

TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

MARCH 2026 - ₹100

A romantic scene of a bride and groom in traditional Indian wedding attire. The groom is wearing a white kurta and a white turban, while the bride is in a pink and gold lehenga with a sheer pink dupatta. They are embracing on a hillside with a view of a town and mountains in the background. Pink rose petals are falling all around them, and the ground is covered in a layer of petals. The scene is framed by tall, dried grasses in the foreground.

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**WHERE LOVE MEETS LEGACY
INDIA'S MOST SPECTACULAR WEDDING
DESTINATIONS BY RADISSON HOTEL GROUP**

Karjat's green grandeur, Srinagar's lakeside poetry, Lonavala's heritage hills, Corbett's wild beauty - four of Radisson's ultimate wedding venues

TT BUREAU



In India, weddings are more than mere ceremonies; they are immersive, multi-day celebrations where emotion, culture and aesthetics converge. Spanning from intimate pheras by the river to grand ballroom receptions that stretch into the early hours, every element must align to create an experience that feels timeless. As modern couples increasingly seek destination weddings that combine scenic beauty with seamless hospitality, the choice of venue becomes as meaningful as the vows themselves.

Radisson Hotel Group has long understood this emotional equation. With properties located across India's most evocative landscapes that include forested retreats, misty hill towns, and serene riverfronts, the brand has redefined what it means to host weddings in contemporary India. The group's portfolio blends sophisticated design, expansive venues and deeply personalised service, allowing celebrations to unfold with both scale and soul.

Lonavala brings rolling hills and an easy wedding-weekend mood. Srinagar sits beside the Jhelum with a quieter, more poetic feel. Here are four exceptional Radisson destinations that stand at the intersection of romance, ritual and refined hospitality.

RADISSON BLU PLAZA RESORT & CONVENTION CENTRE, KARJAT: GRANDEUR IN THE GREEN

Set against the verdant Sahyadri ranges, The Radisson Blu Plaza Resort & Convention Centre, Karjat, plays off the tricky tightrope of being close enough to Mumbai to sound feasible, but distant enough to sound like an actual escape. Spread across landscaped lawns and framed by forested hills, the resort creates a cinematic backdrop for large-scale celebrations while maintaining a sense of privacy and escape.

The thing that stands out in this case is the architectural scale, and not only in the 'large ballroom' way. The venue has five elegant meeting and banqueting spaces that can accommodate anywhere between a small ceremony with 12 people to a celebration with 500 people. Indian weddings do not come in one size. The haldi ceremony may be small with just close family members. The sangeet pulls in everyone. The reception does too, with an extra table or three that no one warned you about.

Space is organised here in a way that makes the wedding happen as a sequence without repetition. Poolside mehendis under bright sunlight. Starlight sangeets on lawns which can accommodate proper production. The resort's grand ballrooms, open-air venues and thoughtfully designed pre-function spaces allow for fluid movement between rituals and revelry.

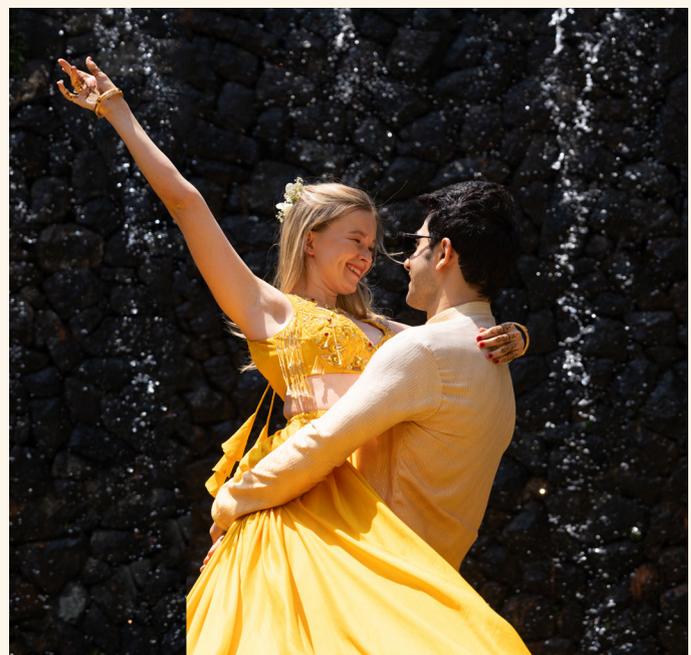
Another subtle advantage of accommodation is the fact that the resort can accommodate the entourage. This helps manage the day's rhythm: fewer taxis, fewer latecomers, fewer "we're stuck in traffic" calls at the last minute before the varmala. People wake up to the mist on the hills, make time for the nature trail, or go for a spa treatment for an hour before resurfacing for the next function. It's as though the wedding becomes a shared staycation, and families secretly want this.

Cuisine takes centre stage here, and rightly so. Palms, the all day dining restaurant, brings us back down to earth with indulgent Super Breakfast spreads. The wedding menus offer a good balance of Maharashtrian cuisine and international dishes, comfort food and variety, and they're guaranteed to have their say on either count. Casual moments are easy to find around the Pool Bar & Grill near the pool. Counters, tasting options and customised dessert spreads ensure that this is more than just banquet food, and that's important in India.

Karjat, at its best, makes grandeur feel less rigid. Nature softens the scale. The celebration still looks expansive, but it doesn't have to feel exhausting.

RADISSON COLLECTION HOTEL & SPA, RIVERFRONT SRINAGAR: POETRY BY THE WATER

Srinagar does romance incredibly well. The mountains, the still water, and the quiet air make even everyday moments feel like a scene from a movie. The Radisson Collection Hotel & Spa, Riverfront Srinagar sits beside the Jhelum River. The location alone may charm couples who want their wedding to feel like a story and not just a schedule of events.



Bride & Groom Photoshoot



Haldi Celebrations

The hotel combines contemporary luxury with subtle and restrained Kashmiri touches. Intricate details, soft colours, and large windows facing the river draw your eyes outdoors. With 212 rooms and suites, ranging from premium and executive options to presidential accommodations, it's built to host wedding groups comfortably, essential if the plan is to keep everyone in one orbit.

Weddings here have a naturally atmospheric feel. Riverside venues provide a calm sort of theatre, with open air and water nearby. Shikaras glide gently past in the distance. Indoor spaces still offer drama through the windows, showcasing snow-dusted

peaks in winter and autumn colours when the season changes. Depending on the timing, the same venue can feel completely different, which may be appealing if couples want their wedding to feel tied to a particular season.

Culinary experiences stay rooted and evocative. Firdaus, the signature restaurant, named after the Persian word for "paradise", reimagines Kashmir's royal culinary legacy with contemporary finesse. Wazwan-inspired flavours and heritage recipes show up with polish without heaviness. Sapphire Restaurant offers all-day dining with international selections and oven-baked specialities. Sapphire Lounge feels made for slower afternoons with artisanal desserts, baked treats, and tea-lounge ease. Evenings often end at Mehfil Bar, where cocktails and mocktails sit comfortably in that riverside calm.

What really makes this property special is the space between the ceremonies. A wedding isn't just about the big moments. It's also about the pauses, like mornings on private balconies, birds singing in the quiet, and the river flowing with a steady, calm rhythm. If a couple seeks romance that isn't loud, Srinagar provides a setting that feels reflective, almost meditative.

RADISSON RESORT & SPA LONAVALA: HILLS, HERITAGE AND HIGH CELEBRATION

Lonavala is familiar, and that is a strength. Couples often seek a destination that feels special but isn't too complicated and offers a cooler climate, lush greenery, alongside a touch of hill-station charm. Radisson Resort & Spa Lonavala is located in the Western Ghats and seems designed for weddings, offering a scenic backdrop without extensive travel.

The resort sits amid green slopes and tidy lawns, a setting that suits weddings stretched across several days. Event spaces



Couple on The Wedding Stage



Bride Flaunting Her Lehnga

are placed with flow in mind, so each function can shift into a fresh setting across the itinerary, instead of repeating the same backdrop.

A highlight here is Raj Bhavan, the resort's largest venue, with a waterfall element, open views, and direct lawn access. It suits receptions and larger functions of up to 300 guests, and the indoor-outdoor connection helps the event feel less boxed in. For smaller gatherings, Surya Bhavan offers a refined indoor space with generous natural light. Together, these venues allow planners to move smoothly between formats: an indoor ceremony when the weather is unpredictable, an outdoor evening when the air cools down.

With 127 well-appointed rooms, the resort can host wedding groups without making anyone feel like they've been scattered across town. That's not only convenient; it changes the energy. Guests can rest, reset, and return without that drained, travel-heavy feeling. Spa facilities and wellness experiences fill the gaps between events, which may sound like a luxury detail, but it's also a practical one. A calmer guest is a happier guest.

Dining holds the experience together. Hirkani, the all-day dining restaurant, runs live cooking stations with Indian cuisine. A seasonal pop-up restaurant rotates menus, often focusing on regional favourites like biryanis and kebabs, which tend to win crowds without effort. Malhari Bar offers a relaxed closing chapter to the day. For wedding functions, bespoke menus can be curated, with multi-cuisine options alongside in-house Maharaj specialities, so the food matches the scale and style of each celebration.

At Radisson Resort & Spa Lonavala, weddings are designed to balance celebration with comfort, offering couples a destination that supports both large gatherings and intimate moments within a well-equipped resort setting.

NAMAH RESORT JIM CORBETT, A MEMBER OF RADISSON INDIVIDUALS: A WEDDING IN THE WILD

For couples who want nature to lead the mood instead of just décor, Namah Resort Jim Corbett may feel like the right kind of different. Set along the Kosi River on the edge of Corbett National Park, with Himalayan foothills in the background, the resort places weddings in a landscape that feels calm, grounded, and distinct from urban venues.

The setting shapes the pace. Dense forest cover, tranquil river views, open skies. Events here can unfold more slowly, and that's not a bad thing. A wedding can feel less like an endless checklist when the destination itself gives guests something to do besides wait for the next function.

Venues are designed to complement the surroundings while keeping contemporary comfort intact. Riverside lawns, garden spaces, and indoor areas offer flexibility for different ceremonies and receptions, intimate rituals, larger gatherings, whatever the itinerary demands. The design integrates natural materials and open views so the outdoors remains central, not something you step outside for "a photo moment".

Accommodation supports extended celebrations. The resort has 48 rooms and suites with contemporary interiors inspired by the surrounding landscape. Spacious layouts, modern in-room amenities, and views of mountains and forested terrain give



Bride Photoshoot

guests a genuine retreat between functions. Mornings begin with a complimentary breakfast buffet, which is a small thing on paper, but in real life, it becomes a natural gathering point before the day's events begin again.

What many couples like here is the built-in sense of experience. Wildlife safaris, nature walks, wellness time, these can sit between ceremonies and turn the wedding into a shared retreat. Not every guest will do a safari at sunrise, but the option itself changes the tone. It gives the destination a second identity beyond "wedding venue".

Dining rounds out the experience. Pratha, the all-day dining restaurant, offers local and international menus through buffet and à la carte formats, with seating for up to 60 guests and views of the Sitabani hills. Boond bar works well for informal gatherings, pre-function chats, post-function wind-downs, when guests want something relaxed without leaving the property.

At Namah, weddings feel shaped by place. Structured hospitality, yes. But softened by the river and forest that sit quietly in the background, doing their own kind of hosting.

A NEW LANGUAGE OF INDIAN WEDDINGS

Across these four destinations, a shared idea starts to emerge. Weddings are moving beyond ballrooms into riversides, forests, and hill landscapes. Radisson Hotel Group's portfolio reflects that shift, giving couples options that feel rooted in place.

Luxury, in this context, isn't only about scale. It's also about how the experience holds together: adaptable venues, an understanding of cultural rituals, and service that appears to anticipate the realities of Indian weddings, the late starts, the outfit changes, the suddenly-added guest list, the need for food that satisfies five generations at once.

And yes, destination weddings aren't perfect. They can stretch budgets. They can be demanding of older guests. The weather can complicate plans. But the right property reduces the friction and leaves more space for what people actually remember.

In a country where weddings become part of family history, the venue becomes part of the story too. Vows beside the Jhelum in Srinagar. Celebrations across Karjat's green hills. Mist settling over Lonavala's lawns. Ceremonies framed by the Kosi River in Jim Corbett. Each Radisson destination offers a setting shaped by place and purpose.

As couples continue to reimagine what a wedding can look like, these hotels stand as hosts, holding moments that are meant to last long after the final celebration winds down.



WEDDING BUZZ 2026



ZERO TEMPLATE, ALL HEART



Image Courtesy: Iskra Events & Celebrations

In 2026, weddings put authenticity first, trading predictable spectacle for personalised, immersive celebration

TT BUREAU

Birju C. Gariba is the Founder and CEO of Iskra Events & Celebrations, a Mumbai-based experiential events company recognised across India's luxury wedding and global corporate events space. With over two decades in event management, destination weddings, and large-scale live productions, he is known for pairing meticulous logistics with high-concept storytelling, shaping each celebration as a curated memory to be recalled for ages.

Named for the Russian word meaning "spark" or "sparkle," Iskra positions itself as the creative catalyst that elevates everything from intimate destination weddings to multinational galas into immersive, visually rich, emotionally resonant experiences.

Birju C. Gariba shares his take on the 2026 wedding trends he sees shaping the next wave of celebrations.

THE WEDDING BUZZ FOR 2026: AUTHENTICITY WINS

"For 2026, authenticity is the new wedding buzz. I'm seeing couples shed the same old playbook and choose celebrations that feel more personalised, curated, and immersive. They're looking for places that speak to them culturally, and they want

a showstopper moment that becomes the highlight of all functions and is talked about long after. It's not that couples want less impact, they simply want impact with a point of view.

Weddings had been shrinking, but larger numbers are back on the table as more hotels expand their portfolios and add more rooms within their premises. The direction is clear: scale can return, but it needs to be earned through meaning and experience.

AESTHETICS WITH HEARTBEAT: INCLUSIVE STORYTELLING

"Authenticity has also become the new wedding currency. At every stage, I'm seeing couples want the celebration to feel inclusive, not limited to immediate family, but extending to the entire circle that matters to them. Many are moving away from outdated, OTT wedding entries, replacing them with inclusive ideas that involve close ones in the moment, so the entry becomes a shared memory rather than a solo performance.

Storytelling is no longer reserved for the sangeet. Couples want it threaded through the themes, food, design



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Image Courtesy: Iskra Events & Celebrations

ues, and every medium available. At Iskra, we make sure each couple's story is presented uniquely, so the wedding feels authored rather than assembled, and every segment carries continuity.

PALETTES ON THE PLATE: TRADITION SERVED

Heirloom cuisines are finding their way into weddings, with family specialties and the flavours of meaningful places being woven into menus in the most authentic way possible. Menus are becoming elaborate and thematic, yet not overly diverse, so guests aren't confused by too much variety. The focus is moving toward clarity, a few strong ideas executed exceptionally well.

