

# *Runaway romance*



**Below:** Nicola looks back at new husband Nicolas as the couple from Lausanne in Switzerland stroll on the beach in Barra.  
**Right:** Californians Gregg and Jen share a look of love.



LAUREN MCCLYNN - [HTTPS://LAURENMCCLYNNPHOTOGRAPHY.COM](https://laurenmcclynnphotography.com)

After speaking with three adoring couples from overseas who chose to tie the knot in Scotland, **Stephanie Abbot** discovers that love can take you around the world

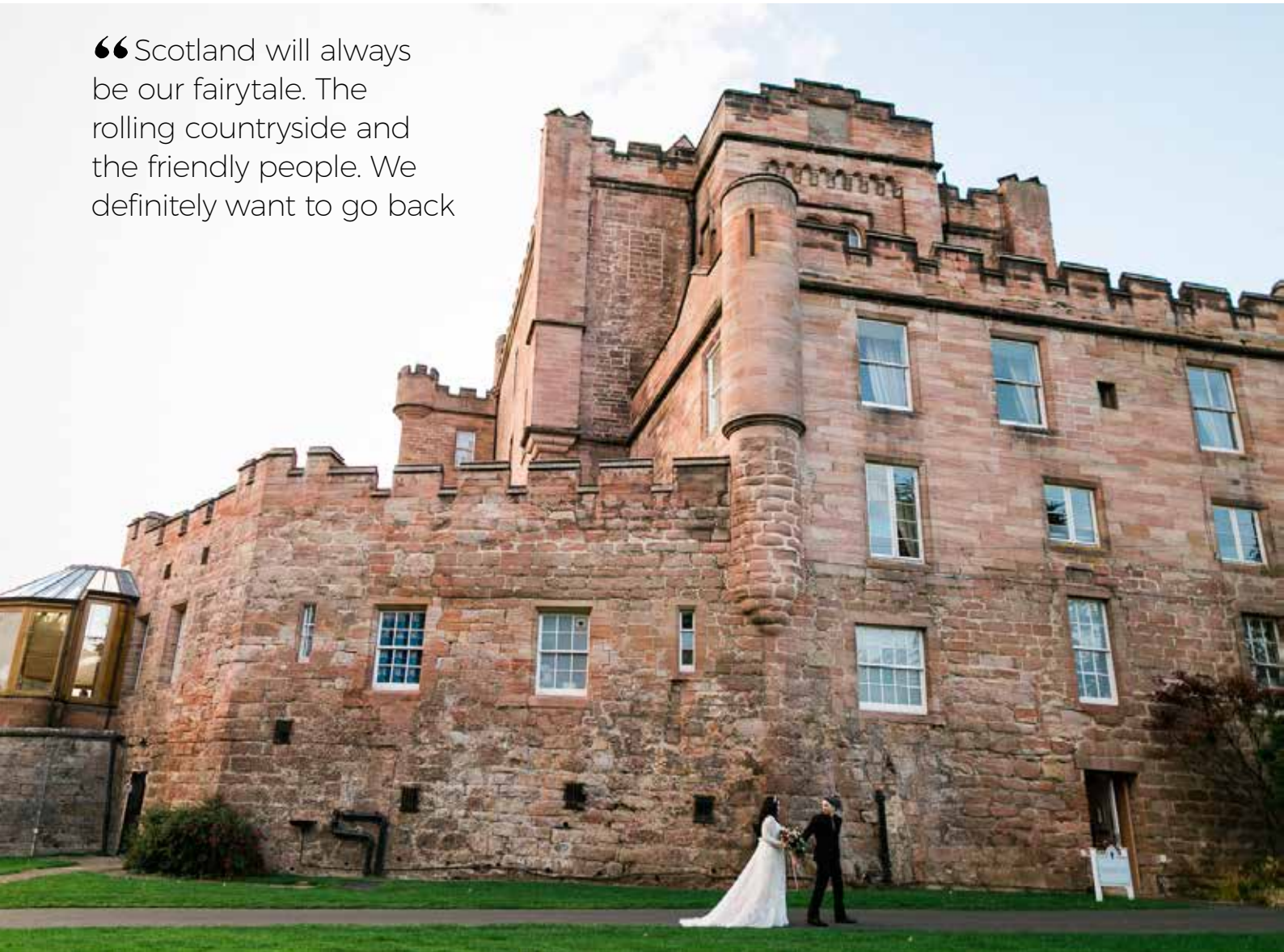
Planning a wedding can take a long time, and for many women the preparations begin long before anyone has even popped the question. Tales of princesses and princes finding happily ever after and living in glorious castles in far away lands may have shaped many of our childhood wedding plans, but unfortunately as we grow up, all too quickly we begin to realise that life doesn't necessarily replicate the pages of our cherished storybooks. Nevertheless, when we find someone we want to share forever with, lots of people choose to kick off their own fairytale with a truly magical wedding. For some, that means a beautiful beach in Hawaii, for others it's a lavish affair in Greece's picture perfect Santorini. Then there are those who decide to throw caution to the wind – and gails are always a high probability – by coming thousands of miles to Scotland.

