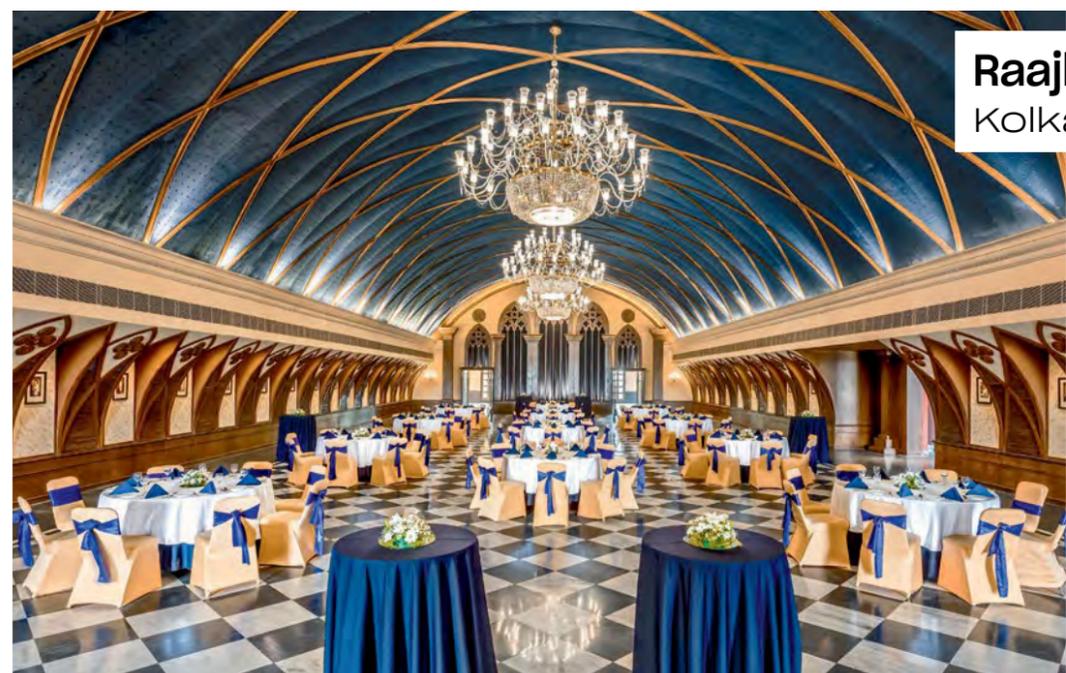
fragrance of spices like cinnamon, cardamom, clove, and saffron wafts through the air. Other cuisines can also be prepared on request. Nadis follows all COVID-19 safety protocols and procedures assigned by the Union Territory. For those who wish to explore the city and its many delights, the owner, Yaser Shaw is just a call away.



The Belgadia Palace Mayurbhanj

CHOOSE TO DO THINGS the royal way while contributing to a sustainable way of living at The Belgadia Palace (thebelgadiapalace.com). Built in the 18th century, this property is home to the erstwhile royal family of Mayurbhanj in Odisha. With purposeful travel at the heart of its existence, the hotel partners, along with the local tribal community, offer a peek into their traditional way of life. Built along Victorian lines, the

property allows couples to bask in the luxury of a bygone era as they await their special day. Nine heritage bedrooms—each tastefully decorated and fitted with modern amenities—are available, making the venue perfect for a cosy wedding with a small guestlist. And the offbeat location will add a magical touch to your ceremonies. Traditional fare, as well as customised menus can be prepared as per your choice.



Raajkutir-Swabhumi Kolkata

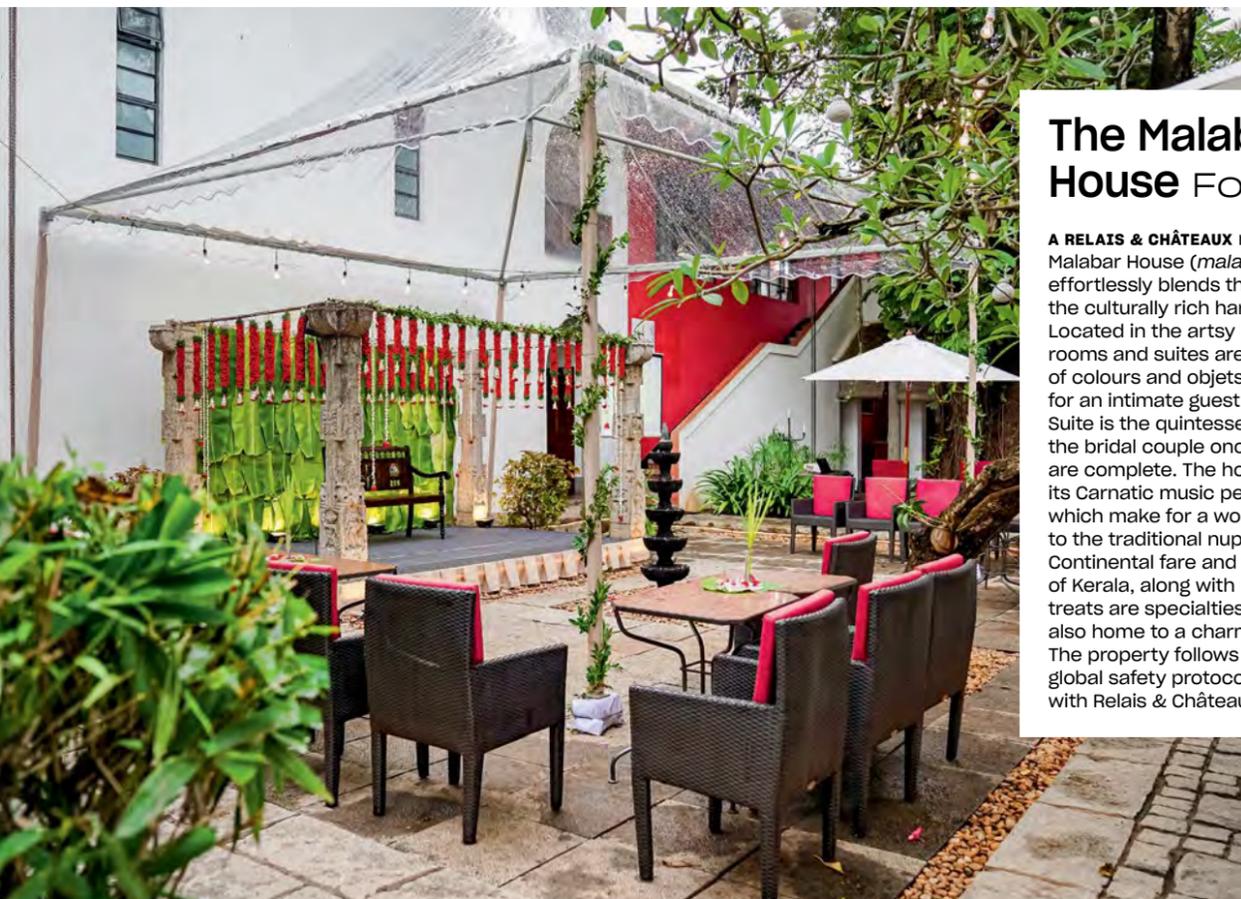
RELIVE THE DAYS of zamindars at Raajkutir-Swabhumi (raajkutir.com), a gorgeous boutique property in Kolkata. Designed as a time capsule and a metaphor for a bygone era, this property is an ode to the Bengal Renaissance. For couples seeking to infuse tradition and history into their wedding celebration, the hotel provides a background like no other. Its versatility is evidenced in the 33 luxuriously appointed rooms, and the three large banquet halls (indoor and outdoor) housed within the property. The hotel offers in-house wedding planners who specialise in helping the couple choose the right theme, décor, and scale of their ceremony, whether its a mehendi, sangeet, or an evening cocktail affair. The hotel also follows all COVID-19 protocols so you and your guests can have a stress-free time. raajkutir.com



Aurika Udaipur

UDAIPUR IS ONE OF the most popular choices for destination weddings. And still, the city of lakes always manages to surprise with an undiscovered gem. Located on a hilltop and spread across five acres, Aurika (aurikahotels.com) is a member of the Luxury Escapes collection and is one of the most majestic and expansive boutique hotels in Udaipur. Their banqueting and dining spaces can accommodate large wedding parties, as well as private, sit-down dinner celebrations under the stars. The hotel is home

to 139 modern and aesthetically appointed rooms, while the sweeping hilltop views are a treat for the eyes. Ekaara, the 510-square-metre, pillarless ballroom is perfect for socially distanced wedding functions. Comprehensive wedding packages, a dedicated staff, special décor services, and in-house wedding planners are at hand to help the bridal couple ensure no stone is left unturned. Also, the hotel is situated close to the city's main points of interests, including Fateh Sagar Lake and Pichola Lake.



The Malabar House Fort Kochi

A **RELAIS & CHÂTEAUX** member, the Malabar House (malabarhouse.com) effortlessly blends the old and new in the culturally rich harbour city of Kochi. Located in the artsy Fort Kochi, its 17 rooms and suites are an amalgamation of colours and objets d'art, perfect for an intimate guest list. The Malabar Suite is the quintessential abode for the bridal couple once the festivities are complete. The hotel is known for its Carnatic music performances, which make for a wonderful addition to the traditional nuptial ceremony. Continental fare and the coastal cuisine of Kerala, along with Mediterranean treats are specialties at this hotel; it is also home to a charming wine lounge. The property follows the Bureau Veritas global safety protocol in association with Relais & Châteaux. ✦

BEYOND BORDERS

Taking your wedding ceremonies to a gorgeous overseas location has a tempting charm. Pick from these international hotels that ace the Indian wedding game and simplify the entire destination-wedding-planning process. **BY ANUSHKA GOEL & BAYAR JAIN**



Atlantis, The Palm Dubai

WITH A MASSIVE INVENTORY of 1,549 rooms and suites on offer—including seven signature suites—Atlantis, The Palm is ideal for lavish celebrations just as much for intimate ones. Choose from any of their 13 dedicated indoor-event spaces. The spectacular Atlantis Ballroom (with direct access to the Royal Terrace) and the glittering Asateer Marquee, for instance, can accommodate up to 2,500 guests, while the Silk Ballroom and the Spice Ballroom—complete with a private terrace overlooking the twinkling skyline—can individually house 300 people. Alternatively, consider a poolside luncheon at The Zero Entry Pool that offers the ideal backdrop for up to 2,000 guests, the 17-hectare Aquaventure Waterpark for a fun-filled after-party, or The Royal Beach for beachside elegance and intimate receptions. For a truly unique wedding, host a show-stopping event surrounded by 65,000 marine animals, with a tailor-made function for up to 150 guests at The Lost Chambers Aquarium.

