

Created by  
SnapKnöt

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE  
TO PLANNING A

*Destination  
Wedding*



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# Introduction

You are engaged! Congrats! Let the excitement and wedding planning begin! One of the very first things you and your soon-to-be has to decide is your wedding location. Destination weddings are very popular and a great idea for a couple who may love traveling or for those who have always dreamed about getting married in your favorite city or vacation spot. You also could both be from totally different locations around the country and simply want to pick a city where you can meet in the middle.

While planning a destination wedding, there are so many various details you have to consider so we put together this destination wedding guide to help you out. Whether or not you know if a destination wedding is exactly what you want, read through this guide to help answer some of your questions. Hopefully this will help you make the important decision of where you want to say “I do.”

And if you need a little bit of extra help with all of the other hundreds of wedding details, be sure to download our [wedding planning checklist](#) to keep you on track.

## 8 TIPS FOR PLANNING

# *A Destination Wedding*

**I**t is never easy to plan anything if you are not able to physically be there to do it and a destination wedding is no exception. One good thing is that technology today makes it easy to contact people from anywhere. Since we know that so many people have destination weddings, we put together these 8 tips that we hope will help you in your planning.

# 1

## Pick Your Location Carefully

Depending on what your budget is, there is a destination you can find that will fit that budget... you just have to do your research! Just make sure you know upfront how many people you will be having attend your big event. You don't want to choose a tiny beach location when every single person on your guest list will actually want to join.



Photo credit: [Melissa Mercado](#)

# 2

## Plan Ahead and Early

When you are planning a destination wedding, it pays to plan and book everything early. It is also important to get your invitations out early as well. You have to remember that your guests may need to get passports if needed or book flights. They may also need to know well in advance so they can take off that time from work or save up the money they will need to travel. Planning earlier will also get you and your guests a better rate on a room block at a hotel...the closer to the event, the more expensive the rooms will be. Flights also tend to be cheaper further out.

# 3

## *Your Wedding Location* CAN ALSO BE YOUR HONEYMOON SPOT

If you have been longing to have your wedding at a beautiful beach, why not think about making your honeymoon be at that same beach location? You can save money as many resorts offer wedding and honeymoon packages. Also, many guests who attend a destination wedding stay for a few days longer than the actual wedding if they are able to. You can enjoy some one-on-one time with your new husband or wife but also enjoy some quality time with your family and friends if you want to.



Photo credit: [Melissa Mercado](#)

# 4

## *Think About The Weather* WHILE CHOOSING A LOCATION AND DATE

That Caribbean destination seems like the perfect spot, but it would be awful to have a hurricane hit right on the exact week of your wedding. If you are going to have a destination wedding, make sure you consider the time of year you plan the event. It may be best to stay away from the months of hurricane season if you want to have your wedding in a hurricane prone area.

# 5

## Understand The Marriage Laws

It is very important to make sure you know what the marriage laws are in the country or destination in which you are tying the knot. Every country has its own requirements... some including blood tests, residency requirements, proof of immunizations and more. Make sure that you check out what those laws are before you even consider booking a venue for your destination wedding. Some of those laws may not be ones you want to deal with and it is MUCH better to know that upfront.

# 6

## Only Book Reputable Vendors

Booking your florist, [wedding photographer](#), caterers and more are difficult when you are all the way on the other side of the country... or world! Make sure every vendor you book is one that can provide a great list of satisfied clients. It is also helpful to check with the contact you are working with at the venue, hotel or resort you are using for your event. They typically will have a list of preferred vendors that they recommend, and that way you know you are getting the best.

If you are looking for your wedding photographer for your destination wedding, make sure you start a [FREE](#) account here on [SnapKnot](#), and we will help you find your perfect photographer within your budget and in the location in which you will say "I do."



Photo credit: Studio Julien Pontarolo

# 7

## Be Mindful Of Your Guests

Coming to a destination wedding can be costly for guests. Make sure you have all the details for the guests planned out so that when they arrive, they know exactly where they are going. It is a great idea to have a car service or transportation information available for each guest. It is also good etiquette for any couple having a destination wedding to let the guests know that their attendance is a gift in itself, and a gift is not necessary.

# 8

## Use A Wedding Planner

It never hurts to hire someone who knows the area and all the various vendors you need, as well as all those specific laws that you will need to follow. Many times, if you are getting hitched at a resort, they will have a wedding planner that you will work with specifically. If not, you may want to look into finding one that can do wonders for planning the wedding that you have always dreamed of in the destination of your choice.



