

# LODGING

## Isn't It Romantic?

5/6/2011 | by Laura A. McNeill



### ACTIONS >>

SHARE

E-MAIL

PRINT

### RELATED >>

[4 Questions for Stanley Tang, BLT Architects](#)

[60-Second Profile: Britt Mathwich, Great Inns of the Rockies](#)

[Current Outlook](#)

[Earth Day Continued...](#)

[Gas Prices and Room Demand](#)

[Going to Great Heights](#)

[Hampton Inn Grows Overseas](#)

[Hotel Food and Beverage](#)

[Isn't It Romantic?](#)

[Jump and Jive](#)

A wedding day is something that people will never forget. Couples spend hours finding the perfect location, planning every minute detail, and making sure that their special day will be everything they ever imagined. However, there is just as much, if not more, planning that goes into having a property set up to host couples' dream weddings. Although the property's appearance may initially draw the guest, it is the customer service, attention to detail, and personal connection that creates the perfect wedding.

Paradise Point, located in San Diego, Calif., is known for its destination weddings. The weather is great year round, and it is one of the only beachfront and bayfront properties in San Diego. The mile of white sand certainly helps the property, as it has become one of the most popular wedding destinations in Southern California.

However, it is the entire experience that sells the property; couples want to feel like their wedding is as important to you as it is to them. "It doesn't matter if you have a beautiful hotel, it comes down to personal connection. They need to believe in and trust the individuals planning the event because they are buying the relationship," says David Hall, general manager of Paradise Point.

### SERVICE FROM THE START

From the moment a couple arrives on the property, the planning begins. The first visit for prospective newlyweds at Paradise Point begins with a greeting from the resort's catering manager, who gives them a tour of the property. After seeing the five unique ceremony locations and the six different places they can have their reception, couples are introduced to the wedding specialist. "It is important for the wedding specialist to find out exactly what the couple is looking for, from the food to the experience," Hall says. "Do they want sand in between their toes or a formal reception in our Sunset Ballroom? Once you understand what they are looking for you can present options."

The same process happens at Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa in La Jolla, Calif., which, like Paradise Point, is operated by Destination Hotels & Resorts. Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa is also a popular property to host weddings in California. The property was once an equestrian stable used to breed thoroughbred horses and it has inspired the entire look of the hotel. The front lobby remains identical to how it used to be. Similar to the first visit at Paradise Point, couples are greeted by the catering director when they arrive at Estancia.

Angie Kemp, catering manager, believes getting to know the couple on a personal level is essential. "Weddings are a very emotional and exciting process and sometimes feelings are hurt, or people want more attention, so it is about getting to know the people and how they want and wish to be treated," she says. "Some people want e-mails. Some have been living for this moment their entire life and want you to be at their beck and call.

"We meet with the bride and groom and walk them around the property and show them the space, show them the guestrooms, dressing rooms, all of the elements," Kemp continues. "Then we meet with them to talk about the menu, total costs, contract terms, deals, and specials. Once the contract is signed we introduce them to the event manager."

#### **GETTING THE SPECIFICS RIGHT**

When couples meet with the event manager at Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa, they go over specifics of the reception: Do they want a table at the altar or extra microphones? It's the little things that cannot be overlooked. The event manager works closely with the catering manager. "We work as a team, we go and meet with them and the event manager. It's a whole team, not just one person," Kemp says.

On the couple's second visit at Paradise Point, they begin to plan the menu. Although there are set menus available, the chef tries to create a special menu with each wedding. "We schedule a time when the chef prepares possible items for the menu, maybe mahi mahi and a tenderloin," Hall says, "and then, depending on what the couple likes, the chef takes a creative direction and then on the next meeting comes back and says, how about this for an appetizer?"

#### **RELAXED AND MEMORABLE**

When the big day arrives it is all about making the wedding party feel relaxed and confident that the property staff will be able to meet their every need. This is the most chaotic and stressful time for the hotel. At Paradise Point, while the banquet team begins to prepare the food and set up the room, the bride-to-be and her bridal party are brought to the full-service spa to be pampered. "We have a full-service spa where the women can have their nails and hair done," Hall says. "There is also an outdoor area with a hot tub where we provide champagne and lunch. It gives them a chance to relax and chat either the day before or the day of the wedding."

Paradise Point goes so far as to pick up the entire bridal party in a golf cart, which resembles a limo, and drive them to the ceremony.

Similarly, at Estancia, the staff does everything it can to make the day perfect. "We provide a dressing room for the bride and a finishing room for the groom. The room is stocked completely with an emergency bridal kit, all types of mirrors, and a tall wedding gown rack," Kemp says.

Behind the scenes, the staff checks on the ceremony site. They make sure all vendors have arrived, and set up the banquet room.

"After the ceremony we greet the newlyweds with drinks and hors d'oeuvres," Kemp says. "The couple is provided with a wedding butler who follows them around for the rest of the night making sure they have everything they need. Toward the end of the wedding, the couple is brought to their complimentary suite, where they will find champagne, rose petals covering the bed, candles, and a piece of wedding cake."

No matter how beautiful your property may be or what type of "bridezilla" you may encounter, the recipe for a perfect wedding includes attention to detail, great customer service, and creating a personal connection to the bride and groom. "You have to deal with brides and families in the planning," Hall says. "It's a very stressful time and people's emotions can ride [high], but it is important to recognize that it is their day and to allow them to experience it how they want to and help them through it."