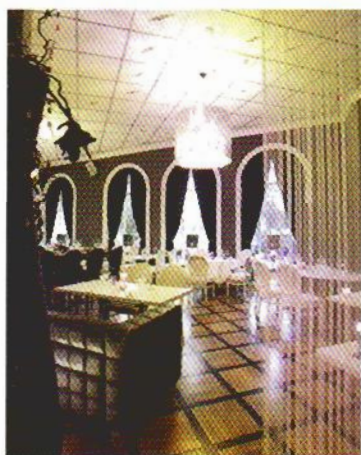


ON THE WATERFRONT

If you and your love thrive on seaside ambience and high-energy hustle and bustle, one of these four cities by the shore may be just the place for your post-nuptial escape
By Bekah Wright



turn up the heat in Iceland

Play in a geothermal pool (top, left) and stand in the spray of the daunting double waterfall at Gullfoss (top, right) before sharing nouvelle French food at Silfur restaurant (above).

For some, a romantic getaway means a seaside honeymoon complete with mai tais and hammocks. Others pine for the high-energy excitement of a metropolis. No need to be torn. Waterfront locales that pair a healthy dose of nature with the cosmopolitan combine the best of both worlds. From Iceland to Washington State, these unique seashore destinations embody a rich sense of history, a thriving cultural scene, and awe-inspiring scenery. Best of all, as walking cities, they allow for taking on the world side by side.

REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

There's a certain mystique about the island of Iceland. During the summer it's as if the sun refuses to set, going strong for 22 hours a day. Not to be left out, the winter sky showcases the brilliant streaks of the Northern Lights. Located near the Arctic Circle in the North Atlantic Ocean, the country's geographical setting brings with it built-in ambience via landscape that ranges from lava fields and glaciers to fjords and geysers. This is a place for adventurous duos who want to explore natural wonders, scour the high seas for humpback whales, or float in the milky blue waters of a lava field.

Reykjavik, the country's capital, gained its name—which means “Smoky Bay”—from the steam rising from geothermal vents beneath its terrain. Although it may be tempting to set stakes in one of Reykjavik's plethora of hot springs, there are sights not to be missed. Situated on Reykjanes Peninsula, the city presents views at every turn of the blue waters of Faxaflói Bay and the snowcapped peak of Mt. Esja. Stroll through streets lined by brightly colored tin-clad driftwood houses set beside those made from basalt. Weather permitting, head to Lake Tjörninn for ice-skating hand in hand amid a bevy of swans and geese. Later, scramble up 73 meters to the Hallgrímskirkja Church tower to kiss above the city.

On the weekends, join locals at Kolaportid, a combination fish and flea market down by the harbor. From here, embark upon a whale safari through the Hvalstodin Whale Watching Centre to cuddle up on the deck of a catamaran while scouting for humpbacks and puffins. Another day calls for packing a picnic and setting out for Iceland's Golden

HONEYMOONTRAVEL

Circle. Here you'll see Þingvellir National Park; Geysir, the geyser for which all others have been named (visit Strokkur Geyser while here); and the double waterfall at Gullfoss. As for those hot springs, visit the ultimate: the Blue Lagoon, a spa known for its mineral-rich, healing geothermal seawater. Shrouded by steam, this is the perfect place to float shoulder to shoulder on milky blue waters flowing through a black lava field.

Four-star accommodations can be found at the Hotel Borg. Centrally located in Austurvöllur Square, the hotel is surrounded by cafes, parks, galleries, and shops (Reykjavik's main shopping street, Laugavegur, is nearby). Althing, Iceland's House of Parliament is also near. Built in 1930, Hotel Borg was restored to its original art deco style in 2006. The 56 rooms each have unique décor and custom-made furnishings. Choose the two-floor Tower Suite for 360-degree vantages of the city that are ideal for catching sunrises followed by breakfast in bed.

