

# All about Andalusia weddings

February 2011

An 8-page Olive Press insiders guide

No chance  
for cold feet

Amie Keeley on  
why getting married in  
Andalusia is not always  
as simple  
as cutting  
the cake

WITH Valentines Day looming romance is very much in the air as many young couple's thoughts invariably turn to marriage.

Proposals are being made and (hopefully) accepted and the best possible date for the wedding is set. It's usually at this point that hearts begin to flutter; not just with love, but with a growing state of panic. Dates mean deadlines, deadlines mean plans, plans mean knowing who, where, when and most importantly how much!

But planning a wedding in Spain doesn't have to be stressful if you keep in mind the most important things - you're marrying each other and it's your day. On the face of it, Andalusia certainly seems to have it all when it comes to weddings.

With fantastic weather - just three days of rain on average from June to early September - leading dress designers and glorious settings, it is no surprise that getting married Spanish-style has become big business. It also helps that Spain is the world's second largest exporter of bridal wear, making the country a major trend-setter in the world of wedding fashion.

With a high value still placed on marriage, Spaniards like to spend large on their big day, which not only joins two people together, but two families as well.

But, to ensure that your wedding goes ahead without any hitches there are a few things you need to avoid. Firstly, avoid a midday wedding in the heart of summer, as you don't want your big day to be remembered for its fainting guests.

One local wedding planner recalled how one event turned into disaster when the brides elderly relatives started "dropping like flies" as a July heatwave arrived with a vengeance.

Then there was a wedding in Tarifa, where a cham-

Turn to Page 2

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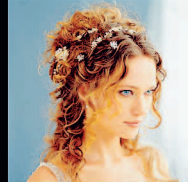
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## 2 Wedding special

From Page 1

pagne reception was ruined when 100 glasses shattered to the ground as the notorious Levante wind suddenly whipped up.

Secondly, a budget ball park figure is a must - it helps to keep everything grounded.

Having grand

plans for an

all-expenses-

paid jaunt

for 200 on a

€5,000 bud-

get is not a

realistic expecta-

tion and will lead

to disappointment.

While weddings in Spain

are between 20 and 25 per

cent cheaper than in the UK,

they are still going to cost a

reasonable amount of money.

The next most important decision

is where to get married.

Increasingly, destination

weddings are popular and

Andalucia fits the bill perfectly

for couples looking

for guaranteed sunshine, a

perfect honeymoon location

and a great holiday break for

guests.

Of course, like most things in

Spain, nothing is straightforward.

The paperwork trail can be

# Sunshine wedding

a little slow and somewhat complex depending upon the couple's status.

All couples will

need to show

proof of ID,

proof that they

are free to

marry, birth

certificates

and, if applica-

ble, divorce certi-

ficates.

They will also need to fill in

application papers and have posted the banns with the town hall in the area where they wish to get married.

Then they will need to show some proof of where they have resided for the previous five years.

Those that are resident in Spain will need their *empadronamiento* certificate, and for those that are not things can get a little complicated... If either of the couple are

Catholic, bishops from the home country and Spain will usually work together to produce a dispensation allowing a marriage in a catholic church in Spain.

Non-Catholics will need to find out from the town hall the exact connection needed with the town to see if you can get a permit.

While sometimes you can get permission by merely owning a house in the town, in others you have to have lived there for two years.

On top of this, all legal documents need to be translated into Spanish and presented to the town hall at least three months before the wedding date.

To guarantee no hiccups, non-residents should really try to begin the process at least six months before a planned wedding date.

An easier alternative - and a good choice for those in a hurry - is to get married either in the home country or in Gibraltar and then have a celebration 'blessing' in Spain with family and friends.

Non-residents should begin planning six months ahead

### Bouquet for the virgin

WEDDING customs vary across Spain and in some areas, for example, the bride offers her bouquet to the Virgin Mary; while in others it's given to a best friend or thrown into the crowd.

It is also common to throw rice, not confetti, over the bride and groom.



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Pictures: SUE CALLISTER www.suecallister.com



**ANDALUZ:** Wedding at church in Cabezas de San Juan organised by Hacienda de San Rafael

For those of you not living in Spain, choosing somewhere here could be based on all sorts of reasons, from family connections to romantic reminders.