With the romantic wilderness of the hills, the castles and stately homes steeped in history, plus beautiful traditions that have existed since medieval times, it's not difficult to understand why couples from around the world choose our bonnie little country as the destination for their nuptials.

Weddings in Scotland are big business and there are lots of people who have decided to make it *their* business. There are even those who have gone a step further by specialising in helping people from far flung countries experience their own Scottish wedding. One such business, Tartan Weddings, is owned by Lisa Bauer who lives in New York but is originally from Edinburgh and now works with couples from all over the United States, helping them to make their Scottish wedding dreams come true. 'It's really surprising the amount of people who reach out and want to consider Scotland. It's so cool

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“Scotland will always be our fairytale. The rolling countryside and the friendly people. We definitely want to go back



because it's all different. I know how much they spend on weddings in the US and you only get your venue for five hours. You're eating while you're dancing and everything is rushed – you pay \$6,000 for a DJ, not even a live band. But in Scotland, you get your own castle – a proper fairytale princess castle – so the wedding is more of an experience.'

Lisa worked with LA-based beauty blogger Jen Matthews (@mybeautybunny) who, after booking her wedding at Dalhousie Castle in October – the same venue that Lisa and her husband chose for their marriage – came to realise that she really needed someone to help with planning and creating the perfect day. 'We wanted a smaller destination wedding where our family and close friends could meet for the first time,' says Jen. 'We thought about getting married in Hawaii. Then we thought about getting married in a castle. We're not your ordinary couple, and we're not really beach people, so it was a no-brainer.'

While Jen says the couple's family and friends were initially surprised by their choice of location, particularly for October, everyone loved it. 'The Dalhousie Castle piper piped Gregg and his mother down the aisle. He also did a traditional cake cutting with his sword, and gave a speech. We thought that was pretty cool. We performed a traditional Celtic hand fasting during the ceremony, and it was beautiful.' Having celebrated one of the

**Above:** Jen and Gregg take a romantic stroll outside Dalhousie Castle. **Above right:** Jen and Gregg enjoy their fairytale moment together.

**Below:** Many couples are keen to include the tradition of hand fasting.

most significant moments in their lives here, Jen feels that the couple will always have a special connection to the country. 'Scotland will always be our fairytale. The rolling countryside, the lochs, the friendly people, the Gothic architecture... We definitely want to go back – maybe for our one-year anniversary.'

On this side of the pond, Janice Grimely-Evans owner of Blue Thistle





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## THE WEDDING PLANNER

*Three women working to create the perfect Scottish weddings for overseas couples*

### 1. Tartan Weddings

After experiencing her own dream wedding to American hubby Craig at home in Scotland, Lisa wanted to help brides in the states have their own fairytale wedding, while understanding the requirements and expectations of those across the pond. [www.tartanweddings.com](http://www.tartanweddings.com)

### 2. Blue Thistle Weddings

A fully qualified International Wedding Planning Professional, Janice Grimley-Evans specialises in elopements and creating weddings that will suit any budget but won't compromise on style or quality. [www.bluthistleweddings.co.uk](http://www.bluthistleweddings.co.uk)

