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MÉRIDA

Much More Than a Journey: An Experience That Leaves Its Mark



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Editor's Note

November 2026 | By Adrián Pavía

Director, IADWP – Latin America & Spanish-Speaking Caribbean Chapter - Editor in Chief – ÉPICA Magazine

The Future Waits For No One.

As Latin America begins to embrace spring, with blooming gardens, outdoor celebrations, and a new wedding season promising to bring renewed momentum, Europe welcomes the warm colors of autumn, transforming its vineyards, castles, and historic villas into extraordinary settings for celebrating love. Two different seasons, yet one industry facing challenges that extend far beyond geographical borders. We are living through times of economic uncertainty, international conflicts, and changing consumer habits that inevitably impact the romance industry. Couples are reassessing their budgets, redefining their priorities, and seeking experiences that hold genuine meaning. Yet one thing remains unchanged: the desire to celebrate life and love. In this evolving landscape, our responsibility as professionals is not to wait for the market to return to what it once was, but to recognize that the **market has already changed, and we must evolve with it**. Creativity, adaptability, and a strategic approach to our businesses will be essential as we navigate this new chapter.

October also brought us an extraordinary experience: the **World Romance Tour in Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico**, where I had the privilege of participating in The Mérida Circle, an exclusive gathering of internationally recognized professionals invited to discover, analyze, and reflect on Mérida's potential as a destination for weddings and celebrations. Over several days, we explored historic haciendas, luxury hotels, heritage venues, and exceptional culinary experiences that allowed us to appreciate the cultural richness of Yucatán. But above all, we shared meaningful conversations that reminded us of the true value of our industry: **listening, connecting, and creating opportunities together**. The experience continued with Love Mexico, featuring educational sessions, business meetings, and celebrations where technology, artificial intelligence, the evolving luxury consumer, and commercial challenges took center stage. My heartfelt gratitude goes to **Kitzia Morales**, the entire IADWP team, and all the hosts who made this remarkable experience possible. I am convinced its impact will extend far beyond those unforgettable days. Because a congress may end when the lights go down, but the relationships we build there have the power to transform our future.

And while we are still feeling the incredible energy of Mexico, we are already **gearing up for our next major gathering in El Salvador**. A new destination, new opportunities, and another occasion to demonstrate just how much Latin America has to offer the world. Congresses should not simply be places where we attend conferences, exchange business cards, or reconnect with friends. They should become genuine platforms for professional transformation. El Salvador awaits us with the opportunity to continue strengthening our community, discover new possibilities, and create partnerships that reach beyond our individual markets. I want to encourage every professional to arrive with a different mindset: instead of asking only what we can gain from an event, let us ask **what we are willing to contribute to help our industry grow**. Because the future of destination weddings will not be built through isolation or constant competition, but through collaboration, education, and the ability to think beyond our own borders.

And before closing, I want to express my deepest gratitude to every reader, contributor, and professional who continues to support **ÉPICA Magazine**. Each edition represents an opportunity to share knowledge, discover new perspectives, and remind ourselves that we are part of an extraordinary industry. But I also want to leave you with a challenge. **Do not settle for what you already know. Do not become so attached to your past successes that you forget the importance of continuing to learn. Do not allow technology to move forward while you remain standing still**. The world is changing, couples are changing, and destinations are changing. We must change, too. It is time to challenge established practices, reinvent our business models, open doors for emerging talent, and understand that true leadership is not about being the first to reach the finish line, but about helping others move forward as well.

What lies ahead may not necessarily be easier. But it has the potential to be far more extraordinary.

And for those who have the courage to prepare, evolve, and work together, I am absolutely convinced of one thing:

THE FUTURE IS NOT SOMETHING WE WAIT FOR. IT IS SOMETHING WE BUILD.

Let's keep moving forward. Let's aim higher. Let's go for more!

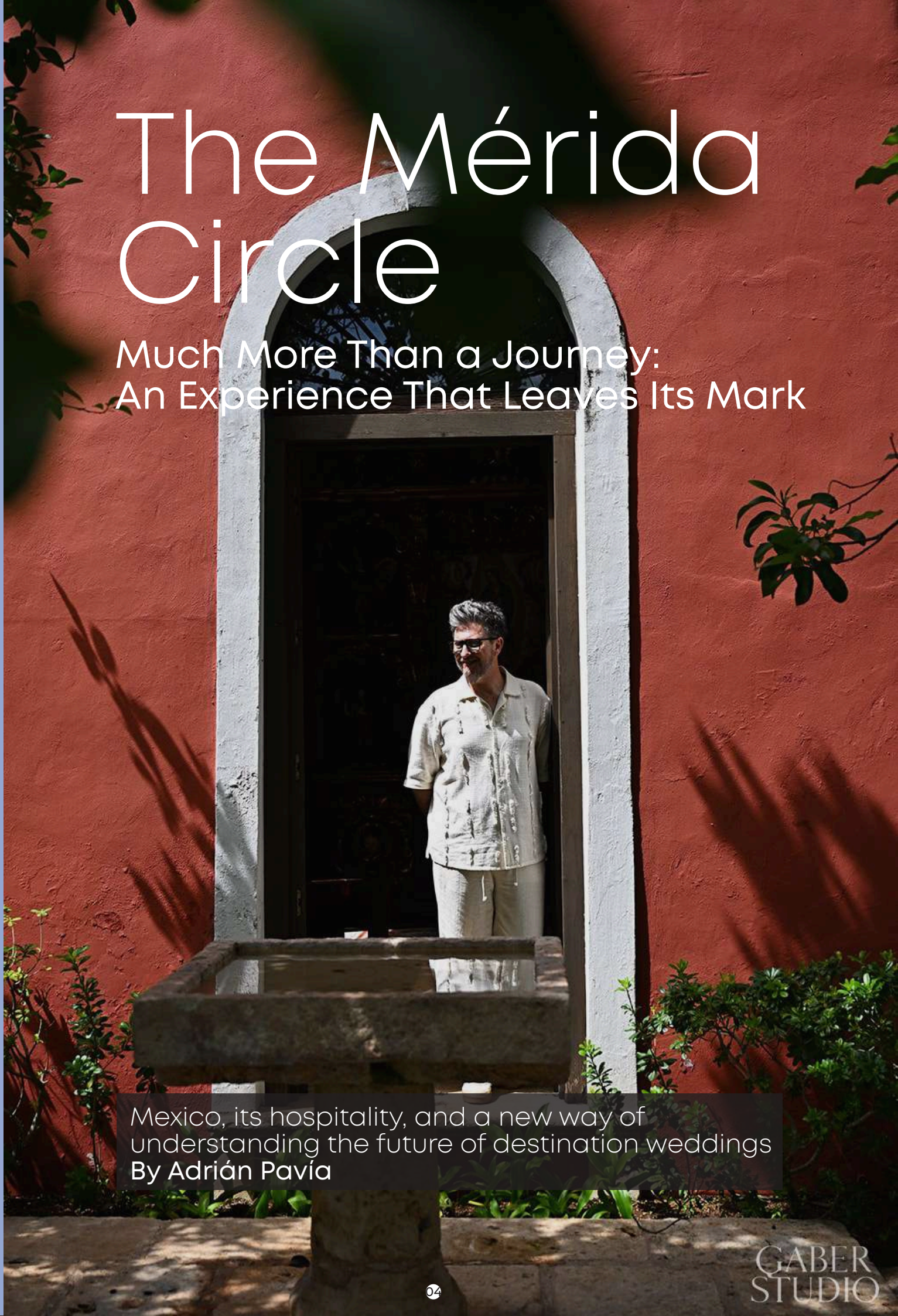


Adrián Pavía

Director IADWP Capítulo Latinoamérica
e Islas del Caribe de habla hispana
Editor General – ÉPICA Magazine
Wedding & Event Expert

The Mérida Circle

Much More Than a Journey: An Experience That Leaves Its Mark



Mexico, its hospitality, and a new way of understanding the future of destination weddings

By Adrián Pavía

GABER STUDIO



Some journeys are for work, others for pleasure, and a few, almost without our realizing it, become experiences that transform us. My participation in The Mérida Circle, in Yucatán, Mexico, belongs to that last category.

Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of visiting numerous destinations, attending international conferences, and meeting extraordinary professionals. Yet I have always maintained that we do not truly discover a destination when we land at its airport or check into a magnificent hotel. We discover it when we begin to understand its identity, traditions, people, and everything that makes it unique.

That is precisely what The Mérida Circle offered us: an initiative by IADWP and IADWP Academy, with the support of the Yucatán Secretariat of Tourism Development (Secretaría de Fomento Turístico de Yucatán) and Visit Mérida, inviting us to experience a city from a perspective far deeper than that of a conventional visitor.
This was not simply about seeing hotels, touring event venues, or attending business meetings. Its ambition was greater: to bring together international professionals to listen, observe, exchange experiences, and contribute ideas that could strengthen Mérida's position in the global destination wedding and celebration market

And when an experience begins with such a purpose, you understand that you have not been invited merely to participate. You have been invited to contribute.



Ph: Gaber Studio



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A Circle Of International Voices

One of the most enriching aspects of this experience was sharing it with accomplished professionals from different countries, cultures, and markets.

Under the warm hospitality of Kitzia Morales, I had the enormous privilege of joining this select international circle alongside Brian Worley of B. Worley Productions; Meltem Tepeler of KM Events; Rui Mota Pinto, known for his distinctive approach to design and emotional experiences; Eddie Zaratsian, an international reference in floral design and event production; JoAnn Gregoli of Elegant Occasions; and Myrdith Leon-McCormack, founder of World Bride Magazine. Arun Bablani and Gideon Hermosa were also part of this distinguished group, although their schedules and other responsibilities meant we did not cross paths during every activity. That in no way diminished the value of bringing so many perspectives and professional journeys together around one destination.

In my own case, more than 25 years of experience in weddings, hospitality, and events, together with the recognition I have earned in Argentina for my different, creative, and often disruptive approach to celebrations, brought me to that table. I was there not only to listen, but also to share my opinions, exchange experiences, and offer my own perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing our industry.

That professional journey is complemented by my role as Director of the IADWP Latin America and Spanish-Speaking Caribbean Chapter and Editor in Chief of ÉPICA Magazine, positions that allow me to closely observe the evolution of our markets and help build bridges between professionals and destinations.

Sitting down to exchange ideas with international leaders of this caliber was undoubtedly a recognition of my professional journey, but also a tremendous responsibility. I have always believed that being disruptive does not simply mean doing things differently. It means having the courage to question established practices, propose new perspectives, and help transform our profession.





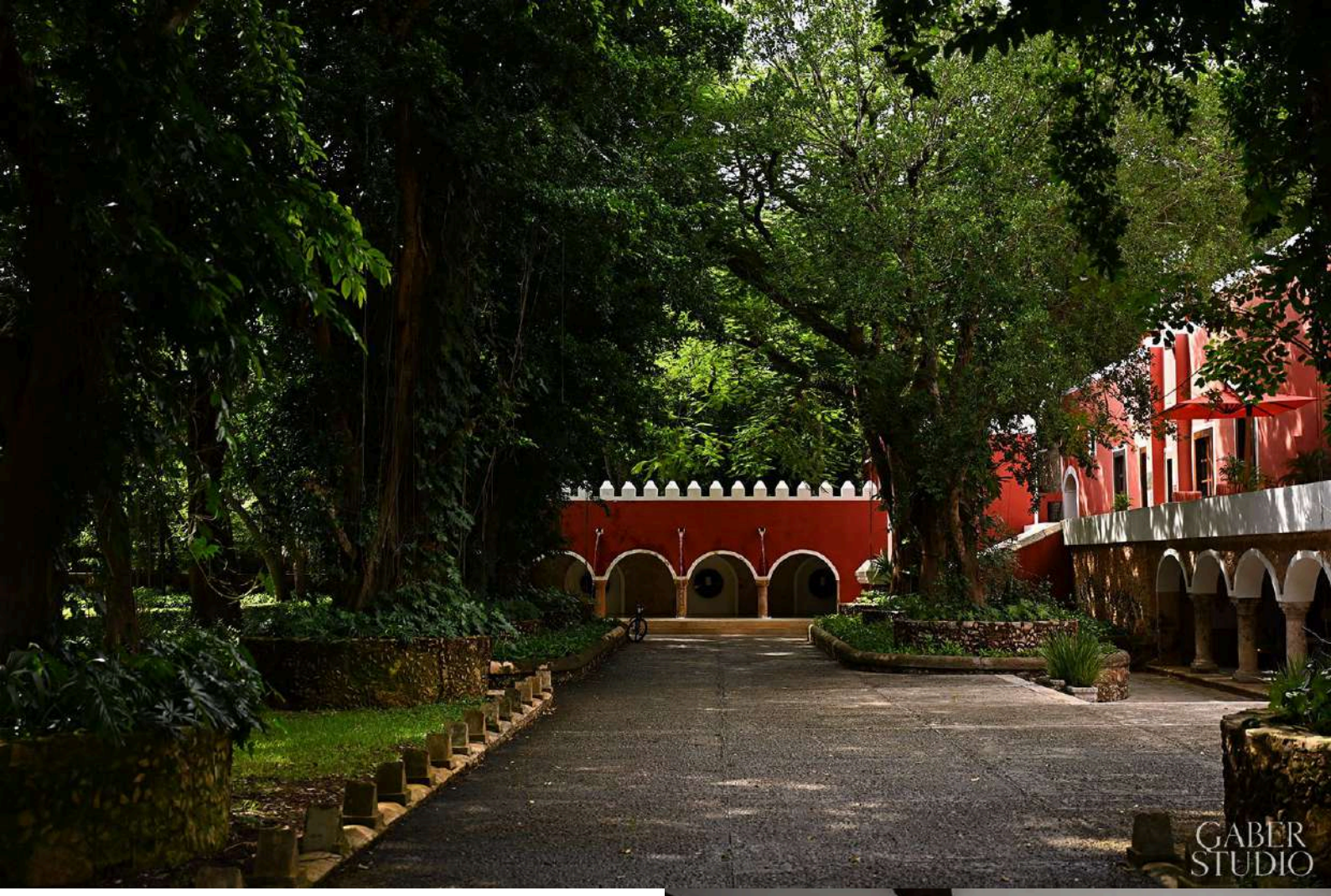
If there is one thing I confirmed during those days in Mérida, it is that the most valuable conversations are not the ones in which everyone agrees, but the ones that challenge us to think beyond what we already know.

