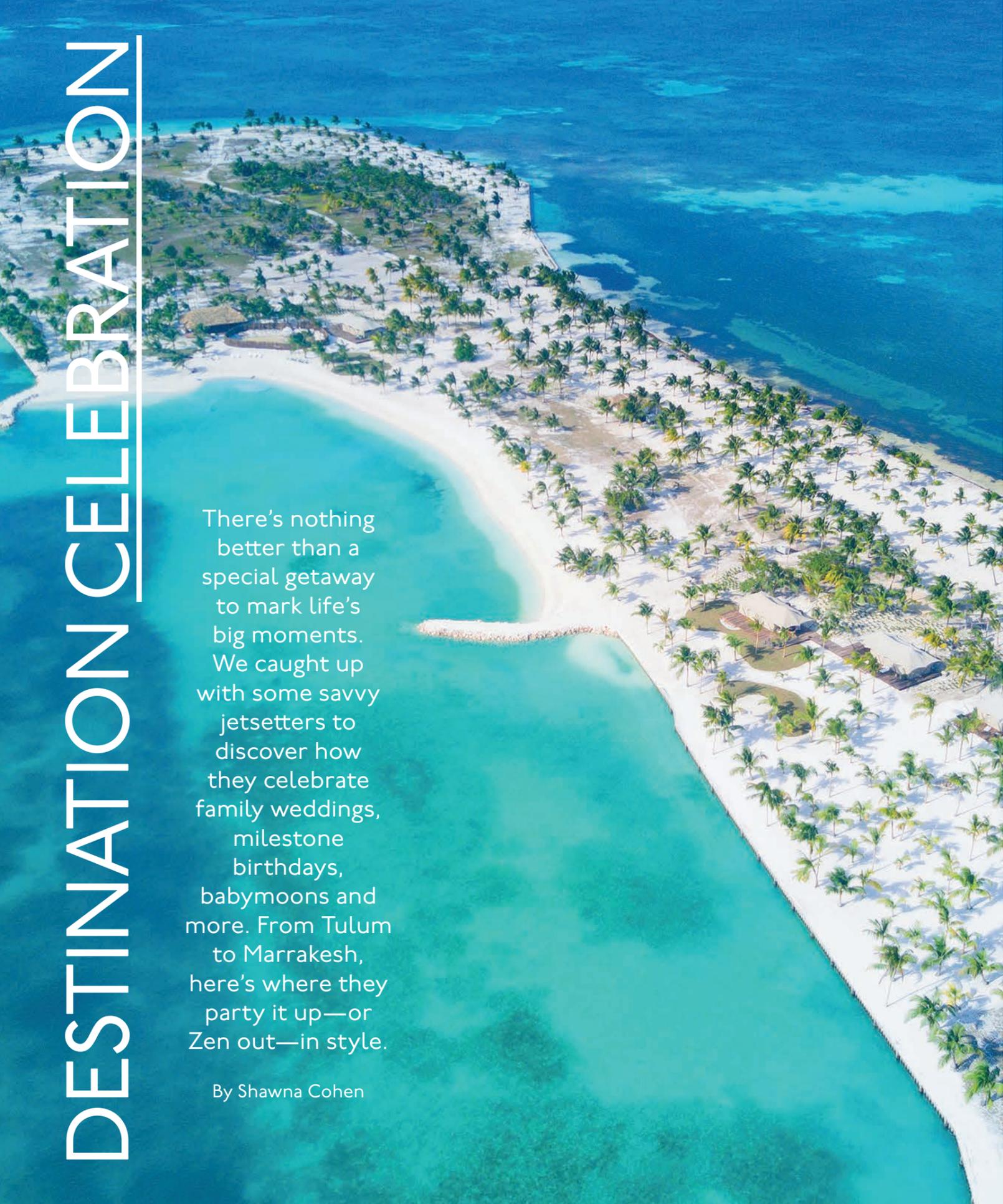


There's nothing better than a special getaway to mark life's big moments. We caught up with some savvy jetsetters to discover how they celebrate family weddings, milestone birthdays, babymoos and more. From Tulum to Marrakesh, here's where they party it up—or Zen out—in style.

By Shawna Cohen



40TH BIRTHDAY IN CAYE CHAPEL, BELIZE

Editor and Stylist Katherine Lande
from West Palm Beach

Imagine spending three blissful nights on a private island with your closest girlfriends. The place is uninhabited save for a private chef, devoted staff members and an “experience director” whose sole job is to plan



Clockwise from top: Private glamping in Caye Chapel; the natural beauty of the Great Blue Hole; the Belize Maya Ruins.