Irrespective of venue, trust their in-house, dedicated wedding specialist to curate a memorable event. The services also include a customised multi-tiered wedding cake; a one- or two-night stay at an Imperial Club Room, with honeymoon facilities and in-room breakfast; preferential room rates for wedding bookings; in-house florists; and access to Signature Suites for ceremonies. atlantis.com

Kulm Hotel St. Moritz Switzerland

THE KULM HOTEL St. Moritz has a long-standing history in hospitality, dating back to 1856. The hotel has served as the wedding venue for several high-profile celebrations from across the world. The views here are paradisiacal—the hotel is surrounded by pristine mountain forests, quiet Alpine meadows, rushing mountain streams and lakes, and centuries-old culture, making it one of the most attractive wedding destinations in the Alps.

A member of Virtuoso and The Leading Hotels of the World, the hotel boasts exquisitely designed rooms, six world-class restaurants, various event rooms, an extensive spa, and exclusive treatments by the Swiss luxury brand Valmont.

Adding to its charm is the hotel's partnership with Tehiya Narvel Events (tehiyanarvel.com), who are not only experts in curating Indian weddings, but also offer professional hospitality for the Indian bride and groom. kulm.com





Paradise Island Resort & Spa Maldives

A 20-MINUTE speedboat ride from Velana International Resort, Paradise Island Resort & Spa brings all islandic wedding dreams to life. From spacious bungalows with direct access to the pristine beach, to luxury villas with private hot tubs and beach-pool villas with a contemporary nautical design, each room here is heavenly. The dining options—ranging from traditional Japanese, Italian, and Maldivian—are all desirable.

However, it's the idyllic setting that steals the spotlight for all to-be weds. Imagine a secluded island with white-sand beaches, a lagoon awash in deep blues and aquamarines, and soaring coconut palms swaying in the breeze gracing the wedding album.

Celebrations here are effortless and tailor-made, courtesy of a dedicated coordinator attending to every detail. While a professional team caters to everything from planning to the execution, the couple can soak in panoramic Maldivian views at the infinity pool, floating effortlessly towards a dreamy wedding. villahotels.com



Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort

THE LUXURY ANANTARA RIVERSIDE Bangkok Resort is located on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, which loosely translated means the 'River of Kings'. Set amidst 11 acres of lush tropical gardens, the gorgeous property offers a plethora of idyllic wedding settings to choose from—ranging from a grandiose ballroom with regal Thai décor, to an al fresco terrace shrouded in orchids at the water's edge.

The resort's 'Reet At The Riverside' wedding package is curated to seamlessly accommodate multi-day celebrations for up to 250 guests. This includes accommodation in 125 rooms for three nights; a welcome dinner with soft drinks at the Riverside Terrace restaurant, offering stunning views of the river; an after-party for 100 guests at various in-house venues that the couple can choose from; a mehendi lunch with soft drinks at the tropical-garden, restaurant terrace of Trader Vic's; a sangeeet dinner and soft drinks at the grand Chaophraya Ballroom; puja ceremony rooms for the bride and groom; a wedding lunch at the elegant Garden Room; preparations for the baraat to arrive via boats; high tea at the beautiful Grand Sala terrace overlooking the river; and a wedding reception dinner with soft drinks in the very elegant Lunar and Moon event rooms. anantara.com



Royal Saray Resort Managed by Accor Spa Bahrain

INSPIRED BY THE TRADITIONS of a Royal Bahraini summer house, Royal Saray Resort Managed by Accor paints a magnificent scenery for all kinds of nuptials. Set on a private beach at Manama's Seef District—just 15 minutes away from Bahrain International Airport—with views of the Arabian Sea, this regal abode comes complete with cascading fountains, vaulted halls, and abundant greenery. Their lavish three- or four-bedroom royal villas, rooms, and suites are adorned in neutral palettes with gold accents, allowing every wedding ensemble to pop with glamorous ease.

When here, al fresco ceremonies come to life at the heavenly garden or poolside, under a blanket of glimmering stars dotting the skies. The Al Sarra Ballroom fuses Arabian hospitality and luxury to bring forth a contemporary set up—making it a timeless choice for indoor events. all.accor.com



The Ritz-Carlton Maldives

NESTLED AMONGST AZURE waters and lush vegetation, The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands, offers a variety of settings to suit the type of celebrations couples may desire—from private beach coves to water villas. The resort's lush, tropical foliage, azure sea, and white-sand beaches offer a picturesque backdrop for pre- and post-wedding ceremonies, honeymoons, and renewal of vows. Scenic villas, romantic gardens, and secluded beaches transform into magical spaces that are customisable for the perfect wedding. The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands offers Ocean Pool Villas starting from 150 square metres, along with multiple outdoor venues, as well as private dining venues.

The couple and their guests can also indulge in the resort's culinary offerings, ranging from robust Italian pastas to Oriental tapas-style fare. Each of the seven restaurants and bars here craft a journey of the senses. Consider toasting the sunset with a glass of chilled rosé, enjoying a local version of traditional afternoon tea, dining under the stars, or opting for a Japanese barbecue. The uninterrupted sunrise and sunset views are ideal for creating lasting memories of special celebrations. What's more—the resort's curated team is experienced in organising Indian weddings, ensuring every detail is looked after and every moment captured for eternity. ritzcarlton.com





SLS Dubai Hotel & Residences

FEW PLACES IN DUBAI boast of a 360° view of the city—SLS Dubai Hotel & Residences is one such address. Located in Downtown Dubai, the hotel features 254 expertly designed rooms, as well as 321 hotel apartments. Make the most of its towering, 75-storeyed height by taking a dip in any of the two rooftop infinity pools, which offer enviable views of the majestic Burj Khalifa and Dubai Creek. Or unwind at Privilege, their rooftop nightlife venue with a chilled-out ambience.

The resort's world-class culinary venues include Fi'ila, an authentic Italian restaurant; Carna by Dario Cecchini, a contemporary steakhouse; S Bar, a lobby-level mixology lounge; EllaMia, a sophisticated café; and the 12 Chairs Caviar Bar, a 12-guest, caviar-dedicated dining space. Adding to these luxuries is the Ciel Spa, a seven-treatment room that entices with its dedicated thermal areas with steam rooms and experience showers, plunge pools, and relaxation rooms; two outdoor terraces add to the charm.

When tying the knot here, expect to enjoy all these offerings, with a bright-red cherry on top in the form of impeccable service, curated décor, and alluring entertainment. Six meeting rooms, with over 260 square meters of space, can accommodate groups of varying sizes, from an intimate gathering of 10 to a lavish party of 260. sbe.com

The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi, Grand Canal



OPULENCE LIES AT THE HEART of The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi, Grand Canal. The beachfront location brings together the Orient's centuries-old traditions and culture to create seamless destination weddings for discerning couples. To begin, the luxury hotel is just 20 minutes away from Abu Dhabi International Airport, making it easier for guests to fly in. Next, wedding planners specialising in high-end destination weddings are available at every beck and call. From taking care of the logistics, to accommodating and coordinating the flow of events for over 1,000 guests, the team facilitates everything for the couple every step of the way.



The gorgeous venues make the entire experience even more appealing. From the stunning Roma Ballroom, with its private elevator and direct access to the exclusive Bridal Suite, to the intimate Olive Garden and tranquil Grand Canal Beach, and from the striking Pool Garden to the many indoor and outdoor venues, the luxurious property offers a range of romantic locations ideally suited to wedding celebrations of almost any size. Breathtaking views of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and the Grand Canal across sprawling, landscaped lawns add to the glamour. ritzcarlton.com



Raffles Seychelles

WITH THE EXPERTISE OF Raffles Seychelles' dedicated wedding team, couples can bring their wedding dreams to reality. From a specialised-menu creation, to dining experiences and venue set-up by the resort's culinary and banquet teams, the resort helps create lifelong memories.

With unrivalled beaches, a pristine waterfront, the property's resort beach—Anse Takamaka—offers soft-powdered, white-sandy shores for the perfect beachside wedding. Add to it spectacular views of the Indian Ocean and Curieuse Island, the original home of the Coco De Mer Palm Tree.

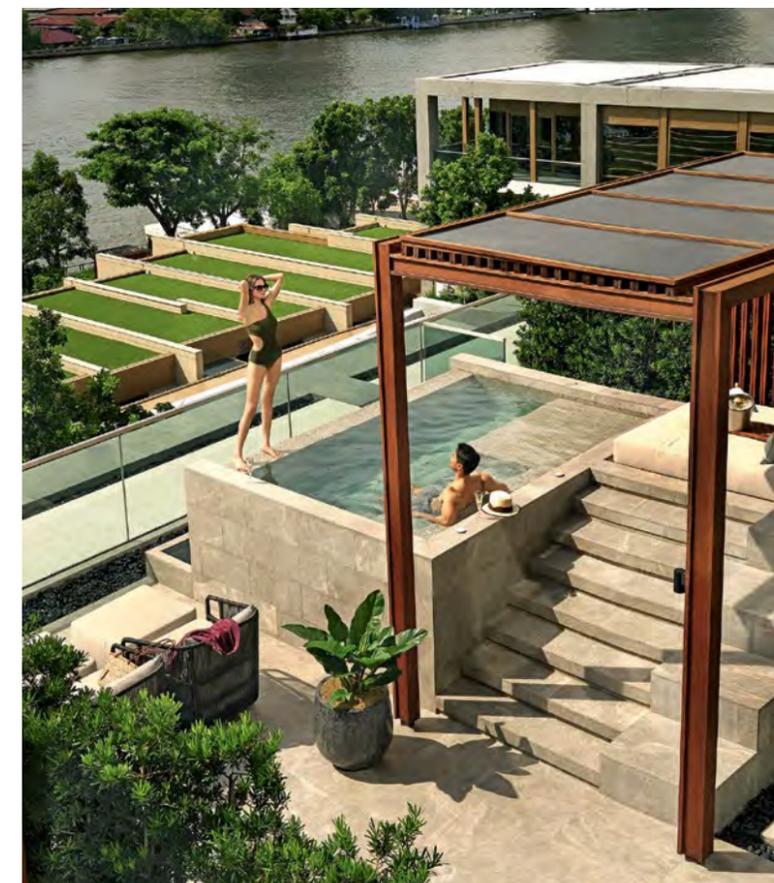
Continue the celebrations post the marriage ceremony with exceptional wedding-themed packages. Choose from a romantic sundowner, a family barbecue on the beach, a sunset cruise on a luxury boat, or a symbolic ceremony at the resort. To commemorate the special day, all weddings here end with a 'Tree of Love' ceremony, where the couple plants a tree in the gardens to symbolise a growing relationship and their binding love for each other. raffles.com

Capella Bangkok

NESTLED ON THE east bank of the Chao Phraya River on Charoenkrung Road, Capella Bangkok invites couples to write their love story for a once-in-a-lifetime celebration with an elegant waterfront wedding. Couples can exchange vows at a stunning riverside setting, with dedicated support from the resort's Wedding Whisperers, a team that has years of experience in designing bespoke ceremonies and celebrations.

