

Condé Nast Traveler

MARCH 2021

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Eternal Appeal*

*Stargazing in
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*Bangkok's
Cutting-Edge
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+ 32 WAYS
TO CELEBRATE
THIS YEAR





Coffee and cookies at Norway's Storfjord Hotel

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The ancient city of Arles is the next contemporary-art destination; discovering some of Tel Aviv's best attractions on an overlooked stretch of a major thoroughfare; how a water-sports pro at Hawaii's Mauna Lani, Auberge Resorts Collection, spends his day off; and more

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Among the fjords of Norway's rugged west coast, a devoutly sustainable approach to hospitality has taken root; surveying northern Italy's Slow Food movement and its disciples, who hold the past and future in equally high esteem; and a seaside-skimming escape route along New Brunswick's Acadian coastline

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REASONS TO CELEBRATE

After a year when milestone trips were mostly impossible, we tally the big ones we'll soon be taking again—honeymoons, birthdays, family reunions, and more—while exploring how all travel can be an act of celebration

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A TRAVELER'S TALE

In Iceland, actor Stanley Tucci finds that wonderment comes easily

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PHOTOGRAPH: THE INGALLS



the destination wedding

Happy Together

For Sarah Khan, a save-the-date turned out to be more than just a wedding announcement—it was the catalyst for a never-ending family reunion

Was this the eighth event? The fifth all-nighter? The seventh cake? The 42nd flower garland? At some point I learned to stop counting and just embrace the joyful chaos.

I was in Hyderabad, India, jet-lagged and sleep deprived, for the final stretch of my cousin's wedding. In India the word *wedding* often encompasses not just a single ceremony but a series of events spanning several days; in this case, Saad and Farah's festivities had begun two weeks ago and 8,000 miles away in San Francisco. By now, on day-who-knows-what, the parties, the singing, and the laughter were melting into one endless loop of revelry. "I had to ask my boss for a month off just to get married," Saad said with a chuckle. And that didn't even include the honeymoon.

When your family is spread out across the world—mine is in California, Texas, Massachusetts, Saudi Arabia, and India—weddings are more than a celebration of love: They're an excuse for an epic family reunion. Whenever a wedding is announced, we all start coordinating our flights.

JFK was deserted on Christmas Day in 2019 when I boarded a plane to San Francisco, so I soaked up my last moments of tranquility before



embarking on a whirlwind three-week trip. But even amid the pomp and finery of a traditional wedding, the jubilant moments in between the rituals were the most memorable. The peals of laughter at the *manja* party to kick off the festivities, when we all took turns slathering Saad's face with turmeric paste—and then he chased each of us all over the house to return the favor. The 3 a.m. dance practices where I tried my best to get my uncoordinated cousins to channel their inner Bollywood stars. My sister, Noura, warming up in the car for her knockout rendition of Etta James's "At Last" at the *sanchak-mehndi*, a colorful pre-wedding function filled with music and dancing. Beaming with pride as Saad and his 30 groomsmen nailed the choreographed entrance we'd been polishing in the lobby until just minutes before. The wedding day, when the *dhol* player led our boisterous *baraat*, or groom's procession, down the elegant halls of the Fairmont San Jose. A makeshift spa night with nine of us piled onto a bed, painting Kiehl's masks on one another's faces. The Texan groom blasting country music as we drove around Hyderabad in search of midnight ice cream. Arriving early to the regal *walima*, a reception hosted by my aunt and uncle, at the 18th-century Chowmahalla Palace, to make time for family photos beneath the chandeliers of the Durbar Hall before the guests arrived—then flipping

through the local papers together over breakfast the next morning to glimpse those pictures in the society pages.

There were plenty of other milestones to commemorate during the three-week extravaganza, and the bride and groom were happy to yield the spotlight: surprise cakes marked three birthdays and an anniversary, and an evening of *qawwali* music celebrated the groom's brother Zafar's engagement to Sheema.

When we left Hyderabad last January, we planned to do it all over again in six months. Instead, when Sheema and Zafar's nuptials rolled around in July, I woke up at 4 a.m. to watch the *nikah*, an Islamic ceremony, live-streamed from India; in December we all reunited on Zoom for a scaled-down series of events celebrating the couple in Dubai. Before last year, my biggest worry was that we'd eventually run out of cousins' weddings we could use as an excuse to get together. Now I know I need to seize every chance I can to see my family, weddings or not. But first, 2021 owes us a do-over for Zafar and Sheema—and I can't wait to book that flight.

Alternative Spots for Family Reunions

Handpicked by our travel specialists

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The Chilean Wilderness

Excursions at Chile's adventure lodges range from chill (stargazing) to challenging (volcano treks), making them ideal for multigenerational gatherings. Plus, says Passported's Leslie Overton, set meal times mean no debating when and where to eat each night. She suggests staying in Patagonia, the Atacama, or the Lake District and adding a few nights at a vineyard property, especially Vik Chile, for wine tastings.

PASSPORTED.COM

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A Ranch Retreat

Western ranches "fit the bill for privacy, fun, outside space, relaxation, and adventure," says Jules Maury, who heads Scott Dunn Private. For buyouts she likes the nine-room Granite Lodge at Montana's Ranch at Rock Creek, which offers photography workshops, scavenger hunts, and mountain biking. There's also a club for kids, the Little Grizzlies.

SCOTTDUNN.COM/US

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The Hacienda Takeover

Throughout Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, 19th-century haciendas have been transformed into intimate boutique hotels, and Modern Adventure's Luis Vargas says they're perfect for reunions—close to archaeological sites, nature reserves, and cenotes. His go-tos: Hacienda Temozon, Hacienda Sac Chich, and Chablé Yucatán.

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