After 25 years, I remain convinced that experience gives us the authority to express an opinion, but our ability to keep learning is what allows us to evolve.





Ph: Gaber Studio



The First Days: When Hospitality Begins To Tell A Story

Our experience began at Hacienda Xcanatún, Angsana Heritage Collection, a carefully restored eighteenth-century henequen hacienda transformed into a luxury retreat.

Its tropical gardens, historic architecture, and contemporary spaces represent a combination I find particularly appealing: the ability to deliver high-end hospitality without sacrificing a destination's identity.

The program included a private tour of the property hosted by its owner, Tina Baker, giving us a closer look at the property's history and concept.

One of the most meaningful moments of the welcome, however, was the opportunity to connect with Maya traditions through a traditional welcome ritual.



Some experiences do not need grand productions to be memorable. Sometimes it is enough to pause, listen, and understand that we are entering a place whose culture deserves far more than a photograph.

Gastronomy also played a central role. The traditional preparation of cochinita pibil, with its characteristic underground cooking method, brought us closer to one of Yucatán's most representative culinary expressions.

This prompted one of my first professional reflections: how many opportunities do we have to incorporate authentic traditions into a destination wedding without turning them into mere tourist entertainment?

The real challenge is to respect and understand those traditions, allowing them to become part of a genuine experience.





Chablé Yucatán: When Luxury Has An Identity

Our next visit took us to Chablé Yucatán, set in a nineteenth-century hacienda in Chocholá.

To speak of Chablé is to speak of a vision of luxury that goes far beyond architecture or service. It is to understand how a property can build an experience around its natural surroundings, history, gastronomy, and relationship with local culture.

The visit included a culinary experience at Ixi'im with chef Luis Ronzón.

For those of us working in hospitality and events, encounters like this are especially interesting because they show us how gastronomy can become one of the defining elements of a destination's identity.



A wedding should not simply transplant an international production into any location in the world. It should allow that place to play an active role in the celebration.

Yucatán has an extraordinary amount to offer in this regard.

The day continued with a sunset gathering at Yerba Santa, located in El Minaret, one of the most emblematic historic mansions on Paseo de Montejo, followed by dinner at Cigno Mejorada.





Different spaces, different proposals, and one shared conclusion: Mérida offers a remarkable variety of settings for very different styles of celebration.



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Hacienda Chuntuac: Listening Before Proposing

One of the most conceptually significant moments of The Mérida Circle took place at Hacienda Chuntuac, a seventeenth-century historic property within the Cuxtal Ecological Reserve.

There, we took part in an exchange with local leaders designed to bring together perspectives, reflections, and ideas inspired by the experiences of the preceding days.

I particularly value the fact that a gathering like this does not limit itself to showcasing a destination's strengths, but also invites professionals to reflect on its opportunities for development.

Promoting a destination is not simply a matter of displaying its finest photographs.

It means asking what the market needs, what an international couple expects, how trusted partnerships are built, and how we can generate tangible benefits for the host community..




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The day also included a meeting with Fundación Haciendas del Mundo Maya at Taller Maya to learn about initiatives supporting social and economic development in Maya communities.

I consider this social dimension essential.

If we constantly talk about sustainability, identity, and authentic experiences, we must understand that behind every destination are people, crafts, traditions, and communities that deserve to be respected and included in its growth.

The true luxury of a destination should also be measured by the well-being it can create around it.

Love Mexico: From Discovery To Knowledge And Business

Once the first stage of The Mérida Circle was complete, our experience continued with Love Mexico, the international gathering organized by IADWP.



KITZIA MORALES













We moved to the Hyatt Regency Mérida, strategically located near Paseo de Montejo and the Yucatán International Convention Center.

The change of setting also marked a transition in the program.

We moved from an intimate experience of discovery and exchange into days devoted to education, professional development, business meetings, and building international relationships.

I must say that I find this combination particularly intelligent.

Getting to know a destination is important, but understanding how to market it, connect it to other markets, and respond to couples' evolving expectations is equally essential.

The conference sessions addressed topics highly relevant to the present and future of our industry.

Arun Bablani offered his perspective on the trends that will define celebration travel through 2030. Rui Mota Pinto explored the technology-driven revolution, artificial intelligence, automation, and human-centered design. Lisi Korn examined the expectations of the new luxury traveler and the creation of high-value experiences.



The program continued with Alain Martínez, who invited us to reflect on the creative power behind extraordinary experiences.

There were also specialized sessions on digital strategies, artificial intelligence applied to proposals and budgets, financial management, commercial conversion, and new business models, featuring professionals such as Chris Dehner, Cheryl Bailey, Pipe Gaber, Judy Karwacky, Nikki Hendrix, and Roslyn Ranse.

My reflection?

The wedding industry is changing much faster than some professionals are willing to acknowledge.

Good taste, an attractive Instagram account, or spectacular photographs are no longer enough.

Today we need to understand technology, finance, marketing, experiences, hospitality, and consumer behavior.

Talent remains essential, but without education and business vision, it risks remaining little more than a good intention.





Business Spaces: Where Real Opportunities Begin

Another of Love Mexico's most valuable aspects was the opportunity to take part in spaces devoted to commercial relationships.

Business appointments brought professionals, destinations, and vendors closer together, while experiential hubs offered a different way to discover Yucatán's identity.

Highlights included Cacao Circle, an experience connecting participants with Maya roots presented by Chablé Yucatán, and Sacred Melipona Honey Experience, developed by Fundación Haciendas del Mundo Maya.

These initiatives demonstrate that a professional gathering can go far beyond traditional lectures and meetings.



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There were also networking lunches featuring destinations such as Puerto Vallarta and Las Vegas, broadening opportunities for exchange across markets.

And here I want to emphasize something I consider essential: the real value of these gatherings is not measured by the number of business cards we exchange.

It is measured by the relationships we manage to build afterward.

A contact can become a vendor. A vendor can become an ally. And a well-built alliance can open doors we could never have imagined while working alone.







Mérida Also Knows How To Celebrate

Of course, it was not all lectures and meetings.

And when the guests are professionals from the celebration industry, it is impossible for the evenings to go unnoticed.

Love Mexico's welcome celebration was originally scheduled to take place at Casa Rosada, but rain forced a move to the Convention Center. Far from diminishing the occasion, the change of venue highlighted something those of us in the events industry know well: the ability to adapt is part of every great production. Fresh Elegance came to life there, combining black, gray, coral, and tangerine tones.

The experience reminded us that even when the weather changes our plans, creativity and teamwork can turn an unexpected challenge into a memorable celebration.


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The following evening brought Mérida Afterdark, an experience conceived in two acts and two different venues: Casa Salina and Salón Gallos.

The aesthetic concept, White Sophistication, invited participants to wear white, ivory, cream, and beige.

Beyond the celebration itself, experiences like these allow us to observe the work of local professionals and vendors: production, styling, gastronomy, lighting, music, and all those details that, when executed properly, appear to happen effortlessly.

And those of us who work in events know perfectly well how much work lies behind that apparent ease.
The farewell took place at Hacienda San Antonio Hool, in a celebration supported by Visit Mérida and produced by Suare, the company led by Fadel Gómez, Director of the IADWP Yucatán Chapter. It was a fitting opportunity to recognize the talent and dedication of the local professionals who bring these experiences to life.

The Linen Elegance concept, inspired by natural shades, beige, and brown, accompanied an



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evening in which historic heritage once again took center stage.

I find it extraordinary that a destination can offer such different spaces while maintaining such a recognizable cultural and aesthetic identity.

Mérida: A Destination With So Much To Tell

After visiting hotels, haciendas, restaurants, and historic venues, I am left with a reflection I consider especially important.

Mérida does not need to become another destination.

It needs to keep strengthening what makes it unique. Its architectural heritage, gastronomy, Maya traditions, haciendas, and the hospitality of its people are extraordinary assets for the international wedding market.

But a destination is not positioned through beautiful venues alone.


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It needs trained professionals, reliable vendors, connectivity, commercial strategies, and a community that understands growth must be built collectively.

And that is precisely where I find the greatest value of The Mérida Circle.

We were not invited merely to admire what Yucatán has to offer.

We were invited to consider how that potential can be projected into the future.

An Honor I Will Always Carry With Me

During my time in Mérida, I also had the honor of receiving the Ciudad de Encuentros (City of Encounters) recognition from the Honorable City Council of Mérida.

It was a deeply meaningful moment.

After so many years in this industry, I still believe that the most valuable recognitions are not those that merely celebrate a career, but those that remind us of our responsibility to continue contributing.

Receiving an honor in a city that welcomed us so generously represents, for me, a renewed commitment to education, professional exchange, and building bridges between destinations.


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Thank You For Letting Us Be Part Of It

I want to express my special gratitude to Kitzia Morales for her vision, her remarkable ability to bring people together, and her ongoing commitment to the growth of our industry.

My thanks also go to Ed Cotton, the teams at IADWP and IADWP Academy, the Yucatán Secretariat of Tourism Development and Visit Mérida, Fadel Gómez and her team at Suare, the hosts at every property, and all the professionals and vendors who made this experience possible.

And, of course, to my fellow participants in The Mérida Circle, with whom I had the opportunity to share conversations, perspectives, and experiences that enrich the way we understand our profession.

I return from Mexico with new knowledge, new relationships, and a conviction that grows stronger with every journey.

The wedding industry does not grow only when we organize extraordinary celebrations. It grows when we share knowledge, build community, and create opportunities for others.

Mérida opened its doors to us.

We had the privilege of discovering what lies behind them.

And perhaps that is the most important lesson of this journey:

The most extraordinary destinations are not necessarily those with the most to show, but those with something genuine to tell.

Thank you, Mérida.

Because some journeys end when we return home.

And some experiences only truly begin when we understand everything they have given us.

