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## DOMINICAN WEDDING POWER









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## Adrián Pavía "The legacy for the new generations is undoubtedly ÉPICA MAGAZINE".

There are times when an entire industry seems to spread its wings to fly higher. And today, that is happening with the destination wedding universe. Couples are not only looking for extraordinary venues, they are looking for a complete, unique, transformative experience. The exponential growth of this phenomenon is no coincidence: it responds to a deep need for connection, beauty and conscious celebration. Weddings are no longer just a day: they are a journey. And in that journey, every detail counts.

In this context, the role of the planner becomes even more relevant. We are much more than organizers: we are interpreters of dreams, guardians of emotions, cultural translators, ambassadors of experiences. Our work represents a whole industry that lives on love, but also on excellence, on precise logistics, on perfect timing. Recognizing and valuing this work is essential to continue building a solid, professional and human sector.

And if it is a question of building, we cannot fail to look at the new generations: what are we doing to inspire them, to train them, so that they live this profession with passion and responsibility? At ÉPICA we believe that knowledge should not be kept: it should be shared. We are a medium, yes, but we are also a community, a platform, a bridge between experience and innovation, between those who have blazed the trail and those who are just beginning to walk it.

Thank you for being on the other side, for reading us, for being part of this editorial adventure that excites us in each edition. This magazine would not be what it is without you: without your stories, your images, your ideas, your talent.

And now, before closing, I stop for a moment to share what love means to me - as an editor, as an organizer, as a person. Love is presence. It is giving without restraint. It is being there when no one else is. It is creating safe, beautiful, authentic spaces where others can experience the unforgettable. In short, love is the driving force behind everything we do. And as long as we continue to be guided by it, everything will be – like this magazine – simply legendary.

Adrián Pavía

ÉPICA Magazine Editor Latin American Chapter Hispanic Caribbean Islands Director IADWP

# Ping Pong DOMINICAN WEDDING POWER



*Mirtha Sánchez* @mseventsrd National Chapter Leader Islas del Caribe Hispana

As a regional benchmark, what distinguishes the Hispanic Caribbean in the destination wedding universe?

1- Cultural diversity. We offer a mix of Spanish, African and indigenous influences. This is reflected in the music, gastronomy, traditions and aesthetics of the celebrations. It has soul and character.

2- A close and spontaneous hospitality. We do not only sell sun and beach, but a human warmth very difficult to replicate. Couples and their guests feel that they are received as family, this enhances the experience and turns it into something more emotional than simply touristy. 3- Variety of authentic scenery. From pristine beaches to colonial cities, mountains. We offer more than resorts, we offer weddings with local identity.

4 - Language and cultural connection with Latin America and Spain. The Hispanic Caribbean connects more easily with Spanish-speaking markets looking for something familiar but exotic at the same time. It is ideal for Latin couples who want to celebrate outside their country without losing their language and customs.

5- Unique musical and festive style. The music (merengue, bachata, salsa) and the way of celebrating are very different. The party is not just another element: it is the heart of the wedding. And that attracts those who are looking for a vibrant, relaxed and emotionally rich experience.

If a couple from Europe arrives looking for "an unforgettable wedding", what Dominican cultural experience do you offer them?

. Welcome with Dominican rum, coconut and live merengue.

. Creole banquet with mangú station, suckling pig, tostones and sancocho.

. Dominican party with animation and Caribbean crazy hour.

.Souvenir with soul: Local handicrafts or Dominican coffee.

A wedding in the DR should tell a Dominican story: joyful, warm, flavorful, rhythmic and deeply human. That is the key difference compared to other Caribbean destinations.



*Mary Pily López* @marypilyeventstudio National Chapter Leader - RD

How would you describe yourself as a wedding planner?

I am a perfectionist, passionate and very dedicated to my projects.

#### From your perspective of national leadership, how do you see the wedding industry evolving in the Dominican Republic?

I am a perfectionist, passionate and very dedicated to my projects. The destination wedding industry in Dominican Republic is growing, more and more couples are planning their weddings in our country. Dominican Republic offers from a great air connectivity with more than 7 international airports to a great value chain capable of offering services of an international standard, a rich culture and a varied gastronomy and without leaving aside our music and especially the warmth of the Dominican people make our visitors live a unique experience. This positions us as a destination with a lot to offer.

The next few years will be ones of growth and positioning, with a view to becoming the #1 destination in the public's preference. And we are ready for it.

## What is your ritual before each wedding that connects you to the purpose of celebrating love?

Before each event we have the habit of having a moment of introspection. We learn the essence of our clients and the reason why we were hired, that allows us to generate a more powerful link with the feelings of this couple and to capture in our work their essence and celebrate their love.

Connection is the basis for fulfilling those dreams.



*Naysi Pérez* @naysiperezeventos Regional Chapter Leader. Zona sur

## What is your personal touch in every wedding you organize?

I believe that I not only organize weddings, but that I put soul into them. My secret is in the details, in making everything flow with beauty and emotion. I believe that my personal touch is in creating moments that not only look beautiful but are deeply felt.

#### Is the Dominican Republic a destination for all types of couples, or is it limited to beach lovers?

Yes, we are definitely a destination for all types of couples. Not only for those looking for sun and beach. Although our beaches are incredibly beautiful, we have much more to offer.

We have beautiful mountains with microclimates for those couples who are looking for another scenario and are adventurous. If we mention some destinations with these characteristics, I would like to start with the mountains of my town San Jose de Ocoa, specifically the area of Taton at an altitude of 1000 meters above sea level and an average temperature of 15-22 degrees Celsius throughout the year.

We also have Jarabacoa and Constanza with an amazing ecotourism development. With impressive forests that look like something out of Pinterest.

Another option is our capital, Santo Domingo, our jewel, the colonial city that tells a story to those couples who enjoy culture and architecture. Our country is an ideal destination to celebrate the wedding of your dreams.

Come and meet us!



*Gladys Quiñones* Regional Chapter Leader. Zona este. @eventosycatering

## What was the destination wedding that filled you with pride?

Marc Anthony and Shannon de Lima's wedding stayed in my soul because of the trust they placed in me, accepting all the ideasIproposed.

## What event is a must at your destination weddings?

One of the most special activities is the welcome night, creating theme parties working with the essence of the bride and groom, connecting with the guests according to their nationality, looking for the best combination, creating an atmosphere of feeling and joy and organizing activities for the day before the wedding.

#### What place in your region in the Dominican Republic do you recommend for a wedding?

Rio Chavon in La Estancia or Playa Dominicus, for the beautiful sunsets and theirbeauty.



**Elisa Abreu** Regional Chapter Leader. Zona norte. @elisaabreuweddings

## What characterizes you as a destination wedding planner?

I am characterized by a passion for creating authentic, deeply personalized and emotionally unforgettable experiences. To me, every wedding is a story that deserves to be told with beauty, respect and creativity. I firmly believe that every couple should see themselves reflected in every detail of their celebration – in their roots, their dreams and their way of loving – and that their guests should take away a genuine and extraordinary memory of what they have experienced. I am passionate about turning the natural and cultural richness of my area into magical settings that elevate every love story.

## What places in your area do you recommend for weddings?

The northern part of the Dominican Republic is a true treasure trove for destination weddings. Puerto Plata captivates with its colonial feel, storied architecture and golden oceanfront sunsets: ideal for those who dream of an elegant wedding by the coast. In Santiago, lush gardens create fresh and romantic settings. And if we talk about pure magic, nothing compares to the mountains of Jarabacoa: boutique spaces surrounded by nature, perfect for intimate, authentic and soulful celebrations. Each place has its charm, and my mission as a wedding planner is to guide each couple to that corner that connects with their story and the experience they wish to live with their loved ones to celebrate.

## How would you describe the destination wedding market in your area?

The destination wedding market in the north has been constantly evolving and is no longer just about sun and sand. Today we are a versatile region, with options ranging from luxurious beachfront weddings to enchanting mountain experiences. Personally, I have found my niche in mountain romance tourism, a segment to which I dedicate all my passion and on which I have focused much of my career. The Dominican Republic is much more than just a beach: we are a land rich in scenery, culture and possibilities for all types of couples and wedding styles.



**Braulio Segura** Regional Chapter Leader Santo Domingo

## When is the moment when you feel you bring a different perspective to your events?

I feel that I bring a different look when I have the opportunity to connect deeply with the story and dreams of each client. My greatest strength lies in the creativity we bring to each event, always taking into account the trends, but adapting them with sensitivity to the tastes and values of those who trust us. What really makes the difference is the love and charisma we put into every detail. For me, it's not just about designing events, but about creating memorable moments that touch the soul.

What was the most exciting wedding you have designed and what made it stick in your soul?

