

Jacketless Hardcover  
8 1/2 x 10 in, 176 Pages  
175 Color Photographs



\$35.00 U.S.  
Weddings

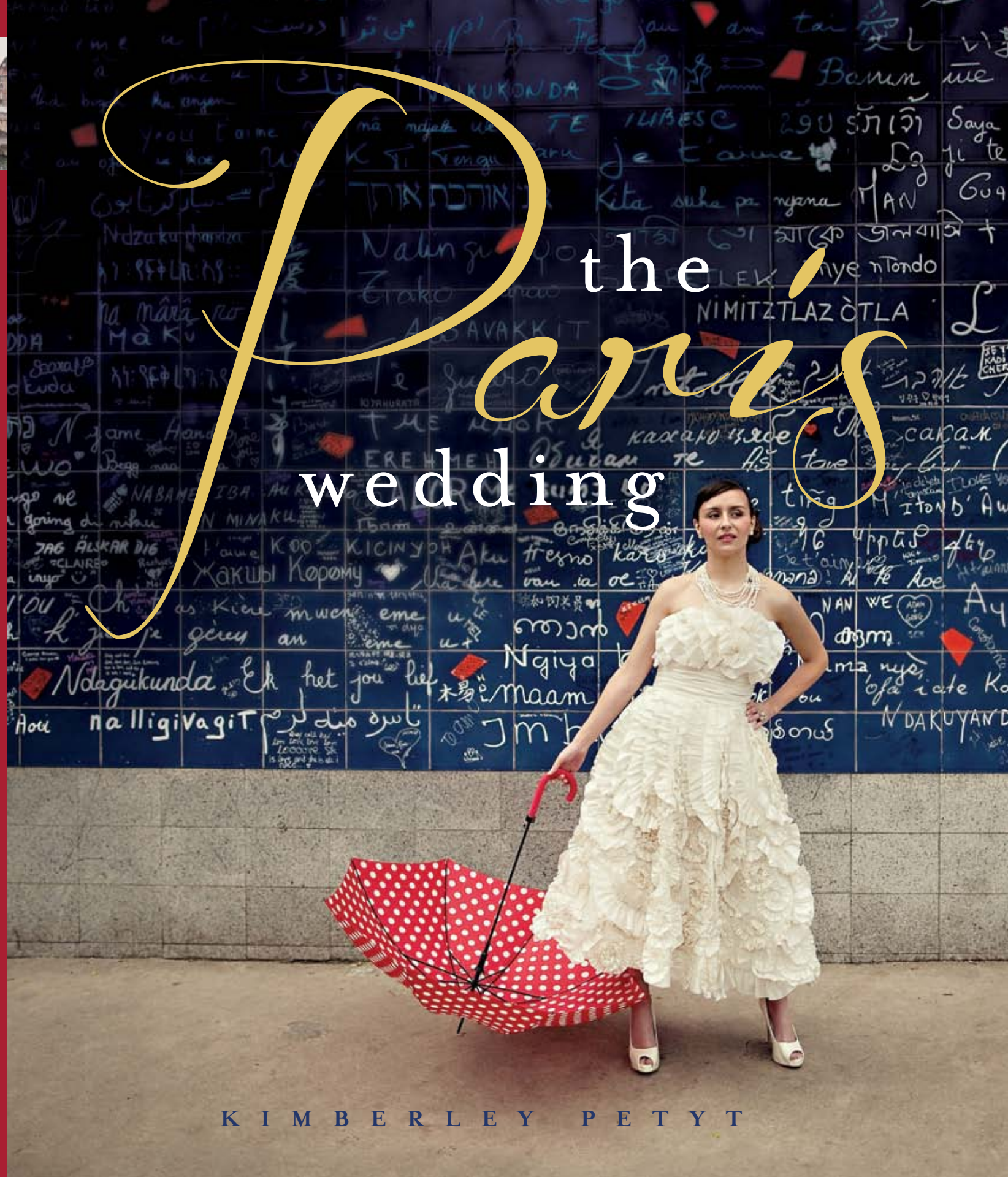


the paris wedding

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# the Paris wedding

KIMBERLEY PETYT

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## the skinny on getting married in paris

**f**ROM THE CLASSIC TECHNICOLOR DANCE SCENES OF *AN AMERICAN IN PARIS*, TO MORE RECENT FILMS LIKE *MIDNIGHT IN PARIS* AND *MOULIN ROUGE*—TO MANY AMERICANS, PARIS IS THE EPITOME OF STYLE AND ROMANCE. AND WITH THE RECENT POPULARITY OF DESTINATION WEDDINGS, WHAT COULD BE MORE STYLISH AND ROMANTIC THAN A WEDDING IN PARIS? UNFORTUNATELY, ALONG WITH THE FAIRY-TALE IMAGES OF A PARISIAN WEDDING COMES THE COLD SLAP OF REALITY IN THE FORM OF MILES AND MILES OF ADMINISTRATIVE RED TAPE.





## French Weddings vs. American Weddings

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My husband and I were once at a wedding in France when, around 11:30 p.m., just as dessert was being served, a couple showed up and sat down at our table. I assumed that they were just terribly late (or terribly rude), but after chitchatting with them for a bit, I realized that I had already spoken to them earlier that day after the ceremony at the church. They had then mysteriously disappeared for the following five hours. I mentioned this to my husband, and he casually remarked, "Oh, they must have just been invited for the dessert." Me: "Um, *WHAT?*" Lui: "Yeah, Jean-Luc only works with Philippe, so they were probably invited just for the dessert." Me (completely dumbfounded): "And they came?" Lui: "Ouf! You Americans are *trop sensible* (too sensitive)!"

And that, for me, is one of the biggest cultural differences between American and French weddings. A typical American wedding is made up of a ceremony (civil, religious, symbolic or otherwise), a cocktail hour and a lunch or dinner reception followed by dancing. The entire event is usually over by midnight at the latest. When you're invited to an American wedding, you're either invited to the ceremony and reception, or, as is the case when the ceremony venue is very small, just the reception. A typical French wedding, on the other hand, lasts all day AND leads into the next. It starts with a civil ceremony at a city hall in the morning, is followed by a religious ceremony if the couple chooses, and then a *vin d'honneur* (a small cocktail reception).