Elevated bartending and couple-recommended signature cocktails are featuring more often. Bartenders design entirely new cocktails based on the couple's taste preferences, giving guests a "taste through the eyes" of the host families and the couple. A newer request emerging is long-table sit-down dining, when the format suits the celebration, bringing intimacy and conversation even within a large gathering.

THE STANDOUT SYMPHONY: CULTURAL FUSION

One wedding that stood out for me was a true cross-cultural merge: an Indian Punjabi family with the bride settled in the US, and a Jewish groom. The intention was to bring out the best of both worlds while creating a memorable experience for mostly visiting guests.

We hosted events that showcased Indian festivals for international guests, beginning with a vibrant Holi celebration and culminating in pheras at City Palace, alongside a full Jewish ceremony with the Rabbi blessing the couple. It was unique to witness how these two worlds crossed, and how, in many ways, they were almost similar in the emotions they carried and the way families gathered around the couple. The takeaway for me was that when culture is handled with respect and detail, fusion doesn't feel like a compromise, it feels like a richer story.

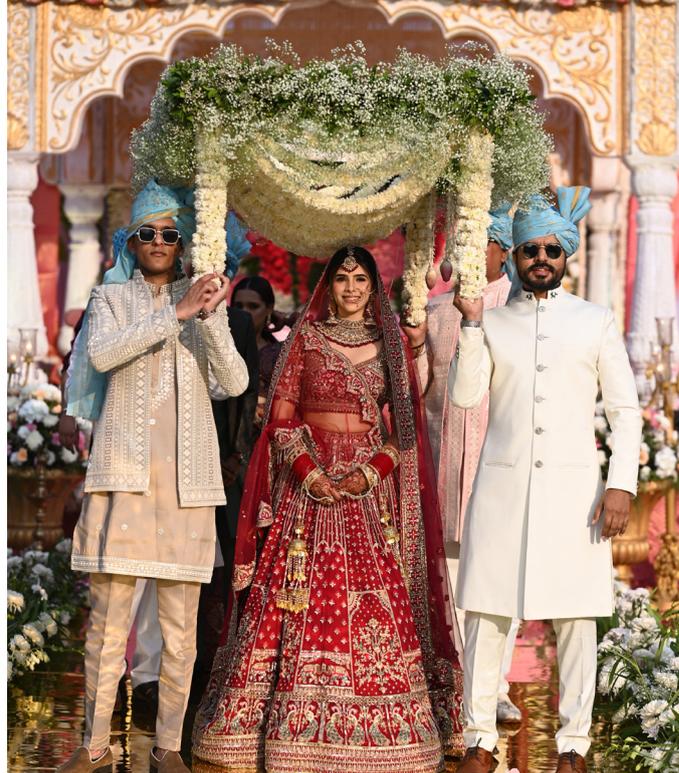


Image Courtesy: Iskra Events & Celebrations

THREADS THAT TELL STORIES: LEGACY DRESSING

"Bridal attire is becoming more narrative-driven. I'm seeing brides repurpose their mother's wedding outfit into something modern, carrying blessings forward while making it their own. Jewellery is being repurposed as well, along with special accessories gifted by grandparents that travel through lineages and across functions, turning style into inheritance.

Recycled materials and unique message boards are also featuring in these narratives, with creativity taking centre stage over "safe" and same old choices. The most memorable looks are the ones that carry meaning, not only shine.

THE PLANNER'S PERSONAL IMPRINT: STRUCTURED CALM

"As a company, we've established ourselves as all-rounders who offer complete solutions in a structured, process-driven format. I've noticed younger couples are more active in planning than before and prefer a structured approach over an ad hoc one, with clarity on flow, roles, and deliverables.

Our philosophy borrows its simplicity and clarity from Mastercard: Bring us the couple and for everything else, it's Iskra.



Birju C. Gariba, Founder and CEO, Iskra Events & Celebrations



TWO DESTINATIONS, ONE RADISSON WEDDING VISION

Corbett for grand celebrations, Nainital for intimacy, Namah builds a complete wedding destination narrative

TT BUREAU

Medhatithi Bhattacharjee, Cluster General Manager of Namah Resort Jim Corbett, a member of Radisson Individuals, and Namah Nainital, a member of Radisson Individuals Retreats, is shaping a wedding story that moves between forest stillness and lakefront serenity. His cluster-first approach brings two distinct destinations under one luxury vision, reflecting how weddings today value place, experience, and personal meaning alongside grandeur.

That philosophy is rooted in a clear market shift. Destination weddings are now driven by emotion, exclusivity, and experiential value. Overlooking pristine Naini Lake and framed by the Himalayas, Namah Nainital offers an intimate, meaningful, and timeless setting, where scenic beauty and the region's spiritual aura support immersive celebrations with contemporary luxury.

Its fast rise as a preferred luxury wedding address in the hills, Bhattacharjee notes, comes from focused positioning. Couples are moving beyond traditional banquet venues and seeking scenic locations, exclusivity, and meaning. Namah Nainital's lake-facing setting, personalised service, and ability to curate intimate, elegant celebrations have made it a preferred choice for discerning planners and families.

Inventory is another key strength. The hotel's well-appointed rooms and luxury suites, including lake-facing categories, allow wedding groups to be accommodated comfortably while

“At Namah Nainital, a member of Radisson Individuals Retreats, we are not just hosting weddings. We are curating deeply personal celebrations shaped by nature, spirituality, and refined luxury.”

- Medhatithi Bhattacharjee, Cluster General Manager of Namah Resort Jim Corbett, a member of Radisson Individuals, and Namah Nainital, a member of Radisson Individuals Retreats.”

creating differentiated experiences for families, close relatives, and VIP guests. This mix delivers both exclusivity and operational flexibility for seamless execution.

Culinary remains a major differentiator. Bespoke menus span Kumaoni specialties, traditional Indian wedding cuisines, and global selections, each designed around the couple's preferences with authenticity and personalisation at the core.

Bhattacharjee's long-term vision is to position Namah Nainital among North India's most sought-after luxury wedding destinations. At the cluster level, his two-year roadmap extends Corbett's strong wedding credibility by creating "The Namah Cluster Wedding Destination" narrative, Corbett as the scale-driven celebration hub, Nainital for intimate functions, VIP hosting, and curated experiences.

A unified sales, marketing, and service model with combined inventory, seamless guest movement, single-window planning, and curated planner showcases aims to establish Namah as a distinctive, complete luxury wedding ecosystem.



Medhatithi Bhattacharjee, Cluster General Manager of Namah Resort Jim Corbett, a member of Radisson Individuals, and Namah Nainital, a member of Radisson Individuals Retreats.

THE CALM BEHIND THE BEAUTIFUL STORM

Cinematic Heritage defines Kaveri Vij's 2026 wedding trends as legacy meets modern drama, anchored by emotional minimalism always

TT BUREAU

Co-founded in 2014 by Kaveri Vij, the Chief Dreamer & Planner, and Akshay Chopra, Designer Events Inc. is a Delhi-based firm specialising in intimate luxury weddings that focuses on personalised storytelling instead of just sheer extravagance.

Based out of Delhi, Kaveri, a hospitality graduate with over a decade in events, blends Bollywood romance with real-life chaos-turned-triumph, delivering experimental décor and emotionally aware guest management.

Kaveri Vij shares her insights on the 2026 wedding trends shaping this new, meaning-led era of celebration.

THE WEDDING BUZZ FOR 2026: MEANING FIRST

"For 2026, I see a clear shift of intentional storytelling over spectacle. Couples are moving away from curated excess and leaning into meaning, with attire that carries personal arcs, rituals that honour heritage, and spaces that immerse guests in the couple's story. For me, true luxury now is emotional pacing: pauses, crescendos, and release.

Sustainability and artisan craftsmanship are central.

Conscious sourcing and environmental responsibility are part of the celebration itself. Aesthetically, Cinematic Heritage is defining the moment: spaces where legacy meets modern drama, with textures, colours, and light layered to feel timeless yet personal. Emotional minimalism matters too, bold moments anchored in meaning, not volume. 2026 won't be defined by one colour or motif; it will be defined by why choices were made.

AESTHETICS WITH HEARTBEAT: CINEMATIC HERITAGE

"The aesthetic I keep returning to is what we call Cinematic Heritage: culture and legacy translated into immersive storytelling with unmistakable luxury. I distil the rituals they honour, the memories they treasure, and the heritage they inherit, then build a space that feels alive.

Every palette, texture, and floral choice has to earn its place in the narrative. I want guests to feel the story unfolding around them. Our signature is simple: weddings should never feel generic. When they look back, it shouldn't feel like a "styled wedding". It should feel there unmistakably theirs.



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PALETTES ON THE PLATE: EDIBLE NARRATIVE

"I believe beyond regional authenticity, what's lighting up sangeets and receptions is sensory storytelling through food and beverage. Couples are moving past traditional buffet structures into curated contrasts: street-style chaat paired with craft champagne, mithai lifted with sea salt or smoked elements, and desserts reimaged as art installations. The goal is the emotional surprise instead of just shock value.

Beverages have become narrative devices. Signature cocktails recreate chapters of their story, while non-alcoholic experiences are equally theatrical. The next frontier is immersive, performative Food & Beverage: roaming mixologists, live infusion stations, edible garnishes, multi-sensory presentations. The dining table becomes a grand stage, and the celebration lingers.

THE STANDOUT SYMPHONY: CONTRASTING INTIMACY

"Last year reminded me that unforgettable weddings are defined by a truthful reflection of the couple. We designed two weddings that couldn't have been more different: a 500-guest extravaganza in Jaipur and an intimate 50-guest NRI wedding in Goa.

In Jaipur, the sangeet became a Parisian Cabaret-inspired world, created to narrate their first date at the Moulin Rouge in Paris. Daytime celebrations turned jungle-safari-inspired, and the ceremony drew from Cappadocia, with hot air balloons suspended amid a floral-rich backdrop.

In Goa, the parallel evening was quiet, soulful, and intimate. A beloved Tamil singer flew in from Chennai, and the wedding took place at sunrise on the beach, guided by South Indian temple priests. South Indian floral touches and woven textures kept it sacred and personal. One celebration was expansive and layered; the other was restrained and intimate. Both worked because they held the couple's love honestly.

THREADS THAT TELL STORIES: WORN MEMORY

"I think bridal attire is no longer only about looking beautiful. It is an intentional extension of the couple's narrative. Couples are curating symbols: heirloom textiles reinterpreted, regional crafts revived, family motifs woven into embroidery, meaningful dates or poetry stitched discreetly into linings.

I'm also seeing identities blend, interfaith couples merging design languages, destination weddings incorporating local craftsmanship, and modern silhouettes layered with traditional techniques. When done thoughtfully, the wardrobe archives a legacy.

THE PLANNER'S PERSONAL IMPRINT: PURPOSEFUL GRANDEUR

"A philosophy people associate with us is cultural authority with emotional depth. I don't believe in trend-driven design; trends fade, culture endures. Nothing is ornamental without purpose,



Kaveri Vij, Co-Founder, Designer Events Inc.

because wedding design shapes how a family remembers a day that becomes part of their legacy. I see this work as a responsibility, and that demands restraint, taste, and a deep understanding of tradition, even when the scale is grand.

Our signature is building immersive worlds, layered and cinematic, where nostalgia meets grandeur and emotional impact. It isn't about excess, it's about intention: creating moments that feel culturally rich, emotionally intelligent, and unmistakably the couple. For us, weddings aren't events. They are love stories translated into space that feels like home, filled with a lot of love.



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BEYOND THEMES: A TIMELINE OF LOVE

Design begins with conversations, not Pinterest, so the visual language mirrors the couple's rhythm

TT BUREAU

Founded by Vikramjeet Sharma, Le Florence Weddings is a Delhi-based firm with 200+ bespoke celebrations delivered and 15+ years of team expertise across India and globally. The brand is known for vibrant aesthetics, seamless synchronisation, and Vikramjeet's "full of life" energy, spanning intimate rituals and grand destination affairs alike. With India's wedding surge amplifying both scale and expectations, he also keeps sustainability in focus through eco-decor and efficient logistics.

Vikramjeet Sharma breaks down the 2026 trends shaping weddings as celebrations move from spectacle to choreography and meaning.

THE WEDDING BUZZ FOR 2026: EMOTION FIRST

"If I had to sum up the wedding buzz for 2026 in one line, it would be this: weddings are no longer about impressing guests; they're about moving them. Weddings have evolved into immersive, emotionally intelligent experiences. Scale still matters, but meaning now holds equal, if not greater, weight.

Couples are asking sharper questions: Why this ritual? Why this colour? Why this location? Every decision is expected to carry intention. In 2026, luxury is thoughtful and personal. The most celebrated weddings feel personal and quietly powerful, where guests walk away feeling they've understood the couple. At Le Florence Weddings, that has shaped how I plan. Weddings that feel authored, not assembled.

AESTHETICS WITH HEARTBEAT: SOFT MAXIMALISM

"The aesthetic capturing the zeitgeist is what I call 'soft maximalism with soul'. It isn't minimal, but it's also not ornamental for the sake of it. Sculptural florals, restrained palettes, strong architectural layouts, and layered textures that create real depth in place of hollow drama.

Design doesn't begin with Pinterest boards; it begins with conversations. I want to understand a couple's rhythm, how they met, what grounds them, how they celebrate, then let the visual language follow. If a couple values intimacy, we soften scale through warmer lighting and tactile details. If they thrive



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on energy, we introduce contrast and bolder moments. The rule stays constant: the wedding must feel like an extension of the couple, not a performance.

PALETTES ON THE PLATE: SENSORY PAIRINGS

"I have seen that food has become one of the most exciting creative playgrounds in weddings. Beyond regional authenticity, there's an appetite for unexpected pairings and experiential dining. One flavour direction that has become a signature in our 2025–26 weddings is Indian comfort with global technique, like an Awadhi galouti reimagined as a delicate tartlet, or a live chaat counter where the water is infused with seasonal fruits and herbs.

Beverages have evolved too. Narrative mixology, drinks inspired by the couple's journey, is replacing generic bar menus: a cocktail based on their first date, a hometown-inspired mocktail, and non-alcoholic pairings treated with the same reverence as fine wine. The aim isn't novelty; it's that moment when guests smile because it feels unmistakably them.

THE STANDOUT SYMPHONY: RESTRAINED DRAMA

"An unforgettable wedding I orchestrated in the last year was built around a simple idea. Time. The couple wanted the wedding to feel like chapters of their life unfolding. Each event represented a phase, past, present, and future, with décor, music, rituals, and lighting evolving across days.

What pushed my creative boundaries wasn't scale or budget; it was restraint. Knowing when not to add, allowing silence between moments, and trusting that emotion doesn't always need amplification. The most powerful orchestration often lies in what you choose to hold back.

