



{facing page} Melissa Mann met hubby Kent during a summer visit to Washington Island. They returned to the island to host their sunny outdoor wedding against a backdrop of glistening water.

Who says a destination wedding HAS TO BE AN INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT AWAY? Couples don't have to go to another country for a wedding getaway, they simply need to travel to another county. Breathtaking scenery, an abundance of charming venues and unique options to relax and explore—that's just a start to the list of reasons couples host a destination wedding in Door County.

DECIDING ON DOOR COUNTY
 Many to-be-weds have a connection with Door County, whether they grew up there or have fond memories of vacations past. Much of the county survived development pressure, so visitors (nearly 2 million annually) can explore 23,000 acres of public and preserve land, including five state parks. Travelers can also experience accommodations from quaint to posh, along with notable art galleries and fine dining restaurants.

themed wedding, and Door County definitely delivered. "There was a beach to take pictures on, a yacht club for the reception that allowed us to arrive via boat, and beautiful water views," she says.

Water skiing, beach excursions and poolside dinners? Wedding planner Allison Kline of Sash & Bow in Little Suamico has planned

wedding weekend events around all of these activities, and has even turned a rehearsal dinner into a two-hour sightseeing cruise.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Door County maintains a lot of local flavor—cherry included. "The cherry is still definitely a hit in Door County," says Kim Jensen of Pink



destination
DOOR COUNTY by JULIE WARNER

BRIDES DISCOVER UNFORGETTABLE WEDDING GETAWAYS WITH THE PENINSULA'S BREATHTAKING SCENERY AND CHARMING VENUES.

Whatever their reason for choosing Door County, brides and grooms love how the intimate setting brings guests together. "Because it is such a small community, you're not staying in a huge hotel with 700 rooms," says Carrie Baldwin Smith of Door County Event Planners. "People are staying in one location, and all your friends are there. It's not just eight hours; it's about enjoying the weekend together."

Though they currently live in San Francisco, bride Brittany Schaefer and her husband Tom selected her hometown of Sturgeon Bay as their wedding destination because of the gorgeous waterfront venues (including their reception site, Sturgeon Bay Yacht Club), all within a five-hour drive for most of their guests. "Our guests loved making a weekend out of it, hanging out with friends and family," Schaefer says.

Bride Melissa Mann met husband Kent during a summer visit to Washington Island, where he grew up, and now they make the trip to what they consider their "special place" several times a year. Last summer they traveled from their home in Jacksonville, Fla., to host their wedding on the island. The couple held their ceremony at a family home before a tented reception outside Mann's Mercantile, the family's retail store. "You can get away from everything," Mann says. "It's the best place to relax and have a calm, quiet place to lay by the beach."



WATERFRONT EVENTS
 The 70-mile-long peninsula that makes up Door County boasts 300 miles of shoreline, bordered on the west by Green Bay, on the north and east by Lake Michigan. That means plenty of places to stretch out your towel (on any of 53 public beaches) and plenty of waterfront venues.

Schaefer and her husband's love of water, along with the fact that they got engaged at a marina, prompted them to choose a nautical-




Brittany Schaefer and husband Tom made the most of their waterfront wedding, arriving by boat to their nautical-themed reception at the Sturgeon Bay Yacht Club and snapping pictures on the sandy shoreline.



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Bakery in Egg Harbor. Bursting with more than 2,000 acres of orchards, Door County is one of the top cherry-producing regions in the nation. Jensen's new favorite reception treat is a double-chocolate cherry cake pop. She's also baked the fruit in granola, pastries and scones for use in guest gift boxes.

Cherries aren't just for dessert, though. When catering weddings, Alexander's of Door County in Fish Creek uses the local favorite to flavor a vinegar barbecue-sauced salmon and to sweeten his glazed duck, says owner Bruce Alexander.

Mann incorporated some of the region's other culinary traditions into her wedding. For their rehearsal dinner, she organized an iconic Door County fish boil (with whitefish caught by local fisherman) at KK Fiske and The Granary in Washington Island, where the couple first met. "It was part of our wedding plan to make sure all the out-of-town guests were invited to the rehearsal dinner and to make it as 'Door County' as possible," she says.

