

SPECIAL PROMOTIONAL FEATURE



Photo: El San Juan Hotel & Casino



¡Amor!

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PUERTO RICO WEDDINGS HAVE WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.



WHEN IT COMES TO ROMANCE, PUERTO RICO offers the best of the Caribbean along with amenities as fine as any you'd find back home. Island charm, beautiful beaches and tropical flowers abound, making it the ideal getaway for your wedding and honeymoon. The services are as tempting as they are diverse: While couples seeking a quiet sunset ceremony by the sea can have their choice of sandy strands – followed by a private dinner for two on the beach or in an exclusive suite, if they desire – those looking for indulgent affairs will find ample options. Musicians from harpists to live bands will entertain. Decor options from upbeat to over-the-top are on the menu. Photographers and videographers capture your memories with care. And the food? It can be regional or American, familiar or gourmet. On Puerto Rico, your wedding will be what you want it to be, with sunshine, sand and a bevy of polished professionals making it happen in the background.

Couples choose Puerto Rico weddings for the island's beauty and excellent service, yet the destination's logistics are no small selling point. Hundreds of flights a day arrive in its four airports. The American dollar is the currency. Nearly all residents speak English. And no American citizen needs a passport to visit. In these respects, San Juan is as domestic a destination as Springfield or San Diego. You and your guests can simply show your driver's licenses and walk onto the plane.

With its majestic stone forts, lush green jungle and mile upon mile of sparkling coastline, Puerto Rico is inherently romantic. Feel the *amor*.

PLAN A

One couple is crazy about Puerto Rico's sandy shoreline, so their wedding planner, Muriel Lázaro of **Muriel Weddings**, created

a beach-themed wedding including placing lounge chairs at the entrance and using the names of island strands for each table. For a duo who met at Starbucks, she put logoed promotional items and whole coffee beans on the tables, which were named for the chain's hot beverages.

Muriel Weddings customizes every local and destination wedding to fit each couple's lifestyle, passions and budget. With 15 years in the industry behind her – plus a wealth of corporate event-planning experience internationally – Lázaro loves the business she's in, and that comes through with each ceremony and celebration she plans.

"Sometimes couples work so hard to plan

their wedding that when the day comes they're too exhausted to enjoy it," she observes. Letting a professional in this field organize your big day is going to save you at least 90 percent of your stress, she says, adding that you're going to enjoy every minute thanks to the contributions from your planner, leaving you more time to devote to the special touches and to pampering yourself for this big event in your life.

She's happy to step in and handle the details, and readily recommends tried-and-true purveyors such as photographers, entertainers, venues and officiants. 787-644-2093, muriel.lazaro@yahoo.com

The owners of **Amorette Destination Weddings** understand that, when it comes to your big day, unforgettable is not enough.

By creating a customized celebration to fit your dreams and budget, Anitzia Julbe and Anita Rivera will make sure that your ceremony and reception are even more wonderful than you envision.

Working with a variety of venues at historical sites and resorts, they'll handle the busywork – and provide countless ideas – so you don't have to stress. The dynamic duo will suggest beautiful ceremony and reception sites, confirm that the one you choose can accommodate you on your chosen date, outline your budget on a spreadsheet, take care of decorations, handle the legal paperwork and introduce



Photos left to right: Four Points by Sheraton Hotel & Casino at Palmas Del Mar, Conrad San Juan Condado Plaza, El Conquistador Resort, El San Juan Hotel & Casino



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Spectacular San Juan, where a radiant sun warms a crystal blue sea and balmy trade winds gently kiss the shore. Pastel tinted buildings line cobblestone streets while an ancient fort keeps watch over the horizon. Slip into cool, cosmopolitan comfort at one of our two swimming pools or immerse yourself in the Atlantic Ocean right at your doorstep. In the evening's, enjoy eclectic cuisine in one of our many bars and restaurants, or try your luck at the Stellaris casino. With our professional Marriott service at your disposal, you will have everything you need for that perfect wedding.