THREADS THAT TELL STORIES: NARRATIVE DRESSING

"Bridal attire has become one of the most intimate storytelling tools in weddings today. Brides are dressing to express memory, lineage, and identity, heirloom textiles reworked into contemporary silhouettes, ancestral motifs embroidered subtly, and colour choices rooted in emotion rather than trend. A bride may choose ivory because it echoes her grandmother's sarees; another may select deep rust or muted gold because it mirrors the landscapes she grew up around.

Grooms, too, are embracing narrative dressing: custom linings with personal messages, jewellery with family history, and footwear chosen with intention. Attire has shifted from statement to story.

THE PLANNER'S PERSONAL IMPRINT: CLARITY & CALM

"If there's one philosophy people now associate with my work, it is that clarity creates calm. A wedding should feel expansive, not overwhelming, for the couple, their families, and even the people planning it. My signature lies in structured storytelling: clear visual hierarchy, thoughtful pacing, and rituals that feel grounded rather than rushed. I tweak traditional formats not to modernise them blindly, but to make them emotionally relevant, like a shorter ritual with deeper explanation, a quiet pause carved out between high-energy events, space for couples to feel their wedding.

Ultimately, a wedding should be remembered not just for how it looked, but for how it made people feel, held, moved, and connected. When that happens, the celebration transcends occasion and becomes memory. That, to me, is the future of weddings.



Vikramjeet Sharma, Founder, Le Florence Weddings



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SOFT POWER LUXURY IN WEDDINGS

Priyal Mehta on 2026 weddings: refined aesthetics, meaningful rituals, and deeply personal guest experiences

TT BUREAU

Priyal Mehta founded Niche Events in 2014, building a boutique wedding planning firm based in Mumbai and Goa that specialises in highly personalised, story-driven celebrations. The company handles 15–18 weddings annually, managing everything from intimate gatherings to grand traditional affairs with a strong focus on seamless hospitality and creative execution.

From venue selection and bespoke décor to VIP guest logistics, including multi-city travel, airport transfers, and stays for 200–300 international attendees, Niche Events is known for turning complex wedding visions into structured, smooth experiences. Their hands-on planning style combines detailed timelines, collaborative decision-making, and flawless on-site coordination, seen across high-profile celebrations including the Sayaji Group heir's wedding and ethereal garden weddings at The St. Regis Mumbai.

Priyal Mehta shares what she sees driving the wedding mood in 2026.

THE WEDDING BUZZ FOR 2026: MEMOIR WEDDINGS

"2026 is the year of intentional luxury. Couples are moving away from performative grandeur and leaning into emotionally intelligent celebrations. It is no longer about scale, it is about meaning. We are seeing intimate guest lists, immersive storytelling, and deeply researched cross-cultural ceremonies that feel thoughtful and respectful.

One of our most defining weddings last year, Tanisha and Noah's Hindu–Jewish celebration in Mumbai, reflected this shift perfectly. Two cultures, two continents, and two families came together not only symbolically, but seamlessly. The biggest trend, for me, is this: weddings are beginning to feel like memoirs, not productions.

AESTHETICS WITH HEARTBEAT: LAYERED UNDERSTATEMENT

"The defining aesthetic of 2026 is what I call soft power luxury. It is understated yet layered, elevated yet deeply personal. For Tanisha and Noah, every event carried its own emotional temperature, and that became the design language. The mehendi felt like a blooming summer garden, with woven baskets, mango carts, and an easy, flowing energy. The Hindu ceremony moved into soft pink serenity, shaped by morning light and live flute music. The sangeet shifted the room completely, becoming a high-energy stage experience with drama and movement.



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Image Courtesy: Niche Events

The Jewish ceremony brought baby blues, candlelight, and sacred stillness beneath the chuppah, and the reception ended as an intimate, candlelit after-party with a live band. At Niche Events, we do not design around trends. We design around memory, personality, and cultural nuance. The aesthetic must feel like an extension of the couple's emotional language.

PALETTES ON THE PLATE: CULINARY MEMORY

"In 2026, food is experiential storytelling. For this celebration, the menus blended Indian warmth with New York sophistication, and the goal was never to overwhelm guests with endless spreads. We curated meaningful culinary moments instead. Signature bride-and-groom cocktails gave the bar personality and helped guests connect with the couple's story. A nostalgic mango cart at the mehendi brought warmth and playfulness, while wine was thoughtfully woven into Jewish rituals in a way that felt natural and respectful.

We also used interactive food elements that encouraged movement and mingling rather than static dining. Guests remember flavours long after they forget floral installations, so culinary design has become as intentional as décor.

THE STANDOUT SYMPHONY: EMOTIONAL WORLDS

"Tanisha and Noah's wedding remains one of the most emotionally layered celebrations we have orchestrated. Across three days, from 3rd to 5th June 2025, we transitioned one primary venue through completely distinct emotional worlds.

What made it unforgettable was not only the décor transformation but the emotional transformation. Each event felt different in mood and rhythm, yet everything stayed connected in spirit. That continuity mattered more than spectacle. It was a wedding that reminded us how design, hospitality, and emotion must move together.

THREADS THAT TELL STORIES: LINEAGE REIMAGINED

"Bridal fashion is no longer about statement pieces alone. It is about storytelling. What truly stood out in this celebration



Priya Mehta, Founder, Niche Events

was the bride's heirloom jewellery, her late grandmother's set reimaged with pearls.

It held heritage, memory, and modernity in one gesture. In 2026, brides are embracing lineage, sustainability, and emotional authenticity over excess. The most powerful looks are not always the most dramatic. They are the ones that feel honest to the person wearing them.

THE PLANNER'S PERSONAL IMPRINT: CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

"My signature lies in cultural sensitivity and emotional choreography. Luxury, to me, is detail with depth. That is what we build at Niche Events: celebrations that are visually refined, culturally intelligent, and emotionally unforgettable.

A planner's role now goes beyond design and logistics. It is about understanding people, shaping flow, and creating an atmosphere where families feel cared for. When every layer is aligned, the wedding stays with people long after the event is over.

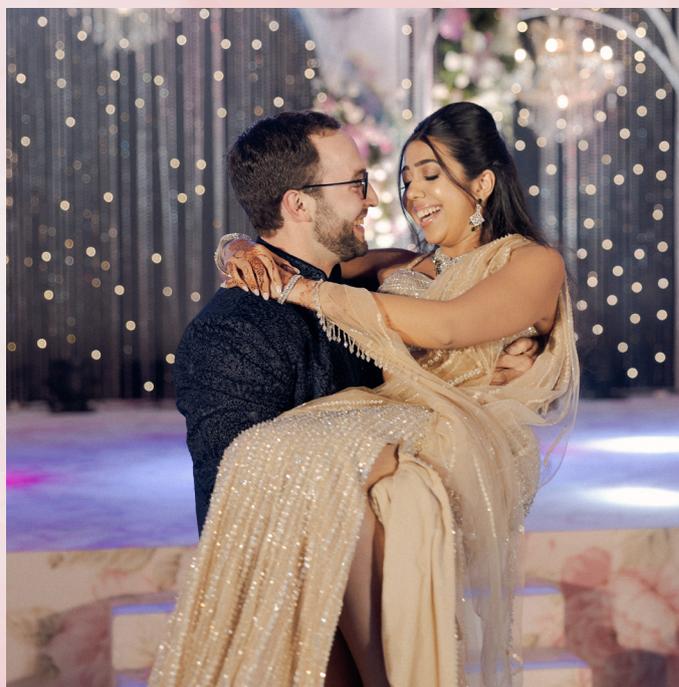


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WEDDINGS BEYOND THE VISUAL

Abhirath Shah explains how modern weddings are becoming immersive experiences

TT BUREAU

ANS Weddings, led by Abhirath Nirmohi Shah, approaches celebrations as wedding management, with a focus on hospitality, logistics, vendor coordination, and execution. Shah began in gigs and artist management, launched ANS Entertainment in 2017, and moved into weddings after handling a wedding in 2016.

Since then, he has managed celebrations across Mumbai and international venues, with experience in décor, F&B, travel, licensing, and on-ground coordination. Abhirath Nirmohi Shah shares what is shaping the wedding mood in 2026.

THE WEDDING BUZZ FOR 2026: LESS PERFORMATIVE

"If I had to describe 2026 weddings in one sentence, I'd say they're becoming far more personal and far less performative. Couples still love scale and spectacle, but the shift is in what they value.

Instead of asking, "How grand can this look?" they're asking, "How do we want this to feel?" Weddings are being designed around atmosphere, emotion, and guest experience rather than only visual impact. Couples are also breaking format more confidently, mixing traditions, rewriting timelines, and moving away from fixed templates.

There is a stronger focus on comfort and flow too, where celebrations feel

luxurious but effortless. That, for us, is the most exciting evolution. Weddings are becoming experiences rather than productions.

AESTHETICS WITH HEARTBEAT: WARM MINIMAL

"What we are seeing is a mood rather than a rigid aesthetic. Couples are gravitating towards spaces that feel elegant, intentional, and emotionally warm, with softer palettes, layered textures, and cinematic lighting. Clean design is popular, but nobody wants it to feel cold, so even minimal setups need depth through materials, florals, and light. At the same time, we avoid treating trends too literally.



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Image Courtesy: ANS Weddings

A wedding should not feel borrowed from Pinterest. Our starting point is always the couple and the energy they naturally bring. For some, understated elegance feels right; for others, colour and visual richness feel more authentic. The goal is not trend-following, but translating personality into space.

PALETTES ON THE PLATE: INTERACTIVE BITES

"I believe food has become one of the most exciting creative areas in weddings because guests remember what they eat and drink as much as what they see. Couples are more adventurous now, open to playful contrasts, unexpected formats, and menus that spark curiosity. We are seeing global influences blend with familiar flavours in ways that feel fun rather than forced.

Interactive formats are especially popular, including live counters, tasting-style service, late-night comfort food, and small plates that create movement and energy. Beverage experiences are equally expressive, with signature cocktails tied to the couple's story becoming a favourite feature. We also enjoy "nostalgia with a twist," like Parle-G with vanilla ice cream or a tequila cocktail with Mango Bite, because those details feel emotional and memorable.

THE STANDOUT SYMPHONY: 25-DAY ARC

"One wedding that stays with us was Raghav & Simran, celebrated across Delhi,

Mathura, and Mumbai over 25 days. It was not the biggest wedding, but one of the most cohesive and emotionally charged. The couple wanted something immersive without excess and cared deeply about guest experience: how spaces felt, how transitions worked, and how the mood evolved.

Every function had its own identity, yet nothing felt disconnected. Lighting, supported by our light engineer, played a major role in shaping rhythm and flow. What stayed with us most was the guest response. People did not only compliment the décor; they spoke about the atmosphere and the food. It reminded us that weddings are really about orchestrating emotions.

THREADS THAT TELL STORIES: SUBTLE SIGNATURES

"I think bridal fashion has become wonderfully personal. Couples are no longer choosing outfits only for grandeur or expectation; they are thinking about comfort, identity, and emotional significance. Heirloom references, handcrafted textiles, and subtle personalisation often matter more than obvious opulence.

We also love seeing how confidently people reinterpret tradition through both clothing and jewellery, where classic silhouettes sit comfortably alongside unconventional choices. The most memorable looks are not always the most elaborate. They are the ones that genuinely feel like an extension of the person wearing them.

THE PLANNER'S PERSONAL IMPRINT: ATMOSPHERE DESIGN

"If there is one thing that defines our work, it is our obsession with how a wedding feels, not only how it looks. We focus deeply on family, flow, and atmosphere. Beautiful décor matters, but design becomes powerful only when it shapes experience: how guests move, how moments unfold, and how energy builds across events. We also make a conscious effort to balance both sides of the family evenly.

Whether the celebration is intimate or large-scale, we prefer to become part of the family while planning it. We believe luxury does not always need to announce itself loudly. At the end of the day, our goal is to create celebrations that feel deeply personal and comfortable, and that people remember emotionally, not only visually.



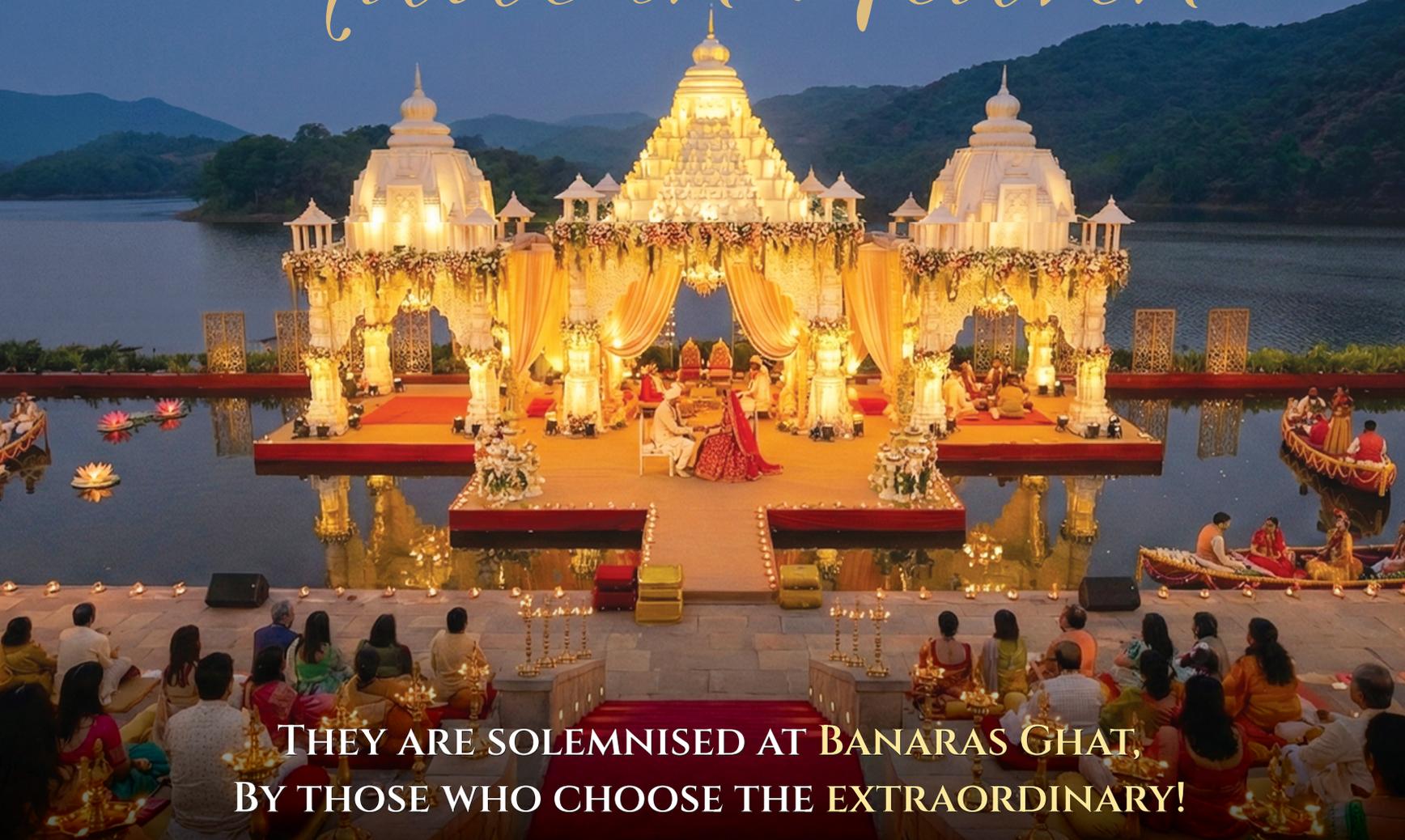
Abhirath Nirmohi Shah, Founder, ANS Weddings



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TT BUREAU

The Tivoli Hospitality Group is building destinations that blend weddings, MICE and luxury hospitality. India's celebration economy is entering a new era. Weddings are no longer confined to a single evening celebration, and corporate gatherings are no longer limited to conventional conference halls. Both are now evolving into multi-day experiences shaped by luxury hospitality, immersive venues and thoughtfully curated guest stays.

