



Lifestyle

# From a gondola in Venice to popping out a car boot, the wild and imaginative proposal stories from four modern men

Four modern men discuss their proposals from a horse and cart ride interrupted by PETA activists, to popping the question in the beautiful countryside of Italy.



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Antimo Iannella and Julia Von in Italy. Picture: Antimo Iannella

A wise man once told me the old adage: "Pressure builds diamonds."

Who knew the reverse can also be true, especially when that diamond is attached to a much-anticipated engagement ring?



I didn't realise at the time, but deciding that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with Julia was the easy part.

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She's the perfect mix of beauty and brains, yet blissfully unaware she's blessed with both.

However, finding the right engagement ring, selecting the manner of proposal and the ideal location, well, that was a much tougher exercise. Particularly as I was determined to keep the details a closely guarded secret.



Antimo Iannella and Julia Von in Italy. Picture: Antimo Iannella

Sydney-based business My Proposal Co. was launched eight years ago by Tania Saad, to help men facing the same predicament.

“It can be difficult because this is all on them, this is their expression of love,” said Ms Saad, who has set up more than 1500 proposals around the world.

“It’s their way of being romantic but they don’t have anyone to bounce (ideas) off because it’s a secret. That’s where we come in.

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“We can help them to alleviate a lot of the pressure and the stress of making sure it is romantic, something that their partner would enjoy.”

If only I had been aware of their services some 12 months ago!

Choosing the ring was always going to be a hard task, given my complete lack of jewellery intel.



Modern Man proposals feature: Pics of My Proposal Co. proposals. Hai and Mariel. Picture: Studio Barakat

Did I want a princess or a round cut? Silver or gold band? Clarity or colour? Full carat or half carat? What's a carat?

The questions came thick and fast, as various shop assistants talked me through my options in the hope of a big commission.

Sadly it wasn't to be for them but several weeks (and many jewellery stores) later, I had in my possession a sparkly diamond ring.

While it didn't quite cost the traditional three months' pay, rest assured there was still a significant crater in my savings account.

Now onto the proposal itself. It's a tricky one: you want to make it unique, memorable and most of all, romantic.

A magical moment worthy of a magical woman.

But how to achieve this exactly?

Popping the big question at sunset in an exotic location? A grand gesture in public with the world watching? Perhaps a private occasion in simpler surrounds? Or somewhere in between?

Ms Saad said it was key to make the marriage proposal “personal and sentimental”.

“It needs to be tailored to their partner and what they enjoy doing as a couple,” she said.

Hotel rooms were a popular choice, giving couples privacy and allowing them to stay the night in a special location, Ms Saad said.

“Then we’ve got clients who want really big extravagant settings, with personal chefs on super yachts and private islands,” she said.



Matt and Hayley getting married. Picture: Studio Barakat Photography

I love Julia more than she’ll ever know, but she wasn’t getting a private island.

Instead, after much internal pondering, I decided my late father’s hometown of Torrecuso, Italy, ticked all the boxes. Unique, memorable, romantic.

In July 2023, I finally summoned up the courage on a trip designed to celebrate my 40th birthday.

She would have no idea.

After a short walk around the tiny town, we reached the picturesque spot I’d previously

Just her and me.

Looking out at a stunning vista, and gazing into the eyes of my dream woman, I got down on one knee and asked her to be mine forever.

Thankfully, she said 'yes'.

What was I so worried about?

**Corbin Schuster**

**Proposal: On a gondola in Venice**



Adelaide man Corbin Schuster proposed to Justine in Venice, Italy. Pic: Supplied.

Mr Schuster had been dating his now-wife, Tina, for about six years when he decided it

"I'm one of those people who want to get all their ducks lined up. I want to make sure I'm absolutely sure of a decision before I make it," he said.

"It had taken me six years and I was getting pressure from friends and family, asking me: 'When are you going to propose? You've found the right one.'"

So prior to the couple's two-week bus tour of Europe, Mr Schuster made sure to get the green light from his future father-in-law, before covertly pinching one of Tina's rings, ready for the proposal.

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But after ten days, he couldn't find the right spot for the big moment.