Adrián Pavía
Director, IADWP – Latin America
& Spanish-Speaking Caribbean Chapter
Editor in Chief – ÉPICA Magazine
Wedding & Event Expert



The Art of Creating a Dream:

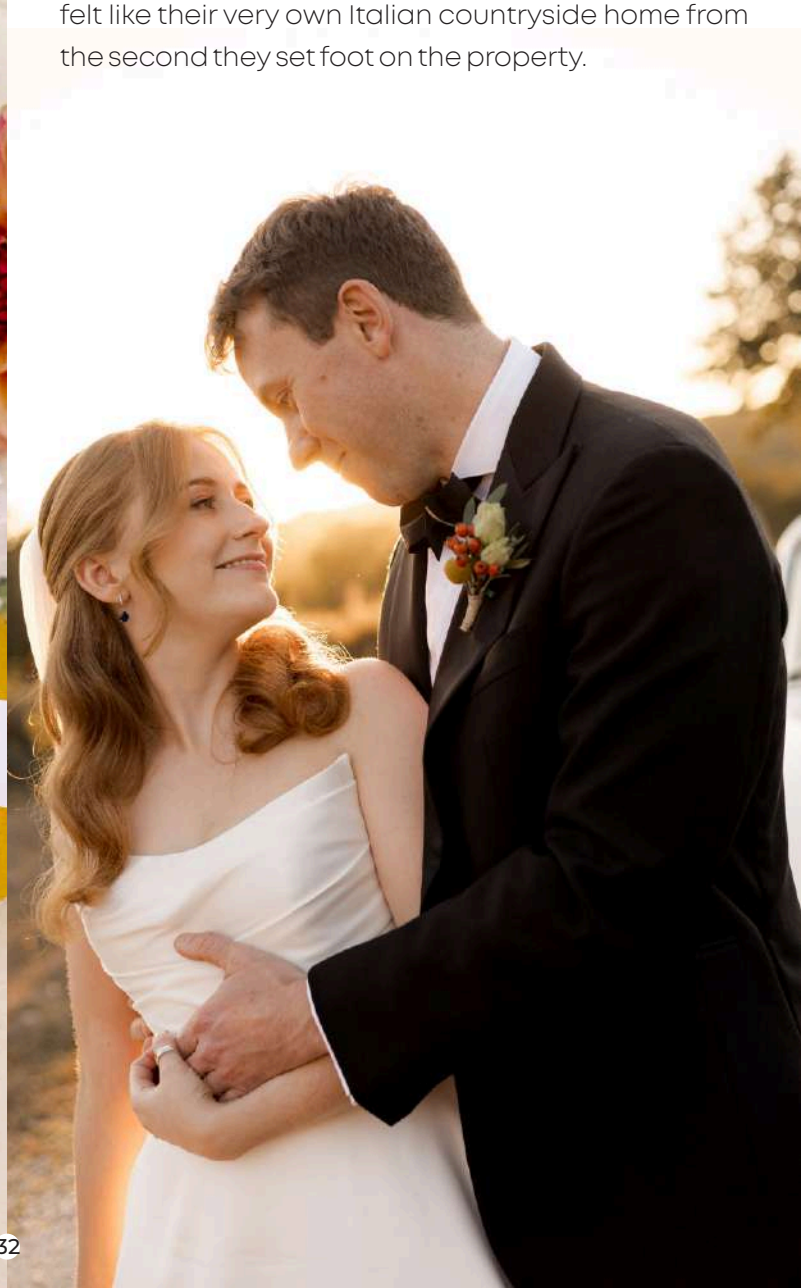
Chloe & Ben's Intimate Destination Wedding in Apulia

Every so often, the universe aligns to create something genuinely unforgettable. For Chloe, born in London, and Ben, a New Zealander also based in the British capital, marrying in Italy was far more than hosting a party—it was a long-cherished dream of immersing themselves in a land they adore, surrounded by its timeless charm, world-class gastronomy, and serene landscapes.

Crafting a celebration like this called for meticulous care and thoughtful touch. As hosts, their ultimate wish was to give their closest loved ones—who traveled from the couple's home countries—an all-encompassing experience. That's why the magic began days before the vows: together, they enjoyed a curated itinerary designed to let guests feel, taste, and live the true heart of Apulia through local tours, private tastings, and shared moments that turned into lifelong memories.

The venue chosen to crown this journey was Masseria Mangiato, a character-filled estate that felt like their very own Italian countryside home from the second they set foot on the property.







A Ceremony Wrapped in History

The day's most moving moment unfolded against a truly iconic backdrop. The symbolic ceremony took place at the foot of the Masseria's historic stone staircase, with the classic silhouette of traditional trulli standing behind them as silent witnesses to their love.

In that magical setting, the ceremony wove together Chloe and Ben's personal story—recalling how their paths first crossed and the journey that brought them to this corner of Southern Italy. Surrounded by knowing glances and happy tears, the couple exchanged vows in an atmosphere that made every single guest feel deeply woven into their story.

A Symphony of Color and Mediterranean Spirit

Bringing a vision like this to life means translating the couple's dream into an atmosphere that feels alive yet effortless. The aesthetic concept grew out of a desire to showcase the region's authentic beauty, striking a natural balance between rustic charm and fresh, spontaneous, understated elegance..







Gastronomic Excellence & Celebration

For Chloe and Ben, offering an unforgettable culinary journey was an absolute priority. Dinner was created as a genuine tribute to Apulia's rich food culture, showcasing local flavors elevated to their finest expression and paired seamlessly with a refined selection of regional wines.

Following the heartfelt speeches, the evening reached one of its most elegant moments with the cutting of the wedding cake and a delicate champagne tower under the stars. The celebration carried on late into the night with laughter, dancing, live music, and a custom cocktail bar crafted specifically for the occasion.

Inspired by the sunlit warmth and scents of the Mediterranean, bright yellow lemons provided a lively accent throughout the styling. Around them unfolded a rich color palette: soft blush pinks, warm terracotta tones echoing the Apulian earth, olive greens, and off-whites that filled the space with light. Each dinner table came to life with beautifully draped linens, thoughtfully chosen tableware, organic floral arrangements, and the soft, romantic glow of candlelight as evening fell.











The Magic of Teamwork

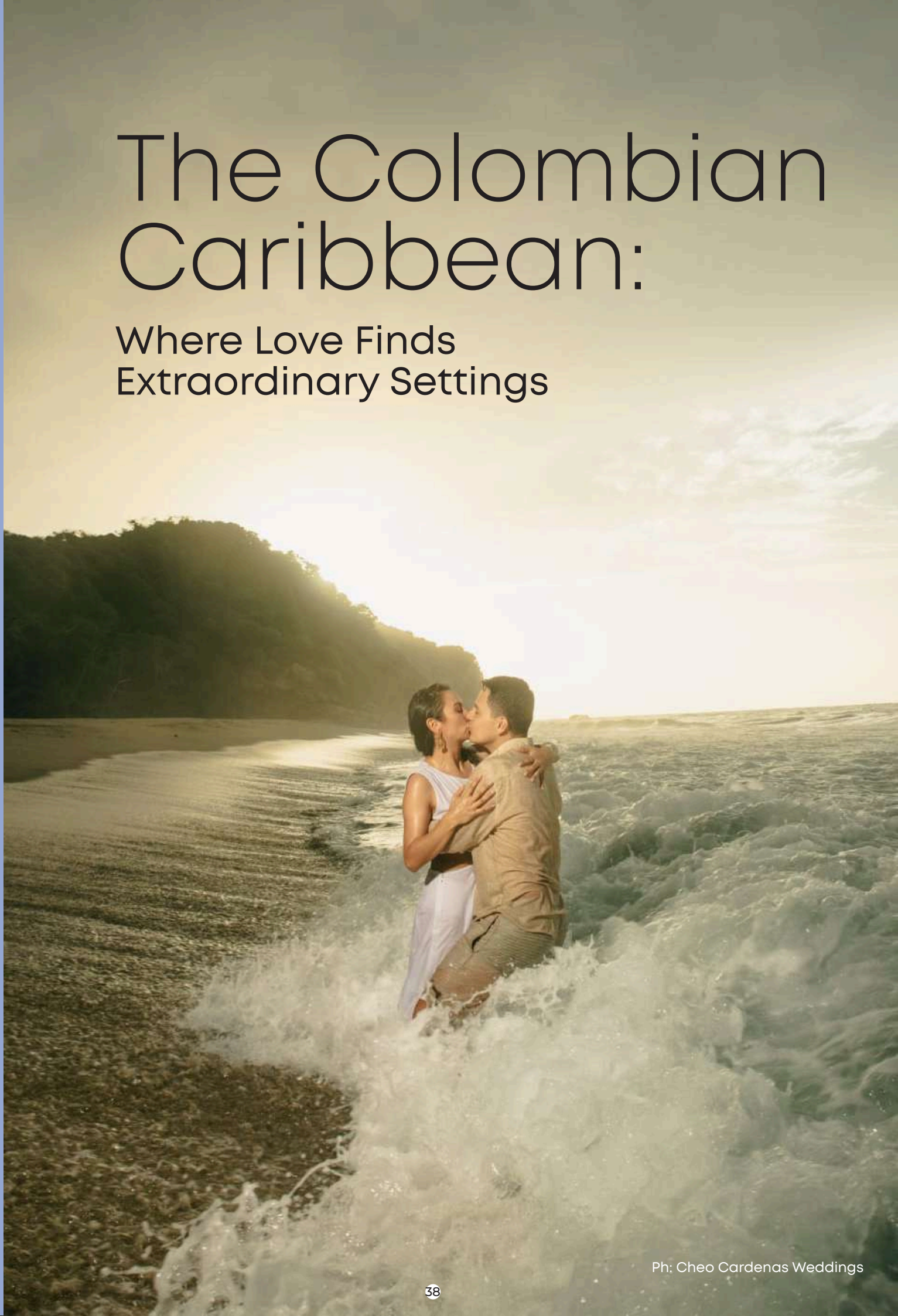
Behind a wedding of this caliber is a seamlessly coordinated team where empathy, craft, and dedication come together to make everything flow naturally. Chloe and Ben's wedding was the proud result of a passionate group of professionals devoted to excellence:

Catering & Banquet: @sovranoeventi
Cocktail Bar Service: @lele_momenti.memorabili
Digital Content Creator: @content_for_weddings
Floral Design: @mariannacataldi_fioridea
Music & Sound: @alexsisto
Makeup Artist: @katya_mua_
Photography: @alessiabusto_fotografia
Stationery & Graphic Design: @riccardopalazzi_art
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The Colombian Caribbean:

Where Love Finds Extraordinary Settings



Ph: Cheo Cardenas Weddings



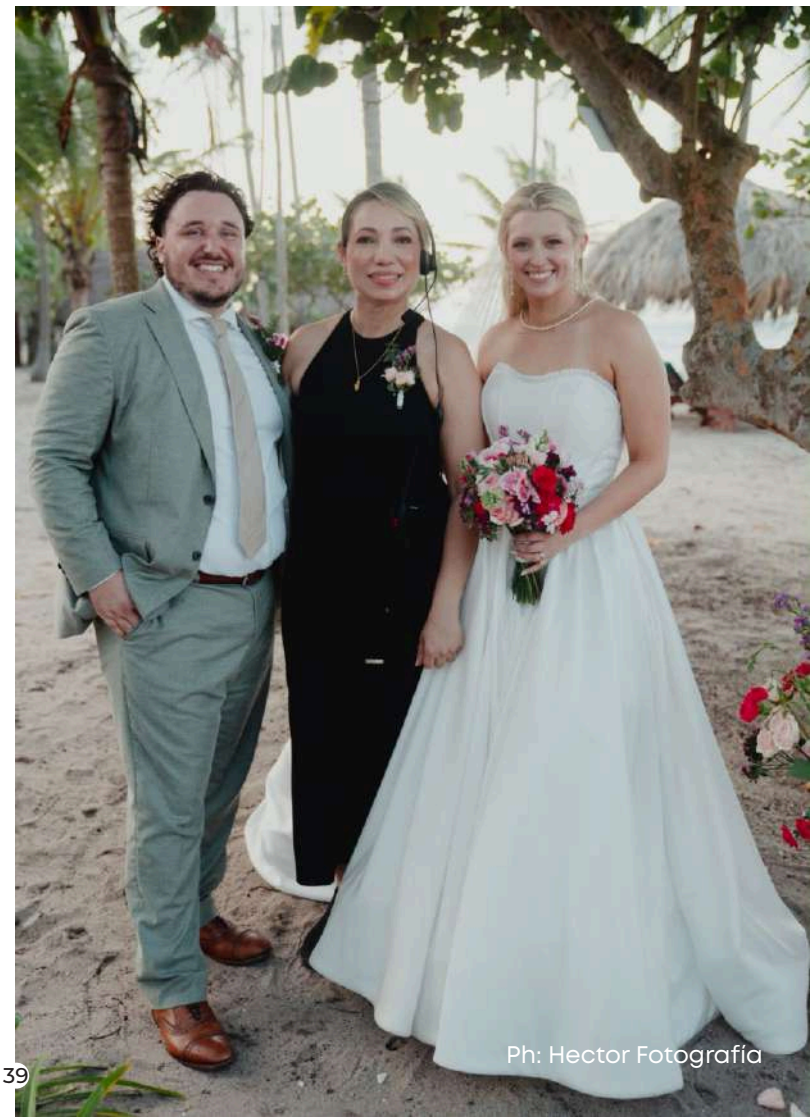
Ph: Henderson Vergara

Palomino, A Destination I Not Only Recommend, But Love.