The perfect gift: Spoil yourself with a Panthere de Cartier Watch.

Hometown Hotspots

[The Spa at The Breakers hotel](#)

“My favourite treatment is any one of the Tammy Fender facials. Her holistic products are heavenly and the spa is such a wonderful sanctuary.”

[Imoto](#)

“With its small size and no signage on the door, it's truly a local spot that always has great energy. I always prefer sitting at the bar where I can mix and mingle with friends.”

every detail of your day with activities such as morning hikes, midday massages and sunset cruises. West Palm Beach-based fashion editor and stylist Katherine Lande experienced just that when she travelled to Caye Chapel – a small, picturesque island in Belize, just north of Belize City – to celebrate her 40th birthday this past spring.

As someone who spends her days producing high-end photo shoots for luxury clients such as *InStyle* and *Ocean Drive*, Lande is a planner. For her milestone birthday, she wanted nothing more than to check out completely. “I didn't want to have to plan anything because that's all I do [for work],” she recalls. But then an exciting opportunity arose: A client working to develop Caye Chapel invited Lande to see the 107-hectare (265-acre) island firsthand.

Weeks later, she and five longtime friends found themselves flying over the Caribbean Sea, about to embark on an adventure-filled journey that brought new meaning to the term “glamping.” “There were these amazing luxury tents right

on the beach, each with its own bathroom, shower, TV, air-conditioning. There's an ocean view on both sides, and the water is the most beautiful turquoise,” says Lande.

The group spent most of its time outdoors, however, swimming, jet-skiing, paddle-boarding, hiking Mayan ruins and taking in the magnificent scenery. A highlight was snorkelling with sharks and stingrays on one of the world's largest barrier reefs. “The water is so crystal-clear, you can see everything. It was such a cool experience!” Later that same day, the group gathered in nearby Caye Caulker for birthday drinks at Koko King, followed by dinner al fresco at Il Pellicano. Here they ate family-style and enjoyed the cool sea breeze and live music.

“It was all about having a unique experience but at a really luxury level that you wouldn't expect,” says Lande of her time on the island. “I had never gone snorkelling with sharks before, never seen a Mayan ruin. This was a big milestone birthday and to be able to do all that was really special.”



ROMANTIC REUNION IN MARRAKESH, MOROCCO

Fashion blogger Vanessa Hong from Vancouver

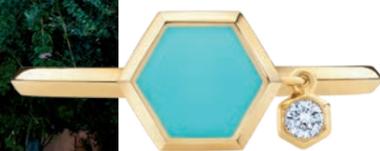


Los Angeles-based fashion blogger Vanessa Hong (thehautepursuit.com) is used to flying overseas - for work, style inspiration, or simply to recharge. But a recent getaway was about so much more: Hong wanted to reconnect with her long-distance boyfriend, Nicolas Raoul-Bourlez, a lawyer living in Paris. The couple, who



From top: The view of the fortified town; poolside at the intimate Beldi Country Club.

The perfect gift: Share the love with a Birks Bee Chic Turquoise Ring.



Hometown Hotspots

Indigo Age Café

"It's operated by Eastern European owners who are really dedicated to promoting local agriculture. Their raw salad rolls are my favourite."

Timbertrain Coffee Roasters

"The perfect place to enjoy early-morning coffee on the bench outside the shop. Good spot to people-watch."

met in 2013 at a Beijing club, spent some serious quality time together in Marrakesh, embracing the local culture and taking leisurely strolls through the city. "It's one of my favourite cities in the world: the smells, the mountains, the medina...it's all really beautiful," she says.

In many ways, 33-year-old Hong is a poster child for global nomads. Born and raised in Vancouver, she moved to Beijing in 2010, and settled in New York just a few years later. "I've been floating all over ever since," says Hong, who recently returned to the West Coast.

In Marrakesh, the couple stayed at the quaint, five-room Riad UP, a modern yet charming house close to the city centre. "Our place had a traditional Moroccan breakfast with local honey, jams, tea and breakfast pancakes that are gluten-free. All the food [in Marrakesh] is amazing - it's very fresh and grown locally," says Hong.

