



Real Wedding Budgets: What We Tell Couples Who Ask Us Directly

Honest, specific numbers from real conversations with real couples planning weddings in Tulum and Belize. No inflated ranges. No guessing.

Why we wrote this down

The question we hear more than any other is also the hardest one for couples to get a straight answer to: how much is this actually going to cost? Every couple has seen wildly different numbers online, and by the time the real invoices arrive, none of it adds up to what was promised.

This guide walks through the real numbers we give couples when they ask us directly, the same way we would if you were sitting across from us right now. The number that matters most is not the one on a resort's website. It is the one that reflects your actual guest list and your actual wedding.



We've planned over 1,000 destination weddings in Belize and Tulum, including a royal event for Kate and William in partnership with the Government of Belize in 2022.



Beautiful weddings start with better information. That is the whole idea behind this guide.

Rachel and Kyle

Signature Destination Weddings



It starts with your guest count

Every couple asks us how to control their wedding budget. The answer is almost always the same. Guest count moves the number more than any other decision you will make. Flowers, chairs, lighting, all of that can be adjusted up or down without changing your total by much. Guest count is different. The jump from fifty guests to seventy five guests will affect your budget in a real, noticeable way. The jump from fifty to fifty one will not.

If you have a hard budget limit, the most direct way to protect it is deciding your guest count first and building everything else around that number, rather than the other way around.

WHAT IS ACTUALLY IN A PACKAGE

Think of it as the foundation, not the finished house

Every resort will hand you a wedding package that looks complete on paper. Think of that package as the foundation of a house. It is necessary, but it is not the whole structure. A standard package typically includes:

- ✓ A venue of the hotel's choosing (not necessarily the one you pictured)
- ✓ Basic folding garden chairs and a simple arch
- ✓ A buffet-style reception with standard tables and linens
- ✓ A short rehearsal dinner, usually around two hours

What it typically does not include: decor upgrades, a DJ, a dance floor, upgraded lighting, or the beach fee required to marry on the sand in Mexico. Those are the walls, windows, and roof. Budgeting for the foundation alone is the single most common reason couples feel blindsided later.

What Tulum and Belize actually cost

These are the numbers we tell couples on the phone, based on what we are actually seeing across our weddings this year. Both are all-in figures, meaning the full wedding day, not travel or guest rooms.

Tulum, Mexico



\$25,000–\$35,000

For the average wedding we plan there, 50 to 65 guests, all in. Smaller weddings in the 30s and larger ones in the low hundreds both happen, but this is the middle of the bell curve.

Belize



\$25,000–\$35,000

For a full, well-rounded 50-guest wedding with a rehearsal cocktail hour and a proper reception. Belize properties cap out around 100 guests, so this is not the destination for a 150-plus guest list.

If those numbers feel higher than expected, here is the context that usually helps. A comparable wedding in the United States, for the same guest count with similar catering and florals, typically runs \$50,000 to \$60,000. A Tulum or Belize wedding is usually about half that, for a similar level of quality.

~60%

OF YOUR TOTAL BUDGET TYPICALLY GOES TO THE RECEPTION

This is why choosing an all-inclusive property over a European Plan (EP) property makes such a difference. On an all-inclusive property, your guests' food and drink is already paid for as part of their stay, so your reception costs mostly cover staffing, setup, and any upgrades, not the full price of every meal and drink from scratch.

What makes Belize different

All-inclusive means something different here. Many Belize properties advertise themselves as all-inclusive, and they are, but on a smaller scale than a big Mexico resort. Expect one breakfast, one lunch, one dinner, and local beer and rum included, not a choice of fifteen restaurants running around the clock.

Room blocks work differently too. Mexico resorts typically hold rooms for a small deposit, often around \$100 per room. Belize properties are much smaller and take on more risk holding rooms for you, so they often require one or two nights paid upfront, or as much as 50 percent of the full room cost, to secure a block. That money isn't lost. As guests book, it gets credited back or applied to your wedding balance. But it does mean Belize is a better fit for couples comfortable putting real money down early.

A buyout is worth knowing about. Because Belize properties are small, a full property buyout, booking every room for your wedding party alone, is realistic in a way it rarely is in bigger Mexico resorts. It's the right call for couples who want true privacy and don't mind paying a bit more to get it.



If you're deciding between Belize and Mexico, the honest answer is: it depends on your top three priorities. Guest list size, ease of travel for guests, and whether you want an all-inclusive experience or something more private and authentic.

What we told a couple with \$20,000 saved

A couple recently wrote in feeling completely overwhelmed. They had saved \$20,000 and kept seeing numbers online anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000. They wanted to know if a destination wedding was even possible for them.

THE HONEST ANSWER

It depends on what that \$20,000 needs to cover. If it has to stretch across the wedding itself, travel, and guest rooms, that budget realistically supports a wedding at a solid three-star property for 10 to 15 guests. But if that \$20,000 is just for the wedding day itself, with guests covering their own travel and rooms, that same budget realistically supports a wedding around 30 guests.

That's the entire exercise. Not a scary number, not a sales pitch, just a direct answer based on what the budget actually needs to do. The moment couples know which scenario they're in, the rest of the planning gets a lot less stressful.

If you want that same kind of direct answer for your own budget and guest list, that's exactly what a conversation with us looks like. No pressure, no obligation. Just real numbers for your real wedding.

NEXT STEP

Want your own real number?

Try our free wedding cost estimator for a personalized estimate in under two minutes, or book a no-pressure consultation and talk it through with us directly.

Next up in your inbox: real venue comparisons and what past couples wish they'd known first.

[Get My Free Estimate](#)

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