

Fancy a budget dream wedding?

OPTIONS: Although wedding banquets in hotels in the Klang Valley are getting more expensive, there are cheaper alternatives for the budget-conscious, write Audrey Vijandren, Suzanna Pillay and Nur Aqidah Azizi

ONCE upon a time, a dream wedding was to be cherished and planned with scrapbook images of little girls wearing star-rudded veils and walking on red carpets adorned with a thousand rose petals.

Unfortunately, reality can be a barrier when the soon-to-be-happily-married couple realise that they have to cash out their savings and max out their credit cards to feed a few hundred guests at their dream venue, usually a luxury hotel.

Over the past few years, costs of wedding banquets have doubled, so thanks to inflation, rising food and transport costs, as well as the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

For RM228 nett per person, the package includes a customised menu by award-winning chefs who can prepare buffet, Chinese fusion or Western cuisines.

Some complimentary gifts include a theoretical bridal entrance on red carpet, decorative wedding cake, bottle of champagne and a night stay for the couple.

Furthermore, with Wedding Incentive Points from Hilton Honors rewards programme, they can earn thousands of bonus points that can be used for their dream honeymoon.

To shorten the to-do list, Hilton can even arrange for an official registrar to officiate the ceremony and offer special room rates for guests.

Marketing executive Samantha Lee, 35, who married a 40-year-old electrical engineer in January, says they opted to hold their wedding banquet in Penang because they couldn't afford one in Kuala Lumpur.

"We started planning for our wedding more than three years ago but we didn't expect to see such an increase in cost."

Although it was tedious to get everyone there, it was better than swapping our credit cards a hundred times to have a wedding here.

"We spent RM30,000 for a beachfront wedding in the afternoon."

Nurin Michael, 35, who is getting married in June, started scouting for her wedding venue last November and decided to hold it in a hall instead of a hotel.

Starwood Malaysia director of digital marketing, Southeast Asia and Malaysia marketing team Cindy Wang.

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Cindy Chang of Nupts & Such says although costs of wedding banquets have increased, couples will continue holding their weddings in their preferred venues.

She says if a person is invited to a wedding, a reasonable amount to give as any pair is between RM200 and RM300.

Wedding planner Sherry Abdul Aziz A from The Knot says prices of wedding banquets at hotels have been high for the past few years.

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Unique weddings at 'Kampung Pengantin'

THE increasing costs of hotel weddings have directed couples to celebrate elsewhere.

Special venues for brides and grooms to commemorate their special day, dubbed Kampung Pengantin (Wedding Village), are making big business in the city outskirts.

At Rynba Haven, Nilai, clients can customise their special day from themes and colours to decor and food.

Unsurprisingly, it has become a popular choice for those who wish for some exclusivity on their big day.

Its manager, Khairil Azman Mohd Bostan, 48, says its popularity among couples is due to its location on top of a hill in Nilai Perdana.

"Besides the venue, we also provide other wedding services in our package, such as wedding DJs, performances, food and photography."

"A typical package starts from RM30,000 and can go as high as RM50,000."

Khairil says customers are not deterred by the challenging geography.

Adha says he has to tweak his packages to account for the economy.

"Wedding packages are in demand, especially among brides-to-be. But we have to lower the price and customise our packages based on the needs of our customers."

With a package that starts from as low as RM350 to RM3,500, Adha says his Seremban-based company makes an average of RM40,000 per month.

Similar Kampung Pengantin venues, such as the English cottage-styled A Park in Puchong, Selangor,

and the garden-themed Singgahsana @ Arjung Floria in Putrajaya, are also thriving.

They offer affordable packages while giving couples the freedom to choose their themes.

Located by a lake, A-Park offers three packages that cater for 1,000 people: Silver (RM33,000), Gold (RM44,000) and Platinum (RM55,000).

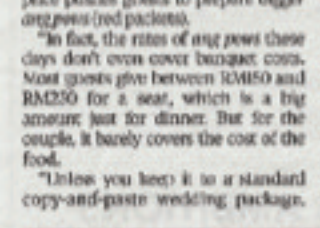
These venues give options to those who are looking for something other than conventional hotel settings.