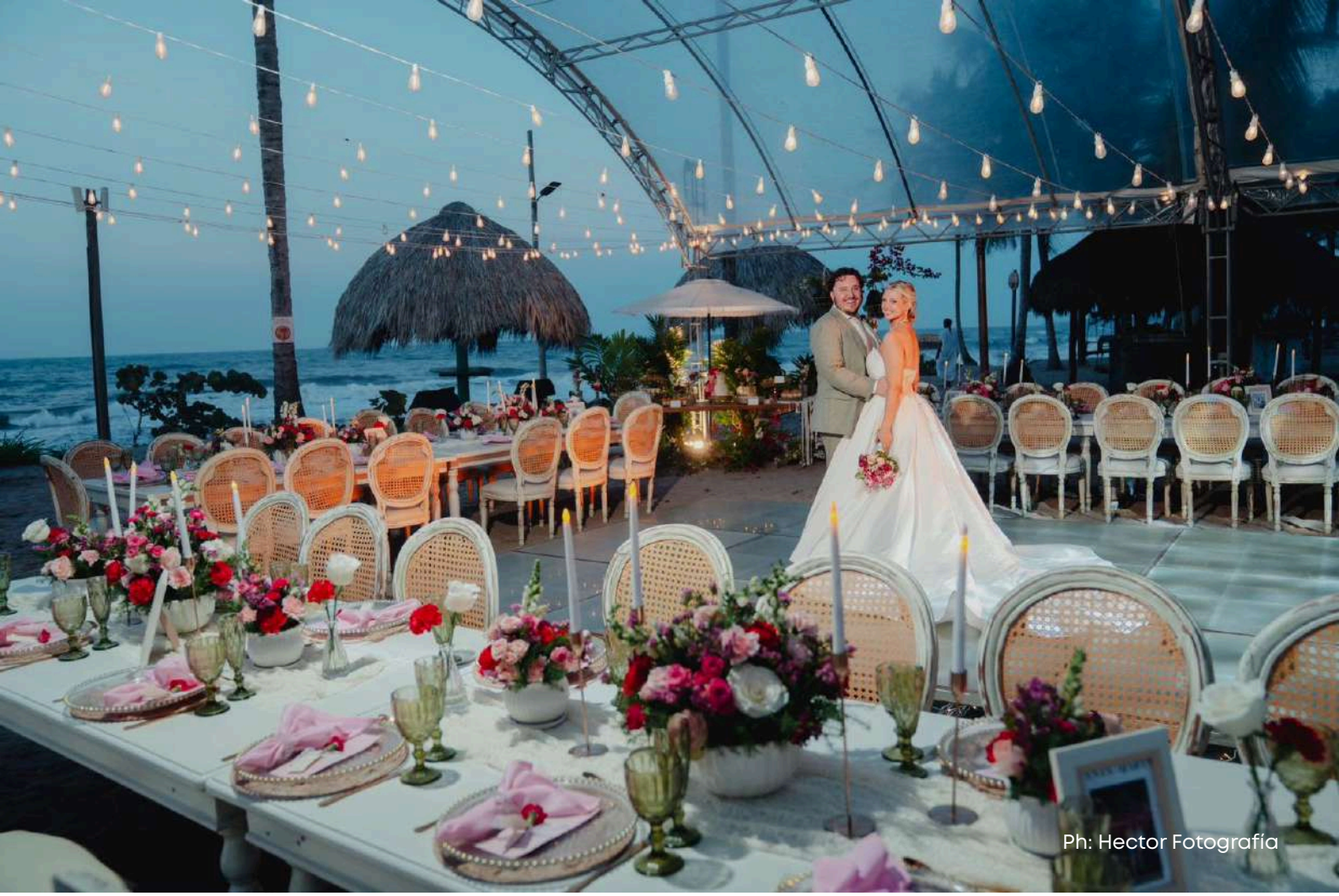
Diversity is a word that defines the Colombian Caribbean: Cartagena captivates with its architecture, history, and beautiful islands; Barranquilla, with the Caribbean and musical legacy of its Carnival; and Santa Marta, with its beautiful sunsets unfolding between the Caribbean Sea and the Sierra Nevada, accompanying the journey toward Palomino, a destination that deserves to be discovered with all the senses. Each destination has its own charm, but Palomino has a different identity: there, the landscape, nature, and hospitality become part of the celebration.

A Destination That Reveals Itself Along The Way

PPalomino is a township in the municipality of Dibulla, in La Guajira, north of Santa Marta, along the beaches of the Caribbean Sea. Every time I set out on the journey to this place, I enjoy it as if it were my first time. The majesty of the Sierra Nevada, its different climate zones, rivers, and nature reserves make this region an exceptional setting. Its extraordinary biodiversity brings together a wealth of fauna and flora that include hundreds of species of birds, mammals, reptiles, tropical flowers, palm trees, and lush vegetation that transforms the landscape into an experience for the senses.



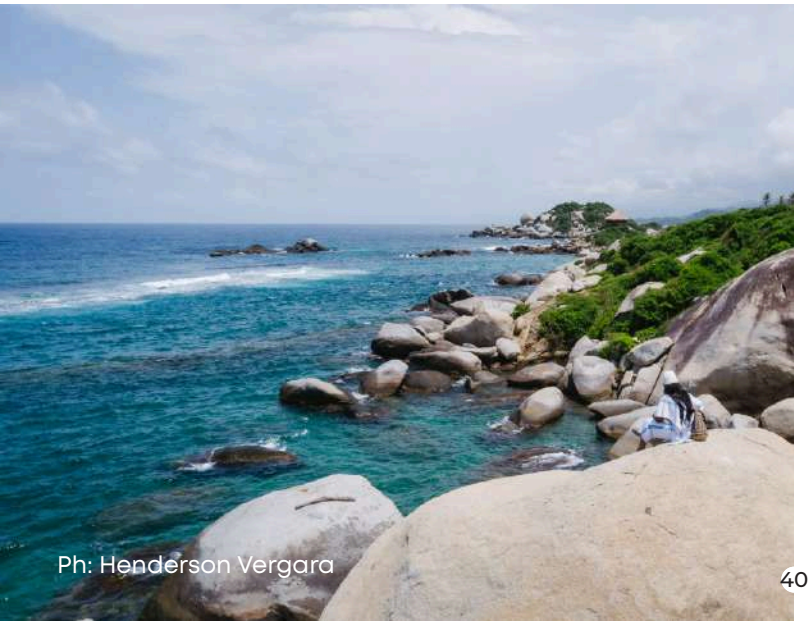
Ph: Hector Fotografía



Ph: Hector Fotografía

Here, it is possible to enjoy horseback rides, go birdwatching, and experience activities such as tubing down the Palomino River, where, with a little luck, you may spot red howler monkeys among the trees along its banks.

The Sierra Nevada is also the ancestral territory of four Indigenous groups: the Arhuaco, Kankuamo, Kogui, and Wiwa. Their history, traditions, and spiritual connection with nature enrich the identity of this region and invite visitors to discover it with respect for their communities.



Ph: Henderson Vergara

The Hospitality That Turns A Wedding Into An Experience

Beyond its landscapes, biodiversity, and all the experiences it offers, it is its people who make Palomino a unique destination. Its residents welcome you with a genuine smile and show you that, for the locals, kindness is not a matter of protocol, but a natural way of relating to others.

For more than 10 years as a destination wedding planner, I have worked with different hotels in the area, primarily with Aité Eco Resort, whose commitment to preserving the natural environment aligns closely with my own. A biodiversity survey of its surroundings recorded eighty bird species which, together with its palm trees, expansive beach, and ocean views, create an extraordinary setting in which to celebrate love.

For couples who dream of a destination wedding, Palomino offers an intimate and authentic experience, far from the pace of big cities. A ceremony by the sea, a reception beneath the Caribbean sky, and the opportunity to share several

days of experiences with family and friends allow the celebration to transcend the wedding day itself.

Palomino: An Adventure That Goes Beyond Photographs

When I recommend Palomino, I do so not only from professional experience. I do so with the emotion of someone who knows the destination, enjoys it, and deeply believes in what it has to offer.

Getting married in Palomino is more than choosing a beautiful setting for photographs. It is about having an adventure, discovering extraordinary landscapes, connecting with nature, and sharing experiences that become unforgettable memories.

I want my couples to experience the destination, connect with its people, and return home carrying with them the memory of an adventure filled with emotions, discoveries, and shared moments.

As wedding planners, our role extends beyond creating beautiful settings. We must know the destination, understand its logistics, collaborate with local vendors, and respect its surroundings allow us to design authentic celebrations that reflect the personality of each couple.



Ph: Nehemías Gomez Fotografía

It is not simply about moving a wedding to a paradise beach, but about transforming the destination into an experience that remains in the memories of those who live it.

Because when you genuinely love a place, you do not need to try too hard to convey its beauty.

You simply have to share what you feel each time

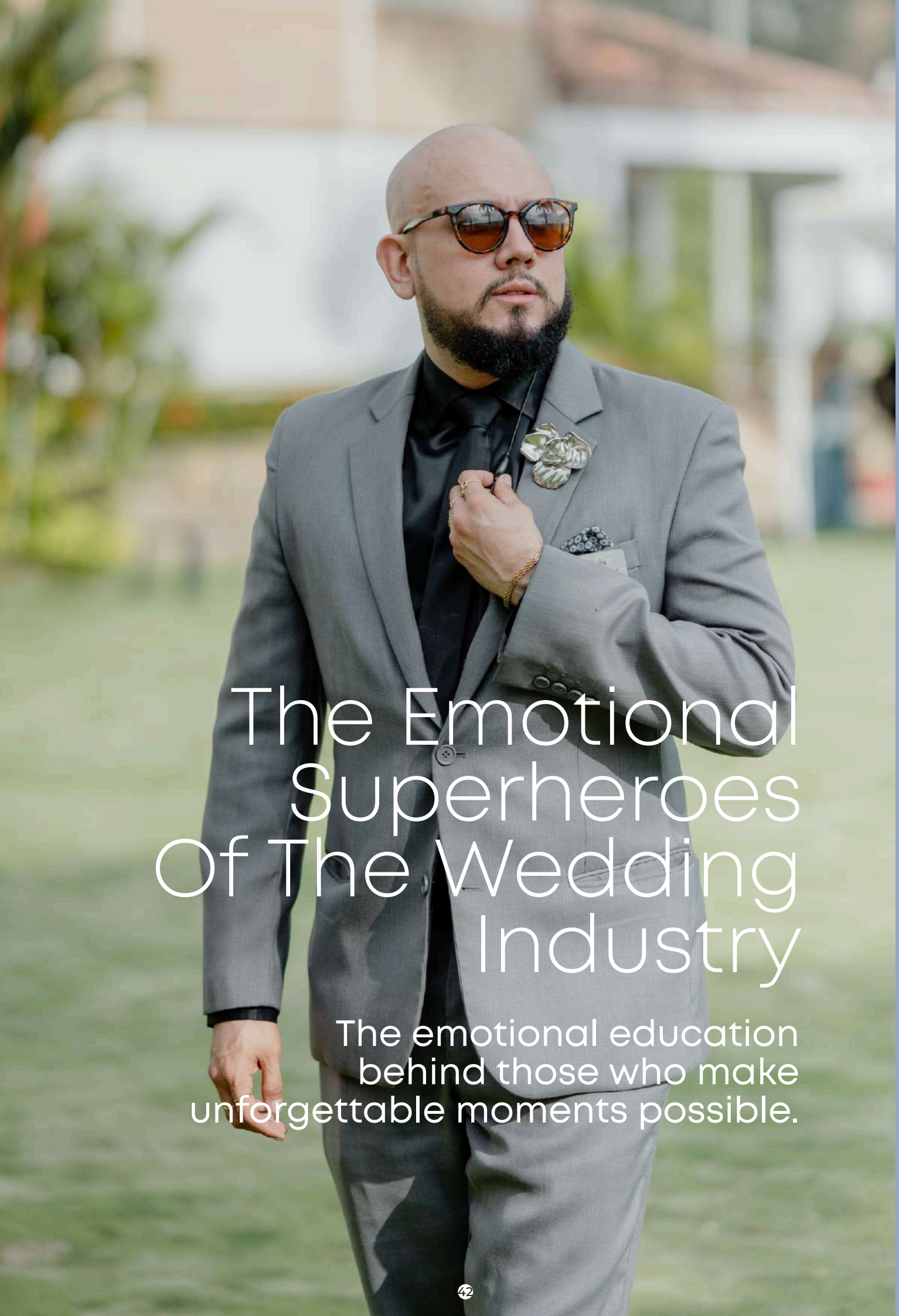


Reserva natural Hotel Aite Eco Resort

Patricia Taborda
Founder & CEO | Patricia Taborda
Destination Weddings & Events

Destination Wedding Planner
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Instagram: @patytabordaweddings
Facebook: Patricia Taborda Destination Weddings
Phone: +57 310 630 2766
Mail: patytaborda.weddings@gmail.com



The Emotional Superheroes Of The Wedding Industry

The emotional education behind those who make unforgettable moments possible.

