

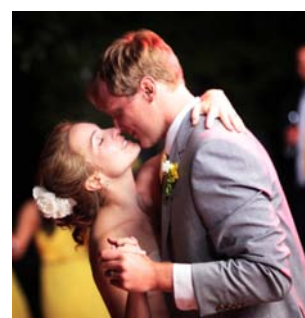
# TOGETHER

# A date in the desert

Couples head to a dry place for winter weddings



Desiree Barnett —  
Joel Ides



Toby Morris Photography

Desiree Barnett and Joel Ides both work for the HBO cable network, so it's no surprise that their Oct. 8 wedding had the magic of an Emmy-caliber production.

"It was beautiful beyond our expectations," Barnett said. "It was like a wonderland... like 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'" Barnett, 26, who coordinates events and awards for the network, and Ides, 34, a video editor, were married at the Orcutt Ranch in West Hills.

The setting was transformed into an exquisite fantasy world. There was a gazebo resembling a birdcage, trees illuminated by lanterns and topiaries graced with butterflies made of brilliantly colored fabric. As the couple walked down the aisle, the 120 guests tossed rose petals of orange, yellow and pink. "I remember this blur of color coming at me," Ides said. "It was like a Flaming Lips concert."

Like every great romance, there's a backstory here. The Santa Monica couple first met at HBO in 2007. They flirted, but Ides, wary of an office romance, invited her to a movie with a group of friends — then couldn't even sit next to her because another guy got there first. After the film, everyone went out for sushi. Feelings between Ides and Barnett warmed up over sake, then the group moved on to a friend's apartment. It wasn't until the others left and their host fell asleep that the couple found themselves alone. After that night, "We really didn't want to be apart from each other," Ides said. "She just felt like the right person to be with."

The proposal, however, ran into production difficulties. Ides wanted to pop the question the day before Valentine's Day 2009 at Leo Carrillo State Beach. "Poor guy," said Barnett. "We were driving up the coast and it started to pour."

They spent the night in Solvang. The next day, the ring was burning a hole in Ides' pocket as he scouted locations to propose. He drove from one winery to another, but they were crowded with tourists. He finally reached the breaking point: In a winery parking lot, in his Honda Civic, he presented the ring. Not ideal, but, said Barnett, "It did the job."

The couple wrote their own vows for their wedding, officiated by Mary Jean Valente of A Ceremony of the Heart. Among the readings were a Chinese love poem, a passage from the Bible and an Apache marriage blessing.

"We wanted a ceremony that was all-inclusive and incorporated many diverse cultures," Barnett said. "Everyone feels the same way about love."

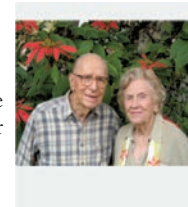
— Maxine Nunes, Custom Publishing Writer

## KRAJCHIR - TOM



Stacie Krajchir and Kristopher Tom were married October 23rd at The Plantation Estate in Kailua, Oahu. She is the daughter of Richard Krajchir of Oahu and Susan Krajchir of Los Angeles. Kristopher is son of Marilyn and Walter Atcheson of Alta Loma. The bride, 42 graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. She is a Television Lifestyle Contributor, Founder of The Bungalow PR and Contributor to The Huffington Post. The groom, 40, is Director of Instruction for Action Learning Systems, a private education consulting firm. He graduated from California State University, San Bernardino. He holds a master's degree in Teacher Education from Claremont Graduate University.

## BALLANTYNE



Jean & Dick are celebrating their 70th Anniversary!

They were married on November 23rd, 1940, at St. Francis Chapel in Balboa Park, San Diego. They moved to Pasadena in 1950. They have 4 children, 10 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. Their family wants to congratulate them on this awesome achievement and thank them for being such wonderful role models!

When Kelly Moshier and Bob Kearley were looking for a destination wedding, the California desert, with its warm allure and easy access, beckoned.

Stress was not on the agenda. They'd had enough of that while maintaining a long-distance relationship when Kearley was a Washington, D.C., lobbyist and Army reservist stationed in several states, and Moshier worked as an operations analyst in San Jose. So for their nuptials, they wanted a casual destination, where fun was always in season.

They chose for their ceremony the Hideaway Golf Club in La Quinta, one of the hipper country clubs in the Coachella Valley. It's the kind of place where recorded rock 'n' roll music can be heard over the music system day or night. In fact, the club was so accommodating, it allowed the bride to arrive by helicopter — to the great surprise of the 160 guests who were enjoying the temperate weather of the desert.

After the exchange of vows, cocktails were served on the patio overlooking the Santa Rosa Mountains. The open desert sky above the guests slowly transformed from the pinks and purples of a sunset to a jet-black canopy with constellations and the occasional shooting star. The couple drove to their reception in a golf cart.

