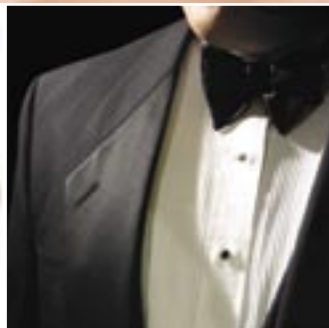
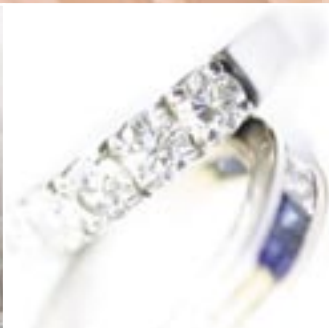


The Perfect Match

FOURTEEN MEMORABLE DESTINATIONS FOR MISSOURI WEDDINGS

BY LAURA BILLINGSLEY



It's official ~ you're engaged. The question has been popped and the answer was yes. Now there's another important question to answer: where should you have the wedding? The options are limitless. From charming chapels or your own home, from churches to boats and ballrooms, couples are tying the knot in many distinctive locations.

"The ceremony is the heart of any wedding," says wedding liaison Carolyn Burke. "It should set the tone for the entire day." Finding wedding locations is Carolyn's job. Her company, Wedding Ceremony Services in St. Louis, is devoted to helping couples pick the perfect place to say "I do." She recommends considering three main things: size, location, and religious background. The size of the wedding will play a major role in determining where it can take place. Most venues have limited seating, so you'll need to know the number of guests before picking a spot. Location is equally important. Do you want the wedding nearby or are you willing to travel a few miles? How close must the reception be to the wedding site? Religious background is also a consideration. Interfaith couples may choose a religiously neutral location.

There are many other things to think about, such as cost, parking availability, electricity, and sound systems. Couples navigate through all these variables to select a location that works for them. Carolyn tries to match people to venues by focusing on key words they use, such as "elegant," "simple," or "outdoors."

Couples looking for a truly memorable and unique setting for their ceremony or reception will find plenty of options in Missouri. From a hall with seating for two thousand to a treetop chapel in the woods, there is a destination that's a perfect match for you.

MEET ME UNDER THE CLOCK

Whether a wedding has fifty guests or one thousand, historic Union Station at Kansas City can accommodate them. If a civil ceremony is more your style and you don't mind sharing your bliss, tell the love of your life to meet you "under the clock" for the wedding. The famous clock has been a meeting place for everyone from business partners to lovers for years. It's in a public area, so ceremonies there are usually quick and no-frills.

For more traditional weddings, Union Station has twelve banquet and meeting venues, from the smaller Jarvis Hunt Room to the stately Sprint Festival Plaza. The Jarvis Hunt Room holds between eighty and a hundred guests for a wedding ceremony and has historic charm — it used to be the men's smoking lounge. The room has marble floors, marble wainscoting, and ornamental chandeliers. Sprint Festival Plaza has 65-foot ceilings and can accommodate up to 1,800 guests for a reception.

For information, call 816-460-2020.

SAY 'I DO' IN THE CELLARS

With the vineyards at Stone Hill Winery at Hermann as a backdrop, your wedding photographs will be memorable. A sense of history is strong here — the brick main building was built in 1869. The arched underground cellars are another great place for photos. These cavernous spaces are the largest series of vaulted cellars in North America.

A deck and open-air pavilion can seat up to three hundred people for ceremonies and receptions. Catering is provided by the winery's restaurant, and Stone Hill's award-winning wines also are available. Kay Schwinke, wedding coordinator, provides assistance. "We try to make everything as stress-free as possible," Kay says.

For information, call Kay at 800-909-WINE.

ELOPE AT THE LAKE

Why go to Vegas when you can slip off to the lake? The Inn at Harbour Ridge bed and breakfast at the Lake of the Ozarks offers elopement-style wedding packages. You bring the license; they provide the officiate, the setting, and the champagne. The cost for a private ceremony is \$275 — less than two tickets to Vegas. Couples can be married on the lawn or in a decorated gazebo in the garden. The grounds feature a waterfall and goldfish pond. There is a maximum of about twenty-five guests. Owner Sue Westenhaver says her custom-built weddings are perfect for many people looking for a ceremony that's meaningful but doesn't break the bank.

