

HK



Brides on a Budget

Planning a wedding in Hong Kong doesn't have to be costly, provided you think carefully about where to save and where to splurge. Aaliya Zaveri tightens her purse strings.

By [Aaliya Zaveri](#) | published Sep 24, 2009



They say that love blooms in hard times, but pay cuts and layoffs hardly pave the way for that lavish dream wedding you've always wanted. In a time when we're only just finding our way out of the biggest recession since the Great Depression, suddenly that lavish wedding bash is starting to look, well, a little tasteless—not to mention a waste of money that could go towards your first home or an amazing honeymoon. While the wedding community on popular online portal ESDLife reports that the average Hong Kong wedding costs about \$226,352, they also report that 23 percent of couples have to take out loans to finance the event. We ask, is all that expenditure really needed?

Not necessarily, according to our wedding planning experts. Cost-conscious couples will find that savings, just like love, can be found in unexpected places. The first thing to do is remember what your wedding is all about. Sonya Yeung of wedding planners Bliss Creations says: "Weddings are ultimately about celebrating the love a couple has for each other, and a gesture of recognition of the family and friends that have supported them throughout the years." In other words, a healthy sense of perspective can help you decide whether you really need to splash an extra \$10,000 on those gold foil stamped, half-centimeter thick invitation cards after all.

Another place you can make savings is—quite obviously—the guest list. Coco Wong of Coco weddings advises brides to be ruthless with the guest list. “Try only to invite the guests that you know will really enjoy the wedding and the banquet,” she suggests. Another cost-saving measure is to have an overseas wedding. It sounds rather counter-intuitive, but actually cuts the guest list down considerably, as well as allowing you to take advantage of cheaper vendors overseas. Yeung recommends checking for low season airfares, where traveling costs are likely to be cheaper. If you do decide to stay in Hong Kong, wedding planner Michele Li of The Wedding Company advises setting the wedding date in July or August, traditionally a low season for local weddings, and to consider holding the ceremony on a weekday.

The planners also warn of the hidden costs that you might not anticipate in your budget. “When you hire a band, you might have to pay extra for a sound system, so be sure to check,” warns Wong. “Also take into account the price of your shoes and veil, which can also be pricy.” Still, there remain some areas that everyone agrees are worth the cost. A good, experienced photographer is a must, as this your photos are what will remind you of your big day. Li also recommends talking to a good wedding consultant, even if just an on-the-day service, as an organized planner with plenty of contacts in the industry can save you a lot of expensive mistakes.

Decorations

Save money by choosing locally grown flowers instead of imported ones, and check which flowers will be in season at the time of your wedding. In addition to being cheaper, they’ll also be at their best if you buy in season. Consider forgoing floral centerpieces in favor of fairy lights and tealight candles.

Splurge: Full venue floral decoration including staircase decoration, a floral backdrop, reception table and photo frame decoration: \$40,000

Agnes b. Fleuriste, 3/F, IFC Mall, Central, 2805-0631

Save: Fresh herbs are another alternative to flowers, and smell just as good. A selection of herbs of different leaf shapes, such as basil, rosemary or marjoram in a glass vase make for unusual centerpieces.

These can be found at the Mong Kok flower market: from \$20 per bunch

Invitations

If you really can’t part with the tradition of printed invitation cards, remember to streamline by eliminating liners and interior envelopes.

Splurge: 100 personalized letterpress invitations with tailor-made monograms: \$6,000

Seesawed, 6/F, Yu Hing Mansion, 55 Bonham Strand West, Sheung Wan. 2537-9690

Save: A wedding website can be personalized with various themes, and you’ll be able to manage RSVPs, add maps to the wedding location and keep guests updated if there are any changes: Free

www.ewedding.com

The party

Go for a lunch or afternoon tea instead of a sit-down dinner, and nix the open bar. If the idea of an entirely sober crowd is too terrifying, just serve beer and wine. Michele Li of The Wedding Company suggests trying to negotiate free corkage and bringing your own alcohol. She also recommends pairing the I-do with an Ipod and having a music playlist instead of a live band.

Splurge: Dinner for 100 with the Four Seasons’ Perfect Match wedding package in the Harbor Ballroom. Includes the cake, wedding favors, signature wedding menu and more: around \$280,000.

The Four Seasons, 8 Finance St., Central, 3196-8888

Save: The Renaissance Harbor View Hotel’s Wedding Package. Two hours use of the chapel, fruit punch, light snacks and a number of other services: \$5,888

Renaissance Harbour View: 1 Harbor Rd., Wan Chai, 2584-6906

The dress

For maximum mileage, consider buying a dress that can be altered and worn again after you have walked down the aisle. Another alternative is to trawl through wedding magazines, get an idea of the dress you want, and take it to a tailor who can recreate it at a fraction of the cost.

Splurge: A Christian Lacroix original: \$80,000

Designer Bridal Room, 2/F, Grand Millennium Plaza, 181 Queen's Rd. Central, 2167-8708

Save: A custom-made gown from a local tailor: \$4,000

Commix Workshop 10/F, Wing Tat Commercial Building, 121-125 Wing Lok St., Sheung Wan, 6851-0748