Moshier said she knew where she wanted to get married ever since her parents built a home in La Quinta. "I wanted a place that was a destination wedding, but was still close with direct flights so my guests could arrive with ease."

### The weather factor

Grand entrances via helicopters and golf carts, sunset cocktails on the patio, open-air receptions: In many places, these would be hard to pull off at a winter or early-spring wedding. "Weather is one of the big reasons couples choose the desert," explained Cathy O'Connell, co-owner of the La Quinta-based Celebrations of Joy. "As other areas are cooling down, we are having our best weather. Although some days and nights can be a bit chilly, only very occasionally is rain an issue in the winter, and overall it's easy to plan at least part of your event outside."

Winter days in Palm Springs and throughout the Coachella Valley are among

the mildest in the U.S., with the daytime highs rarely dipping below 65°F. Rainfall is a scant 5.8 inches yearly, and the Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism boasts that the average days of sunshine number around 360 a year. Palm Springs is two hours away from L.A. — for a destination wedding, it is convenient for Southern Californian guests.

The valley has hundreds of wedding venues. In Palm Springs, the Riviera Resort & Spa recently reopened after a \$70-million renovation. It was a hangout for the Rat Pack and Sonny and Cher, who regularly performed in its oval-shaped 19,670-square-foot Grand Ballroom. Couples can have their ceremony there or on a lawn overlooking the towering San Jacinto Mountains.

For more intimate ceremonies, there's the Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn, a 1927 Mediterranean Revival inn nestled against the mountains. Clark Gable and Carole Lombard spent part of their honeymoon there. A garden with a mountain waterfall is a favorite spot for ceremonies. Couples can have their ceremony right on the course at Palm Springs' historic O'Donnell Golf Club, where Bob Hope used to play. Or they can exchange "I do's" at Gene Autry's sprawling home at the trendy Parker Palm Springs.

### Coachella Valley's appeal

"Couples choose to come to the desert because they want to create a fun weekend experience for their family and friends, one that transcends just a Saturday together," O'Connell said. "Transportation is easy with the lack of traffic in the area, and event costs are typically less than in L.A."

The area's midcentury architecture and striking mountain backdrop give weddings a unique sense of place. L.A. photographer Joan Allen, who grew up in the Mojave Desert, noted its visual appeal: "I love open roads, open fields, isolated areas. My roots in photography began with fashion and beauty, so placing a gorgeous bride in a beautiful designer gown and shoes in front of a desert backdrop, I am in my perfect element."

The desert also can inspire fun wedding themes. When O'Connell was first approached by Jimene Bostick and Bernie Lopez of Carlsbad to plan their wedding, the future bride "basically said 'this is what I want' and pointed to what she was wearing," a leopard-print dress with pink accents, said

1. Jimene Bostick and Bernie Lopez wed at the Rancho La Quinta Country Club with its mountain vistas. Wedding planner Cathy O'Connell added feathers to the setting to reflect those in the bride's gown. Photo by Jennifer Dery Photography. 2. Jennifer Purcell and Aaron Dodez of Pasadena chose the Parker Palm Springs for their nuptials designed by Celebrations of Joy. Photo by Allyson Magda Photography. 3, 4. The Frank Sinatra House in Palm Springs was the location of a Cathy O'Connell-planned wedding that combined Old Hollywood elegance and a New York couture style. Photos by Joan Allen. 5. Kelly Moshier arrived at her wedding in a helicopter with her dad, Andrew Moshier. Photo by Robert Marcos Photography.

O'Connell. Their wedding featured bright colors and animal prints set amid palm trees. Pink feathers and a custom-made pink runner accented the ceremony site. "The end result was stunning!" said O'Connell.

### Other destinations

Beyond the Coachella Valley, other desert destinations make excellent winter wedding spots. Average daytime winter temperatures in Death Valley hover in the high 60s and low 70s, and it's home to one of the most unique lodgings in the state — the historic four-diamond Inn at Furnace Creek. The property overlooks dramatic sand dunes, rock formations and the 11,000-foot peaks of the valley. On-site event planners can create a wedding with champagne carriage rides, hay wagon trips or star gazing.

If you've always pined for a London backdrop for your wedding, you needn't look further than the California border. In 1971, the famous 1830s London Bridge was dismantled in the U.K. and rebuilt across Lake Havasu. The London Bridge Resort features a waterside wedding pavilion amid a lush green golf course at the base of the graceful bridge. The property has more than 12,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event facilities. It can arrange catering, floral design, music and photography services as well.

And, needless to say, the warm weather of the California desert is a lot nicer than London this time of year.

— Matthew Link, Custom Publishing Writer

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