One of Iceland's best restaurants is in the hotel: Silfur, where executive chef Steinn Óskar Sigurðsson presents nouvelle French cuisine paired with international wines. Sjóvarkjallarninn,

also known as the Seafood Cellar, is the place to go for fish and seafood with a twist. Dinner with a view can be had at a famous landmark, The Pearl. Set atop Óskjuhlid hill, the structure stands out among a wooded setting with its glass dome and walls that link to six aluminum-sided tanks containing hot water for heating the city. The fourth floor has a viewing deck with panoramic telescopes for taking in glorious views of Reykjavik. Even better for watching the night sky come alive with city lights is Perlan, the revolving restaurant on the fifth floor that offers an international menu with Icelandic flair.

As evening progresses, catch a performance of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra or one at the National Theatre. Then again, Friday and Saturday nights are known for Reykjavik's *runtur*, the city's notorious pub crawl. Join the fray, raise a pint, and vow to celebrate future anniversaries with return visits to Iceland.

To learn more about Iceland, visit www.visiticeland.com. For more on Reykjavik, visit www.visitreykjavik.is. For details about the Hotel Borg, call 011-354-551-1440 or visit www.hotelborg.is. Rates range from \$266 to \$2,120 per night, subject to change.



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CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Dripping with Spanish moss and Southern hospitality, the city of Charleston is set on a peninsula flanked by the Cooper and Ashley rivers. Established in 1690, the city reflects its history with charming cobblestone streets lit by gas lanterns and genteel houses with piazzas and court-

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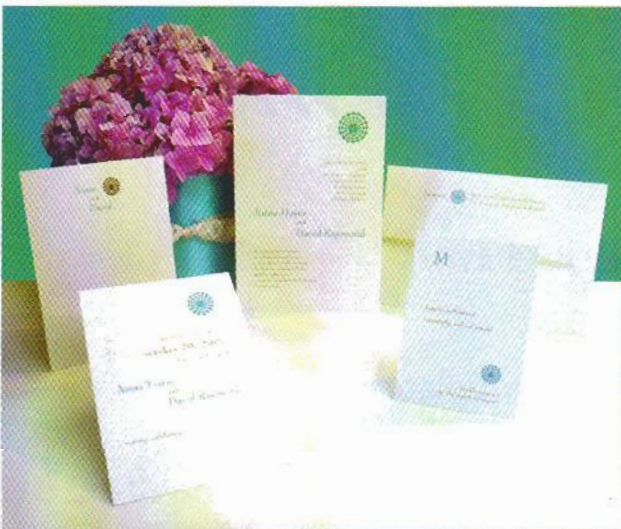
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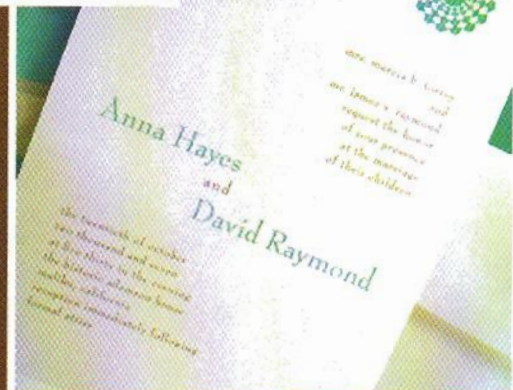
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yards. Newlyweds swept up in the romance will slip into drawling endearments of "dahlin'" and take a slower pace to savor the atmosphere.

Set in Charleston's picturesque Historic District near the legendary City Market is Charleston Place, an institution since its construction in 1986. The hotel is regal with an Italian marble lobby, a Georgian open-arm staircase, and a 12-foot crystal chandelier. Of the 440 guestrooms, choose the Presidential Suite for its 18th-century décor, mahogany furnishings, and bathroom featuring Botticino marble and brass fixtures. Seek Southern comfort at the hotel's spa with a "Together Warm Stone Massage." A horizon-edged swimming pool with a retractable glass ceiling adjoins an on-site fitness center.

Get the lay of the land on a carriage ride by Palmetto Carriage Works. There's no way to predict the route your carriage will take; all must stop at a kiosk in the City Market, where a bingo-like system lets them know which avenues to venture down. No matter the course, the tour will be packed with history and town scandals. Or view the city on a bicycle built for two. Rent one from Bike the Bridge at the Aquarium Wharf, then cross the Arthur Ravenel Bridge (aka the Cooper River Bridge), the longest cable-stayed bridge in North America.

