

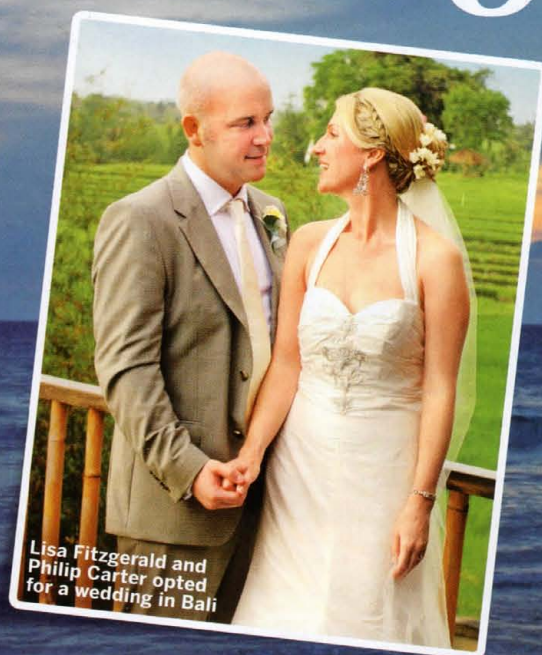
# A tale of two weddings

An overseas wedding can make your dream day a fairy-tale fantasy

WORDS SHERIDEN RHODES

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Lisa Fitzgerald and Philip Carter opted for a wedding in Bali

**Instead** of tying the knot at home, more couples are heading overseas for a wedding that's both unique and budget-friendly. We head to Phuket and Bali to find out how much bang you can get for your buck on your big day. And to take extra special care of your gown (and you), why not fly Jetstar's StarClass?

## Phuket

With incredible beaches and renowned Thai hospitality, Phuket is a dream wedding location for many couples — and can work out a whole lot cheaper than a five-star wedding in Australia.

Anna Robinson and Natalie Doherty from Melbourne-based Take Us To Thailand organised the Phuket wedding of Lauren Martin and Ian Wardell (main photo) at the popular Twinpalms resort on Surin Beach. Robinson and Doherty have first-hand experience of getting married in Thailand and know personally all the things that can go wrong. "I married in Thailand in 2004 and Anna was my bridesmaid. Unfortunately, the food and beverage manager left and didn't tell the resort about my wedding," Doherty says.

With eight weeks to go and 60 people booked on flights, she quit her job and flew to Thailand to organise everything from scratch, going on to start her own business with Anna so brides don't have to go through the stress she experienced. "I thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown, but it ended up being spectacular and a holiday for everyone. Plus, I ended up with a business out of it."



FROM TOP: A wedding planner will help with the legal logistics of an overseas wedding; Twinpalms resort dinner reception for Lauren and Ian; Lisa and Philip add some gorgeous Bali touches to their big day



Melbourne couple Lauren and Ian, as well as most of their guests, flew Jetstar to Phuket and scored a lot of bang for their buck by holding both their wedding and honeymoon in Thailand. "The ceremony, celebrant, flowers, bouquets, gourmet seafood menu and seven hours of cocktails, beers and wine for 30 guests, hot air Khom Loy lanterns launched over the night ocean as a good luck symbol to the bride and groom, a photographer, hair and make up, pedicures, manicures, and two-hour spa treatments for the bride and groom cost under AU\$9,000," Robinson says. Take Us To Thailand charged AU\$4,000 to coordinate every detail of the couple's intimate tropical wedding, plus organised their honeymoon and booked accommodation individually for all 28 guests.

The couple loved the fact that their wedding was low-key and intimate — exchanging vows barefoot on the beach as the tropical sun was setting.

Plus, there was no stress involved, with virtually everything done for them. Robinson and Doherty sat down with the couple and communicated via email giving their professional opinion on everything from locations right down to the finer details of flowers and photography.