One of the most exciting weddings I have had the privilege of designing was that of Dominican handbag designer Yoanny Garcia. It was a unique experience, not only for the aesthetics, but for the emotional and symbolic charge that each detail had. Yoanny personally designed many of the elements, from the dance floor to the napkin rings, which gave it an identity all her own. We incorporated chocolate stations made with cocoa from her parents' country house, and limoncello in glass bottles as a tribute to the groom's Italian roots. It was a celebration that reminded us that true luxury is in the authentic, and that when love is designed with intention, the result is forever etched, not only in the memory, but in the soul.

## What Dominican music is a must at a wedding?

sic at a Dominican wedding is not a detail: it is the soul of the day. It is the bridge between generations, the language that unites the guests, the spark that ignites memories. As a wedding planner, I have learned that beyond the decoration, the protocol or the dress, what remains in the heart is how it was lived and music has a lot to do with that.

These songs are not just hits. They are moments. Smiles. Tears. They are those seconds where the dance floor fills up or where a couple hugs each other tightly without saying a word.

This is my professional selection, thought out with intention, emotion and experience:

Essential selection for a Dominican wedding (by Braulio Segura):

MERENGUE (to bring out the soul of the party): La Bilirrubina - Juan Luis Guerra Volvió Juanita - Milly Quezada Tú vas a volar - Rubby Pérez BACHATA (the language of Dominican love): Propuesta Indecente - Romeo Santos Voy Pa'llá - Anthony Santos URBAN DANCE (when the body begs for a party): La Mamá de la Mamá - El Alfa DOMINICAN SALSA (for those who know how to dance with their soul): Estos Celos - David Kada PRIDE AND CLOSURE WITH IDENTITY: Dominicano Soy - Fernando Villalona



*Nydia Alegría* Regional Chapter Leader

## What gives you real happiness when you see a couple say "I do"?

It fills me with happiness to see the genuine connection between two people who choose each other out of love and commitment. Witnessing that moment when they promise each other a life together, surrounded by those they love most, is deeply inspiring. It is a reminder that authentic love remains the most powerful force we have.

## What place in the Dominican Republic do you think is the most romantic for an intimate ceremony?

Altos de Chavón, in La Romana, is pure magic. Its colonial charm, with views of the river and its artistic air, creates an intimate and unique atmosphere that looks like something out of a romantic movie. Ideal for those looking for a ceremony with history, beauty and a lot of personality.

## What Dominican destination would you recommend for an intimate beachfront wedding away from tradition?

Playa El Valle, in Samaná, is a true hidden treasure. Surrounded by mountains and unspoiled nature, it offers a beachfront experience that feels almost secret. It is perfect for couples who dream of a wedding that is intimate, authentic and deeply connected to the natural beauty of the Caribbean.



*Carlos Frias* Embajador RD IADWP Academy: Destination Wedding Congress

Aware that an event is not only an activity, but the dream and expectation of a client without materializing, we have assumed this passion with professionalism. Thanks to this, I have had the responsibility of coordinating social events and groups of delegations of different personalities and institutions, both national and international: for Michaëlle Jean, former Governor General of Canada; for former President Leonel Fernández; for Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations; for Infantry General John Kelly, head of the United States Southern Command; as well as for the World Bank, OAS, UNICEF and the European Union.

I have been immersed in the destination wedding market for 10 years to promote the

city of Santo Domingo, especially the Colonial City.

#### How would you describe Carlos Frias?

Creative, innovating in every event. Demanding and selective in the services he will outsource and represent to the contracting company.

An original being, who promotes his own hallmark. As a communicator, he must know how to listen, to know his clients and vendors well, as well as how to speak, to be a good interlocutor.

Efficient and responsible. Demanding with himself, perfecting himself with internships and courses.

Self-critical.

## The Latest in Wedding Styles, Palettes, and Scenograph of love

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There are weddings remembered for the dress, the flowers, or the venue. But the ones that linger—those suspended in memory like a sigh—achieve something greater: they touch the soul.

Today, true luxury is no longer measured in grandeur, but in subtlety. In how a perfectly dressed table can stir nostalgia. In how a strategically unstructured flower arrangement can evoke freedom. In how a space, when lit with intention, can feel like a memory before it even happens.

The goal is no longer to impress. The goal is to make people feel. The weddings that stay with us are those that become living experiences—delicate, deep, and intimate. It's not the spectacle that moves us. It's the atmosphere, the quiet detail, the feeling that settles softly and lingers long after the last candle has been blown out.



And today, the couple is no longer the only protagonist. In this new language of love, the true centerpiece is the experience that lives on in every guest's heart. A ceremony may be flawless, but its greatness lies in what each person carries away: a glance, a scent, a sensation too tender to name.

As a specialist in luxury destination weddings, I've witnessed a profound shift in aesthetic priorities. Couples are no longer looking for a display—they're looking for emotional reflection. True luxury today is about presence. About how design embraces the story being told. How the environment supports rather than overshadows. And how the entire composition becomes a memory you can close your eyes and relive.

In this new narrative of wedding design, styles evolve, palettes whisper, and scenography no longer decorates—it tells a story.

#### Styles That Speak in a Whisper

Emotional minimalism has replaced visual excess. Rather than filling space, the new style seeks to create breath. Moments where the soul can pause, feel, and remember.

The standout aesthetic: quiet luxury. A calm elegance with no labels, no noise—just intentional materials like raw stone, artisanal ceramics, aged wood, and textured linen. Chairs are lightweight. Tables are dressed with effortlessness. Details are no longer decoration—they're gestures.

Also making a graceful return are the codes of old-world romance: scalloped china with gilded edges, delicate stemware, hand-torn stationery on cotton paper. All under a refined direction that seeks not to impress, but to evoke. Editorial inspiration with emotional weight—these are the weddings that define true modern taste.



#### **Palettes That Caress the Senses**

Color is no longer chosen by season, but by emotion. The most modern palette is one that whispers instead of shouts. Stone, ivory, bone, sand, sage green, soft caramel, dusty blue, and earthy wine. Shades that don't seek attention, but offer depth.

Pure white gives way to nuanced tones. Blush becomes peony dust. Black appears only with purpose—in ceramic accents or matte flatware. Gold is softened into antique bronze or aged brass.

And though palettes have become more subtle, they've gained power. A well-paired palette—where space, textiles, florals, and paper goods flow in emotional harmony becomes a living sculpture. A quiet composition that breathes in unison.

#### Scenography That Tells a Story

Now more than ever, wedding scenography is seen as a visual and sensory narrative. It's not about decorating a venue, but about creating an emotional landscape that invites remembrance.

Ceremonies unfold in spaces that breathe– beneath centenary trees, beside weathered ruins, within secret gardens or strippeddown architectural spaces. The altar is no longer a centerpiece. It's a poetic gesture. Sometimes it's a ring of flowers growing from the ground. Sometimes, just a trail of candles guiding the way.

Draping has re-emerged not as a functional tool, but as an ethereal design element that shapes the soul of the space. Fabric installations—whether stretched or floating —crafted from linen, muslin, or cotton voile, are suspended like soft veils between trees or clean structures. They filter light, create intimate boundaries, and wrap guests in a gentle sense of stillness.

And then comes emotional lighting, now a language of its own. The most beautifully designed weddings speak in light. Not to reveal—but to evoke. Low candelabras mimicking sunset. Overhead warm bulbs creating intimacy. Aisles traced in soft focus. Cinematic shadows sculpting moments meant to be felt before they're seen.

Floral compositions let go of symmetry. Botanical installations seem to grow from the earth: branches, dried foliage, imperfect flowers. The result is beauty that feels organic, not ornamental.

Reception tables become stages of intimacy. Dressed in layered linens, with flowers barely opened, flickering votives, and arrangements placed with almost accidental grace. Here, design doesn't seek visual perfection—it aims for emotional truth.

#### A Feeling You Remember With Your Eyes Closed





In this new way of celebrating love, everything comes down to a single question: What will they feel when they're here?

Because the greatest luxury a wedding can offer isn't extravagance. It's emotion. It's the emotional memory left behind by a moment beautifully designed, fully lived, and deeply felt.

Today's wedding design is a delicate symphony of style, palette, and scenography -created for one reason only:

To craft a memory that your guests will carry forever. And that, without a doubt, is the new way to love.

Diana Sciarrillo

National Chapter Leader Guatemala @idoguatemala @t.socialcreator

# Micro Weddings with Macro Impact

## The Luxury of the Intimate is still Booming



A little over 5 years ago the whole world stopped. For those of us who love to plan weddings, the challenges were enormous. Suddenly, those majestic celebrations that used to gather hundreds of guests, were transformed into small gatherings, full of emotions and fears, but also with great meaning.

As Wedding Planners, we had to adapt to this new reality. Now every detail counted more than ever. The selection of the venue, the floral arrangements, the menu, the music: everything had to be thought out with greater intention for much smaller groups and as allowed.

