

All about Weddings

Andalucia & Gibraltar

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March 1st - March 14th 2017



Andalucia is tailor-made for trysting couples, with so many reasons to celebrate your big day here on the coast. And, as John and Yoko knew, Gibraltar's nifty nuptial licences are the icing on the cake

Sandy splICE



WITH 320 days of sunshine a year, you're nearly guaranteed a nice day for a white wedding on the Costa del Sol.

And that offer is open to everyone, gay or straight. Enlightened Spain was the fourth country to legalise same-sex marriage in 2005.

Andalucia is in Spain's top tier for weddings. It proved the third most popular spot in the country to get hitched in the first half of last year, coming just behind Madrid and its northern neighbour, Catalonia.

The almost 2,000 couples who have chosen the region to say 'I do' know what we know: that this area has a splendour that makes it a prime party location, especially for a celebration as important as 'the big day'.

You can always count on the weather to deliver, while its huge range of hotels, villas and budget-friendly establishments there's an affordably honeymoon haunt for all.

The popularity of destination weddings has spread like confetti in the last few years, and with tourists already opting for Spain over less secure rival destinations, the country is really taking advantage of the booming €15 billion industry.

Marbella is the latest resort to set its sights on the marriage trade after ministers re-

vealed a new scheme to promote the glitzy Costa del Sol resort as a global wedding location during Madrid's FITUR tourism fair this year.

Tourism chief Javier Porcuna said he hopes it will bring visitors during the winter season, as well as during the buzzing summer months.

And you can guarantee a celeb or two will be included in the statistics.

Playa in Marbella star Elliot Wright is to tie the knot with fiancée Sadie Stuart on the Costa del Sol this autumn. They will join a host of stars who have chosen the coast, or neighbouring Gibraltar where you can marry with 48 hours notice, for their special day.

Following in the footsteps of John Lennon and Yoko Ono who famously wed on the Rock (left), the late Status Quo rocker Rick Parfitt married wife Lyndsay in a nifty and thrifty €60 ceremony. Just seven years later, Rick Jnr. enjoyed an extravagant ceremony at Malaga's stunning Castillo de Santa Catalina.

Much like the rest of us, celebs can't help but be attracted by the romantic hotspots the region has to offer; gorgeous Granada, sultry Sevilla, romantic Ronda, charismatic Cadiz and of course the glitzy Costa del Sol.

Don't let the red tape for non-residents put you off. Most 'destination wedding'

Continues on next page



DREAM LOCATION: At Sal y Sol in Manilva and celebs who married here include Russell Watson, Rick Parfitt and James Blunt



Celebrity hotspot

- John Lennon and Yoko Ono famously wed on the Rock in 1969.
- Screen hero Sean Connery married actress Diane Cilento in Gibraltar in 1962.
- Status Quo rocker Rick Parfitt married wife Lyndsay in Gib in 2007.
- His son chose the costa with an extravagant service in Malaga's Castillo de Santa Catalina in 2014.
- Brit singer James Blunt tied the knot with socialite Sofia Wellesley in Ibiza 2014.
- Opera singer Russel Watson enjoyed an extravagant Benhavis ceremony in the summer of 2015.



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couples get the official part done at home before heading to Spain for the dream ceremony, be that a linen-clad affair on a beautiful beach or a posh gala dinner under the stars.

For same-sex couples, it is worth knowing that civil partnerships are only available if one member has been in the country for at least two years. However this rule does not apply to Roman Catholic ceremonies.

Blessings

Those who don't want a religious hoorah and find registry office ceremonies too basic can opt for blessings, offered by several expat officiators and priests along the coast. Expats or Brits looking for a more traditional day can look no further than Gibraltar, where ceremonies can be performed quickly and conveniently, much like John and Yoko's.

Many do the legal bits and bobs on the Rock before returning to the Costa del Sol for the afterparty - made all that bit easier by budget travel companies, who are offering better deals than ever.

The coast offers a multitude of ways to dive into a life of married bliss.

Relaxed poolside ceremonies at palatial private villas are proving increasingly popular, while others are opting for the full church monty and all the bells, incense and whistles that come with it.

A fancy hotel do is another option,

Rocky romance



VARIETY: From the coast near Gibraltar to a church in Benahavis, where Russell Watson got married

and the coast offers up a bounty. The popular Sunset Beach Club in Benalmadena caters for hundreds of weddings a year, while the Rock Hotel in Gibraltar is historic and prestigious. The excellent well located La Bella Vista in Manilva can cater for up to 175 people right by the sea.



While the average wedding budget is a whopping €30,000 - and you can spend more - you can equally opt for a low-key affair at a fraction of that price.