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you, virtually or in person, to suppliers like florists and photographers. They even offer an array of save-the-date cards and invitations. Gift baskets, welcome cards, rehearsal dinners ... simply ask. 787-364-8353, amorette.us

CITY STYLE

Hotels line San Juan's sunny beaches, and trendy restaurants, impressive museums and historical neighborhoods are part of the mix, making this capital city a blend of urban savvy and beach chic.

Once you grasp how hip, how elegant, how over-the-top cutting-edge **El San Juan Hotel & Casino, The Waldorf Astoria Collection** is, you'll understand how astounding your wedding will be. Whether you bring along 20 guests or 1,200, you'll wed in any one of several stunning settings and celebrate in another. The food will be exquisite, and it will be served on your choice of high-end china with luxe glassware and cutlery. The perfect end to any celebration is in one of three dynamic lobby bars. What's considered standard elsewhere is essentially taboo at El San Juan, where spectacular is the rule.

And yet you may never want to leave the spa. Wedding groups – couples, the gals, the guys, even bachelorette parties – find El San Juan's Edouard de Paris Day Spa and Salon quite the enticing hideaway. Couples massages and bridal hair and make-up are popular, yet so are indulgent packages that go far beyond. The Bridal Platinum package features a light mint scrub, satin cream finish, Alpha Vital Facial, hair and make-up and more. With the Bridal Extravaganza, you can even enjoy a European manicure and Platinum pedicure in the spa's Pedicure Nook. 888-579-2635, elsanjuanhotel.com

With its fresh urban flair and beachfront location, the **San Juan Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino** is a wedding destination – so much so that this chic Condado getaway boasts a boutique-style room dedicated exclusively to planning special events. Indeed, Events at San Juan Marriott Resort is a stylish show space that makes creating ceremonies, receptions, bridal showers and morning-after brunches a pleasure. The two of you will sit with a certified wedding specialist and shop, on the spot, for cakes and photographers, china and champagne. Guided by the educated and experienced event

planner, you'll work – within your budget – to arrange table settings, find florists and choose entertainers.

Oh, the choices! In addition to wedding packages and a la carte enhancements, you'll get to formulate the feel you're looking for. The San Juan Marriott's ace experts can conjure up a fresh new take on a traditional wedding or make your big day a cutting-edge affair. Many couples integrate Caribbean elements, from tropical linens and salsa bands at the reception to Nuevo Latino menu items such as yucca bisque topped with avocado and crabmeat, followed by guava-glazed pork medallions with fingerling potatoes, chorizo, leeks, mushrooms and roasted shallots. Under the direction of Executive Chef Celso Pinto, your menu can be New Age or Continental, simple or gourmet. Once you set your hearts on menu selections, arrange for a tasting panel – a couple of parents or friends can join you – to make sure you love what you've chosen.

DJs, harpists and versatile bands are among the entertainment choices. As for the ceremony itself, the San Juan Marriott will bring together your dream elements, even if that involves proper military procedures or ethnic elements. The venues are special too, whether indoors or out, on the sand, looking over the ocean or in an elegant ballroom. 800-228-9290, sanjuanweddings.com

In Spanish, they may say *variedad*. In teen-speak, it's OMG. For you, at **Conrad San Juan Condado Plaza**, it's a generous four dozen places to tie the knot. Yup, four dozen. Some are intimate rooms, while others are pretty settings on the beach, ocean-view gardens, alfresco terraces with lagoon views or elegant ballrooms – the list goes on. Select the venues that jibe with your ultimate ceremony and reception and you're on the way to having that vision fulfilled.