This is how micro weddings came about, and with them, a new way of understanding luxury: less quantity, more quality.

Today, although those restrictions are now history, this trend has not only continued, but has evolved. Couples continue to embrace intimate luxury, seeking personalized, profound and memorable experiences. Why? Because a micro wedding allows the bride and groom to concentrate on what's really important: their story, their loved ones, their emotions, what they don't want to let go of.

The focus has shifted from impressing the crowds to delighting those who really matter. And that, is the true meaning of luxury.

From my experience, here are some keys to achieve a micro wedding with a macro impact:

1. Invest in experiences: With fewer guests, the budget can be redirected to more personalized experiences: wine tastings, tasting menus, live performances, or surprise details for attendees.

2. Choose special locations: Spaces that were once considered unfeasible are now perfect: private villas, secret gardens, intimate rooftops or hidden beaches become perfect settings.

3. Personalize every detail: From stationery to favors, everything can carry the personal touch of the bride and groom. Personalization becomes even more important when celebrating in Petit Comité.



4. Choose quality: By reducing the size of the event, you will be able to invest in the best vendors, the best materials and the best service, elevating every aspect of the celebration.

5. Take care of the emotional atmosphere: As there are fewer people, every word, every look, every hug carries weight. Creating a warm, authentic and loving atmosphere is essential.

Organizing a micro wedding is not organizing a smaller wedding. It is to design an experience, where each element has a purpose and a place in the story you want to tell.

I remember, in the middle of the pandemic, a bride said to me, "The important thing is not how many people come to my wedding, but how love feels that day at the venue." That phrase has stuck with me ever since.

Micro weddings have taught me that luxury is not always ostentatious. Sometimes, the real luxury is being able to look into the eyes of all your guests and know that those who are there are the ones who really should be there.





Every micro wedding I organize proves something to me: the greatest luxury is not measured in the number of guests, but in the depth of emotions that are experienced. Today, couples are looking for authenticity, for experiences that belong to them and reflect their essence.

As a Wedding Planner specializing in creating unique moments, I have learned that designing an intimate celebration is an art. It's not about reducing, it's about perfecting. It's not about doing less, it's about doing better.

Because the real luxury is not in the quantity, but in the quality of the love that is celebrated. And added to that, with a perfect organization, it leaves a feeling that transcends the wedding day and remains forever in the hearts of those who lived it.

## Kika Uribe

Destination Wedding Planner & Event Designer IADWP Regional Chapter Leader Guayas Instagram: @kikaweddingplanner www.kikaweddingplanner.com

# From Pinlerest to your Wedding

How to Turn your Boards into a Dream Celebration?



In the digital age, Pinterest has become an endless source of inspiration for brides and grooms everywhere. With millions of visual ideas at the click of a button, this platform not only feeds the imagination, but also offers clear guidance for those who dream of a wedding perfectly aligned to their personal style. You could make all those "pins" you love a reality, with elements such as:

Themed stations: cocktail bar decorated with signs and flowers, dessert table with flowers and details, special corner with elements such as photos, champagne station with special details, fresh water station to welcome your guests, among others.

Well-defined color palette (powdered pink, gold, terracotta, olive green, etc.)

ETasteful DIY elements: signage, signs, napkin rings, personalized menus.

Organic floral decoration: arrangements such as "artfully arranged wildflowers".

Key lighting: garlands, candles, warm lights that create atmosphere.

Why is Pinterest such a powerful tool for planning your wedding?

Pinterest allows you to collect images by themes, colors, styles and details, creating custom boards that reflect your desired mood. From floral arrangements, to color schemes, invitation styles and table decor, everything can be gathered in one place.

What makes Pinterest special is that it puts a clear vision in your hands: it helps you identify patterns, identify tastes and bring to life ideas that often only live in your imagination.





From Boards to Reality: steps to make your inspiration tangible

Identify your predominant style: is it bohemian, romantic, modern, minimalist, rustic? Look at your board and find the commonthread.

Select a consistent color palette: This will help unify every element, from stationery to floral arrangements. Prioritize the essentials: Not everything you see on Pinterest is applicable or realistic. Choose which ideas are actually feasible based on your budget and location.





Work with vendors aligned with your vision: Show your board to florists, wedding planners, photographers or decorators. They will better understand what you want.

Add your personal touch: The most important thing is that your wedding reflects your story. Use Pinterest as a base, but don't be afraid to modify and adapt.

Final tip: not everything has to be perfect, it just has to be yours.

Pinterest is a wonderful tool, but don't forget that your wedding is unique because you are too. Be inspired, dream big, but remember that authentic moments, shared emotion and real love are what will truly make your wedding unforgettable.



WeddingDesigner @claudiaugartebodasyeventos

# Weddings Rooted in the

The Magic Of Quindío



Re-defining Destination Weddings in Colombia: relaxed luxury, local beauty and deep connection

Some weddings are planned around a location. Others are planned around an emotion.

In Quindío, you don't just have a wedding: you sow. Surrounded by rolling coffee fields, cloud-capped mountains and the vibrant pulse of Colombian culture, this region is not just a hidden gem, it's a serene green sanctuary for couples who want meaning in every detail.

The energy here is different. It's softer, more grounded. Time slows down in the best way. Guests arrive enveloped in the scent of coffee flowers and birdsong. Hammocks sway under bamboo forests. And love stories seem to have been born from the ground generations ago.



Quindío is ideal for couples who want their wedding to reflect their values: intimacy, connection and care. It appeals to those who are not looking for a show, but an experience. Something with roots. Something authentic.

The landscapes are an endless source of inspiration. From private luxury lodges tucked away in the forest to haciendas overlooking verdant valleys, each place feels like a retreat into nature and into oneself. In places like Casa Malva or BioHabitat, the architecture doesn't compete with the environment; it flows with it. The result is simply magical.





But it's not just about the landscape. It's about what the region represents: tradition, respect for the land and deep cultural pride. Weddings here are combined with slow coffee tastings at Café San Alberto, Colombia's most premium coffee experience, or floral arrangements inspired by native flowers, created by hands that know the rhythm of the land.

Many of the area's boutique hotels and restaurants also embrace the "zero kilometers" philosophy, where everything – from the food to the flowers- is grown, harvested and prepared just steps from where it is shared. The result is a more intimate, more connected, and deeply meaningful celebration. lWell-being is not an add-on in Quindío. It is in the essence of the place: the rhythm, the light, the way it filters through the trees in the afternoon. Couples can start the day with yoga among orchids, enjoy a leisurely brunch with their guests, and get married under the branches of a guadua canopy.

These are weddings for those who want to hear their own vows clearly. Who want to give their guests not just a celebration, but restoration. Who want the spirit of Colombia - its warmth, its texture, its joy - to be present in every detail.

Through my role as Director of the Indiana Chapter of IADWP, one of my greatest privileges has been to form strategic collaborations that open the door to destinations like Quindío:



Places rooted in authenticity and with untapped potential for romance tourism. Working hand-in-hand with leaders like José Cimadevilla of the Quindío Convention Bureau, along with local artisans, hoteliers and visionaries, we have created more than a destination. We have started a movement toward intentional and sustainable celebrations.

And when this place is captured with the sensitivity and beauty of Chris J. Evans' lens, its quiet power sings. Each picture reminds us: love doesn't need noise to be extraordinary.

Quindío is not for all couples. It is for those who yearn to slow down and feel everything. For those who want to be surrounded by beauty that is not manufactured, but cultivated. For those who want their wedding to feel less like a production and more like a prayer.

Because when love is rooted in something so real, the celebration only deepens.



Producción:

## Mel George

Mel George Weddings | IADWP USA Regional Chapter Leader Indiana (EE.UU) @melgeorgeweddings

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# The Sound Elove

**Violin that Whispers Emotion** 



#### The story of Mariana Bustamante and Violin by Mar

Some stories don't begin with words, but with a single note. Soft. Luminous. Capable of stirring something within us before we even realize it. In the world of weddings—where emotion weaves through every detail—music isn't just background. It's a memory in the making.

And some artists don't just play music. They become it.

Such is the case of Mariana Bustamante, the heart behind Violin by Mar. Her violin doesn't accompany the moment—it elevates it, defines it, wraps it in sentiment. There's something profoundly intimate in her performances, as though every note were pulled from the soul of the couple she's playing for. This isn't rehearsed—it's felt.

For Mariana, it was love at first sound. As a child, she remembers walking through the conservatory, uncertain of what instrument she might choose. But the moment she saw the violin, she knew. "From the very first moment I saw it," she shares, "I knew I wanted to study violin. It was absolutely love at first note."