Against this backdrop, Tivoli Hospitality Group has been expanding rapidly beyond Delhi- NCR and building a varied portfolio of properties designed for grand weddings, technology-driven MICE events and luxury residential celebrations.

Over the past decade, the group has strategically developed a network of hospitality destinations that spans five-star hotels, design-led celebration venues, convention centres and destination wedding retreats. As India's celebration and corporate events economy becomes increasingly experiential, Tivoli is scaling through distinct hospitality concepts created for luxury weddings, corporate gatherings and residential celebration experiences. From Wedcation by Tivoli and Omnia Convention Centre by Tivoli in Gurugram, with another On the horizon in Greater Noida, to The Upper HSE Sultanpur, The Tivoli, Five Star, Chhatarpur, and Omnia by Tivoli Dwarka, the group is shaping an integrated hospitality ecosystem that brings together scale, technology and elevated stay and celebration experiences. Akshay Gupta, Executive Director, Tivoli Hospitality Group, discusses how the group is redefining India's wedding and corporate event landscape while expanding into new hospitality destinations.

TRANSFORMING WEDDINGS INTO MULTI-DAY LUXURY EXPERIENCES

Tivoli's growth has closely aligned with the transformation of India's wedding industry. Akshay Gupta said, "Weddings today are no longer about a single function. Couples want celebrations that unfold over several days where families and

guests can stay together, celebrate multiple ceremonies and enjoy a complete hospitality experience."

This shift has led Tivoli to design its venues as residential celebration destinations rather than standalone banquet spaces. Across its properties, guests can host elaborate functions while enjoying luxury accommodation and curated hospitality services. Akshay Gupta added, "Our focus has always been to create venues where couples can host larger-than-life celebrations while guests experience the comfort of staying within the same destination".

One of the group's most distinctive concepts is Wedcation by Tivoli, which reimagines weddings as destination-led experiences. Its venues beyond Delhi-NCR have become popular for grand celebrations that combine architectural scale with personalised hospitality, allowing couples to host multi-event weddings under one roof.

ELEVATING THE MICE LANDSCAPE WITH TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

While weddings remain central to Tivoli's portfolio, the group is equally focused on the fast-growing MICE segment. Gupta says corporate clients now expect venues that combine large-format infrastructure with advanced event technology, immersive décor and premium hospitality. To meet this demand, Tivoli has been investing in technology-driven event infrastructure, smart boardrooms and design-led spaces capable of hosting major corporate gatherings, Gupta informs, "From international wedding culinary concepts to AI-enabled event planning tools, immersive lighting technologies and large-scale digital installations, we are constantly bringing global innovations to the Indian wedding and MICE ecosystem."

A major milestone in Tivoli's MICE expansion is the recent launch of Omnia Convention Centre in Gurugram, with upcoming in Greater Noida. This represents our vision of creating world-class event infrastructure designed to host high-profile corporate gatherings and large celebrations



Akshay Gupta, Executive Director, Tivoli Hospitality Group

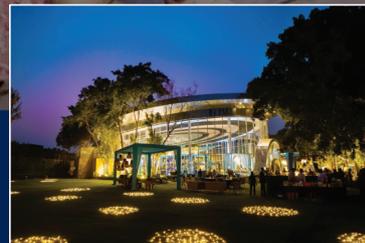
while offering premium hospitality experiences for guests." Gupta emphasises that maintaining a consistent standard of hospitality remains the group's biggest priority. "Our philosophy has always been to ensure that every Tivoli venue reflects the same commitment to quality, service and guest experience," he says. This consistency extends across design, culinary standards, service training and event execution.

Tivoli's expansion into new cities and markets is also guided by the long-term vision of its leadership. Gupta credits much of this thinking to his father, Rohit Gupta, Chairman, Tivoli Hospitality Group. "He has always believed that India's celebration culture is incredibly diverse and that there is tremendous potential in emerging markets and Tier-2 cities where people are looking for world-class venues and hospitality experiences," he concludes.





From luxurious weddings to landmark celebrations, Tivoli Chhatarpur brings together scale, sophistication and seamless hospitality-creating moments that are timeless, elegant and unforgettable



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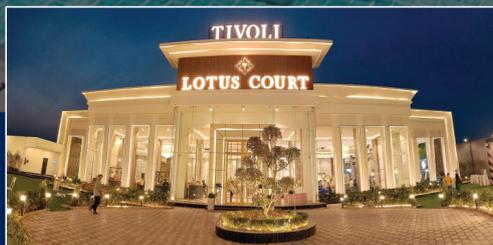
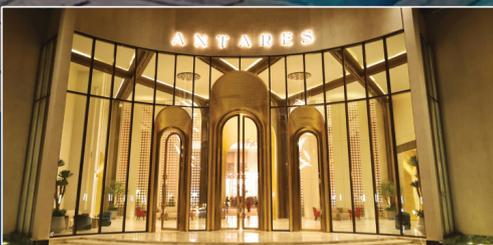


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THE RETURN OF THE INTIMACY ERA

Yuna Weddings' Mukta Kapoor reveals why the future of luxury weddings lies in restraint, softness, and depth

TT BUREAU

Mukta Kapoor, Director of Yuna Weddings, has built a distinct voice in luxury weddings, creating celebrations that feel emotionally rich and visually refined. Her work blends cultural depth with contemporary elegance, shaped by quiet luxury, immersive storytelling, and meticulous detailing. Her celebrations feel deeply personal, with design choices rooted in memory, mood, and meaning.

Mukta Kapoor shares her perspective on the evolving wedding landscape in 2026.

THE WEDDING BUZZ FOR 2026: INTIMATE & SUSTAINABLE

"I believe weddings in 2026 feel quieter, reassuringly so. The shift is moving away from spectacle and towards meaning, mood, and memory, with couples more involved in shaping the emotional narrative of their celebrations.

There is a gentle movement toward immersive yet intimate experiences where design, food, music, rituals, and hospitality flow naturally into one another. Guest lists are more thoughtful. Celebrations unfold across multiple days. Spaces feel personal rather than performative.

Sustainability is becoming instinctive. Reusable elements, local sourcing, mindful gifting, and reduced wastage are becoming part of responsible luxury. Weddings are less about scale and more about depth.

AESTHETICS WITH HEARTBEAT: QUIET OPULENCE

"To me, it appears that the current visual mood is one of quiet opulence. Natural materials, soft light, layered textures, and colours drawn from earth, dusk, and heritage spaces are shaping celebrations today.

I have always believed in enhancing the beauty of a venue rather than adding too many structures. Every space carries its own story. Our role is to reveal it through light, florals, texture, and thoughtful detailing, so the final environment feels effortless and true.

Aesthetics must never overpower identity. Every wedding begins with listening to the couple, their histories, families,

travels, music, and memories. From there, the design grows organically. Guests should feel they have stepped into the couple's world, not a staged production.

PALETTES ON THE PLATE: CRAFTED COURSES

"The narrative around wedding food is changing noticeably. Massive buffets with endless dishes are giving way to something thoughtful and refined. Today, it is about quality, curation, and intention. Couples want the very best, across India and around the world, presented with care rather than excess.

We are seeing specialists and chefs invited to create deeply personal dining moments. Each meal is treated as an experience, with its own rhythm and tone. Late-night comfort counters continue to be loved, and non alcoholic beverage programs are receiving the same creativity and attention as the rest of the menu.

A flavour direction resonating through 2026 is what I think of as heritage with surprise. Familiar Indian notes appear in refined and unexpected ways, through texture or a subtle global influence. Guests experience comfort and discovery, and that balance is what makes a celebration truly memorable.

THE STANDOUT SYMPHONY: HOME ATMOSPHERE

"One special wedding we created this past year was inspired by the feeling of a living room rather than the scale of an event. Everything unfolded with warmth, intimacy, and a sense of being gently held, like welcoming loved ones into a beautifully imagined home.

"Guests lingered, conversations deepened, and moments were experienced rather than hurried through. Creatively, it reminded us to design with restraint, trust subtlety, and allow emotion to lead aesthetics. We drew from elements of home décor and wove them into the larger celebration so the experience felt familiar, personal, and elevated. To me, that softness is where the future of luxury weddings truly lies.

THREADS THAT TELL STORIES: HONEST COMFORT

"Bridal fashion today feels deeply personal. Brides are moving



Mukta Kapoor, Director, Yuna Weddings & Events

away from trend-driven choices and towards garments that hold memory, craft, and individuality.

Heirloom textiles are being reinterpreted. Regional weaves are finding contemporary silhouettes. Colour palettes are expanding beyond traditional reds into ivories, golds, pastels, and deeper jewel tones chosen for emotional meaning rather than convention.

There is a shift toward comfort. Brides want to move, dance, and feel present in their own celebration. And very often, the most powerful look is simply the most honest one.

THE PLANNER'S PERSONAL IMPRINT: FEELING FIRST

"If I had to define my approach in a single thought, it would be emotional intentionality with meticulous detailing. Every element in a Yuna Weddings celebration must have a reason to exist. A light is never just décor. A fragrance is never incidental. A ritual is never mechanical. Each detail is considered for the feeling it creates and the memory it leaves behind.

I believe in a very gentle form of luxury. Celebrations that feel elevated yet effortless, refined yet warm, immersive yet never overwhelming. Where hospitality is intuitive, design is thoughtful, and emotion quietly leads the experience.

The most meaningful wedding is not the one most photographed, but the one most deeply felt. And that is always what we hope to create.



Image Courtesy: Yuna Weddings

WEDDINGS WITH HEART, DETAIL, AND INTENT

Simran Arora reveals how bridal veils, kaleeras, and even sneakers are turning into canvases for the couple's story today

TT BUREAU

As weddings shift towards meaning over spectacle, Simran Arora has built a planning company that feels in step with the moment. Founder and Creative Head of The Dreamcatchers Co., the Delhi-based bespoke wedding studio, she is known for polished, personal celebrations with a made-to-measure approach that balances tradition and modern style.

Simran Arora shares what is shaping weddings this year.

THE WEDDING BUZZ FOR 2026: GUEST-CENTRED SHIFT

"I think the shift is couples moving away from elaborate, picture-perfect weddings and choosing celebrations that feel more thoughtful, intimate, and personal.

Today, couples want weddings that reflect their style and values. They are choosing settings that feel more like an extension of who they are. There is also a move towards smaller, guest-centred weddings, focused on creating a memorable experience for everyone attending.

Technology is playing a bigger role. AI is shaping planning and execution, from design support and personalised guest experiences to post-event photography delivery. It is helping couples customise weddings more deeply.

AESTHETICS WITH HEARTBEAT: QUIET ELEGANCE

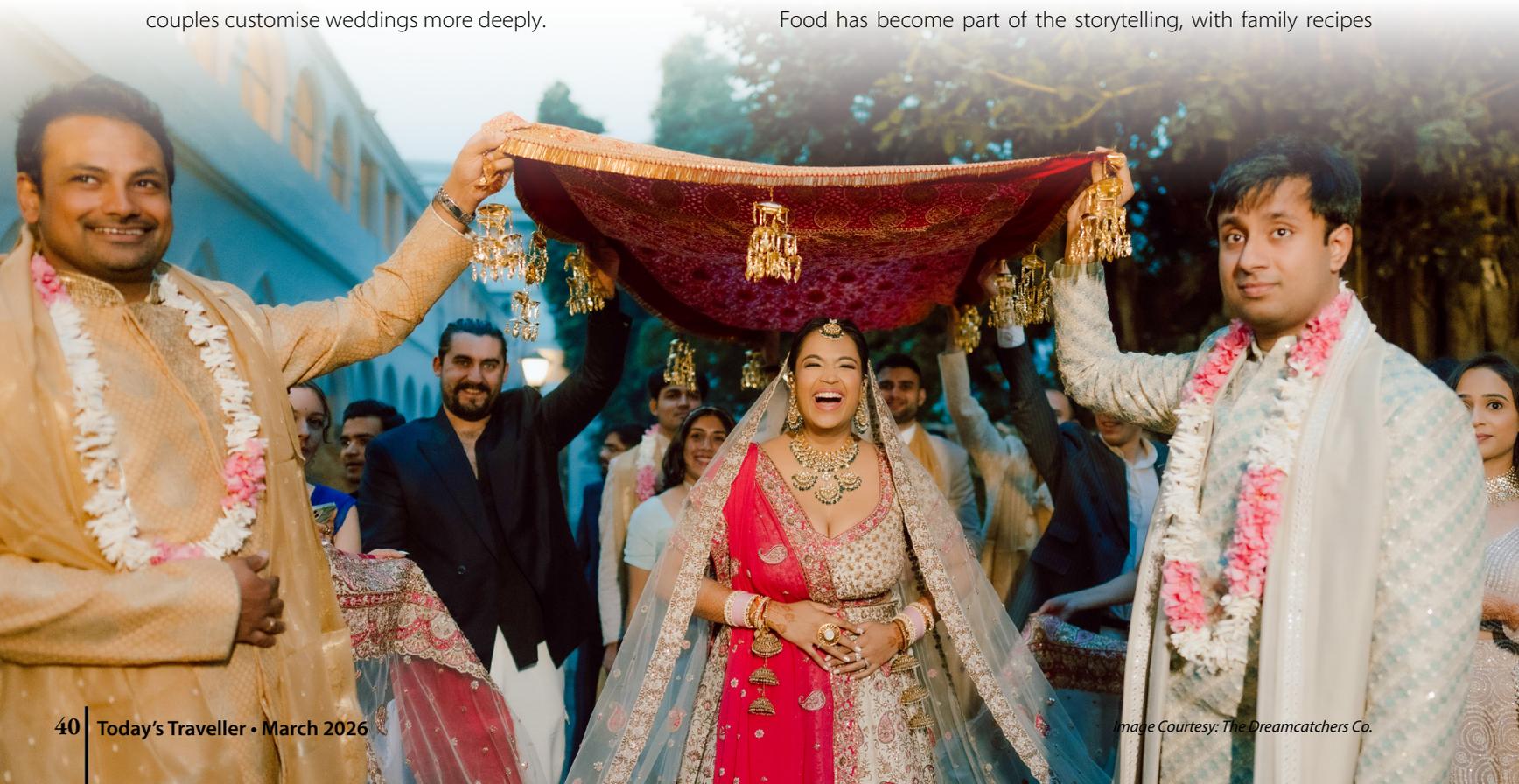
"We have seen that weddings are moving away from maximalism and towards intentional minimalism, muted pastel palettes, and meaningful detailing. We are seeing more monochromatic décor and fewer heavily layered classic themes. The grandeur now lies in the details, with couples choosing quality over quantity.