Late-night reception food options come northwoods-style, courtesy of Kline, who sets up bonfires where guests can roast hot dogs, s'mores or pudgie pies (fruit-filled or meat and cheese sandwiches cooked in a pie iron over the fire).

ACTIVITIES AROUND

When hosting out of town guests, couples often provide information on Door County's highlights, offering tips on what to see and do in the area. Mann and her husband supplied their guests with a list of their 10 favorite things to do on Washington Island, which included hiking Mountain Tower for a view of the islands, getting coffee at Red Cup Coffee House and having a shot at Nelsen's Hall Bitters Pub, the oldest continuously operating bar in Wisconsin.

Along with exploring the Peninsula State Park by bike and discovering cute shops in Fish Creek, some of the Schaefer's guests visited the acclaimed American Folklore Theatre, an outdoor theater located in the woods.

Cherry- and apple-picking are consistent fan favorites, but with six local wineries, Door County grapes certainly deserve attention, too. Kline has planned a wedding among the rows of grapes, and also recommends arranging tours for guests.

Door County Trolley offers popular sightseeing tours of the county's best lighthouses and even a haunted trolley pub crawl. But the trolleys are also perfect for private transportation options; Schaefer loved using the trolley to transport her wedding party from the ceremony to the reception.

TIME WELL-SPENT

The region provides perfect opportunities to relax and spend time with close friends and family in the days before the wedding. Mann's mother, for instance, treated Mann and the bridal party to a day of pampering at the Spa at Sacred Ground in Ephraim. "It was

so peaceful, and the most relaxing day of the entire wedding week," Mann says.

Want to unwind outdoors? Chartered fishing trips, like those from First Choice Charters of Baileys Harbor, are popular excursions for groups of all sizes. Golfing at any of Door County's 11 scenic courses can be as much about the setting as the sport. Schaefer's guests hit the links at Sturgeon's Bay IdleWild Golf Course.

"Everyone had fun. Our families are adventurous and love outdoorsy stuff," says Schaefer. "Door County offered that to them." *

PERFECT PENINSULA VENUES

Notable Door County spots to host your dream wedding, whether you want to wander off the beaten path or take a more traditional route.

WOODWALK GALLERY, Egg Harbor

Historic barn turned contemporary art gallery/theater that moonlights as a wedding chapel and reception site—large-group-friendly | woodwalkgallery.com

HORSESHOE BAY BEACH CLUB, Egg Harbor

Waterfront venue that can host intimate indoor receptions or larger outdoor tented receptions overlooking Green Bay waters | horseshoebaygolfclub.net

THE PENINSULA SCHOOL OF ART, Fish Creek

Unique venue with reception options including art galleries, gazebos and lush gardens | peninsulaschoolofart.com

THE LODGE AT LEATHEM SMITH, Sturgeon Bay

Recently refurbished lodge with a long history of hosting weddings on the canal; a double tent can hold 400 people | thelodgetats.com

THE DOOR COUNTY WEDDING GARDEN

AT THE ORCHID INN, Sturgeon Bay
A lush outdoor setting surrounded by flowers and greenery, with a path leading to waterfalls | theorchidinndc.com

THE ALPINE RESORT, Egg Harbor

A traditional, rustic resort with sand beaches and one of the best views in the area | alpineresort.com

STONE HARBOR RESORT, Sturgeon Bay

Door County's largest conference center, able to accommodate the largest guest lists in the area | stoneharbor-resort.com

BJORKLUNDEN'S BOYNTON CHAPEL Baileys Harbor

A tiny, 12th-century-style chapel featuring hand-painted frescoes and intricate woodwork, perfect for intimate ceremonies | lawrence.edu/dept/bjork/weddings

GORDON LODGE, Baileys Harbor

Lakefront property with plenty of sandy shoreline, a long dock for gorgeous views of Lake Michigan and an event center that can seat larger groups | gordonlodge.com

SIMON CREEK WINERY, Sturgeon Bay

A spirited outdoor venue with 30 acres of grapevines and a terrace overlooking the winery that's perfect for post-ceremony toasts | simoncreekwines.com

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COUNTRY CLUB, BEACH CLUB AND BARN VENUES



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