In the wedding industry, we are accustomed to admiring what we can see: the beauty of the décor, the precision of the production, the flawless timeline, and the magic of an experience that seems to unfold effortlessly. Yet we rarely stop to consider what never appears in photographs or budgets: the emotional world of the human being behind every wedding planner.

Those of us in this profession have an extraordinary characteristic: we navigate the emotions of virtually everyone involved in a wedding. We manage our own emotions while supporting those of the couple; we listen to their families' concerns, attend to guests' needs, find solutions with vendors, and strive to keep our team united and motivated. Often, all of this happens at once, under pressure that few people can truly imagine.

In a way, we become emotional superheroes. We can bring calm amid uncertainty, find solutions as tensions rise, and genuinely celebrate the happiness of others. We learn to read silences, interpret gestures, listen beyond words, and recognize that behind a reaction there may be an emotion that needs to be understood.

But there is something we must not forget: managing emotions does not mean controlling other people's feelings, nor does it mean suppressing our own. It means developing the tools to respond mindfully, communicate assertively, set healthy boundaries, and support others without losing sight of our own well-being.

That is why emotional education in the wedding industry is a necessity, not a luxury. Professional excellence does not depend solely on our logistical, creative, or administrative abilities. It is also reflected in how we resolve conflict, communicate difficulties, cope with frustration, and build relationships with our clients, colleagues, vendors, and team members.

For too long, we have confused professionalism with enduring everything, strength with hiding our feelings, and commitment with being available even when our emotional resources are depleted. Yet those of us who accompany others through life-changing moments also need spaces where we feel understood, tools to manage our emotions, and a professional culture that recognizes the importance of mental health.





It is from this conviction that CONTACTO CON TACTO was born: a philosophy that brings together assertive communication, emotional intelligence, emotional responsibility, and mental health care. It is an invitation to transform how we relate to one another, recognizing that behind every professional role is a person who deserves respect, empathy, and care.

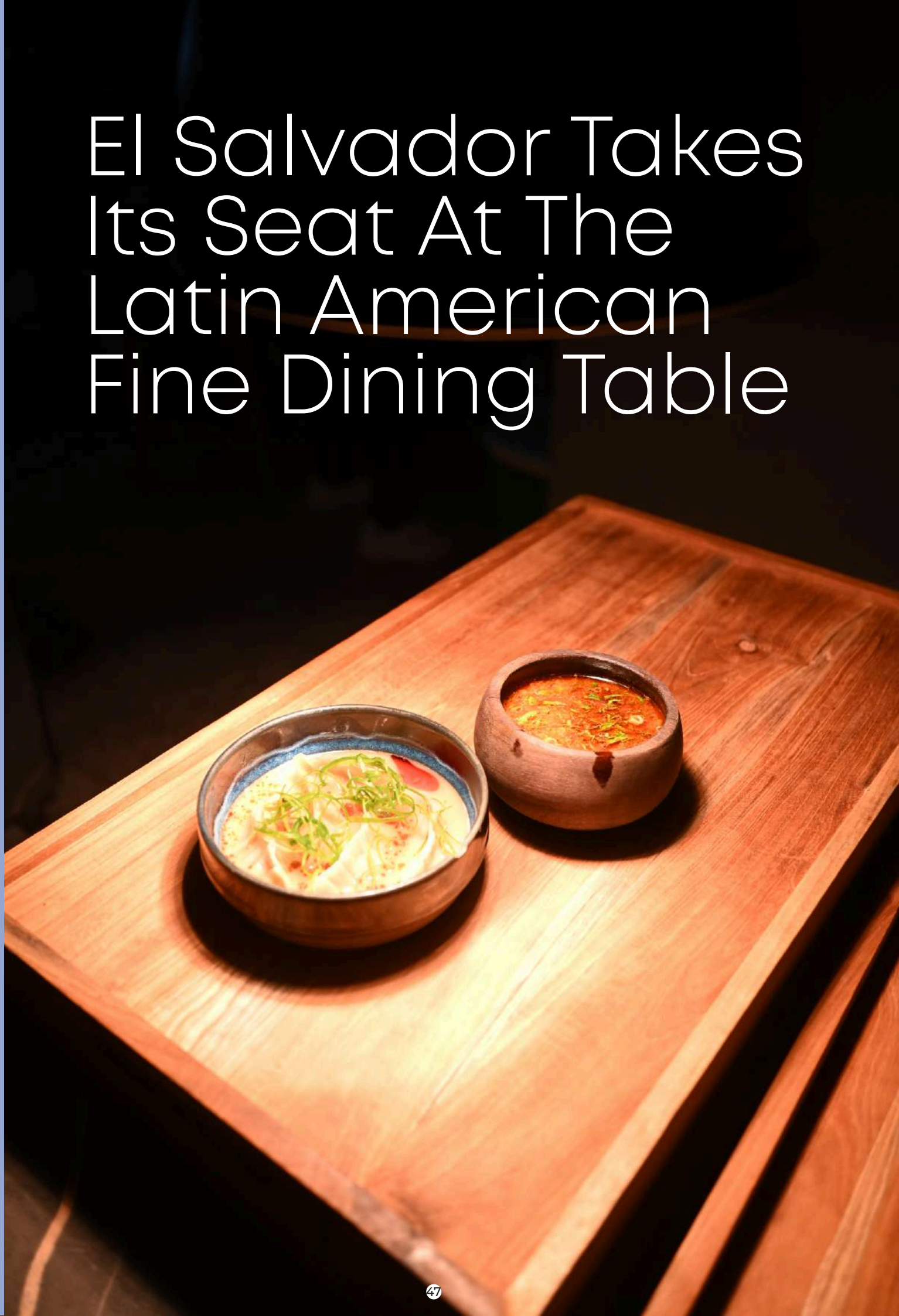
I dream of a wedding industry where sensitivity is recognized as a strength, empathy coexists with boundaries, and excellence is measured not only by what we can produce but also by the humanity we bring to our work. Because yes, we can be the emotional superheroes of this industry. But we do not need to avoid vulnerability at all costs, solve everything, or carry everyone else's emotions. We need to learn to understand, support, and manage those emotions in healthy ways.

Because creating unforgettable moments for others should never mean forgetting ourselves.

Andres Sotomayor
Wedding planner
and director of Contacto Con Tacto
@byandressotomayor


GUANAJUATO.mx
EXPLORE NEW ROADS
Find new roads to
love
Mineral de Pozos

El Salvador Takes Its Seat At The Latin American Fine Dining Table



The recognition of its restaurants and the talent of its chefs reveal a new dimension of the country: a culinary scene capable of connecting cultures, attracting travelers, and enriching the experiences that bring people to El Salvador.

A destination is also discovered through its flavors. What remains in the memory of a journey is often a landscape, the people we meet, and, sometimes, an extraordinary meal shared around a table. In El Salvador, gastronomy is becoming an increasingly meaningful part of that story.

From October 12 to 16, 2026, Fine Dining Week brought together more than 100 chefs and over 35 international media representatives for 27 lunches and dinners at Salvadoran restaurants.





The gathering created opportunities for culinary exchange, bringing together different techniques, traditions, and cultures while placing the country's local dining scene in the international spotlight.



The event culminated in the Los Fuegos 2026 gala, recognizing restaurants and their place within the regional gastronomic landscape. In El Salvador, 43 establishments received distinctions. Among them, **El Xolo and Monarca earned Three Fuegos**, the highest distinction. Casa Fuego, Casa Marina, Gracia, Il Buongustaio, Kemuri, KWA, Ocelot, and Pecado Migrante received Two Fuegos.



The One Fuego distinction was awarded to Al Pomodoro, Alquimia Coffee, Brutto, El Holandés Errante BBQ, Gastroteca, Hacienda Real, Kaeru-Chan Ramen, La Doña, NanTal, Nomad Pizza, Pizza La Classica, Viva Vino, and Yuzu. Together, these names reflect a diverse culinary offering and different ways of interpreting food, creating atmosphere, and welcoming guests to the table.

But what does a gastronomic distinction truly represent? Los Fuegos evaluates far more than a single dish. Its criteria include cuisine, hospitality, service, design, identity, atmosphere, consistency, and the ability to create a memorable experience. Fine dining is not defined solely by what reaches the guest's plate; it is also shaped by every detail surrounding that moment.



For Fine Dining Table, an international community connecting curated gastronomic, hospitality, and lifestyle experiences across Latin America, the United States, and Europe, this first edition in El Salvador offered an opportunity to bring international culinary figures together and discover the potential of the country's local scene.

The value of this gathering lies not only in the distinctions awarded, but also in the conversations it inspires. When a restaurant gains international recognition, curiosity extends beyond its menu to the surrounding landscape, local ingredients, cultural traditions, and the place where the experience unfolds. Gastronomy can become a gateway to discovering a country and a compelling reason to visit.








Surf City
El Salvador
El Centro
Histórico





This connection also extends to destination weddings and events. For couples choosing El Salvador as the setting for their celebration, the culinary offering can transform a reception into an experience with a distinctive sense of place. From a welcome dinner to an intimate gathering between families or a celebration showcasing local flavors, gastronomy becomes more than an accompaniment; it becomes part of the story guests take home with them.







As José De la Barra, CEO of Fine Dining Table, stated: "The Salvadoran culinary scene is ready to welcome the very best of Latin American cuisine, and now it is also ready to compete with it."

El Salvador is taking its seat at the table with a voice of its own. The opportunity ahead lies in continuing to strengthen that identity, connecting local talent with new audiences, and allowing every dish to tell a story beyond the recipe itself: the story of the place it comes from.

José De la Barra
CEO Fine Dining Table

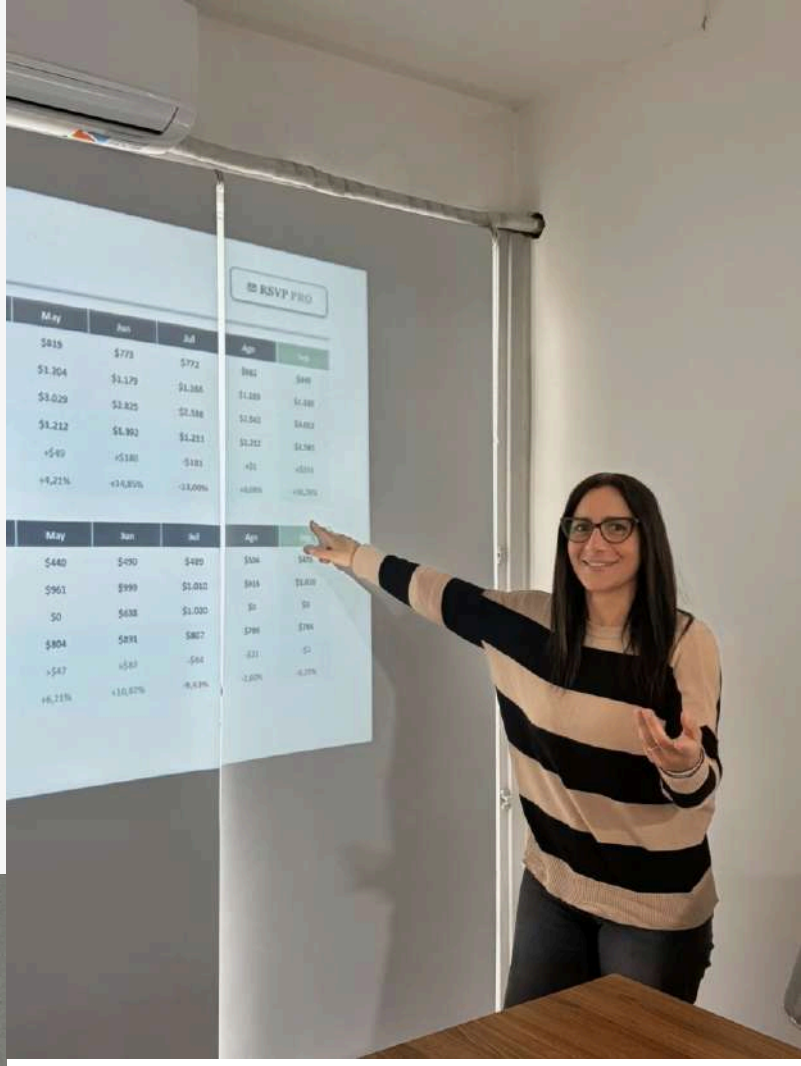
Your Guest Confirmation Team for Destination Weddings