What began as a silent connection between a girl and her instrument evolved into something much greater—a vocation that now fills the most meaningful day in many people's lives with beauty and emotion. Violin by Mar was born from a desire to transform her passion into a career, but it quickly found its place in the world of weddings, opening doors to intimate moments where her music could do what words could not.

What makes Mariana's work so unique isn't just her classical training—it's the way she connects. "I always try to step into the couple's shoes," she tells me, "to remember my own love story, my own memories. That's where I draw the emotion from."

She believes, with conviction, that music speaks when words fall short. "It's the language of the soul," she says softly. Each wedding becomes a conversation—she listens to the couple, learns what songs have marked their journey, and builds a repertoire around their story. Some requests are timeless classics. Others, playful surprises. But every one of them reveals something personal and beautiful.

From her place in the ceremony, she sees what most people miss. "I get to witness the glances, the gestures, the emotion just overflowing," she says. "Even if I don't know them well, those moments let me glimpse something very real and tender between them."

And yes—there are times when her own emotions almost get in the way. "I remember the face of a bride's father during the vows," she recalls. "There was joy, pride… but also a hint of sadness. He could barely lift his gaze. That moment stayed with me."

Throughout the wedding day, she adapts. She reads the room, senses the mood, and chooses pieces accordingly. "As musicians, we learn to read the energy. Knowing what to play when is an art in itself." Her repertoire keeps expanding, each request adding new color to her musical palette.





But one piece never fails to move her: A Thousand Years. "It speaks of waiting, of true love, of dreams coming true. It's surreal, almost magical. It still gives me goosebumps."

For Mariana, live music is more than performance —it's an emotional responsibility. "There's so much behind what we do," she explains. "Hours of preparation, editing tracks, rehearsing, working through every detail... just to make sure that single moment is perfect." Her goal is always the same: to give couples a magical, unforgettable fragment of time.

Violin by Mar is not just music. It's a love letter in sound. A moment suspended. A way of saying "I love you" without uttering a word. Mariana doesn't just play songs—she plays memories, silences, and hearts.

And in every wedding she touches, she leaves behind a melody that will live in the soul of the couple forever.

> Diana Sciarrillo Capitulo Nacional Guatemala @idoguatemala @violinbymar

# Ecuador, Epicenter of Emotions

PHOTOGRAPHIC

TEAM ECUADOR 2025

Wedding Photography Shines on the World Stage

atorianos



The art of capturing emotions found its maximum expression this 2025 when, for the first time in history, a South American country hosted the World Photography Cup (WPC). Ecuador, and more specifically its capital, Quito, became the visual heart of the world. A scenario where culture, talent, innovation and passion for the image merged in an unforgettable week for international photography.

This great event was not a product of chance, but of the visionary leadership of Mario Cornejo Dominguez, WPC delegate for Latin America. His name resonates strongly in the industry: with more than 30 years of experience, he has won international awards,



including two KODAK Elite Awards and the National Photography Award in the United States, and has lectured around the world, from Beijing to Madrid.

Mario not only led the organization of the global event, but also gave life to "Latitud Zero", an unprecedented international convention in the region, which brought together thousands of photographers, more than 20 international experts and the leading brands in the industry.

The World Cup not only positioned Ecuador as a venue, but also as a reference. The quality of the organization, professionalism and hospitality of the country were transmitted live to the whole world. The images that this event gave us can be relived in @zerolatexpo, a window to what was a celebration of height.





Among the talents that stood out in this historic experience was Alexander Velastegui, Ecuadorian photographer specializing in weddings, who represented the country in the "Open Wedding" category of WPC 2025. Born in Riobamba, Alexander is a living example of how human sensitivity can be translated into images that authentically narrate the love, connection and emotion of couples





Trained in Clinical Psychology, his ability to empathize with people is reflected in every shot. For eight years he has been passionately dedicated to wedding photography, creating a space of confidence for couples to show themselves as they are. He has documented weddings in various cities of Ecuador -Riobamba, Ambato, Guaranda, Salcedo and more- and offers a comprehensive proposal with portrait photography, aerial, videography and photo book design. His studio, located in Riobamba, has become a reference for those who are looking for more than just images: they are looking for emotional memories.

His participation in the WPC not only elevated his career, but also demonstrated to the world the level of talent that exists in our country.





"My goal is that each image conveys the essence of the moment," Alexander says, with the humility of someone who has traveled a deep and genuine path within his vocation.

The 2025 Photography World Cup was won by the United States, followed by Portugal and Spain. But beyond the podium, Ecuador won something invaluable: international recognition as a country capable of hosting, promoting and enhancing visual art at its best. And for those of us who are part of the destination wedding industry, this type of event inspires us to continue believing in the power of the image as a narrator of real stories.

Because weddings, like photography, speak of unique moments, deep emotions, culture and identity. And in this cross between visual art and life experiences, Ecuador has shown that it has a lot to offer: diverse scenarios, quality human talent and a warmth that transforms each event into an unforgettable experience.

Today more than ever, as a destination wedding planner, I am proud to see how Ecuadorian wedding photography has managed to transcend borders. And it has done so with heart, vision and excellence. Thanks to professionals like Mario Cornejo, who continue to open doors, and talents like Alexander Velastegui, who walk through them with passion, the world is beginning to see what we always knew in this country: that our stories deserve to be told and remembered.



## Lissner Ortiz García

DestinationWeddingPlanner National Head Leader IADWP- Ecuador https://www.lissnerweddingplanner.com/

> Mario Cornejo M.Photog. Cr.,CPP

CEO Latitud ZERO Expo www.zerolatexpo.com +1 908.5919928

Alexander Velasteguí

BridalPhotografer @alexandervelasteegui\_fotografo





Floral installations are creative and artistic arrangements that use flowers and other natural elements to create decorative compositions in different spaces. They started in the gardens of residences, museums, art galleries, fashion shows, public spaces and have taken over social events, especially weddings. They have become the most sought after corner to take a picture or simply have a surprise effect around the space where guests circulate to the different areas of the event such as food stations, dance floor or main table of the bride and groom.



Every floral installation should have the following components:

Flowers: They are the main component, and fresh, preserved or dried flowers can be used.

Leaves: They provide texture and color, and can be green or other colors.

Ornaments: They can include elements such as branches, fruits, seeds, decorative elements such as fabrics, lights, or any other element that complements the composition. Structures: They are used to support and organize the composition, such as arches, walls, columns, pendants, or chandeliers.

Floral installations have become for us, the floral designers of social events, a great working tool and I could say that a fundamental and almost essential component to be able to frame important spaces. For example, the decorations of the ceremonies or photo area are designed based on floral arrangements. In addition, they create aesthetic experiences and provide a festive and elegant atmosphere.



The main advantages of floral installations:

Creativity and Originality: they offer endless possibilities for design and customization.

Durability: Preserved flowers and artificial installations can last a long time with minimal care.

Visual impact: Floral installations can create a spectacular and memorable atmosphere.

Sustainability: The use of preserved or dried flowers is a more sustainable option.



Nowadays several colleagues in the floral world are taking the experience of floral installations to the streets. This phenomenon will reach more people and we will see how our next customers will put it on their wish list.

I invite you to follow Lewis Miller, a renowned florist from New York, who transforms the streets with a simple and powerful idea: fill green urban spaces with explosions of flowers. Dumpsters, bus stops, lamp posts and any corner can become an instant of unexpected beauty. With flowers left over from events, he creates ephemeral installations.



The FYJA Festival Polanco en Flores in Mexico City, which this year celebrated its sixth version, has also become an important reference. There, attendees could appreciate floral facades in stores, restaurants, banks and hotels. In addition to floral arches designed by florists selected through an open call and floral installations to take pictures.

I believe that floral installations in social events will take more and more strength and acceptance among brides and we must be prepared to have it in our list of services. I recommend walking the event venue and determine where to do it so that it has a high visual impact. I suggest that we always measure execution times because these are large and important pieces that rest on somewhat heavy structures. Floral installations are done on site and you will need to have enough time to be able to execute it in its entirety. For that reason, I do not recommend it in spaces with restricted assembly schedules or with unfavorable weather conditions.



Let's dare to think beyond and seek that our installations always have a differentiating element that allows our work to always shine.

Times change and with it the tastes of our customers. Let's not allow ourselves to be left behind and always look ahead and move forward.

Alexander Gaudiano

Event Floral Designer Floral Instructor and Lecturer IADWP Member

## Creating an Experience that Tells your Love Story, not only the Planning of your Wedding



Today, I share with you two truths that I have identified very early in my career as a Wedding Planner.

The first truth is that behind every couple there is a story that deserves to be told. The second is that no love story is the same, because it is about two unique and unrepeatable people.

