



Going Small *is Big*

By Rachel Sawden

With its charming hotels, pink sand beaches, and old-world venues, Bermuda makes for the perfect dream wedding destination. Vacation rentals and boutique hotels have been carving a niche in an industry that has long been associated with large resorts and big budgets, and in turn, a growing number of couples are forgoing big blowout weddings for more intimate affairs.

The main benefit of holding a small wedding is of course cost. The longer the guest list, the larger the venue and the greater the catering bill. A growing number of smaller venues are seeing a rise in demand for cost-conscious couples.

"We've seen a demand in people who want to use vacation rentals to host ancillary events," says Alison Corday Young of The Ledgelets, a charming cottage colony located in Somerset. "Couples are leaning toward having rehearsal dinners and welcome receptions outside of the ceremony's host hotel."

Another small wedding trend the historic cottage colony has seen is second weddings, vow renewals, and a rise in elopements.

"Recently we had a couple from Vermont who rolled an elopement and vacation in Bermuda into one," says Alison. "It was a second wedding for both of them, so they left the kids at home, rented a cottage, and got married overlooking the ocean with just the officiant and a witness. It was so magical and easy."

Rosedon Hotel Events Manager Emily Sheere has also seen couples leaning toward intimate nuptials, where the overall experience is as crucial to their wedding as the vows. As a member of the prestigious Relais & Châteaux group, Rosedon promises their guests will enjoy their time in Bermuda as much as at the hotel.



"We've seen a definite uptick in weddings this year, both with local residents and overseas visitors," says Emily. "For group weddings, we only offer complete buy-outs, which is highly appealing to those couples looking for an estate-style property with its own high-end restaurant and all the amenities you could wish for. We also see some couples coming alone, enjoying a truly enchanting wedding experience without having to worry about anyone else."

Like The Ledgelets, Rosedon Hotel receives many requests to host rehearsal dinners or receptions, particularly for local couples who got married overseas and want to celebrate in Bermuda.

After working in a larger hotel, Emily says she loves working with smaller weddings.

"A big benefit of doing smaller weddings is that you can completely customize the events and you work so much more closely with the bride and groom," says Emily. "You can really get a handle on the vibe they're looking for, whereas larger weddings can really strain a budget and lessen the couple's options."

Bermuda's small-island status and laid-back charm makes it the perfect fit for couples wanting to focus on connecting with their guests and each other during their big day.

The Ledgelets Cottage Colony: *A History*

The Young family, which today owns the charming cottage colony, The Ledgelets, in Somerset, has lived in the area for more than 300 years. The bold pink property that welcomes visitors, long-term renters, and wedding celebrations can be traced back to the 1938 marriage of John H. Young II and Negla Spurling. To mark the couple's marriage, they were gifted the means to purchase their first home, The Ledges, an old ship captain's house. Not long after, Bermuda became a strategic location during World War II, and on an impulse, John and Negla began taking paying guests to accommodate the American and British servicemen who needed a place to stay on island.

The Ledges expanded to become The Ledgelets, able to accommodate 26 guests in 10 cottages, and 10 years after their marriage, John and Negla's property officially became one of the first cottage colonies in Bermuda.

John went out of his way to make The Ledgelets a friendly, welcoming place, where his guests felt like family members, a practice that continues today. In lieu of a bar, guests signed up to be members of a bottle club, with their spirits stored in the main living room's cedar lockers. Upstairs in the dining room, guests enjoyed home-cooked meals. John's hospitable approach was so inviting, the couple was soon turning guests away, even during the off season.

In 1998, The Ledgelets was converted into a residential property that accommodated only long-term renters, but less than 20 years later, John H. Young II's grandson, John H. Young III, and his wife Alison drew from their experience in Bermuda's five-star hospitality sector to follow their dream of reopening the Ledgelets in John's grandfather's vision. Three of the cottages were converted to vacation rentals while the remaining units continue to operate as residential rentals. Alison's strengths in interior design, style, and media are evident in the property's melding of a chic 1960s vibe with modern touches that appeal to all visitors. Once again, The Ledgelets has become a place where visitors feel like family.