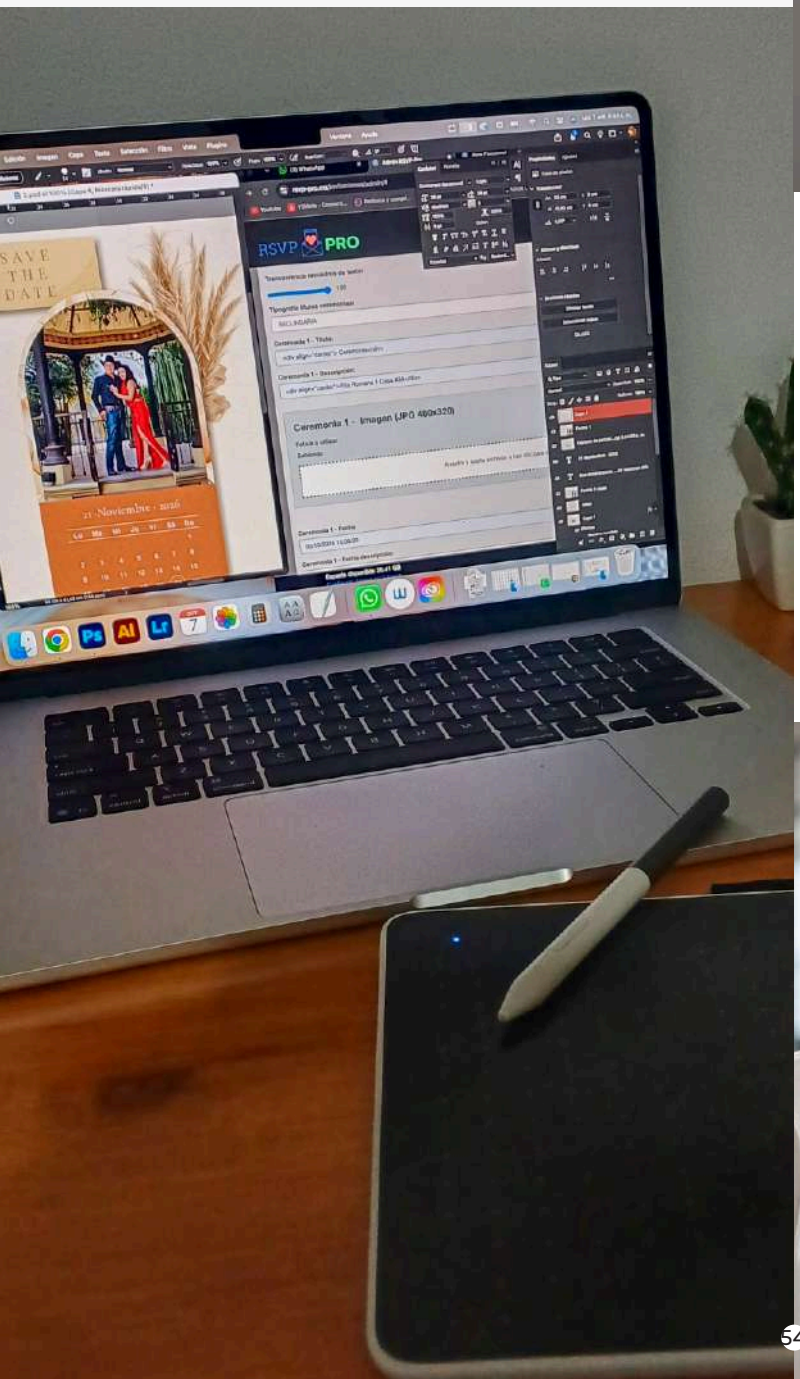
How RSVP PRO frees wedding planners from chasing guests and brings all their information together in one place



If you plan destination weddings, you know that confirming attendance is just the beginning. Then come the flights, accommodations, transfers, dietary restrictions, and who's attending the welcome party, the day-after celebration or the excursion. Details gathered one by one, guest by guest, while the hotel and the caterer wait for the final headcount. Until one day, after so many WhatsApp follow-ups, your line gets blocked.

At RSVP PRO, we join your team as your guest confirmation department. We handle communication with your guests from start to finish: we follow up with each one personally, answer their questions, and gather all the information you need to plan. You focus on designing and producing the wedding; we make sure every guest responds and that you arrive at the event with a finalized guest list and relaxed, happy couples.





It all starts with your couple's guest list. From there, we design whatever pieces the wedding needs, such as the save the date, the invitation, or the itinerary. Each piece is custom-designed, with careful attention to detail, to reflect the style of the wedding you created with your couple. We prepare them in each guest's language and send them via WhatsApp through Meta's official platform, by email, or by SMS, to guests in Mexico and abroad.





ARENA TERRACOTA

Una invitación cálida, delicada y llena de encanto, ideal para anunciar el comienzo de una historia de amor única.

RSVP PRO



BEIGE OLIVA

La elegancia de la papelería tradicional, reinterpretada en formato digital.

RSVP PRO



AZUL GRIS Y PLATA

Una invitación distinguida y refinada, en una armoniosa combinación de azul grisáceo y plata.

RSVP PRO



BELLEZA NATURAL

Invitaciones digitales con diseños botánicos, elegantes, modernas y llenas de encanto.

RSVP PRO





Our team personally follows up on every pending response and brings together in one place the information you currently collect one guest at a time: flights, accommodations, transfers, dietary restrictions, and attendance at each event, from the welcome party to the day-after celebration.

You can check everything in real time and receive a final list ready for your vendors. And we continue supporting your guests with helpful information in the days leading up to the wedding and throughout their stay.

With RSVP PRO, you get back the time you now spend chasing responses, and you have reliable data to coordinate your vendors. Your couples see a professional, polished service, under your brand, that reinforces the trust they placed in you. And you have the peace of mind of working with a team that responds quickly, meets the deadlines it commits to, and adapts to the way you work, wedding after wedding.





We have more than seven years of experience supporting weddings in Mexico and specialize in destination weddings with both local and international guests. Our team brings together designers who specialize in weddings and a wedding planner, so we understand your timelines, your priorities, and what's at stake at every event.

For IADWP members, we offer exclusive one-on-one support from Pablo, our Key Account Manager, a trained wedding planner and an expert in guest management. He'll support you at every wedding and tailor the service to the way you work. Message him on WhatsApp at +52 998 340 9911 or email ventas@rsvp-pro.mx and tell him about your next destination wedding.

Juan Estrada
CEO & Founder, RSVP PRO
www.rsvp-pro.mx
IG: @rsvppro

They Told Us: “We Want a Korean Wedding.”

And that’s when I realized that being a Destination Wedding Planner also means being willing to learn about a culture in order to tell its story.





“Have you ever planned a Korean wedding?”

My answer was honest:

“No.” There was no point in saying anything else.

When Hiomyn and Mr. Kwon reached out to me from Korea—across a screen and through a ChatGPT search she had run herself to find a wedding planner who could assist them in Ecuador—we still didn't know everything that conversation would come to mean.

Hiomyn speaks Spanish, but communication wasn't always easy. They were on the other side of the world, and I had to answer a question that went far beyond organizing a wedding:

Could we help a Korean couple get married in Ecuador while still making them feel that their wedding was deeply Korean?

Today, after living through it, I know the answer wasn't simply saying yes from day one. It was about preparing ourselves.

Learning Before Creating

Our story began in October 2025. The wedding was set for August 22, 2026.

We had months ahead of us, but also a massive responsibility.

I had never executed a Korean wedding before, so I started studying.

I watched K-dramas and series, but I also researched real weddings, ceremonies, protocols, photography, traditional attire, hosting customs, and above all, **the true meaning of marriage in their culture**.

Because I quickly discovered something that left a mark on me: for them, a wedding isn't simply a big party. The ceremony carries enormous weight, and once you understand that, the way you plan changes completely.

It’s no longer just about figuring out where to put the flowers, how to arrange the tables, or what song to use for the entrance—it’s about understanding why each element exists.



Right then, I understood once again that a destination wedding cannot be built on copying; it is built on listening.

Three Visits, Three Days, and a Relationship That Had to Turn Into Trust

Hiomyn and Mr. Kwon traveled to Ecuador three times before their wedding.

Each visit lasted roughly three days: one arrival day, one day of intense work, and one day to return. The first visit was to scout the venue.

First Visit: Finding the Setting

We needed to find a space that could transform into different backdrops while also feeling familiar to them.

We found **Quinta La Francisca.**

The bamboo, the small bridge over the lake, and the surrounding nature reminded them of certain landscapes back home.

The Second Visit: Completely Different

We visited Korean restaurants, explored culinary options, met with photographer Juan Gabriel Narváez to explain a photography style that was also new to us, and toured several bridal boutiques.







They didn’t want to bring all their attire from Korea due to the cost involved, so we looked for it here. Dress, suit, outfits for the pre-wedding shoot...

Every decision was an opportunity to show them that Ecuador could deliver.

Another interesting thing about this is that the couple chooses their outfits together. Unlike our tradition where we believe the groom shouldn't see the bride beforehand, they enjoy this process side by side.

The Third Visit Had a Different Rhythm: A Photo Shoot Through Quito

The Historic Center, San Francisco, its convents and domes, the Guápulo park, and other corners of the city began to become part of their story.

And while they got to know Ecuador, we also got to know a little more about them.

The Real Challenge Wasn’t the Decoration

At first, there was a logical distance—they were in Korea, we were in Ecuador, and everything started over Zoom. And while there was a human connection, there was also a silent question:

Can this team really pull off what we need?

It didn't bother me that they had doubts. On the contrary.

I believe that when a couple entrusts a destination wedding to a team thousands of miles away, trust isn't demanded; **it is built.**

And it was built through preparation, meetings, research, qualified vendors, answers, guidance, and, above all, the willingness to learn.

This experience also reaffirmed something that is part of my way of working: behind every wedding lies an enormous professional responsibility. My training as a Destination Wedding Planner and my work alongside a specialized team are part of that trust a couple places in us.







And Then Ecuador Entered the Story Too

There was one moment I especially loved. After experiencing our cuisine, they decided to change their initial proposal and celebrate their wedding with **a traditional Ecuadorian menu.**

It was a Korean wedding, but it was happening in Ecuador, and that felt wonderful to me.

Because a destination wedding shouldn't force a couple to choose between their culture and the destination they've chosen; it can do something much more beautiful: **allow both cultures to meet.**

On August 22, 116 guests arrived from Korea.

They were joined by eight guests from other countries, including Argentina and Chile.

Quito welcomed a Korean celebration that, at the same time, began incorporating Ecuadorian flavors, spaces, professionals, and experiences.

And right there lay the true meaning of this destination wedding.



A Korean Wedding in Quito

Early in the morning, Hiomyn and Mr. Kwon began their hair and makeup preparation with Amyra and Maggy.

Before putting on their wedding attire, they wore special outfits for the photographs.

And as the guests arrived, one of the moments that surprised me most about this culture began to unfold.

In Korea, guests can see the bride before the ceremony. Hiomyn was seated in a space specially decorated with textiles, roses, and a large white sofa. Guests walked up to greet her and take pictures, while her parents and the groom welcomed people at the entrance.

Each guest also went through registration and received a welcome favor.

Afterward, the cocktail hour had its own language: finger foods and a personalized coffee station by **Senz Coffee**, which ended up being one of the elements the guests enjoyed the most.

Then came the ceremony. The DJ played the Korean songs chosen by the couple, the parents had their special seats, the pastor waited at the lectern, and the master of ceremonies guided the protocol.

In walked the parents, the groom, the flower girls, the rings, and finally Hiomyn accompanied by her father. Then came the vows, and Mr. Kwon cried. At that exact moment, there was no language left to translate.













When a Wedding Also Tells Who We Are

The ceremony was filled with moments that were new to us and deeply meaningful to them. There was a taekwondo demonstration, a church choir, and the bride's father sang for the couple. Afterward, Hiomyn and Mr. Kwon also sang for their guests.