Photo credit: [Melissa Mercado](#)



DO'S AND DON'TS FOR  
PLANNING

*A Destination  
Wedding*

## Do SELECT A DESTINATION THAT IS EASY TO GET TO.

Your guests are more likely to attend and be happy once they get there. You will find that it also eliminates other potential issues with coordinating your event.

## Do CARRY ON YOUR DRESS IF YOU HAVE TO FLY TO YOUR DESTINATION.

Your wedding gown is so important and the one you've been dreaming of wearing your entire life, and let's face it – airlines are notorious for losing luggage. Check with the airline to see if you can stash it onboard. Many airplanes have a coat closet they can hang it in and knowing exactly where it is will give you much needed peace of mind.

## Do CREATE A WEDDING WEBSITE FOR YOUR GUESTS.

A wedding website is a great idea, especially because pretty much everyone is online all the time already! You can add the specific details about your wedding day so your guests know where to look if they need hotel details, room block information or other specific travel information. We love [eWeddings!](#) You can customize your own free wedding website however you would like and they are so easy to use. Check out eWeddings today to [create your own free personalized wedding website!](#)

## Do FIND LOCAL FAVORS AND GIFTS FOR YOUR GUESTS.

You chose your destination for a reason, so reflect the destination by finding little trinkets from the area to give to guests. Do you love the beach because you love searching for amazing sea shells? Add them to your welcome baskets. Are you intrigued by Italy because of their exquisite wine? Give a bottle of your favorite vino to guests as a favor.

## Do RESEARCH THE MARRIAGE REQUIREMENTS BEFORE YOU SELECT YOUR DESTINATION.

Each country and state has its own requirements, which can change from time to time. Make sure you are aware of what those requirements are and get the legwork done before you go.

## Do HIRE A PROFESSIONAL WEDDING PLANNER.

Many hotels and resorts offer day-of planning services, but to ensure you have all the details covered, it's best to hire a third party professional. Your location will likely have a list of preferred vendors they have an established relationship with.

## Do HIRE A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER AND BRING THEM WITH YOU.

Your images will be one of the only tangible things you can take from your wedding day – make sure you love them! If you need to find a wedding photographer that is located in the destination you are getting married, or simply want to find a photographer who can travel with you, be sure to create a free account on [SnapKnot!](#)

## Do VISIT THE DESTINATION AT LEAST ONCE BEFORE YOUR EVENT, IF YOU CAN.

It helps so much to meet your professionals before you go and get an idea of any potential issues you'll have. Many things like traffic and distance from other hotels are not something you can plan for without actually being in the destination. Visiting ahead of time is good so you can be sure to work around any issues before the wedding. It will also show you some awesome places for amazing wedding photos.

## Do CALL NUMEROUS HOTELS TO SEE IF YOU CAN NEGOTIATE GROUP DISCOUNTS.

If you book 10 or more rooms, most hotels will provide a discount. Call the Group Sales Manager and ask for details. You can also see if you can do a full buy out depending on the amount of rooms and guests you expect. This is also where having a travel agent to help out would be very helpful!

## *Don't* SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF.

No matter if you are having an elaborate destination wedding or a small intimate wedding at your home, things can go wrong. Make sure to keep it all in perspective and enjoy the process every step of the way. The little hiccups that may happen are not a big deal in the grand scheme of the event. The love that you and your fiancé/ée share is all that truly matters!

## *Don't* WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO SEND YOUR INVITATIONS.

You need additional lead time when planning a destination wedding. Family and friends should get at least 3 months notice to prepare for attending a destination wedding. They will need to have time to book their accommodations, request off of work if needed, save up whatever money they may need, or even find a babysitter for the kids.

## *Don't* ASSUME PEOPLE KNOW WHERE THEY ARE GOING.

Some people aren't always comfortable traveling to a place they've never been. Instead – make it easy on them by providing them with maps and directions. Also, make sure

each guest gets a welcome basket with repeated itineraries and how to get to each place. Having car transportation already scheduled and available for guests when they arrive in the destination is a great idea as well.

