

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Affluents seeking bespoke, weekend-long amenities for spring weddings

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*Affluents are viewing their spring weddings as more than just one-night affairs. Image credit: Nathan Dumlao*

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By KATIE TAMOLA

For spring weddings this year, affluents are taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary.

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As conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic ostensibly improve, couples are looking to go all out for their special days and to have their weddings not just be events, but experiences. Consumers are thinking outside the box for their nuptials, with many opting for outdoor events and preferences that indicate that customization remains crucial.

"Couples are diving into multi-day celebrations and we look for venue partners who are willing to accommodate a truly customized experience," said Becca Atchison, founder and creative director at [Rebecca Rose Events](#), Winston-Salem, NC. "Refining and perfecting the customization options will go a long way."

"When you ask guests to give of their time and finances to attend, there is a notion of making the most of their experience on site," she said. "These could include on-site activations such as sailing, horseback riding, pottery class or a tasting menu with a private chef."

### Heading outside

As couples and planners return to their wedding venues and contemplate how to make their weddings memorable, luxury hospitality brands remain at their beck and call.

Hospitality group Fairmont Hotels & Resorts wants to reach couples that are looking for an iconic New York experience.



For many couples, a wedding at The Plaza is still the ultimate dream come true. Image credit: The Plaza

The Plaza in New York is offering a package entitled "The Grandest Royal Wedding" an intimate, yet opulent, affair where guests can celebrate with their closest family and friends with seating for 30, complete with flower arrangements and a piano player.

Guests will be invited to toast the couple with Champagne and refreshments chosen by the property's executive chef, then venture to afternoon tea in the Palm Court after the ceremony.

This package also includes a couple's stay in the Royal Suite, a three-bedroom suite with private elevator access overlooking Fifth Avenue, complete with rose petals, a bubble bath, Champagne, monogrammed robes and more. The rates begin at \$55,000.

Last year, Fairmont joined forces with renowned jewelry designer Neil Lane to help couples craft their dream weddings.

"Fairmont Weddings, by Neil Lane" is a package available exclusively across Fairmont properties in North and Central America. The package offers expertise, picturesque venues, luxury offerings and thoughtful services, all designed to produce unforgettable, personalized weddings ([see story](#)).

For many couples, the venues will be a jumping-off point for customization.

"Venues will move beyond 'wedding in a box' packages and offer more bespoke experiences that are completely custom for the couples getting married," said Karen Cleveland, coauthor of *The New Wedding Book: Ditching All The Rules*.

Whether affluents are looking for something intimate or something more grandiose, they are no longer looking at their wedding as singular, one-night events. They are considering proposing their weddings as multi-day, multifaceted experiences with pre- and post-wedding events.

"Couples having a luxury wedding this spring are looking to give their guests a one-of-a-kind celebration," said Rena Sweeney, founder of [Alchemy Events](#), New Orleans. "Rather than just doing a rehearsal dinner the night before or a morning-after brunch, couples are opting for true full-blown parties to give their guests a luxurious three-day weekend.

"The day before the wedding we're seeing activities based on the local culture with a party that night for all the guests," she said. "The day after the wedding features brunch but also incorporates a fun element such as a luxury pool party with IV rehydration therapy and chair massages to help guests recover from the night before."

California's Rosewood Sand Hill location is ready to assist couples in offering an entertaining and restorative experience. With 16 expansive acres and a Santa Cruz backdrop, there is plenty of room for customization and a picturesque photo-op.

Starting at \$75,000, the Emerald Package offers an upgrade to a resort villa suite or presidential villa for the couple

with the choice of one of the following: sense spa private yoga session with healthy breakfast the morning of the wedding for 10 guests; post-wedding brunch for 10 guests; complimentary exclusive use of all wedding venue spaces for the wedding day including the Sunset lawn, Vista lawn, and Rosewood Ballroom.



*Couples at The Ritz-Carlton Sarasota can plant a seasonal bloom at the property's healing garden. Image credit: The Ritz-Carlton*

Rosewood Baha Mar also offers several amenities for beach-loving lovers.

"Our guests have the luxury of choice Rosewood Baha Mar offers several unique and intimate venues, and our professional wedding team can stage these venues for every chapter of this momentous weekend," said Luigi Romaniello, managing director at [Rosewood Baha Mar](#). "We can also arrange elegant, star-lit dinners on the beach or in the Rosewood Garden surrounded by exotic flowers and palm trees.

"Just a short boat ride from Cable Beach, Long Cay Island is paradise," he said. "The private, invitation-only island features endless ocean views and a stunning backdrop for custom ceremonies and receptions."

Straying from the norm

Sustainability has infiltrated the wedding space, with many couples cementing their unions in an eco-friendly fashion.

The Ritz-Carlton Sarasota is offering a Let Love Grow package where couples can plant a seasonal bloom at the property's healing garden, creating something tangible the couple will be able to revisit years after the wedding.

Additional amenities include a vegan-friendly wedding menu, a vegan wedding cake, eco-friendly menu cards and confetti made from plantable materials and more.

Last year, British department store chain Selfridges spread the love with its new wedding shop where consumers can buy or rent secondhand wedding wear.

The "Resellridges: The Wedding" pop-up shop was available for five weeks at the flagship store on Oxford Street in London, and sold apparel for brides, grooms and guests ([see story](#)).

In another untraditional move, many couples are straying away from the customary main-course dinner.

Hospitality group Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts' property in New York has a wedding package that includes a five-to-six-hour cocktail reception as well as a three-course dinner.

Other package inclusions are passed champagne and sparkling water on arrival for guests before the ceremony begins; a custom-designed wedding cake, food and wine tasting for up to four people and more. Guests can call to learn more about this package and customization options.

"I kept saying for years that in 2022/2023, the main course is going to be dead," said Louis Avanti, luxury event planner and founder of [AMG events](#), New York. "We love doing cocktail-style receptions.

"Great bar, great decor, some great entertainment, stroll around, very great photo opportunities we're running receptions [that are] being sophisticated without being sit down because no one gets excited about the main course except the caterer."