The Ballroom offers 747 square metres of space with floor-to-ceiling windows, while the foyer here can accommodate up to 850 guests. Intimate events can be hosted in the Atelier, which can accommodate up to 110 guests and boasts panoramic views of the river. To-be weds can unwind and prepare in the privacy of the Salon, located close to the Ballroom. The resort's Courtyard, an impressive al fresco garden overlooking the river, is perfect for an outdoor wedding of up to 200 guests. More intimate ceremonies, hosting up to 80 people, can be held on the deck of a riverboat cruising along the river.

Guests are treated to exceptional cuisine and exquisite dishes at the Michelin star chef restaurant, Côte by Mauro Colagreco. Working with culinary experts, professional photographers, the finest florists, and other premium partners, Capella Bangkok crafts memorable weddings. capellahotels.com +



A LUXE AFFAIR

The question has been popped and the date finalised. Now it's time to plan. Choose from this carefully curated list of top Indian luxury hotels and glide towards your special day with elegant ease. **BY BAYAR JAIN**



Andaz Delhi

BESPOKE CELEBRATIONS UNDERLINE every event at Andaz Delhi. Whether it's a grand Indian reception or an intimate marriage ceremony, the hotel wows guests with delicate elegance. The ballroom here, often considered the largest, indoor-luxury wedding venue in the city, is massive at 1,003 square metres. When paired with the pre-function area and outdoor-event courtyard, it can host up to 2,000 guests with spacious ease. From the lighting and décor, to a curated culinary journey (including interactive pop-ups by in-house restaurants AnnaMaya, Juniper Bar, and Soul Pantry; as well as over 80 regional expert mixologists) and 401 Reasons to Fall in Love with Delhi, the concept hotel dabbles in a lot of things. In fact, the team also allows the couple to earn free nights on their honeymoon. hyatt.com

The Oberoi Sukhvilas Spa Resort New Chandigarh

THE SISWAN FOREST is an undoubtedly gorgeous backdrop. The Oberoi Sukhvilas Spa Resort elevates the vista with meandering walkways dotted with reflection pools, fountains, and traditional gas torches, making wedding ceremonies here a surreal affair. Among the luxurious accommodation options, you can choose from the palatial Kohinoor Villa, royal forest tents and luxury villas (all with their own private pools), and spacious premier rooms. An all-day, multi-cuisine dining restaurant caters to food cravings of all kinds. The banquet facilities, such as the Ballroom with its private garden, caters to gatherings small and large. And the Durbar Hall here boasts high ceilings, chandeliers, and ornate glass doors that open to an al fresco terrace; its courtyard transforms into a wonderland after sundown, courtesy starlit canopies and *mashaal* torches. The Anant Mahal Courtyard, too, crafts magical moments in its domed-gazebo environs. For the ultimate wedding experience, trust the in-house expert team to make your personalised event smooth and hassle-free. oberoihotels.com



Raffles Udaipur

NOTHING SPELLS INTIMATE more than a private island. Raffles Udaipur, sitting daintily amidst the Udaï Sagar Lake, is an architectural marvel in its own right. It is the brand's maiden outpost, home to 101 luxurious rooms and suites. While the panoramic hill views and manicured gardens make for awe-inspiring backdrops,

the hotel's banquet options are unparalleled. The expansive Grand Ballroom includes a pre-function area, multiple, outdoor-gathering venues, and an on-site temple. The personalised experiences, with a blend of traditional and contemporary designs make this new property ideal for an intimate wedding. raffles.com



THE ST. REGIS Mumbai

WITH EXTRA FOCUS ON the details that matter, the team at The St. Regis Mumbai ensures a memorable wedding ceremony across size and scale. Be it a grand reception or an intimate wedding, this towering destination has space for it all. When here, blend traditional festivities with modern ideas for unique wedding celebrations. Begin the festivities by welcoming guests with cocktails at an elegant party, and end the day with a sunset garland exchange at Astor Terrace, an open-air venue. Trust the beauty services at The Salon to prep for the ceremonies and exquisite massages at the luxurious Iridium Spa to help relax. Add to your joy with customised cuisines curated by the talented in-house culinary team. marriott.com

Alila Diwa Goa

LOCATED ONLY 20 MINUTES from the Goa Dabolim International Airport, Alila Diwa Goa embodies the sunshine state's merriment, and packages it to craft unforgettable weddings. Set against lush-green palms, an infinity pool, sprawling courtyards, and landscaped gardens, this tropical escape is designed to pamper. A team of wedding planners takes stock of every aspect of the ceremonies, while the multiple outdoor and indoor venues spoil for choice. Udeta, spread over 1,672 square metres, is Goa's largest indoor space, and houses a built-in live kitchen. It extends outdoors to Alfresco where a live bar and grill await. Their practice of using eco-friendly products and décor makes a wedding at Alila Diwa Goa even more alluring. alilahotels.com



Conrad Pune

WITH AN ART-DECO INSPIRED design, Conrad Pune is the king of curated wedding experiences, services, and styles. In winter, its allure magnifies. The Grand Ballroom, one of the many versatile venues available here, is designed to host weddings of any scale—from 50 to 1,200 guests. It not only comes with intelligent lighting, but also comprises a dedicated entrance for a regal entry, an indoor automatic lift for added style, and audio-visual technology to show-off pre-wedding shoots and movies. For a dose of nature, consider a ceremony at the Coriander Kitchen Al Fresco area. With a dramatic, 12-metre-high glazed wall overlooking a waterscape, this space assures a romantic backdrop. Alternatively, choose the quaint poolside Kabana to add a surreal tinge to the festivities; or MASU for an Asian-themed pre-wedding cocktail. Either way, shed the hassle of wedding coordination as a team of dedicated specialists ensures seamless planning and execution. conradpune.com



Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel & Residences

NO ONE UNDERSTANDS grand weddings better than Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel & Residences. A chic, sophisticated destination, this contemporary space serves as a quiet retreat in the Maximum City. Spanning 12 acres dotted with lush greenery, the property plays host to many indoor and outdoor venues. The 929-square-metre, pillarless Grand Ballroom, accompanied by an elegant courtyard, is one such magnificent site. Done up in customised themes and décor, the hotel's signature Wedding Studio transforms each venue into picturesque havens. This artistic vibe permeates through the premises, making each spot ideal for pre-wedding shoots—from an intimate shot at the China House Restaurant Pagoda, to a group photograph of the beautiful bride and her maids of honour walking gracefully down the grand steps. hyatt.com



THE LEELA PALACE New Delhi

WHEN AT LEELA PALACE New Delhi, witness a magical symphony of modernity and tradition at each of its elegant banquet venues. Designed to overlook artist Satish Gupta's graceful 'Devi' sculpture in the courtyard, the banquet halls allow for customised décor with attention to detail. The Grand Ballroom features a gold-leaf dome, two crystal chandeliers, and neutral colour palettes. At the lobby level is the Royal Ballroom, where the elegance of a bygone era teams up with modern facilities. As night falls, the Royal Terrace makes for a gorgeous outdoor setting to kickstart a life of togetherness in the warmth of sigris and loved ones. theleela.com



ITC Royal Bengal Kolkata

LOCATED AWAY FROM the din of the city, yet easily accessible, ITC Royal Bengal is known for its quiet grandeur. The 5,630-square-metre banqueting space, for instance, boasts being the largest in the region. The pillarless Bengal Stateroom, the biggest of its kind in the country, has flexible spaces, multiple breakout rooms, and sprawling lawns with a dedicated-arrival lobby, reception, and pre-function area. Crystal chandeliers grace the high, decorative ceilings, while exclusive carpets lend themselves to a classy entrance. The culinary fare, in keeping with the region's hospitality, fuses the best of local and international delicacies. A committed events team adds to its allure. Above all, the Green Banqueting initiative assures a responsible celebration with eco-conscious decisions. itshotels.com



Alila Fort Bishangarh

SITUATED IN THE ARAVALLI HILLS, this fort-hotel ticks all the boxes for an opulent yet intimate celebration. Think majestic columns, arches, turrets, granite, and intricate detailing. The 59 rooms and suites here exude Mughal and Rajput aesthetics, while also paying ode to the surrounding greens. Consider walking down the aisle through a walkway in the courtyard that leads to Darbar, a classic ballroom that can accommodate up to 100 guests. Alternatively, dine under the starlit night at Nazaara, an open-sky venue with panoramic hill views, followed by an after-party at Madhuvani, the in-house bar. Kickstart the next day with an open-air reception at the expansive lawn, Aravali Bagh, or plan an intimate bonfire night at the Aravalli Sands. The true heroes, however, are the curated wedding experiences, such as a romantic helicopter or hot-air balloon ride high above the hills and fort; a grand entrance in a vintage car; a private spa session; a night of delicious cuisines and folklore performances; or stopping at a hunting camp with traditionally-prepared meals. alilahotels.com +



Where Dreams Come to Life

As the world gradually opens its doors to international travel, amp up your intimate ceremonies by stamping them with the thrill of a destination wedding. These 10 locations weave together the ideal wedding backdrop, draped in serenity and safety. **BY ANUSHKA GOEL & BAYAR JAIN**

Charisma of Qatar

A penchant for luxury draped in tradition feeds into Qatar's magnetism. Perhaps that's why so many Indians choose this historic country as their wedding destination.

QATAR HAS LONG LURED COUPLES keen on lavish wedding celebrations seeped in traditions. With magnificent venues, splendid climate, luxurious hotels, unmatched hospitality, marvellous infrastructure, and picturesque backdrops in its kitty, this Middle-Eastern nation ticks all the right boxes for a grand, sophisticated wedding.

All of three-and-a-half hours away aboard Qatar Airways—the country's national carrier and widely credited as the world's best—this royal nation has cemented its name as the safest and richest country in the world. Qatar's seamless travel and arrival experiences only elevate the entire affair.

Apart from offering a free visa-on-arrival and end-to-end airport assistance, the Government of Qatar, along with Qatar Tourism, work in unison to efficiently execute weddings in Doha, keeping guests' comfort paramount and wedding-induced anxieties at bay. Customised immigration processes and easy custom clearances for large-scale weddings further enhance the country's allure.