To adapt this to each couple, we treat every design element as an intentional choice. When visual noise is removed, the couple's personality becomes the focal point. That is where the beauty lies: understated elegance that feels personal, not borrowed from a trend board. Pastels and muted palettes continue to resonate, especially when they are rooted in the couple's own story.

PALETTES ON THE PLATE: MEMORY MENUS

"I believe wedding dining is going through a transformation. Couples are no longer interested in expansive, generic menus for the sake of variety. Instead, they want culinary experiences that feel curated and meaningful.

There is a conscious shift towards menus that reflect the couple's travels, shared moments, and favourite food memories. Food has become part of the storytelling, with family recipes





revived and favourite restaurant dishes recreated for the celebration. One of our biggest signature highlights for 2025–26 has been late-night binge stations at after-parties. These are personalised experiences designed around the couple’s tastes, such as favourite McDonald’s burgers, a nostalgic Maggi counter, or a DIY pasta bar. Guests love these moments, and they often become one of the most talked-about parts of the wedding.

THE STANDOUT SYMPHONY: TIME-ZONE PLANNING

“One of our most memorable weddings this season brought many firsts, which made it meaningful.

It was our first wedding where the couple was not based in India, and the entire celebration was planned and executed almost virtually, with only one in-person meeting, over four months. It was challenging, intense, and deeply rewarding.

Planning a multicultural wedding across time zones, with a couple arriving in India only close to the wedding month, meant navigating distance, logistics, timing, and cultural nuance all at once. What made it unforgettable was the trust. The couple and their family placed tremendous faith in us, and that gave us confidence throughout the process. We also found incredible collaborators along the way, with teams coming together in complete alignment.

THREADS THAT TELL STORIES: PERSONALISED WEARABLES

“We have noticed couples are moving beyond seasonal trends and designer labels and giving thought to what their outfits can say about them. Bridal and wedding attire has become another canvas for storytelling.

Custom embroidery on bridal veils has become especially popular, with significant dates, coordinates, and handwritten quotes stitched into ensembles. Traditional kaleeras are also being reimaged with personalised charms that reflect the couple’s journey, sometimes honouring pets, shared memories, or inside jokes. Personalisation is no longer limited to brides.

Grooms are embracing it too, with wedding dates or initials embroidered onto jackets and cuffs, and playful customisation on sneakers with hand-painted motifs or witty phrases.

THE PLANNER’S PERSONAL IMPRINT: EMOTIONAL LAYERS

“Our philosophy has always been to create understated, intentional experiences that place people at the centre of the celebration.

For us, guest experience is elevated through subtle, meaningful details, not excess. We do not choose a flower only because it is in season; we choose it because it may hold a memory. We do not add a cocktail because it is trending; we include it because it was the drink the couple shared on their first date.

Over time, people have come to associate us with hidden details, emotional layers, and quiet support behind the scenes. The grand moments matter, but the real magic lies in tiny details meant only for the couple. Weddings are about people, emotions, and memories that stay long after the celebration is over.





Image Courtesy: Norza Event

THE POETRY OF WEDDING DESIGN

Aliza Ali and Chirag Bhardwaj spotlight the 2026 wedding mood through design, detail, and emotion

TT BUREAU

Since its founding in 2020 by Aliza Ali and Chirag Bhardwaj, Delhi-based Norza Event has specialised in bespoke weddings. The firm delivers end-to-end services across venues, design, florals, lighting, rentals, stationery, catering, travel, hospitality, logistics, coordination, budgeting, RSVP management, and hotel liaison. At its core is a clear philosophy: personalisation is not a service, but the starting point.

Aliza Ali and Chirag Bhardwaj share what they see shaping Indian weddings in 2026.

THE WEDDING BUZZ FOR 2026: SOUL FIRST

"If the last decade celebrated spectacle,

2026 celebrates soul. I have noticed grandeur is no longer defined by scale, but by sensitivity. Couples are choosing spaces that feel composed rather than crowded, intentional rather than excessive.

We are witnessing the rise of emotional architecture, where environments are built not only with florals and fabric, but with memory, narrative, and pause. Weddings are becoming immersive memoirs. Design is no longer about visual consumption. It is about visceral experience.

At Norza Event, we define 2026 as the year of aesthetics with heartbeat, where every installation breathes, every palette has purpose, and every ceremony feels authored rather than assembled.

AESTHETICS WITH HEARTBEAT: NEO-REGAL MINIMALISM

"For me, the defining aesthetic of 2026 is Neo-Regal Minimalism. It is heritage, refined. Opulence, edited. Think Mughal symmetry reinterpreted through contemporary restraint, sculptural florals instead of sprawling arrangements, and tonal textures like parchment, sand, muted blush, oxidised gold, and forest green held within negative space. The drama lies in proportion, silhouette, and light.

Yet at Norza Event, aesthetics never begin with trends. They begin with temperament. Before we design, we decode the couple: are they romantic or reserved, drawn to warmth or modernity, and what does intimacy

look like to them? For one couple, Neo-Regal may become an ivory courtyard in candlelight. For another, a European garden narrative with a modern regency mood. The aesthetic is the medium. The couple remains the muse.

**PALETTES ON THE PLATE:
GASTRONOMIC THEATRE**

"I think culinary experiences have moved beyond catering. They are now curated performances. Today's sangeets and receptions embrace gastronomic theatre through tasting journeys, live-texture plating, cocktail ateliers, and dessert installations styled like couture showcases. A flavour philosophy we use is Spice Meets Silk, the marriage of bold Indian warmth with restrained global finesse.

That could mean smoked chilli in dark couverture, saffron-laced burrata with compressed stone fruit, tamarind-glazed wild mushrooms with truffle kulchas, or jasmine-yuzu gin elixirs with edible florals. At a winter wedding in Delhi, we introduced a late-night indulgence called Comfort, Elevated: miniature khichdi bowls topped with parmesan crisps and ghee espuma. It was nostalgia plated with refinement. The most memorable menus today are not fusion for novelty. They are emotion, reimagined.

**THE STANDOUT SYMPHONY:
WHISPERED LUXURY**

"A winter celebration in Delhi pushed us into a new realm of restraint. The couple requested timelessness. We conceptualised the wedding as a Winter Ivory Sonata, a study in texture, tone, and silence. The palette moved through ivory, champagne, and muted sage. Orchids cascaded like suspended poetry. Candle corridors created chiaroscuro drama. Drapery was architectural, fluid yet disciplined. The mandap drew on Mughal geometry, distilled to skeletal grace, with no ornate excess.

What made it unforgettable was the courage to edit. In an industry accustomed to maximalism, we

allowed space to speak. We trusted the proportion. We trusted light. Luxury, after all, whispers.

**THREADS THAT TELL STORIES:
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COUTURE**

"I have noticed that bridal couture in 2026 is autobiographical. Heirloom textiles are being resurrected and reinterpreted. A grandmother's brocade becomes a contemporary lehenga panel. A mother's dupatta is restored and edged with tonal zari. Secret embroidery, coordinates, vows, and zodiac constellations are stitched into blouse linings. The groom, too, claims narrative space through velvet bandhgalas, hometown looms, and crests within cuffs.

At Norza Event, attire and environment exist in dialogue. If a bride embraces rose-gold undertones, florals echo that warmth. If the groom chooses heritage ivory, lighting is curated to amplify its depth. The wedding becomes cohesive, styled, but never staged.

**THE PLANNER'S PERSONAL
IMPRINT: EDITED ELEGANCE**

"Our imprint is intentional luxury. Not abundance. Not replication. Intention. We treat editing as a discipline, subtracting before adding because excess dilutes



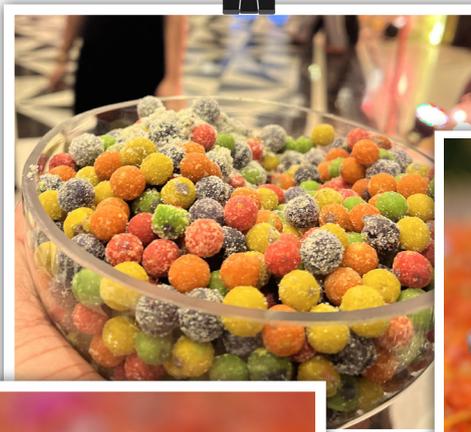
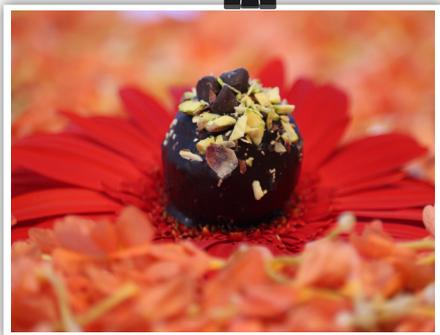
Chirag Bhardwaj & Aliza Ali, Founders, Norza Event

elegance. We prioritise emotional flow over rigid timelines because a wedding is choreography. We build pauses for breath, spotlight moments for parents, and quiet intervals for the couple to exist beyond performance.

Most importantly, everything is bespoke. We do not reproduce concepts. Each wedding is authored from inception through mood, materiality, scent layering, spatial composition, and table narratives. Our clients say they felt seen, and that is the ultimate luxury. Once the florals fade and the lights dim, what remains is the feeling, and that is what we design for.



Image Courtesy: Norza Event



PAAN WITH LEGACY, STYLED FOR NOW

Naushad Shaikh reworks tradition through The Paan Story, making paan chic for luxury wedding venues

TT BUREAU

Naushad Shaikh brings an unusual blend of corporate discipline and cultural conviction to the wedding business. An MBA graduate, he spent 11 years with MNC brands including Haier, Whirlpool and LG before stepping away in 2019 to launch The Paan Story, a luxury paan concept built on a clear promise: 100% tobacco-free and spit-free paan. He has repositioned paan as a refined, hygienic and hospitality-friendly experience for luxury weddings, premium venues and destination celebrations.

Naushad Shaikh shares how The Paan Story approaches menu design, guest experience and venue-ready service for each celebration.

TAILORING PAAN TO WEDDING THEMES

"When people hear 'paan', the first association is often red stains and tobacco, which is why many luxury hotels do not allow it. But paan itself has no connection with that image. Historically, it was part of medicine, traditional offerings and

mehmaannawaazi. Its image deteriorated due to tobacco and related products.

Through The Paan Story, we have worked to restore that identity by introducing 100% tobacco-free and spit-free paan. This solves a real problem for hotels, wedding planners and hosts who want paan in a luxury celebration. That is our biggest USP and the reason planners and properties bring us in to create what we call a "PAANTastic" experience.

We customise not only by wedding theme, but also by destination, number of setups, local traditions and hotel protocols. Whatever the brief, we do not serve tobacco or tobacco-related products.

Our menu formats include DIY Mukhwas, where we curate 10 to 25 varieties such as Banarsi Mukhwas, Anardana, Seven Seeds and Silver Mint. Guests can taste, choose favourites and fill glass jars to take home, making it interactive and memorable.

We also offer Paan + Mukhwas, with traditional options like maghai meetha paan, Calcutta meetha



paan, nauratan sada paan and sugar-free paan, paired with 10 mukhwas varieties. In Paan Ball + Mukhwas, we curate paan balls such as Saffron, Khus Khus, Pista, Dark Choco and Rose Choco, again with 10 mukhwas options. A combined setup brings together Traditional Paan + Paan Ball + DIY Mukhwas in one format.

PAAN AS AN ALL-EVENT EXPERIENCE

"I would not limit paan to the end of the wedding feast. For us, it becomes an experience across the event. Our menu is designed so guests begin engaging early and keep returning. Whether it is maghai paan, mukhwas or paan balls, they are drawn by presentation and taste. Once they try it, they bring others, so the counter grows through word-of-mouth during the function itself.

ROYAL PAAN FOR GLOBAL WEDDINGS

"I think paan is not evolving from a street tradition because it was never originally limited to that. It has a rich history linked to Indian royalty and hospitality. In ancient India, it was offered to guests as a mark of honour. Mughal emperors and Rajput kings also enjoyed paan, often with silver and gold. Its later nukkad-shop association came after tobacco entered the category.

We are rebuilding that original image for the global Indian diaspora through offerings ranging from traditional paan to premium options such as "Gold" paan, because paan carries both heritage and nostalgia. Today's diaspora is also highly health-conscious and often checks ingredient benefits before consuming anything. Betel leaf is widely associated with digestion support, oral hygiene support, respiratory relief, anti-inflammatory properties, antioxidants and possible blood sugar regulation. Source: Google.

SIGNATURE WEDDINGS AND GUEST REACTIONS

"We have created live paan counters for families such as Adani, Marico, Haldiram and Vijay Sales, where celebrities have attended and tasted our paan, mukhwas and paan balls. The strongest feedback is around hygiene, elegance and flavour

innovation. In many weddings, the live paan counter becomes a conversation starter and a memorable highlight.

At Trident Nariman Point, Mumbai, on 7 February 2026, we created a setup with 25 types of DIY Mukhwas and Gundi Paan. Guests described it as a unique mukhwas experience because they could taste, choose and fill bottles to carry home. The next day, 8 February 2026, another wedding at the same venue, handled by Krafted Luxury Events and Experiences, booked us immediately after the client saw the setup during a recce.

PAIRING PAAN WITH MENUS AND COCKTAILS

"We have worked closely with wedding planners to understand client requirements and hotel protocols. We have collaborated with top planners, and through them, our stalls have travelled across the country. We also work with luxury caterers, and many guests reach us directly through word-of-mouth.



Naushad Shaikh, Founder, The Paan Story



Image Courtesy: Mokshiva Entertainment

FROM FIRST LIGHT TO AFTERGLOW

Chetan Chouhan says, this is the year of emotionally intelligent celebrations, each moment building gently toward an unforgettable finish

TT BUREAU

Chetan Chouhan, Chairman and Managing Director of Mokshiva Entertainment, has spent over a decade inside the most ambitious weddings in India, spanning royal celebrations and large-format corporate galas.

Drawing from more than 500 meticulously curated events, he sees 2026 as the year celebrations move decisively away from spectacle for spectacle's sake and toward intentional, emotionally intelligent experiences that feel deeply personal, immersive, and unforgettable long after the lights go down.

Chetan Chouhan shares his insights on what is shaping 2026 wedding trends.