### 3. Destination Weddings Scotland

After realising that 80% of her clients lived outside of Scotland, Emma Douglas wanted to create a specialised service for couples hoping to get hitched here. Emma is a passionate advocate for Scotland as the perfect romantic wedding destination. [www.destinationweddingsscotland.com](http://www.destinationweddingsscotland.com)

Weddings, specialises in elopements and has worked with couples from a whole host of countries including Australia, America and Switzerland. One such couple are Nicola and Nicolas who live in the Swiss city of Lausanne and chose the Isle of Barra as the setting for their big day. 'My father was from the Isle of Barra and I still have family who live there,' says Nicola. 'Apart from our family connection, we also love this little island for its beauty, peacefulness and powerful nature. We often go to Barra during summertime to get away from our busy lives and to recharge batteries.' And despite a lack of WiFi, for Nicola and Nicolas it was all worth it. 'It is extraordinary to have all your family and closest friends gathered in this little church so far away from the rest of the world. We couldn't have been happier.'

Another Scottish-based company bringing brides and grooms here is Destination Weddings Scotland and its

**Right:** Nicolas and Nicola's wedding on the Isle of Barra, where she has family connections, was wildly romantic.



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sister company Timeless White, both owned and run by Emma Douglas. With 80% of her clients living outside of Scotland, Emma felt the need to create a business that catered to their requirements and highlighted Scotland as an option for a destination wedding. In Emma's experience, 'Heritage is the number one reason that people will choose to come here. *Outlander* is probably the second reason people give for coming to Scotland – I can't tell you how many American brides have been piped up the aisle to the Skye Boat Song.'

Scottish brides understand that the weather is a monumental game of risk. It could be dry, dreich or downright dreadful. However, Emma says the wild weather can often be part of the draw for overseas couples. 'We had one wedding where it was just the worst possible weather, grey, dull, pouring with rain and windy. We got to Dunnottar Castle for the wedding and all of the guests got off the bus and said "Oh my god, wow! Look at the waves crashing on the rocks." Meanwhile I was thinking "this is freezing"'

One couple Emma worked with – Serena and Darryl – managed to strike it lucky with their outdoor wedding at Dunnottar Castle, and swapped the heat of the Australian

**Above:** The breathtaking view of Dunnottar Castle. **Below left:** Serena and Darryl, from Australia, enjoyed a ceremony on the cliffside. **Below right:** The happy couple enter the castle to the sound of the sax.

“I had been to Scotland years before and had fallen in love with it then

outback for the cool breeze of Scotland's north east coast. 'I had been to Scotland years before and fell in love with it then,' says Serena. 'This, along with some Scottish ancestry, made it an obvious choice for me. Darryl loves all things old and historical so when we saw the stunning Dunnottar Castle, we knew it was perfect for us.' The couple were eager to keep their runaway romance as authentic as possible. 'We were intrigued and appreciated the deep meaning behind the Scottish wedding traditions we were introduced to. We performed a hand fasting ceremony on the cliffs of Dunnottar and it was one of the most special moments of our day.'

While both Serena and Darryl say they are yet to acquire a taste for haggis, they are in firm agreement that Scotland has become their 'second home', with plans to return to Dunnottar to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Describing the planning process as 'quite a breeze' as Emma and various vendors maintained regular contact, Serena said: 'It was an incredibly intimate, surreal experience. We were delighted.'

What a wonderful feeling it brings to see so many couples from far and wide choose our bonnie Scotland as the setting for their own happily ever after.