"We'd been to the Eiffel Tower, we'd been to all these places in London, but the opportunities were starting to pass me by. It wasn't quite perfect," he said.

On their last night in Venice, Italy, Mr Schuster decided to finally take the plunge.

"It was 11.30pm and we were walking around and we hear this call, 'Last gondola ride of the night'," he recalled.

"So we get in and we're sitting in the gondola and the guy was singing these Italian songs... my heart was going a million miles an hour.

"Prior to going over there I'd had some heart issues and Tina was asking me if everything was all right. I was ready to keel over from nerves."





A proposal on a boat. Picture: Studio Barakat

Mr Schuster eventually pulled out the ring and asked Tina if she wanted to be his wife. She wasted no time saying ‘yes’, and 11 years later they’re still happily married.

“I always make the joke that if she said no, I’d have just pushed her off the gondola,” he laughed.

Reflecting on the magical moment, Mr Schuster said there is too much focus placed on the marriage proposal.

“There’s a lot of emphasis on it, and on the wedding, whereas the emphasis should be put on building a life together,” he said.

“Once the elation and happiness of the proposal and the wedding day dies down, you want to find someone who can make you laugh in difficult times. You want to build a strong partnership for the rest of your life, as opposed to something flashy that looks good on social media.”

## Luke James

### Proposal: Emerging from a car boot at Sydney airport



Luke James and now wife Sarah. Picture: Supplied.

Mr James almost paid the ultimate price when he proposed to his then-girlfriend of five months, Sarah, in 2007.

The couple were heading to Sydney for an event, when Mr James decided to fly ahead and jump into the boot of Sarah's sister's car at the airport – with an engagement ring in his pocket.

“I wanted that element of surprise. Her sister Melanie was supposed to slowly drop the boot down so I could still open it to breathe. But she accidentally locked it down, so I was in there for about 15-20 minutes with not much air... it was a bit touch and go,” laughed Mr James, who previously owned Adelaide restaurant The Manse.

“When Sarah eventually opened it, I could barely get the words out. But it was amazing, she was very shocked and it was a hell of a surprise.

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Mr James, 44, said he had no regrets about the way he popped the question, and encouraged others to propose in a way that “reflects your personality”.

“I just wanted a unique proposal, something that was memorable. We’ve got four daughters now so I wanted something that they would find amazing,” said Mr James, general manager at Crystalbrook Collection, a luxury hotel company.

“Don’t try to do too much, do something that’s natural to yourself. Each to their own, but make it memorable so that you can talk about it for years to come.”

## Lucas Morgante

### Proposal: Horse and carriage ride in Melbourne



Lucas Morgante and now wife Justine and daughter Harlow. Picture: Supplied.,

Sometimes a romantic proposal doesn’t work out as first planned.

On a Melbourne holiday with partner Justine and their young daughter Harlow, Mr Morgante had arranged a horse and carriage ride through the city’s Botanic Gardens, with an eye to getting down on one knee at the end.

But Justine fell ill the night before, forcing him to cancel the surprise.

“The next day she was feeling better so we went out again and had brunch in the city,” he said.

Mr Morgante hastily rearranged another horse and carriage ride but confusion over the pick up location led to an argument between the couple.

“We started fighting with each other right there in the street,” he said.

The trio were eventually picked up and started their ride, but they were soon interrupted by a group of PETA animal rights activists.



Lucas' proposal was interrupted by a group of PETA animal rights activists. Picture: Supplied.

“Apparently only a few weeks prior a horse had dropped dead in the CBD. So they started abusing us, really getting stuck into us,” Mr Morgante, 39, said.

Undeterred, they finally made it to the gardens where their carriage driver found a nice romantic spot to pull over – though he'd given Justine a few too many hints about what was to come.

“He was making a big deal about it and he gave us this big wink and I'm like, ‘What are you doing mate, this is supposed to be a surprise,’” said Mr Morgante

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“That’s when Justine knew something was up and she was getting excited.

“So we got out of the carriage and I proposed and she just started crying and said yes. It turned out really well and now we always have an interesting story to tell.”



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