

# NEW ZEALAND WEDDINGS

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## Bride of the Year

WIN prizes worth \$45,000

## GET READY

- Plan to perfection
- Personalise your day
- Stress-free solutions

120+ gorgeous gowns

## PETRA BAGUST

Shares her wedding day insights

*Vintage glamour*  
Styles to flatter your figure



"We wanted a relaxed wedding with a feeling of intimacy"



## Tropical delight

Sandy Bennett and Brian Hitchcock were married at The Rarotongan, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, on June 21, 2007.

**Our love story** We went against all rules and met at a bar in central Auckland. One of Brian's mates recognised me from playing hockey for the New Zealand team and talked him into approaching me. We took each other's numbers and started dating a few weeks later. Two years on we were holidaying in Rarotonga and Brian proposed in our room. We were interrupted by a knock on the door – but by the time Brian returned the rock was on my finger, so he rightly assumed my answer was yes!

**My wedding look** I found my gown at Felicity's Bridal Salon in Auckland. I wore my late grandmother's crystals, which felt very special. They were fairly full-on and I pretty much chose the dress to go with the crystals.

**Venue vibe** We wanted a relaxed wedding with a feeling of intimacy. The Rarotongan made the perfect venue, since that's where we got engaged. Having a destination wedding meant we didn't have to worry about transport on our wedding day – or the weather, which is unpredictable at home. We had the ceremony in a gazebo on the beach, a great BBQ buffet for the reception and hours of non-stop dancing.

**Planning to perfection** The bulk of our wedding was organised by our personal wedding planner Heather Rorani from The Rarotongan. While I carried around my lists and fretted about things, I really had nothing to worry about!

**Something special** Both of us have lost our fathers (mine passed away seven years ago, and Brian's two years ago) so we knew it would be an even more emotional time for both of us and wanted to be with a small group of close family and friends in a place full of sunshine. Our 49 guests came from as far as East Timor and Texas, which was really touching.