Charleston is acclaimed for its eight styles of architecture, from Colonial to Italianate. Check into seasonal tours led by The Preservation Society of Charleston and The Historic Charleston Foundation. Plan visits to the Nathaniel Russell House and Aiken-Rhett House. Further afield are several Charleston plantations. While exploring the gardens at Middleton Place Plantations, it's not unusual to pass a sunning alligator. Ride horseback along trails on the 65-acre property. Nearby is Drayton Hall with an open field that calls for picnics and kite flying.

Amble leisurely along city streets. Myriad boutiques and art galleries make for prime window-shopping. Find further visuals at the Gibbes Museum of Art. Outside, don't be surprised to find a breathing sculpture. Wander down to Waterfront Park where the pier's porch swings are just right for swaying and watching seagulls float on Carolina breezes.

Dine on the region's Lowcountry cuisine in one of two eating establishments at Charleston Place, Palmetto Café and The Charleston Grill. Palmetto Café's garden setting is casual; the Charleston Grill sets a more sultry tone with candlelight and live jazz. Down by the water-

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laundry-strung balconies erupt onto wide, tree-lined avenues with designer boutiques. Make frequent sojourns to parks, public squares (check out Rossio and Praça do Comercio), sidewalk cafes, and coffeehouses along the way. Nearly as sweet as your newly betrothed's kiss, a custard tart from The Antiga Confeitaria de Belém.

For romantic accommodations, book a room at Lapa Palace. Built in 1870 as the private residence of the Count of Valenças, the property became a resort in 1992. Set on a hilltop above the Tagus River, the elegant pink and black 109-room resort is located in the Embassy District. The Tower Room in the Palace Wing is idyllic, with oval windows and ornate crown molding. Rich gold and blue textiles highlight 18th-century classical furniture. Double sinks and a hydro massage tub in the bathroom are ideal for honeymooners. Linger over city panoramas from both a parapet and terrace.

Take time to explore the century-old gardens strewn with ornamental fountains and small streams. Indoor and outdoor swimming pools are available for catching up on laps. The Wellness Center sets the stage for relaxation with a sauna, Turkish steam bath, solarium, and gym. Book a "Massage for Two" at the Lapa Palace Spa, which offers a full-service menu, including specialty treatments from La Prairie.

Don't miss the Castle of São Jorge, where it's possible to walk along the ramparts of the walls and share a sunset atop the city's highest hill. Tour the Gulbenkian Museum's collection of more than 6,000 works of art. Notice the various styles of the architecture that have shaped the city from Moorish, Romanesque, and Gothic to traditional Portuguese and Baroque. Visit two famous examples: Jerónimos Monastery and Belém Tower. While taking in Lisbon's many monuments and cathedrals, be on the lookout for *azulejos*, painted ceramic tiles adorning buildings throughout Portugal that tell stories, serve as family crests, or remember local explorers/seafarers. Schedule one daytrip to Estoril to see the Portuguese Riviera, and another to Sintra to spot palaces within its hilly woodlands.

One of Lisbon's superior dining establishments is at Lapa Palace—the Ristorante Hotel Cipriani, showcasing Italian/Venetian cuisine. During the summer, dine on the garden terrace. Year-round enjoy clear skies inside—painted clouds adorn the restaurant's ceiling. For Portuguese fare, Sua Excelência is an excellent choice. Or combine dinner and live entertainment at a