## *Don't* LEAVE GUESTS HANGING.

The rehearsal dinner and wedding are obviously required events, but adding a few more activities that are “optional” for guests during a destination wedding is a great idea. People will want to explore the destination on their own, but also want to have some quality time with you. Maybe try a bonfire on the beach at sunset. Or a night out at a local bar where everyone can hang out and relax. The gatherings don't have to be extravagant; it's more about spending time with your loved ones.

## *Don't* EXPECT THAT EVERYONE WILL COME.

If you live in Maryland and are doing a destination wedding in Italy, you may have a small number of attending guests. Understand that cost, time and distance will play a major role in how many people attend. And if you are planning a destination wedding that is somewhere closer and many guests can drive to, the turnout may be much better than if it was an international destination wedding.



Photo credit: Jessica La Plante Photography 

# Destination Wedding ETIQUETTE

**E**tiquette is something every bride will struggle with at some point during her wedding planning... especially when dealing with planning a destination wedding. It's important to stay balanced; you need to make sure you get what you and your spouse want, but you also want to keep your loved ones in mind at the same time. Below you will find some very common etiquette questions answered that should help you out during your destination wedding planning!

## TRY TO LIMIT PRE-WEDDING EVENTS TO ONLY ONE.

A destination wedding can be a large expense for some people and that only escalates if you have several parties to attend on top of the wedding. If you are having an expensive destination wedding, but also really want to have a huge bachelorette party or bridal shower, it could end up being too much for those you love. You do not want your family and friends to start feeling stressed over expenses when they should be enjoying your special day.

You know your guests and their circumstances better than anyone, so consider that when deciding which events to have. If friends or family insist on throwing you a shower, don't fight them over it, but make sure you recognize the overall financial outlay before adding more events to the roster.

## KEEP IN MIND THE PROPER WAY TO TIP VENDORS.

Tipping is important and shows your appreciation for a job well done. When planning your budget, it is important to include gratuities into your calculations. Also be sure to check with your wedding coordinator for the proper gratuity for your specific location of your wedding as this can vary from one country to another.

## HERE ARE A FEW OTHER TIP GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW:

- Be sure to read through all vendor contracts and final bills to see if a gratuity was already included. You don't want to double tip (unless you want to)!
- The host should carry an envelope with cash on the wedding day for unexpected tips. You want to make sure you have the cash if it is needed so you are not scrambling around the day of.
- Guests should not be expected to pay parking lot attendants, coatroom attendants etc. This should be arranged ahead of time. Also be sure to inform your guests with discreetly placed signage so they do not double tip.
- If you have a wedding planner, they may prefer to give out tips on the wedding day. If not, designate someone to handle this detail for you.

## SENDING THANK YOU NOTES IN A TIMELY MANNER.

Wedding gifts are wonderful, but trying to send out thank you notes soon after your wedding and honeymoon is difficult for most brides and grooms. Ideally, you should write them as soon as a gift arrives, but it is perfectly acceptable to send them within a month of returning from your honeymoon.

You may have heard that you have a year to send a thank you note for any gifts you receive. This is a common misconception. Guests do have up to a year to send their gifts to you, but your acknowledgement should be made as soon as possible.

## KEEPING THE GUEST LIST DOWN WHEN EACH FAMILY HAS MANY PEOPLE TO INVITE.

Destination weddings are usually more intimate occasions for the family and closest friends but there are many times where both sets of parents have extra

friends or family members they really want to invite. Sometimes this is very difficult for the bride and groom, especially if the parents are the ones paying for the wedding.

Be sure to communicate early in the planning process with both sets of parents about your wishes for the amount of guests you want to attend. If they are not happy with having to leave some people off, perhaps suggest they host an 'at-home reception' for their friends or family.

## TO INVITE (OR NOT TO) INVITE CHILDREN TO YOUR DESTINATION WEDDING.

Depending on where your wedding will take place, and what type of event you will be having, you may want to have it as an 'adult only' event. Make sure you communicate far in advance if you will be including children (or not) so your guests can plan ahead.

Also, it is good etiquette to keep the rules the same for everyone. If you include some children on the invitations, all children of your guests should be included. It will not be taken well if you invite your niece and nephew to your celebration but leave out the other set of children who you may not be as close to. The exception to this would be children participating in the wedding.

## WHAT EXPENSES SHOULD YOU TAKE CARE OF FOR YOUR BRIDAL PARTY?

Participating in any wedding can be expensive! It is generally proper etiquette for a destination wedding for attendants to pay for their own clothing, accessories, hair and makeup, travel, lodging, wedding and shower gifts. It is also customary for the maid of honor or bridesmaids to host a shower or bachelorette party.

