



What About Vietnam - Series 2 - 8

Vietnam - The perfect Wedding Destination

Kerry Newsome: So, Nadine Zeigeldorf we are talking about Vietnam as a wedding destination. There's going to be some places that stand out. What are the most popular cities in Vietnam for weddings?

Nadine Zeigeldorf: I think Vietnam overflows with extraordinarily beautiful places. Lots of people say Vietnam in the destination wedding categories as wanting to have something near the beach. For us I think the most popular choices would be the islands down in the south, Nha Trang, which is a really fun beach city; the extraordinary Ha Long Bay is a popular choice, and also of course **Hoi An** which is without a doubt everyone's favorite in the end.

Kerry Newsome: So much charm in Hoi An.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: And it's romantic with the beautiful, quiet little town with lanterns in the street. It that's magic.

Kerry Newsome: It's pretty. And you know it's got all those beautiful doors and the old town as a great background for photos and I can just imagine it in wedding photos easily.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: I think what's appealing about Hoi An in particular is we have an International Airport in Danang thirty minutes down the road. We have beautiful islands. We have fantastic beaches, we have a cute little river, we have the actual town that sits on the river we've got fabulous foods if you even wanted to explore the ethnic minorities, they're not so far away so in one location you have such an overflowing abundance of variety.

Kerry Newsome: Yes and I think it's that variety in the mix with culture & food you know. Lots of venues for every budget, all of that kind of thing that would make it extremely attracted.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Absolutely, and activities as well, they are also plentiful here. There is something for everyone. There is something for the kids' right up to grandma who you may have asked to join in the destination.

Kerry Newsome: You know some people may think it's a bit strange to be talking about weddings, you know we're in the midst of COVID but you know weddings get planned well in advance.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Absolutely, I mean we have to two types of couples. We have a couple who are fairly spontaneous who are traveling through. Sometimes, they go...You know it's amazing you know we got engaged in Ho Chi Minh City. We're going to get married in Hoi An. We do get that quite often for those who want to in a loop in terms of the grand celebration, and the celebration with family and friends.

In six to nine months tends to be the general kind of planning time, but people like to give the family and friends about twelve months notice, particularly if they've got to book a vacation at work. They need to plan their travels because they are waiting for many people, so you know I'm in Vietnam, it's not just the wedding, there's a whole travel experience that often leads to getting into the wedding point. People do like to give family and friends about twelve months.

Kerry Newsome: We cannot wait. I bet.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Yes, and that's great too.

Kerry Newsome: But I think if we're talking about some of the aspects that COVID has affected wedding plans. For some people they've got really dashed. You know like their weddings kind of got put on hold, or are canceled outright, or you know they are looking for another way to celebrate, and to get together and maybe in smaller numbers than previously considered. I would think that Vietnam as a wedding destination would definitely hit the note there for people.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Definitely, and I think you know we got a lot of people who are coming from various points across the globe.

So to exactly come to the middle (region of the globe) attention is appealing here, and to have a dedicated amount of time with family and friends. It's a busy life you often don't get time like this.

So we are finding that numbers seem to be between twenty to forty, maybe fifty to sixty, which is still relatively small for some weddings, but we have you know couples who are coming;- the groom is coming from the U. K; and the bride from Australia for example, so people need to travel, so why not make an experience out of it. That's why Hoi An is so appealing and Vietnam in general. If people never travel to Asia I think it's a beautiful intro into the S.E Asia region.

Kerry Newsome: And I know when we got together to prepare for this. We kind of talked about and had bit of a giggle about the percentage of people that actually will attend? Because you know I thought that was something to think about. Because you know, if I'm going to invite people to an overseas destination, you know, will people come? I'm keen to get your answer for everyone on that one.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: It's definitely a thought. The destination wedding side of things is still new to people.

I know having a destination wedding is a big deal, because we think people won't travel, and I always caution people and say please be careful, because from my experience. YES, they will.

You will get ninety, ninety five percent of your invited guests will say yes, so do be aware. It's because Vietnam is still intriguing to so many people. People want to travel to Vietnam and if you've got a beautiful event like a wedding to travel for, why not. That's the perfect excuse to book that ticket and plan a trip that you've been dreaming off.