Then came one of the most symbolic moments: both bowed to their parents as a way to honor them. The groom knelt. The bride bowed.

And then, Mr. Kwon broke some boards as a symbol of leaving behind anything negative that might affect their marriage.

Finally, they were pronounced husband and wife.

They walked out amidst a shower of petals, followed by photographs with all their guests.

There was no huge dance floor like we often imagine in many Western weddings.

After the banquet, the couple changed their outfits, cut the cake, and spent time with their guests in a much more relaxed way.

I even discovered another cultural detail that I found lovely: guests do not try to visually compete with the couple. Their attire tends to be more smart-casual out of consideration for the couple: that day, the ones who should stand out are them.

What a Korean Wedding Taught Me About Ecuador

When it was all over and only the couple and our team remained, one of those moments happened that no planning can ever write into a timeline.

Hiomyn and Mr. Kwon were thrilled. We looked at each other and celebrated together.

We had pulled it off—we had thrown a Korean wedding in Quito, in Ecuador.





Behind that outcome were months of research, meetings, doubts, learning, vendors, decisions, and a team that, as I often say, had to work at **1,000 percent.**

They spoke to us excitedly about Ecuadorian cuisine, thoroughly enjoyed the coffee station, and congratulated everyone who made the celebration possible.

But for me, there was something even more important. This wedding confirmed that being a Destination Wedding Planner doesn't mean knowing everything.

It means having enough preparation to recognize when you don't know something and the humility to learn it.

It means surrounding yourself with capable professionals.

It means researching a culture before trying to represent it. It means listening.

And it means understanding that when a couple crosses an ocean to get married in your country, they aren't just hiring an organization.

They are trusting you to carry a piece of their identity to another part of the world.





Ecuador as a Stage for the World

For a long time, we have talked about Ecuador as a wonderful country for destination weddings because of its landscapes, its four regions, its gastronomy, and the diversity of settings it offers.

But this experience made me look at the concept from a different perspective. Perhaps Ecuador's true potential doesn't lie solely in foreigners coming here to get married.

It lies in the fact that they can come **without having to leave behind who they are**.

That a Korean couple can bring their culture.

That a couple from another country can bring their traditions.

That their guests can experience our flavors, our landscapes, our people, and our hospitality.





And that we have the professional capacity to build that bridge.

That, to me, is what a destination wedding is.

It's not just about moving a wedding from one country to another.

It's about moving a story without losing its essence.

Hiomyn and Mr. Kwon taught me that a wedding can travel thousands of miles and still stay true to the people at its heart.

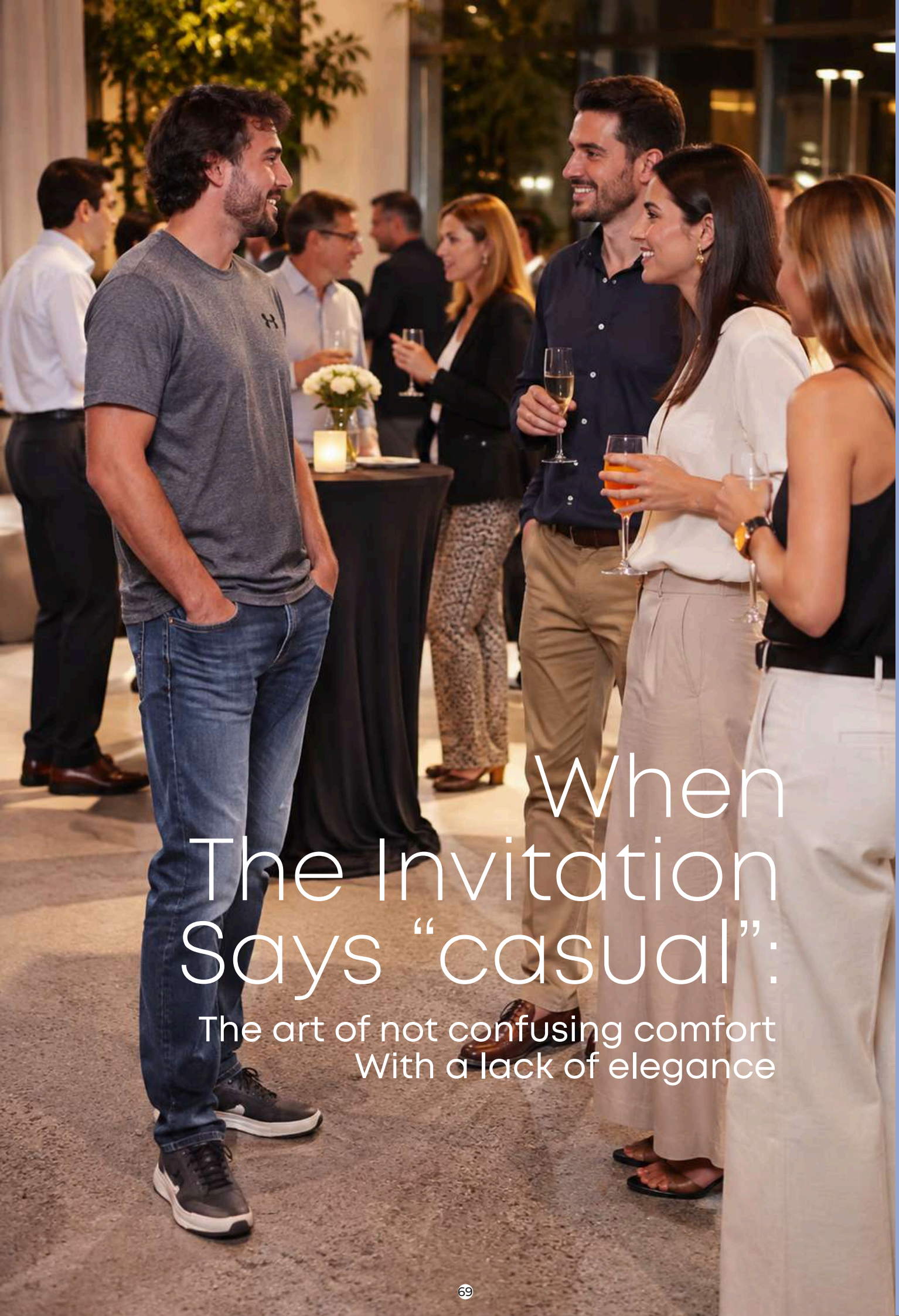
And perhaps that is one of the reasons why I love this profession so much:

Because every couple that arrives in Ecuador brings a world with them.

And when we do our job well, we don't try to change it.

We receive it, we understand it, and we find a way to make it bloom right here.

Lissner Ortiz
Destination Wedding Planner
www.lissnerweddingplanner.com
@my_sweetliss



When The Invitation Says “casual”:

The art of not confusing comfort With a lack of elegance



After so many years working in the wedding industry, one thing still amazes me: some people's extraordinary ability to treat an invitation as though it were merely an optional suggestion. The couple carefully chooses the venue, the food, the flowers, the music, and every last detail of their celebration. Yet there is always a guest who decides that the dress code is entirely negotiable. And when the invitation says casual, heaven help us! Some people seem to take it as official permission to show up dressed as though they were heading to the grocery store.

Let's begin with an uncomfortable truth: a casual wedding is still a wedding.

A dress code is not a whim on the hosts' part, nor is it an imposition designed to make our lives difficult. It communicates the spirit of the celebration and helps us feel part of it. Respecting it is a sign of consideration for the people who invited us. Because elegance does not begin in the wardrobe: it begins with good manners.

And this is where a common misunderstanding arises. Many people believe that dressing informally means dressing any way they please. But there is an enormous difference between being comfortable and looking as though you left home without glancing in the mirror. A casual wedding lets us relax, play with color, choose lighter fabrics, and leave certain formalities behind. What it should never encourage us to leave behind is good taste.

For Him: Relaxed, But Not Straight From The Gym

Gentlemen, I have good news: if the invitation says casual, you can probably let your tuxedo rest in the closet. But that does not mean replacing it with a soccer jersey.

Well-tailored chinos, a linen or cotton shirt, lightweight dress trousers, and an unstructured blazer can all be excellent choices. Light colors, earthy tones, blue, olive green, and natural combinations work particularly well for daytime or outdoor celebrations.

A tie? Usually unnecessary. A jacket? That depends on the venue, season, and time of day, but it can



always elevate the look. Shoes? Loafers, smart boat shoes, or well-maintained leather or suede footwear are excellent options.

Now let's address a delicate subject: sneakers. Yes, they can work at certain contemporary weddings, especially when they are minimalist, spotless, and paired with a carefully chosen outfit. But let's not confuse elegant urban sneakers with the pair that has accompanied you on park walks for the past three years.

Shorts, flip-flops, and sports jerseys should stay out of the picture, unless the couple has specifically requested beachwear or an unusually relaxed theme.

The rule for men is simple: look relaxed without looking uninterested.

For Her: Elegance Without The Red Carpet

Ladies, a casual wedding does not require you to arrive covered in sequins as though you were about t o accept a film award. But be careful: it does not mean that just any summer dress will do.

Midi dresses, coordinated separates, palazzo trousers, elegant jumpsuits, and skirts paired with beautifully made blouses are wonderful alternatives. Floral prints, soft colors, flowing fabrics, and delicate accessories create a fresh, feminine, and sophisticated look.

Footwear deserves special attention. If the wedding is in a garden, on a country estate, or at a vineyard, elegant sandals, block heels, or understated wedges may be wiser choices than stilettos that end up sinking into the grass.

Because let's be honest: there is nothing glamorous about crossing a ceremony space as though you were walking through quicksand.

Hair and makeup can reflect that same relaxed spirit. There is no need for an over-the-top production, but a polished appearance still matters. Well-styled hair, appropriate accessories, and a harmonious outfit can look far more elegant than an extremely expensive dress chosen without any thought.

And one recommendation never goes out of style: unless the couple says otherwise, avoid white and any shades or outfits that could clearly be mistaken for bridal attire. There are hundreds of wonderful colors to choose from. We do not need to compete for the spotlight with the person who invited us.

The Venue And Time Of Day Speak, Too

Not all casual weddings are alike. A seaside ceremony at sunset calls for something different from a celebration at a country estate or lunch on an urban rooftop.

So before deciding what to wear, ask three essential questions: Where is the wedding? What time is it? And what kind of experience have the couple envisioned?

A daytime casual wedding welcomes natural fabrics, bright colors, and simpler accessories. An evening celebration may call for more structured garments, deeper tones, and accessories that elevate the look.





And if you are unsure, it is always better to discreetly ask the hosts or the wedding planner than to improvise a wildly personal interpretation.

The Real Problem Is Not The Clothing

I want to pause on something I consider far more important than trends or etiquette rules.

We live in an age when freedom is all too often confused with a lack of consideration. We hear things like “I dress however I want,” “Nobody tells me what to wear,” or “If they invited me, they should accept me as I am.”

Of course everyone has the right to express their identity. But we must also understand that accepting an invitation means stepping, for a few hours, into a world that other people have imagined and created to share with us.



Respecting that world does not mean losing our personality. It means having enough sensitivity to understand that not everything revolves around our personal preferences.

Nobody needs to spend a fortune on new clothes to be appropriately dressed. Often, it is enough to combine pieces we already own thoughtfully, pay attention to the details, and use common sense.

Because good taste does not depend solely on money. And good manners depend on it even less.

Casual Does Not Mean Careless

If I had to sum this up in a single piece of advice, it would be this: when an invitation says casual, relax the formality, but never the respect.

This is not about impressing others or competing over who wears the most expensive label. It is about understanding the occasion, honoring the invitation, and standing beside the couple on one of the most important days of their lives.



After all, a wedding is not a fashion runway, but it is not your backyard either.

