

citywoman



Your guide to health, style and happiness

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musthave

■ **CELEBRITY** beach style needn't be pricey this summer.

Pick up this Melissa Odabash khaki zebra print bikini top (£22) and pant (£16) from Debenhams, which is almost identical to a two-piece sported by none other than WAG spectacular Coleen Rooney.

Visit Debenhams in The Oracle, www.debenhams.com call 08445 616161 for stockists.



■ **NEED** a patriotic pick-me-up in the wake of Britain's Wimbledon woes? Let your living room fly the flag with this stand-out Union Jack sofa.

Furniture expert Ponsford is offering Halo's Bensington Union Jack sofa for £2,449 – not cheap, but then iconic statement pieces rarely are.

It's available now from www.ponsford.co.uk and can be delivered anywhere in the country. Call 0114 255 0075 for more information.

mustapply

■ **WITH** the warmer weather comes that most irritating of summer pests – mosquitoes.

Whether home or abroad, repel those pesky insects with natural insect camouflage incognito. It's a natural, ethically produced anti-insect camouflage spray that masks human kairomones so our scent remains unrecognisable to insects.

It smells fresh and contains citronella among its natural ingredients. Find it at Holland & Barrett stores or www.lessmosquito.com for £8.99.



■ **CITY Woman** loves facial skincare – especially if it helps with that gorgeous summer glow.

Sunflower and green tea are the key ingredients for the Simple Sun range, as it enhances skin's natural protection from harmful rays. The Sun Sensitive Shimmer Facial Aftersun shines above the rest thanks to its special blend of

pro-vitamin B5, vitamin E and allantoin, which softens and protects skin, while the light-reflecting particles give an instant radiance. It costs £6.50 for 75ml.



YOU see that deliriously happy, blushing bride on the right?

Anyone who's ever been engaged wants to be that woman; but it takes an awful lot of hard work.

Once you're engaged, you spend the first few weeks floating above ground, boring everyone within earshot with your step-by-step account of The Proposal.

But as soon as you pause for breath, the first thing the listener will ask is: "When's the big day?"

And so it begins. Planning the actual wedding. Nobody prepares you for that.

Some have had their day in mind since they were little; hoarding scrapbooks with pictures torn from plush bridal magazines.

They're the lucky ones. There are others, however, who did no more research than perhaps running around the house with a net curtain around their head.

Which is why so many brides-to-be stumble at the first hurdle.

Now we're finally in what passes for a British summer it's easy to fall in love with the idea of a country house or manor in the sunshine. Perhaps a marquee? Everything is easier to visualise now the warmer weather is here.

But then, as summers often turn out to be damp squibs, is it safer to settle for a romantic winter wedding? Candles, plush red velvet and white faux fur, the scent of orange and cinnamon, holly running along the pews...

It's a common sticking point, and one of many, according to Rachel Wood, founder of

readingwedding.co.uk. It's a website aimed at putting local wedding suppliers all in one place – ideal for clueless brides-to-be.

"I'd personally say go for summer over winter," she says.

"The thing about winter is it gets darker earlier, whereas a summer wedding will give you more light.

"The temperature is something to think about, too, especially if you've elderly relatives attending, as they won't want to be standing around in the cold for too long."

But don't winter weddings save you a packet?

"I went to a wedding that started at five o'clock and it was so cold," Rachel recalls.

"The couple had a romantic idea about all the snow and people being snuggled up warm and cosy indoors, but with snow, you have to bear in mind that some people just aren't going to get there!

"Some people talk about the advantages of a winter wedding in terms of special deals. But some of these venues and suppliers will have Christmas and New Year parties to think about, they will be very busy during the party season. For instance, people might like balloons – but those suppliers will be very busy on Valentine's Day.

"January is probably the quietest time, but then your guests aren't likely to have the spare cash for travel and accommodation."

That is the key – the guests. As much as the wedding is supposed to be the bride's big day (and the groom's, I suppose), it'll be a disaster if their loved ones don't enjoy themselves.

"There are lots of ways to keep the wedding party entertained –



DREAM DAY: But it takes a lot of effort to get there

What's the plan

Not every bride-to-be has a clue about her big day. But **LEIGH MENCARINI** finds there are plenty of ideas to be had locally – if you know where to look...

...missus?

what about hiring a caricaturist?

"Within three to four minutes they can draw your guests a sketch – on paper that perhaps matches your wedding colour scheme? – so they can then go away at the end with a little souvenir.

"They also create conversation. All too often I've seen guests at weddings standing around not knowing anyone, but get an entertainer like a caricaturist or a close-up magician and before long you're all mingling.

"People don't just want to remember your wedding; they want to remember they had a fabulous time."

Entertaining younger guests is another thing to bear in mind. A children's entertainer has become rather popular, however a bouncy castle or an ice cream van would be nice for adults, too.

But cost-wise, it all adds up – what about the 'trimmings'?

"Most brides think first about the image – the flowers, the cake, the dress – but you can source lots of things by getting crafty and creating things yourself," she says.

"Lots of places such as cake

decorators are starting to hold workshops so you can create your own dazzling, stunning cakes and decorations that are unique."

It would certainly give your day an individual touch – so long as you have some ideas to begin with.

"It's vital you speak to the people who deal with weddings," she says. "They will have their own ideas that you won't have even thought of before.

"There may be a point where you see something at a later date and think 'I really want that' but then with a wedding, there will be costs you haven't thought of and you realise you haven't got the money for it. So it's vital to plan ahead."

It's the basis from which the website was launched more than a year ago.

"I heard too many people say 'I would have liked that for my wedding but I couldn't find one,'" Rachel says.

Having a local directory to ignite inspiration seems like the ideal tonic. It's enough to have you floating back on cloud nine again...

■ **For more big day ideas, visit www.readingwedding.co.uk.**

Do something a bit different...

HERE are some quirky ideas to make your wedding stand out.

■ If the men in your party aren't the type to hit the dancefloor (and let's be honest, there aren't many who are) why not keep them entertained with a fun casino? Jokers Fun Casino can set up blackjack, poker, roulette and casino stud poker games as super ice-breakers for the party.

■ Caricaturist SaraLouise will amuse your guests as well as give them a unique keepsake from your special day. Ideal for those quiet moments when the pictures are being taken or the reception room is being changed around.

■ Sweet-toothed guests will love the Candi-licious candy buffet – a tiered table of jars filled with all your favourite sweets and lollies. An unusual focal point, but a definite hit with young and old. Find all stockist details at www.readingwedding.co.uk.

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Picture: Neil Horne, www.eyemagine.co.uk

People want to remember they had a fabulous time