

MY HONG KONG

Wedding

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Dream Wedding



Photo: Love Train Studios

Couples in Asia are spoiled for choice when it comes to dreamy destination wedding venues. We caught up with Sonya Yeung, creative director of destination wedding planner Bliss Creations, to hear her top picks of the region's most under-the-radar wedding spots.

By Kate Springer

DESTINATION: Penang, Malaysia

Zone, offers tremendous city charm with temples, local food and a mix of Chinese, Indian, Islamic, and British architecture.

PHOTO OPPS: George Town is home to picturesque Chinese temples in Little India and mosques in China Town. Taking photos alongside street art and the beautiful terraced buildings will result in amazing photos.

HOT VENUES: There are many wonderful colonial hotels and old mansions, plus spice gardens, Buddhist temples and beachfront locations.

USP: For multi-cultural couples, Penang also offers a wide range of themed weddings including traditional Peranakan, Chinese

Malay and Indian. Chinese is also widely spoken in Penang, which makes it easier for Cantonese-speaking wedding parties to get around.

INSIDER TIP: With the Malaysian Ringgit low against the Hong Kong Dollar, Penang also offers great value for money.

BEST SEASON: It's best to visit Penang between December and March to avoid the rainy season. Penang is often hot and humid, so if you're having an alfresco event, keep guests cool with refreshments, cold towels and fans.

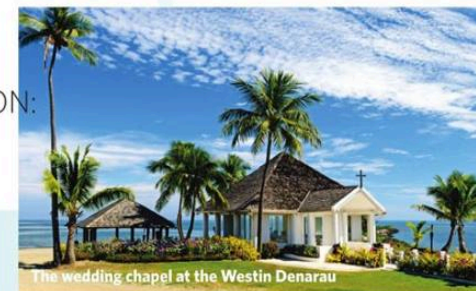
GETTING THERE: Penang is about a three-hour direct flight from Hong Kong.



Photos: KENFOO Weddings

THE HIGHLIGHTS: The cultural capital of Malaysia, Penang has a rich history, delicious food and wonderful architecture. George Town, a Unesco World Heritage

DESTINATION: Fiji



The wedding chapel at the Westin Denarau

THE HIGHLIGHTS: Blessed with clear blue water, sandy beaches and jungle rivers, Fiji is home to more than 300 islands. The archipelago offers beautiful scenery, marine life and rich culture with some of the friendliest people in the world.

PHOTO OPPS: Fiji has picture-perfect beaches and tropical island scenery - both great for wedding photos. There are hundreds of islands available to ensure privacy when taking those special photos.

HOT VENUES: Weddings can take place anywhere from a rainforest surrounded by singing tropical birds to a white sandy beach paired with crisp blue waters, high-end beach resorts with chapels to secluded caves. Popular wedding destinations include **Sheraton Fiji Resort**, **Sofitel Fiji Resort and Spa**, and **The Westin on Denarau Island**.

INSIDER TIP: Taveuni is known as the 'Garden Island of Fiji' with its lush jungles, tropical birds and flowers. It is also home to

the Lavena Coastal Walk, which passes by white sandy beaches and a cascading waterfall.

BEST SEASON: Visit Fiji between June and September to experience the best weather.

GETTING THERE: Fiji is about a 10-hour direct flight from Hong Kong, operated by Fiji Airways.

Get in touch with Bliss Creations: 2982-0192, www.blissweddings.asia.



Photo: Aidan Dockery



DESTINATION:

Hanoi, Vietnam

THE HIGHLIGHTS: Vietnam is a great place to tie the knot - it is fairly inexpensive, while offering beautiful surroundings and fantastic food. Decked out in French architecture, Hanoi has a wealth of restaurants and hotels, plus easy-access to the nearby Unesco Heritage site of Halong Bay.

PHOTO OPPS: Hanoi is more than 1,000 years old, so there is a colourful history in the buzzing

French Quarter, ancient citadels and nearby wilderness. For a natural touch, head to Hoan Kiem Lake and Bach Thao Park.

HOT VENUES: Hanoi is home to some beautiful colonial hotels, like the **Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi** - one of the grand dames of Southeast Asia. The hotel has planners on staff to make logistics a breeze. In Halong Bay you can take an overnight cruise aboard a luxury boat.

