

Headline	Whimsical wedding fantasies		
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**Star 2**

# *I do, Malaysia*

With its wide variety of scenic locations, Malaysia is on its way to becoming the go-to place in South-East Asia for destination weddings, helping to further boost the country's burgeoning tourism industry. >2

— Photo: Tourism Malaysia



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# Whimsical wedding fantasies

Malaysia is an ideal destination for couples who are looking for that extra something special on their wedding day.

By MING TEOH

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TRAVELLING to a special destination to get married has become increasingly in vogue with today's modern couples who are often looking for something different from the norm for their special day.

At the World Travel Market in London, Luxury Weddings Worldwide founder Susan Barone revealed that "the global wedding industry is worth US\$300bil (RM1.23tril), and that it is almost recession proof and growing continuously". She was moderating the first "Say I do to the destination wedding market and enhance your brand" discussion at the international travel trade show.

Barone emphasised that the two very different business areas of travel and weddings are even more successful when brought together.

According to luxury wedding planner Bruce Russell, destination weddings are not just about the wedding couple, but often, it also involves the couple's family members and guests too. He noted that besides Western destinations, Asian countries are also popular wedding destinations, and couples often have a theme such as a beach or lakeside wedding or getting married in the mountains.

In fact, a report in *The Malaysia Reserve* states the wedding industry as being one of the nation's most lucrative businesses. It is worth up to RM7bil a year and there are approximately 300,000 couples that tie the knot annually.

Destination weddings and pre-wedding celebrations are also increasingly popular here, with the country's great variety of scenic locations to take wedding portraiture. The country's rich cultural heritage and delicious cuisine also make it an ideal wedding (and holiday) destination for couples from overseas.

Tourism Malaysia encourages the development of the wedding market and is actively promoting the country as a destination for wed-

dings and to take wedding photographs. The tourism board has provided industry players with platforms to market their wedding and pre-wedding services at international travel events.

It also works closely with the Association of Wedding Professionals in Malaysia. The association was formed to increase awareness of the wedding business and serves as an umbrella for wedding industry professionals, as well as to ensure a consistently high quality of service to wedding couples in Malaysia.

For local and international couples looking to take their wedding photos or get married in Malaysia,

the country has many locations that could provide you with inspiring ideas for themes.

There are also lots of amazingly beautiful places at which newlyweds can have their romantic honeymoon.

## Forest fantasy

Get married in natural surroundings against the backdrop of lush green forests, serenading jungle creatures, and perhaps even a waterfall. Think Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* if this is your dream concept for your wedding photographs or reception.

But remember to slather on some insect repellent to keep the mosquitoes and bugs away, though.

If you're feeling adventurous and would like to take your wedding shots in the jungles of Peninsular Malaysia, you might want to consider Taman Negara, Forest Reserve Institute Malaysia (FRIM), KL Forest Eco Park, Templer Park, Hutan Pendidikan Bukit Gasing, Belum-Temenggor Forest and Chamang Waterfall.

Of course, the jungles in Sabah and Sarawak are also beautiful, but some may be a little difficult to access.

Some places, such as FRIM, charge a fee for using the premises

for photography, so do check with the right authorities beforehand.

## Glorious gardens and lovely lakes

If you enjoy nature and the outdoors, but want to be closer to civilisation, then perhaps you might prefer a garden or a lakeside wedding.

Imagine beautiful blooms, shady trees, pretty ribboned garden chairs, chiffon billowing in the breeze, and fairy lights strung up on trees. All this in a lovely garden setting which might perhaps be by a river or lake.

Do bear in mind that weather



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If you do plan to do a wedding photoshoot at the beach, make it a fun one!

conditions are very important for such outdoor celebrations, so if your wedding is during the monsoon season, this is probably not the theme for you.