Since destination weddings tend to be smaller than a typical wedding, you may choose to help your wedding party out on expenses (budget permitting, of course), but it is certainly not required. But remember, what you do for one person, you should do for everyone.

#### HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS TO MAKING YOUR WEDDING MORE AFFORDABLE:

- Negotiate group discounts on airfare and lodging. Check with your travel agent to help you out with this.
- If you are having a beach wedding, perhaps rent a large beach home for you and all your guests and have the wedding there so you could tie-in the accommodations with the entire event. This saves money all around!
- Don't choose the most expensive bridesmaid dresses or suits for the groomsmen. This will help to keep the cost down for the entire bridal party.

## EXPERTS GIVE THEIR BEST

# Destination Wedding Tips

**W**e have some destination wedding planning tips from some awesome experts in the travel and wedding industry and these are a must-read! Enjoy!

## CELIA TRYZBIAK

LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL SPECIALIST WITH BERMAN TRAVEL LLC

**W**hen you are planning a destination wedding, who better to help you with your planning than a travel agent? They know all the ins and outs of planning a trip and are aware of all the various necessities and fees that you could get charged when planning. It is also helpful to have a travel agent to help your wedding guests with their travel needs as well. Celia Tryzbiak is someone who knows her stuff when it comes to travel! She provided some great tips we had to share with you. Be sure to check out Celia's website at [www.travelbycelia.com](http://www.travelbycelia.com) or visit [www.bermantravel.com](http://www.bermantravel.com).

### **Here is what Celia had to say about planning a destination wedding:**

*"I would ALWAYS recommend having a travel agent book the group for the bride and groom. They are experienced in group bookings, know the destination inside & out and will have a relationship with the resort/wholesaler already, so the bride and groom can feel stress free knowing that someone is taking care of things for them.*

*The planning process should start 1 year in advance. This will give the best pricing because the hotel's availability is still strong. It will also give guests plenty of time to get time off of work.*

*All-inclusive hotels are the way to go for destination weddings. They give the most bang for your buck. Also when the guests stay at the resort all their meals and drinks are included in the room price. We call it the "leave your wallet in your room" vacation.*

*The best areas to plan a destination wedding at an all-inclusive resort would be in the Caribbean and Mexico.*

*Most resorts have a wedding planner on site and he/she comes complimentary or at a nominal fee based on how many rooms are contracted for the guests. This of course varies from resort to resort. The wedding planner will work with the bride/groom directly throughout the entire planning process. The planner will have tiered packages that will go from basic to very extravagant as far as the set up for the wedding and reception so it really works with any budget.*

*Travel agents (most of them, including myself) are free of charge because the hotels will pay them a commission for bringing the group to the resort. It is just another person in addition to the wedding planner to help out the bride and groom."*

**Here are a few more tips from other wedding industry experts that are definitely a must-read!**

*"Pick a creative spot. Hawaii and Mexico are beautiful but expensive. Some of our most amazing weddings are the ones that are unusual. We recently did one on the Santa Monica pier with a carnival theme and Corey Feldman officiating. The mountains such as Lake Arrowhead and Big Bear have amazing hotels and rustic camps that have amazing food and ambiance."*

*-Lea Hatch, Owner, [A Shot Above Entertainment, Inc.](#)*

*"Do the legal stuff at home (marriage license) - saves time, money, running around, residency requirement stays. So when you get to the destination - the ceremony is just the "icing on the cake" (and the legal forms were completed in your home town)."*

*-Marilyn Cairo, Co-Founder of [AskMeWeddings](#)*



Photo credit: Kate Holstein 

*"A great tip for brides is to send all their wedding guests who will be bringing children information on child care at the specific property you will be staying or a great company offered around the city."*

*-Rachel Charlupski, Founder, [The Babysitting Company](#)*

*"Plan early. If you will be marrying abroad, you will want to know in advance what are the requirements to do so. Most often this will require to plan early, and depending on your destination, it might be worth looking at airfares & accommodation early in the planning process, too, so that you and your guests take advantage of early birds / special fares. Most of your guests will also likely need as much advance notice as possible to adjust and plan for an overseas trip, including getting a passport, so the earlier you let them know, the better."*

*- Nelly Grange at [wedOtahiti](#)*



“Factor in your priorities and personalities (as a couple). It is important that your venue and location will fit in your overall budget. So be sure to do your research) and remember that some venues do not look like how they are perceived online which is where hiring an event planner like us can help!”