The magic behind telling a story is developed under the alchemy of being able to reach the hearts of the guests and family with unforgettable experiences so that they never forget how we made them feel at that particular wedding. However, it cannot be only with the vows, or only with the design of the events, but with every detail, with every space, with every song that sounds, with every aroma that envelops the air and even with the flavors that are shared at the table.



When we plan a destination wedding, our job is not just to design an event, it's to build a universe where their story is lived and breathed.

#### I will tell you one:

Some years ago, a newly engaged and wonderful couple came to me: Marianne and John. They met at a DJ festival in Tulum and from that day on, their story was a journey of music, travel and books. She was a lover of stories about fantasy worlds, and he was obsessed with exploration and adventure. Their friends joked that they were like the wind and the waves: different, but inseparable.



When designing their wedding, I couldn't ignore who they were or how they had arrived at that moment. We created a concept where every space spoke of them: a sunset ceremony with violin strings playing their favorite song, a welcome cocktail inspired by their first trip to Holbox, and a symbolic ceremony the next day in the middle of the Mayan ruins, with their closest friends. Even the stationery had details about the trips and the worlds they had conquered together. And so it is done. What are the key elements to tell these stories? To be practical, let's start by identifying these 4:

1. Their love story: How did they meet? What was the defining moment of their relationship? What was their first great adventure together?

2. Their shared passions: Music, sports, food, favorite destinations. Let those elements be present not only at the event, but in the small moments of the weekend.

3. What makes them unique as individuals: Is she a chef? Does he play guitar? Are they both Harry Potter fans? That's not left out. It's celebrated.



4. Key people in the relationship: Friends, family, grandparents, mentors. Those who have been witnesses or guides in your story should be present, literally or symbolically.

Once we master the right information comes the most magical part of it all; incorporating holistically into the different moments of the weekend, or week of events. Memorable moments to include: Welcome dinner at a cenote, pre-wedding ceremony at a location that reminds them of their first trip, or a surprise letter from their parents



read at sunrise. The great advantage of destination weddings is that you will always have the opportunity to build that "Momentum" over several days of events, at least two.

But how do you do it? Start with the details, we go from less to more.

Day 1: in the welcome event, you don't need to tell everything. Just leave little clues:



A playlist with songs that marked their relationship.

Drinks inspired by his first trips together.

Centerpieces with clues related to their story: a miniature bicycle because they met in Amsterdam, a butterfly because it symbolizes a loved one.

Day 2: In a previous dinner or group activity, you start to show more of their essence: a surprise video of their friends telling anecdotes.

Games or dynamics where everyone discovers curious facts about the couple.

Welcome kits with details that reflect their personality.



**D**ay 3: it's the big day of emotions, the wedding. Here everything makes sense, and we reach the climax.

The decoration that looked pretty now tells their story.

The ceremony reveals those phrases that had been clues before.



The song of the first dance brings together all the emotions that were rising throughout the weekend.

Day 4: it is the emotional closing, a farewell brunch.

Now without rushing, everyone shares what they felt and experienced. That's when you realize that you didn't just design a wedding, you created the beginning of a new story. On this day, let's give them a gift that they can take home with them so that this feeling will be with them forever.

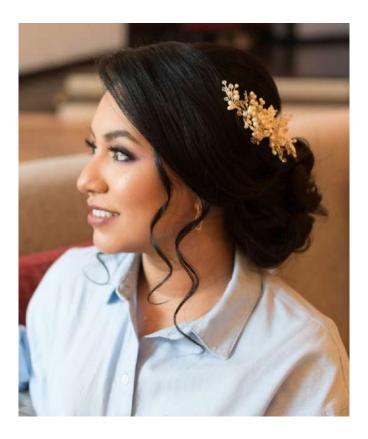
There is no perfect formula to create the ideal experience, but we can connect with each couple that entrusts us with their love story in order to create events that will remain forever in the memories of those who had the joy of living them.

Ilse Diamant

Luxury Romance Ambassador @diamantevents LATAM Director DWSA

# Glowing at the Altar

Bridal Hairstyle Trends for 2025



The 2025 wedding season promises to be all about individuality, elegance and connection with nature. Brides and their bridesmaids are looking to reflect their unique essence through every detail, and the hairstyle becomes a key element in achieving this.

#### Hairstyles that Celebrate Naturalness

This year, the dominant trend in bridal hairstyles is carefully crafted naturalness. Loose manes with soft waves, known as "mermaid mane", bring a romantic and relaxed air, ideal for outdoor or beach ceremonies. To achieve this effect, we recommend using salt sprays for texture and light hold.

Low buns and ponytails are also reinventing themselves. The tousled style updos, such as the nest bun, are characterized by loose strands and a less structured finish, providing sophistication without stiffness. Braids continue to be a popular choice, but with a creative twist. Dutch, herringbone or root braids are adorned with floral details, pearls or crystals, adding a bohemian and sophisticated touch to the bridal look.

For the most daring brides, the "wet" effect emerges as a bold and modern trend, perfect for weddings in humid environments or by the sea.

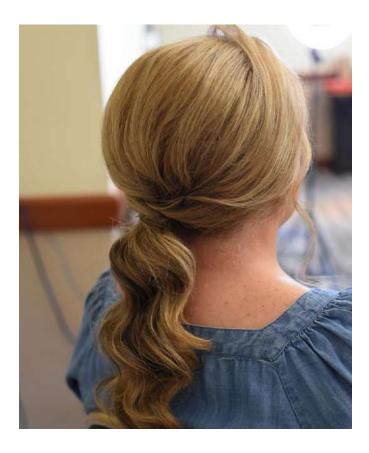
#### Accessories that Enhance Beauty

Accessories play a key role in the hairstyles of 2025. Elaborate headpieces, tiaras and jeweled details become protagonists, complementing the simplest styles and adding a touch of glamour and personality.

#### Bridesmaid Style Harmony

Harmony between the bride's look and that of her bridesmaids is essential. It is recommended to establish a general aesthetic line, such as a common type of wave or accessory, while allowing each bridesmaid to express her individual style. This creates a cohesive and elegant look without sacrificing the authenticity of each bridesmaid.





### Wedding Trends for 2025

This year's bridal hairstyles align with overall wedding trends, which emphasize personalization, sustainability and immersive experiences. Multi-sensory weddings, which stimulate all the senses through custom fragrances, live music and menus designed to surprise, are on the rise.

Sustainable and natural décor, with dried flowers, local foliage and biodegradable materials, dominates the spaces, creating environments that reflect a genuine connection with nature.

In bridal fashion, versatile, detachable dresses and two-piece ensembles offer brides the possibility of adapting their look to different moments of the celebration, reflecting their personal style and comfort.

#### Tips for a Flawless Hairstyle

For the hairstyle to look perfect throughout the celebration – especially in hot or humid climates - good hair preparation is essential. Updos tend to offer greater durability, while loose hair should be worked with wellstructured waves and humidity-resistant styling products.

It is key to use high quality styling products that provide hold without weighing hair down. It is also recommended to have a small touch-up kit that includes bobby pins, mini hairspray and anti-shine wipes.

Doing hairstyle tests beforehand allows you to adjust details and ensure that the final result faithfully reflects the bride's style. Clear communication with the stylist is essential to achieve a harmonious, flattering and long-lasting look.

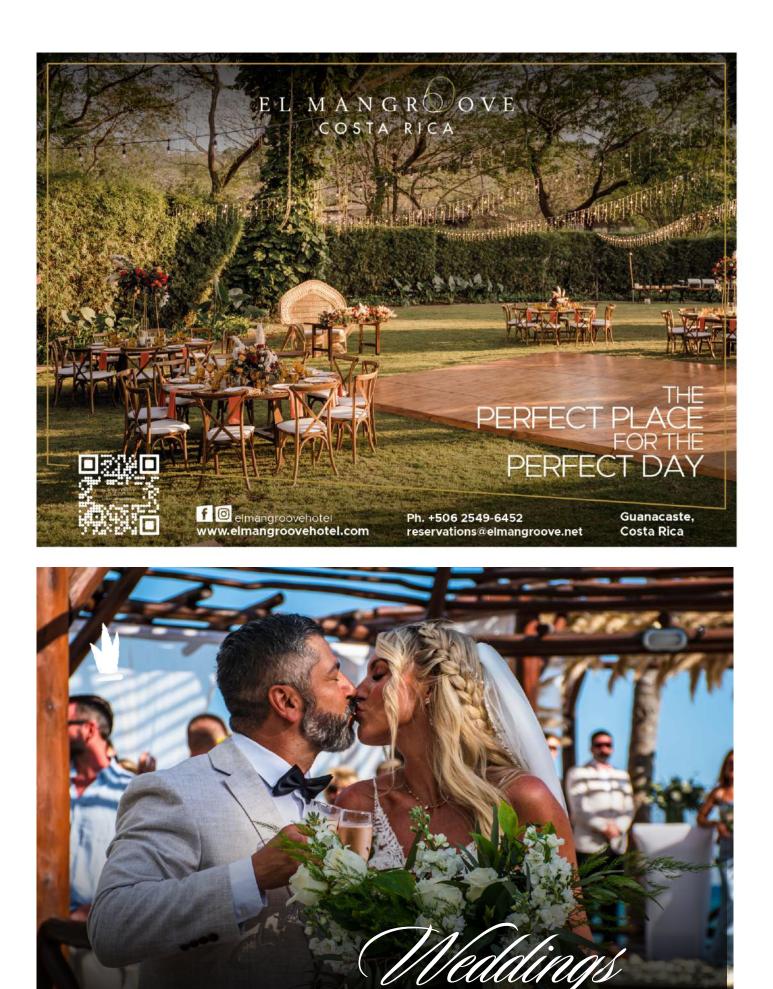
Most importantly, enjoy the process. Choose a hairstyle that you really feel comfortable and beautiful with. Beyond trends, trust in what highlights your essence. A hairstyle and makeup that make you feel radiant will always be your best accessory for an unforgettable day.