THE WEDDING BUZZ FOR 2026: PERSONAL CODES

"In 2026, I'm watching couples shift away from 'bigger' as a default and lean into weddings that feel like an honest extension of who they are, not merely what's trending. The focus is on memory-making: how the day feels, how it flows, and what guests carry with them after it ends. For me, the most successful celebrations are the ones that leave space for emotion, not only applause, where every high note is earned rather than forced.

AESTHETICS WITH HEARTBEAT: IDENTITY ANCHORS

"This year, I believe the most luxe décor is not the loudest; it's the most intentional.

The aesthetic capturing the zeitgeist is 'meaning-led design'. It's not about one signature look, it's about building environments that evolve with the couple's story. As a décor company, we adapt this by beginning with identity rather than inspiration boards. I always start with who the couple are, not what they like on Pinterest. Every design choice, colour, texture, lighting, music is anchored in their journey.

PALETTES ON THE PLATE: CULINARY ARC

"For me, dining is no longer a standalone 'service moment'. It's part of the emotional arc of the wedding, designed to keep guests engaged, surprised, and comforted in equal measure.

Food has become a storytelling tool. Beyond regional authenticity, I'm seeing couples embrace unexpected pairings that feel familiar yet elevated. Rich, slow-cooked flavours balanced with bright, fresh notes, and nostalgic cocktails with a modern twist.

THE STANDOUT SYMPHONY: TRUSTING RESTRAINT

“One of the most unforgettable weddings I orchestrated in the past year stood out because it was designed like a journey, not an event. The theme wasn’t announced; it was felt. From ceremony to after-party, the mood shifted seamlessly through light, music, and spatial design. Guests moved through the celebration instead of sitting through it. What pushed my creative boundaries was trusting restraint, allowing moments of quiet, intimacy, and organic interaction at scale. It reminded me, again, that the most powerful weddings don’t overwhelm; they connect.

THREADS THAT TELL STORIES: WEARABLE LEGACY

“Bridal attire has become deeply narrative-driven. I’m seeing couples use fashion to honour heritage, mark milestones, and express identity with clarity and intention. Outfits evolve through the celebration, symbolic colour choices are rooted in personal memory, and craftsmanship carries emotional weight, not merely visual impact. Clothing is no longer only ceremonial; it’s a medium for storytelling, allowing couples to quite literally wear their journey.

THE PLANNER’S PERSONAL IMPRINT: SURPRISE BALANCE

“One thing people now associate with our work is putting story before schedule. I design weddings around emotional beats rather than rigid timelines, and I love reimagining rituals so they feel authentic rather than obligatory. Sometimes it’s a quiet moment built into a busy day; sometimes it’s a personalised ritual that replaces tradition with intention.

My philosophy is simple: if it doesn’t feel real to the couple, it doesn’t belong in the wedding. In 2026, luxury isn’t excess. Luxury is precision, sincerity, and the confidence to let meaning lead.



Chetan Chouhan, Chairman and Managing Director, Mokshiva Entertainment



Image Courtesy: Mokshiva Entertainment



Image Courtesy: Mokshiva Entertainment

KENYA THRU SOPA'S EYES

With properties at some of the most breathtaking destinations, it is a dream come true to see Kenya through Sopa Lodges...

ARJUN GILL

Sopa Lodges is one of East Africa's most recognized safari hospitality brands, with six properties across Kenya and Tanzania. Sopa offers guests authentic African experiences through unique activities such as game drives, cultural dance performances, and sundowners. Each property is strategically located, providing exceptional access to wildlife and landscapes. The brand is recognized for its nearly 40-year safari legacy, people-first service, commitment to sustainability, and versatile event hosting for corporate groups and weddings. Sopa Lodges emphasizes comfort, soulful storytelling, and the warm hospitality embodied in its Maasai-inspired name, "Sopa." Every Sopa Lodge has a story to tell...

AMBOSELI SOPA LODGE – KENYA 'At the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro'

The lodge is nestled against Mount Kilimanjaro's breathtaking backdrop, just 20 minutes from Amboseli National Park. Visitors can enjoy game drives, sundowners, bush dinners, and the exclusive Rocky Hill dining experience. Rocky Hill is located right inside Amboseli National Park, enhancing the guest's dining experience with a hot meal during game drives. The accommodation consists of 84 rooms, including presidential

and honeymoon suites. For MICE the hotel can take up to 110 pax (theatre style) across two conference rooms.

Signature Experiences:

- Private dinner: A romantic, lantern-lit dinner experience beneath Africa's tallest mountain, perfect for honeymooners or special celebrations.
- Champagne bush breakfast: Start your morning with a full breakfast and bubbly in the heart of the wild, surrounded by grazing elephants and views of Mount Kilimanjaro.
- Lunch at Rocky Hill: A unique outdoor dining spot located inside Amboseli National Park, offering an enhanced dining experience.
- Nature walks: Learn about local flora, small fauna, and tracks from experienced guides while soaking in Kilimanjaro's shadow.
- Hemingway's bar experience: Step into a living tribute to literary legend Ernest Miller Hemingway at this iconic bar, a vibrant sanctuary where the spirit of storytelling, adventure, and artistic brilliance still burns bright. Built by Hemingway himself, the bar is steeped in rich history and deep cultural roots, celebrating his deep connection to Kenya and its people. Sip on finely crafted cocktails as resident bar supervisor Papa Emma shares stories from Hemingway's wild, fascinating life.





MEANING BEHIND THE NAME 'SOPA'

"Sopa" means "Hello" in the Maasai language — an embodiment of the warm welcome and people-first service that defines the Sopa experience.

BRAND PHILOSOPHY @ SOPA LODGES

"Comfort lies in authenticity, storytelling, and soulful moments in the wild. We don't just host guests – we welcome them into a timeless African experience."



MASAI MARA SOPA LODGE – KENYA
‘A front row seat to the migration’

Set high on the Oololaimutia Hills, this lodge is one of the earliest properties in the Maasai Mara game reserve. It is designed as traditional African roundhouses, offering privacy and charm. It offers 101 rooms, including interconnecting rooms and honeymoon options. For MICE there is a conference room seating 70 pax.

Signature Experiences:

- Bush breakfasts & dinners: Dine among wildlife in the open savannah, often timed to coincide with game drives and sunrise

or sunset moments.

- Boma dining with live entertainment: Traditional African dinners with storytelling, drumming, and dance in an open-air circular enclosure.
- Hot air balloon safari add-on: Optional experience that provides unmatched aerial views of the Mara.
- Happy hour at Ol Murran Deck: Sip sundowners while gazing out at the golden plains; an ideal setting for social media moments and reflective writing.



LAKE NAKURU SOPA LODGE – KENYA
‘Panoramas of the Great Rift Valley’

The Lodge is ideally located on the western escarpment of the Rift Valley with commanding views of Lake Nakuru. It is a haven for bird watchers and wildlife lovers with sightings of rhinos, pelicans and more. It features 60 rooms including 2 accessible rooms.

Signature Experiences:

- Koroga BBQ dining: Guests cook their own meals at live cooking stations with sweeping lake views.
- Guided nature walks: Explore Lake Nakuru’s reputation as a birdwatcher’s paradise under expert guidance.
- Archery & poolside leisure: A perfect mix of active and relaxed recreation for couples and families.
- Massage treatments: Local wellness therapies amidst nature.



LAKE NAIVASHA SOPA RESORT – KENYA 'Eco-elegance by the lake'

Astonishingly, the property is built without cutting a single tree, while the resort's curving design respects the lake's natural beauty. It's close to Nairobi and perfect for weekend escapes or team off-sites. The resort offers 82 rooms, including interconnecting rooms and two suites. For MICE, it features six conference rooms; the largest one holding 70 pax in theatre style.

Signature Experiences:

- Best of Vasha in a day: This experience features a picnic breakfast, boat tour, flower farm experience, winery tour, organic beef rearing farm tour, gift hamper, food and wine pairing dinner and night hippo viewing.
- Horse-drawn Chariot Date Nights: Step into a real-life fairy tale with an intimate ride through the flower farms of Naivasha, ending with a starlit dinner and hippo sightings.
- Aqua Gastronomy: A curated boat tour on Lake Naivasha culminating in a lakeside gourmet dinner featuring wine and food pairing as well as night hippo viewing.
- Lakeside BBQs & Boma Dining: Enjoy smoky grilled meats and local flavors overlooking the lake under a traditional open-air boma.



SOPA'S STRENGTHS

Unmatched wilderness locations

Each Sopa property is strategically positioned within or adjacent to major national parks, ensuring direct access to Africa's finest wildlife and landscapes.

MICE & weddings in the wild

Sopa Lodges caters to small and mid-size corporate groups, retreats, and dreamy destination weddings. With versatile spaces, dedicated planning teams, and immersive add-ons like bush dinners, cultural performances, and themed décor — each event becomes unforgettable.

Sustainable by design

From Naivasha's tree-preserving architecture to eco-conscious operations, Sopa Lodges is committed to protecting the ecosystems it operates in.

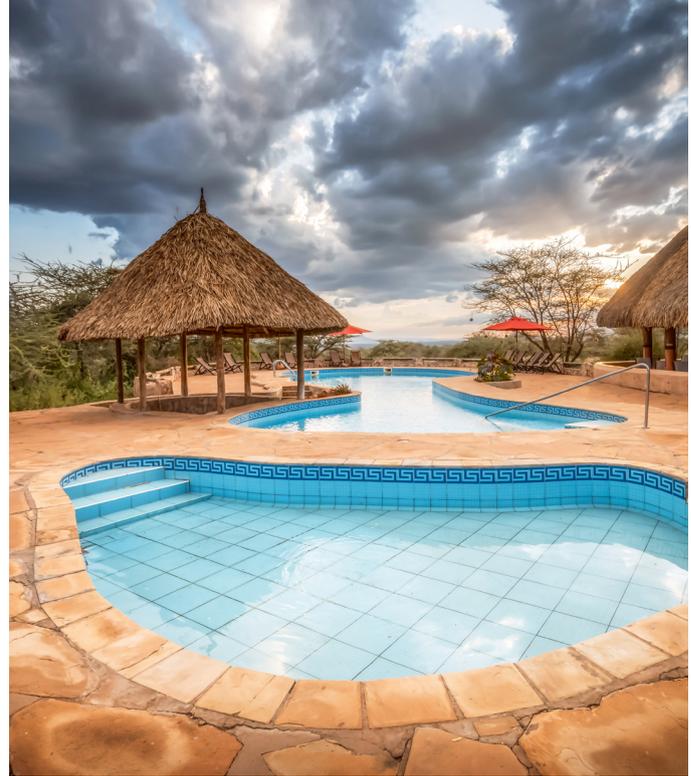
SAMBURU SOPA LODGE – KENYA

‘Where culture meets wilderness & the cosmos collide’

The lodge is inspired by Samburu homesteads and perched on elevated ground with stunning views. It is located in the Samburu National Reserve – famed for its unique Samburu special five species like Grevy’s zebra, Reticulated giraffe, Beisa oryx, Somali ostrich and the Gerenuk.

In addition to wildlife viewing, the area is home to an incredible variety of birdlife, making it a paradise for bird watching and bird photography enthusiasts. You can also explore the landscape on guided nature walks, offering an even deeper connection with the environment. All of this blends seamlessly with magical celestial nights, where stargazing under Samburu’s vast, unpolluted skies becomes the perfect way to end your day.

There are 60 rooms, including wheelchair accessible interconnecting units. The lodge is built to reflect the architectural heritage of the local communities whose sons and daughters make up the majority of the work force at the lodge. Fifteen cottages, each with two bedrooms are built in an arch formation on either side of the public areas to surround the waterhole but leaving a wide gap to allow the animals free movement to the water.



Signature Experiences:

- Bush dinners under the stars: A culinary experience accompanied by traditional music and the ambient sounds of the Samburu night.
- Sundowner cocktails with hilltop views: Toast the sunset overlooking Samburu’s rolling hills and thorny shrubland.
- Astro Tourism: Thanks to near-zero light pollution, guests can enjoy guided stargazing with powerful telescopes, binoculars and laser pointers including planetary tracking and constellation storytelling.



Master of complications

ROUND
TRIPLE MYSTERY



Inspired by a vision of time as fluid and unbound, the Mystery collection has always challenged convention. From the first single-disc Mystery to the Double Mystery with hours and minutes.

FRANCK MULLER
GENEVE

VOWS AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Forget the ballroom. These weddings are a full-blown natural spectacle.

CHANDRUTPAL DAS BORO

A new tribe of couples now shapes luxury wedding travel, and old templates rarely satisfy them. A vineyard in Europe, a beach in Bali, a palace suite in Rajasthan, all can feel like déjà vu. They want weather in the room, air in the lungs, sea life at the altar, ice under candlelight, and stars across a black sky. In this mood, romance moves away from décor and leans into spectacular.

That shift has opened a striking category of venues. Ice chapels rise for one season, then dissolve into river water. Underwater chambers place vows inside living reefs. Helicopters carry couples onto mountain ridges. Remote deserts weave astronomy into the timetable. Sandstone valleys offer heritage, silence, and contemporary design. In every case, the location defines the ceremony as strongly as the guest list.

ICE CATHEDRALS IN ARCTIC SWEDEN

In Jukkasjarvi, deep in northern Sweden, IceHotel appears each winter beside the Torne River. Builders and artists harvest river ice, carve halls, shape suites, and cast chandeliers with a soft blue sheen. The palace exists for one season, then spring arrives, and the structure slowly returns to water.

Inside the Ceremony Hall, redesigned every year, weddings take place in temperatures of minus five degrees Celsius. Guests arrive wrapped in thermal layers and parkas. Breath hangs visibly above every vow. Ceremonies stay brief, often close to twenty minutes, because cold weather sets its own timetable. Brides often wear capes and stoles over formal gowns, then change later for a heated reception.

That limit gives the place real charge. Sound softens, light bends through ice walls, and movement slows a little. During winter, the skies above Jukkasjarvi fill with aurora, green and violet ribbons stretching overhead.

Insight - Icehotel receives around 150 design proposals each year, and selects only about 15, so every winter build is curated like a temporary art edition.

UNDERWATER VOWS IN THE MALDIVES

A wedding venue sits six metres below the Indian Ocean. Curved glass walls hold back the sea while reef fish drift past at eye level. At times, a manta ray glides across the frame and steals every gaze in the room. That is Niyama Private Islands in the Maldives, a Minor Hotels property that also offers the world's first underwater restaurant and nightclub. The space is all drama,



Weddings Amidst Namibia's Sand Dunes. Image courtesy: LOTTY H. Elopements

anemone chairs, clamshell bars, and artsy interiors. Then comes the five-course Nikkei menu with stars like scallop ceviche and Maldivian reef fish gravlax!

The Maldives has become a leader in underwater wedding design, largely because many resorts already operate at a high level in marine experiences. Venues offer couples an underwater dining chamber as a ceremony space. Elsewhere, certified divers choose open-water-vow exchanges with waterproof slates and rings. Water clarity also shifts by season, so timing matters.

