

True romance? Why this couple is getting divorced on Valentine's Day

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With the help of a company called DivorceHotel, a New York couple is untying the knot over Cupid's dead body.

(CNN)—On most days, the gorgeous [Gideon Putnam Resort & Spa](#) in Saratoga Springs, New York, looks like the perfect place to start a new romance.

This Valentine's Day, however, it'll be used to end one.

That's the day a couple from Long Island, New York, with help from a company called [DivorceHotel](#), will come together for the

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DivorceHotel says its service is cheaper than going through courts

last time as husband and wife to finalize legal proceedings and make their divorce official.

Married for 25 years with four children, Antonio and Kathie (who prefer not to provide their last names) are both in their mid-40s. Antonio works in the construction business in New York City, Kathie is a medical professional.

Amid the lush grounds of the resort in the foothills of New York's Adirondack Region, the details of their split will be made official over three days, with wine and maybe spa treatments on the side.

"The hotel is actually known for weddings," says Kathie. "It's got a great spa and it's in a great town with really good atmosphere.

"If you get stressed you can get a massage or a facial."

Though they share a "warped sense of humor," the couple insists their Valentine's Day divorce is no joking matter.

"We're not trying to be flip about divorce," says Kathie. "It was a long hard road to finally make this decision -- whether you've been married five or 10 or 25 years, divorce is never easy -- but it's best for both of us and our family, the six of us.

"We don't hate each other and we won't hate each other and this has lot to do with it. We're not taking this as a joke, but we can still joke about it."

If that attitude about something as potentially soul-crushing as divorce surprises you, the story behind the company that's facilitating what it calls a "special ceremony" might make you a believer.

Just what is DivorceHotel?

Though combining divorce and vacation might seem as American (and heart-friendly) as fried chicken and waffles, DivorceHotel is actually a Dutch company, founded in the Netherlands in 2011 on, if you can believe it, Valentine's Day.

The company doesn't actually own or operate any hotels -- it partners with various properties to host divorce proceedings -- but says the concept behind its vision of "divorce vacations" is both pragmatic and positive.

"We started DivorceHotel because a lot of divorce procedures end up in fights that drag on for months and sometimes years," says company founder Jim Halfens, who is neither married nor divorced. "The element of time destroys a lot of divorce procedures and a lot of lawyers and other professionals delay procedures on purpose based on their hourly rate."

"It is possible to split up in a positive way," says company founder.

Couple has been married 25 years and has four children



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DivorceHotel provides mediation services prior to the final divorce procedures, during which it enforces a strict three-day timeline to wrap things up.

It operates on a flat fee.

The couple tells CNN they're paying a total of \$6,500 for their divorce -- that includes mediation and dealing with the legal end of the divorce, the hotel bill and resort weekend, including some meals, and \$1,000 or so in state filing fees.

"The longer a divorce procedure takes the bigger the risk the procedure will fail, because more and more people with opinions will be involved and make it complex," says Halfens. "We are able to split up our spouses in a clean and positive way."

"We have friends we've seen go through divorces and it usually takes years," says Antonio. "Even when it starts off amicably, by the time it gets to trial everybody's seething with hatred and making all sorts of crazy accusations."

"A buddy of mine was married for five and a half years and over \$30,000 that they couldn't agree about (in mediation), it ended up costing him \$200,000 (mostly in legal fees) and it's probably going to cost him his house."

Antonio and Kathie will travel to the resort separately and stay in separate rooms.

"I'm not looking forward to this weekend, but it's taking a lot of stress out of an already stressful situation," says Kathie, emphasizing that the couple's split is amicable. "It makes it much easier to deal with."

But why on Valentine's Day?

Making a tough situation easier sounds good, but why target the day associated with heart-shaped chocolate boxes and other hopeful "Be Mine" sentimentality?

"When you think about it, this weekend has twofold meaning," says Kathie, who, along with Antonio, says the Valentine's Day timing is pure coincidence. "Friday is Friday the 13th. Then we have Valentine's Day ... We are trying to keep our sense of humor."

Does Halfens have something against Valentine's Day?

"We started DivorceHotel in 2011 on Valentine's Day to show the world we believe it is possible to split up in a positive way," he says. "It's more that we have an association with Valentine's Day -- positivity."

"You could say this is one special. It will be the first time in our existence we will process a divorce on Valentine's Day."

"Special" might not be the word Antonio and Kathie would settle on -- both make it clear the divorce decision process has been



Unmarried Jim Halfens has "helped a lot of people to split up in a positive way."

incredibly difficult and painful -- but they're at least satisfied with their decision to take care of the details the way they have.

"The whole notion of sitting in the cold, antiseptic environment of a courtroom or a conference room with attorneys and hash out all the details of my life, I didn't want it," says Antonio. "That's not how we began our relationship and it's not how we should end it.

"This is civilized."