And then of course you have the culmination of this beautiful love setting you know here in magic Hoi An. But I think I told you about the story where a lovely couple, who were based in Hong Kong. She was from Australia, he was from the U. S. She said I'm inviting two hundred people. I aid, I think about seventy to eighty will come so be careful.

I gave them my standard warning and then, sure enough we passed the ninety percent mark quite quickly, and I got a message from her everyday. I don't believe that four more people has confirmed and it was like this every day. She invited two hundred people and one hundred and ninety nine came.

Kerry Newsome: A hundred ninety-nine out of two hundred people came. WOW!

Nadine Zeigeldorf: You know I do tell that story very often as my bench mark because it is true. Vietnam is just magic.

Kerry Newsome: I don't think any of us need an excuse to go to Vietnam. But it is a great excuse to add to the process of making that booking, and just to get, you know all of the extras and as you say. The extra time with people, that you don't see that often. A wedding normally finishes at the end of the event, and that's the norm for a lot of people.

This is a chance to sort of hang around and experience the culture. I think it's a great idea. I wish I had thought about it. So now I'm going to get you to give us some ideas. What is a winning program? You kind of mentioned that it has some different elements and some different aspects in combination. Talk us through a wedding program typical or unusual.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: When you see the experience beyond the wedding itself. When we first meet our couples, we talk about the importance of it, and the importance that people traveling all over the world potentially, to come and be with them as a couple but also experience this amazing region.

We talk about that in the terms of a wedding week, because often that's what we do, we are planning multiple experiences for five to seven days. Because you want to WOW people.

Well, with the experienced people, they are sometimes traveling a long way to see you. So I say there's just so much more that we can fit in, to make this experience a lifetime memory beyond the wedding day.

Kerry Newsome: Some examples, like I think you mentioned a "welcome event". Can you talk to people about some of those and some other aspects. I mean I've seen some funny things in places around Vietnam wedding.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: I was thinking about who and which couple should I share some weddings experiences with, and the one that came to mind was Jaden Justin she's from the UK, he's from Australia so again that's classic situation, that we find a lot in our couples that someone needs to travel. With these guys they were both living in Australia, and family have met, and a lot of the friends in fact hadn't met so we discussed starting the week off with a bang. So yes okay welcome events of some sort is definitely something we recommend, but because many of these people had met I wanted to do something that would brake the ice a little bit, so we arranged a basketball competition. So if you've been to Vietnam you'll be very familiar with the circular boats on the river. They're not that easy to make to go straight in one line.

Kerry Newsome: They are not very steady.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: So we randomly call people from different sides of the globe, and different family members, and put them in a situation that forced them to engage, interact, have fun and just have something to talk about.

So not everybody goes off with the madness like that, but there are so many fabulous experiences to have here in terms of food and culture and activities.

So definitely a welcome event is a sure thing, whether it is a sunset barbecue or one night with a band on the beach.

Something in the ancient town is always something of interest; definitely the number one welcome event. Get everyone together to celebrate this beautiful tropical environment, that they've all landed in. And then let me break it down to two smaller groups traditionally. Sometimes we find that "out of the box" experience but it doesn't have to be that way. Sometimes, the bride wants to go off and do one thing, and the groom could do another and people can join them in those experiences. Either way.

But we find it gives people a little bit more of an intimate experience. Again, it's the sun & fun stuff. Hoi An you know, it goes "off" and great photo shots, pampering, some massaging, cocktail parties, cooking classes and those kinds of things.

The boys often want to be a little bit more adventurous and they might end up heading down to the big city in Danang. For those that have already met on the first night, it's just a lovely follow on from that. We also definitely encourage families to come to give family time and make it a bit of a priority. Maybe a couple of nights before the wedding, so that there was a bit more of an intimate experience because the day can be so busy. There's also tailoring which is also a fun experience that we can help with.