A thoughtful layer now shapes many underwater weddings. Several resorts pair the celebration with coral gardening led by marine biologists. Newlyweds and guests attach coral fragments onto nursery frames after the vows, leaving a living marker in the reef.

In Mexico, cenote ceremonies in the Yucatan offer another underwater mood, less polished and more ancient, with limestone caverns, filtered sunlight, and an almost reverent hush.

Insight - Minor Hotels says Subsix has hosted everything from champagne breakfasts to midnight glow parties for over a decade, which gives the venue a nightlife pedigree as well as wedding drama.

MOUNTAIN CEREMONIES ABOVE THE CLOUDS

High altitude changes the emotional rhythm of a wedding. At Everest Base Camp, the trek becomes part of the rite, and the landscape strips away excess long before the ceremony begins.

Many couples want that mountain atmosphere without a full expedition, and helicopter ceremonies now make it possible. In Alberta and British Columbia, experienced guides and licensed officiants coordinate legal weddings on isolated alpine landing sites. A short flight can carry a couple and a small party onto a ridge with snowfields and open sky.

Weather controls everything in this category, so flexibility



Weddings on Isolated Alpine Landing Sites, British Columbia



Weddings at AlUla, Saudi Arabia

belongs at the centre of planning. Contingency dates need a place in the first draft. Even helicopter access often includes a short walk on uneven ground, and altitude acclimatisation still helps, especially above 3,500 metres. Wind becomes the sound system, and conversations turn direct. In Nepal and Bhutan, local spiritual traditions can sit beautifully within these high ceremonies.

Insight - Canada's Blackcomb Helicopters' wedding format is unusually precise. Couples get a 45-minute mountain landing, with 12-minute (Silver Band) or 25-minute (Gold Band) flight options.

CELESTIAL WEDDINGS IN THE ATACAMA

The Atacama Desert in northern Chile remains the benchmark for celestial weddings. The air stays dry, and the night sky often appears in crystal clear detail. Major observatories cluster there for the same reason, and couples now follow that map, seeking vows under one of the finest dark skies on earth.

Here, the calendar often begins with the moon. New moon phases bring darker skies, and meteor showers can shape



Image Courtesy: Nomad Weddings

wedding weekends. Some couples hire a sky specialist for timing and ceremony guidance, then commission a custom star map showing the exact sky pattern above the venue during the vows.

At Tierra Atacama, private sky sessions fit naturally into the wedding stay and often blend modern astronomy with indigenous sky stories.

Darkness becomes part of the luxury language here. The Milky Way appears dense and textured, almost architectural in detail. Iceland and Hawaii also offer compelling alternatives, each with local regulations and an equally alluring night sky.

Insight - ESO (European Organisation for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere) notes Chile's Paranal benefits from an average of 330 clear nights per year, a rare statistic even among famous dark-sky destinations.

DESERT GLASS AND SANDSTONE GRANDEUR

Al-Ula in Saudi Arabia offers a different kind of drama, quiet, ancient, and deeply visual. The landscape holds Nabataean tombs, sandstone cliffs, and a long human story in rock. New hospitality projects in the region work best when they respect that age and avoid visual competition. The Chedi Hegra and Our Habitas Al-Ula both lean into this approach, using architecture that frames the desert and lets the horizon stretch.

Weddings in Al-Ula often feel restrained in the finest sense. Open sky, stone, warm light, and styling do much of the work. Licensed falconry can enter the ceremony through local specialists, bringing a cultural detail with deep roots in Bedouin tradition.

Namibia offers a different desert experience altogether. In the NamibRand reserve, elopements at Wolwedans unfold amid dunes that seem endless in late afternoon light. Couples often arrive by charter flight and move straight into silence. The sand changes colour with the evening, and the horizon holds every guest in its spell.

Insight - UNESCO also notes Hegra (in Al-Ula) preserves about 50 pre-Nabataean inscriptions and cave drawings, which adds an extra archaeological layer beyond the tomb façades.

WHEN LANDSCAPE BECOMES THE WITNESS

These weddings share a clear instinct. The moment feels pared back. Staging recedes. Voice, touch, and promise move into sharper focus.

A vow spoken in a place this large can feel brighter and more precise. The world stays vast, indifferent, and beautiful, and the couple stands inside it for an hour, making a human promise with uncommon clarity.



Cenote Ceremonies in Yucatan, Mexico. Image Courtesy: Yucatan Travel



Wedding Vlog. Image Courtesy: Chris, Unsplash

DIGITAL SHAADI, GLOBAL GUESTS

In the digital age, love does not wait. It goes live.

JEET BHATTACHARYA

Couples today are choosing digital weddings not because they have to, but because they genuinely want to widen the circle of who gets to witness their day. A best friend in New York can watch the varmala as it happens. A cousin in Dubai can send a blessing in the chat that gets read out between rituals. The geography disappears, but the emotion stays intact.

There is also something deeply comforting about real-time participation. Weddings move fast. Moments blur. But when everything is streamed and saved, it becomes an instant digital archive. The entry, the laughter, the vows, the small glances between rituals, all preserved and ready to replay, share, or revisit on anniversaries.

For creator couples, the decision carries another layer. Weddings now double as content ecosystems. Brand collaborations, beauty partnerships, couture tie-ups, venue showcases, YouTube revenue, affiliate links, and post-wedding

vlog series allow the celebration to continue earning long after the pheras conclude. Love becomes memory, and memory becomes momentum

THE CREATOR WEDDING EDIT: LIVE, LOUD, LOVED

BINKS

The Fun-Loving Groom who live-streamed his wedding with Pinkcess

Mithul Nayak, famously known as Binks or 8bit Binks69, is a Mumbai-based gaming YouTuber and S8UL streamer renowned for his Valorant and BGMI antics, captivating over 367K subscribers with live energy and community vibes.

His recent full-day live-streamed wedding with fellow creator Pinkcess (Dhwani Bhatt) redefined India's streaming culture. Audiences gained family-level access during rituals, vows, and festivities in real time. Gaming camaraderie merged



Behind The Scene of Wedding video shoot for vlog. Image Courtesy: Reneterp, Pexels

with genuine emotion, sparking huge platform engagement and solidifying his trailblazer role.

Set against Goa's lush, sunlit landscape, the stream carried viewers through the entire arc of the celebration. The *baraat* arrived with all its noise and swagger. Music performances unfolded like a live stage. The camera then moved into the *mandap* where the rituals played out moment by moment, right up to the final emotional beat of the *bidai*. For Indian viewers, it felt startlingly intimate because nothing was reduced to highlights. You were not watching a recap. You were inside the timeline.

What made it genuinely intriguing was the production intent. A multi-camera setup captured different angles simultaneously, with multiple 4K cameras collecting cinematic shots while a mobile operator stayed on the ground, interacting directly with viewers, reacting to their comments, and taking them closer to the action. 360-degree cameras added a playful layer, turning parts of the celebration into immersive, rewatchable moments. Professional audio was set up so clearly that audiences could even hear the *pandit* reciting mantras, which is usually lost in typical wedding videos. It felt like a wedding, a live show, and a digital cultural moment all at once.

TRIGGERED INSAAN

The Hindi commentary and roasting creator known for reaction videos and gaming, who captured his wedding as a warm digital vlog.

Triggered Insaan, real name Nischay Malhan, is a Delhi-based YouTuber famous for clean comedy roasts, gaming, and family-friendly content, amassing over 15 million subscribers.

His marriage to Ruchika Rathore did not feel like a distant celebrity event. It felt personal, almost like attending a friend's wedding. Instead of glossy, overly curated snippets, his wedding vlog carried the warmth and humour his audience knows him for, moving through candid moments, family banter, behind-the-scenes chaos, and quiet emotional pauses.

What stood out was how natural it felt. There were no dramatic filters or exaggerated edits. Viewers caught nervous smiles before rituals, teasing between siblings, small unplanned moments during the ceremony, and the kind of laughter that usually stays off camera. The vlog format made the wedding feel lived-in rather than staged.

For millions who have grown up watching him online, it became a shared milestone, proving how creators now turn personal chapters into collective digital memories.

TYPICAL GAMER

The daily gaming creator known for streaming role play games and Minecraft brought his community-first vibe into a live wedding with Samara Redway

From Canada, Andre Rebelo as Typical Gamer fuels 15 million fans through high-octane Fortnite runs, quirky challenges, and vlog adventures. His and Samara Redway's livestreamed wedding worked because it treated "going live" as a creative choice, not a gimmick. The ceremony, held at an undisclosed mountainside venue in Canada, was framed like a warm digital invite rather than a public spectacle. Fans were given a heads-up well before the vows, so the audience gathered the way guests do, arriving early, waiting, chatting, settling in.

The most intriguing decision was what they left out. No text-to-speech interruptions. No donation alerts hijacking the emotion. They deliberately removed the noisy streamer mechanics so the attention stayed where it belonged, on the vows, the quiet pauses, the raw smiles, the moment.

It became a new kind of wedding style: intimate in feeling, communal in scale. A "small-ish" wedding in real life, expanded into a global viewing room, with the chat turning into a live chorus of blessings and celebration.

SOURAV JOSHI & AVANTIKA BHATT

Sourav Joshi, the everyday-life vlogger from Uttarakhand with a passion for drawing, captured his *shaadi* to Avantika Bhatt as a complete, personal wedding story on camera across 8 videos (39M subscribers).



Typical Gamer and Samara Redway wedding shoot. Image Courtesy: Samararedway, Instagram



Triggered Insaan and Ruchika Rathore. Image Courtesy: Triggered Insaan, Instagram

Sourav Joshi's shaadi vlog stands as a crisp showcase of India's modern "digital wedding." He crafted the entire event into an audience-friendly narrative, rolling out pre-wedding build-up episodes followed by a seamless full-day "Shadi Vlog" that traced every ritual and moment in authentic flow.

What feels unique is the point of view. The camera is not parked at a distance like traditional wedding coverage. It moves through rooms, corridors, cars, and family clusters, catching small nerves, teasing, last minute fixes, and those blink and you miss them smiles that make weddings feel real. The rituals stay central, but the vlog format lets viewers understand the rhythm around them, who is doing what, and how the mood changes across the day.

Moreover, his decision to reveal his partner Avantika Bhatt fully for the first time in the vlog added an emotional layer that fans had been eagerly waiting for, turning the wedding into a collective shared story.

ALANNA PANDEY

The fashion, beauty, and travel influencer who vlogged her wedding, sangeet, and reception as a stylish multi-episode celebration

Alanna Pandey is a LA-based fashion icon blending sultry makeup tutorials, luxe travel diaries, and chic OOTDs for her 1.7M Instagram followers. Her wedding vlogs stood out because they gave audiences something celebrity weddings rarely offer: continuity and context, not only highlight photos.

Across multiple videos covering the wedding, sangeet, and reception, viewers saw how a high-profile celebration actually moves, from the build-up and backstage energy to the choreography, entrances, and the way the evening flows when the guest list includes Bollywood's inner circle.

What made it especially compelling was the celebrity proximity, captured in a way that felt immediate and unfiltered. The reception and festivities saw major names, including Shah Rukh Khan and Gauri Khan, along with a wider set of well-known faces such as Kanika Kapoor, Orhan Awatramani (Orry), and Aaliyah Kashyap.

In that atmosphere, performances became more than "viral clips". The vlogs preserved them as part of the night's story, including the stage moments featuring Ananya Panday, and celebrity guests like Aryan Khan attending the celebrations, which collectively made it feel like a rare digital window into how celebrity weddings actually unfold.

IMMERSIVE WEDDINGS

Immersive weddings are reshaping how love is experienced, especially for families spread across cities and continents. Technology is no longer in the background. It is shaping how memories are made and shared.

VR attendance lets guests feel present inside the celebration, turning their head to see the mandap, guests, and décor in real time.

Metaverse mandaps allow couples to build spaces that blend heritage and imagination, from ancestral homes to dream settings.

3D hologram blessings bring absent loved ones life-sized into the moment. AI edits arrive within hours, while wedding NFTs preserve memories as digital keepsakes.

TRADITION, NOW WITH A WIDER HORIZON

Live weddings are not here to dilute tradition. They are here to carry it further. A wedding still belongs to the family in the front row, the priest by the mandap, the hands that hold the varmala, the eyes that well up during the bidaai.

Yet it also belongs to the people who cannot board a flight, take leave, or cross time zones, but still want to be part of the moment. The guest list now stretches beyond geography, without losing its soul. The sacred fire still burns. It simply has better Wi-Fi.



Pandey Siblings in One frame. Image Courtesy: Alanna Pandey, Instagram



Image Courtesy: Wow Wedding Makers

WHEN CELEBRATION BECOMES CAPITAL

India's wedding industry has grown into a ₹5 lakh crore powerhouse, with over 10 million weddings taking place each year.

KAMAL GILL

On a winter evening in Udaipur, as the sun lowers behind the Aravalli hills, a palace courtyard glows in muted gold. Diyas shimmer against carved sandstone. Lake Pichola mirrors a mandap rising in silk and antique florals. Guests are not arriving for a single ceremony. They are entering a three-day narrative.

And that narrative could well be Tomorrowland! Translating dreams into reality are India's wedding planners who give you reality bytes that frame the big picture. Shares Ekta Saigal Lulla, Founder, ESL Events, "We've worked with clients who were passionate about board games and transformed their celebration into a full-fledged board game-themed wedding, complete with interactive game stations and design elements inspired by their favourites. Another client's love for Tomorrowland led us to curate an immersive music festival-style experience, complete with neon lighting, eclectic stage setups, and electrifying live performances that transported guests into a world of rhythm and revelry."

And so the wedding story unfolds ... a welcome dinner overlooking the lake. A curated heritage walk through the old city. A sunrise mehndi framed in handwoven drapes sourced from Varanasi. A reception that blends classical ragas with contemporary orchestration.

Two hundred guests have flown in across four continents. The hotel is fully booked for four nights. Florists collaborate with local artisans. A Mumbai atelier has worked for months on a handloom bridal ensemble inspired by ancestral textiles. Jewellery commissioned in Jaipur draws upon temple craftsmanship. Taxi operators, lighting technicians, caterers, priests and production teams operate in synchronised precision.

It appears intimate. It functions as an economic engine. Reveals Vikramjeet Sharma, Founder of Le Florence Weddings, "Imagine a wedding where the décor is inspired by Parisian elegance, with a touch of Moroccan mystique, or where the entertainment includes dancers from Africa, Europe, and even

artists flown in from South America. Themes like Moulin Rouge, black-and-white galas, or even a whimsical fairy tale setting are just the tip of the iceberg.”

One celebration moves crores across sectors. It fills hotel inventory in what was once a shoulder week. It fuels aviation demand. It activates artisan supply chains. It generates global social visibility that no tourism campaign can purchase outright.

Three months later, in Dubai, a ballroom overlooking the Creek transforms overnight into a mandap suspended in light. The skyline shimmers as 600 guests gather for a sangeet choreographed with cinematic precision. Charter flights land from Mumbai and London within hours. Luxury coaches ferry guests between a desert welcome dinner and a yacht-hosted after-party.

