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Look Before You Leap

In case the intoxicating beauty of this coastal New England region distracts you from paying attention to practical details, we asked five prominent wedding planners in the region to give us their words of wisdom for couples thinking about getting married on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, or Nantucket.

♥ What is your best piece of general advice for couples contemplating a Cape or Islands wedding?

Send out an attractive, detailed Save-The-Date packet (including wedding and general island information). This will make travel planning more enjoyable for guests and will give them their first indication of what a wonderful experience the event will be. **Lynn Buckmaster-Irwin, Weddings On The Vineyard**

Be realistic! About the logistics, the costs to you and your potential guests, the travel needs and traffic concerns, the unpredictable weather. The Cape and Islands is a uniquely beautiful locale in which to host a wedding, but I cannot stress enough the importance of being sure that the venue options meet the needs and budget requirements necessary to deliver your event just the way you envision it. **Aimee Guethinger, Alfresco Events**

Plan ahead, and give your guests plenty of time to book their accommodations. Sending a Save-the-Date packet with all the information guests will need to make their reservations is also an excellent idea. **Jennifer Hentrich, Ocean Edge Resort and Golf Club**

Share your wedding dreams and visions with a professional wedding planner who knows the Cape towns (and their permitting rules) intimately. Not only will you save lots of time and money, but also this Cape connection will be a "year-round friend" to troubleshoot for you as the months go by. **Allison Wildes Liset, Elegant Engagements**

Plan ahead (12-18 months at least), and hire local vendors. Planning a wedding on Nantucket presents the same challenges and considerations as any destination wedding plus many, many more simply because it's an island. There is a wealth of talent right here, and by having a local contact a bride gets directly to that talent and is privy to all those "little secrets" only we know. **Maureen Sullivan, Nantucket Island Events**

♥ What is your favorite new idea for a wedding?

As an island favor for guests: Customized packets of local photographer Alison Shaw's cards, including a personalized back-insert message from the bride and groom. Perfect in a Vineyard welcome bag for each guest! **L.B.-I.**

Gospel choirs included in the ceremony have been the top new request from my 2005 brides. I just love the spiritual energy and enthusiasm a choir brings to the service! **A.G.**

A specialty drink is always fun at the reception. Say, a Cape Cod Cosmopolitan garnished with cranberries. **J. H.**

A formal beach wedding! In years past, only the small, casual and quick JP [Justice of the Peace] weddings were on the beach, but for this season we are breaking all the rules. Gorgeous chairs, lush fabrics, thousands of flowers, and hundreds of guests are making for some breathtaking "celebrity look" weddings on local beaches! **A.W.L.**

Hold your wedding in the off-season. In months other than June-September, the crowds are gone and the island takes on this mysteriously romantic feel. I love a fireside wedding followed by an exquisite candlelight dinner with great wine. If the snow flies . . . what a bonus! The price for events drops considerably, and most of the local talent is still here. **M.S.**

What is your favorite tried-and-true idea for a wedding?

♥ A group photo of all the guests, even if that number exceeds 200! As years go by, this special memory captured on film will be a cherished treasure. **L.B.-I.**

I suggest a getting-ready event designed to allow the women in the bridal party, as well as others close to the bride, the opportunity to support her as she prepares to take on the new role of wife. It is also a way to celebrate these all-important friendships among women. **A.G.**

It is always wonderful when you welcome your guests in their hotel rooms with a specialty gift, including an itinerary of events for the wedding weekend. **J. H.**

The seashell wedding theme on the Cape and islands is timeless. Tasteful in its muted color palette of pale pinks and beiges, the scallop shell is able to be elegantly woven into every aspect of the event—on invitations, chocolates, favors, menus, and programs. Even butter pats can be molded into a scallop shell! The wedding cake can be decorated with edible shells and dusted with brown sugar sand. It is a classic wedding look for a seaside wedding. **A.W.L.**

This is more of a philosophy than an idea: My mantra is "confirm, confirm, confirm." No matter what size, budget, or venue, confirming each vendor is a must! **M.S.**

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