All told, the Conrad San Juan Condado Plaza is ideal for beginning your lives together. With ample options for indoor and outdoor events, it has welcoming spaces for you and your closest loved ones, glamorous venues for 1,100-guest bashes and, of course, beautiful spaces for parties of 40 or 400. In addition to the assistance of a seasoned wedding planner and food by a team of renowned chefs, you'll enjoy a beachfront location in the trendy Condado neighborhood, a 24-hour casino, superior

dining selections and three swimming pools. 888-722-1276, condadoplaza.com

ISLAND HIDEAWAYS

Beyond San Juan and Puerto Rico's other incredible cities, you'll find resort hotels that offer quiet vacations filled with days on the beach and around the pool and, perhaps,

participating in fun activities. The wedding choices are diverse and delightful.

A destination wedding can be about avoiding the muss and fuss of a gala affair. If it's simplicity you seek – with privacy and striking beauty at an affordable price– consider marrying or honeymooning at **Casa Grande Mountain Retreat**. This well-kept secret is about nature:

lush greenery, tropical flowers and fruit-bearing trees. Begin your life together in an Eden-like setting.

Peaceful and relaxed, Casa Grande is located in a lush valley, where its 20 rooms cascade down a green mountainside. Once a coffee plantation, the property is now a romantic getaway owned and operated by former New York lawyer Steve Weingarten. Enjoy a hike along a wooded trail under the forest canopy. Conspicuously absent are telephones, televisions, radios and air-conditioning. Take a dip in the freshwater pool. Dine on meals inspired by food and beverage manager Michael Mahon, formerly executive sous chef at the venerable Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. Enjoy a guided adventure walk to a waterfall or begin your day with a yoga class; it's taught at 8 a.m. by Steve, a certified Kripalu yoga teacher.

If you choose to wed at Casa Grande, you'll likely have your ceremony under the hacienda's mango tree, with guests seated facing the mountainscape. Sunrise is a popular time because the sky is especially striking, but sunset weddings are equally enchanting. Honeymoon at a hideaway. 888-343-2272, hotelcasagrande.com

Be among the first to wed at the **St. Regis Bahia Beach**, a stunning upscale enclave scheduled to debut in November 2010. A St. Regis Meetings Butler will help you plan every detail, from choosing flowers for just the right bouquet to lighting up the dance floor. The grand Astor Event Pavilion, surrounded by lush greenery, invites festive yet elegant celebrations in the open air. All told you'll have more than two dozen venues in which to marry and dine with loved ones, from the lawn in front of a plantation house to a magnificent ballroom.

If you plan to say your vows at home, consider Puerto Rico's newest house of splendor for your honeymoon. Like all guests, you'll receive the iconic St. Regis butler service. Ask your personal butler for anything from a special gift to ... well, nearly anything – in person, by phone or via e-mail, which he'll receive via Blackberry – and your wish will be fulfilled. With the resort's honeymoon package, you'll be chauffeured to the hotel and greeted for your seven-night stay with champagne. During your honeymoon, you'll receive a 60-minute couple's massage, a nature tour, and a picnic basket lunch on the day of your choice.

The St. Regis Bahia Beach, set on a 483-acre estate that was once a coconut plantation and native maritime forest, will soon be a pampering hotel with sea and rainforest views. A lagoon-style pool will meander around the property, and a two-mile beach will invite lounging, swimming and water sports. The Remède Spa will be a haven for pampering. A challenging golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. will be managed expertly by Troon Golf.

With this kind of attention to detail, you can just imagine how special the food will be. In fact, the St. Regis' Fern Restaurant will feature artfully prepared and presented foods by world-renowned chef Jean-Georges. Meals will also be available at the St. Regis Bar, Aqua, the golf club and Molasses Restaurant. 877-ST-REGIS, stregis.com/bahiabeach

If you tie the knot with your toes in the sand at the **Rio Mar Beach Resort & Spa – A Wyndham Grand Resort**, you're apt to stay on the resort's grounds during your entire wedding and honeymoon. Why leave? Nestled in a secluded 500-acre stretch of waterfront land, you'll have access to a mile-long bronze beach, a tennis center, two golf courses, the Mandara spa, luxe cabana-lined pools, water sports, the neighboring El Yunque Rainforest and 11 restaurants and lounges.