A five-star property allocates entire floors for family occupancy. Private chefs are flown in. Jewellery worth crores travels under secured logistics. A digital command centre manages live streaming for relatives in Toronto and Singapore. Four days unfold. The economic ripple continues far longer. Hotels benefit. Airlines benefit. Destination management companies benefit. Florists, stylists, transport operators and audiovisual specialists benefit.

Says noted wedding planner, Birju C Gariba, Founder and CEO, Iskra Events, “Big arrivals will continue to trend on social media and will see the use of SFX (Special Effects) to the next level, blended with dancers in exotic costumes as well as props that are inspired by Bollywood. Baraats, which are the traditional domain of grooms, have seen a parallel in bridal Baraats as well, and these may become the next big thing.”

Agrees Kaveri Vij, Co-Founder, Designer Events, “Grand entrances will reach new heights, featuring horse-drawn carriages, choreographed dances, and even hot air balloons.”

The imagery travels globally, reinforcing destination branding. Multiply those two scenes by nearly ten million weddings annually. That is the scale of India’s wedding economy.

THE ₹5 LAKH CRORE ARCHITECTURE

India hosts close to 10 million weddings every year. The industry is valued at approximately ₹5 lakh crore and growing at an estimated 20–25 per cent annually. An average urban wedding ranges between ₹15 lakh and ₹50 lakh. Destination weddings frequently exceed ₹1 crore. Ultra-luxury celebrations can cross ₹50 crore.

Shares Vikramjeet Sharma, “The planning for these grand Indian weddings usually kicks off about a year in advance, and believe me, it’s worth every moment. Setting up the venue can take days—sometimes weeks—but it’s all part of the process.”

Spending patterns reveal the scale of this influence. Venues and catering typically absorb 35–40% of overall budgets. Hospitality has emerged as the most strategically transformative category. Weddings have moved from banquet department revenue to boardroom priority.



Image Courtesy: Shubh Muhurat Luxury Weddings

Spending distribution broadly reflects jewellery as the largest category, followed by venue and hospitality, couture, décor, catering and entertainment. Jewellery alone accounts for nearly one-third of expenditure, reinforcing India’s position as one of the world’s largest gold markets. While jewellery and wedding attire account for another 25–30%. Gold purchases worth nearly ₹3.5 lakh crore each year see a majority demand linked directly to marriage ceremonies. Bridal ensembles span a remarkable range, starting at ₹50,000 and reaching ₹50 lakh or more, reflecting both aspiration and status.

Meanwhile, cinematic wedding films and premium photography packages, priced between ₹3–15 lakh, have emerged as lucrative specialised segments. Financing trends further underline the emotional weight of the occasion, with around one-third of families opting for loans averaging ₹8–12 lakh. Projections suggest the industry could approach ₹15 lakh crore by 2028.

Remarks leading wedding planner, Mareesha Parikh, Director of Swaaha Weddings & Experiences and CEO of Nautanki Company, “Mythological themes are set to take centre



Image Courtesy: The Wedding Network



Image Courtesy: Reet Entertainment Pvt. Ltd.

stage—grand, cinematic storytelling inspired by ancient Indian epics, blended with modern theatrics, music, and lighting. But personal storytelling will always remain a classic, couples love weaving their own journeys into the celebrations, making each moment unforgettable.”

In India, a wedding is no longer a social ritual; it is a powerful economic force woven deeply into culture, tradition and national growth.

DESTINATION INDIA: THE EXPANDING DOMESTIC CIRCUIT

Rajasthan remains the benchmark. Udaipur’s lakeside palaces, Jaipur’s fort courtyards and Jodhpur’s desert heritage properties anchor large-format celebrations. Goa balances beach romance with accessibility. Kerala’s backwaters deliver understated elegance. Manali, Rishikesh, Tehri, Jim Corbett and Shimla are witnessing a surge in mountain weddings driven by cooler climates and intimate guest lists. Mahabalipuram, Chettinad mansions and Hampi offer architectural gravitas. Nashik vineyards are increasingly preferred for experiential ceremonies. The Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep are emerging alternatives for island luxury. India’s wedding geography is expanding beyond traditional hubs into layered, experience-led destinations.

THE GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

Thailand continues to dominate international formats, particularly Phuket and Krabi. The UAE attracts large diaspora celebrations, combining connectivity with luxury infrastructure.

Italy’s Lake Como and Tuscany host ultra-high-net-worth weddings. Turkey’s Bodrum, Greece’s Santorini and Bali remain aspirational settings. Oman and Qatar are rising contenders. Destination selection increasingly depends on visa ease, charter connectivity and production infrastructure.

Says Mareesha Parikh, “Personally, I’m excited about the unexplored gems—hidden treasures in Oman and lesser-known spots in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Eastern Europe. These destinations bring something fresh to the table, giving couples a chance to create unique and unforgettable wedding experiences.”

The Indian wedding is culturally rooted, yet globally staged.

2026 WEDDING TRENDS

In 2026, weddings are becoming more personal and experience-led. Couples are planning smaller, well-managed celebrations with a strong focus on guest comfort and good flow across events. Décor is cleaner and more thoughtful, with statement flowers, warm lighting, and locally inspired touches. Fashion is more individual, with modern takes on traditional wear and coordinated looks for families. Food is also getting more exciting, with regional menus, live counters, and custom cocktails. Sustainability is now part of the plan, seen in mindful gifting, less waste, and support for local artisans.

VENUES: EXPERIENCE OVER EXCESS

Boutique heritage properties are increasingly preferred over oversized ballrooms. Outdoor mandaps set against lakes,

vineyards and desert dunes dominate visual storytelling. Multi-day itineraries now include curated city walks, local craft interactions and wellness mornings. Sustainability enters negotiation conversations. Solar-powered resorts and biodegradable décor are influencing venue choice. Luxury is becoming atmospheric rather than overwhelming.

MOOD AND AESTHETIC

The palette of 2026 is archival. Antique ivory, muted gold, sage green and dusty rose replace loud saturation. Décor references regional heritage: Pichwai art, temple motifs, Banarasi textiles and Chettinad columns return in refined forms. Minimalist mandaps allow architectural context to breathe.

COUTURE

Handloom revival shapes couture. Banarasi, Paithani and Kanjeevaram textiles reappear in lighter silhouettes. Brides choose breathable structures. Grooms experiment with layered styling and heritage detailing. Convertible ensembles reflect multi-event practicality.

TECHNOLOGY AND CRAFT

Wedding-tech platforms streamline guest management and vendor logistics. Hybrid participation remains relevant for global families. Meanwhile, artisan clusters in Rajasthan, Varanasi, Kanchipuram and Kutch experience seasonal uplift through wedding demand. The wedding industry bridges luxury consumption and grassroots livelihood.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Environmental consciousness shapes 2026 decisions. Couples opt for biodegradable décor, plant-based menus and recyclable installations. Luxury is increasingly defined by thoughtfulness. Neha Mehrotra, Founder, Foreign Wedding Planners, concurs, "Sustainability is also at the heart of Gen Z wedding trends. Eco-conscious choices such as thrifted wedding décor, locally sourced flowers, and ethical bridal fashion are becoming the norm. From biodegradable confetti to digital invitations and zero-waste receptions, couples are making conscious efforts to minimise their environmental footprint. Personalisation is key, with couples writing their own wedding vows, designing interactive digital invites, and even experimenting with 3D-printed wedding cakes to add a unique touch to their special day."

JEWELLERY

Polki and uncut diamonds remain dominant. Temple jewellery has achieved pan-India adoption. Coloured gemstones complement softer couture tones. Lab-grown diamonds gain traction among younger buyers prioritising ethical sourcing. Jewellery is evaluated for longevity and reinvention beyond the wedding day. Shares Neha Mehrotra, "Convertible jewellery, such as detachable necklaces that transform into bracelets,

will allow brides to get multiple looks from a single piece. Minimalist designs inspired by vintage aesthetics will blend the best of modern and traditional styles, featuring sleek lines with heirloom-inspired details."

THE STRATEGIC OUTLOOK: AN ECONOMIC NARRATIVE WRAPPED IN CELEBRATION.

The ₹5 lakh crore wedding economy influences hotel investment, aviation route planning, couture retail cycles and tourism board positioning. Few sectors generate such concentrated economic momentum across metropolitan and Tier-2 destinations. The Indian wedding of 2026 will be smaller in guest count yet higher in experience. Softer in aesthetic yet stronger in heritage storytelling. Digitally amplified yet emotionally intimate.

Indian weddings have evolved as a tourism accelerator. A cultural export. A luxury growth engine. The wedding economy stands at the intersection of all of it. It carries tradition forward while driving contemporary growth. It activates heritage properties and modern ballrooms alike. It uplifts artisans and luxury brands in equal measure. It connects India to the world through celebration.

And as the Indian wedding continues to travel across palaces and skylines, across continents and cultures, it reminds us of something fundamental. Celebration has always been part of India's story. Today, it is also shaping its economic future.



Image Courtesy: Bon Evento



Image Courtesy: Pradyk, Pinterest

OLD VOWS, LIVING RITUALS

Unique Indian wedding rituals and global parallels that reveal symbols of transition, play, protection, duty, and community

M GOUTHAM

Wedding rituals echo the ideas of the past into the present. Many customs that linger from the past have been reinterpreted to be playful and fun, divested from the culture that birthed them. They trace their roots back to the Puranas and ancient folklore, defining the experience of Indian wedding ceremonies. A lot of them are symbolic and ritualistic, adding a playful charm to the wedding ceremony.

Many of these traditions find kinship with similar customs across the world, similar motifs and philosophies, and attitudes exist across the globe for eyes keen enough to find them. Some share similar narratives, others share motifs and symbolism, creating a vast network of shared ideas and practices between cultures.

RENUNCIATION AND RETURN

The Kashi yatra is a common wedding narrative across India in Brahmin weddings. The wedding rituals follow the narrative where the groom renounces worldly life and starts a pilgrimage to Kashi in search of spiritual fulfilment.

The bride's father stops him and persuades him to return, reminding him that marriage is not a lesser path, that household life, duty, and family responsibility are also sacred, and Grahastya comes before Sanyas in the path to fulfilment. The groom accepts domestic life, and the wedding proceeds.

Across the world, the same pattern can be seen in different forms: in some Nepali wedding lore, a groom may don saffron and announce a Himalayan retreat before a purohit and family elders draw him back with the language of grihastha dharma. Similar motifs can be found in Sri Lankan Buddhist marriages and farther from home in some African marriage traditions.

NALANGU AND PLAYFUL RITUALS

Nalangu, a tradition observed in some South Indian marriages, arrives after the solemnity of vows, mantras, and family rituals. The rituals of Nalangu are ones that can be playful, noisy, and deeply social. It is a soft landing, something many families of the day have turned into something playful.

One of these rituals includes a ring being dropped into a wide bowl or brass vessel filled with milk, turmeric water, or



Image Courtesy: Yuna Weddings & Events

petals, and the bride and groom search for it with one hand. Some others include breaking appalams (a food item similar to pappad), where the bride and groom take turns breaking them over each other. Another ritual includes snatching as many Betel leaves as possible from a pile between them.

One could easily see how these rituals have been reinterpreted to be playful and lighthearted over the years. Outside India, similar post-wedding play appears in different forms where rituals from the past have lingered on, add levity to the marriage ritual as a whole.

KALARATRI

Kalaratri is a Bengali Hindu post-wedding custom in which the newlyweds spend their first night apart. In some families, these traditions are stricter, and many observe this day after the wedding reception, the ritual perhaps slowly moving into something more symbolic. Either way, the idea remains the same: the first night is treated as a moment of pause, not immediate union.

Often linked to the Behula-Lakhindar story in the Manasa Mangal tradition, where the wedding night is marked by danger and loss, Kalaratri absorbed this sense of vulnerability and evolved into a form of ritual protection. The “dark night” became not a denial of intimacy, but a guarded threshold. The same motif of separation can be seen in many cultures across the world, though the practice and its intention and symbolic meaning may differ from culture to culture.

In Scottish folk tradition, the so-called “barn sleep” places the couple in a barn or stable rather than a comfortable home setting, with water sprinkled for luck and a rustic period of adjustment before domestic life fully begins. In Iran and Greece, the emphasis shifts toward protection, with evil-eye precautions,



amulets, and sensory rituals used to guard the newlyweds during a period seen as spiritually sensitive.

BREAKING POTS AND OBSTACLES

In some Gujarati, Sindhi and Ismaili wedding customs, wedding rituals include breaking a clay pot, earthen vessel, or ritual plate during the marriage sequence. Sometimes the groom breaks it at the entrance; in other cases, the family performs the act together.

The break may represent removing obstacles, warding off negativity, strength, or inviting good fortune. In some traditions, the breaking of the pot is thought to release blessings that the contents of the pot represent.

In the German and Polish Polterabend, held on the eve of the wedding, guests gather to smash porcelain, crockery, and earthenware, and the couple then clean up the shards together. This custom is linked to luck and read as an early test



Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Marathi Wedding Ritual. Image Courtesy: Mudra Aute, Pinterest

of teamwork. In Greek celebrations, plate breaking is tied to dancing and happiness, with smashing used as an expression of joy, abundance, and, in many interpretations, a way of driving away ill fortune; while the practice is less common in formal weddings today, it still survives symbolically and in staged forms, sometimes with safer plaster plates.

MEHANDI

Mehandi is perhaps a pre-wedding ritual that could be called quintessentially Indian, a practice that has been adopted across various states and communities and can be traced back to truly

ancient times were records and references turn blurry. This is a ritual that truly needs no introduction.

As Indian as Mehandi is to us, the traditions in India sits in a wider culture of Henna also found in Turkey, Yemen, Morocco, Sudan, Egypt and more. Across cultures, henna is a symbol of joy and celebration and is associated with health, fertility, and security. Some communities also believe that it can ward off evil eye and negativity, especially during auspicious occasions.

THE NO-INVITATION WEDDING

This is perhaps one of the most unique traditions of them all, observed by the Koya community, something almost unimaginable to most of us. A marriage where no one is invited! Where the news of the ritual spreads organically through friend and kinship groups until the wedding drums invite people over to the grove where the wedding is supposed to happen. Dhemsa dance circles form, and people stream in from neighboring hamlets, turning the event into a collective celebration rather than a private family affair.

By night, the bride is brought in procession, local liquor is shared, and simple vermilion rites are performed in the open. The Koya Pendul wedding is less an invitation-based ceremony and more a community assembly for all who arrive.

CONCLUSION

Seen alongside similar traditions across the world, these traditions reveal that though the culture may differ in objects, stories, and ceremony, they often return to the same human instinct: to ritualise change so that joy, fear, duty, and hope can all be held at once. In that sense, wedding customs are not just relics of the past but also living maps of how societies imagine love, family, and the work of building a life together.



Image Courtesy: Sana Lakhani, Pinterest



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