For information, call 877-744-6020.

TIE THE KNOT IN THE TREETOPS

The Treetop Chapel at Bear Creek Lodge at Branson is surrounded by the magic of the Ozarks. Fountains bubble along a path. The chapel has a stone fireplace, log benches, chandeliers, and a floor hand-painted by a local artist. The suites and cabins are cozy mountain-lodge style.

The chapel will seat about thirty-five people, but outdoor weddings in the water garden can accommodate many more. Bear Creek Lodge has a variety of suites including the Bears Den Master Suite, which sleeps six. A private log cabin is perfect for honeymoons.

For information, call 866-443-0030.

From the Top: Stately Union Station in Kansas City hosts many weddings. Stone Hill Winery's vaulted arch cellars in Hermann provide a unique backdrop. The Gazebo at the Inn at Harbour Ridge is an intimate venue.



WIRKEN PHOTOGRAPHY



COURTESY OF STONE HILL WINERY



VIVID IMPRESSIONS

KISS ME AT THE CONSERVATORY

Snow may powder the ground, but you can still have a garden wedding. Get married anytime of the year at the Conservatory in the historic district along the banks of the Missouri River at St. Charles. An all-glass greenhouse encloses a world of tropical foliage and flowers. The bride can come in a horse-drawn carriage, or the couple can take a romantic ride away. Besides the garden house, there are also outdoor gardens and courtyards.

For information, call 636-947-0414.

Another greenhouse option is the Jewel Box at Forest Park in St. Louis. Call 314-531-0080.

TAKE CENTER STAGE AT THE THEATER

This historic theater is located in downtown Kansas City. In the 1920s, Bob Hope often entertained crowds on the stage. On many weekends today, the Uptown hosts national acts such as Elvis Costello and Billy Idol. Besides the actual theater, the Broadway Room, Valentine Room, and Cabaret Room also are available.

For information, call 816-753-8665.

WED ON THE WATER

Imagine a wedding on the water with a view of the arch in the background. The *Tom Sawyer* and *Becky Thatcher* are replicas of nineteenth-century steamboats, and they are available for weddings, receptions, and rehearsal dinners. The boats cruise the Mississippi for a view of downtown St. Louis. Gateway Arch Riverboats are available for weddings year-round.

For information, call Tara Creamer at 314-923-3047.

For weddings on other waters, call the St. Charles Empress on the Missouri River at 636-946-4995 or the Celebration, a luxury cruise yacht on the Lake of the Ozarks at 573-480-3212.

GET DOWN TO BUSINESS

At Cedar Creek Conference Center at New Haven, you can have a wedding retreat. Play nine holes of golf, swim in the pool, fish in the lake, hike the trails, and play tennis. Cedar Creek also features a Swiss chalet dining room and a Western town complete with saloon. The entire center must be rented, but the wedding guests have exclusive access to the 130-acre grounds and 45 sleeping rooms.

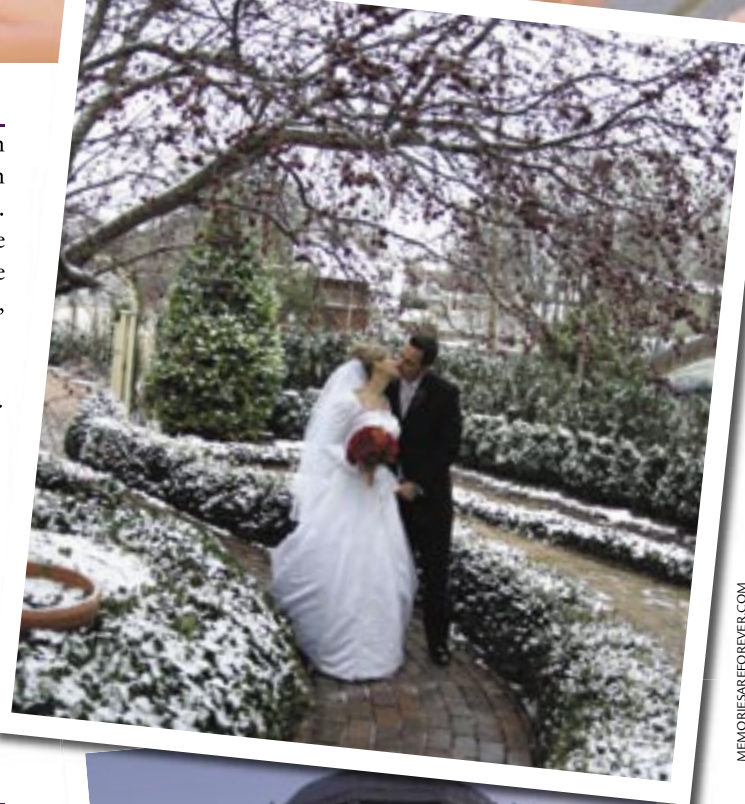
For more information, call 314-843-4063.

