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WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS

## From here to eternity ...



Laguna Wedding Chapel

With good reason, the essential questions of "where, when and how" (hopefully "why" has already been answered!) linger in the minds of many hopeful brides and grooms the world over.

And while there are a number of alternatives to a hometown affair, why not consider the allure and romance of experiencing your wedding dreams in tropical paradise at Laguna Phuket, with your choice of fairy tale-like settings - perhaps in a lush, enchanting garden; next to a picture-perfect beach with turquoise waters as your witness; or even floating over a tranquil lagoon, graced by the touches of a mesmerising island sunset? Sounds nice, but it gets better.

Next, take into account the friendly and personalised assistance of professional resort staff specially trained to relieve a great deal of the stress often related to the very questions above. And if that's not enough, don't forget the proven reputation of five outstanding, integrated resorts offering an unsurpassed variety of services, venues and options. At this point it should become apparent why Laguna Phuket is now widely recognised as Asia's premier wedding and honeymoon destination for ardent and quality-conscious couples wishing to tie the knot in unique, pampered style.

From ultra-private ceremonies in luxuriously appointed Thai settings, complimented by soul-soothing spa packages for just the couple, to full-scale weddings with receptions and special functions for hundreds of guests, potential partners for life will find no shortage of choice at Laguna as they conveniently arrange this most special of days.

Indeed, your first decision will likely be at which of the resorts here - the Banyan Tree, Allamanda, Dusit Laguna, Shoraton Grande or Laguna Beach Resort - to have your wedding, so a quick look at the different venues and some of the special options available at each hotel may help. However, before doing so it would be useful to make note of what the hotels have in common wedding-wise, beyond excellent facilities, services and accommodation.

First, all five resorts offer both traditional Thai and Western-style ceremonies. Thai weddings are one of the most beautiful and

ornate aspects of their wonderful culture. They typically feature several symbolic rites, including the chanting and blessing of Buddhist monks, the placing of garlands and head slings upon the couple, forehead painting and a holy water blessing meant to bring fortune and health to the couple's spiritual and earthly relationship. The nicest part of these weddings, besides wearing splendid Thai costumes if you like, is that family and friends can participate, playing an important role in the ceremonial rites. However if it's just the two of you, the warm staff at each of the resorts will gladly assist in this capacity.

Also very popular at Laguna Phuket are Western weddings, which can be individually tailored to suit anything from the simplest to the most extravagant of desires. For these, you may elect to have either a moving religious ceremony led by the appropriate authority, or a romantic and personalised non-religious ceremony conducted by a celebrant. Basically, let the wedding co-ordinator at your intended resort know what your dream wedding scenario consists of, and they will do their utmost to make it a reality. You name it - decorations, exotic floral arrangements, alters, gazebos, arches, cakes, ice sculptures, various musicians, photographers, dinners, cocktails, fireworks and even elephants - all can be conveniently arranged, leaving you free to relax and enjoy time with each other or with family and friends.

Another feature on the marriage menu at all Laguna resorts is at least one enticing wedding spa package, which should come as no surprise given the quality and international reputation of its world-class spa facilities. Moreover, an indulgent spa treatment is without doubt a fantastic way to relax before what is certain to be one of the principal events of your life - you deserve it!

Now getting back to location, this of course depends largely on your personal preferences and intended spending level (or hopefully your parent's!), but you would not be unjustified in first exploring Laguna's internationally acclaimed Banyan Tree Phuket. This stunning resort showcases three main wedding venues: The Sands Restaurant garden area adjacent to Bangtao Beach, and either next to or on the Lagoon Deck, which is covered and eminently suitable for the lovely bride to make her once-in-a-lifetime entrance via the resort's graceful and be-flowered Thai-style boat - aptly named Sanya Rak (Promise of Love). The

## ... dreams in a tropical paradise ...



Wedding at Columbian Garden of Dusit Laguna Resort by the Andaman Sea

Lagoon Deck is also an ideal place for receptions and dinner parties, with guests often moving afterwards to the Banyan Cafe for a climactic disco party.

Privileged pairs desiring something more private, however, would be hard-pressed to find an experience more intimate and dreamy than exchanging vows within their very own villa grounds here – especially those fortunate enough to be staying in one of the Banyan Tree's truly remarkable Spa Pool Villas. Overlooking a picturesque lagoon, these lavish sanctuaries are the epitome of class, comfort and style.

With its practical and convenient suites, the Allamanda is especially appealing to couples who may already have children. There is a beautiful area for weddings right next to a sparkling lagoon here, and they are also happy to help arrange your ceremony at Laguna Phuket's newest venue described below. Likewise, remember that in line with the integrated resort concept here, it is quite easy to stay at one resort and get married at another!