If you'd like to take your wedding photos in a garden or lakeside setting, check out Perdana Botanical Gardens, Kepong Metropolitan Park, Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, KL Bird Park and Taman Lembah Kiara in Kuala Lumpur; Putrajaya Botanical Gardens in Putrajaya; Taiping Lake Gardens in Perak; and Seremban Lake Gardens in Negri Sembilan.

### Padi field pizzazz

Here's a variation on the nature theme. If you've been inspired by the movie *Crazy Rich Asians* and its glamorous padi field wedding scene, how about taking your wedding photos or even having your wedding near padi fields? Head for Sekinchan in Selangor or Alor Setar in Kedah to scout for the perfect location.

Do remember that there are specific seasons if you want green – or golden – padi fields. For example, the best times to head for Sekinchan are in March and April or September and October for those fields of green. For golden padi fields, the best times would be from early May to June, and November.

### Idyllic islands and beaches

Sea, sand, and sunshine. If a beach or island themed wedding is your dream, then, you're in luck!

There is no lack of beautiful beaches and islands in tropical Malaysia. What's nice about having a beach or island wedding is that you can stay on for your honeymoon. And, of course, nothing beats a glorious sunset at the beach.

Places to consider: Langkawi in Kedah, Pangkor in Perak, Port Dickson in Negri Sembilan, Sepang Gold Coast in Selangor, Tioman in Pahang, Redang and Perhentian in Terengganu, Tunku Abdul Rahman National Park in Sabah and Satang in Sarawak.

### Under the sea

How about an underwater wedding? This concept is only suitable for certified scuba divers, obviously. And it is not just the bride and groom who would need to know how to dive, the person solemnising the wedding would need to be a diver too, as well as the photographer.

You also have to factor in waterproof equipment for the photoshoot.

This theme is definitely unusual, but aside from the diving part, there are many other issues to take into account.

Some places to check out for an underwater themed wedding photography session are Mabul and Matakang in Sabah, as well as

Redang and Lang Tengah in Terengganu.

### Majestic mountains

If you would rather chill than bask in the tropical heat, then head for the hills. There are several hill resorts where you can enjoy a mountain-themed wedding. Head to Fraser's Hill or Cameron Highlands in Pahang, or Bukit Larut in Taiping, Perak, if you prefer something closer to the city.

For something more adventurous where some hiking or climbing is required, check out Gunung Irau in Pahang. Known as the "mossy forest", you might feel like you're in New Zealand or *The Lord Of The Rings* movie.

The other place adventurous couples could check out is Mount Kinabalu in Sabah, although everyone in your party would need to be fit enough to scale the majestic mountain for that.

### Mysterious caves

There are several caves in Malaysia where you can actually get married in. If you're taking pictures, be mindful of the creatures living in the cave as they are probably not too fond of bright lights and flashes.

Adventurous couples may even want to try rockclimbing or abseiling for a fun photoshoot.

Check out Batu Caves in Selangor, and Mulu and Niah Caves in Miri, Sarawak. For cave wedding photo sessions that involve rockclimbing or abseiling, try Damai Wall at Batu Caves.