Spain's wedding diversity, where same-sex marriage has been legal for 12 years, is the reason some 3,000 gay couples have tied the

knot in the country, year on year, since 2006,

But gay or straight, church or private villa, beach or banqueting suite, there has never been a better time to put a ring on it in Spain. It's no wonder more than twice as many people come to Spain to wed as Spaniards go elsewhere.



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Wright into shape

ELLIOT Wright has been spotted working out with his fiancée in the run up to their big day. The *Playa in Marbella* star, 36 and his soon-to-be wife Sadie Stuart, 24, were spotted enduring a gruelling work out in Mijas. It comes after Sadie was seen shopping for the perfect dress. Sadie showed off her already sculpted abs in a fitted crop top and leggings while she was egged on by a personal trainer, before climbing up an intense ropes course. Elliott struggled through an exercise involving medicine balls before carrying weights on his shoulders. The genetically gifted pair announced their engagement last summer after 10 months of dating. Speaking in July, Elliott said: "I knew she was 'the one' because my kids love her!"

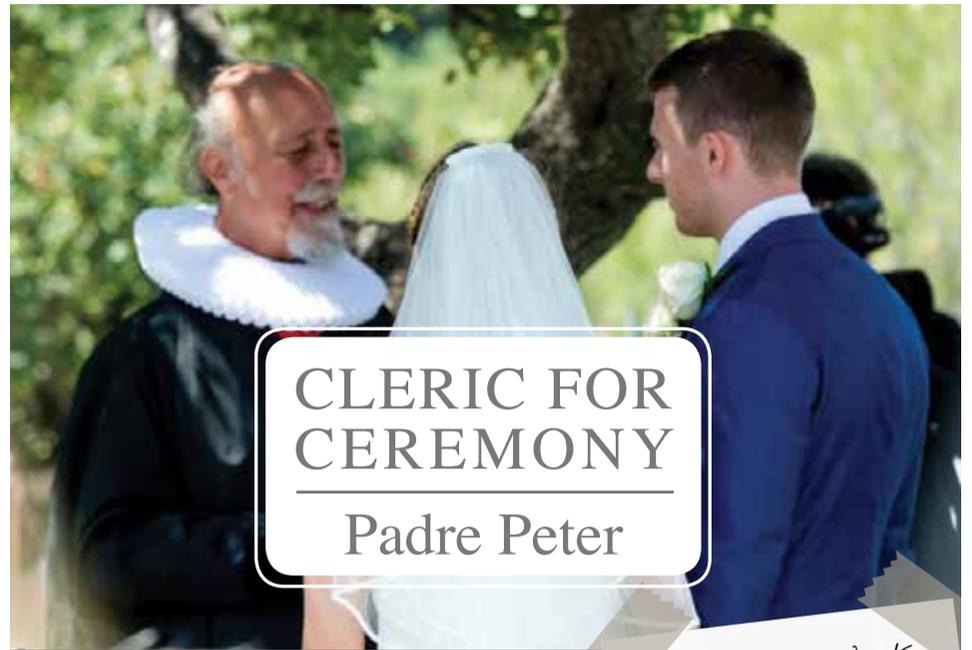


SERENA'S BIG DAY: Captured for Channel 4 documentary

On screen

Expat chef gives daughter away on TV

EXPAT chef Steven Saunders has appeared in a wedding documentary in the UK. Channel 4's heart-warming *The Wedding Day* documented his daughter Serena's big day at the Sheene Mill in Cambridgeshire. The 17th century mill-turned stunning wedding venue, was once run by Steven and his former wife, but is now in the hands of their daughter. Serena said: "It was pretty intense, the *Renegade Productions* filming team followed us for the best part of a year. "The documentary ended up being really funny - it showed a bit about each of our families as well as the wedding itself and our decision to take the Sheene Mill on. "I worked at the Sheene Mill from the age of 11; it has been the home to so many of my happy memories, from my childhood swims in the river, to the recent years." Serena's dad Steven runs The Little Geranium, located in La Cala de Mijas, which has become one of the most renowned restaurants on the coast. *The Wedding Day* is available to watch on 4OD online.



CLERIC FOR CEREMONY

Padre Peter

Don't take Lorna's word for it! Why not get in touch with him on padrepeter1@gmail.com and see what he can do for you? Then you might agree with Lorna.

Padre Peter - Words can't describe him, just fantastic and guests are still raving about the ceremony. My mum said it was one of the most romantic ceremonies she had ever seen. Brilliant... Lorna



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Same-sex marriage in Gibraltar was met with applause at the end of last year

GIBRALTAR finally joined the world's more forward thinking countries when it legalised gay marriage last year.

The gay marriage bill passed almost unanimously in parliament and was met with applause by residents on the Rock.

Despite coming some 11 years after Spain, the decision was met with praise from the majority of residents on the Rock.

