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### Gemma Bowman, wedding planner

Written by Miss W on January 20, 2012

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In 2004 bride-to-be Gemma Bowman artistically and lovingly designed her own fairytale *wedding in Ibiza*. Six months later the newlyweds were back on the island for keeps, launching bespoke *wedding planning* and design company, *Ibiza Wedding*. Today, Gemma and her team are the island's number one go-to-girls for designing luxury *Ibiza weddings*, from barefoot beach affairs and spiritual countryside blessings to three-day events within the walls of a beautiful Ibiza villa.

How did you discover your flair for planning weddings? I guess because we got married here and I'm quite girly and like candles and flowers and all of those finer details. I'm a Taurean, like making lists, can delegate and I'm quite bossy... I think honestly, it's having a combination of characteristics that makes you a good wedding planner. Being calm even in the face of potential chaos also helps - the couple and their family look to you and it is your job to take any stress on during the day, deal with it and ensure that they have the most fabulous day. You've got to be very organised, be able to boss people around without them feeling like they're being bossed around, plus have the creativity to come up with different ideas for a wide variety of clients with different backgrounds, nationalities and cultures. There is also the potential minefield that comes with this being a hugely important day for the couple, but also their parents and in many cases step parents, so a good dose of diplomacy and tact is often needed to ensure that you please nearly everyone most of the time. It turned out I had the right characteristics to do the job!



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#### What's your favourite thing about planning a wedding in Ibiza?

Meeting clients and working with people who are prepared to push the boundaries a little bit. Those who don't necessarily want a really traditional celebration, ones who want to imprint their personalities on their wedding and do things that aren't thought of as being wedding-y allows us to have a lot of flexibility and creativity and ultimately a great deal of fun.

#### And the most challenging?

Dealing with people being very laidback, potentially unorganised and Ibiza-like! After six years of planning I don't really suffer the fools for very long and we now have a really good portfolio of suppliers who share our work ethic, but there's some cases where you're trying to explain to clients from the UK, Hong Kong, Australia and the like that things like 'close of play' don't exist in Ibiza. I'll get back to you as fast as I can, but in winter that may mean three weeks, even with the very best venues, because they're closed and the owner is in Bali. There's no need to panic, it *will* happen - you just have to go with it, trust us and everything will be fine. We know what we're doing!



#### How long (on average) does it take to plan a wedding in Ibiza?

The fastest we've organised an event was in six weeks, which was the renewal of vows of Slash (Guns 'n' Roses) and Perla last summer, but the average is probably about 12 months. It depends on the date and venue availability at times, so if you want the pick of the best, or a June or September Saturday, then I'd say allow between nine and 12 months. Some people contact us two years in advance but in Ibiza 12 to 18 months max would be the best time frame.

#### What is the basic process like?

I would say most couples come to the island twice, once to check everything out and pinpoint the venue, and book their ceremony. Once that's done, they'll come again at a later date and see the caterer, the hairdresser, the florist, do wine tastings and all the supplier visits. There's always a very tight paper trail of emails to have a record of everything we've planned.

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**How do you ensure no two Ibiza weddings are alike?**

We get clients to put as much of their own personality into the wedding as possible. And if you're getting married in Ibiza, you're pretty much going a little against convention anyway... you might want an element of tradition but most couples are open to doing things they wouldn't normally do if they were getting married elsewhere.

**How many weddings do Ibiza Wedding plan each year?**

Our target is never a certain number of weddings; it's the number of weddings we can physically take on depending on the needs of each client. We might do anything between 15 and 30, and when we're doing a lower number it's because some weddings are really intense and might run over five days, which is becoming more and more popular. So we can't put a figure on it - we would never over-commit ourselves because it's such a bespoke service and we have to be able to give a certain level of attention to each client- that is something we just won't compromise on. I guess it's the antithesis of that conveyor belt wedding image - I'd hang up my hat before I let the company go in that direction.