USP: In Halong Bay, your ceremony can take place on the boat by the water, followed by a beautiful dinner in a cave in one of the many limestone karst mountains. Light it up with hundreds of candles and you have a truly amazing wedding to remember.

INSIDER TIP: Vietnam requires visas for most passport holders, so remember to check with your consulate.



DESTINATION:

Chiang Mai, Thailand

THE HIGHLIGHTS: Full of culture, natural beauty and hospitable people, Chiang Mai is a beloved wedding destination. The old city is set around a moat, while the surrounding countryside is home to mountains and lush vegetation.

PHOTO OPPS: The whole area is very picturesque, so there is no shortage of photo opportunities. The beautiful gardens of Royal Park Rajapruek are a great place to capture special moments.

HOT VENUES: Chiang Mai is home to lush tropical garden venues that can't be found elsewhere in Asia - they're great

places for wedding ceremonies.

137 Pillars House is also a heritage-style venue to tie the knot in style. On the pricier side, **The Four Seasons Chiang Mai** is located between lush rice fields in Mae Rim and is one of the most popular wedding venues in the area, with top-notch service.

USP: Thai food is, of course, delicious - and there are so many activities for guests to enjoy, including trekking, handicraft workshops, cooking courses, zip-lining, and more.

INSIDER TIP: As Thailand is a Buddhist country and there's a



The Four Seasons Chiang Mai

new king, it is important to be respectful of any dress codes and code of conduct.

BEST SEASON: It's best to avoid mid-February to mid-April as the air is very smoggy. You'll experience the best temperatures between October and January.

GETTING THERE: Chiang Mai is about a 2.5-hour direct flight from Hong Kong.

5 Tips to Get Into Wedding Shape

BY ULTIMATE PERFORMANCE PERSONAL TRAINING

TIP #1 - DON'T LEAVE IT TOO LATE!

Give yourself plenty of time to get in shape, we're talking months, not weeks here. Ideally you want to cruise into your wedding at a comfortable weight and not straight off the back of a crash diet. You want to enjoy your wedding day and the build up to it so if you are trying to lose weight for the wedding then start early and you can ease off the diet as the wedding day approaches safe in the knowledge that you've done the hard work already.

Being in an extreme calorie deficit and performing excessive amounts of training right up to the wedding day will only increase the likelihood of becoming a bridezilla. Eating well and training hard should help to ease stress not contribute to it.

TIP #3 - DON'T BE AN EXTREMIST!

Avoid crazy diets. Ensure that the basics are taken care of: adequate protein, healthy fats, loads of vegetables and starchy carbs and fruit based on activity level and lean body mass. As a rule you'll be able to handle more carbohydrates the leaner you get and the harder you train.

Give yourself a shot at making some permanent lifestyle changes. If you think the idea of life without bacon is unbearable then Vegan isn't going to work. If a life of low carb makes you thoroughly depressed then avoid Atkins. Dietary principles are universal, what matters are calories, macronutrients and food. Find a way of eating that allows you to remain compliant to the plan, everything else is just hype and hyperbole.

TIP #5 - GET A KNOWLEDGEABLE COACH

If you're in the midst of planning a wedding, you most likely don't have room for anything else on your plate. Enlist an expert to help you get in the best shape of your life, and rest easy knowing you're in good hands.

TIP #2 - DON'T BURN OUT!

Starting early doesn't mean that you have to do everything all at once. Your plan should build in intensity as you need it to. This means starting with an exercise plan that you can be consistent with. Three times per week consistently over 12 weeks is much better than seven days a week every third week.

Start with a well structured plan that allows you to increase exercise volume and duration as you make progress and your body adapts. Don't simply sign up to every class at the local leisure centre, be more strategic.

TIP #4 - DON'T IGNORE THE BASICS

It's easy to get distracted by fluff: the latest dietary trends, new research on emerging superfoods, a brand new way of burning calories, the latest instagram glute training sensation. However, ignore the basics at your peril. Sleep is fundamental to your success. If you sleep badly and don't have a well established bedtime ritual then this is a very ripe, low hanging piece of fruit in the orchard of fat loss.

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CONTACT US FOR MORE DETAILS:

✉ JUDITH@UPFITNESS.COM ☎ +852 2798 9000

🌐 WWW.UPFITNESS.COM.HK