



→ paper, and serving wedding banquets made with seasonal produce.

In other words, no matter whether you want to say “I do,” be it in the park with just the two of you or a wild surprise party for all your friends and family, there’s nothing to stop you from having exactly the wedding that suits you. These days, we can finally marry whom-ever, however, and wherever we want. Even if your family members, time-honored tradition, and Hollywood are whispering in your ear, you don’t have to have a text-book wedding for anyone else’s sake. Lots of couples are throwing off the shackles of convention, striking out on their own path, and—when they decide to get married—doing it their way.

“Lovebirds from the farthest corners of the Earth have come up with their very own vision of a dream wedding.”

Lots of wedding planners actually specialize in unusual weddings and can arrange fantastic celebrations ranging from outdoor ceremonies to action-based themes. For such professionals, no distance is too far, no mountain too high, and no dream too fantastical. At the same time, it’s perfectly possible to arrange a unique wedding all by yourself. Whether you’re into music, a certain lifestyle, or sports, a shared passion for something forms a unique and wonderful foundation to build upon. *What a Wedding!* showcases a lot of DIY ideas that are easy to adapt for your own celebration.

Amid all of the excitement, it’s important to remember that being able to freely choose your life partner is something that not everyone can enjoy. UNICEF

estimates that around 700 million women—and yes, men, too—are in forced marriages. In many parts of the world, marriage doesn’t equate to love. This is all the more reason to prize your union, which is entered into freely and with a loving heart, as something very precious indeed. The good news is that more and more countries around the world are now permitting same-sex marriages, allowing people in love to celebrate their feelings for one another openly.

Love knows no bounds, as the many happy couples in *What a Wedding!* can attest. Lovebirds from the farthest corners of the Earth have come up with their very own vision of a dream wedding. Many of the couples featured in this book mixed traditions from two different continents or cultures. Others transformed unusual places into incredible party venues, honored their shared history, or surprised their guests with personal touches. And they continue to be an inspiration long after their big day, as they were true to themselves and made their wedding their very own.

*What a Wedding!* is intended to get you thinking creatively about your own personal vision for your wedding day. So share another kiss and top up that champagne glass: Here’s to the happy couple!

*Marianne Julia Strauss is the author and co-editor of What a Wedding! She is planning her own wedding celebration, which will take place in Yosemite National Park, surrounded by family and close friends. Ultimately, she knows that the best kind of wedding is the one that makes you happy!*



*Previous double-page spread* Happy nuptials celebrate their big day in Los Angeles; drawing up invitations will be among the first items on your checklist. *This double-page spread* Expressive details like abundant colorful flowers and makeup will add drama to your wedding; the couple pictured above chose to have their wedding ceremony in Patagonia.