With the Director of Romance leading the charge, Wyndham Rio Mar offers an array of gorgeous personalized options all in one unique location. From the photographer to the wedding attendant, your every wish will come to fruition. The recently launched wedding room boasts an array of decor options, flowers and photography books in order to ensure you know what you're getting on this isle of enchantment on your wedding day.

The venues and packages alone are ideal, whether you're holding your ceremony and reception as a formal indoors affair or barefoot and beachfront. Wyndham Rio Mar is ideally positioned near San Juan and provides a picturesque backdrop for an enchanting wedding. If fresh air and ocean views appeal to you, say your vows in the new wedding gazebo (which seats up to 80), on the Ocean Terrace, in the Vista Verde garden or perhaps directly on La Playa Beach. Indoors, Old World-style lantern chandeliers and wrought-iron candelabras set a Spanish colonial tone in the Oceanfront



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And, oh, the food! Under the expert eye of Executive Chef Jan Pfeiffer and award-winning Pastry Chef Anibal Rodriguez, the food is artfully prepared. You'll have a wide choice of menus for your reception, rehearsal dinner, day-after brunch, etc. You can go casual with a lobster or Caribbean-themed buffet. For a more formal affair, choose from dishes like an entree of veal chop and lobster tail with porcini sauce and vanilla velouté, or tenderloin of beef covered with onions and garlic pudding served with herb aioli shrimp and chanterelle mushroom glaze. Elegant, yes, from canapés to coffee. 877-636-0636, wyndhamriomar.com

Minutes away from San Juan's crowded metropolitan area, **Four Points by Sheraton** hotels offer refreshing change. Each is a stylish getaway with romantic wedding venues, outstanding service, excellent food and diverse amenities. At these hotels, couples may design simple or lavish weddings, and either way they'll receive true value without compromising quality.

One choice is the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel & Casino at Palmas Del Mar, where beach, lake and garden settings are inherently romantic. Located within a private vacation enclave, the hotel offers a relaxing infinity pool, a restaurant, a wine bar and access to resort activities. The second option, Four Points by Sheraton Caguas Real Hotel & Casino, features charming garden, terrace and indoor venues for ceremonies and receptions, an exquisite French-style bistro, an inviting swimming pool area and the island's largest casino.

Whichever you choose, you'll be guided throughout your event by a single catering manager who will be devoted to creating the wedding you envision. A menu will be tailored just for the occasion, and with a certain minimum on banquet consumption you'll receive two room nights as a gift. Return a year later with the Back to Paradise Anniversary package. You'll be greeted with champagne in your room, receive free breakfast daily and receive a free room night for a two-night stay, and another evening on the house for a four-day stay. 800-612-2323, fourpointspr.com

This is how much **El Conquistador Resort, The Waldorf Astoria Collection** wants your wedding to be completely your own: Besides a

couple dozen venues, from beach to ballroom for ceremonies and receptions, this exclusive resort invites you to build your own wedding cake. Want red velvet cake with cream cheese filling, ivory rolled fondant and fresh flowers? It's yours! Round or square, your towering confection will be personalized to your dream specifications.

Which fits right in. El Conquistador – a sprawling AAA Four Diamond resort with a private island/beach, a championship golf course, a Golden Door Spa, a water park, numerous restaurants and bars, water sports and a casino, plus 100,000 square feet of flexible event space – hosts weddings of any size and shape. Following a \$120 million makeover, including the addition of the Grand Atlantic Conference Center, El Conquistador is all about choice. Barefoot barbecues and five-course plated dinners are equally at home here. And wedding packages make ceremonies and celebrations affordable. The consistent guarantees are quality and incredible service – plus food you won't forget. How about an entree of grilled baby lamb chops with blood orange sauce, toasted pine nuts and coriander-roasted fingerling potatoes? The resort can even accommodate kosher and ethnic menu requirements. Las Casitas, the resort's enclave of private villas, is a terrific honeymoon spot for quiet canoodling featuring private pools and 24-hour butler service. 800-468-8365, elconresort.com

