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## Getting hitched - with kids in tow

The beautiful Cook Islands is a favourite destination for barefoot brides - even those with ready-made flower girls!



**M**ore and more couples are choosing to tie the knot after they have children. Yestin Spowart and Lucy Airton explain why they chose the Cook Islands for their big day.

**1 Why did you opt for a destination wedding?**  
We were attracted by the naturally beautiful surroundings, the great locations for the wedding photographs and the relatively low cost. We also wanted to avoid pressure to conform to extended family politics and expectations of the "traditional wedding". The other advantage is that you don't just spend one day with the guests you invite.

**2 Why the Cook Islands?**  
We both love the four S's... sun, sea, sand and... sun tans! We had been recommended the Cook Islands by a friend who had lived there for a year. Her description fitted our notion of 'idyllic' - beautiful and yet unspoilt by tourism. It certainly lived up to expectations.

**3 How long did it take to plan?**  
The actual wedding planning took about four days. This was very much due to the efficiency, relaxed, reassuring and professional nature of the staff at The Rarotongan Beach Resort & Spa. The resort's extensive wedding photograph album helped us in making choices about where to hold the ceremony (beach, tropical garden etc), right down to flower arrangements and hair styling. But co-ordinating the flights and arrangements for our four guests, all of whom were coming from England, took more like six months.

**4 What was the reaction from your family and friends?**  
A mixture of shock and delight. As we come from England, it was

too much to expect many people to make the long journey. We therefore planned the date around a visit to New Zealand by Yestin's parents (the built-in babysitters!)

**5 How many guests attended?**  
Our two children Ben (four years) and Bryony (three years) were ring bearers. Our other guests were my parents, plus Lucy's oldest school friend, Sarah, and her partner Paul aka "Fishy".

**6 What is your most memorable moment of the day?**  
Yestin: The whole atmosphere created by the weather, the location, the music and the staff. And I'll never



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forget the moment Lucy appeared on her warrior-escorted vaka around the headland as she was ceremoniously delivered to me on the beach.  
**Lucy:** It was so relaxed. I spent the morning swimming and sun bathing then had my hair done in 40 minutes before getting dressed and being canoed around the lagoon. The children made it for me - they were so happy all day long.

**7 What did Ben and Bryony think of their mum and dad getting married?**  
Both Ben and Bryony were chuffed to be a major part of our marriage celebrations. They were stoked to be ring holders and that mum and dad were going to give one another a ring and would then have the same last name. They talk about it a lot. Bryony thought mum looked like a princess, and of course she had her hair done in beautiful flowers.

**8 The best part of a destination wedding?**  
Hassle-free venue with everyone on island time, holiday high spirits. Complete strangers would come up to us and congratulate us on our family celebrations.

**9 Any advice for couples with children planning a similar wedding?**  
Ensure that you involve your children in the wedding planning and celebrations and try to give them each specific roles within the ceremony. We had a copy of the official marriage documents photocopied so that Ben and Bryony could both act as signatories. They were really proud of this - especially as they had just learnt to write their names.  
Another important thing for us was to include the children in our wedding vows. We wrote our own

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**further INFORMATION**  
Cook Islands Tourism Corporation  
Phone: 02 9955 0446  
Email: ausmanager@cook-islands.com  
Website: www.cook-islands.com  
Getting there: Pacific Blue flies from Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane to Rarotonga. Visit www.flypacificblue.com, or call 13 6789. Further information: The Rarotongan Beach Resort & Spa, visit www.therarotongan.com

vows and a poem about our special day. Even though they were only three and four, they felt very special when we mentioned their names.  
We'd highly recommend The Rarotongan Beach Resort & Spa. Invite a close family member or someone who the kids are happy to stay with while you get away for a night for that extra special honeymoon experience. We spent a night and two days on Aitutaki

at the Rarotongan's sister resort, The Aitutaki Lagoon Resort & Spa, while the grandparents looked after the grandkids. This was definitely money well spent. It was absolutely beautiful and our night in an overwater bungalow topped off the occasion nicely.

**10 How did Ben and Bryony enjoy Rarotonga, and what made it special for them?**

They were both made to feel very welcome at the resort by staff and guests alike. The Moko's Kids' Club was wonderful and they fully immersed themselves in the poolside activities and performances.  
Another fond memory for them was feeding the tropical fish on the shoreline. They are still reported to be re-enacting scenes from their Rarotongan experience during role plays at their kindergarten.  
**11 Anything you would have done differently?**  
I would have loved to have stayed longer! There were no real expectations from the extended family to tie the knot, it was just that the time was right for us. We are so glad we waited though, because now we can share our very special memories with our children as they were such an important part of our day.



In the enchanted Cook Islands (just west of Tahiti) your family can play in wonderland to your heart's content. At The Rarotongan, snorkel straight off the stunning beach in the sparkling lagoon, a protected marine sanctuary for 7 years (like snorkelling in a tropical aquarium!) Enjoy the Cook Islands' ONLY KIDS CLUB (Kids Stay & Play FREE at The Rarotongan!) with Free Kids Welcome Pack and Free Snack & Drink at each Moko's Kids Club session! Paradise, from our family to yours.

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