

Destination WEDDING

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FALL/WINTER 2019

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Ways to
PERSONALIZE
YOUR
WEDDING

BACKPACKER
CEREMONIES

20
PLANNING
QUESTIONS
YOU HAVE TO ASK

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FROM SUNNY BEACHES TO DARK CAVES

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TODAY'S
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BY ERIKA HUENEKE

RHODE ISLAND

AMERICA'S FIRST RESORT

RHODE ISLAND ROMANCE

CELEBRITIES aren't strangers to Rhode Island, from Taylor Swift, who throws an annual summer bash at her home in Westerly, to the contestants of *The Bachelorette*, who descended on Newport this spring for the show's 15th season. The A-list obsession is nothing new: The who's who of the world have been flocking to the U.S.'s smallest state for almost four centuries.

Only 4,001 square kilometres, the Ocean State has a lot going for it: easy accessibility within the eastern time zone, abundant fresh seafood, and 640 kilometres of stunning coast. And of course, there's Newport's long history of throwing epic parties.

During America's "Gilded Age" (roughly 1870 to 1913), the wealthiest families of the time hosted extravagant balls in their summer "cottages". Today, groups can tour several of these fascinating Newport Mansions, including Rosecliff, where dramatic entrances come courtesy of the grand heart-shaped staircase. Nearby, historic villas-turned-inns like OceanCliff, Castle Hill and The Chanler also arrange soirées in hilltop, ocean-view venues.

Diversions around town range from wine tasting at Newport Vineyards to strolling the 5-kilometre Cliff Walk. Newport also boasts a wonderfully preserved colonial neighbourhood, as well as 10 historic lighthouses. Bridesmaids can bond over a Bridal Bliss



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package (think champs and cupcakes) in the spa of Hotel Viking, Newport's first hotel, while the circa-1673 White Horse Tavern – America's oldest pub – welcomes rehearsal dinners in its three private dining rooms.

Newport tends to hog the spotlight, but Rhode Island's other regions also impress, from the foodie hub of Providence to the beach haven of South County. At the latter, weathered shingle-style estates with gabled roofs and wistful widow's walks dot the small town of Westerly, whose white-steepled Watch Hill Chapel happily hosts vows.

Next door, the iconic Ocean House hotel – an authentic replica of the 150-year-old original – offers elegant touches like a local harpist,

a sleek raw bar and ballroom dancing by the sea. Meanwhile, with canoeing, stargazing and marshmallow roasting, Weekapaug Inn exudes a *Moonrise Kingdom* vibe (scenes from the 2012 movie were filmed nearby in Jamestown); couples can depart waterfront ceremonies in style on the inn's six-passenger Quonnie Queen boat.

High season runs from late May to early September, but fall – with crisp weather and changing leaves – is also a lovely time to exchange vows. Whenever you wed, satiate guests with local seafood like lobster rolls, clam chowder and littleneck stuffies. Another must – Del's Frozen Lemonade: This Rhode Island phenomenon is best served spiked.

GETTING THERE:

From Toronto, a direct flight to Rhode Island's capital city of Providence is about 1.5 hours.

PLACES TO HOST YOUR WEDDING:

- › On a private beach at Ocean House hotel (Westerly). oceanhouse.com
- › Overlooking Weekapaug Inn's Quonochontaug Pond (Westerly). weekapauginn.com
- › On the Schooner Aurora, OceanCliff Resort's classic tall ship (68 passengers, Newport). newportexperience.com
- › On the oceanfront lawn of Rosecliff mansion (Newport). newportmansions.org
- › Amid the grapevines of Newport Vineyards (Newport). newportvineyards.com



Newport Vineyards