With the winning combo of nature – heartwarming sunsets and swaying palm trees on Almirante Beach, plus nurture – 112 luxurious guest rooms and suites in an impressive AAA Four Diamond boutique resort setting, **Rincon Beach Resort** has long been a coveted destination for weddings. Now a \$2.8 million banquet facility will make saying your vows that much more spectacular. In December 2010, couples will have the option of celebrating their unions in the lovingly designed Grand Ballroom/Meeting Facility. Choose intimate quarters for you and a few, or a few dozen, guests. Or spread out with more well-wishers for a sit-down dinner or cocktail-style reception.

Caribbean beauty is woven into the design. Architect Ricardo Lefranc wows with stone columns, arches and, on the ceilings, exposed wood beams. As for color, interior designer Natalia Somoza borrowed from Rincon's inspiring ocean,

mountains and famous sunsets. Coral, goldfish yellow, aquamarine and sand hues meld indoors with outside.

The beautiful venue may be new, but Rincon Beach Resort is experienced at hosting weddings. It offers full-service coordination, from budget analysis to etiquette assistance. Three packages provide for all the basics plus enhancements: a wedding arch, torches, fresh flower decorations, a judge, bouquets for the bride and maid of honor, boutonnieres for the groom and best man, a bottle of champagne and a wedding cake. Upgrade for extras like a sit-down dinner with wine for up to 50 guests. All packages include a three-night/four-day stay in a junior suite for the lucky couple.

The hotel itself, with truly beautiful accommodations, has two restaurants (and will have a third when construction is complete), a beach, a freeform infinity-edge pool and hot tub overlooking the ocean, a swim-up bar and a boutique wine bar. 866-589-0009, rinconbeach.com

If the resort hotel scene isn't right for you, **Villa Montaña Beach Resort** is a highly

personal alternative. Situated on 35 acres with its own three miles of quiet beach and a mountain backdrop, Villa Montaña is a true home away from home. The complex is a collection of 48 villas owned by individuals plus 25 hotel rooms, a restaurant and two swimming pools. Some of the Puerto Rican families who own their vacation homes rent them out to visitors, including couples who want to get married and honeymoon on the property. As a result, your stay will be personal and one-of-a-kind with nary a hint of corporate feel.

Weddings here have few rules. Gallop to your ceremony site by horseback. Wade up after a scuba dive, or sail in by boat. Walking down the aisle the traditional way, of course, is always a popular choice. Then exchange rings and celebrate wherever strikes your fancy – on the beach, in the sea-view gazebo, on the lawn, in a garden or indoors. You can't go wrong with The Tamarindo Room or the Eclipse Restaurant, with its Caribbean Sea views. The villas sleep as many as 10, so your guests can join you comfortably and affordably.

Your menu choices for the celebratory brunch, lunch or dinner are varied so you can choose a menu that fits your style and budget. Tempting choices include grilled dorado with tropical sauce, roast pork loin with tamarind glaze, and marinated flank steak with a sweet onion reduction. For the rehearsal dinner, Villa Montaña suggests a barbecue, Spanish tapas or seafood market theme.

During your Villa Montaña stay, you might take tennis lessons with the resident pro, receive spa treatments in a private alfresco couples rooftop loggia, or ride horseback along beach and jungle trails. Many newlyweds simply stroll along the beach, cuddle up in hammocks and, when they're feeling social, get to know the residents and managers, who live on the premises. 877-882-8082, villamontana.com

Convinced? For a simple wedding or a sensational soiree, Puerto Rico offers the ceremony and reception you seek. That's amor.



Soon, a simple "I do" will join them forever.

The sea waves will be the witnesses of their awaited union. The salty breeze will comb their hair with the rhythm of their love. At that time, they'll be convinced that being together is the most natural thing in life.

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