HONEYMOON TRAVEL

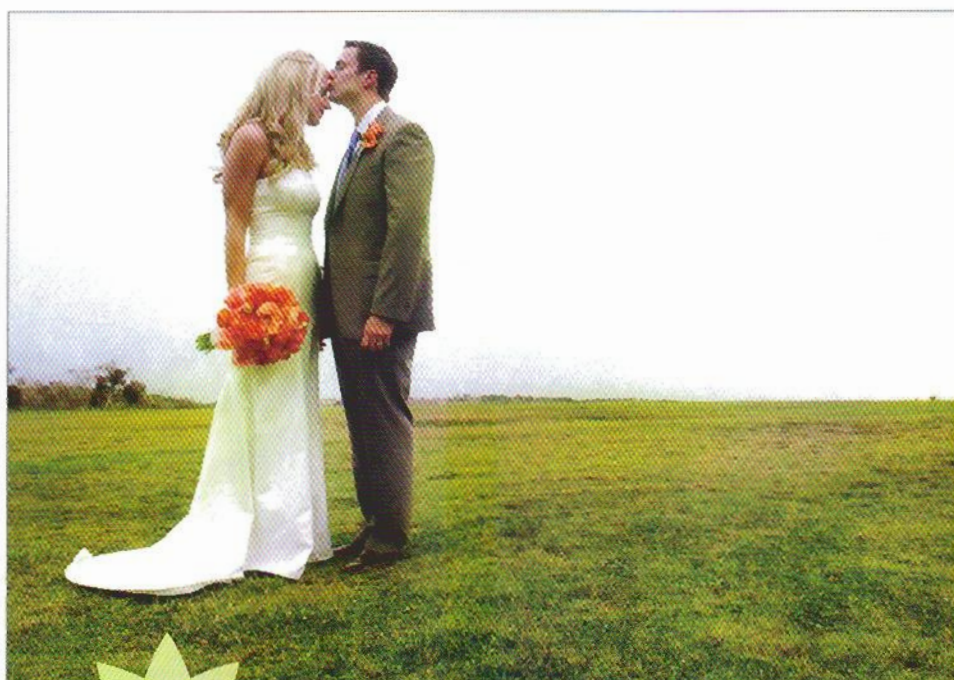
front, dine at McCrady's tavern, a Charleston mainstay since 1788. After a meal of modern American cuisine, scan the dessert menu for nitro strawberries, a post-dinner thrill.

Later, check out Charleston's music scene. Be on the lookout for performances by local favorites such as the all-female a cappella group The Plantation Singers, jazz from Robert Lewis and Frank Duvall, or a blend of bluegrass, country, folk, and rock from The Blue Dogs. Or take a late-night Bulldog Tour through the city's graveyards, where the dead tell their own tales.

To learn more about Charleston, visit www.charleston.com. For more about Charleston Place, call (843) 722-4900 or (800) 611-5545, or visit www.charlestonplace.com. Rates range from \$229 to \$1,900 per night, subject to change.

LISBON, PORTUGAL

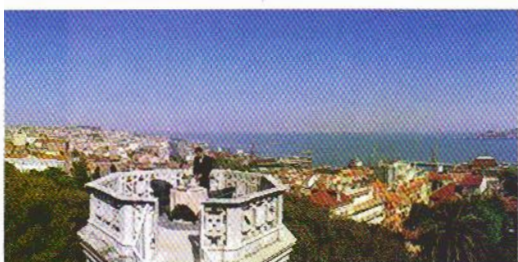
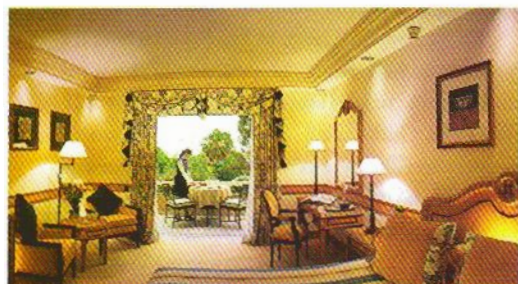
It's easy to understand the yearning behind Portugal's fado music after a visit to its capital, Lisbon. Set on the Iberian Peninsula where the Tagus River flows into the Atlantic, the city's charm is found in its unique districts. The best way to get to know this metropolis is to get lost along its hilly streets. Surprises can be found at every turn as narrow, cobblestone roads with



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performance of fado; two fado venues are Canto do Camões in the Bairro Alto and Parreirinha de Alfama. Diners are serenaded by these veritable vocal soap operas of love and betrayal. Caught up in the emotion, you'll soon be dreaming up lyrics to describe your own love story.