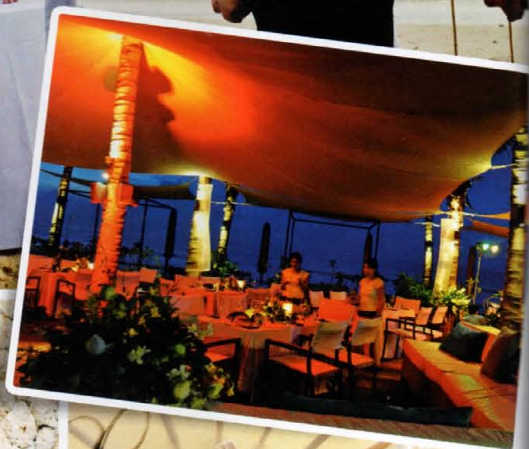
"It was great that everyone else was counting down the days until flying out, just like we were. Our friends and family have not stopped talking about our wedding and we hope some of them will do the same thing so we can do it all over again, as their guests!" Martin says.



## Bali

With its gorgeous scenery and fascinating culture, Bali is a great choice for a destination wedding. Lisa Fitzgerald and Philip Carter decided to tie the knot at Pantai Lima's "Sound of the Sea" villa in the secluded beachside village of Pererenan after the logistics of holding a wedding in Australia proved too difficult for their Irish families.

They contracted Bali-based wedding planner Karen Quarello-Morgan at Cher



Ange, who charges US\$3,000 on average to coordinate a Bali wedding. "This was absolutely the best thing ever. We met up in Brisbane and Karen was able to show us all the options on her laptop. I have a background in event management and could have done it myself, but to have the knowledge of the island, the people and expertise of someone who lives there made our lives so much easier," explains Fitzgerald.





What really sold Bali for Lisa and Philip was the easy-going holiday atmosphere and the warmth of the Balinese people. Cost was also a factor. "I don't think you could get the same standard of food and service for the price back home," says Fitzgerald.

*Real Weddings* magazine founding editor Kirsten MacKelden says many resorts in Asia offer all-inclusive wedding packages. "The cost per head for a wedding is less than what you'd find in Australia where the average spend is AU\$110 per person, while the favourable exchange rate makes holding a wedding in Asia very attractive," she says.

Lisa and Philip's wedding featured local children in traditional dress welcoming guests with frangipani bracelets and leis, Balinese dancers and musicians, a fire dance and a band that learned all the couple's favourite songs via YouTube videos.

Sydney couple Georgia Cousens and Jim Johnston also opted for an exotic and relaxed wedding in Bali as they both love travel and most of their friends and family live around the world. "It turned out to be a fantastic idea as not only did everyone have a wonderful holiday, but it kept numbers very manageable," says Cousens.

The couple, whose wedding appeared in *Real Weddings* magazine, hired Melbourne-based Narelle Williams from Global Weddings, a company that specialises in organising weddings in exotic locations around the world. "Without her, we probably wouldn't have had quite so spectacular a wedding."



MacKelden says many hotels will have an event or wedding planner who speaks good English and can assist couples with all the hotel details and refer other suppliers. "Generally speaking though, an overseas wedding planner is worth their weight in gold because they have an overview of the entire trip, and also handle all the formalities for marriage licences, other wedding pre- and post-events, and co-ordination of travel for the bridal couple and their guests."

Georgia and Jim's choice of the stunning

## FIND IT

**Take Us To Thailand**  
Tel: +61 (417) 030 654

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Cherng Talay, Phuket,  
tel: +66 (0) 7631 6500

**The Legian**  
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Seminyak, Bali,  
tel: +62 (361) 730 622

For legal requirements of getting married in Thailand and Indonesia go to:  
[www.thailand.embassy.gov.au](http://www.thailand.embassy.gov.au)  
[www.indonesia.embassy.gov.au](http://www.indonesia.embassy.gov.au)

**Georgia Cousens and Jim Johnston in Bali**  
**INSET: The Pantai Lima dinner reception of Lisa and Philip**



Legian Hotel in Seminyak as their ceremonial reception and accommodation location proved a coup. The wedding itself was a mingling of east and west. The bridal procession included eight Balinese flower girls in traditional dress, while the lavish dinner party overlooking an infinity pool adorned with floating flowers and candles was followed by a 100-piece fire-dancing troupe performing on the adjacent beach. The "formalities" ended with jubilant guests jumping into the pool.

"The only advice I would give others considering marrying overseas is to hire a wedding planner and don't take on the booking of guest accommodation. That's something I would definitely not have done had I known how stressful it would be," says Georgia. ★

**Jetstar flies to Phuket from Sydney and to Bali from Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Darwin. Book online at [Jetstar.com](http://Jetstar.com).**

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