Special thanks to Verónica de Cañas, professional makeup artist and hairstylist CEO of VC Studio in El Salvador, Guatemala, United States and other destinations.

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by Princess



Luxury with Purpose



Wedding by Renaissance: Where Love and Sustainability Meet.

Every couple dreams of a unique marriage, a day that reflects their essence and values. Today, more brides and grooms are looking to celebrate their love with purpose, without leaving a negative footprint on the planet.

Located in the exclusive Vitacura district, Renaissance Santiago Hotel is the first fivestar hotel in Chile with LEED Gold certification, which means it is designed to be more efficient, responsible and environmentally friendly. Here, luxury and sustainability go hand in hand, creating the perfect setting for an unforgettable wedding.

#### A Conscious and Elegant "I do".

Sustainable weddings are more than a trend; they are a way to celebrate with meaning. At the Renaissance Santiago Hotel, every detail is designed to reduce environmental impact without sacrificing charm or sophistication. The hotel has clear policies of resource conservation, use of renewable energy and waste reduction. The result? A wedding that respects the planet, minimizes its carbon footprint and, at the same time, offers an unforgettable experience for guests.

In addition, its location in the heart of the city makes access easier, avoiding unnecessary transfers and reducing  $CO_2$  emissions.

#### Local Flavors, Cuisine with Soul

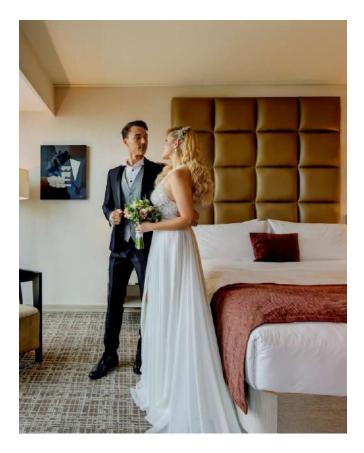
Nothing speaks more of love than a shared table. At the Renaissance Santiago Hotel, gastronomy is a celebration in itself:

Organic and seasonal ingredients, grown in the gardens of local vendors

Vegetarian and vegan options designed with creativity and flavor.

Local vendors that provide quality and support the community's economy.





Because conscious food not only delights the palate, but also takes care of the environment and respects the work of those who are behind each ingredient.

#### Details that Make the Difference

Sustainability does not mean sacrificing beauty or memorable experiences. At Renaissance Santiago Hotel, each wedding is unique and personalized, with the advantage of having all the services in one place:

Elegant and versatile spaces for the ceremony and reception.

Catering with quality standards and environmental responsibility.

Sustainable decorations that reduce waste without losing charm.

A recycling and composting program that guarantees a cleaner and more conscious celebration. In addition, by choosing a sustainable marriage, the bride and groom become agents of change, inspiring their guests to adopt more responsible practices in their day-to-daylives.

#### A Commitment to Love and the Planet

Getting married in a sustainable hotel is more than a choice, it is a declaration of principles. It is to celebrate love with a greater purpose, with the certainty that every decision adds up to build a better world.



At Renaissance Santiago Hotel, we believe the future of the wedding industry is greener, fairer and more conscious. And we are here to make it happen, creating unforgettable experiences for those looking for more than just a simple "I do".

María Loreto Gómez

Wedding Planner & Designer Regional Chapter Leader, Chile

# **Hilton-Dollar Question:**

How to Build a Luxury Wedding Brand



In a crowded industry filled with aspirational brands, the question remains: how does one build a luxury wedding brand that withstands the test of time? With thousands of wedding businesses vying for this seemingly elusive status, how do you rise above the noise and secure your place?

After twenty-one years in that space in the wedding industry, I've seen what separates those who aspire from those who succeed—and stay there. The most enduring brands master a set of fundamentals that at their core, get us back to basics.

I was fortunate to begin my career working with celebrities and the one percent. I opened the right office address, developed on-point branding from the start, and I offered to work for free for my ideal first client. I knew they could create the ripple effect I needed. And they did. Fast. And while I'd like to say I was ready for it, I wasn't. What I didn't know, I learned quickly, and sometimes the hard way. But I've remained in the luxury industry for over two decades now, by protecting what matters most: consistent, uniquely different quality. To set yourself up for success, prepare yourself to win with these five steps forward.

#### Walk the Walk

Luxury clients have unique tastes and often seemingly impossible expectations. Serving this clientele requires a deep understanding of their world—its nuances and preferences. Study the destinations these clients frequent (even if you can't afford to stay there), shop





(or visit) where they shop, get familiar with the culinary and cultural experiences that define their lifestyle. Experiencing what they value helps to anticipate their future desires before they're expressed— offering a level of service that becomes indispensable.

### Be Consistently Exceptional (While Always Changing)

Across every touchpoint—social platforms, visual portfolios, communication, and beyond— consistency is paramount. A brand that maintains a cohesive identity fosters trust, becomes instantly recognizable and helps generate an emotional need and purchase. Live and breathe the brand's ethos, reinforce its essence in every post, conversation, and interaction. Trust is cultivated through this repetition of quality, even as your style evolves. And evolution is essential too, consistency of quality remains constant but your art and experience should continue to climb and be a unique differentiator for you.

#### Service, Elevated

Luxury lies not only in appearance but in a commitment to service. High-net-worth clients often require attentiveness beyond the expected - whether that's accommodating calls across time zones, pushing creative boundaries for bespoke results, or discreetly handling behind-thenscenes details that are anticipated before the ask. The glamour is only a small part of the story; the rest not everyone is cut out for.



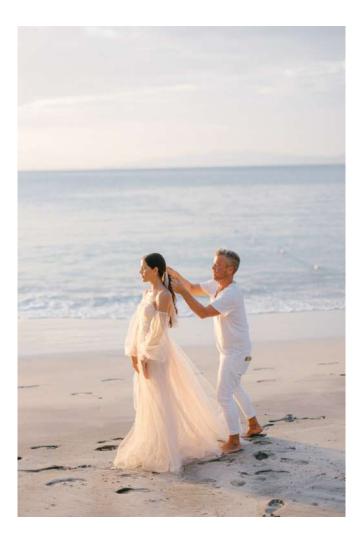
#### Show—and Tell

Saying you're luxury doesn't make it soproof is essential. Creating a portfolio of curated visuals demonstrates the caliber of work aligned with luxury client's style (and they aren't all the same). Is your ideal client a "quiet luxury" couple or are they over-thetop? Showcasing visuals they can see themselves in helps to speak to them before they call. Create a world where the client sees their own story reflected back with a deep connection.

#### Let Others Say It Too

Endorsements remain one of the most powerful validators of a brand's position. Testimonials, reviews, and media features build credibility that no self-promotion can





replicate. In the realm of luxury, trusted editorial platforms can hold great influence. When a brand is spotlighted by a name they know, it signals trust and creates desirability. Visibility in the right outlets not only elevates perception but allows influential voices to confirm your brand's place at the top.

When you master these pillars, you won't just enter the luxury market, you'll lay the groundwork to own your place in it.

### Harmony Walton

Founder of The Bridal Bar https://www.bridalbar.com/ https://www.instagram.com/bridalbar

# Wedding Punner 3.0

### **Professionalism with Purpose**

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The wedding industry has evolved. And with it, so has the role of the wedding planner. Today it is not enough to coordinate events and design schedules; to be a planner is to practice with criteria, method and a clear ethic that makes a difference, both for the clients and for the vendors that are part of the process.

The Wedding Planner 3.0 is, above all, a specialized professional. She or he studies, is trained, knows the market, masters digital tools and deeply understands the emotions that are activated at a wedding. But beyond that, she or he is a connector between all the actors of the event, who works with structure and sensitivity.