Kerry Newsome: I think the tailoring is an important one to mention. Because I've seen the whole wedding party, come and get all of their dresses, and the guys get the gear and that's part of the week before. It's all part of the experience

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Yes, absolutely in particular because the girls and the boys may notice each other and that's such a fun experience. We send the boys off with a beer in hand to the tailor. I'm surprised actually when they come out looking absolutely fabulous, but they've also had a brilliant time together doing that.

That's kind of outside the norm of choosing your wedding attire that an experience here in the town. Over five hundred tailors, is always fun and of course for the girls is something really special as well. It's a special time for the girls to be together, because often a couple haven't had time to be with their friends and not seen their family for such a long time.

Kerry Newsome: And sometimes I think the people getting that preparation together for weddings can be very stressful. And can be expensive for many of us. And to be able to do that in Vietnam as all part of that wedding week, and do it in a fun environment, do it in a way that is probably going to cost you a bit less is great. The girls get to maybe engage in the design a little bit. Because they can. Because they are all standing next to each other, and looking at each other and making sure the design is the way that the bride wants it to be.

Or he's happy to change it and the same for the guys. Sending guys off to get their suits, like normally in western society that's a real bug bare The guys normally wouldn't be doing that with a beer in hand. And our lovely Vietnamese tailors. Fussing over them and you know getting them to choose fabrics and things like that. I'm sure they have a real wowser of a time.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: They do absolutely love it. You can kind of hear them grumbling about it but for real they have to go to the tailors but guarantee they have a laugh. And they all would be fabulous on the day. They can go out casually, whether they are in tailored shorts and nice shirts if the wedding is a little bit more casual, or the guys are in a three-piece suits. Either way they just end up looking fabulous.

Kerry Newsome: And you've got some great photographers in the regions, as well now to be able to take special photos of the event.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Absolutely.. Yes, definitely lots of young emerging Vietnamese photographers, who are incredibly talented. Who have learned the art of telling a wedding story, photographing your wedding in more documentary styles? And you've got the stories, the journey of the day or the week. If you're going to engage with the photographers, you need a little bit longer. But, yes definitely, we've also got some great western photographers in the region.

Some people do like to bring their photographers from abroad, and that's absolutely okay too. Whatever, it's your wedding in the end, and your memories.

Kerry Newsome: Absolutely, one other aspect of weddings that I learnt after our first conversation, was the different styles of weddings that you organize and get involved with. And one of those, I thought was quite interesting, was where a Vietnamese is possibly living abroad or studying abroad, or have lived away from Vietnam and their family for a long time and married a foreign possibly. And, they want to come back and connect with their cultural background and get married in a traditional way. Maybe talk to us about some of the different types of weddings that you get involved with.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Yes of course, we still have our classic destination wedding where people want to leave the shores of the country and have a very special experience. That we find is the becoming less and less popular.

What we find more is couples are coming from different parts of the globe and very often we have a situation where we're contacted by a couple, one or both have inherited heritage. They may have been born here, and have grown up or lived abroad or they were born in Australia or the U.S. or the UK. Wherever it might be, and they want to come back and they want to honor the heritage and we help to facilitate a blended experience. We help them learn about or relearn about the wedding culture. And the wedding customs here and integrate that into the wedding experience, and the white wedding perhaps at the end. Trying to find something, that is a mix, in a blended way to showcase who they are. All couples are different and we work to find the wedding creation that's right for them. The cultures and customs in Vietnam are incredibly beautiful, and very often the bride of the groom wants to share that with the other half family and friends. You're blending families, you're blending customs and culture. It's a really magic way to do it here.

Kerry Newsome: Yes, and I agree and I think that reconnection, all that ability to be back in the country of your origin and express your love for your partner, in that environment and taking that aspect, must be just so rich in feelings and emotion for everybody attending. Because as you say everyone is experiencing it in a different way, but I like that.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Weddings are filled with love any way. But when you're sharing the more personal side of the bride or the groom in terms of what the family heritage is, it becomes incredibly personal and they're also very beautiful. Ceremonies here like the traditional tea ceremony, where the young couples ask for their blessing from their family members. By offering tea and in return the parents will offer their blessing. Yes, you can marry. But also give guidance and support on how to have a healthy long loving marriage. A beautiful intimate thing like that also involves both sides, and those moments are very special. And maybe a couple still wants to have the white wedding, so that's absolutely okay too. You can do the ceremony separate, we can integrate them together. And of course, showcasing you know the great food of Vietnam; there is just so much here for our couples to like and to share.

