

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Luxury hotels offer tiny wedding options during pandemic times

August 12, 2020



*Las Ventanas al Paraiso, a Rosewood Resort in Mexico, is offering an Escape & Elope package. Image credit: Rosewood Hotels & Resorts*

By DIANNA DILWORTH

Luxury hotels are courting engaged couples whose weddings are off with offers of small group weddings or elopement packages to help increase bookings as the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the hospitality business.

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Rosewood Resort Group is promoting such options at its resorts in Las Ventanas al Paraiso, A Rosewood Resort in Los Cabos, Mexico and Santa Barbara in California. Gurney's Newport Resort & Marina is also making such offers.

"The couples who are being faced with canceled wedding plans are looking for ways to celebrate with their loved ones and making the most of a very unfortunate circumstance," said Damon Banks, editor and managing partner at [LuxeGetaways](#), Washington, DC.

"I hear many couples completely canceling the wedding and planning for a future date a year or more in advance to celebrate the day with friends and family the way they planned," he said. "However, they are proceeding with very small ceremonies or eloping to still marry the love of their lives, despite the pandemic."



*Gurney's Newport is offering Little Lighthouse Gatherings of up to 15 people for small weddings. Image credit: Gurney's Newport*

## Escape and Elope

The pandemic has caused many betrothed couples to rethink their wedding plans. More than 90 percent of global couples are postponing their ceremonies and 10 percent are cancelling their events entirely, per a report at [The Knot](#).

Some couples are opting for smaller inner circle weddings or plan to elope and then plan a larger reception in 2021, when guidelines permit.

Luxury properties have been adapting to the situation and offering viable alternatives that promote safety while allowing couples to go through with weddings this year.

[Las Ventanas al Paraso](#), A Rosewood Resort in Los Cabos, Mexico is promoting the Escape & Elope offer for couples who are looking to have their wedding without having to worry about a large gathering. The experience includes a private chef dinner on the sand, a luxury suite, flowers, photography and a ceremony.

[Rosewood Miramar Beach](#) in Montecito, CA is offering a private dinner and stay for couples a la carte. The hotel's new Massimo's Garden restaurant features one single secluded table surrounded and garden. The hotel is marketing it as a place for couples to toast their marriage and gives them a glimpse at a potential venue for a reception next year.

[New England resort Gurney's Newport](#) has seen a number of weddings requests from engaged couples who had booked a larger wedding elsewhere but have had to reduce the size and style of their celebration. Some couples have booked these smaller celebrations on their original wedding date.

The hotel is offering Little Lighthouse Gatherings, small gatherings which allow up to 15 people to attend.

"At Gurney's Newport we shifted our focus to offer small, intimate weddings with the introduction of Little Lighthouse Gatherings which allows for up to 15 attendees," said Pamela Baldwin, director of sales and marketing at Gurney's Newport, Newport, RI.

"Gurney's Newport has seen a number of weddings requests, typically from engaged couples who had booked a larger wedding elsewhere, but have had to reduce the size and style of their celebration," she said. "Additionally, some couples have booked these smaller celebrations on their original wedding day.

"At Gurney's Newport, couples have been requesting more flexible menus and themed dinners, so our team has been customizing and creating ideas that are more appealing for smaller groups such as mini barbeques and clambakes."



*Rosewood Miramar's outdoor dining options. Image courtesy of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts*

## Uncertain futures

As the global health situation continues to remain in flux, hotels are struggling and any promotions like these can help.

The big task is to convince affluent consumers that they are following all of the health and safety protocols to safely allow couples to celebrate small wedding days even if it is just the couple.

Still, even as the hospitality industry has been tremendously impacted in the past few months, both travel and weddings are still sought-after experiences.

"Luxury hotels who can still cater to the couple or couple with a few family members and create experiences that they will remember forever are going to be the same hotels that these couples want to revisit for their larger ceremony, and maybe even yearly for their anniversary," Mr. Banks said.

"Hotels today are looking at the big picture and realizing that every small 'win' now can result in long-term successes with their guests," he said.

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