### Urban delight

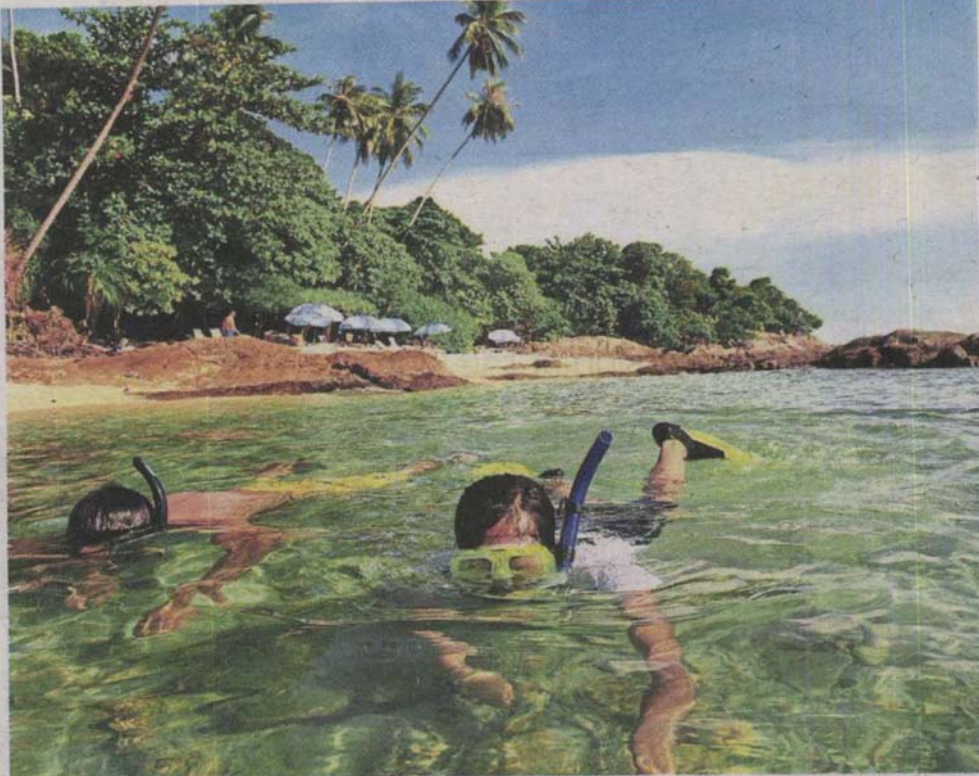
If you prefer something more modern, then look no further than the big cities of Peninsular Malaysia. At Putrajaya, there are many modern buildings and architecture set amid beautifully landscaped surroundings that are perfect for your photoshoot or even wedding ceremony.

How about having the Petronas Twin Towers, the Sultan Abdul Samad Building or Petaling Street in KL as a backdrop for your pictures?

There are many options in Melaka or Penang for a variation of this urban photoshoot, too, featuring heritage buildings, street art and yes, street food.



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If you love the idea of an 'undersea' wedding theme, but you can't scuba dive, how about snorkelling instead?



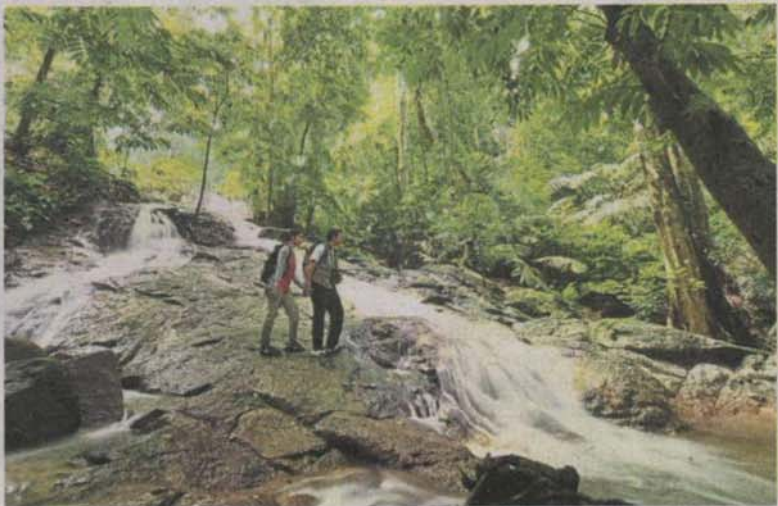
If you're more of a city couple, then an urban photoshoot from a highrise building with a view of the city skyline might be more your cup of tea.



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Bukit Larut in Taiping, Perak.



You can take your wedding photos at FRIM, too.



A wedding in a cave is a novel idea.



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Get married at beautiful forests like the KL Forest Eco Park.



KL Bird Park would make for a gorgeous setting for your wedding pictures.

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