



FAR AND (NOT SO FAR) AWAY

Whisk away to one of these destination wedding venues **BY KARINA TIMMEL**

Once you're engaged, expect your to-do list to double.

A destination wedding can be even more time consuming since it requires more research from afar to find the perfect spot with everything you want and need for your special day. To speed up the process so you can concentrate on things like dress shopping, here are six of our top "wow"-worthy destination venues.

The Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island, Amelia Island, Fla. ▼

Why thee wed: This luxury resort on one of North Florida's gorgeous barrier islands recently underwent

a \$65-million renovation. The 446-room oceanfront property is host to a plethora of wedding venues, including oceanfront lawns, a spacious beach, five ballrooms, private rooms and fine-dining restaurants that can accommodate anywhere from two to 800 people. In true Ritz-Carlton impeccable service style, a full events team is at your beck and call onsite to help coordinate all the details.

Must-try: Your rehearsal dinner awaits at Salt, a AAA Five-Diamond restaurant that offers 48 types of infused and imported specialty salts.

904.277.1100 www.ritzcarlton.com



^ **El Monte Sagrado, Taos, N.M.**

Why thee wed: Imagine exchanging vows on a grassy circle surrounded by views of mountains, waterfalls, ponds and towering 80-year-old cottonwood trees. Sounds pretty dreamy, right? This bohemian-chic resort with 84 guestrooms, suites and casitas sits on a thoughtfully appointed 11-acre landscape. It has more than 7,000 square feet of flexible function space and intimate outdoor sites, including the abovementioned Sacred Circle; Taos Mountain Lawn, for weddings of up to 400 people; Grand Bohemian

Gallery, a 60-person intimate space featuring original works by various renowned artists; and the Sandoval and Rio Grande ballrooms, which entertain 70 and 200 seated guests respectively. Opt to incorporate traditional Native American storytelling into your service for a completely unique touch. A wedding specialist helps coordinate everything.

Must-try: Catch some R&R at the Living Spa, an eco-friendly retreat featuring candlelit couple's suites and all-natural treatments.

800.875.8675 www.elmontesagrado.com



**Inn at Palmetto Bluff,
Bluffton, S.C.** >

Why thee wed: There's a mystical feeling about the Carolina Low-country, with its labyrinths of rivers, islands, marshes and maritime forests, and The Inn at Palmetto Bluff is located on 20,000 acres of a nature preserve right in the heart of it. Its 50 guest cottages come complete with large screened porches, hipped metal roofs and fireplaces (S'mores kits are gratis). The white Waterside Chapel is picture-perfect for your ceremony, with expansive views of the May River and majestic oaks. Next, head to the elegant ballroom and oversized verandas of the River House, which can accommodate 200 guests for your reception. Plus, the property recently introduced the Wedding Design Studio, which offers a library of inspiration (literally color-coded albums of ideas) and a comfortable lounge for decision-making with the onsite coordinator. **Must-try:** A private wine-cellar dining room with seating for 36 makes for a unique after-party space.

843.706.6506
www.palmettobluff.com

**Oak Crest Mansion Inn,
Pass Christian, Miss.** >

Why thee wed: This quaint, 1920s eight-bedroom inn located on 12 serene acres is all about historic Southern charm and hospitality. Ceremonies take place on the front steps of the mansion with guests in garden chairs on the lawn; in



the picturesque gazebo or facing the chapel, both accommodating about 100 guests; inside the chapel for intimate weddings of 25; or within the recently added 6,000-square-foot ballroom, which can accommodate up to 300 guests standing or 150 seated. While there aren't any vendors (besides the gourmet chef) or planners onsite, each wedding is provided a wedding coordinator. **Must-try:** Embrace the 1920s theme and choose to ride via horse and buggy to your ceremony, courtesy of Tillison's Carriages.

228.452.5677
www.oakcrestmansion.com

**Fripp Island Resort,
Fripp Island, S.C.** >

Why thee wed: Only an hour from Savannah's airport, this barrier-island resort is like a private club—150 home rentals, ranging from one to eight bedrooms, two top-rated golf courses and a racquet club (for



that pre-wedding workout!) to boot. The property hosts weddings of up to 300 guests and venue options include the beach, Beach Club, golf course or pool area. Everyone will have fun shuttling around on golf carts and scooters as there are no cars allowed. The resort handles catering only—the crab cakes are not to be missed!—and they'll recommend an offsite wedding planner to help with the rest. **Must-try:** Charter a boat for an entertaining fishing excursion for early-bird guests the day before your wedding.

888.741.8974
www.frippislandresort.com

**Cala Luna, Tamarindo,
Costa Rica** >

Why thee wed: Looking for adventure? Gather your closest (up to 80 guests) and hop on a four-hour direct flight down to Costa Rica's northern Pacific coast. This boutique luxury resort, made up of suites and villas within a well-landscaped jungle, sits on one of the country's best beaches—and you can get hitched on it. Other venues for the ceremony and reception include the open-air restaurant and pool area and a brand-new indoor pavilion. The onsite wedding coordinator works with your outside planner on all the particulars. Freshly muddled strawberry mojito, anyone? **Must-try:** Splurge and stay in one of the villas—it's totally worth it for the private pool.

506.26.53.02.14 www.calaluna.com ■



Photo: Antonio Saba