Above all, ask yourself: what sort of setting are you looking for? Is it historic, exotic, seaside or country? - Andalusia can offer all of these.

You might consider a stunning country hotel like Hacienda de San Rafael, near Jerez, or a brilliantly located townhouse hotel, like La Vista, in Medina Sidonia.

And then, of course, there are the more off beat wedding venues like golf courses, with the Fairplay Resort, in Benalup proving to be a popular spot.

Ultimately do you want a small or big wedding? How far will guests travel? Can you organise it all yourself or do you need a tour operator or event organiser?

Everything from not speaking the language, to not feeling comfortable negotiating with foreign suppliers, are reasons why couples often choose to work with a local wedding planner.

The planner's local knowledge and experience will help to ensure a stress-free occasion and one that will almost certainly save time and money.

One of the top tips for a successful partnership with your wedding planner is to visit the area and bring as many ideas as possible.

Establish a rapport based on trust, leave enough time for planning and keep to your planner's timelines.

Listen to advice based on sound experience of organising weddings - your expat mates might love that restaurant, but can it get 150 starters out in less than four hours?

Find out how many weddings the planner is working on that year and if he or she has more than yours on a particular day.

Andalusia is a great wedding destination which can offer you and your guests more than just a wedding day and with careful, considered planning you can make your dream day a perfect experience for all.



**GIBRALTAR WEDDINGS:**

Like John and Yoko you need no residency requirements. You can give 24 hours notice if space is available. You will need your Birth certificate - proof of 'single' status - and if a widow(er), your former partner's death certificate or original marriage certificate. If divorced: previous marriage certificate and absolute divorce decree.



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**Plan for the heat**

IN Andalusia, summer weddings unsurprisingly take place around 7 or 8pm, after the oppressive heat of the day has subsided.

After a short wedding ceremony it's usually off to a local restaurant - or 'celebrations' venue - for the set meal or buffet with plenty of wine that flows until the early hours until no guests are left!

In Gibraltar there are a number of wedding organisers, not to mention a series of great venues, such as the stunning La Caleta hotel, which practically sits on its own beach.

Once all the paperwork is out of the way the real planning fun can begin.

There are a host of good wedding planners around to help

you with all the right choices for wedding venue, the cake, hair-dressing and flowers.

They will help make your wedding day memorable - hopefully for the right reasons!

**Try and visit the area and bring as many ideas as possible**

**CIVIL MARRIAGE (NON CATHOLIC): In Andalusia the following are generally required, but do vary from town to town**

1. Birth Certificate (with sworn translation)
2. Passport
3. Consular Registration Certificate
4. Consular 'No impediment' to marriage certificate
5. Proof of Spanish residency: through copy proving empadronamiento

**CATHOLIC: The Archbishop has the final say but, generally required:**

1. Baptism certificate
2. Sworn declaration by parents that son/daughter is 'single'

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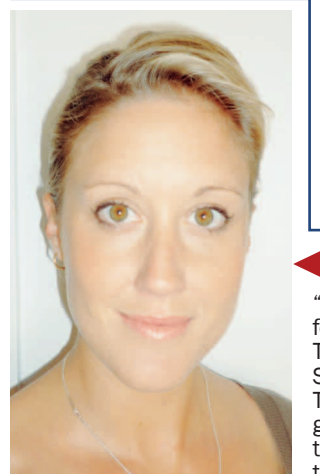
**Wedding special**



*What*

**Amaya Bellacione, Couture Cakes**

“Everyone wants a beautiful wedding cake. It’s the centre piece of the reception. But it’s important for the cake to taste as good as it looks. You don’t want everyone to be disappointed when they take a bite of your stunning cake and it doesn’t deliver.”



**Emily B planner**

“The best a few sunbe... That way y... Spanish su... There’s n... glowing re... to ruin all... tures!”



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# ...the experts say



## David Rodriguez, Hacienda La Herriza wedding venue

"Many things run through a couple's mind when deciding on a venue for their wedding, be it budget, setting, distance, capacity, menu options or quality of service. Do not hesitate with these details but always go with your instincts and pick a venue that 'feels right' for you, then everything else will fall into place."



## Angeles Porcel, Alhambra Weddings

"The most important piece of advice about catering is to look for the best value for money. Sometimes the most expensive does not mean the best quality. So the wedding planner's knowledge of caterers will help the couple find the best options available."



