

relationships Verve

verve feedback

E-mail verve@inl.co.za

SMS 32546 (Each SMS costs R1)

After a day spent sightseeing and preparing for the wedding on the Nile Express cruise boat, Georgina and Shane Crouth were grateful that they could be seated during the ceremony itself.



The bride was depilated with sugar and the groom given a scorpion tattoo at Georgina Crouth's most unusual wedding during a cruise on the Nile.

HOW WE ELOPED – TO EGYPT

WHEN Shane proposed, it took me by complete surprise. After all, we had been happily unmarried for six years and had lived together for most of that. We sent out SMSes, and then spent about an hour on the phone with tearful sisters and moms.

But as soon as we shared our engagement news with friends and family, we felt pressure to set a date and find a venue. The worries seemed endless: pick a theme, pick a colour scheme, compile a guest list, organise flowers, outfits, food, etc.

My future mother-in-law understood me better than most, saying that she could imagine a simple wedding in the forest or one on the beach.

We just wanted an uncomplicated, intimate wedding which was not going to cost a fortune – I know of couples who are still paying for their expensive weddings five years later – and which didn't become so stressful we wouldn't enjoy it.

We toyed with many ideas until one night, after discussing our coming trip to Egypt, we decided to keep it really simple and elope. We would have our wedding and honeymoon in one. It made perfect sense.

Egypt might not be the first choice as a romantic location for a wedding but Shane and I had always wanted to travel to the birthplace of civilisation, the mystical land of the pharaohs and the Nile. And

what better place to exchange our vows than on the world's longest river, the waters of which have sustained life for thousands of years?

However, with just six weeks to plan a legal wedding in a foreign country, we had little time to waste. Fortunately for us, our tour operator, Cecelia Amory, from Egypt & Beyond, has vast experience in that country and took charge of all the planning.

Cecelia also lent a maternal ear when I had to vent my frustrations with the Department of Home Affairs. We needed unabridged birth certificates, and these can take up to 12 weeks to arrive. Officials were unsympathetic, with one demanding to know why we wanted to get married in Egypt. We told her it was none of her business.

We also had no idea the feverish lengths that Cecelia and her friend in Egypt, Mohamed al-Shabrarwi, would go to in order to make it a memorable wedding. Being one of Cecelia's primary local contacts, Mohamed owns American Express Travel and the five-star luxury Nile Express cruise boat on which we would spend six days.

He arranged many of our wedding day treats: four stylists, a photographer, a cameraman to record a DVD, a violinist, a belly dancer, a tanoura dancer, the wedding feast – and even contacted the Egyptian media to cover the event. We were later told, but can't swear it, that we were the first couple from South Africa to get married in Egypt and the first to wed on the Nile.

Our plan was to formalise the wedding at a civil ceremony at the South African embassy in Cairo and have the wedding itself on the Nile Express.

We were to spend six days on the boat, sailing from the romantic Mediterranean city of Luxor to Aswan and back. Then we planned to spend the rest of the honeymoon exploring Abu Simbel, Cairo and Alexandria.

Luxor has a vibrant resort atmosphere and no less than 300 cruise boats leave its harbour.

Not wanting to miss out on anything, we spent the morning of our wedding day at Luxor and Karnak temples, followed by a light lunch on the boat before Shane and I were separated for what is known as "the sweet".

During this time, women massage oils into the bride's skin; smooth her body by threading and "sugaring", a process not unlike waxing, but with a lump of what's essentially soft toffee; apply wedding *mendhi*, the temporary decorative henna tattoos; dress her; style her hair and apply her make-up.

The groom also gets treated with a shave, a massage, *mendhi* (probably not traditional, but what the heck, Shane chose a scorpion) and threading – plus some male camaraderie, in Shane's case, being fed a revolting mixture of wine and beer.

The "sweet" went to schedule, until the woman who was to do my make-up had to leave suddenly to fetch something from home. I was already dressed in a simple white cotton dress and sandals, my hair was done, but I was not quite ready.

Here the saying of "wagta wagta (slowly, slowly)" proved apt: an Egyptian five minutes can mean 10 minutes, half an hour or hours, which delayed the ceremony and got me increasingly frustrated.

After countless phone calls from her husband, Mohamed

intervening; Cecelia trying to calm matters; and much shouting and gesticulating in Arabic, the make-up artist returned, by which time I had taken matters into my own hands and applied the make-up – only for her to remove it and work her magic. It all worked out in the end, but the bride was two hours late.

Since we had "eloped" in a sense and my father was not able to join us, Mohamed stood in for him. A father to two sons, he proudly walked me down the stairs of the boat. Besides my godmother, Nicky, who had accompanied us for part of the trip, the rest of our guests were mostly strangers, or rather new friends whom we'd met on the cruise.

