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YOUR BIG DAY SIMPLIFIED

GUARDING THE GOWN P29



FRIENDLY FACE-OFF P30

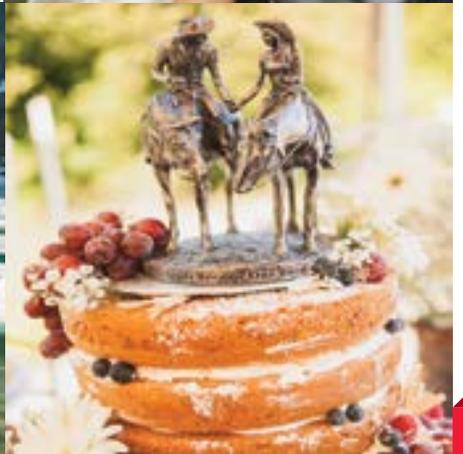


FIESTA FOREVER P31

the *plan*



OUR GUIDE TO WEDDINGS IN THE U.S. NATIONAL PARKS
how to marry in the
NPS



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by CARRIE BELL



Pacific

Towering trees, purple mountain majesties, seaside cliffs and more than a few volcanoes give new meaning to the term Wild West.

YOSEMITE, CALIFORNIA

Whether you envision vows in a grassy meadow, a waterfall fete or a winter-white wedding that takes advantage of the ice-skating rink, the home of Half Dome has a wide variety of spaces. It also boasts several indoor venues, including a wooden chapel and **The Ahwahnee**, a 1927 luxury lodge with Arts and Crafts touches. The only issue: This sought-after park is often booked more than a year in advance. *Rooms from \$349.*

CRATER LAKE, OREGON

Say I do at the fifth-oldest national park, where several promontories along the volcanic rim overlook the very blue, very deep namesake lake and its forested islands. Keep in mind that this area averages 44 feet of snow a year (it's often still blanketed come spring) and has no indoor wedding facilities. Groups can overnight and dine in the 71-room **Crater Lake Lodge** between May and October. Built in 1915, it's full of old-timey charm — stone facades, a crackling lobby fire

OLYMPIC, WASHINGTON

At this diverse park, covering nearly 1 million acres of the Olympic Peninsula, you can explore tide pools at the ocean, chase waterfalls on a rainforest hike, and climb a legit mountain in the same trip. Lodging varies from Spartan campgrounds to warmly appointed lakeside resorts. **Lake Crescent Lodge's** westerly view over clear glacial waters makes for exceptional sunset unions. **Lake Quinault Lodge** features a gazebo on a manicured lawn and a ballroom with cathedral ceilings. Bonus: Both lodges are on the National Register of Historic Places. *Lake Crescent rooms from \$72; Lake Quinault rooms from \$89.*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ALLISON HARRIP PHOTOGRAPHY; KENNY KANST; COURTESY ELLO THERE; SHUTTERSTOCK (3)



Mountain

Find big skies, rocky mountain highs and even one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World.

GRAND TETON, WYOMING

This peak-filled playground provides group activities aplenty, from Elk Island cruises to whitewater rafting. **Jenny Lake Lodge** begs for a welcome party, while two chapels vie for your vows. Up to 600 guests can mingle under the antler chandeliers at **Jackson Lake Lodge**. *Rooms from \$289.*

GLACIER, MONTANA

Called the Switzerland of North America, this mountainous marvel is snuggled against the Canadian border. Tie the knot in a tree-lined outdoor amphitheater like Rising Sun, Avalanche Creek or Many Glacier, or opt for the

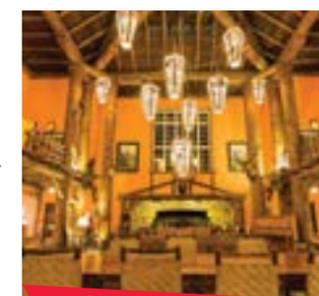
pebbly shore of Medicine Lake. Stay at the circa-1913 **Lake McDonald Lodge**, where trademark retro red buses congregate, making for a stellar photo op. *Rooms from \$207.*

GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA

Calling all adventurous couples: Favored ceremony spots (Shoshone Point, Grandeur Point) at this gorge-ous natural wonder are isolated and rustic, or require short hikes. Retreat to the **Thunderbird Lodge** (picture a fireplace and a balcony overlooking the Colorado River and South Rim) for your reception, but retire to **El Tovar**, a throwback to the golden age of railroad travel. *El Tovar rooms from \$207.*

ZION, UTAH

Desert meets forest in this peaceful preserve of vertical walls, sandstone plateaus, vivid wildflowers and curious wild turkeys. Co-opt shuttles for eco-friendly transportation to six outdoorsy sites like the campground amphitheater or Temple of Sinawava, which has a river beach. **Zion Lodge** catering can whip up a brunch buffet after a sunrise ceremony. *Rooms from \$170.*



Quick Hits

NPS EMBLEM >> Arrowhead **ANNUAL VISITORS** >> 300 million+ **MOST VISITED** >> Great Smoky Mountains **ENTRANCE FEE** >> \$5-\$25 **BEST TIME TO GO** >> Sept.-Oct.

HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE! THERE'S NO BETTER TIME OR PLACE TO #OPTOUTSIDE FOR NATURAL NUPTIALS. BUT WITH 409 NPS SITES SPREAD ACROSS MORE THAN 84 MILLION ACRES, WHERE DO YOU BEGIN THE SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT SYLVAN SPOT? RIGHT HERE.

The Details

NATURAL BEAUTY

GO INTO THE WILD PREPARED.

PERMITS

A special-use permit is required to marry on NPS land. "As they are first-come, first-served, we recommend applying early," says NPS spokeswoman Kathy Kupper.

DECOR

Leave no trace. "Use nonfloral centerpieces such as river rocks, curly willow, pine cones, vegetables and fruit," advises Green Fox Events owner Sandra DiDomizio.

CAKE

Choose a naked cake for your fresh-air fete. "This is a great way to integrate a more natural, rustic feeling into your dessert," says Harmony Creative Studio's Margaux Fraise.

FAVORS

Etsy artist Ello There has a line of park-themed retro patches. Ranger Doug's Enterprises, started by a former Grand Teton employee, reproduces vintage NPS artwork on postcards.



Eastern

The national parks of the Eastern U.S. trade snowcapped peaks for extreme leaf-peeping, and red-rock riverbanks for Atlantic beaches.

SHENANDOAH, VIRGINIA

Only 75 miles from D.C., this stretch of the Blue Ridge Mountains is particularly pretty during fall's foliage show. Skyline Drive spots like Stony Man Overlook can host unions, but most couples prefer the lawns, stone hearths and oak-beamed rooms of **Big Meadows Lodge** and **Skyland Resort** (closed in winter). Capture what locals call the "phoenix shot," when the sunset ignites the valley. *Rooms from \$149.*

ACADIA, MAINE

Once a summer haven for the well-heeled, the original Eastern park shines with some of the Atlantic seaboard's most spectacular scenery, including surf-pounded granite shores, deer grazing in quiet meadows, and Cadillac Mountain, the East Coast's highest point. Take advantage of the park's horse-drawn carriages, and capitalize on the fact that whale-watching and wedding

season share the time frame of May to October. Local delicacies like lobster, popovers and all things blueberry are on the menu in the Jordan Pond House's private dining room. Overnight at Bar Harbor's historic **Harborside Hotel, Spa & Marina**, overlooking Frenchman Bay. *Rooms from \$159.*

CUMBERLAND ISLAND, GEORGIA

Wild horses famously inhabit this unspoiled barrier island, where moss-draped oaks canopy quiet footpaths, and daily visitors are capped to a mere 300 people. Even better, it has the Kennedy seal of approval: JFK Jr. exchanged vows in its tiny whitewashed church, then stayed and celebrated at **Greyfield Inn**, a columned turn-of-the-century mansion run by Carnegie scions; both sites still bless unions. *Packages from \$425, including rooms, rehearsal dinner, ferry service and on-island transport.*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Posing at Crater Lake. I do's at Glacier. A Southern soiree at Greyfield Inn. Lake McDonald Lodge's cozy lobby. The rustic facade of The Ahwahnee. PREVIOUS PAGE: Grand Teton wildlife. Putting a ring on it in Zion. Mother Nature inspires florals, photos and desserts (3). Breaking the ice in Glacier (2). All smiles in Yosemite.