- *Marisa Manna Ferrell, Wedding/Event Planner, Owner, [So Eventful](#)*

“Consider combining your destination wedding with your honeymoon (what Sandals Resorts calls a WeddingMoon®) this option makes planning and budgeting for a destination wedding easy and fun. Sandals also offers a multi-island experience called Honeymoon Hop, where couples may choose to marry with friends and family at one Sandals and honeymoon at another. This gives the photography minded couple, a sea of gorgeous photo options!”

- *Marsha-Ann Brown, Director of Romance for [Sandals Resorts](#)*



Photo credit: Sandals Resort 

“When looking for a wedding planner, it is a great idea to hire an expert destination wedding planner. Remember that just because someone is a wedding planner does not mean they’re specialized or knowledgeable in planning destination weddings or events. Look for a wedding planner who has worked to plan multiple destination weddings and events. I’d suggest someone who has done at least 50+ events outside their state and a minimum of 25+ outside the country if you’re traveling internationally. Most destination wedding planners will have done at least 150+ events outside their state and 100+ internationally. If there’s a wedding planner that may not have planned dozens of weddings, look for their event/corporate background. Some wedding planners (like myself) do a lot of corporate events that are mainly outside of the state or country they live in. Consider this when making your decision.”

- *Gregorio Palomino, CREATIVE Executive Officer, CEO, [CRE8AD8](#)*

“Hiring a destination wedding planner will definitely end up saving couples money in the long run. Pros have established relationships with the vendors and hotels in your destination city, which means getting preferred pricing because of the volume of business they do with them. Hiring the right wedding planner for YOU is important. This is someone you're going to be working very closely with and involving in family discussions (which are often heated) about finances, details of your relationship, etc. Allow someone with experience and years of knowledge working in that city to help take your ideas, vision and dreams to fruition so you can truly be a guest at your own wedding and enjoy - not stress out - about the planning experience.”

- *Anastasia Stevenson, [Coastal Creative Events](#) and [www.howtodiwedding.com](http://www.howtodiwedding.com)*

“Be sure the most important people to you like parents, grandparents and siblings are in agreement. Don't set up a destination wedding only to find out those you want most to witness your matrimony will not or cannot travel.”

- *Adrienne Sasson, [Travel Consultant/Business Development Director, Rubinsohn Travel](#)*

“Check into the hotel a day or two before your wedding. When your wedding is far from home, last-minute to-do's become a big stressor. Not to mention, the morning of the wedding is always stressful in and of itself because of everything going on! That's why it's best for couples to check into their hotel a day or two before the wedding. For example, if you're planning a Saturday wedding, plan on arriving on Thursday or Friday. This will allow you to check into your room, hang up the dress and tux, as well as relax and unwind with family and friends before the big event.”

- *Kristin Prindle, [Event Sales Manager, Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa in Austin, TX](#)*