Shane is Jewish and I'm Christian, so we had a non-denominational service by a Coptic Christian wise man.

My flower girls, Brittany, Rio and Matisse de Freitas, were Cecelia's young nieces, who were on holiday with their parents. Their mother, Natasha, also happens to be an events co-ordinator, and jumped in to attend to the details we hadn't even considered

– the flowers, bouquet, the thousand gold coins (symbolising a thousand tokens of wealth slowly built up), the confetti, the decor and the candles. José, Natasha's husband, quietly fulfilled baby-sitting duties.

A violinist played the wedding march as I nervously descended the stairs to find Shane smiling reassuringly at the foot, and then we were ushered into the lounge, which had been transformed into a wedding reception hall.

We sat under a massive heart-shaped rose display during the ceremony as the wise man pulled off our quickie wedding with finesse, even getting our difficult Western surnames correct.

We hadn't prepared vows – it would have felt a bit out of place in front of people we barely knew – but having the little ones present our candles and throw the coins and confetti was a real tear-jerker moment.

After we were declared married, we gave our guests gifts of Egyptian crystal and then a belly dancer and a *tanoura* dancer performed (the *tanoura* is a version of the Sufi dervish dance).

Then we were chased upstairs to our honeymoon suite for a few minutes. Neither of us was sure if this was to consummate or pretend to consummate, so we just took a breather. It had been a very long day.

Afterwards, we rejoined the wedding party for dinner in the boat's restaurant, which had laid out a feast of local dishes, seafood and the best turkey we've ever eaten – as succulent as a plump duck. The chefs outdid themselves, finally presenting us with a magnificent five-tier wedding cake. It was the best food we would eat in Egypt, even if we couldn't muster an appetite.

Our friends and family were disappointed we had chosen the elopement route, but when they saw the wedding DVD and photographs and heard the stories about Egypt, they understood why we had done it.

We had found the local people very proud of their country, incredibly warm and hospitable, and eager to please. They were not going to pass up on an opportunity to make it a memorable, historic event. It certainly was.



The Nile Express, top, and the tanoura dancer that performed the whirling dervish dance at the reception on the boat.



With travel agents like these, who needs wedding planners? Georgina and Shane with Mohamed al-Shabrarwi and Cecelia Amory.

Advert ID: 7265950
318.047 By226.772
Booking Code: MB
Customer ID: EXQUISITE TRADING 2000
Colour: 1SPOTK

First Appearance: 27/11/09
Last Appearance: 27/11/09

GB OUTLET STORES
GLOBAL BRANDS TOP INTERNATIONAL BRANDS AT GREAT PRICES
END OF RANGE CLEARANCE!
BUY ONE AND GET ONE FREE

FILA R220

FILA GREAT SUMMER SPECIAL! WAS: R300 NOW: R50

FILA WAS: R200 NOW: R50

FILA WAS: R200 NOW: R50

FILA WAS: R200 NOW: R50

OFFERS VALID ONLY UNTIL 6 December 2009
On selected items. While stocks last!
Terms and Conditions apply.

WHERE TO FIND US:
• Shop No. 49, World Wear Centre, Cor. Beyers Naude & Wilson Road, Fairlands, 011 476 9104
• Shop 24, Woodmead Value Mart, Woodmead, 011 804 8337
• Cor. Ignatius & Hans Prow Street, Selby, 011 630 4050
• Shop 89, Campus Square Centre, Cor. Kingsway & University Road, Auckland Park, 011 482 3079

Affordable Stylish Living

Manhattan 2 Division Sofa NOW ONLY R3 499

Borren Lounger WAS R3 999 NOW R2 999

Manza Contemporary Chair NOW ONLY R2 299

Manhattan Corner Unit WAS R12 999 NOW R8 999

Tagus Side Table WAS R1 999 NOW R1 299

LIFETIME GUARANTEE SOFA FRAMES

VOTED BEST FURNITURE STORE IN SOUTH AFRICA 2009

THIS WEEKEND ONLY

Bloemfontein: Gauteng: Boksburg • Centurion Mall • Clearwater Mall • East Rand • Fourways Crossing • Irene - Eco Deco Park • Kya Sanda • Pretoria • Rosebank • The Glen • Waverlywood • Woodhill • Parkview Shopping Centre • Zambesi Drive, Eastern Cape: East London: Beacon Bay & Hartingways • George • Knysna • Port Elizabeth, Kwa-Zulu Natal: Amanzimtoti • Ballito • Durban • Hillcrest • Pietermaritzburg • Umhlanga, Mpumalanga: Nelspruit • Witbank, North West Province: Kimberley • Rustenburg, Western Cape: Cape Town • Palm Centre • Parow • Somerset West • Tokai • Tygervalley • Willowridge 0861 300 159 Wetherly's • www.wetherly's.co.za

Wetherly's
Living the Lifestyle