



THE
WEDDING SCHOOL
DESTINATION WEDDINGS

THE MYTH

- ▶ You'll get to see the world, and someone else will pay for it!
- ▶ Destination weddings are "high end"
- ▶ Destination weddings are all glamorous
- ▶ Every destination is an awesome one
- ▶ Destination weddings pay a lot of money
- ▶ Destination weddings are fun vacations



THE REALITY

- ▶ You barely see where you go because you're too afraid to leave your gear or cards in a hotel room
- ▶ You travel across the world...to shoot in a Hilton that looks just like your downtown Hilton...at home
- ▶ Someone will always undercut you for that "free vacation"
- ▶ Clients tend to feel like they own you for the time you're there, even when you're not working





THE REAL REALITY

- ▶ Destination weddings can be fun
- ▶ You have to price yourself wisely
- ▶ You have to consider all of your logistics
- ▶ You have to firmly manage client expectations
- ▶ You have to know precisely what you're getting yourself into
- ▶ Don't be swayed by the "rock star" allure of a "free trip", and you'll be fine!



PRICING FOR PROFITABILITY



CONSIDER YOUR COSTS

- ▶ The “free vacation” aspect of it needs to be taken off of the table. This is a WORK TRIP!
- ▶ How long will you have to be gone, realistically? I always leave a buffer day, so four days at the most
- ▶ How much income will you lose over those four days?
- ▶ What other costs will you incur?
- ▶ What costs aren't you considering?



TRAVEL COSTS

- ▶ Flight for you and an assistant - I always bring my assistant/2nd with me and do not hire locally unless I know the photographer already
- ▶ Lodging for at least four nights - one room or two?
- ▶ Meals all day, every day, for you and your assistant/staff
- ▶ Transfer fees from airport to hotel, rental car, uber, car service
- ▶ Snacks and sundries in the airport, hotel, and while traveling
- ▶ Taxes, fees, and small upcharges everywhere : wifi in hotel, etc.
- ▶ You should not have to bear any of these costs on a business trip!



LOSS OF INCOME?

- ▶ If you regularly shoot multiple weddings per weekend, what happens if you're traveling?
- ▶ If you run a studio and shoot portraits, what happens if you're traveling?
- ▶ What else do you stand to make that weekend?
- ▶ Does it matter what time of year it is? For example, I almost never have doubles in January, but often have triples in June
- ▶ I'm only open for destinations in the winter months



CREATING A PACKAGE

- ▶ One day of lost wedding income (profit, since I won't have any costs associated because I won't have staff, assistant, etc.) : \$4,500
- ▶ Two days of lost potential engagement session income or portrait income : \$3,000
- ▶ Can I really add \$7,500 to my base rate just to leave the state or country?
- ▶ If you don't, you stand to lose money on the wedding instead of profit
- ▶ Be realistic about your income losses. Will you really lose another wedding? Will you really lose studio income?



MY TRAVEL PACKAGE

- ▶ My top package only : \$9,500
- ▶ This includes an album and an engagement session, that only for destination weddings will I turn into an additional hour of coverage
- ▶ I add lost income to that, which is about \$5,000 : the profit from one wedding and one portrait shoot
- ▶ I add extra money for food and sundries...and to pay my staff more
- ▶ That collection is now \$14,500
- ▶ The client will reimburse me for my flights, hotel, and transportation



**\$15,500 IS A
TYPO, RIGHT?**

IT'S NOT A TYPO

- ▶ If I am going to leave the country, I have to be compensated for my time
- ▶ If I want a vacation, it won't be while I'm working
- ▶ If the wedding is in the off-season, the up charge for "lost income" is somewhere I can start negotiating. I won't lose income if it was probably never going to be income in the first place
- ▶ You charge what you're worth at home. Why wouldn't you do that when you leave home?

THE TRAVEL LOGISTICS



AIRFARE AND FLIGHTS

- ▶ Get a camera bag that can fit under your seat, even in a small commuter plane
- ▶ Split your gear between yourself and your assistant, if you can
- ▶ I prefer direct flights, and I upgrade whenever I can afford to...and I book my own flights, always
- ▶ Keep a list of your gear and serial numbers at home, just in case
- ▶ Make sure your insurance covers you if you leave the country



MAKING IT LEGAL

- ▶ I refuse to shoot out of the country unless I can do it legally
- ▶ ...sorry, Canada!
- ▶ I won't pretend to be a tourist, I won't lie and say I'm on vacation, I just won't, the end!
- ▶ travel . state . gov, and look for visas
- ▶ Google is your friend
- ▶ If there is a cost, the client pays for it



WHAT ABOUT LODGING?

- ▶ I prefer to stay close by, but not where the bride and groom are staying
- ▶ I always book my own hotel, always
- ▶ Tripadvisor, Yelp, online reviews
- ▶ Do they have a room block somewhere?