MELISSA BEATTIE - WWW.MELISSABEATTIE.COM

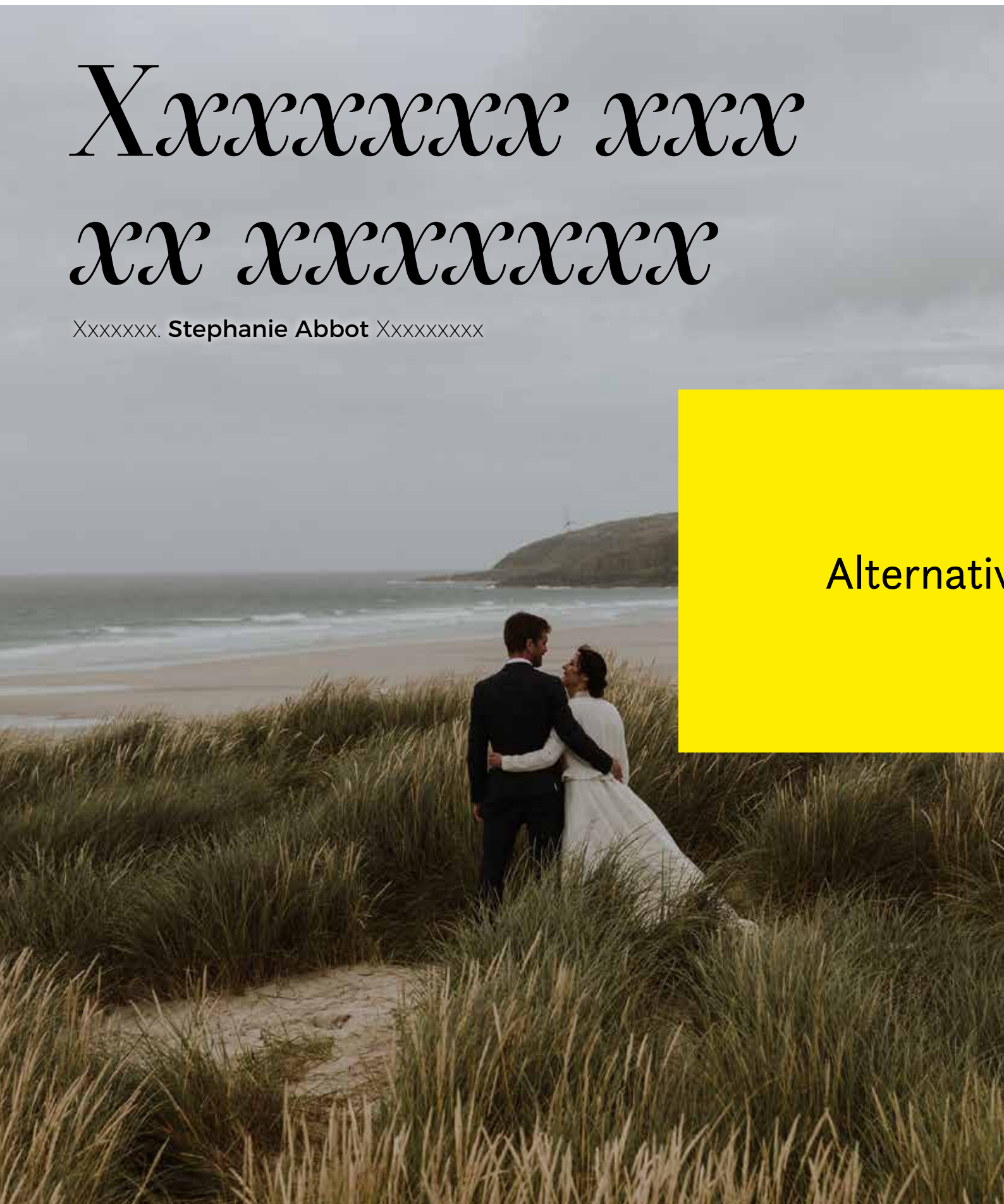


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**P**lanning a wedding can take a long time, for many women the preparations begin long before anyone has popped the question, or even before they've lost all of their baby teeth. Fairytales of princesses and princes finding happily ever after and living in glorious castles in far away lands, may have shaped the initial wedding plans many of us had when we first began to dream up ideas of what our own big day might look like. Unfortunately as children grow up, all too quickly they begin to realise that life doesn't necessarily replicate the pages of their cherished storybooks (or Ipads). Nevertheless when we find that special person in our lives we want to share forever with, lots of people choose to kick off their own fairytale with a truly magical wedding. For some, that means a beautiful beach in Hawaii, for others it's a lavish affair in Greece's picture perfect Santorini. While some might stay close to home and choose from the best options available. Then there are those who decide to throw caution

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