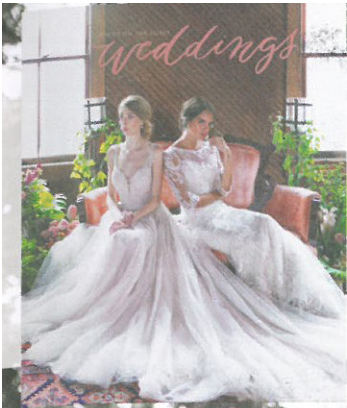


FOCUS ON THE COAST

# weddings



FALL | WINTER 2016-17



## ON THE COVER:

Venue: *terra sol sanctuary*  
 Gowns: *Camille's of Wilmington*  
 Flowers: *Eco Chic Blossoms*  
 Hair & Makeup: *Meraki Beauty*  
 Jewelry: *Lumina Gem*  
 Rentals: *Martha My Dear Rentals*  
 Photographer: *Eric Von Bargaen*  
 Cover Models: *Tonya Robinson & Scarlett Randall*

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# A ROMANTIC RETREAT ON THE CRYSTAL COAST

WRITTEN BY: BECKY STARKEY

These days, weddings and the accompanying honeymoons take on many different forms. My husband and I combined our honeymoon and wedding and eloped to Hawaii for the least stressful day ever. Friends of ours recently took their honeymoon before the wedding to guarantee ideal weather in Canada. Another couple waited months after the wedding and headed to a mountain cabin to get snowed in together.

Your wedding day is one of the most important days of your life, but the honeymoon is your first trip together as a married couple. You want it to be amazing, but that can mean different things. Some want to get out early and explore the landscape, others want to sleep in and have a boozy brunch, while another couple might want to visit historical sites. Or maybe you want to fit it all in! Of course you could travel across the globe to do this, or you could stay close to home. Even though The Crystal Coast is an easy two hour drive, I promise you'll feel transported to a world made for two, whether it's for your honeymoon or a romantic weekend getaway.

## STAY

Accommodations are a matter of personal taste. Some people want a simple place to rest their head at night, while others need to lounge in the lap of luxury. When my husband and I sat down to plan this past summer's trip, we knew we wanted to rent an oceanfront beach house through Bluewater Realty. We've always enjoyed the home away from home experience. We spent every morning on the upper deck that looked out over the beach. My husband would bring me coffee, and we'd plan our day out.

Although we loved our adorable cottage, there's really no wrong way to enjoy your stay. For those who want the full service hotel experience, the DoubleTree Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel is your best bet. Each room has a private balcony, ocean view, and beach access just feet away from your romantic enclave. If you're looking for a more historical experience, there are several bed and breakfasts in Beaufort that will tickle your fancy.

## EAT

Fresh, local, and delicious. What more can you ask for when it comes to dining? There are so many places on the island that cater to a full range of flavors, but you must try Pescara Wood Oven Kitchen. This was one of our favorite meals of the entire trip. Once an oceanfront beach house, the restaurant has been beautifully renovated and the menu, billed as Coastal Italian, makes you want to order one of everything. In our experience, whatever is placed in front of you will be out of this world! This is the perfect spot to revel in marital bliss while your loved one is bathed in candlelight.

But, in my opinion, not all meals need to be a romantic affair. Sampling tried and true local spots is one of our favorite things to do while vacationing. When we sat down at Banks Grill and saw cooks sliding colorful, plastic plates full of biscuits and gravy across an aluminum counter, it was love at first sight, and then again with first bite. My advice: go hungry!



## PLAY

My husband and I are self-professed beach bums and could have easily sat on the beach the entire time, but with a variety of unique experiences right outside our door, we know we couldn't lounge the entire time. One of the first things we did was pedal through Beaufort with the fine folks of Hungry Town Tours. This was our first time to the idyllic town, and while my husband was apprehensive about the biking/listening combo, he proved himself to be a professional, threatening a wheelie or two. As architecture fans, we loved learning about how Beaufort's beautiful houses were built, but there's a tour for everyone, even Nicholas Sparks fans.

We also recommend taking a ferry to the Cape Lookout Lighthouse. Along the way, the ferry driver made a detour so our group could spot the wild horses of Shackleford Banks. Once we arrived, we climbed 188 steps to the top of the lighthouse for a breathtaking 180 degree view. Talk about hand-holding material! After we'd gotten the best glimpse of the coast, it was time for some R&R, but we closed the week out in style with sunset wine and cheese aboard a custom Carolina style Sport-fisher. This was the perfect way to wind down and talk about our favorite parts of The Crystal Coast.

Although this trip wasn't part of our honeymoon, it was probably one of the best trips we've taken. It was a special kind of casual romance, where our experiences never overshadowed our desire to just be together in the moment. Also, the fact that it's just down the road takes the pressure away to jam pack every minute of your itinerary. For us, this meant sleeping in, long lunches, and flying by the seat of our pants a couple of days. As long as you have the right person, marriage is fun no matter where you are, but visiting The Crystal Coast makes you feel like you just said "I do."