SHOOTING THE WEDDING



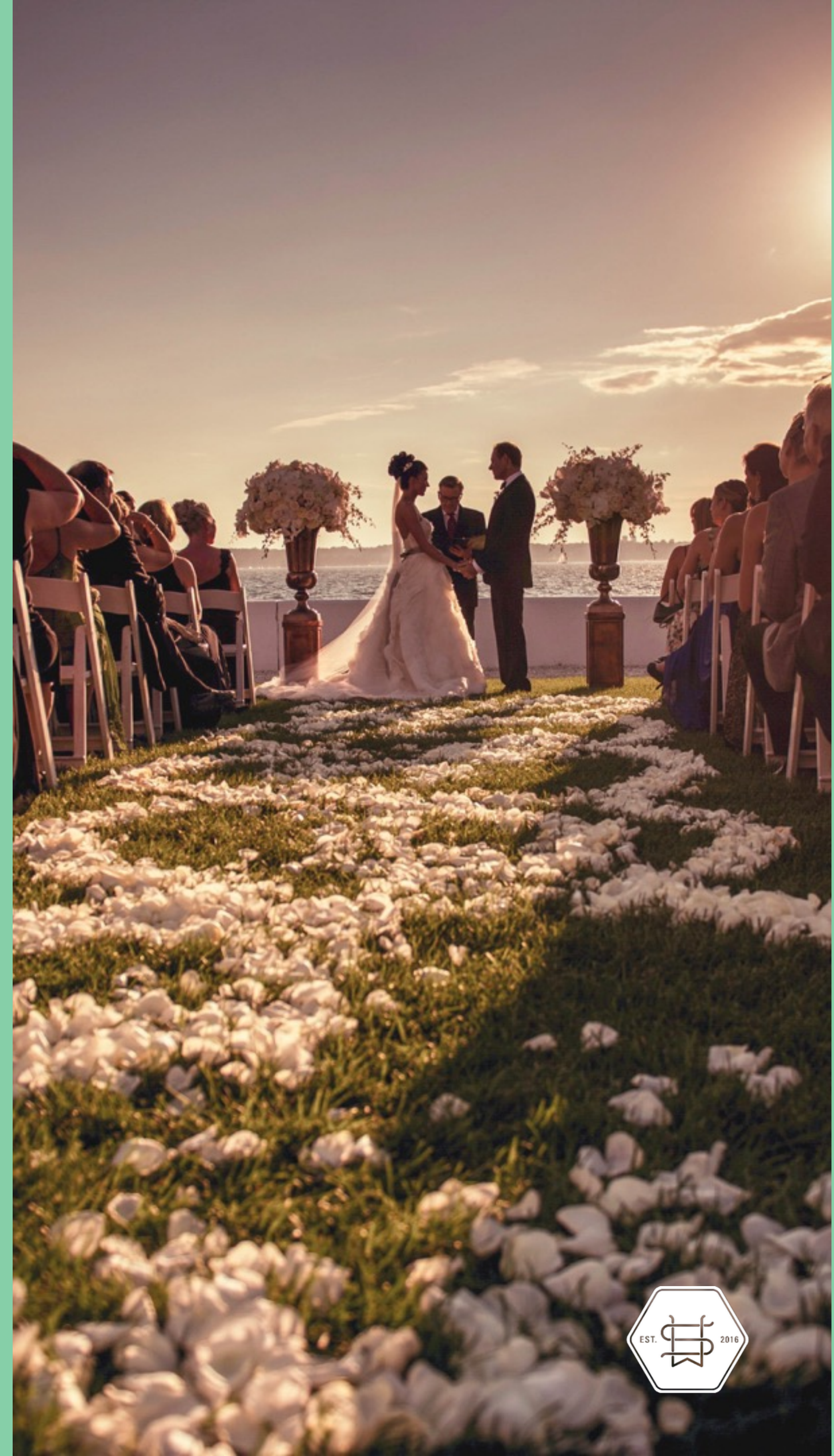
NOTHING IS DIFFERENT!

- ▶ I show up early, same as always
- ▶ I walk the venue on the day of the wedding, same as always
- ▶ Everything else is just the same as if I were shooting at home
- ▶ My time matters, just like at home
- ▶ I don't start early or stay late for free, just because I'm traveling



TRAVEL WORKFLOW

- ▶ Back up to laptop, using my standard folder structure and download process
- ▶ Back up to two external traveling hard drives... one goes in my gear bag, one in my suitcase
- ▶ Cards stay on me at all times, no matter what
- ▶ I don't back up RAWs to a cloud anywhere
- ▶ This is the part that stresses me out the most about traveling for weddings!



COMMON ISSUES AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS



PRE-WEDDING

- ▶ Other photographers are willing to undercut you to get that “vacation”
- ▶ Clients want to book your flight using their points
- ▶ Clients want to book your flight using their credit cards
- ▶ Clients want to make your hotel reservations
- ▶ Clients want to invite you to other wedding events “since you’ll be there!” and just want you to “have fun and take pictures if you want, but mostly have fun!”



WHILE TRAVELING

- ▶ Flights get delayed, cancelled, or re-routed
- ▶ Does your contract cover acts of god or travel disruptions? How?
- ▶ Weather causes major disruptions to travel plans
- ▶ The wedding is cancelled due to weather related issues
- ▶ You get stranded during a layover
- ▶ The airline wants to check your bag
- ▶ You have to check part of your gear and it gets lost



EVERYTHING ELSE

- ▶ Your flight back home is delayed, cancelled, or you get stuck
- ▶ You lose the cards, a backup drive, or your laptop
- ▶ The airline wants to check your bag on the way home
- ▶ Clients balk at travel fees or drag their feet on paying the final invoice



MARKETING DESTINATION WEDDINGS



SEO, SEO, SEO

- ▶ Watch Rob Greer's SEO video!
- ▶ ...watch it again!
- ▶ Keyword ranking for the venues and cities you want to work in
- ▶ Include the word "destination" in your text if you're truly targeting clients having destination weddings. That is probably what they'll be googling when doing research!
- ▶ I don't market for them much, though!