They also embraced Marrakesh's local spa culture, with daily visits to a hammam. And shopping in the city's bustling outdoor market was a must: "I bought a beautiful hand-woven throw, along with wooden kitchenware made up in the Atlas Mountains." Hong was also excited to check out the famous Beldi Country Club, an eco-minded boutique resort with glass-covered greenhouses and a massive rose garden. "It's like a commune for artisans," she says.

On the food front, they feasted on traditional Moroccan dishes like tagine and couscous, often at unassuming spots without official names. Some of her top spots include Nomad (for modern Moroccan cuisine) and the iconic Dar Essalam. For someone who is constantly on the move, Hong's favourite part of this special weekend getaway was simply relaxing. "I'm not one of those people who plans things out aggressively," she explains. "I prefer to just let things happen."

THE MEDINA IS RICH WITH SECRET HIDEAWAYS AND TABLES FOR TWO



An al fresco room at Riad UP, Hong's preferred residence in Marrakesh.

PHOTO: PHILIP REEVE/ALAMY (TOP RIGHT)



A beach where the sea meets the edge of Mayan ancient ruins in the Yucatán peninsula and (below) the couple's retreat, Casa LaHa.

Hometown Hotspots

[Sushi Kaji](#)

"Best sushi in the city! We do a lot of birthdays here. They also have really good sake, like an unfiltered nigori sake that's creamy and cold. It's the closest thing to Japan that we have in Toronto."

[East Room](#)

"It's a co-op workspace in Riverside (in the east end of the city) but you can rent it out for events. We had Marlon's baby shower there. The bones of the building are amazing!"

[Bar Raval](#)

"I'm a sucker for tapas and seafood. I really like the vibe and their cocktails are fabulous."



BABYMOON IN

TULUM, MEXICO

Chic shop owner Micah Cameron and restaurateur Colin Tooke from Toronto

Just eight weeks before they were expecting their first child, Toronto couple Micah Cameron and Colin Tooke headed to Tulum, Mexico, for a romantic babymoon (one last hurrah for the parents-to-be). But it wasn't all breakfast bowls and long walks on the beach. Cameron, 27, owns Frankies Surf Club, a chic lifestyle boutique in Port Carling, Ontario, that sells breezy Lemlem scarves and Moroccan-print swimsuits by Mara Hoffman, among other summer essentials. Next door is Tooke's lakeside restaurant, Grand Electric Muskoka, which he and partner Ian McGrenaghan operate in addition to Toronto hipster hangouts Grand Electric and Electric Mud BBQ.

Last February, the couple created a three-week pop-up shop on the picturesque, soft-sand coastline along Tulum Beach in Mexico's Yucatán peninsula. They invited a few friends to join them, along with a creative team to produce a fashion shoot for the Frankies website. To accommodate the large crowd, Cameron rented a luxury beach house, Casa LaHa, through VRBO.com. The space is modern and massive, replete with giant terrace, swimming pool and bedrooms featuring ensuite Japanese hot tubs. When not working, they chilled beachside in colourful hammocks and dined beneath a domed *palapa* (it didn't hurt that Tooke is a renowned chef!).

"Tulum is one of my favourite places in the world. It is so magical," says Cameron, former women's fashion director for the Hudson's Bay Company. She has frequented the beach town for more than a decade and witnessed its transformation from hidden gem to popular tourist spot—but that hasn't changed how she feels about the place she calls her second home.

During their month-long getaway – the couple stayed for an extra week of relaxation post pop-up – they hit some of their favourite spots, including stylish boutiques such as Lol, La Tiendita Tulum and Caravana where Cameron picked up the store's line for Frankies. They also visited Posada Margherita for mojitos and appetizers, as well as Chamico's, an off-the-beaten-path seafood joint where beach meets jungle.

Cameron's most memorable meal, however, was a "babymoon" feast prepared by Tooke, who visited a local market and returned with fresh fish and veggies. "He made a whole red snapper cooked in a chili sauce, and grilled octopus caught that afternoon." One month after their return, son Marlon Wolf was born.



The perfect gift: Treasure a new arrival with a Birks Busy Bee Silver Picture Frame.



BIG FAMILY WEDDING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Lifestyle blogger Joudel Janoska from Ottawa



The outdoor and indoor scenery at the Hartford House hotel.

Joudel Janoska will never forget travelling to her sister's wedding in a horse-drawn carriage in the mountains of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. "That part stood out," Janoska says with a laugh when describing last September's fairytale wedding. The Ottawa-based lifestyle blogger (joudeljanoska.com) and model emigrated from South Africa to Canada on her own at age 21. Now 35, she and husband Mark make the long trip back as often as possible to visit her large extended family that includes seven aunts and uncles and countless cousins. The couple's children – four under 10 – have also joined them on several trips.

