

# The New York Times

## Sunday Styles

### A Bachelorette's Night (or Four) to Remember

Destination parties are becoming the celebration of choice for brides to be.

By SHEILA MARIKAR

When Tracy S., a 33-year-old creative agency account director, began thinking about her bachelorette party, she knew getting out of town was a must.

"Living in New York and kind of being familiar with the night life and restaurants, it doesn't feel very special for a bachelorette," she said. Tracy, like some other women who were interviewed, spoke on the condition that her last name not be used so as not to completely lift the curtain on a clandestine girls' weekend. "You don't get the bonding time, the feeling of everyone getting away together. It's just the crazy few hours in the nightclub that you're not going to remember."

Instead, in May, she and six friends flew to Miami for a four-night extravaganza. Three of them were spent at a three-story "pool cabana" at the W South Beach that had a private roof deck. ("It was like a town house," Tracy said.) Day 4, a "detox day" of spa services and relaxing meals, culminated at the St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort in a 2,800-square-foot suite.

In between, the group dined on sushi at Katsuya and shared plates at the Soho Beach House. They shopped at boutiques and got their hair done. One woman arranged coordinated costumes for the party to wear while going out: gangsters, barbarians and sea creatures, the last involving shark, turtle and lobster hats that tied under their chins.

The cost for each attendee (including Tracy's portion, which was shared between her fiancé and her friends): \$4,000. And that was after Tracy's fiancé paid for one night for everyone at the W hotel, which lowered the price.

It is becoming increasingly common: multiple-day destination bachelorette celebrations, sometimes more than one. After

Miami, Tracy had a second, more low-key bachelorette party with her West Coast friends at a California beach. They rented a boat, shopped and avoided alcohol. ("They're pregnant, so we kind of had to accommodate that," she said.)

For brides, multiple parties provide an opportunity to celebrate with groups of women who may not know one another, or who may not be able to afford a veritable vacation to fete their friend's coming marriage. The movement toward five-star getaways may be due, in part, to people mar-

Lia Batkin, a founder of the personal travel planning Web site In the Know Experiences, often organizes destination bachelor and bachelorette parties (about three dozen in the last six months), and the priciest are usually for clients over age 30. In 2007, she planned a five-day shopping trip to Paris for a bride in her 30s that featured a private tour of Coco Chanel's Rue Cambon apartment and personal shoppers who escorted the party of five to boutiques. The women stayed in the George V Hotel (now a Four Seasons) and spent a day in the Champagne region with one of France's top sommeliers. All attendees paid \$20,000 to \$25,000 for the trip, depending on whether they flew economy or business class, not including shopping. (The bride paid only for her flight and shopping.)

After the 2008 economic downturn, things changed somewhat: Ms. Batkin noted that some of her clients now subsidize parts of a destination weekend, for example, by paying for everyone's accommodations, to lessen the financial burden.

After the 2008 economic downturn, things changed somewhat: Ms. Batkin noted that some of her clients now subsidize parts of a destination weekend, for example, by paying for everyone's accommoda-



TOM BLOOM

to lessen the financial burden.

It was what Jenny Studenroth-Gerson, who blogs about weddings on her Web site Born to Be a Bride, tried to do with two bachelorette parties before her own wedding. At her first, what she called a "semi-raunchy cowgirl night on tap" in Dallas, she paid her own tab. She tried to pay her share during her second party, in New York, but her fiancé refused to let her as they went to appointments at Sally Hershberger, manicurist at the Parker Meridien, ate at ABC Cocina, danced at Macao Club Co., had late-night eats at Bubby's, and then went to the night at the Essex House and a brunch at Sugar and Plumm. Each attendee paid \$550 for her 24-hour still-single spree. On Monday morning, when we were all separating to get cabs, they let me treat them to Starbucks," she said.

The pressure to roll out the royal treatment can force some attendees to get creative. Elana, a 29-year-old lawyer, has attended eight bachelorette parties in the

last two years, many with the same group of college girlfriends. Beyond the cost, which Elana said was "probably equivalent to taking a real vacation, though I don't view them that way," she sees a need to ensure that each bride's party is special and different from the rest.

At a recent Atlantic City party for a celebrity-obsessed bride, she put together a "step and repeat" (a banner used on red carpets for photo taking) in the bride's hotel room and had the group take Instagram photographs in front of it every time they changed. She also made a personalized Us Weekly magazine for the bride.

For others, the time and activities can add up to more than they can afford. One woman, who works at a nonprofit organization in Chelsea and spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of offending the bride, wrung her hands about attending a recent bachelorette party in the Hudson Valley. The day involved chipping in about \$500 for a limousine ride to and from Manhattan, wine tasting, blueberry picking, a cooking class and a lingerie gift exchange. "I just couldn't justify that cost, \$500 for one day," she said.

This battle between extravagance and common sense was chronicled in a parody bachelorette-party e-mail chain written by Caroline Moss and Michelle Markowitz, who posted it on the blog The Toast in August. (One line in the e-mail chain read, "Let's plan this near a holiday weekend, but not on a holiday weekend, so you still have to take multiple days off work!")

But some brides and their bachelorette-party planners just want to make sure the guys don't have all the fun. Ms. Studenroth-Gerson's appetite for two bachelorette parties was whet when her fiancé returned from his bachelor party in the Dominican Republic and announced that his work friends wanted to treat him to a weekend in Las Vegas.

"When he decided that he was going to have two," she said, "I had to even the score."

**The stripper dressed as a police officer? Women are now booking five-star getaways that include sushi, shopping, spas and suites.**

**ONLINE: IT'S RATED PG (REALLY)**  
In a video, apple-picking and pie-baking trump tequila shots and strippers at Katie Dickens's summer-camp-themed bachelorette party, where old friends reconnected — without the hangovers.  
[nytimes.com/weddings](http://nytimes.com/weddings)