Working with a planner 3.0 means having a strategic and emotional ally. From the first contact, there is a clear methodology,

defined timelines, constant communication and absolute respect for the style, budget and limits of the couple. It is not about imposing trends and budgets but about interpreting dreams and transforming them into real and executable experiences. Our job is to advise with information, to make decisions with the couples, not for them, and to support the process emotionally, even when tensions or doubts arise.

A professional planner does not improvise. He evaluates vendors, anticipates problems, optimizes resources and takes care of the integral wellbeing of the event. Every detail is backed by experience, criteria and a deep vocation to serve with excellence.

In addition to this, the Wedding Planner 3.0 does not compete with vendors. He values, respects and empowers them.



A serious planner works as a team, takes care of the partners' processes, facilitates the operation and defends the coherence of the event as a whole. Likewise, it is expected from vendors the same as it can offer: professionalism, clarity, compliance and a collaborative and proactive attitude.

Our mission in life as wedding planners is to believe in honest partnerships, transparent quotes, clear contracts and trust as the basis of everything, even when all seems lost.

When a vendor understands that the planner is a facilitator, not an obstacle, the work flows and the experience for the couple improves significantly.

For all of the above, the wedding planner 3.0 represents a new era in the wedding industry: more ethical, more technical and more human.





The planner does not seek to be a protagonist, but be of support. The planner does not act from the ego, but from the purpose and always thinking about the common good and not the individual good.

Planning a wedding is not simply coordinating. It's managing dreams responsibly, connecting the right people, and elevating the experience for everyone involved. For couples, this will always mean peace of mind. For vendors, it means order and support.

And for us as wedding planners, it means to provide soul, structure and excellence.

To be a Wedding Planner 3.0 is to understand that the real success is not in the decoration, but in the coherence, in the trust and in the way we work together to create something that leaves a legacy and transcends into history.

Sonia Martinez Jurado

National Chapter Leader Colombia @bridalagency\_ info@bridagalency.co +573154430924

### The Vital Importance of Professionalization in Wedding Tourism

An Interview with Kitzia Morales, President of IADWP



The value of Wedding Tourism Specialist recognition in building a solid, professional and reliable industry.

Wedding Tourism is no longer an emerging trend but one of the fastest growing tourism segments in the world. In this scenario, couples are not only looking for spectacular destinations, but also for the certainty of working with trained professionals that guarantee quality, ethics and excellence in every detail of their event.

This is where the Wedding Tourism Specialist (WTS) recognition takes on special relevance. This distinction serves as a strategic tool that validates the experience, professionalism and commitment of companies and professionals to the highest quality standards in the industry. Beyond being a badge, it represents a work philosophy focused on continuous improvement, transparency and the delivery of memorable experiences. It also strengthens the confidence of couples and better positions certified destinations and vendors in an increasingly competitive marketplace. To learn more about its value and impact, we talked to Kitzia Morales, President of IADWP, an international benchmark in Wedding Tourism.

1-From your perspective, what does the Wedding Tourism Specialist recognition represent for the destination wedding industry?

For me, it represents a watershed in our industry. For years we have seen how informal companies have emerged, and that is why this type of process is vital. It is a tool to provide certainty to couples that the companies they hire for their big day are formal and of the highest quality, as they comply with specific standards and processes that guarantee safe, professional and reliable events.

### 2- In an increasingly competitive and demanding market, why do you consider it essential to have quality distinctions such as this one?

It is essential to differentiate ourselves in such a dynamic industry. Raising our standards and keeping ourselves in constant training is key, because we are part of a community that never stops. We have to keep up with trends, regulations and expectations to remain competitive and reliable.

### 3- How does this recognition impact on couples' confidence when choosing vendors for their destination wedding?

According to studies, 55% of couples prefer to hire suppliers that have distinctive or certifications that support their quality and



professionalism, and are even willing to pay more for it. This percentage is increasing significantly.

### 4- As a professional with extensive experience, what difference do you perceive in certified companies versus those that are not?

The clearest difference is in the smoothness and organization of your events. This is because certified companies are faithful to their internal processes, which guarantees greater control, quality in execution and confidence for couples.

5- From your experience, why is it important for wedding professionals and companies to commit to a culture of continuous improvement and excellence?

Because in such an emotional and specialized industry, it is not enough to get it right once. Every couple expects to live their perfect and unique wedding, and that requires us to stay updated, review processes, improve services and adapt constantly. The culture of continuous improvement elevates the quality of each vendor and, at the same time, strengthens the entire industry. We offer safer, more memorable and high-level experiences. It also helps us consolidate our destinations and professionalize our market at an international level. Companies that do not evolve are left behind; those that bet on improving themselves become benchmarks and generate greater confidence.

### 6- Beyond commercial growth, what impact does this recognition have on the reputation





and prestige of companies within the wedding tourism industry?

The main impact is that it forces companies to self-assess. Many grow so fast that they neglect to review processes and standards. This recognition is an excellent opportunity to stop, review your operation and reaffirm or update your internal processes. And, of course, it brings prestige. Recognized companies position themselves as benchmarks within the sector, increasing their visibility, reputation and business opportunities.

7-What would be your message to those companies that have not yet decided to certify their services? Why is this the ideal time to do so? I would advise them not to wait any longer. Our industry needs formality, professionalism and real differentiation. In a market where new companies are emerging every day, quality recognition is essential. The ideal time to start is now. Leaving it for tomorrow only reflects a lack of commitment. Those who bet today on quality and excellence are the ones who will set the standard for the future.

#### Conclusion

Improvisation comes at a high cost — not only for couples, who may face increased expenses and a ruined experience, but also for companies, whose profitability and reputation may be compromised. Betting on professionalization and continuous improvement is not only a business strategy, but an ethical obligation in an industry that lives by fulfilling dreams.

We thank Pervez Taufiq for the photos for Love India 2024.

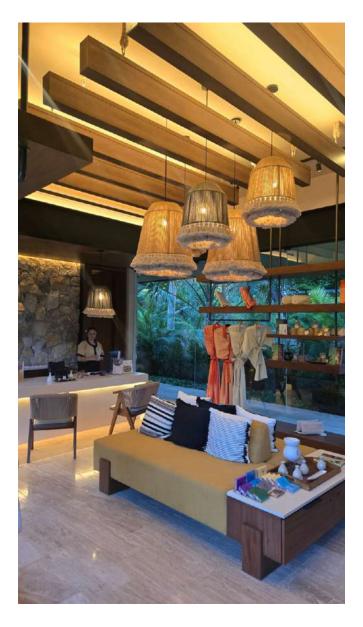
@ptaufiq photography

Be part of the highest quality community:

Natalia Bejarano nat@weddingtourismspecialist.com www.weddingtourismspecialist.com

@weddingtourismspecialist





There are cities that welcome you—and then there are cities that understand you. Places that don't just receive guests but embrace their purpose. And there are moments that remind us exactly why we do what we do. For me, Mérida was one of those rare moments.

I had the great honor of being part of the International Destination Wedding Certification, held from April 9–11, 2025, in this luminous and visionary city. From the very first moment, it was clear that this was not just another industry event. It was a statement of intent: the destination wedding industry in Latin America is growing, thriving, and moving forward with clarity and heart. What struck me most was the extraordinary support from the City Council of Mérida, led by Mayor Cecilia Patrón Laviada. Their presence was not symbolic—it was strategic. Mérida is not looking to be a host. Mérida wants to be a leader in global romance tourism, and it is taking all the right steps to get there.

Over the course of two immersive days at the Fiesta Americana Hotel, I was privileged to share the stage with inspiring colleagues, each of whom brought deep insight and expertise to the conversations shaping our industry's present and future.

Kitzia Morales, President of IADWP, opened the program with a powerful overview of the global destination wedding market and the opportunities it holds for Mérida. She was joined by Ed Cotton, IADWP Founder, and Ana Gon, President of the Advisory Board, who provided strategic data, trends, and direction for our region.

In design and creative experience, Gastón Kerriou shared how to adapt weddings whether luxury or budget-friendly—to meet clients' expectations, and later gave an exquisite masterclass on high-end etiquette and the role of the planner. Melissa Lara, with her signature elegance, explored the power of influencers and styled shoots for global positioning. Angela Proffitt joined us virtually with a fresh, disruptive take on how to integrate digital tools, AI, and immersive tech into destination weddings.

I had the honor of delivering three conferences: Cultural Fusion in Destination Weddings, Crisis Management & Contingency Planning, and Marketing Destination Weddings to High-End Clients. Each session was an invitation to look beyondlogistics and aesthetics, and truly reflect on what it means to create intentional, cross-cultural, emotionally resonant celebrations.