To learn more about Lisbon, visit www.visitlisboa.com. For more on Lapa Palace, call (800) 237-1236 or visit www.lapapalace.com. Rates range from \$530 to \$3,680 per night, subject to change.

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

With its roller-coaster hills lined by cobblestones, downtown Seattle feels like a thrill-ride for the senses with exciting sights around every bend. Case in point: Pike Place Market, where the stalls are teeming with buckets of freshly cut flowers in eye-popping colors and fragrant produce waiting to be sampled. One stall not to miss—Sosio's Fruit & Produce for peaches so sweet and juicy, they leave the knees trembling. Another favorite stop is the Daily Dozen Donut Company, where brown paper bags are ceremoniously snapped before they're filled with hot, melt-in-your-mouth mini-doughnuts. For entertainment, watch fish being tossed through the air at the Pike Place Fish Market.

Hop aboard a jitney to the waterfront for a visit to the renowned Seattle Aquarium. Close by is the Seattle Art Museum's Olympic Sculpture Park, where sprawling on the lawn to enjoy views of the Olympic Mountains and Puget Sound over a bottle of champagne is as much fun as taking in the art. Check out the collections of Asian, African, Northwest Coast Native American, modern art, European painting, and decorative arts at Seattle Art Museum (SAM). The Seattle Center has several museums on site



sequester yourselves in Seattle Walk hand in hand to many of this seaside city's sights from the venerable Fairmont Olympic Hotel.

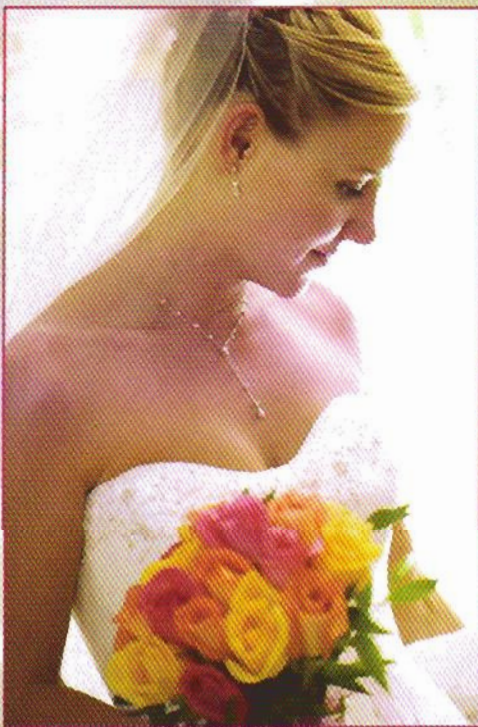
as well, including Experience Music Project, Pacific Science Center, and The Children's Museum Seattle. One of the area's main attractions, though, is the Space Needle. If it's a clear day, head to the observation deck of this 1962 landmark for sweeping views of Seattle. Back on the ground is a small amusement park, where one of the best rides to be had—the Seattle Center

Monorail—speeds passengers through town.

Try two forms of transportation for sightseeing in Pioneer Square—a horse-drawn buggy and the Waterfront Streetcar. Compare the view from the Smith Tower observation deck with that of the Space Needle. Find the totem pole from the Tlingit American Indian Village. Take in the area's Victorian-Romanesque architecture