No wonder, then, Qatar boasts over 50 five-star properties to choose from for a dreamy, bespoke ceremony for all tastes and sensibilities—ranging from the traditional to the contemporary.

In fact, each hotel and staff in this peninsular Arab country is well-acquainted with Indian customs, rituals, traditions, and requirements for a stress-free nuptial.

Sharq Village & Spa (ritzcarlton.com) in Doha, for instance, can accommodate 300 guests. The Ritz-Carlton, Doha (ritzcarlton.com), on the other hand, creates the ideal ambience for an intimate soirée. Picture a relaxed cocktail party on a private beach followed by a laid-back brunch in the accompanying lawns the following day. The St. Regis Doha (marriott.com) also promises equally spectacular and beautiful venues, accentuated by excellent hospitality, services, and experiences. The Gulf country's flexible beverage policy doubles as a crowning glory across properties, in turn facilitating a ceremony sloshed with merriment.

A memorable wedding, however, is one that extends the fun and excitement beyond the ceremonies. And Qatar understands such experiential holidays all too well. Home to white-sand dunes, azure-blue inland seas, stunning architecture, inspiring art installations, enriching museums, and energetic tourist spots—Qatar has it all. visitqatar.qa

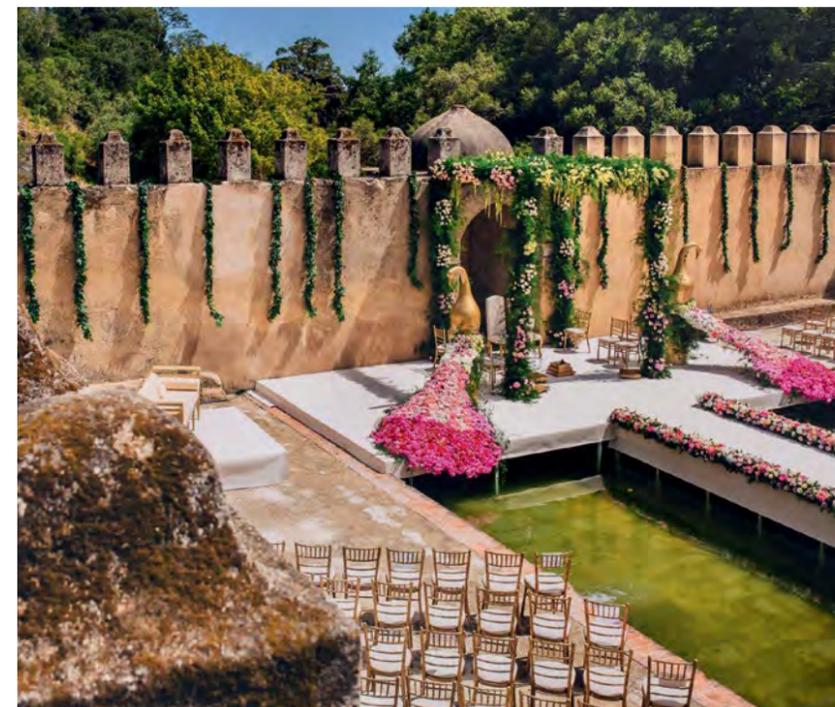


Ras Al Khaimah

A HIDDEN GEM CLOSE to Dubai, Ras Al Khaimah is the UAE's nature emirate, boasting exquisite landscapes, including 64 kilometres of pristine beaches, as well as towering mountains and terracotta deserts—providing the perfect backdrop to weddings. Whether couples are looking for an intimate beach wedding, a glamorous event in a private nature reserve, or a classy, traditional celebration, Ras Al Khaimah offers several mesmerising venues to help make their dream wedding come true.

Amongst the many hotels offering a spectacular setting, Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort ([hilton.com](https://www.hilton.com)) offers the perfect canvas for unforgettable moments. Guests can choose from banquet halls or beautiful outdoor backdrops along the one-and-a-half-kilometres of private white sands. From popping the question to the first dance, the bride and groom can rely on the hotel's team of specialists to help along the way.

Through the hotel's expertise and partnerships with talented décor designers, photographers, florists, and experienced chefs specialising in authentic Indian cuisine, guests can enjoy exceptional cuisine and impeccable service delivered in a setting of taste and luxury. As special occasions like these call for grand gestures, a dedicated wedding specialist works diligently and custom designs all the beautiful events, ensuring the couple has the best time of their lives. [visitrasalkhaimah.com](https://www.visitrasalkhaimah.com)



Portugal

WHETHER IT'S A FAIRY-TALE engagement in a palace in Sintra, a vintage wedding in the vineyards of Douro, or a romantic beach reception off the coast of Algarve, Portugal offers the perfect wedding destination for Indian weddings, harmoniously respecting its many traditions.

The country with the oldest borders in Europe is a joyful locale with a perfect, mild climate, an abundance of natural beauty, dramatic forts and ancient castles, striking architecture, and exquisite villas. Couples can soak up the best of both worlds here, be it at a hotel nestled in the mountains, or at a shoreside venue with the sea as a backdrop.

Portugal's South-Asian community brings Indian cuisine to every part of the country, and the expertise of local, Indian wedding-service companies is impressive. What's more, the place makes for the perfect honeymoon destination with several intimate getaways that include gushing waterfalls, lush forests, scenic riverfronts, and more. [visitportugal.com](https://www.visitportugal.com)



Seychelles

BLANKETED IN GOLDEN sunshine, the sea and the sand, Seychelles is a nuptial paradise for nature lovers. An archipelago of 115 islands, it is home to absolutely stunning landscapes. And with its one-of-a-kind flora and fauna, white-sand beaches, and gently swaying palms, you can dream of an idyllic set-up and it will be made possible.

Walk down the aisle barefoot for a laid-back beach ceremony, book a private island to celebrate with your loved ones, opt for an indoor ritual in a tasteful, colonial-styled private villa, or host a cocktail evening at a plush retreat overlooking the ocean—each experience offers a novel arrangement that will live in the memory long after it is over.

As romance blossoms naturally in the archipelago, Seychelles readily alters into a heavenly honeymoon destination. Catch your breath after the festivities to enjoy a stint with Creole culture, dig into their colonial past, or walk hand-in-hand on stunning beaches. Adventure-loving couples can enjoy the locale's natural wonders by indulging in a bouquet of activities, such as fishing, hiking, trekking, bird watching, diving, snorkelling, parasailing, and more.

And since planning a wedding can be stressful, Seychelles offers a host of world-class spas, luxe resorts, along with the freshest culinary creations featuring a fusion of Indian, African, and European flavours. [seychelles.travel](https://www.seychelles.travel)



Jordan

EXPERIENTIAL WEDDINGS LIE AT the heart of Jordan. With jewels like the ancient, sandstone city of Petra and the Dead Sea's healing properties embossed in its crown, this Middle-Eastern country is a haven of gorgeous backdrops. Seeking a unique location for your special day? Opt for the ruins of Little Petra or the historic deserts of Wadi Rum, and you can be assured of personalised ceremonies at each spot. Consider taking the celebrations to properties such as Petra Marriott Hotel ([marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)) and Mövenpick Resort Petra ([movenpick.com](https://www.movenpick.com)), offering striking views

of the cityscape and its impressive sandstone-carved Treasury. Couples hoping for a sojourn by the Dead Sea's mesmerising shoreline can stay at the Hilton Dead Sea Resort & Spa ([hilton.com](https://www.hilton.com)), Dead Sea Marriott Resort & Spa ([marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)), or Crowne Plaza Jordan-Dead Sea Resort & Spa ([ihg.com](https://www.ihg.com)). Amman, the capital city, abounds in spectacular heritage sights, and couples can embrace the best of the old and the new with a stay at hotels such as the Fairmont Amman ([fairmont.com](https://www.fairmont.com)), Grand Hyatt Amman ([hyatt.com](https://www.hyatt.com)) and W Amman ([marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)). [visitjordan.com](https://www.visitjordan.com)



Bali

KNOWN AS THE 'Land of the Gods', Bali embraces the spiritual side of weddings and blends it seamlessly with cultural luxury. Its location eight degrees south of the Equator lends this tropical wonderland a warm climate all-year round, making the Asian nation an easy choice for outdoor weddings for a significant portion of the year. The white sands of Kuta, Jimbaran, Seminyak, and Nusa Dua are ideal for a beach wedding, accentuated by privacy. Mount Batur, an active volcano overlooking the serene Batur Lake in Kintamani, makes for dramatic backdrops; while the West Bali National Park is ideal for nature-loving couples, courtesy of the rich flora and fauna that seek refuge here. After long-drawn days of wedding ceremonies and hullabaloo, surrender in total relaxation and experience the best of Balinese spas, dotted all over the island. indonesia.travel



Ibiza

THIS SPANISH ARCHIPELAGO in the Mediterranean Sea is perfectly suited for couples looking to extend the celebrations beyond the ceremonies. Taking note of the growing interest in destination weddings at Ibiza, this Balearic island's tourist companies have begun specialising in the matrimonial-services sector, allowing couples to choose from a range of fantastic locations overlooking the sea. Villas and smaller wedding venues, too, can be booked for intimate celebrations—all offering specialised complimentary services, such as wedding planning, make-up and hairstyling, catering, video and photography, DJs, artistes, and more. Being a popular tourist destination also lends the island to a plethora of well-functioning services, such as restaurants, hotels, public transport, and leisure activities that make pre- and post-wedding experiences a breeze. In fact, to make the destination-wedding-planning process easier, Ibiza has created an online repository (ibizadestinobodas.net) of all the information a couple may require to plan an island nuptial. ibiza.travel

Dubai

OPT FOR AN ETHEREAL beachside wedding at The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai (ritzcarlton.com). With crystal waters and rippling waves crashing along the shore, this beach resort paints the perfect backdrop for a romantic wedding. The resort's restaurants, beachside garden, and ballrooms cater to the dream-wedding couples are seeking.

Those looking for Middle-Eastern flair, immaculate views, and intimate settings can opt for The Palace Downtown (addresshotels.com). The hotel's open-air space, offering enviable views of the Burj Khalifa and The Dubai Fountain, is an excellent location for couples to host a cocktail party or reception, while the gazebo, facing the Burj Khalifa, is the perfect private space for couples to say (or renew) their wedding vows.

One of the most luxurious hotels in Dubai, the One&Only The Palm (oneandonlyresorts.com) is the ideal destination for a grand wedding. The sizable pool, flanked by private cabanas, makes for a beautiful venue for a sundowner or a daytime cocktail/pool party for guests to soak up the sun.