Kerry Newsome: Yes, absolutely. And we talked about that reconnect, but we also talked about others, like in a Renewal of vows, Second weddings, and then you made a prediction about some people. All this seems to be trending. Post COVID share with us about some trends.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Look, like you mentioned earlier. I think things are going to be smaller. I think, a little bit more intimate. We have been separated, social distance through this experience of COVID. I think these steps of coming back together to celebrate things like weddings might be tentative. They might be smaller and a little bit more cautious. I think we're going to find the experience is going to be incredibly intimate and incredibly emotional. But I also feel post Covid people **will** potentially be faced with economic situations. As we know weddings are not a cheap endeavor to undertake, so I think you know WOW Vietnam is romantic, it's beautiful, so I think people are going to do that "sneak off" or Elope and I think they're going to commit.

Kerry Newsome: Okay I'm going to put that on there !!

Nadine Zeigeldorf: So people will just come and say “we've got married”.

Kerry Newsome: And you know we touched budget. We touch on the costs in regards to our weddings. I mean how long is a piece of string is as far as cost is concerned. But would you say that the feedback from your plans, weddings are good value in Vietnam?

Nadine Zeigeldorf: I would definitely say so. I mean of course, you can go with the full “bells and whistles” here, with five-star resorts and your budget you will pay the same as in the west. But if you choose to have unique experiences. We find that the budget extends. If for example in the west, the couple are unable to cover the cost of the welcome dinner. In Vietnam you will be able to amongst other smaller events.

Kerry Newsome: Yes.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Because a restaurant can feed sixty to eighty people actually doesn't end up costing that much money. When you are thinking of the cost of our local beer and local food, it depends on the experience. We work with each couple. What's your budget, what's important over the wedding week and then identify how to create the best experience for them. You know within the budget, also depends on how many people they want to come. And we have tricks that we know even at the five-star resorts. We can help save a little bit of money, that could potentially be used somewhere else. I'm so passionate about Vietnam and passionate about what I do. That I want people to have an incredible experience, the whole time that they are here. Working out with the couples, to make that happen within their budget is what I do.

Kerry Newsome: So, just to finish up so we can wrap up. I mean from my start to finish do you have a recommended time that you would suggest that people consider? What is the best plan re getting leave approved from whoever they are working for? What time are you suggestinga week?

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Yes, and absolutely. At least at least five days you know within the area that you've chosen for the wedding. And then of course you know like we discussed several times; how fabulous Vietnam is and the journey that people take to and from that wedding destination.

If the wedding in central Vietnam, people may fly north to experience Ha Long Bay as part of their time in Vietnam, or in the south go to the Mekong Delta. And all the other fabulous things along the way here. So often it's not just the five-day wedding week experience here. There's a little bit more that they will like to take on so you know. Yes, we do we listen to people who are here for five days and then we have people who are here the entire month soaking up the sun in Vietnam.

Kerry Newsome: And let's just finish then on maybe be your favorite honeymoon options just sorry we can wrap it up.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Well, I think we are seeing entire families tag along on the honeymoon. The bride says yes, we're going to Ha Long Bay. We want to go there, so they end up with

the boat load of people on Ha Long Bay, and for those looking for that beautiful kind of hidden and honeymoon in private experience. Vietnam has amazing resorts here in central Vietnam, and all across Vietnam. One place, doesn't just have to be the sole destination. You know we've got such incredible network to jump in and out of here.

Kerry Newsome: And some very beautiful neighbors. Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: Exactly, so many great places. Vietnam has it. You really need to plan time to enjoy it.

Kerry Newsome: Well not that I ever want to get married again but I...Well I might do a vows renewal. ha!! Thank you very much for being on the show.

Nadine Zeigeldorf: My pleasure.