

BRIDAL GUIDE

By the Sea

By: Eric Butterman
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Oceanside retreats beckon honeymooners who crave a leisurely pace and cozy surroundings.

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TOP: You know what's beachy keen? A gourmet snack served in a cabana at the Fisher Island Club. ABOVE: A California oceanside retreat.

There's something inherently romantic about escaping to the seaside. It may be the sense of endless possibility that comes from looking at the expanse of the ocean. Or perhaps it's the calming effect of the sea air, or that we so often equate the beach with relaxation. Whatever your reason for a sojourn by the sea, these intimate inns and cottages offer unparalleled settings and personalized service.

Alegria Mendocino Oceanfront Inn and Cottages, California

At this centrally located property in laid-back Mendocino, visitors have 10 individually appointed rooms to choose from. Of the four cottages, Cove Cottage is the romantic standout, featuring a cozy, wood-burning stove, a shower peeking onto the beach and a private deck with views of



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The call of the green is strong at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, off the coast of South Carolina; you snooze, you lose out on cocktails by the pool on Kiawah; a sun-splashed deck at Fisher Island Club in Biscayne Bay.



both river and ocean. The Garden Cottage has more of a rustic feel with redwood paneling inside and views of the surrounding bluff. Breakfast, served in the main dining room, features such favorites as broccoli frittata with sun-dried tomatoes and raspberry coffee cake with organic fruit. The inn's gardens are a quiet place to stroll and the oversize outdoor hot tub is the perfect—and secluded—perch to watch the ocean and the sea grass swaying in the breeze. Hiking, biking and shopping are all a stone's throw from the property; restaurants within walking distance are Café Beaujolais, known for their French-style aperitifs and pan-roasted California sturgeon, and 955 Ukiah Street Restaurant, which features a mouth-watering crispy duck (room rates start at \$159 a night and include breakfast; weekends may require a two-night minimum; oceanfrontmagic.com).

Barclay Cottage Bed & Breakfast, Virginia

One of only two original beach cottages left in Virginia Beach, this family-run bed-and-breakfast has been welcoming guests since 1917. Located steps from the famed oceanside boardwalk, the adults-only hideaway offers four guest rooms. A favorite among guests is Lillian's Room, once original owner Lillian Barclay's classroom, which now displays antiques from her era. Alice's Room has an array of Victorian-era lamps that belonged to the descendants of current innkeep-

ers Stephen and Marie-Louise LaFond. Homemade breakfast is served family-style each morning on a table set with antique flatware. (If you're lucky, the multi-course meal will include the signature toasted coconut—yum!) The main house's cozy porch and patio offer a chance to enjoy complimentary wine as you watch the sunset and catch the fireworks display every Sunday and Wednesday night, from July 4th through Labor Day. Area highlighted events include the Neptune Festival, held the last weekend in September, and the American Music Festival over Labor Day Weekend. The B&B provides beach towels, beach chairs, boogie boards and bikes. And did we mention the sherry for nightcaps? It's all complimentary (room rates start at \$110 a night and include breakfast; barclaycottage.com).

Chatham Bars Inn, Massachusetts

Just beyond the beach, the landscaped gardens and the main building at this exclusive Cape Cod retreat, you'll find charming cottages with quaint decor and private patios or wooden decks. Another choice here is to stay in a spa suite that offers in-room hydrotherapy and saunas, plus exclusive access to a relaxation pool area and a Japanese Zen garden. Four restaurants on the oceanfront property include the casual beach grill, a tavern and an elegant main dining room with white-glove service. Popular activities include day →

PHOTOGRAPHY: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) © KEVIN SYMS; KIAWAH ISLAND GOLF RESORT; © KEVIN SYMS



FROM TOP: The cozy New England-style cottages at Chatham Bars Inn have either golf course or sea views; a hearty California-style breakfast is served at the breezy Alegria; the gardens at Alegria Mendocino Oceanfront Inn and Cottages are bursting with fragrant herbs.



trips to swim with the seals, deep-sea fishing and lounging on the hotel's private beach. Tea and sundowners are served on the large veranda. And there's an exclusive trolley that can take you into the cute shop-lined New England village (room rates start at \$295 a night; chathambarsinn.com).

The Collins Inn and Seaside Cottages, Washington

The **Collins Inn and Seaside Cottages** in Ocean Shores, Washington, has four understated, cozy cottages that can sleep up to six, or even your pets (feel free, the owners insist).