Visitors can create sweet memories and enjoy an extravagant experience at Jumeirah Dar Al Masyaf (jumeirah.com). The Royal Malakiya Villa, inspired by the summer houses of old Arabia, is an intimate, two-storey villa with butler service, a plunge pool, and an outdoor terrace, all just steps away from the beach, making for the perfect spot for couples to host a small wedding with their loved ones. The rooms also have stunning views of the Madinat Jumeirah waterways, the world-famous Burj Al Arab, lush gardens, and vistas over the Arabian Gulf. visitdubai.com



Thailand

THAILAND HAS LONG tempted couples from India to tie the knot at its varied landscapes. Beach lovers can share their first kiss against the sunset as a newlywed couple on the beaches of Hua Hin, Phuket, Khao Lak, Pattaya, Koh Samui, Krabi and Rayong. On the cultural side, Chiang Mai and Bangkok shine with enticing offerings. Be it ceremonial needs or culinary requirements, venues at each destination guarantee subject expertise, allowing the couple to say "I do" without any stress. The 'can do' attitude of the locals only facilitates this further. When here, whether it is driving down to the nuptials venue in a vintage car or getting henna designs before the D-day, each betrothal dream is catered to. As the ceremonies end, the couple can enjoy moments of togetherness at a range of sightseeing spots, with adventure activities, wellness spas, shopping places, and more. tourismthailand.org



Tuscany

INDIAN WEDDINGS IN TUSCANY are characterised by large events. During the last year, however, forced limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic have meant that Indian brides and grooms have rediscovered a more intimate and exclusive side of Tuscany—of smaller venues and timeless charm. The wedding ceremonies in Tuscany are no longer majestic in size, but are increasingly becoming more exclusive and itinerant, touching on several locations within the region, which has always had a wealth of landscapes. This includes the pristine countryside; historic cities of art and architecture such as Florence, Siena, and Pisa; the medieval castles of the Valdera; the unspoiled vineyards in the Chianti area; the seaside shores of Maremma and Versilia; and the small, pretty villages of Valdorcia, to name a few. Getting married in Tuscany is not just about hosting a wedding, but an incredible, all-round experience offered to the guests by the bride and groom. In all, a memorable wedding is guaranteed. visittuscany.com 



Your Happily Ever After

Embark on a blissful married life by heading to any of these 10 offbeat and charming Indian destinations for a romantic—and safe—honeymoon.

BY SHRIMAYEE THAKUR



Dindi, Andhra Pradesh

Nestled at the intersection of the Godavari River and the Bay of Bengal, Dindi is a little slice of beachy heaven. Explore the lush greenery of the village via a bicycle ride, where you can also spot exotic birds that have come in search of Dindi's serene backwaters. Antarvedi Beach, where the river meets the sea, is a must-visit location surprisingly free of crowds. Soak in the view undisturbed, with just each other's company and the hum of waves crashing

on to the shore. Or trek along the 26-kilometre-long beach that runs through coastal areas, and interact with local fishermen. Visit the nearby heritage village, Peruru, where time stands still, leaving the community, its culture, and the buildings as they were a century ago.

Stay: Palavelli Godavari, a riverfront resort, offers plush rooms with private balconies from where you can enjoy the view. sterlingholidays.com



Kamshet, Maharashtra

Known as a paraglider's paradise, Kamshet is perfect for couples looking to experience adventures together. And they'll have plenty to choose from here—head to the Shinde Wadi Hills, a popular paragliding point; or undertake a challenging trek to the Dhak Bahri Caves, an ancient site of animal sacrifices (practised even today) that offers gorgeous views of the surrounding land, including the twin forts of Rajmachi: Shrivardhan and Manoranjan. Approximately 20 minutes from Kamshet, the Bedse Caves are also worth a visit. Some of Maharashtra's oldest caves, they are home to ancient Buddhist shrines, known for their beautiful rock carvings. Spend a quiet afternoon together on the banks of the Pawna Lake, an artificial waterbody formed by the Pavana Dam. Explore the three forts nearby—Lohagad, Tikona, and Tungi—and end the day taking in a dazzling sunset over the lake.

Stay: Stay at the **Le Farm Luxury Farmstay**, a villa near the backwaters of the Vadivale Dam, ideal for couples seeking complete privacy. lefarm.in

FROM TOP: KRISHNAN VIALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK



Gokarna, Karnataka

Fast emerging as a popular beach destination, Gokarna is often called the more laid-back and less commercialised version of Goa, and is perfect for honeymooners wishing to spend time on beaches dotted with swaying palm trees. Walk along the pristine, white shore at Kudle Beach, and stop for a bite at any one of its numerous, tempting eateries, or head to Om Beach to see its unique curved coastline. Quicken the pace of your honeymoon by engaging in one of the many opportunities for water sports: parasailing, banana-boat ride, or jet-skiing. Delve into Hindu mythology at the 1500-year-old Mahabaleshwara Temple, built in the Dravidian style of architecture, using white granite. Once you've had your fill of the beaches, trek to the massive, black-limestone caves in Yana or visit the intimidating Jog Falls, one of the highest plunge waterfalls in India. Take a closer look at the history of the region at Mirjan Fort. Built in the 16th century, it is blanketed in moss and surrounded by a lush, green forest.

Stay: Kahani Paradise, located only minutes from Paradise Beach, features lavish rooms offering stunning views of the ocean and complete privacy. kahaniparadise.com

FROM TOP: DESIGN PICS INC/ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK

Poovar Island, Kerala

Situated close to Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala's capital city, but removed from its hustle and bustle, Poovar Island is an oasis of calm, girded by the Neyyar River. Its endless stretch of golden sands, dense coconut-and-banana-tree groves, and myriad species of fauna form a bewitching backdrop for your honeymoon. Pozhikara, just a kilometre from Poovar, boasts a beautiful sandbank that separates the turbulent sea from the Neyyar River; spend a lazy afternoon here, relaxing on the beach and watching local and migratory birds. Take in a vantage-point view of southern Kerala

from the top of the lighthouse at Lighthouse Beach, or head to the beaches of Kovalam and master the sport of surfing with the help of Kovalam Surf Club. Catch a glimpse of the region's history at the rock-cut cave temple in Vizhinjam, dating back to the 8th century, or acquaint yourself with rare and colourful species of marine wildlife at the Vizhinjam Marine Aquarium.

Stay: To round the experience, stay at one of the floating cottages at Poovar Island Resort, which also offers sunset cruises along the calm backwaters around the island. poovarislandresorts.com



Dhanaulti, Uttarakhand

Tucked away amongst lofty Himalayan peaks, Dhanaulti is a hilly paradise covered in dense, green forests of oak and deodar trees, as well as rhododendrons. While it is located close to some of Uttarakhand's more popular destinations, such as Chamba and Mussoorie, Dhanaulti has an enviable air of peace and tranquillity that others lack. Sitting high in the Himalayas, this hilly destination offers several opportunities for adventure. Test your balancing skills on a Sky Walk, a thrilling activity where you walk across a 360-foot-long wire, set more

than 36 metres above the ground; or take an exciting zip-line ride over the lush environs. Enjoy an afternoon picnic at the Eco Parks of Amber and Dhara, which are basically two forest-gardens, set 200 metres from each other. To soak in panoramic views of snow-clad Himalayan peaks, trek to nearby Lal Tibba, known for its romantic sunrises and sunsets.

Stay: The Terraces is a boutique spa-resort, featuring plush interiors, a balcony to enjoy the spectacular view, and a spa with a range of exotic treatments. theterraces.biz



Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan

Spanning 800 square kilometres, Sariska Tiger Reserve displays Rajasthan's arid beauty with its dry deciduous forests, rocky cliffs, and endless grasslands offering a welcome home to the local wildlife. The park is a well-known haven for successfully relocated tigers. The best way to catch a glimpse of one is on the three-hour Sariska Safari, which will take you through the area's numerous attractions. While its tigers are definitely the biggest attraction, the reserve also hosts other jungle cats, leopards, wild dogs, sambars, chital, and nilgai,

along with exotic species of birds, such as sandgrouse and crested serpent eagles. The forest also features two ancient temples—the famous Pandupol Temple, mentioned in the *Mahabharata*; and the 6th-century Neelkanth Temple, with its erotic statues. History buffs will like the Kankwari Fort—only accessible through a safari—where Emperor Aurangzeb jailed his brother, Dara Shikoh.

Stay: The Amanbagh offers palatial suites, as well as tours, including of Bhangarh, an ancient city, and Somsagar Lake, where you can enjoy a private meal. aman.com



Mayurbhanj, Odisha

Known for its natural beauty, Mayurbhanj is a cultural hub that was once part of the kingdom of Bhanja rulers. The ancient village of Khiching, which sits within the Mayurbhanj district, was once its capital, and houses an architecturally unique temple made of chlorite slabs with intricate carvings, dedicated to Goddess Kichakeswari. A small museum nearby displays historical sculpture and art. Mayurbhanj also has several other beautiful spots steeped in mythology, such as Bhimkund, a lovely, blue pool and waterfall surrounded by craggy rocks that has ties to the *Mahabharata*; and Ramirtha, the only crocodile-rearing centre in the region, that is mentioned in the *Ramayana*. Mayurbhanj is also home to the sprawling Similipal Biosphere, home to tigers, numerous species of reptiles, and birds.

Stay: Lulung Aranya Nivas is a rustic forest-resort where you can switch off from the bustle of city life in the comfort of lux suites and riverside cottages. similipalforestresort.com

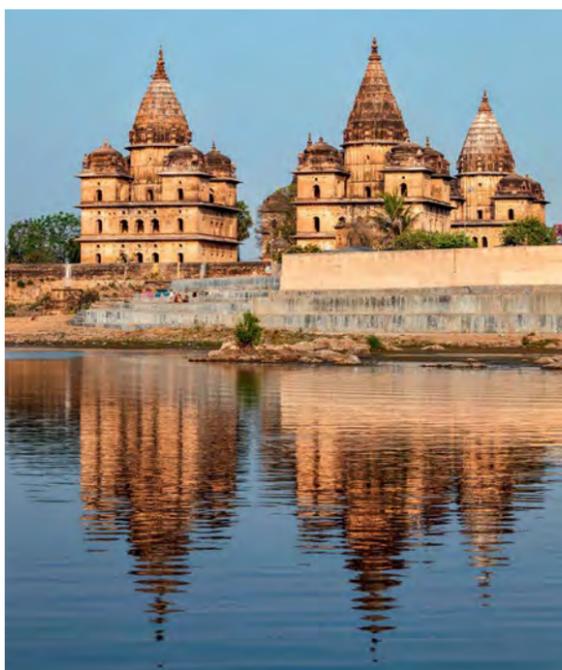


Orchha, Madhya Pradesh

A beautiful ode to Madhya Pradesh's regal past, the historical town of Orchha was established by the Bundela chief, Rudra Pratap, in the 16th century. Its glorious past is proudly displayed through its Rajput palaces, royal *chhatris* (cenotaphs constructed in honour of the rulers), and temples—architectural treasures that have a firm foothold in the town's present look. The Orchha Fort Complex, located on an island in the Betwa River and reachable by a four-arched bridge, is the primary attraction here. The vast complex houses multiple palaces within, including Jahangir Mahal, built by Bir Singh Deo in the early 17th-century to commemorate the visit of Emperor Jahangir.