Minister for Equality Samantha Sacramento said: "The change strengthens the vital institution of marriage and ensures that it remains an essential building block of modern society."

Aaron Mills and Adrian Charles Triay-Dignam became the first

Equality on the Rock



TRAILBLAZERS: Aaron and Adrian during their nuptials

same-sex couple to wed on the Rock on December 16 last year.

"I work for the Borders & Coast-guard Agency so I checked his passport and that's how we met," Aaron recalls.

"He used to spot me every day and one day he called me over to stamp my passport... and the rest is history," adds Adrian.

The fight for equal marriage in Gibraltar was fronted by the Equality Rights Group from 2012 - when the Rock lowered the consent age for same-sex relations to 16 - and took four years to win.

The couple had set their wedding date for December 2016 a year earlier, unaware that the marriage act would pass in time.

"A couple of days before our civil partnership, we got the call asking us to pop in and do all the paperwork again if we wanted to be the first to get married," Adri-

an recalls, "We flew all of Aaron's family from the UK over specifically for the ceremony."

The pair received a warm congratulations from Chief Minister Fabian Picardo.

"To see everyone come together and really dress up made it that much more special for us."

And with camera and film crews present to mark the historic day, it was only a matter of time before the story grabbed the attention of the world's press.

"I received calls from Australia and Spain and we were even in *Pink News*," Aaron gushes.

The momentous day brought Gibraltar in line with the rest of the free world, and reminded everyone that love is love, no matter who it is between. As Adrian says: "Love is waking up in the morning, looking at the person next to you and thinking 'my god, I'm so lucky.'"

'I received calls from Australia and Spain and we were even in *Pink News*'

WHAT YOU NEED

Civil marriage (non-Catholic): In Andalucia the following are generally required, but do vary from town to town

1. Birth certificate (with sworn translation)
2. Passport
3. Consular registration certificate
4. Consular 'no impediment' to marriage certificate
5. Proof of Spanish residency: through copy proving empadronamiento

Catholic: The Archbishop has the final say but, generally required

1. Baptism certificate
2. Sworn declaration by parents that son/daughter is single



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22 Wedding special

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Bouquet for the virgin

WEDDING customs vary across Spain and in some areas, for example, the bride offers her bouquet to the Virgin Mary; while in others it's given to a best friend or thrown into the crowd. It is also common to throw rice, not confetti, over the bride and groom.



Church challenge

CHURCH weddings have hit an all time low in Spain as couples opt for more non-religious ceremonies. Only 22.2% of 68,560 couples tied the knot at the country's Catholic altars in the first half of 2016. That is a huge fall from the same period in the year 2000, when 75% had a Catholic ceremony. Barcelona province had the lowest number of Christian ceremonies in mainland Spain, at only 10.5%. Malaga saw the least in Andalusia, with 21.6%.

Shoe-mento

EVERYONE likes a memento of their special day, and if you're a shoe-lover, look no further than expat artist Debbie Lush.

Debbie, from Dublin, has exhibited across Ireland, Dubai and Marbella and most recently signed with the exclusive Atrium gallery. One of her most famous collections is that of Christian Louboutin and Manolo Blahnik shoes.

"They became very popular in Ireland, and suddenly brides and bridesmaids were asking me to paint the shoes they were wearing on the big day," explains Debbie, 37, who also gives private art classes.

"It's a real nice memento and something a bit different, and they are all painted with oil and can come



LOCAL TALENT: Debbie

framed." For more information contact Debbie on 658 497 186 or dlushdesigns@gmail.com or visit www.lushdesigns.ie



Beat the heat

IN Andalusia, summer weddings unsurprisingly take place at around 7 or 8pm, after the oppressive heat of the day has subsided. After a short wedding ceremony it's usually off to a local restaurant - or 'celebrations' venue - for the set meal or buffet with plenty of wine that flows until the early hours until no guests are left!



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LOOKING your best for the nail-biting big day means making sure you have every tiny detail covered, right down to your fingertips.

Paul has always acquired an amazing following of clientele, hence the Paul Foster Nail Boutique opened in Marbella two years ago and has been fully booked ever since. But that's no surprise as the head honcho's pre-nuptial pampering parties are the toast of the coast.

"I love having wedding parties," Paul says, "It's amazing being a part of someone's special day, and we get such a great atmosphere in the boutique."

His reviews will give you a clue, with 47 out of 49 giving the salon's polished performance a five-star rating on Facebook. And it's no surprise, as brides and hens can get the whole salon to themselves and receive the full works.

"We supply champagne, tapas and snacks, it's a real personal service, they only get this day once so we always want to make it special. The salon isn't probably what you are imagining also, the high spec salon is designed to a different level."