Expect intimate stone fireplaces, Jacuzzi tubs and warm colors, along with Craftsman touches in natural textures for a homey feel. Each cabin also boasts a modern kitchen. Situated at Grays Harbor, only a few steps from the ocean, the eco-friendly retreat is within walking distance to popular seafood spots, including Mike's Seafood, known for clam chowder and Dungeness crab, and Emily's Restaurant at Quinalt Beach Resort, offering an much touted Friday seafood buffet. Damon Point State Park, Duck Lake and Oyhut Wildlife Recreation Area are also located nearby. Seasonal highlights include the Beachcombers Fun Fair in March, the Razor Clam Festival in April and the Arts and Crafts Festival in September, said to be the largest on the West Coast (room rates start at \$500 a night and include breakfast; collinsinn.com).

Fisher Island Club, Florida

Located on a mangrove- and palm-covered private island in Biscayne Bay, this retreat has sun, sand, golf and more, set against the backdrop of 1920s architecture. In addition to the main hotel, there are four fabulous cottages. Rosemary's Studio—named after Rosemary Vanderbilt (yep, those Vanderbilts)—is decorated with antiques and boasts marble floors from the early 20th century. In similar style is Rosemary's Cottage, a three-bedroom, three-bath suite within yards of the sparkling sea. No matter where you choose to stay, you'll have exclusive use of a golf cart. Naturally, golf is available, as well as tennis, yoga, Pilates classes and a slew of water activities. If you're more the cocooning type, you can laze by a personal plunge pool or a Jacuzzi in a private courtyard. And don't forget to check out the island's luxurious spa housed in a tile-roofed building. Top restaurants include Café Porto Cervo, showcasing Italian fare with marina views, and Garwood Lounge, which offers continental cuisine such as Chilean sea bass in miso and honey glaze, served to the accompaniment of live piano music (room

rates start at \$1,210 a night and include dinner, breakfast, golf-cart use, a massage, tropical fruit snacks, champagne and a romantic turn-down service; fisherislandclub.com).

Kiawah Island Golf Resort, South Carolina

This tony retreat is custom-made for those who want intimacy, but who'd also like a little golf. Upscale villas, a two-minute walk from the ocean, have balcony views and are modern in style. The picturesque private island also offers accommodations in individual

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PHOTOGRAPHY: (TOP TO BOTTOM) COURTESY OF CHATHAM BARS INN; JOHN BIRCHARD; COURTESY OF ALEGRIA INN.

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cottages set among wooded areas and lagoons. Plenty of restaurants populate the area, highlighted by the Italian-themed Tomaso at Turtle Point Club House, the Ocean Room steak house and the Atlantic Room known for its seafood. Heron Park, a wildlife reserve on the property, is a favorite for nature lovers all year round. Activities range from naturalist-guided hikes and cycling tours to fishing excursions and canoe trips down the river. Other island happenings include deep-sea fishing, sailing, sea kayaking, tennis and, of course, golf. The Friendship Cup is held in late February, followed by the annual Pro-Am. The PGA Championship will find its home here in 2012 (rates for the two-night romance package start at \$1,550 and include accommodations, daily breakfast, one dinner, a couple's massage, a rose-petal turndown service and champagne and chocolate upon arrival; kiawahresort.com).

Santa Barbara Luxury Beach Cottage, California

Staying here is like having your own personal beach house. Just look for the blue door right beyond the towering palm trees and foliage-framed garage. Once inside, you can spread out among two bedrooms and a glass-walled, sun-drenched living room that opens onto the sand. The home's decor reflects the surroundings and the surfboard hanging on the bedroom wall isn't just for decoration. Feel free to use it, as well as the bikes and the kayak, during your stay. When you've had your fill of the beach, head to the pier and hop on a whale watch. Or check out the amazing Farmers Market on State Street and the Santa Barbara Arts and Crafts Show, held every weekend (rates start at \$550 a night; ocean-cottage.com).

Sea Sprite Guest Lodgings, Oregon

Set on scenic, boulder-dotted Cannon Beach in Oregon, **Sea Sprite** offers a

main inn, a guest house and three carefully looked-after cabins. Perhaps the most prized, Haystack Cottage is situated on the beautiful grassy flat area overlooking the looming Haystack Rock, which rises an impressive 235 feet above sea level. Estuary Cottage is a modern escape featuring hardwood floors, mosaic tilework and oversized soaking tubs. The main house showcases views of the nearby lighthouse and the north end of Cannon Beach. At night you can see crab boats on the ocean and even the occasional elk on the beach. All units have full kitchens, but for a treat visit the popular restaurant/cooking school Extra Virgin Olive Oil. The open-kitchen eatery seats no more than four couples an evening. Dine here and chat with the chef, get some insider info—including recipes—and savor the different wine pairings. Activities at Cannon Beach include the annual Puffin Kite Festival in April and sandcastle-building competitions the second week in June (room rates start at \$105 a night; seasprite.com). ■