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A couple sets their sights on the City of Light for a romantic winter wedding

BY LAMBETH HOCHWALD

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THIS PAGE: After selecting hot cocoa or hot mulled wine from this cheery, citrus-colored cart, guests stayed warm while waiting for the new couple to emerge from the church. OPPOSITE: The bride holds her arrangement of 'Pierre de Ronsard' roses and olive-tree foliage, and she wears a couture dress accented by lace and vintage brooches.





*There are few cities to
get married in that are
as magical as Paris.*

Add to it a winter wedding, with the promise of snow cascading over Parisian roofs and a festive feeling in the days after Christmas, and you've set the scene for an unforgettable celebration.

For Caroline Seif, a Dubai-based TV producer, it took a little bit of convincing to buy into the charms of a wedding held at a decidedly frigid temperature. This bride had always dreamed of having a beach wedding, with guests wearing flip-flops as they walked down a sandy aisle. But compromise is one of the cornerstones of a happy marriage, so Caroline agreed to get married in Paris where her now-husband, Alexandre Hawari, is from.

Despite the fact that her wedding day fell on the dreariest of gray December days, Caroline felt transformed by the magic of the City of Light. The cold became an afterthought the minute she walked into the majestic Saint-Augustin church. "Alexandre cheered me up about braving the freezing temperature, and we all laughed while we took photos," says Caroline, who met Alexandre

RIGHT: Caroline and Alexandre pose for a wedding-day photo overlooking the Seine. OPPOSITE: The oversized floral arrangements near the altar are an artful combination of white amaryllis, orchids, and massed flower heads and petals.





This old and majestic Parisian church is the setting for the nuptials.



in an elevator in her Dubai office building seven years ago.

Caroline enlisted Les Têtes Chercheuses, a Paris-based wedding planning firm, to help her realize her dream of an eclectic celebration—one encompassing the classic style and romance of the city, as well as its sleek, chic modernity. At Saint-Augustin, a massive 19th-century church built in the heart of the city, the floral arrangements were designed with oversized branches of olive trees and big, glass cylinders with stacked bunches of flowers—a recent design trend that originated in Paris.

Post ceremony, guests showered the couple with faux snow, cleverly clustered in “snow cone” cups tagged with instructions that read: “When the newlyweds walk your way, throw the snow and yell Hooray!” Then, guests warmed up with hot chocolate or mulled wine served from an old French tricycle cart. While their guests sipped on hot beverages served in cups wrapped in white woolen muffs, the couple motored off to the reception in a circa 1940 white Citroen.

Set on the Champs Élysées amid twinkling



Christmas lights, Le Pavillon Ledoyen offered an elegant yet cozily warm scene for the wedding dinner. Guests were challenged to arrange Scrabble letters to spell out their names, thus finding their seats. The reception was filled with personal moments, including speeches by the couple’s nephews and another by Alexandre’s twin sister. “The toasts brought tears to



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Candlelit tables • Instead of traditional place cards, guests played a mini game of Scrabble to find their seats. • Caroline and Alexandre hold hands as they cut the cake.



our eyes," says Caroline. "A book was made with words from all our friends and family around the world. It was the best gift. We will cherish it for years to come."

The flowers were elegant and charming. "Some light-pink 'Pierre de Ronsard' roses were placed in silver vases, and several petals and white candles were placed throughout the room to complete the setting," says Alice Dentan, a wedding planner at Les Têtes Chercheuses. "A couple of bouquets hid in the bookcase between tomes by Voltaire and Rimbaud. The dinner felt so sophisticated and intimate at the same time."

During dinner, a jazz band played '30s French classics like Edith Piaf's "La Vie en

Rose." A basket was stocked with ballerina flats in pretty packages next to the dance floor, should anyone wish to swap her heels for something more comfortable. And for the men? Cigars to enjoy at the celebration or afterwards.

The traditional multi-coursed wedding meal ended with a venerable French favorite, a Parisian Pâte à Choux (cream puffs) filled with vanilla cream and topped with sparklers. But the party didn't end with this decadent sweet treat. The dancing went on into the wee hours of an early winter morning, the children (and adults) got to scoop their favorite candies into a take-home bag, and all agreed—this was a fête no one would ever forget. ❖

ABOVE: The newlyweds take their leave amid family and friends cheering and throwing faux snowflakes. OPPOSITE: Tables are awash in pink with mounds of 'Pierre de Ronsard' roses and spray roses in silver urns.