Samantha Tams, co-founder of LAFS, delivered an inspiring talk on building brands with purpose. Saúl Ancona, former Secretary of Tourism for Yucatán, provided concrete strategies for scaling marketing with meaningful impact. And Lucero Álvarez gave a thoughtful presentation on elevated service standards in the luxury space.

But what moved me most was the audience. Seeing so many planners—from Mexico and across Latin America—with open minds, humble hearts, and a hunger to keep learning was powerful. These were not passive attendees. They were builders, creators, professionals eager to evolve and elevate. Every question, every hallway conversation, every moment of reflection reminded me that our industry is not just growing—it is maturing.





Beyond the sessions, Mérida offered us moments to remember. The welcome dinner hosted by Kitzia Morales was warm and intentional. The farewell evening at Teya Viva, rich in history and local charm, felt like the perfect exhale to an emotionally full experience.

I left Mérida grateful. Inspired. Reaffirmed in the belief that we are no longer just creating weddings—we are crafting living experiences that have the power to transform. We are no longer just serving love stories—we are shaping an industry that honors culture, identity, and future legacies. Thank you, Mérida, for your vision.

Thank you, IADWP, for building bridges.

And thank you to every colleague who brought wisdom, generosity, and soul.

We are united by romance.

But what drives us forward... is purpose.

**Diana Sciarrillo** National Chapter Leader Guatemala @idoguatemala





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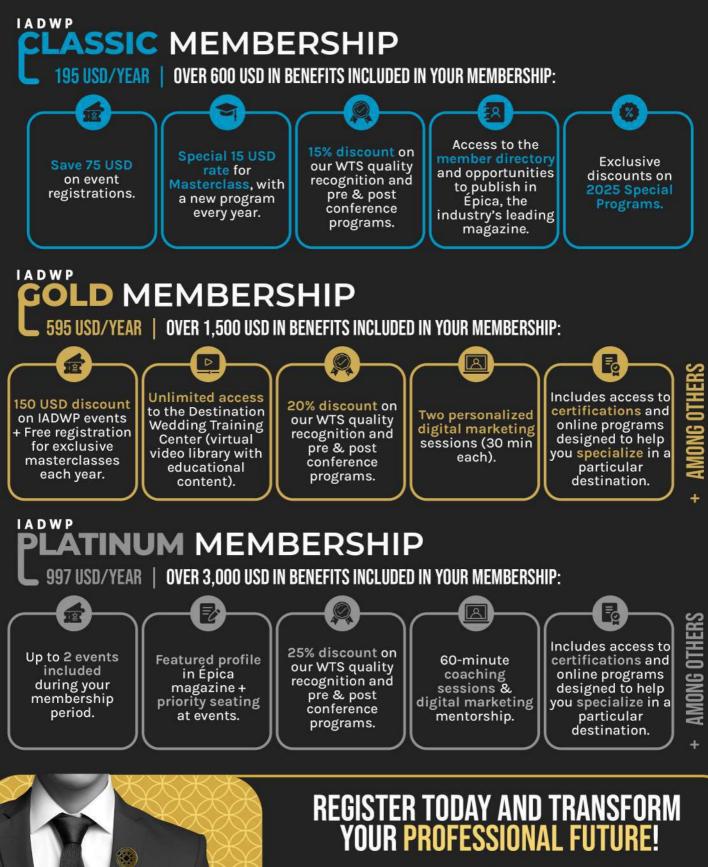
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We are delighted to feature some of our exceptional Platinum members of the International Association of Destination Wedding Professionals:



Harmony Walton The Bridal Bar

@@bridalbar

Harmony Walton is the founder of The Bridal Bar, a PR and creative marketing agency for luxury wedding professionals. With over 21 years of experience, she has launched numerous businesses, repositioned brands, and worked with clients worldwide. Her work has been featured in 100+ media outlets including The New York Times, GMA, and Martha Stewart Weddings.



Sarah Young

Sarah Young Luxury Destination Event and Wedding Planner - Y Plan Events Ltd

@ @sarahyoungevents

Sarah Young is a luxury event planner with over 24 years of experience, known for creating extraordinary weddings and lavish events. She was Malta's first wedding planner and has since organized hundreds of events, spoken at major international conferences, and even delivered a TEDx talk. Sarah also stars in her own Maltese TV series, Flip the Venue, transforming local spaces into stunning wedding locations.



Jorge Meneses Angermeyer Waterfront Inn

@ @angermeyerwaterfrontinn

I'm a pioneering entrepreneur with over 25 years of experience creating transformative experiences that blend sustainability, adventure, and wellness. As the founder of Neotropic Expeditions, Opuntia Hotels, and Bhumi, I focus on regenerative travel and conscious gastronomy in destinations like the Galápagos and the Amazon. Passionate about biohacking and longevity, I see travel, food, and innovation as powerful tools for personal and planetary regeneration.



Sarah Wang My Wedding Songbird

Regional Chapter Leader California

@Myweddingsongbird

Sarah Wang is the founder and Principal planner at My Wedding Songbird. She was born in Taiwan and moved to the US in middle school, so she's fluent in both Mandarin and English. She's also a currently ordained minister, and was a youth pastor for 7 years. Fun fact: Sarah got into the wedding industry as a wedding singer years before forming My Wedding Songbird in 2016.

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### We are thrilled to announce that our chapters in North America continue to grow! Meet our IADWP Mexico Chapter!



### Mario Delgadillo

NATIONAL CHAPTER LEADER MEXICO MARIO DELGADILLO, PROFESSIONAL EVENT & WEDDING PLANNER @@mariodelgadillowp

Mario Delgadillo, a systems engineer and international marketing specialist, is the founder of "Mario Delgadillo, Professional Event Planner" and an active member of ABC and IADWP. He has led regional chapters of both associations and is a partner at Grupo ENDE. He is also a frequent speaker and panelist at national and international events.

### **\*\*** REGIONAL CHAPTER LEADERS **\***\*



### Miroslava Bautista

BAJA CALIFORNIA / LOS CABOS @@miroslavabautista

#### Miroslava Bautista Wedding Planner

Miroslava Bautista WP, based in Los Cabos, was founded in 2005 as a destination wedding planning agency. Its founder, Miroslava, has over 20 years of experience and works with couples from the U.S., Canada, Colombia, the U.K., and Mexico. She offers full wedding planning services, including pre- and post-wedding events. Her focus is on minimizing stress for couples and creating unforgettable experiences.



### Paula Abreu

@ @paulaabreuevents

#### Paula Abreu Weddings & Events

Hi! I'm Paula Abreu, Chef & Wedding Expert with 15 years in the industry. I'm the Mexico Director of IWEA and creator of socially conscious weddings. I've catered for artists like Ricky Martin and Sarah Brightman and contributed to magazines like Forbes. I'm also the author of "Chispa & Corazón", a must-read for wedding pros.



#### Wedding and Events by Leonardo Favela

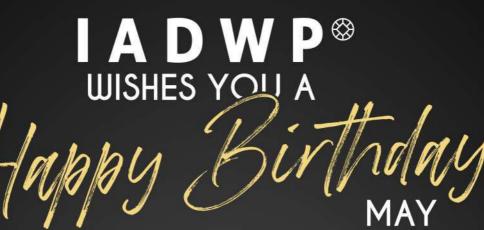
Leonardo Favela is a certified wedding & event planner with a solid background leading projects for brands like Fashion Days and Pineda Covalín. He's a frequent speaker at top industry events on weddings, marketing, and social responsibility. He leads his own agency and is an active member of IADWP, IWEA, and ABC.



### Badel Gómez YUCATAN @ @soiree\_eventos

#### Soiree Events

Badel Gómez is a wedding planner from Mérida, Yucatán, and director of Soirée Event Planning, specializing in destination weddings. She leads the IADWP chapter in Yucatán and is known for creating unique experiences rooted in local culture. In 2019, she won an award for her <u>i</u>nnovative wedding concepts.





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Jeni Chaffer © @jenitravels May 4<sup>th</sup>



Sonia Martínez ©®bridalagency\_ May 6<sup>th</sup>



Yuraima Blanco © @lanegrayuraima May 6<sup>th</sup>



Freddy Ku ©@freddykuphotography May 7<sup>th</sup>



Mariama Taj @@premiumeventsanddesign May 8<sup>th</sup>



Grace Palma ©@crystaleventos May 8<sup>th</sup>



Terri Doria ©@terridoria May 10<sup>th</sup>



Nelly Espinal ©@neco.eventos May 12<sup>th</sup>



Kitzia Morales @@kitzia\_moralest May 13<sup>th</sup>

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Jennie De Jesús ©@forevertogethertravel May 15<sup>th</sup>

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Rosario Hernández ©@herconentertainment May 16<sup>th</sup>

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Nadia Ríos @@saphireescapes May 21<sup>st</sup>



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