



Destination Weddings – Are You a “Destination”?

With the special events industry taking our financial “knocks” this year, we have heard (and rightly so) a **lot of buzz** about weddings being the “recession proof” market to target. Absolutely correct! But let’s get a little more specific about one market in particular. . .

We have been saying all year that brides today may be trying a skimp a little on their budgets (cutting the guest list being the first place they try to save). A survey conducted for Destination Weddings & Honeymoons magazine forecasted that the average budget for a traditional wedding fell 7% in the past year to \$20,398 as a national average. **Where is the good news here?** The fact is that they are all still hosting the event, and multiple wedding related events at that. That in itself is good news. More pointedly, the same survey also revealed that the destination weddings market will grow to \$16 billion this year from \$13 billion in 2008, extending a streak that has seen the market boom from just \$3 billion in 2001. **Now that’s the kind of news we like to hear!**

When talking about destination weddings, most people automatically think tropical or exotic locales – Mexico, Caribbean, Europe, Hawaii, etc. Destination weddings are defined as a wedding taking place outside of a 100 mile radius from the bride & groom’s home town. The “destination” does not have to be a beach or island location – **just “away”**. In a recent Beverly Clark survey of our brides, for those stating that they were having a destination wedding (56%), Florida, California, Arizona, New York and Georgia all made it into the top ten as to where the event would be held!

So, have you ever considered yourself a destination wedding venue? Here are a few things to think about when trying to break into this booming market:

1. Do the work. Take time to speak to industry destination wedding experts to determine if your location is destination wedding friendly, and what you could do to attract and book more events
2. Becoming known as a destination wedding hot spot is all in the knowledge of your sales team and the marketing of your property. Become keenly aware of all the local area cultural points of interest and things that would be attractive to out of town guests. Market your property as a destination by showcasing all that you have to offer as well as the surrounding area
3. Build relationships with event planners and travel agents who specialize in destination weddings and events – they will bring you the best events!
4. If brides contact you directly, also refer them to a great event planner (one that you have built a relationship with in #4, above) who can handle all aspects of the destination event that you cannot handle – guest travel, invitations, welcome amenities, event design and décor, activities, etc.
5. Market (advertise) your business on a wider scale – not just to local markets. Research to determine where your “pull” market is from and advertise to specific, targeted areas.

For wedding industry vendors outside of hotels, resorts, event venues, country clubs, wineries, etc., the same theory applies. Determine if your business or service “can travel” and if you actually want to! Then, do # 1 – 5 above as well as researching what the local vendors have to offer so you see what you are competing against and why you are better. Why would a bride pay to transport you to her event when she could book local? You **MUST** have a great answer to this question. Trust me, the brides will be asking the same thing.

Never thought of yourself as being in the destination wedding market before? **Well, maybe it’s time to re-think it!**

For more information on the **Beverly Clark Hospitality Training Programs**,
please contact **Lynne LaFond DeLuca** at lynne@beverlyclarkenterprises.com
and visit our website at www.beverlyclarktraining.com

Beverly Clark Enterprises
114 East Haley, Suite K Santa Barbara, CA 93101
800.933.3434