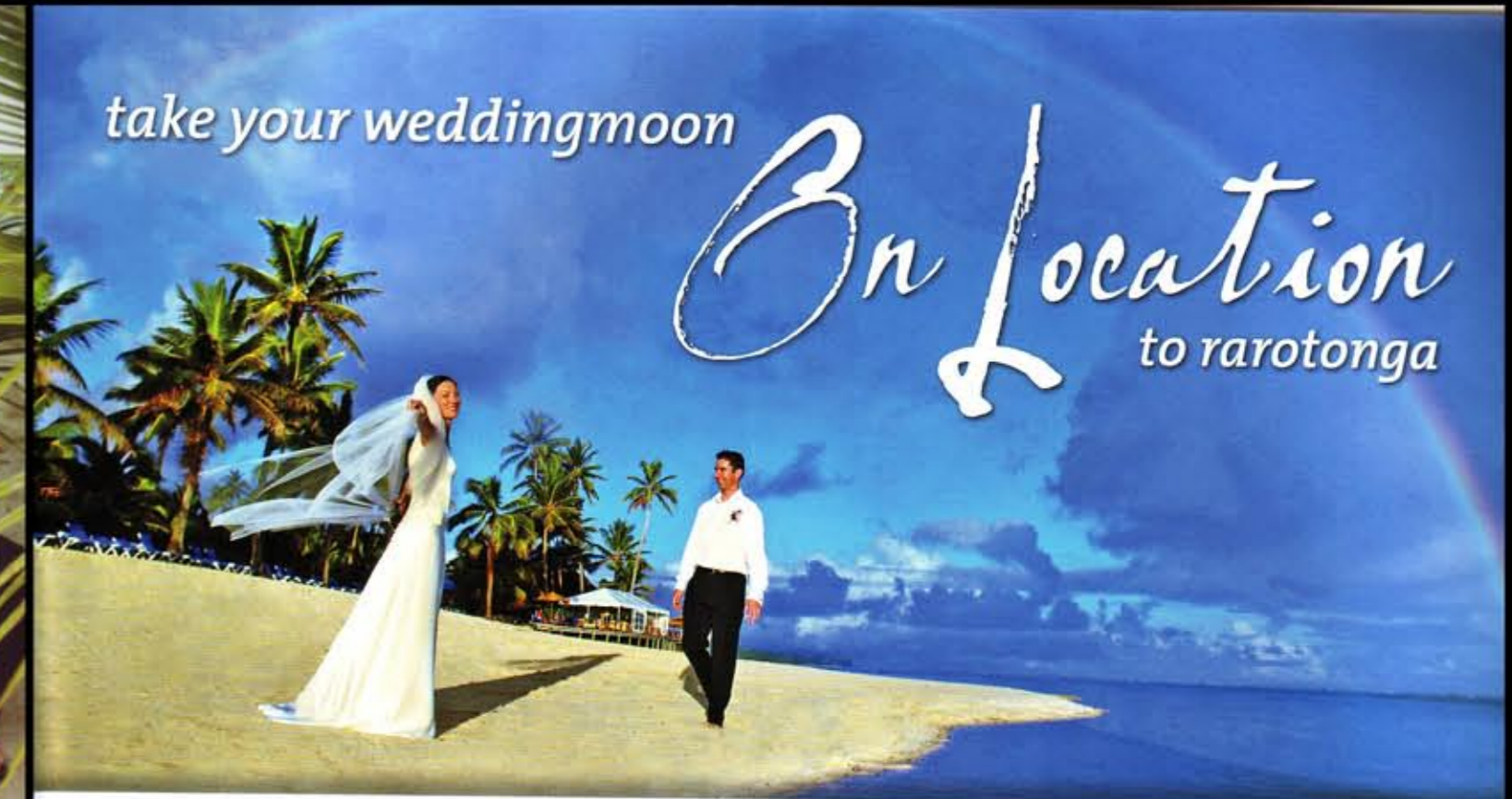
**Going for it** Right before the wedding the best man realised he forgot the post-ceremony toasting goblets. Luckily he was staying at The Rarotongan so he did a mad sprint to his room and was able to get back, goblets in hand, before I even arrived!

**Memorable moments** The whole day was memorable, but I was particularly touched by Brian's vows. He was so genuine and choked up when he was saying them. It was just beautiful. There was hardly a dry eye during many parts of the day. All of the speeches were fantastic – every word was spoken from the heart.

**Advice for brides-to-be** Look into a destination wedding. Give guests heaps of notice so that they can get used to the idea and use it as a holiday. Plus, it means your wedding celebrations will last more than a day!



**Above** Sandy and Brian planted a tree on the beach where they wed to symbolise their commitment to each other. **Left** The couple chose to marry in Rarotonga at the resort where Brian proposed. 'Sun, sand and sea' were Sandy's favourite parts of their destination wedding. **Below** The wedding was organised top to bottom by their wedding planner at The Rarotongan. 'Every detail was amazing – especially the flowers!' Sandy says.



## 'Elope to Paradise' Weddings

Take your Big Day on location to the heart of the South Seas, where you'll discover the enchanting Cook Islands just west of Tahiti. Imagine standing here together on the white sand beach beside luminous Aro'a Lagoon (the Lagoon of Love), bathed in the golden glow of the setting tropical sun. The Rarotongan Beach Resort & Spa's idyllic Aro'a Beach is one of the most perfect places on Earth for couples in love to embark on a lifelong adventure. Wedding packages start from the beautifully simple sand-between-your-toes ceremony 'Taputou – The Promise' at just NZ\$1299. And if you're considering bringing family and friends along to share your special time, then everything's right here – loads of complimentary activities, superb snorkelling, spa, salon, gift shops, fitness centre, fantastic kids club, restaurants and much more. Ask for The Rarotongan's new Beachfront Suites, like being in your own native hut. Your weddingmoon at The Rarotongan – meant to be. For a special romantic retreat, fly away together to your own private island, The Aitutaki Lagoon Resort & Spa. Heaven sent.

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