Paul has been in the beauty business since he was 16 when he was soon bitten by the manicuring bug and now has many years experience as a master nail technician under his belt, including a stint at world-class Harrods of London and years of offering bespoke mobile services to a little black book of exclusive global clients.

"This isn't my job, it's my passion, I love coming to work," he enthuses. "We all do, and I think that shines through to the customers and makes them feel happy too."

Paul opened up his shop in 2014 after switching Leeds for Marbella some nine years ago. Now this San Pedro boutique is nailing it with extra services, including waxing, and is willingly tak-

ing more professionals on board his fabulous team. They will join Paul and the ever-friendly Ivana and Rachel, who make it their mission to have you feeling fabulous when you walk out of the door. You can be guaranteed the perfect start to your wedding in the hands of Paul and his team, whose business motto rings true: 'Arrive as a customer, leave as a friend.'

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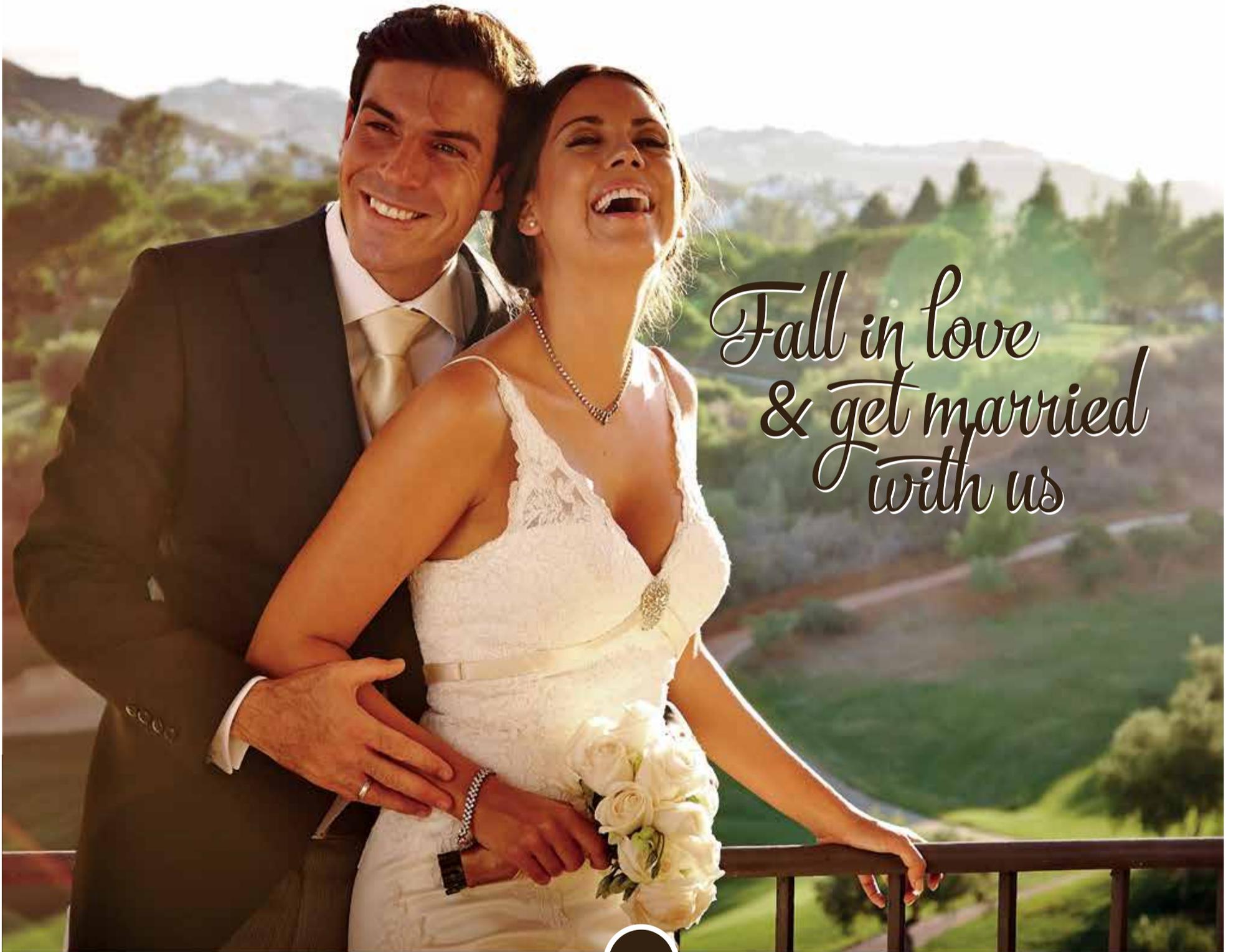
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