**Can you give us an example of one of the most amazing weddings you've worked on?**

We did an amazing gay wedding in a villa, and at midnight the couple in full fancy dress appeared with two glamorous Amnesia drag queens, bearing a huge box full of fancy dress for all the guests, with full on disco blasting out! It was camp, amazing fun and there was so much love and happiness in the air - just perfect. This couple also walked down the aisle together to 'Baby I'm your Man' by Wham which was a wonderful moment and prompted much laughing and crying from the guests - they set the tone of the

day from that very moment. And the bride who wanted to be taken down the aisle on a four-poster bed held aloft by four semi-naked Pacha dancers. That's quite over the top isn't it?



**What advice would you give couples thinking about getting married in Ibiza?**

First, be open minded as to the type of wedding you want. You might think you want a beach wedding but don't discount a villa until you've seen a few – people often completely change their minds. The second thing would be to be patient. Things in Ibiza have their own rhythm, pace and way of working – trust in the people you've contracted to organise the wedding, they know what they're talking about. Let us do the worrying. I always say to clients, when I see them get very stressed out about details (even though I'm the first person to say detail is important!) at the end of the day the most important thing is that you're surrounded by the people you love and that you are having the wedding you really want, as (hopefully) you won't get a second go at it. So many couples get caught up in things like 'what happens if I don't have those flowers, that cake, this dress'... and it's just not worth it. Enjoy your wedding and take some time during the day to stand back with your new spouse and take it all in, as it really does fly.

**If you could go back and have your wedding again, is there anything you'd now do differently based on experience?**

No. You'd go crazy if you thought like that! It was the first one and I wouldn't have changed a thing, it was absolutely perfect, very simple, very low key, and it was OUR wedding, so no, never!




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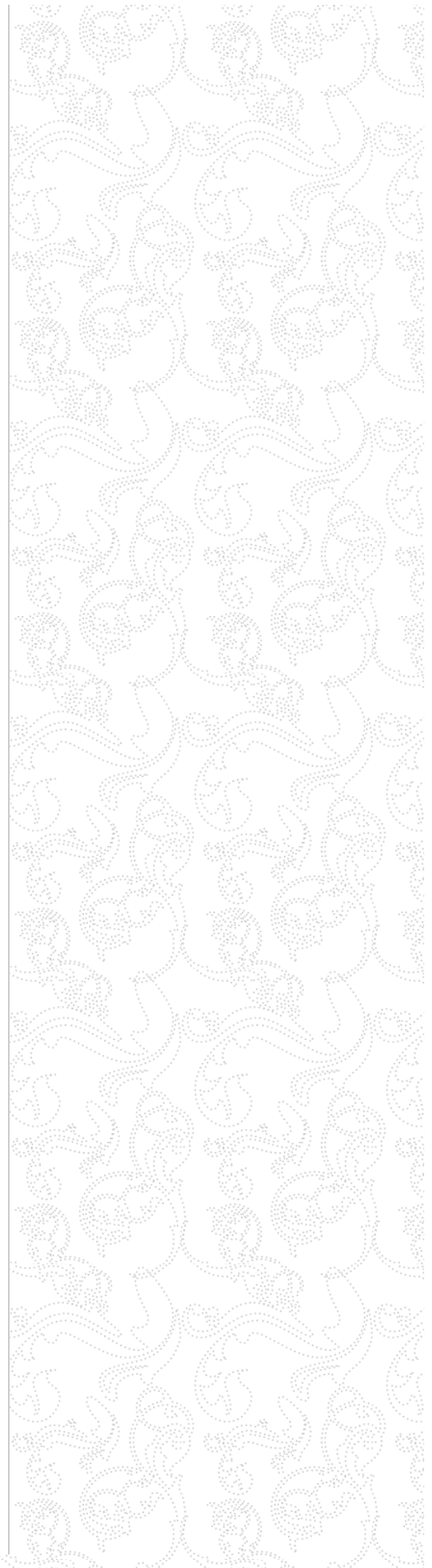
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