And that is only the food, Matyikalul says.

But, she says, if the reception is held in a venue, such as a community hall, it is cheaper than holding it at a hotel.

"Hotel banquets cost between RM150 and RM300 per person, depending on how luxurious the hotel is."

What about an average Indian wedding?



Letitia Han



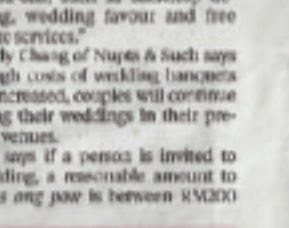
Sherry Abdul Aziz A



Nurin Michael



Matyikalul



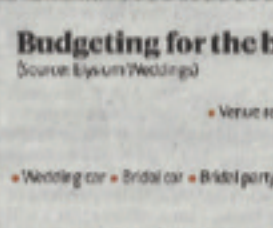
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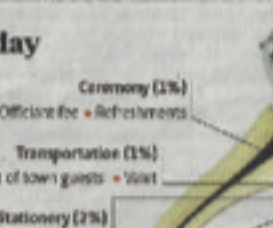
Matyikalul



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No pomp, but great ceremony

IF a couple are willing to forgo pomp and grandeur, they can have a memorable day without burning a big hole in their pockets.

Wedding planner Matyikalul Najwa Ab Maralib from Wawa Cleo Studio says traditionally, a Malay wedding is held in the home of one of the newlyweds.

She says the cost is RM25 per pax, inclusive of the canopy, sound system, food and decorations.

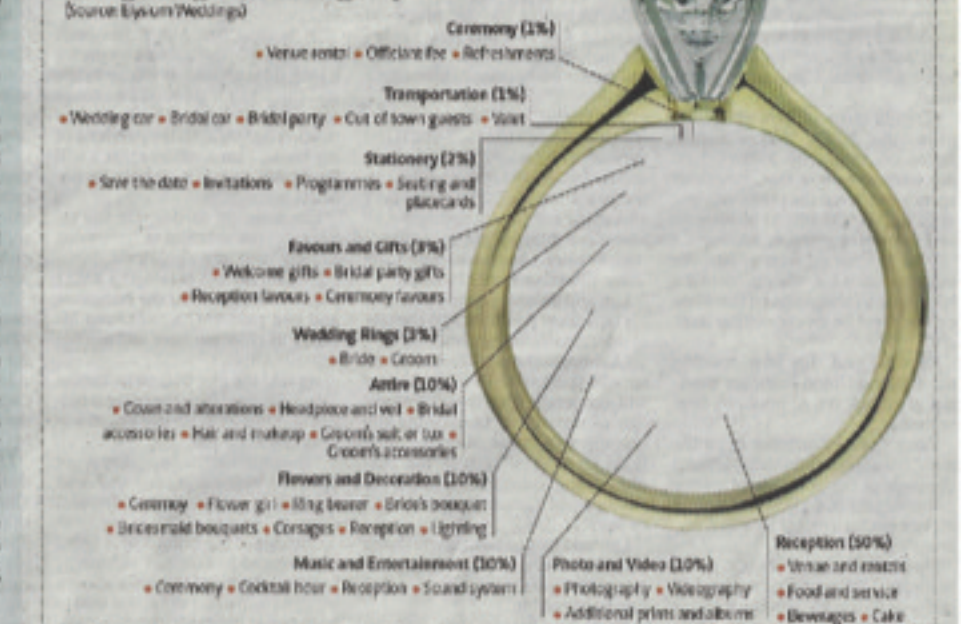
"So a wedding reception for 1,000 guests can cost RM25,000 and above."

"If they want a fancy wedding reception with more dishes, they will have to pay extra."



Matyikalul Najwa Ab Maralib

Premium packages offered by top hotels in the Klang Valley



Budgeting for the big day

