Some cultures say rain for your wedding is good luck, but ask any British bride-to-be if she wants a downpour on her big day and you’ll be off the guest-list in less time than it takes to say ‘I do’.

Luckily, we’ve got sunkissed isles and breathtaking venues just a short-haul flight away – close enough for friends and family to come, but without the need to invite dozens of distant relatives.

Better yet, commission can be earned on everything from the ceremony to the honeymoon, and all the extras in between. Offer to arrange travel for the wedding party too and it could turn into an even more lucrative booking.

A HAPPY UNION

For ease and elegance, nothing beats a well-planned hotel ceremony; the wedding party can stay on-site and in many cases, a coordinator takes care of the details.

The latest additions to the Cypriot hotel scene, So White and So Nice Boutique Suites, make the perfect setting for a whiter-than-white wedding, with one of Ayia Napa’s best beaches and accommodation to suit couples and families in each of the sister properties.

It’s one of Planet Holidays’ top choices for wedding venues, but other favourites include the Anassa, Columbia Pissouri Beach Resort, Le Meridien Limassol Spa & Resort, and Palm Beach Hotel & Bungalows.

Cyplon recommends getting hitched in the landscaped gardens at Olympic Lagoon Resort, where the happy couple get extras including champagne and flowers on arrival, complimentary candlelit dinner, in-room breakfast with another bottle of bubbly, plus 15% off at the spa.

The new Unity Terrace at Alexander the Great Beach Hotel offers uninterrupted views over Paphos harbour and can accommodate up to 55 for dinner.

Cyplon also highlights St Nicolas Bay Resort Hotel & Villas in Crete, where the wedding package includes a decorated...
honeymoon suite, with private pool, for the wedding night, couples’ massage and a farewell dinner with wine.

Olympic Holidays’ favourite is five-star Atrium Palace Thalasso Spa Resort in Rhodes, where weddings take place on the edge of the beach so guests overlook the Aegean Sea without getting sand in their shoes. The hotel can organise a video feed to the UK for those who can’t make the journey, plus guests on a budget can swap the luxury hotel for self-catering Castle View Apartments in neighbouring Haraki, from £339 for a week.

Thomson’s weddings programme has been greatly expanded this year, with new destination Thassos, plus nine extra venues in Cyprus such as Louis Ledra Beach and Louis Phaethon Beach Club.

Beach brides

Some couples go abroad for that sand-between-the-toes ceremony, which is why Planet Weddings can now arrange weddings on public beaches outside Paphos and in Ayia Napa. Prices start at £675 including flowers and photographs, with a range of accommodation to suit all budgets.

The specialist operator also tips St Paul’s Bay in Lindos, Rhodes, as one of the best spots on this popular island, but Zante is the ‘dark horse’ of the market.

Managing director Mathilde Robert says: “Zante has been immensely popular with couples from the UK. It can cater for Catholic weddings, but its appeal is largely due to low-cost holidays for family and friends.”

The most popular venue is Porto Azzurro in Vassilikos, where the pair can tie the knot by the water’s edge then move to the on-site restaurant for their reception.

Also offering the best of both worlds are the gardens at five-star Skiathos Princess, which lead to Aghia Paraskevi Beach. The white-sand beach is complemented by a backdrop of pine tree-dotted hills and olive groves.

Olympic Holidays can arrange a gazebo for smaller receptions, or a candlelit beach party for bigger groups, and couples staying at least 14 nights in a junior suite enjoy extras including a spa session for two.

While Santorini’s black-sand beaches are stunning, steep cliffs also make them difficult to reach in some spots, but it is possible to enjoy those caldera views elsewhere. Ionian Weddings can arrange a Santorini Sunset Terrace ceremony with a champagne toast, before moving on to a vineyard in Pyrgos. The package starts at €5,215 for 35 people, including marriage licence and fees, registrar, venue hire, musicians, flowers, cake, photographer, transfers and a four-course meal at the reception.

Special ceremonies

If ever there were a day to feel extra special, it’s a wedding, so why not offer a ceremony as unique as your customers? Planet Weddings features Paphos
NEWS FROM GREECE

Islands of Greece has added luxury villas in Skiathos, including stylish Villa Jasmine, set in an olive grove with views across Kolios bay. Prices start at £739 for seven nights with flights, based on four sharing.

Western & Oriental now offers 25 Greek hotels in its Europe brochure. These include Mystique in Santorini, and the Aegean Suites in Skiathos.

CV Villas’ 2014 collection features new properties across Corfu, Lefkada, Paxos and Kefalonia. They include Villa Olivia in Lefkada, for up to eight people from £2,635; and in response to growing demand for Corfu, Villa Helidon near the northeast coast, with a private pool and accommodation for six, from £905. Both prices are per villa for a week, and include car hire, maid service and welcome hamper.

Islands of Greece

0845 675 2600

westernandoriental.co.uk
020 7666 1234

cvvillas.com
020 7563 7999

Set in stone: the Ottoman Baths, Paphos

Cool breeze: St Nicolas Bay Resort, Crete

Star performance: Cameo Island, Zante

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CASTLE, and has added the Larnaca Castle for 2014. This 14th-century site is at the end of Larnaca’s famed promenade of palm trees, and ceremonies are held in its beautiful inner courtyard or on the rooftop overlooking the Mediterranean Sea; for added value, the couple gets free transfers from any Larnaca hotel.

While a bathhouse might not seem like a classic spot to exchange vows, the cool stone walls of the renovated Ottoman Baths in Paphos make for another atmospheric setting. Ionian Weddings offers a package for 20 people from €2,790 plus a €282 licence fee, to include private ceremony, administration fees, flowers, photos and reception at the beachfront tavern. Thomson has also started featuring the baths in its wedding portfolio.

Couples get character combined with top-notch views at Argostoli Lighthouse in Kefalonia, where they can choose between exchanging vows at the lighthouse or by a traditional watermill. A full package for 20 people costs from €3,595 with Ionian Weddings.

Those seeking total seclusion for their nuptials can follow Olympic Holidays’ recommendation of the exclusive Cameo Island, offshore from Laganas on Zante (from €800-€1,000 for private hire). Weddings specialist Fanoulla Spyrou says: “The bride walks across the bridge to find her prince charming waiting on the other side, with the ceremony conducted against a sea-view backdrop.”

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