Another famous palace inside the fort, Raja Mahal is known for its beautiful murals. The Pravin Rai Mahal was built in honour of a famed, eponymous 17th-century poet and musician. Known as the 'Nightingale of Orchha' at the time, her story is played out in a light-and-sound show at the fort. Combine water sports and sightseeing with a kayaking tour around Betwa, which allow you a closer look at the 14 *chhatris* along the banks, or visit the Orchha Natural Reserve, home to exotic species of birds.

Stay: In keeping with the town's royal theme, check in to one of the opulent rooms at the Orchha Palace. orchhapalace.com



Velavadar National Park, Gujarat

Picture pale-yellow grasslands, nestled between two seasonal rivers, stretching into the distance, with a cluster of elegant blackbucks loping through it. Velavadar is a sight to behold, and perhaps one of the only tropical grasslands that has been established as a national park, in 1976. Once the hunting grounds for the maharaja of the princely state of Bhavnagar, the reserve is relatively small, about 34 square kilometres, yet is packed with wildlife, which includes wolves, nilgai, striped hyenas, and one of the largest harrier roosts—with birds like Montagu's harriers, Pallid harriers, and marsh harriers, all nesting here. While blackbucks are quite easy to spot, visit the park early in the morning for a chance to see the elusive wolves, or perhaps a rare bird, such as the tiny Bengal florican.

Stay: The Blackbuck Lodge, located in the park, offers the chance to get up close and personal with the wildlife, in cottages with plunge pools and decks looking out into the wilderness. theblackbucklodge.net



Yumthang Valley, Sikkim

Also known as the 'Valley of Flowers', Yumthang Valley resembles a picture-postcard, with its snowy mountains, sparkling Teesta River, vast green meadows dotted with colourful Himalayan flowers, and a forest of silver firs. Though its proximity to the Indo-China border means visitors need a permit from Gangtok, this enchanting paradise makes sure the effort is worth it. Gear up for a trip to Zero Point, often called the last point of civilisation as there are no roads ahead. Sip hot coffee or tea while enjoying a spectacular view of the mountains around you. Dip your toes into the hot spring nearby, which is warm even in the winter, and is believed to have medicinal properties.

Stay: As there are no accommodation options in Yumthang, you can stay at the Yarlam Resort in nearby Lachung, a pretty little village on the banks of the Lachung River. yarlamresorts.com

ALL SHUTTERSTOCK



10 Beach Bachelorette Party Destinations

▲ The bride and bridesmaids pose for a picture to kickstart the wedding festivities.

Kiss the last days of singlehood goodbye and head out for a final fling in India with your BFFs amid mesmerising shades of blue, flaming sunsets, stellar sundowners, and sandy shores. **BY PALLAVI PASRICHA**

1 GOA

The glimmering allure of the sun, sand, and sea never dims in Goa as, behind its sandy shores, lies a hip and happening party vibe. If you want to live it up for your bachelorette, consider staying near the Anjuna, Baga, Calangute, or Candolim beaches of North Goa. Here, buzzing nightclubs lend an extra sparkle to an evening of dancing. Antares and Titlie in Vagator, located on this side of Goa, are two of the best restaurant-bars in the sunshine state. Those seeking a quieter bonding time should head further north to Arambol, Ashwem, and Morjim. Goa, however, is not just about beaches and bars. Adventurous souls can opt for scuba diving and bungee jumping; while history buffs can take heritage walks in the historic districts of Fontainhas and Old Goa. If you would rather simply laze on the beach and sip on cocktails, then the almost-deserted beaches of Colva, Benaulim, and Palolem in South Goa fit the bill perfectly.

STAY: ITC Grand Goa itshotels.com; W Goa marriott.com

2 PUDUCHERRY

A scenic drive on the East Coast Road from Chennai to Puducherry will bring you to this charming, erstwhile French colony whose colonial aura, combined with beachfront attractions, make for a perfect bachelorette destination. Think French-architecture residences, quaint walkways, restaurants with sensational food, chic cafés, and a chilled-out vibe. Take early-morning strolls to enjoy the vast blue expanse of the sea at Promenade Beach, go surfing or scuba diving at Serenity or Bodhi Beach, or take a boat to the pristine Paradise Beach. For a break from the seascape, spend time cycling and roaming around the cobbled lanes of White Town, with relaxing stops for nibbles at Café des Arts and Villa Shanti. At sundown, let down your hair and party at one of the bars. Bay of Buddha is a great rooftop venue with stunning views of the sea. Head to Auroville for a day trip and savour breakfast at Bread & Chocolate.

STAY: Villa Shanti lavillashanti.com; Le Pondy lepondy.com

3 DIU

This former Portuguese colony with its spectacular beaches might just be the calm you need before the hectic madness of the wedding. The secluded spaces at Diu are ideal for you and your gang to unwind. You can also consider cycling around the old city, home to quaint Portuguese buildings. Since the main Nagaon Beach is usually crowded, head to Jalandhar Beach—with a rocky landscape, it doesn't attract too many people. Watch the sun submerge into the distant horizon at the aptly named Sunset Point Beach. Just outside Diu town is another peaceful stretch of sand at Ahmedpur Mandvi Beach. If history interests you, visit the 16th-century Diu Fort, one of the most well-preserved Portuguese forts, with an impressive double moat. The views here are truly stunning. St. Paul's Church is a splendid sight, too, standing tall in its Baroque architectural style.

STAY: Radhika Beach Resort radhikabeachresort.com

4 SWARAJ DWEEP

Powder-white-sand beaches, azure waters, delicious seafood, and the best diving spot in the country—Swaraj Dweep (formerly Havelock Island) has all the right ingredients for a memorable bachelorette. A heady mix of activities will keep you busy here. Go snorkelling at Elephant Beach, which can be reached by a 40-minute boat ride (tip: hire a glass-bottom boat), or consider diving to venture into a magical undersea world. In the evening, get ready to chill with your friends at a café or bar, organise a beachside party, take in a flaming sunset at Radhanagar Beach, or go kayaking under a moonlit sky. Experienced divers can try night diving, too.

STAY: Taj Exotica Resort & Spa tajhotels.com; Barefoot at Havelock barefoot-andaman.com

5 KOVALAM

The 17-kilometre crescent-shaped, palm-tree-lined sandy stretch at Kovalam represents the best of tropical seaside destinations—iridescent-blue waters, great stay options, and plenty of nightlife venues to enjoy with your besties after the sun sets over the vast expanse of the Arabian Sea. Here, you can party at your own pace. Spend the afternoon dipping your toes in the waters and sipping margaritas by the beach, or have an adrenaline-packed day as you go parasailing, kayaking, surfing, or take a speedboat safari. Climb up the nearby bright-red-and-white Vizhinjam Lighthouse, situated atop a hillock to get a spectacular view of the horizon. Or, if you prefer a more hedonistic pastime, enjoy an indulgent massage at an Ayurvedic spa. The famed backwaters of Kerala are not too far away, either, in case you want to check them out. A few days in Kovalam and you are certain to head back recharged and refreshed for the big day.

STAY: Taj Green Cove Resort and Spa Kovalam tajhotels.com; The Raviz Kovalam theravizkovalam.com



Surfing, paragliding, and relaxation at Vagator Beach, Goa.

6 ALIBAG

Alibag is action-packed. Think beach hopping, water sports, dreamy sunsets, an ancient fort, and scrumptious seafood. Skip the crowded Alibag Beach and head to the serene Akshi and Nagaon beaches, instead. While the latter is popular for water sports like jet-skiing, banana-boat rides, and more; the former is quieter and scenic. Kasturi and Sanman are great restaurants for basic yet delicious seafood. If you want something fancier, head to Bohemian Blue for Lebanese and Italian fare or Boardwalk by Flamboyante for great meals, drinks, and views.

STAY: Radisson Blu Resort & Spa radissonhotels.com

7 KARWAR

It is at this seaside city that Rabindranath Tagore wrote 'Prakritir Pratisodh', a poem about Karwar's beauty. Hence, there is a beach—more peaceful than the others—named after him. Seeking adventure? Go on a fun dolphin-spotting ride; take a boat to an uninhabited island and climb to the top of the 19th-century Oyster Rock Lighthouse, built by the British; or hike up to Guddalli Peak for spectacular views of the sea and the hills. The seafood at Amrut, a local restaurant, is a must-try.

STAY: Cintacor Island Resort cintacorislandresort.com

8 LAKSHADWEEP

Crystal-clear waters, palm-fringed islands, white-sand beaches, and colourful corals—Lakshadweep's seaside landscape is a picturesque backdrop for your bachelorette trip. Not all islands of this secluded Union Territory, however, are open to tourists. Head to Kavaratti, Kalpeni, Kadmat, Minicoy,

Bangaram, and Agatti. The diverse marine life is the star attraction here. At Kavaratti, Lakshadweep's capital, dive 12 metres below the sea with your friends for a face-to-face encounter with the Wall of Wonder—a stunning underwater cliff made of corals. Minicoy—famous for shipwreck diving—houses the archipelago's oldest lighthouse; while Agatti boasts large lagoons and stunning beaches. Kadmat, from where you can venture 40 metres deep into the sea, also has a gorgeous beach.

STAY: Kadmat Island Beach Resort, Kavaratti Island Beach Resort, Minicoy Island Beach Resort, Agatti Island Beach Resort lakshadweeptourism.com

9 KOVALAM

This hidden seaside gem along Coromandel Coast, just 40 kilometres from Chennai, is a dream come true if you want to ride the waves. The gentle sea along this part of the Bay of Bengal is a surfer's paradise; even beginners in your group can venture into the sea. Jet-skiing or boat rides in the backwaters will keep you busy in the day. In the evenings, relax at Surf Turf, a great beachside café that is also a surf school.

STAY: Taj Fisherman's Cove Resort & Spa tajhotels.com

10 MANDARMANI

About a four-hour drive from Kolkata, Mandarmani is a quiet beach-town that's perfect for socially distanced getaways. There is little to distract from endless hours of beachcombing along the white sands framed by swaying trees. Go for long walks or indulge in water sports. Digha and Shankarpur are the relatively cleaner beaches in the neighbourhood.

