

# MEL & RAFE

*This couple planned a wedding in the South African countryside from their home in the UK – with a little help from their family and friends*

**THE STYLE**  
RURAL ROMANCE

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
MARLI KOEN



Cape Townians Mel and Rafe live in London, but both knew there was only one place where they wanted to get married. “We both grew up in Cape Town,” she says. “On a trip home in 2015, we were at the top of Table Mountain, when Rafe proposed. The city and region is one of the most beautiful in the world, and a lot cheaper than London, so it was a no-brainer to have our wedding there as well!”

While the couple know Cape Town very well, they both faced a common issue when it comes to planning a wedding overseas – not being able to see a venue before booking it. With the help of Mel’s close friend Cindy, a make-up artist who knows many of the venues in the region, the pair narrowed down their choices based on pictures and cost. Rafe’s mother then stepped in to visit two locations, with the strong recommendation of Langkloof Roses, a farm about 100km from the city in the breathtaking countryside. “She was adamant that Langkloof was the venue for us,” recalls Mel. “And she was so right! We booked it, then visited in person about nine months before the wedding, so we had a good idea of the space.”

Rafe and Mel’s day was the result of both long-distance planning with the help of friends and family on the ground, and taking some risks. “We roped in people for different things,” she says. “Some people couldn’t try their outfits on until a few days before, and we couldn’t taste our wedding menu beforehand – but everyone looked absolutely gorgeous, and the food was great!”

WORDS BY DAVID JØRGENSEN



While Mel and Rafe couldn't taste their menu before the big day, they loved it



## WHAT THEY LEARNED

*Mel and Rafe's tips for planning a destination wedding*

Online sources for floral and décor ideas are great for showing suppliers what you like

Video calls are superb for face-to-face communication – we first spoke to our celebrant over Skype

Check the average weather for your planned date – it will influence everything



Mel's bridesmaids all chose their own styles for their tops



*Spotlight on...*  
A DESTINATION

“You shouldn’t have a destination wedding if you are in any way a control freak!” says Mel. “In terms of the décor, outfits for the bridesmaids and groomsmen, or the food, we didn’t really have a solid sense of how all the different aspects of the day were going to come together. Honestly, we had to hope and pray that it would all be OK – and it was!” Not having a firm grip on every detail and being a “fairly relaxed kind of bride” is something that Mel advises anyone thinking of going abroad for her big day, but she did find that making the effort to visit the venue before the wedding was a good decision. “Doing a recce beforehand means you can properly visualise your day in advance,” she explains. “Actually, I’d say this is an absolute must. If it’s at all possible, try to get there about a week before your wedding date to tie up any potential loose ends – it’s really helpful. We were able to travel to South Africa a couple of weeks before, and for us, that time was such a special part of the whole experience.”



The naked cake, decorated with fresh berries, was made by a friend of Rafe's sister



Florals were central to the décor, based on the local area and flowers indigenous to South Africa



DREAM TEAM

**CEREMONY & RECEPTION VENUE**  
langkloofroses.co.za

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
marliken.com

**BRIDE'S DRESS**  
katjakatya.co.uk

**BRIDEMAIDS' DRESSES**  
Instagram:  
@grahame\_t\_brown

**GROOM'S OUTFIT**  
topman.com

**FLOWERS**  
studiobloem.co.za

**HAIR & MAKE-UP**  
cindyhorton.co.za

**CELEBRANT**  
stfrancissimonstown.  
weebly.com

**CAKE**  
cakesbyhenno.co.za

