

All about Andalusia weddings

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Claire Chiappe on the trials and tribulations of getting married in Spain

ONE sunny afternoon back in 1998 my husband got down on one knee and made the most romantic of proposals; Right on top of a mountain in the Serrania de Ronda, surrounded by goats and a bemused looking goat herd!

Of course I said 'yes', and from that moment on we began a journey into the unknown and, as much as anything, the world of Spanish bureaucracy!

We quickly discovered that getting married here was going to prove quite a challenge, especially in those cloudy 'pre-internet days' when you relied on local priests, town hall clerks and the occasional expat 'aficionado' to provide semi-accurate and sometimes conflicting information.

We found it a real learning experience and had soon created a thick file on the subject, (so good was it that even the British Embassy called us once or twice to confirm a few facts!).

After gleaning a wealth of information and armed with a local newspaper's classified section for local florists and photographers we set out to arrange our own wedding.

All in all it took us six months and I remember, following the wedding, somebody casually mentioned that we should start our own wedding business.

It was said as a joke, but with all the information we'd compiled, we actually took it seriously and our first 'baby' was born, 'The Wedding Service'.

Now a decade-and-a-half later with two more babies in tow and still happily mar-

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Splice up your life!

Picture credit: Talia Giraudo at www.thoroughlygeous.com



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ried (well, we've weathered the odd Costa storm or two like most couples!) we have plenty of weddings under our belts. From large churches to small chapels, country fincas to big seaside dos we have done the lot. There have rarely been dull moments, plus some hairy times too, for example sitting outside the law courts in Malaga waiting for the right judge to appear.

Farmer

Then there were the hours spent at Estepona Register Office, circa 1999, watching the clerk laboriously type out on her ancient typewriter the paperwork for a marriage application, tippex-ing out the mistakes. These were the days before the term 'Wedding Planner' even hit the pages of *Bride Magazine*. Looking back over the last decade or so we have had some memorable moments! They include the organist who failed to arrive at the church as his wife had gone into labour and me desperately sending the wedding car round the block to give us time to find a replacement. Then there was Jamie chashing around farmland in an

Never a dull moment



IDYLLIC: It is not just the weather that makes a Spanish wedding. Here, a charming hotel near Gaucin

attempt to find the farmer, who supplied the white homing doves, to be released romantically in the glorious surroundings of a luxury five star hotel and forced to sit up all night keeping an eye on the doves just in case one died. Those and many more little details, but on a positive note, for all the responsibility, it is a wonderful and happy vocation, very rewarding

when you see the happiness and joy that comes through on the day. We have also recently been asked if we organise divorces. Tough to tackle on the legal front, but food for thought... we are always up for a good party!

Claire Chiappe is the owner of *The Wedding Service* www.weddingservice-spain.com

Frances Leate ponders whether Spain is a land of romance or are the Spanish dead between the sheets?

Spanish romantic?...hmm

I HAVE always considered myself as a bit of a Bridget Jones-type, drowning in wine and experiencing endless disappointments in love all the while wearing pin-striped pyjamas and singing love ballads on the sofa. Well, not really, but I have had my fair share of crushes on inappropriate men and not nearly enough Mr Darcy types to sweep me off my feet. So moving to Spain presented me with a new opportunity to find Mr Right. I hate to generalise, but I was done with beer-swilling Brits with their eyes glued to the football every night or career-obsessed Englishmen waking at the crack of dawn just to beat their boss to work. I wanted butterflies-in-the-stomach romance, of the distinctly Spanish-kind. I imagined quickly finding a Javier Bardem-type, passionate and intense with a penchant for grand romantic gestures. Outgoing, flirtatious and sexy, the Latino lover stereotype wasn't something I was entirely unfamiliar with. A few years back I found myself knee deep in love with a Cuban. My pina colada-induced romance didn't last much longer than my two week holiday though, especially after I found out that a wife, girlfriend, lover and a bit on the side was all par for the course for a *Cubano*. However, with recent statistics showing that Spanish children are



DISHY: Bardem-types are scarce the most stable in the world, with nearly 90% growing up with both birth parents still together, the idea of a multi-dating Casanova didn't really fit with the huge value Hispanic people seem to place on family life. I sought the help of newly acquired Spanish friend, Diego. A handsome (imagine Julio Iglesias in his hip thrusting prime) man of about 30. Single (or so he says) and looking for romance. He explains: "I don't think Spanish men are any different to men in England or other parts of Europe or even Latin America. "I think Spanish men do love to flirt and can be romantic, but only with the right girl. "Some British women are more likely to give everything away after the first few dates and if you haven't had to work for it I don't think you value it. "But in the end, most single men are really looking for someone to be with long-term. "Family is the most important thing in Spain and I know people think us

AVOID THE WEDDING WOES



To avoid some of the heartbreaking scenarios some couples find themselves in after being swindled by so-called 'wedding planners', Laura Charles, of Reviva Weddings, has a few tips to ensure your wedding day comes off without a hitch

IS your wedding planner insisting you put all your budget into his or her account to book the suppliers on your behalf or is he organising your payments to the suppliers directly? Beware, if you are paying money for the suppliers to the planner, the planner could well be covering up the true supplier costs and marking up the prices. It is a huge risk to hand over your entire wedding budget to one person, regardless of how much you trust them. If you are paying the suppliers directly, overseen by your planner, then you know the actual costs involved and your planner will obtain individual receipts and confirmation of booking from every supplier involved. There are stories about planners bullying suppliers, whether it is photog-

raphers or cake makers, etc, into building in commissions into their prices in order to pay wedding planners. So despite paying your planner a rock bottom bargain fee of €800 chances are he may well be taking €800 again by the venue, plus another €400 or so in commissions from the suppliers. This means the client has paid nearly €2,000 to this planner without even realising it, while suppliers may feel underpaid. If the suppliers are being paid what they are worth then they are happy and will breeze into your wedding without having to worry about cutting corners and scraping back that 10 or 20%.

For more top tips visit www.theweddingdecorator.blogspot.com



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weddings special

The best of both worlds



SETTING: The location really appealed to Crossley (right)

By Mason Jones

JUST five minutes from the beach and 15 from the white-washed village of Mijas Pueblo sits the perfect Andalucian wedding venue.

Hotel Tamisa Golf, located in the hills above Fuengirola, offers the best of both worlds when it comes to tying the knot in Spain.

With easy access to both the tourism hotspots and the more traditional Spain, Tamisa provides a perfect middle ground overlooking the Costa del Sol.

Surrounded by picturesque gardens, the luxury four-star hotel has been the choice of hundreds of couples looking to wed in Spain.

Priding itself on peace and quiet, it is easy to see why famous faces flock to the relaxing hide-away.

Vinnie

Vinnie Jones, Rolf Harris and Spice Girl Melanie C are just some of Tamisa's previous clients.

From footballers to film-stars, the hotel has seen its fair share of celebrity guests both on the nearby golf course and at wedding ceremonies.

"Discretion is paramount, and all our guests are assured of the utmost courtesy and privacy to enjoy the hotel's facilities in complete anonymity without any hassle," explains hotel manager John Peach.

Ex-Nottingham Forest goal-keeper Mark Crossley, who recently got married at Tamisa, has nothing but praise for the hotel.

"The setting, the garden, the food, the staff, the atmosphere were all perfect and we couldn't have asked for more," he tells *the Olive Press*.

"All our family and friends commented on how beautiful

the hotel is and how fantastic the whole day was.

"We will definitely be returning for our first anniversary next year," he added.

Visit www.hoteltamisagolf.com

Why celebrities such as footballer Mark Crossley choose Tamisa hotel to get married

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