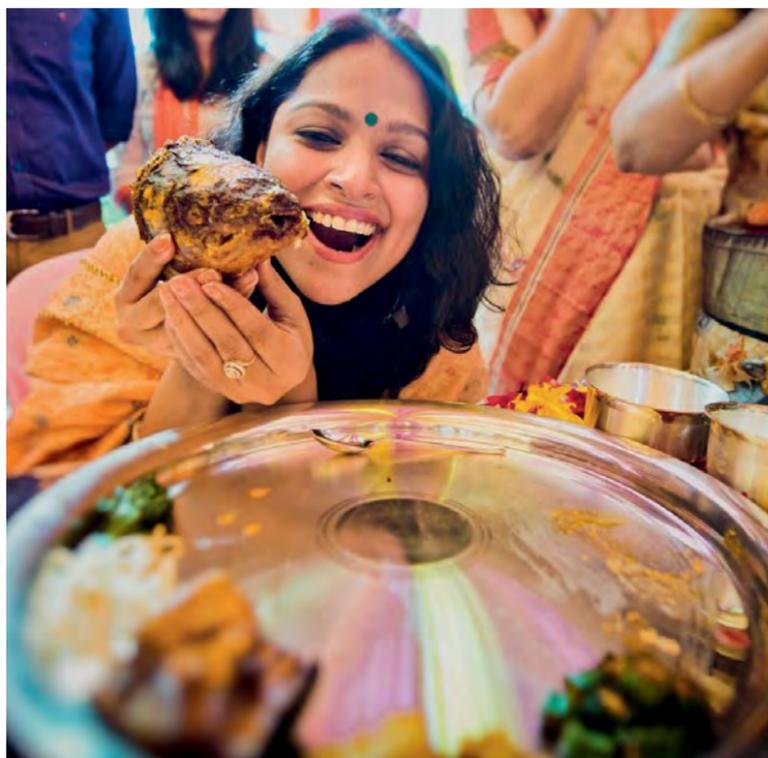
STAY: Viceroy Beach & Spa Resort viceroyhoteldjr.com



Cruising along the picturesque shores of the serene Mandarmani Beach.

Beyond the Regular *Daawat*s

The rich traditions of Indian weddings are amplified by every communities' traditional food and tastes. While some thrive even today, others remain temptingly alive through folklore. **BY VERNIKA AWAL**



▲ An elaborate feast comprising the favourite sweet and savoury dishes of the bride and groom, aiburo bhaat is a much-loved tradition in Bengali weddings.

PLANNING FOR THE BIG, fat Indian wedding (and now, possibly, the more intimate and personalised one) often begins by narrowing down on the wedding menu; sometimes, as soon as the marriage is finalised. Caterers, today, set up an unending line of counters that look to scale the length and breadth of Indian and global cuisines. A few dishes and their very traditional ingredients, however, never fail to find a place in the very heart of our weddings. Such time-honoured variants are considered auspicious and are an integral part of the ceremonies. Scouring the four corners of India, one realises how much of what we savour is steeped in rich heritage and ancestral pride.

Sustenance in the North

In a Punjabi *Khatri* household, the wedding functions begin in full swing only after a traditional ceremony known as *chakki chung*. Performed by the mother of the bride or groom, along with the other married women of the house, it is a curtain-raiser to the proceedings. A handful of wholewheat is added to an old *chakki* (grindstone), and the ladies of the house grind it into a fine flour. This same flour is then kneaded into a dough, with the imprint of the mother's fingers. The *halwai* (confectioner) then deep-fries it, and a portion of it is placed in the soil with a prayer to the weather gods to prevent *meeh jhakkar* (rains and storms).

A portion of the ground flour, along with some of the fried wheat, is used to make sweets, and these dishes cooked in the *shaadiwala ghar* (wedding house) are served as *shagun ka prasad* (auspicious offering).

Today, deep-frying is not a ubiquitous practice, but adding flour has remained a quiet but pivotal ingredient in Punjab; serving as a layer of tradition behind all the bling that one sees upfront. Even now, this special flour is used to make *kada prasad* (a sweet dish) and rotis at weddings.

Another wedding tradition in Punjab is the *bhaji*—a box of deep-fried sweets and savoury snacks gifted to every guest from the bride's family. This is also sent with the bride during *vidaai* (farewell). A symbolic addition now, the *bhaji* was once a vital necessity, as the bride's family and their guests would often travel long distances over days to return from a wedding; hence, making it essential sustenance.

North of Punjab, it is customary for a traditional bride's family from Himachal Pradesh to gift *takeera* (soaked, dried, and pounded wheat), *badiya* and *moti sevaiya* (sweet vermicelli) to the groom's family. Nitika Sood Kuthiala, a home chef and an expert in Himachali food, explains, "These are usually dry-food items. The rationale was to keep something available for the bride to rustle up when she goes to her new home. They're typically prepared months in



FROM TOP: SADHYA VERNIKA; NITIKA SOOD

▲ An assortment of sweet and savoury fried snacks, known as *bhaji* in Punjab. Below: Crisp and crunchy Himachali mathis, a popular fried snack.

advance by the women of the family. Passing it on to a bride is considered a blessing, today."

Datyaloo—an entire meal comprising chickpeas, *dahi bhalle* (yoghurt-based dish), peas-paneer, vegetables, pulao, a sweet dish, and puris—is yet another traditional offering that has withstood the test of time. This elaborate meal is made to ensure

enough food is available in the wedding house, allowing the family to focus on the preparations. *Samhoota da bhatt*, a special meal prepared for lunch after *samhoot* (the haldi ceremony), also finds its place in current culinary wedding traditions—it features black *urad dal*, cooked compulsorily along with rice, *madra* (legumes and curd), *khatta* (black chickpea curry) and *meetha* (sweet rice).

Kuthiala also highlights how the *dham*, an auspicious meal cooked across Himachal

Pradesh, forms a vital part of not just weddings, but most festive occasions. Even today, the *dham* is served at the bride's home before the wedding, and at the groom's, after.

Diversity of the West

Smita Deo, a renowned chef and culinary veteran from north Karnataka, elaborates on the resplendent celebratory traditions of Karwar. Deo says, "After the wedding rituals [in northern Karnataka], a lavish five-course lunch is served on a banana leaf. Tables covered in simple, white cloth are laid in long rows, and the full spread comprises salt, lemon, *kakdi huler* (a chutney with cucumber), fruit *sa sasam* (citrus fruit chutney), *upinkai* (fresh mango pickle), *appalam* (papad), *bhajias*, and *upkaris* (sautéed vegetables). Beyond this, the *muga randoi* (moong curry) is ever-present, next to a *val val* (mixed vegetable stew) or a *gajbaje randoi* (mixed vegetable curry). In summers, *ambya umman* (ripe mango curry) and *ansa fansa bhaji* (pineapple and jackfruit curry) is served, as well. Finally, *dalitoi* (dal cooked with ginger and chillies and tempered with coconut oil), *rasam* and *sambar* are served right at the end, followed by (in this order) *puliyogare* (tamarind



SHUBHRA CHATTERJI MAYUR CHANNAGERE



SADHYA VERNIKA

rice), *bisi bele bath*, lemon rice and finally, curd rice. All this, along with a delicious glass of *taak* (buttermilk).” Alongside any contemporary menus, this extensive traditional Karwar meal is an integral part of weddings even today.

Interestingly, even within Western India, culinary traditions vary significantly. For instance, in Maharashtra, food preferences change with communities and topography. Sae Koranne Khandekar, a Maharashtrian cuisine expert and celebrated cookbook author, explains how, along with the variety, what’s acceptable in some communities is absolutely avoided in others. “*Alu cha phatphada* is a sweet-sour-spicy colocasia leaf curry with bits of coconut and peanuts, and is a wedding staple in the plateau region of Maharashtra. Towards southwestern Maharashtra, it is a complete no-no as this dish is made there for *shraadh* (a solemn Hindu period).”

Even with the diversity, many components in a Hindu-Maharashtrian wedding feast are of similar significance to what’s served in northern Karnataka. But, the traditions range far and wide. As Khandekar says, “While biryani and kebabs have made their way to Muslim-Marathi weddings today, they originally have very different customs. Customarily, the village would be invited for lunch, and a rich goat curry will be served with aromatic rice, along with some sweets.” On the other hand, Khandekar explains how in east-Indian weddings, *fugiya*—a bread made using a loose, leavened dough pinched into small balls and fried—is served with curry. “Traditionally, the women of the house would make this bread themselves, as they sing folk songs,” she adds.

The rich practices of the East

In West Bengal, the tradition of the *anondo naaru* (laddoo) is rich. Priyadarshini Chatterjee, a noted food writer, explains how a laddoo made of pounded rice, sesame, coconut, and jaggery is common in many families on joyous occasions, such as weddings.



NITIKA SOOD (2)

This *naaru* is fried in mustard oil and is prepared by the women of the house.

Perhaps even more iconic is the *aiburo bhaat*—a traditional ‘final’ meal of singlehood. In light of fast-fading community traditions, this remains a rich custom among Bengalis. At the bride’s end, it has the added significance of being her ‘last’ meal at her maternal home. Interestingly, instead of having fixed items on the menu, the *aiburo bhaat* comprises the favourite food of the to-be-wedded, but the *paayesh* (a sweet rice pudding) has found ubiquity in it—no matter how different the family traditions are.

In Assam, certain ethnic communities welcome the bride home with *baati ghuruwa*. As per Gitika Saikia, a stalwart of Assamese and northeastern tribal cuisines, nine married women of the family welcome the newlywed to her marital home by feeding her *rohi* (first press of rice wine) from a bell-metal bowl, with a piece of pork meat. “The idea behind this tradition is to welcome the bride in a positive way, wherein the nine married women signify the blessings of nine generations,” Saikia explains.

50-item marathon in the South

Chef Marina Balakrishnan, founder of Oottupura (*thatthalasserygirl.in*) takes us to our final quadrant in Kerala, where the wedding *sadhya* has a massive spread. “In a Hindu-Keralite wedding, the *sadhya* is served with almost 30-50 items on it. There are accompaniments such as *inji puli* (sweet-sour and spicy Keralite curry), pickles and banana chips, alongside *avial* (coconut curry with rice), *sambar* and *pachadi* (fresh pickles). Two *payasams* (sweetened vermicelli pudding) are always present on the *sadhya* menu as well,” she says.

