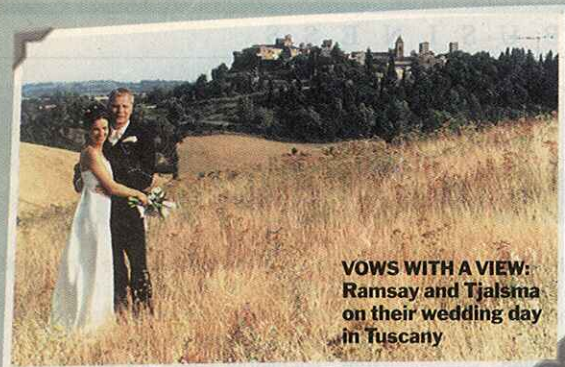


TIME

Peace Is Hell

Three months after Baghdad fell, the Allies
are still struggling to bring order out of chaos.
Is this any way to run an occupation?





VOWS WITH A VIEW:
Ramsay and Tjalsma
on their wedding day
in Tuscany



LET'S BE CIVIL: Israelis
who can't (or won't) have
religious weddings are
flocking to Bulgaria

SOCIETY

FLY ME TO THE MOON

What's new in nuptials? Destination weddings are the rage across Europe, in Tuscan villas, Austrian castles...even Bulgarian registry offices

By AISHA LABI

WHEN ANGELA RAMSAY AND HENK Tjalsma decided to get married, they had to make a Solomonic choice. She's British and he's Dutch, so a wedding on either's home turf would have meant an overseas trip for the other's family. So they opted for Tuscany, inviting only their closest relatives. "We'd been on holiday there and just fell in love with it," says Ramsay. Some Internet research led the couple to settle on a ceremony in the town of Certaldo, and to entrust the planning to WeddingItaly by Punto di Fuga, an Udine-based company that handles 200 weddings a year and arranged the paper work, ceremony, photography, flowers and reception. When Ramsay and Tjalsma were married last month in Certaldo's 12th century governor's palace, the wedding went off without a hitch. It was presided over by a representative of the town's mayor—assisted by a translator.

Fewer Europeans are getting married now than a generation ago, but when they

do wed, more of them, like Ramsay and Tjalsma, are looking for unusual ways to say I do. It used to be that marrying away from home meant sneaking off to elope. Not anymore. So-called destination weddings have long been popular with adventurous Americans and Japanese couples seeking alternatives to expensive ceremonies at home. Today, an estimated one-third of U.S. couples combine wedding and honeymoon into one big getaway—or "weddingmoon"—usually with friends and relatives in tow. But destination weddings are growing in popularity among Europeans, thanks to some of the same factors that have fueled the trend in the U.S. As the marriage age increases, older couples are more determined to take control of their weddings, especially since they're likely to be footing the bill. According to one recent survey, more than 10% of U.K. couples now choose destination weddings, up from 6% five years ago, and the figure is rising quickly as tour operators and vacation venues—hard hit by slowdowns in the travel industry—scramble for a bigger share of the bridal business.

Wedding planners report that the trend is also catching on in Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, with couples heading to the sunnier climes of southern Europe to exchange vows.

Long-haul locales like the Caribbean or Las Vegas attract plenty of couples, but for larger weddings—150 guests is about as big as destination weddings get—couples are more likely to remain closer to home. "It's less a case of getting married on a beach in the Caribbean these days," says Vikki Berg, travel editor at *Brides* magazine in the U.K. "People prefer to go off to a villa in Italy instead." Tuscany and Umbria are the most popular venues—though Italians themselves, like the French and Spanish, still tend to wed at home. Ireland, Austria, Malta and Cyprus are also popular choices. Bulgaria has become a favored spot for Israelis, who have to travel abroad for civil ceremonies as these aren't permitted under Israeli law. Most of the couples understand Bulgarian because they're immigrants from the former Soviet Union who don't meet strict Orthodox rabbinical requirements.

WEDDINGITALY BY PUNTO DI FUGA TRAVEL CO.; PETAR PETROV—SPECTRUM PICTURES