Dusit Laguna's two most popular wedding sites are the Columbia Garden and Ruen Thai restaurant. The former is sheltered by tall casuarina trees next to the Andaman Sea, which provides cooling breezes and a gorgeous backdrop for your ceremony. While this idyllic location is suitable for nuptials of any size, those seeking a more secluded experience might opt for an indoor service at the Ruen Thai, which can be privately reserved for the couple and their guests. Located next to a serene lagoon, the restaurant's ambience is enhanced by lacquered, warmly-lit wood and the atmosphere is charming and romantic.

One of the most exciting options for couples having either a Thai or a Western ceremony at Dusit Laguna is a traditional Long Drum procession that adds spectacular energy and exhilaration to their auspicious occasion. This inspiring parade features a troupe of colourful, dancing musicians playing powerful drums and cymbals while leading an elephant to the wedding site. Riding in a special chair upon the elephant is the bride, who can be accompanied by the person giving her away or the groom himself. Either way the procession makes for an unforgettable addition to your wedding day and is sure to be appreciated by all who witness it.

The Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket delivers the same quality weddings that its award-winning services and facilities are known for worldwide. Throughout the peaceful gardens and meandering pools that make up this spacious resort – not to mention the Bang Tao beachfront where a huge, air-conditioned marquee can be set up – there are numerous possibilities for romantic scenarios here.

However, one of the most entrancing locations by far is the Wishing Well Garden area, where as the name suggests, you are likely to get the warm feeling that fairies or spirits are shyly in observance from behind the surrounding greenery and blossoming flowers. Similarly, those who wish to experience the magic of a Thai-style ceremony often choose to have it in the resort's refined, lagoon-side Chao Lay restaurant, especially during inclement weather. Of interesting note at Sheraton Grande is that couples staying in their marvellous Lagoon Villas can be picked up right from their dockside doorstep by a specially decorated boat, which then takes them to the wedding venue where their (likely envious) guests await.

Active and fun-loving couples might consider having their wedding at the Laguna Beach Resort, which is well-known for its extensive sport and recreation facilities. Here too there are several wedding venue options, but unless you want to take the plunge down their 50-metre water slide together, you will likely choose to have your ceremony either under a quaint Thai sala next to the lagoon or in the air-conditioned Rim Nam area next to the Rim Talay restaurant, which can afterwards cater exquisitely to your dinner party.

Like those at Dusit and Sheraton, most newlyweds at Laguna Beach Resort take part in a Love Tree planting ceremony. Symbolising the future growth of their relationship, the tree is decorated with a plaque bearing the couple's names and the date of their union. Also standard in the resort's wedding package is an adorable baby elephant that merrily provides some of the cutest additions to your wedding photo album.

Before making the final decision of where to have your wedding though, you should know that there is still one more amazing possibility here. Following the innovative style evident since its inception, Laguna Phuket has unveiled Thailand's very first resort wedding chapel. And what a heavenly sight it is...

## ... five star fairy tale settings



Wedding at Wishing Well Garden of Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket

Featuring glorious Thai-style architecture complimented by tasteful, modern touches, the elegant new Laguna Chapel is made to impress. Floating over the shimmering lagoon on stilts, with a gracefully arched roof that reaches toward the clear blue sky, the Chapel has tall glass walls on four sides that dramatically allow sunlight into the air-conditioned main hall. The lofty ceilings and the panoramic 360-degree view from within the Chapel hull provide exalted inspiration regardless of the nature of your ceremony, and it would be difficult to imagine a more romantic scene than a sunset wedding here, with the final flames of the day flickering over the water as you say "I do".

The Laguna Chapel seats about fifty guests, with standing room in the main hall for a few more. It can be conveniently accessed by

private vessel and the large deck area at the front of the building makes a superb setting for cocktails before or after your ceremony. There are also garden and reception areas and restrooms with full-length mirrors. Finally, whatever final touches you may need for your wedding can likely be provided by Laguna's new Bridal Showroom, located nearby in Canal Village.

So there you are, five resorts with at least fifteen dazzling locations, as well as a diamond of a Chapel, all available for your dream wedding. If the two of you cannot agree on at least one of these choices, then you might have to go back to that "why" question! In all seriousness though, soon-to-be newlyweds truly are spoilt for choice at Laguna - which is precisely the way it should be.

Contact your preferred Laguna Phuket hotel and leave your wedding and honeymoon in expert hands!

*Thai Airways International have direct flights to Bangkok from Brisbane. Contact your travel agent for details.*

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