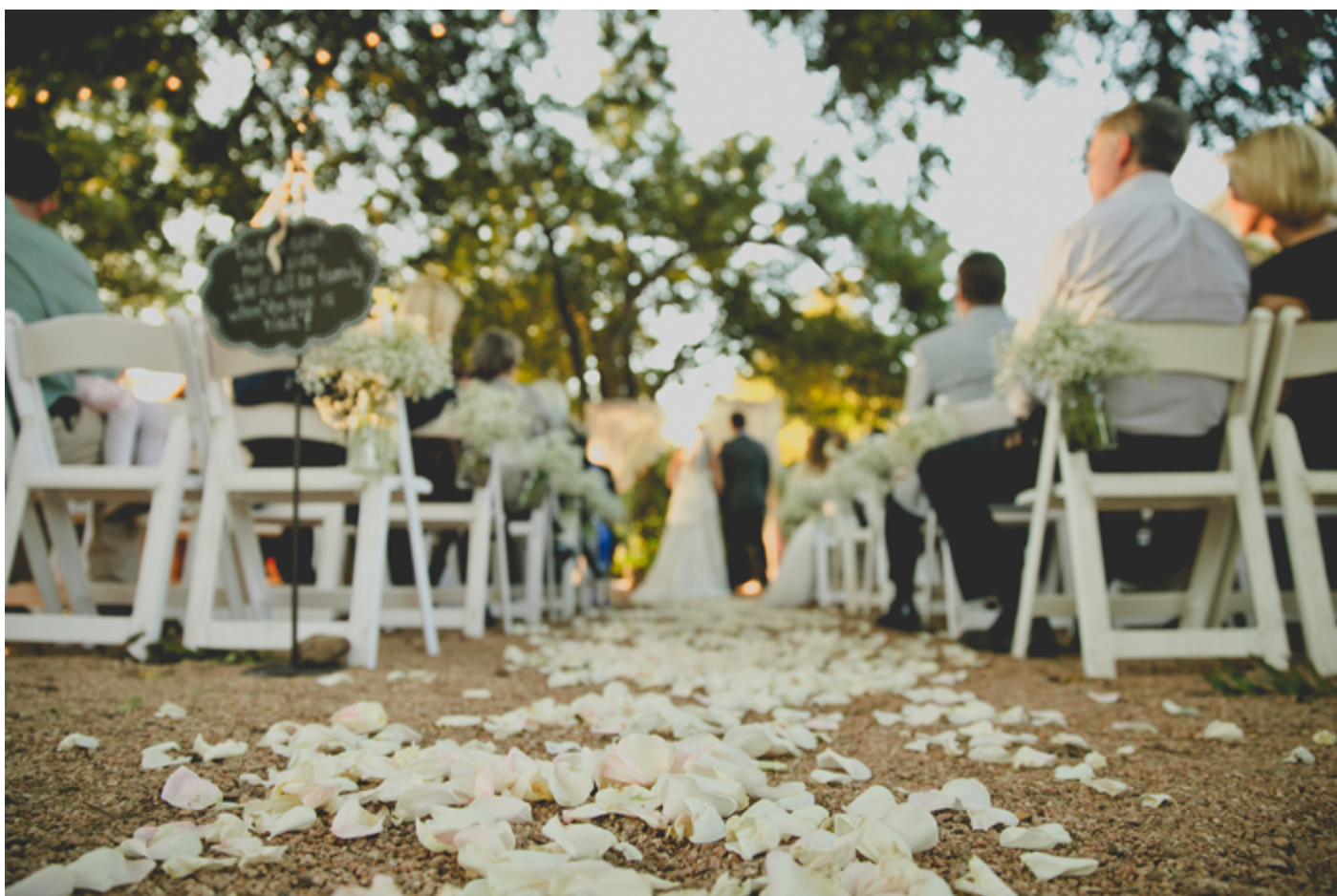


Photo credit: [Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa](#)

*“Consider shipping your luggage ahead of time. Whether you are the bride, groom, family members or bridal party, you will likely be packing a lot of things with you on your trip to a destination wedding. From formal and casual clothes, to party favors and DIY decorations, to hair and makeup products, carrying on luggage is just not possible. However, checking luggage isn't practical either. With numerous bags, it's much more affordable, reliable and convenient to ship luggage ahead. We pick up your luggage from your home and will deliver them directly to your destination, whether it is a destination, cruise ship, or more in 200+ countries and territories. We also handle the entire customs process and include a best on-time guarantee in the industry. We handle the entire logistics process so you do not have to worry about it!”*

*- Zeke Adkins, Co-Founder, [Luggage Forward](#)*

*“Plan to hold an additional reception close to home. If you decide to have a destination wedding, there will undoubtedly be guests that may not be able to attend, whether it be due to job obligations, families obligations or financial hardship. If there are many that simply can't attend the wedding, consider holding another reception close to home. If your destination wedding is designed to be small and intimate than planning an additional reception will allow you to be able to invite those that were unable to attend.”*

*- Aviva Samuels, [Kiss the Planner](#)*

# SnapKnot

Even though planning a wedding is a huge undertaking, your possibilities are truly endless. If you choose to have a destination wedding, be sure to plan very far ahead and choose an amazing location that works well with you as well as the other guests who will be attending. Once you do that, let the rest of your planning begin! And remember, your entire wedding is such a wonderful celebration between the two of you, so enjoy every moment!

If you are still looking for a photographer for your engagement session or your wedding day, be sure to check out [SnapKnot](#) for the best local wedding photographers in your area or in the destination you are planning to have your wedding!

Note: Some of the links in this ebook may be affiliate links for which SnapKnot receives a small consideration if you purchase a product or service via that link.