Balakrishnan also touches upon the diversity of the region, based on religion, too. She explains, “In Muslim weddings of the Malabar area, the biryani is served as the main dish, while other dishes such as the Malabar *parotta* (a flaky bread) and chicken curry, along with *pathiri* (rice-flour pancake) are served, too. On the other hand, in Syrian-Christian weddings, there is an elaborate menu with *palappam*-stew (rice and coconut pancakes with stew) and seafood.”

A Culinary Journey

This entire journey tells us how food emerges as a bond connecting families and generations. And when it comes to weddings, it takes on an even deeper meaning—certainly more than the elaborate buffets that mainstream wedding fare is associated with today. It is, effectively, a thread that ties the country together, even when our traditions vary. ✦



▲ From top: Serving of prakadi, a speciality of Himachal Pradesh; Kangri dham, an auspicious part of Himachali tradition.

Opposite page: Laid out on a banana leaf, the sadhya meal serves a range of mouthwatering curries, vegetables, rice, pickles, and sweet preparations.



Floral Boucques by Guldasta

Floral bouquets and cakes have been staple gifting picks in India for a long time now—not just for weddings, but for other occasions, as well. Drawing inspiration from this timeless union, Delhi-based pastry chef Rhea Malhotra started Guldasta in 2020 to combine the beauty of floral bouquets with the deliciousness of cupcakes. “More and more people are moving away from traditional weddings to smaller, personally curated celebrations at home, where ‘boucques’ can work as a great substitute for the usual cake,” says Malhotra. Each of her boucques is intricately piped by hand, the floral motifs coming together petal by petal. These are then packaged to look like a bunch of flowers in a basket, which is then packed within a signature Guldasta box, making it a celebration of unboxing and sharing with your loved ones. There are a number of options on offer for colours and designs, as well as two icing flavours—American buttercream and Swiss meringue. [@guldasta.official](#); prices start at ₹2,500.

NOT A PIECE OF Cake

Ditch the regular wedding cakes and treat your guests to these unique, quirky, and absolutely delicious goodies, instead. **BY SATARUPA PAUL**

GONE ARE THE DAYS OF THE TRADITIONAL tiered wedding cake, lathered in vanilla frosting and piped with colourful icing that pronounce you happily wedded. Last season witnessed the rise of intimate—and dare we say, more meaningful—gatherings of loved ones coming together to celebrate your big day. The enhanced safety protocols also meant ditching the multi-tiered communal cake for alternatives that could be served as individual portions, and yet retain the celebratory essence of a wedding cake. From towers of macarons to beautiful arrangements of Indian mithais, wedding-cake alternatives have assumed lives of their own, and how.



Artisanal Mithai Pyramids by Meethi by Wok in the Clouds

There was a time when no Indian wedding was complete without a round of mithais for dessert. Putting a spin on this custom, Meethi by Wok in the Clouds has elevated authentic Indian sweets to a luxurious experience in the form of their mithai pyramids. “Mithai has been an integral part of all Indian celebrations, including weddings, but as times changed, age-old Indian mithai recipes [have] slowly lost their relevance,” says Bobby Gujral, director of Wok in the Clouds. It’s this loss of cultural significance that Meethi is trying to address by recreating the charm of these original recipes. The 100 per cent natural and handcrafted Indian mithais are packaged in staggered pyramid boxes so that the contents are presented in all their glory. The pyramids come with an option to customise the packaging, choose the floral arrangements, and pick the mithais of your liking from their wide selection of artisanal milkcakes, barfis, kalakand, lauj, and more. [meethi.in](#); prices start at ₹3,500.

Bespoke Truffle Boxes by Truffle & Co

If you love truffles, and want them prepared for your big day exactly as per your taste and preference, then seek out Truffle & Co. Known for their hand-rolled truffles, the brand creates these bite-sized, chocolatey delights without eggs and in a range of distinctive flavours, including Decadent Dark, Bumble Bee, Modagor, Cappuccino, Autumn, Champagne, and more. For weddings, they offer specialised bespoke services, wherein a Truffle & Co representative meets up with the couple in advance to compile a list of their likes and dislikes. A unique flavour,

specific to the couple is then created, which is meant for them and them alone, never to be replicated ever again. “Each wedding gets its own set of truffles specifically made to fit the theme. Also, we strive to create boxes that evoke the couple’s fondest memories together,” says chef and co-founder Vidushi Sharma. The truffles are handcrafted from start to finish with premium-quality ingredients from around the world, such as French cream and Belgian chocolates, thanks to Sharma’s love for travel. [@truffleandco_](#); prices start at ₹1,000.



Fusion Sweets by Bombay Sweet Shop

Make your wedding a remarkable affair by opting for an assortment of fusion sweets from the famed Bombay Sweet Shop. Think Coconut Caramel Patissa Bar, Ferraro Rocker Besan Laddoo, Dulce De Leche Peda, Aam Papad Lollipops, and more. A venture of Hunger Inc, the Bombay Sweet Shop imaginatively reinterprets a gamut of traditional Indian sweets in a contemporary and fun format. "We take what's known and stir it with

something surprising to give you a sweet treat that you'll love," says Sameer Seth, partner at Hunger Inc Hospitality. "For instance, Kaju Katli is a much-loved mithai that is a part of many celebrations. We recreated the iconic sweet as a bite-sized bonbon, with a decadent layer of chocolate to give you our Kaju Marzipan Bonbons. The thought has always been to make mithais desirable desserts again." bombaysweetshop.com; prices start at ₹50 per piece.



Traditional Nankhatais by Lost Roots

This traditional Indian cookie, crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, found in glass jars at every corner tea shop, may seem like an odd inclusion, until you see how the Delhi-based Lost Roots has elevated it to gourmet status. Specialising in recreating the exact taste and texture of the original *nankhatai*, the brand offers a wide selection of shapes, flavours, and colours to fit every occasion, such as coffee, *elaichi* (cardamom), paan, rose, oats, and jaggery. "Our *nankhatais* are made fresh for each order and handcrafted by some of the most skilful *halwais* (confectioners). They are prepared in pure desi ghee with premium ingredients," says founder Nishant Goel. "We also offer customised boxes to add a hint of elegance to the *nankhatais*." These Indian cookies are certain to not only add a touch of tradition to your menu, but also evoke a sense of nostalgia in your guests. lostroms.in; prices start at ₹400 for a box of four.

Boozy Ice-Cream Tubs by Spirited Swirls

Perfect for an intimate wedding hosting a primarily adult attendance of friends and family, these ice-cream tubs from Delhi-based Spirited Swirls come infused with premium liqueurs and spirits. Brainchild of home-baker Jaspreet Kaur Aulakh, the boozy ice-cream tubs are completely vegetarian, eggless, and preservative-free. Made to order, they come in seven flavours, such as Kahlua Coffee, Rum N Raisin, Whiskey Caramel, and Tiramisu, as well as vegan ones like Oreos N Rum, Whiskey Chocolate, and Pina Colada. "Boozy ice cream is still pretty niche as a dessert, and it's even rarer to find one at a wedding. So, for those looking to do something totally out of the ordinary, these can be a great dessert alternative to a regular wedding cake," says Aulakh. Add to that the drama of cool smoke created by dry ice in which they are presented, and you'll have guests leaving in high spirits, literally. [@spiritedswirls](http://spiritedswirls.com); prices start at ₹500.



Macaron Towers by Miam Patisserie

Macarons have been finding their way into upscale Indian weddings for quite some time now, whether as accompaniments for tea or as an after-dessert course. Lately though, they've evolved to occupy centre stage on their own as macaron towers. Started by the Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef Bani Nanda in 2015, Miam Patisserie does an exclusive selection of French pastries, viennoiseries, and cakes made with authentic French technique and precision, using natural and seasonal ingredients. Their macarons come in an assortment of flavours, such as Belgian dark chocolate, salted caramel, raspberry, coffee, blueberry cheesecake, and more. Nanda says, "Large macaron towers are becoming exceedingly popular at weddings, for they not only look beautiful, but are also easy to pick and eat, as well as conveniently replenish throughout the event." miampatisserie.com; prices start at ₹900.

Madeleine Platters by Brownsalt Bakery

A French classic that is often eaten hot with coffee, madeleines are soft, mini-sponge cakes, with a distinctive shell shape that can be infused with a variety of flavours and coated with white or dark chocolate to elevate the look. "You can make a pretty tower or platter with chocolate-coated madeleines as an alternative to a wedding cake. It'd be a perfect replacement as guests can pick up individual pieces and mix and match the flavours, so there's a bit of a surprise element, too," says Divya Advani, founder of Brownsalt Bakery that does a mean selection of such madeleines. The Mumbai-based online bakery takes traditional healthy ingredients and lends them a modern interpretation in the form of granolas, cookie cakes, brownies, etc. The madeleines come in various flavours, such as orange and honey with a pistachio crust, nutty brown butter, matcha, lemon, and many more. brownsaltbakery.com; prices start at ₹390.



Assorted Baklavas by The Baklava Box

For a taste of the Mediterranean, swap your cake stand for a beautifully laid out platter of assorted baklavas from The Baklava Box. Originating in Turkey and available throughout the Arabian landscape, this layered dessert of filo pastry filled with chopped nuts and sweetened with honey or syrup makes for a lusciously decadent alternative to the regular wedding cake. "The exuberance associated with weddings in India is something that is often celebrated with food. Our baklavas fit in perfectly with that thought, as they are premium, 100 per cent vegetarian, and come packaged in gourmet boxes with nuts, dates, and various other customisations," says Vatsal Agarwal, founder of the Kolkata-based gourmet sweets company. The Baklava Box offers many variants of baklavas, such as almond tart, cashew square, midye, mixed tart, pistachio square, and pyramid to name a few. Besides baklavas, they also do flavoured dates, kunafa, and Indian-fusion sweets. thebaklavabox.com; prices start at ₹980.



Indian Mithai Cakes by Amintiri

Have an undying love for syrup-soaked gulab jamuns or delicate *rasmalais* floating in a saffron-milk bath? But also want to experience the celebratory ritual of cutting a cake together for the very first time? Why settle for either when you can have the best of both in one delicious ensemble? The Bengaluru-based Amintiri offers just that with their Saffron Rasmalai Cake and Gulab Jamun Cake. "Initially released as a limited-edition offering during Diwali to pay ode to our favourite Indian sweets, these two cakes soon rocketed to the top of our bestseller charts," says co-founder Priyanka Bhojwani. The unique presentation of two popular Indian sweets as cakes makes them perfect for not just festivals, but for weddings, too. Besides decadent cakes in a variety of classic, as well as innovative flavours, they also offer cake loaves with a shelf life of up to a week. amintiri.in; prices start at ₹860. †



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