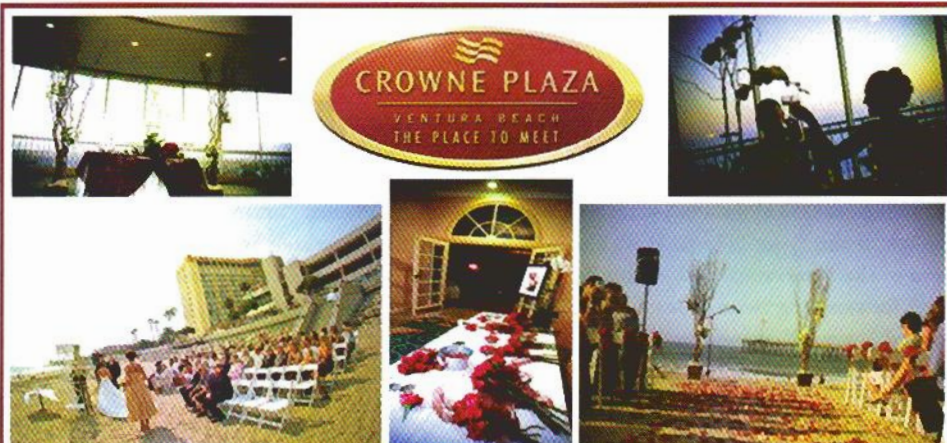
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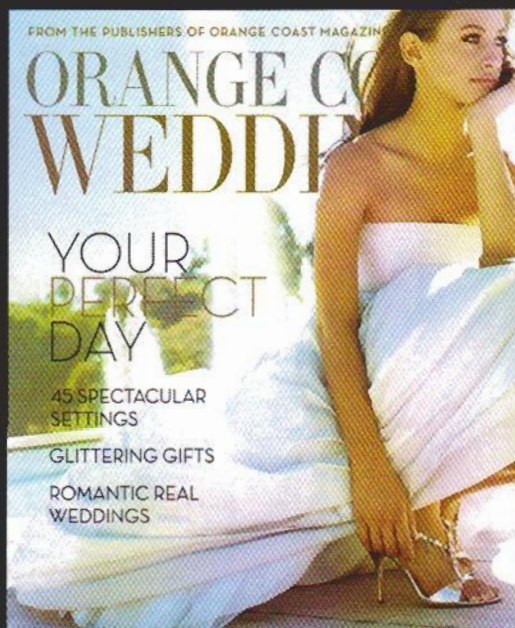
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while checking out shops and galleries. Warm your hands with a cup of joe in Occidental Park before touring the Pergola and Pioneer Building. Another must-see Seattle sight—watching salmon swim upstream and downstream at the Chittenden Locks Fish Ladder.

On daytrips, visit some of Seattle's outlying islands, including Friday Harbor in the San Juan Islands for a whale-watching expedition and tour of The Whale Museum. Save time for setting out in a double kayak to spy wildlife in its natural habitat. A ferry ride to Bainbridge Island will put color in your cheeks. Once there, share a gelato while meandering along Winslow Way's shops and galleries. Whidbey Island is the place to search out some of Washington State's palate-pleasing seafood. A hike to Snoqualmie Falls will reward you with rainbows.

Within walking distance of many of Seattle's attractions is the stately The Fairmont Olympic Hotel. The grand lobby evokes the hotel's past with white gold chandeliers and ornate woodwork. Double staircases lead to an indoor balcony that gazes upon the scene below. The 450 guestrooms are undergoing a multimillion-dollar "redecorating" to a palette of mossy green and cranberry and contemporary décor. French doors separate the living area from the bedroom in the Deluxe Executive Suite. Head to the hotel health club to unwind with a massage or make use of the pool, state-of-the-art fitness equipment, and sauna. Back at the suite, cuddle up on the loveseat and order room service.

One of Seattle's top restaurants, The Georgian, is in The Fairmont, and showcases local seasonal and organic ingredients in its French-inspired cuisine. (Save room for the black and white chocolate soufflé.) The venue has full-tilt elegance with 20-foot Palladian windows and crystal chandeliers. Also on site is Shuckers, an oyster bar featuring Northwest seafood. For a bit of romance, dine at Campagne at the Pike Place Market, where the summer patio provides city views and the country French fare provokes sighs. Afterward, take in a performance at the 5th Avenue Theatre or catch the Seattle Symphony at Benaroya Hall. Your applause will be inspired not only by the performances, but also by your entire experience in this Pacific Northwest city.

To learn more about Seattle, visit www.visitseattle.org. For more on The Fairmont Olympic Hotel, call (206) 621-1700 or (800) 441-1414 or visit www.fairmont.com. Rates range from \$419 to \$3,000 per night, subject to change. ■