## Laura Charles, Reviva Weddings

"As a wedding stylist, every wedding is unique. What transforms a special occasion into an extra special one? It's not just about money, it's a couple with a dream that makes the difference. Oh, and paying attention to the little details can make a wedding very personal to that couple."

## Brown, Head wedding for Tarifa Weddings

advice I can give is use a...  
...before you come out.  
...our skin is ready for the  
...sun and you won't burn.  
...nothing worse than a  
...d bride with strapmarks  
...your lovely wedding pic-

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WITH a backdrop of bougainvillea, the tranquil swimming pool at sunset made the perfect venue for Sara Parrao's nuptials.

The 400-year-old **Hacienda de San Rafael**, near Sevilla, was a true gem for her wedding. "It had everything we wanted - and the owners made us feel so relaxed," explains Sara. "The fact that we could hire the whole venue for the weekend really was the icing on the cake - so our guests could unwind."

The hacienda - which is on *Conde Nast Traveller's* gold list - has a good reputation for weddings, thanks to the continual attention by owners Anthony and Patrick Reid.

Now in its 20th year of hosting weddings, the brothers work hard to provide everything. Equally charming, is hotel **La Vista** in Medina Sidonia. High up in the classic white town, owners Gary and Kirsty Biston know from experience the pleasure of getting married in the sun as they tried and tested the method themselves when they tied the knot in Spain in 2002.

Kirsty cut her teeth as a wedding coordinator for Thomson Holidays in the Dominican Republic before moving to Spain. They can organise everything including the ceremony at the stunning Catholic church across the square or at the local town hall.

As Kirsty explains: "I organise all the legal aspects of the ceremony, liaise with the hairdresser, flower company, photographer and DJ whilst Gary arranges all the accommodation, flights and car hire."

They can even supply the

Andalucia has a big choice of venues

# Wedding grandeur



**CHOICE:** (clockwise from top) **Los Caballos, Fairplay, La Caleta and La Vista**

rings, as they had to do at one wedding recently when the bride and groom left their rings in a parked car in La Linea. "Luckily they were able to use mine and Kirsty's during the ceremony," said Gary. "Oh how we laughed (well the bride nearly cried actually)."

Another superb location to get married is **La Caleta Hotel**, which has been voted Gibraltar's leading hotel for two years running.

There can be few more spectacular settings in which to get married than on the Ocean View Terrace. With the Strait of Gibraltar providing a stunning backdrop, the Caleta has everything in place to ensure an unforgettable and worry-free wedding day on the Rock.

Whether it's an intimate affair for just the happy couple or an extravagant ceremony for up to 220 guests, General Manager Franco Ostuni and his team will make your wedding day

truly a day to remember. For an incredible rural setting, you would be hard pressed to beat **Hacienda La Herriza**, which sits on the edge of the beautiful Alcornocales natural park, near Gaucin. A dream retreat, this stylish boutique hotel is run by the talented David Rodriguez, who is friendly and efficient.

In Benahavis, you might want to try the enchanting **Cortijo de los Caballos**, which exudes Moorish rustic charm.

The equestrian centre, owned by a renowned horse whisperer, has 11 stables tastefully converted into separate apartments, each delightfully quirky and different. This unique set-up has the advantage of accommodating up to 25 people, while at the same time affording a high level of privacy for guests. Another wonderful place to tie the knot is the **Fairplay Golf Hotel & Spa**, in stunning countryside in the heart of Cadiz province. Voted Spain's leading spa resort, there is an 18 hole golf course for the groom, as well as a fully equipped spa for the bride and her bridesmaids.

Other venues worth checking out are **Hotel Molino del Puente** in Ronda, which is a superb rural retreat, or **Hotel Cortijo Bravo**, another amazing country escape near Velez Malaga in the Axarquia.

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## Dealing with Bridezilla

**Tarifa Weddings organiser Emily Jane Brown on the bride from hell**

"My worst bride got very drunk early, insulted the catering staff by clicking her fingers at them, then interrupted the speeches announcing she didn't like anyone present, before being led away by her mother while shouting at the assistant coordinator to get her a fresh drink! I later found her stumbling around with mascara running down her face muttering that she never wanted to get married, was in fact still in love with her ex, but was pregnant with the groom's child! It explained the drunkenness and outpour of emotions."

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