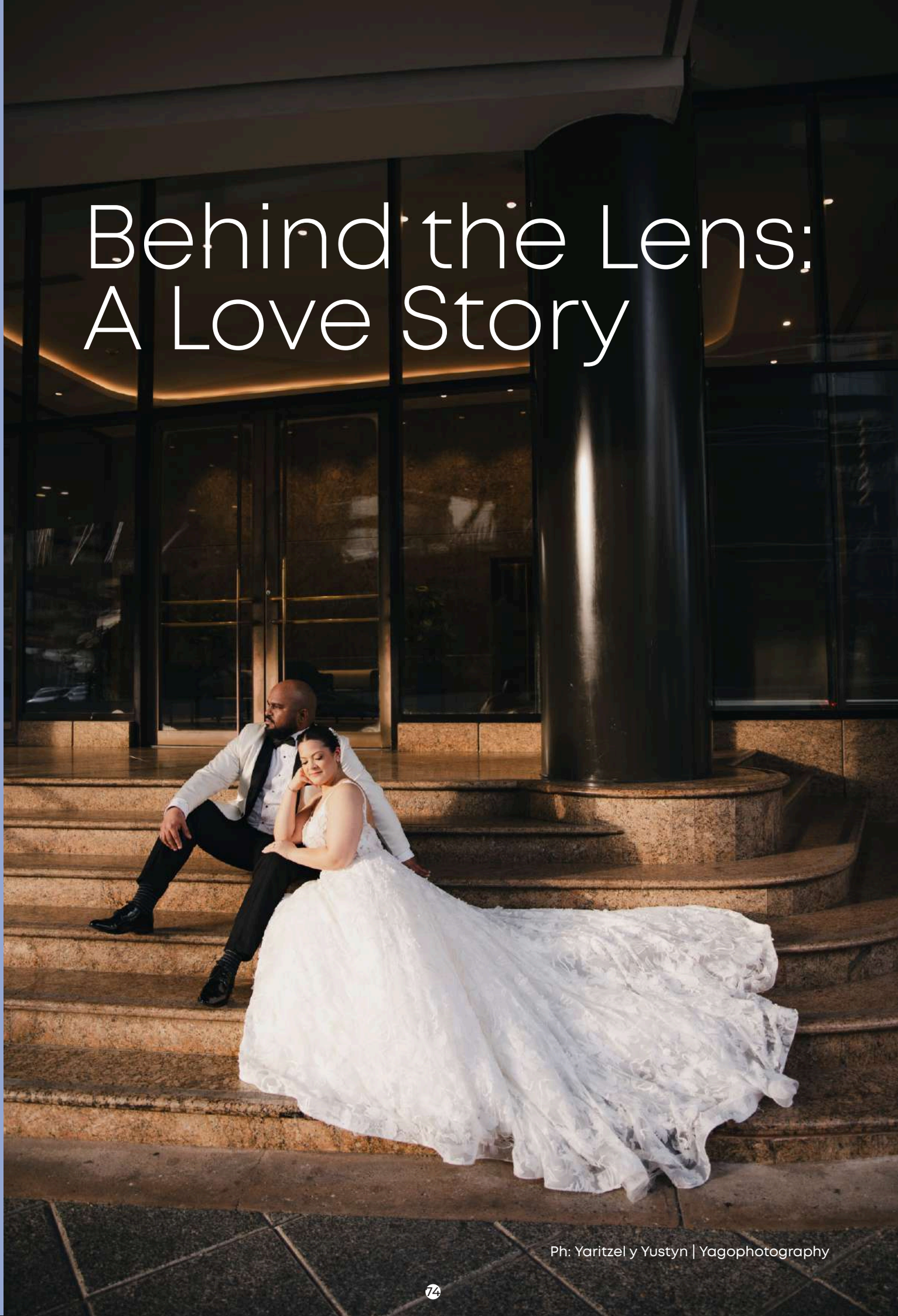
And remember: we can dress informally without behaving carelessly toward the commitment we make when we accept an invitation.

Because fashions change, dress codes evolve, and trends come and go.

But good manners, dear readers, should never go out of style.

Adrián Pavía
Director, IADWP – Latin America
& Spanish-Speaking Caribbean Chapter
Editor in Chief – ÉPICA Magazine
Wedding & Event Expert

Behind the Lens: A Love Story



Ph: Yaritzel y Yustyn | Yagophotography

Three couples who have become benchmarks in wedding photography and videography in Panama, all while building their own story of love and entrepreneurship.

Behind every photograph that captures a knowing glance and every video that brings an emotion back to life, there are people dedicated to telling love stories. But what happens when the ones behind the lens share a love story of their own?

In Panama, where the wedding industry continues to evolve and creative talent finds new ways to tell stories, there are couples who have managed to turn their passion into a life project.

Miguel and Fabi, from Guedes Photographers; Yaritzel and Yustyn, from Yago Photography; and Mike and Zully, from Mike Lao Films, are part of that talent making its mark on wedding photography and audiovisual production in our country.

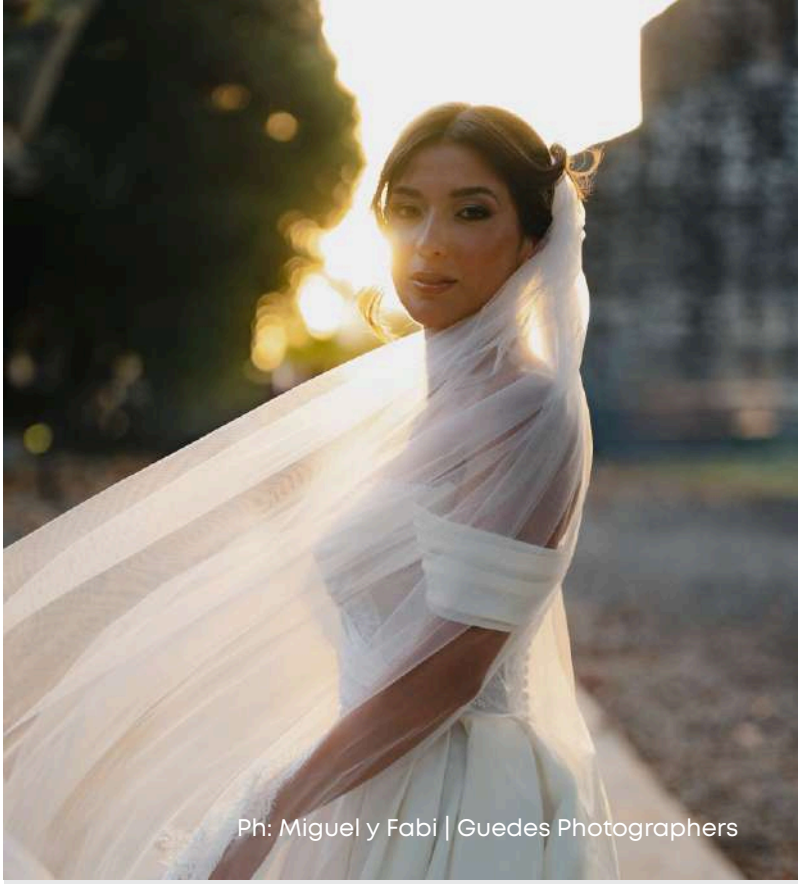
Their journeys began in different ways: some self-taught in photography, others starting with a first photo that ultimately grew into a romance, and others gifting wedding videos to their friends.

Today, beyond sharing their lives, they share decisions, challenges, dreams, and the responsibility of preserving memories that will stay with other couples for generations to come.

Miguel & Fabi | Guedes Photographers



Ph: Miguel y Fabi | Guedes Photographers



Ph: Miguel y Fabi | Guedes Photographers

Two Perspectives, One Shared Story

It all began with Miguel's dream of devoting himself to photography. Without any formal training in the field, he and Fabi learned as they went—working through cameras, trial and error, real hands-on experience, and countelss weddings.

Today, Guedes Photographers is far more than a business: it is a project they built together from the ground up.

Although both of them photograph, their eyes are different. Miguel focuses on the emotions and intimate moments between the couple, while Fabi looks at the light, the fine details, and everything happening around them. Two distinct perspectives that ultimately complement each other to tell one single story.

Like any couple building a business together, they've had to learn how to separate their professional responsibilities from their personal relationship. They don't always agree, but they've come to realize that working as a team doesn't mean thinking exactly alike.

For them, growth doesn't necessarily mean taking on more weddings; it means doing them better, all while holding onto the core essence of what inspired them to start in the first place.

And perhaps one of their greatest lessons comes directly from the couples they photograph: love isn't found only in the grand moments, but in the daily decision to choose each other and walk side by side.

Yaritzel & Yustyn | Yagophotography

A Love Story That Started with a Photograph

In 2017, Yustyn met Yaritzel through mutual friends. As a true photography enthusiast, he had his camera with him and didn't take long to ask her a question that would change their lives forever: “Hi, how are you? Can I take your picture?”

She agreed, without imagining that three years later she would say “I do” for a lifetime.

Yago Photography was born in 2016 when Yustyn began exploring his passion for photography using a camera gifted to him by his aunt. Over time came portraits, brand projects, and eventually weddings.



Ph: Yaritzel y Yustyn | Yagophotography



Ph: Yaritzel y Yustyn | Yagophotography

In 2021, they photographed their first wedding together in Penonomé. Since then, they have crafted a signature style where Yustyn’s romantic, emotional vision seamlessly blends with Yaritzel’s documentary and editorial sensibility.

Their story also carries a special touch: both of them have known sign language since they were young—a skill that has allowed them to connect with deaf couples and develop a unique sensitivity to gestures, glances, and emotions that often need no words at all.

Faith, communication, and respect are the core pillars of both their marriage and their business. For them, before being business partners they are husband and wife, and before being colleagues, they are friends.

Yet perhaps the most touching part is their dream of photographing their couples again when they celebrate 50 years of marriage—a photo shoot they promise to give them as a gift.

Because for Yaritzel and Yustyn, photographing the beginning of a love story is just as thrilling as having the chance to watch it grow.



Ph: Miguel y Fabi | Guedes Photographers



Ph: Yaritzel y Yustyn | Yagophotography



Ph: Mike y Zully | Mike Lao Films

Mike & Zully | Mike Lao Films

From a Gift Between Friends to a Life Project

The story of Mike Lao Films began in the most unplanned way possible: by gifting wedding videos to their friends.

Mike had background knowledge in shooting and editing, while Zully brought fresh ideas and a different perspective. Using a borrowed camera, they filmed that very first wedding, never imagining they were taking the first steps of what would eventually become their company.

Interest from other couples started to grow, until one of Zully's coworkers asked a defining question: **"So why doesn't Mike do this for a living?"**

The idea gained traction. They took part in a wedding expo, and over time, Zully left her corporate job to commit to the business full-time

.Today, Mike takes the lead on technical direction and filming, while Zully shoots as second camera and manages communication and marketing. Editing remains a creative space they share together.

Yet working as a team has also taught them that a marriage needs moments where conversations



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don't revolve around clients, budgets, or upcoming deadlines.

For them, one of the most rewarding moments comes when a couple receives their video and discovers emotions or quiet details they weren't able to fully appreciate during the wedding day itself. That is when they are reminded that their work goes far beyond delivering a film: they are preserving an irreplaceable moment in someone's life.

Love Is Built Behind the Lens, Too

Three couples, three different beginnings, and one shared passion.

Their stories remind us that building a business as a couple doesn't mean agreeing on everything, sharing the exact same talents, or having all the answers.

It means learning to listen to each other, recognizing one another's strengths, and finding a balance between professional dreams and the life they've chosen to build together.

Perhaps that's why their work carries such a special meaning. As they document vows, hugs, and new beginnings, they are also writing their own story.

Because in the end, love isn't only in front of the camera. So often, it is behind it, too.

Melissa Pineda
National Chapter Leader - Panamá



Argentina
Adrián Pavía
+5493415012940
apavia@iadwp.com

Chile
Carla Valdebenito Jalaf
+569 97334778
carla@rhonda.cl

Colombia
Sonia Martinez Jurado
+573154430925
weddingmanager@bridalagency.co

Costa Rica
Jeffrey Cervantes Calderon
+506 8665 0990
director@crweddingplanner.com

Ecuador
Lissner Ortiz
+593984678280
gerencia@lissnerweddingplanner.com

El Salvador
Rebeca Jerez
+503 77485634
rebecajerez@rebecajerez.com

Guatemala
Diana Sciarrillo
+502 57782271
dianas@weddingsinguatemala.com

Islas del Caribe de Habla Hispana
Mirta Sánchez
+809-756-0554
mirtasanchez@msevents.com.do

Panamá:
Melissa Pineda
+507-6949-3049
bodas@melissapineda.com

Perú
Jossy Quezada Sánchez
+51 999050677
Jquezada@jossyquezadawp.com

República Dominicana
Mary Pily López
+1 829 717-6544
marypily@marypily.com.do

Venezuela
Juan Salvador Rangel
+58 4144949074
Juan@juansalvadoreventos.com

ÉPICA

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Director & General Editor:
Adrián Pavía
Editorial Coordinator:
Jossy Quezada
Content Coordinator:
Lissner Ortiz
Design:
Velvet Hell Estudio
Instagram: /velvethellestudio/