It's her most recent journey, however, that stands out the most. "This was different from our other visits; it was to celebrate my sister," says Janoska, the eldest of three girls. The trip not only entailed a spectacular wedding, in which Janoska served as maid of honour, but also a slew of festive celebrations leading up to the big day, with family flying in from around the globe (Australia, England, Dubai).

Janoska stayed in Umhlanga, a coastal town just north of her hometown, Durban, where her mother and sisters now reside. Here she hosted high tea for 55 women, in honour of the bride, at the luxurious Beverly Hills Hotel, the country's first five-star hotel.

Wedding guests ultimately made the winding, almost three-hour journey from Umhlanga to Hartford House, a grand hotel at Summerhill (a stud farm on the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands Meander). An extravagant rehearsal dinner



The perfect gift: For the bride, Birks Muse Silver and Freshwater Pearl Stretch Bracelet.



Hometown Hotspots

[Copper Spirits & Sights at the Andaz Ottawa Byward Market](#)

"They have a feature once a month called Beats + Brunch at the rooftop lounge. I love to host events and bring clients up here, as well as host friends for couples' night out. My cocktail favourite is the Neneh Cherry."

[Riviera](#)

"We celebrated our 10-year anniversary here. It's a beautiful, sophisticated restaurant with a NYC vibe."

included a six-course meal and endless schmoozing and laughter. "Everything was so elegant—there were rose petals, cocktails, everyone was dressed to the nines. You'd think it was the actual wedding day!" she says. The wedding itself was magical, with unexpected touches such as dozens of fresh-cut tulips hanging from the ceiling. For Janoska, however, the highlight was seeing her sister so happy and being part of her special day, family in tow.

LIFE-CHANGING RETREAT IN
**TODOS SANTOS,
 MEXICO**

Equally Wed founder
 Kirsten Palladino from Atlanta



got up on my knees but it was a freeing feeling. Our instructor, Jan, talked a lot about how energy moves through you through the waves. When you fall off your board, be patient; let yourself pop up rather than panic.”

Palladino also raves about a trip to an organic farm, where she picked veggies she then used in a Mexican cooking class back at her boutique hotel, Pachamama. “The hotel is really unique in that it’s

Surf’s up at Playa de Los Cerritos; architectural details at Pachamama (below).



Hometown Hotspots

Fritti

“A wood-fire pizza restaurant in Inman Park. It has my heart for a casual lunch or dinner with delicious food and al fresco dining.”

La Tavola

“When my wife and I have something to celebrate, we head to La Tavola, a quaint, rustic Italian restaurant in Virginia-Highland. The seasonal menu never disappoints, and they make a killer Negroni.”

PHOTO: ENTWINED STUDIO (KIRSTEN PALLADINO)



Poolside views at the Pachamama boutique hotel where Palladino found her me-time.



Following the recent losses of her father and brother, writer and editor Kirsten Palladino headed from Atlanta to Todos Santos, Mexico, in June for some much-needed healing. There she joined 14 others on a Soul Nourish vacation, a six-day retreat that included yoga, guided meditation and the chance to connect with like-minded women.

Palladino, the author of *Equally Wed: The Ultimate Guide for Planning Your LGBTQ+ Wedding* (Seal Press) and co-founder of online wedding magazine *equallywed.com*, ventured on this journey solo, leaving behind wife Maria and their six-year-old twin boys. “Life-changing” is how she describes the trip, which included many firsts for this passionate advocate.

“I swam with sea lions in the Sea of Cortez, followed by a beautiful lunch on an island out in the middle of nowhere,” says Palladino. “We also went to El Pescadero to help build an organic fruit and vegetable garden for kindergarten children. It was incredibly rewarding to immerse ourselves and be able to give back.” She took a surfing lesson, too: “I never

got up on my knees but it was a freeing feeling. Our instructor, Jan, talked a lot about how energy moves through you through the waves. When you fall off your board, be patient; let yourself pop up rather than panic.”

Palladino also raves about a trip to an organic farm, where she picked veggies she then used in a Mexican cooking class back at her boutique hotel, Pachamama. “The hotel is really unique in that it’s



The perfect gift: Engrave the date on Les Plaisirs De Birks Horizontal Gold Bar Necklace to mark the occasion.