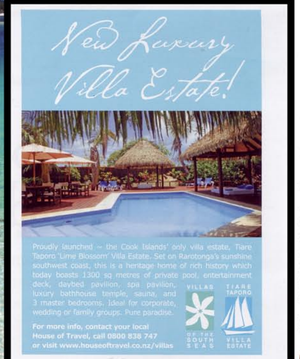


RAROTONGAN BEACH RESORT & SPA

RAROTONGA

REAL LIFE DESTINATION WEDDING

After eight years together, soul-mates Joshua Hartley and Nicole Nungesser recently married at The Rarotongan Beach Resort & Spa. Here is their romantic journey to the altar ...

How did you first meet?
In December 1999, we started talking at a holiday event and really hit it off. Nearly 6 ½ years later, Josh proposed at the top of the Eiffel Tower right before midnight.

Why did you opt for a destination wedding?
We had watched so many of our friends and family get married at traditional ceremonies, and they were all starting to look the same. We wanted something different.

Why the Cook Islands?
Several years ago, in the middle of our vacation there was a coup in Fiji, and our travel agent was kind enough to tell us about the Cook Islands. It was love at first sight! Rarotonga was more beautiful than we could ever imagine. It seemed only natural to go back to the spot where we feel so in love. We both love having our own little secret piece of paradise to sneak off to.

How long did it take to plan the wedding?
We gave ourselves a little over a year to plan things, but it could have come together much quicker. The planning was really easy! I spent much more time (and was a lot more stressed out) working on our traditional reception back home. The Rarotongan Beach Resort & Spa had two great wedding planners to help with anything and everything. Thanks again to Heather and Marian for all their hard work! I thought I'd be a complete "control freak," but they knew the island better than I did, so I put a lot of trust in them. While I chose my wedding colours, they picked flowers for my bouquet. I chose the flavour of the wedding cake, they made sure it looked beautiful.

Was there anything that you felt worked especially well?
We had an intimate sunset beach ceremony beside Aroa Lagoon (the Lagoon of Love) with just a few guests and then a private candlelit dinner, which was very romantic. We really love the culture of the islands, so we had a string band play before the ceremony, and a full island dance troupe perform afterwards. We had a great time laughing at each other's dancing abilities!

The best part of a destination wedding?
There were so many "best" parts about our destination wedding: We got to spend the day enjoying each other instead of keeping everyone else happy; we were able to re-live our first vacation together; we didn't have the stress that goes with a traditional wedding; and after the ceremony, we were already on our honeymoon!

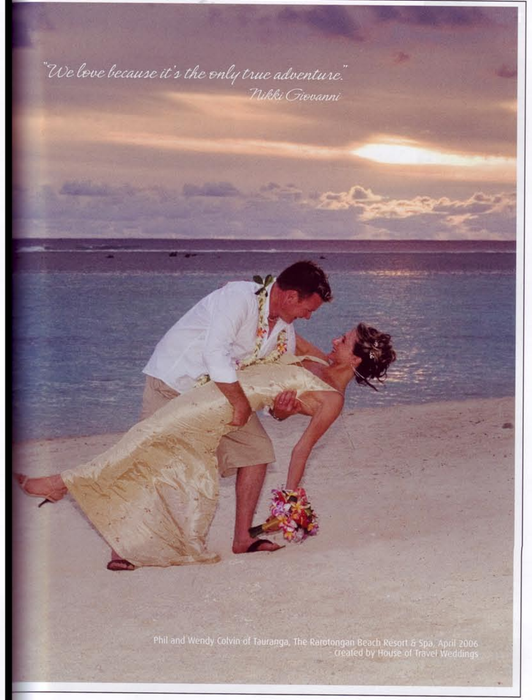
Anything you would have done differently?
No, no, no! Everything was perfect!

HOUSE OF TRAVEL WEDDINGS SPECIAL OFFER

Special Rates available for Wedding Groups at The Rarotongan Beach Resort & Spa or sister resort, The Aitutaki Lagoon Resort & Spa, during frangipani season, November to February, please inquire.

For more details: houseoftravel.co.nz/weddings/rarotongan-beach-resort

PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL COLLIN, THE RAROTONGAN BEACH RESORT & SPA



Phil and Wendy Colvin of Tauranga, The Rarotongan Beach Resort & Spa, April 2006. Created by House of Travel Weddings