EXCHANGE VOWS IN PARADISE

Paradise Park at Oregon, Missouri, is a ten-acre site that includes a hundred-year-old barn and two gazebos near a field surrounded by wildflowers. A spring-fed creek and trails make good spots for photographs. Breezeways feature flowers and a pond with a waterfall. The barn, which has electricity and modern facilities, is filled with plants and artwork and has a wooden dance floor. The park offers couples a completely private and relaxed setting. Owner Roderick Dryden allots two full days for each reservation: one for set-up and rehearsal and one for the ceremony and reception. Paradise Park is about twenty minutes north of St. Joseph.

For information, call 660-446-2407.

From the Top: Have a garden wedding anytime of year at the Conservatory in St. Charles. Put on a show at the Uptown Theater in Kansas City. Gateway Arch Riverboat weddings are available year-round, too.



MEMORIESAREFOREVER.COM



COURTESY OF UPTOWN THEATER



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SAY 'HAI' IN THE JAPANESE GARDENS

The elegant Japanese Gardens are the most popular venue for weddings at The Lodge of Four Seasons at the Lake of the Ozarks. The gardens feature flower beds, waterfalls, and a stone bridge as well as a lake view. Mimosas, weeping cherries, and willows provide shade. Other spots for outdoor ceremonies or receptions are patios with lake views and the wharf by the marina.

For information, call The Lodge at 800-711-8983.

HAVE A CEREMONY AMONG BUTTERFLIES

The Butterfly House at Chesterfield offers a stone pavilion draped in white, a deck overlooking a reflecting pond, or a lakeside terrace and pavilion for the wedding ceremony and reception. The terrace has a backup plan in case of inclement weather; walls can be dropped to keep the wedding party and guests dry. At night, the wrought-iron torches scattered throughout the grounds provide a magical glow. If the wedding is before dusk, guests receive admission to the Butterfly Conservatory.

For information, call 636-733-2339.

MAKE IT A PRECIOUS MOMENT

Precious Moments Wedding Island at Carthage has been turning dreams into fairy tale weddings ever since it opened in 1996. Where else can you stroll down pink sidewalks decorated with hearts? The island is part of Precious Moments Park and is surrounded by a forty-acre lake where swans glide across the water. The island features the Precious Moments Wedding Chapel, a Victorian mansion with marble floors, and a house known as the Bride's Home. The chapel itself features a mural and stained glass windows with Precious Moments figures by creator Samuel Butcher.

For information, call 866-336-2554.

MARRY IN A MANSION

Millionaire lumberman Robert A. Long built Longview Farm, which opened in 1914. The original farm had fifty-one buildings including a show horse arena and racetrack, horse and dairy barns, greenhouses, a school, a church, and the grand mansion. Billed as "Kansas City's premiere event facility," Longview Mansion offers a choice of rooms for weddings and receptions, plus the elegant grounds, and each wedding has exclusive use of the entire facility. The sunken gardens with a fountain and the all-season pavilion with chandeliers are popular spots. Longview provides dressing rooms, a private chef, tents, and valet parking.

For information, call 816-761-6669.

TRY A TIGER FOR THE BEST MAN

The A. P. Green Chapel at the University of Missouri has hosted Tiger weddings for more than forty years. The non-denominational chapel is attached to the Memorial Union and used mostly by students or alumni who want to infuse their wedding with a little Mizzou pride. They get a 10 percent discount too. Wooden pews and beams in the vaulted ceiling warm the small, graceful chapel. The campus has many reception sites available.

For more information, call 573-884-1299.

From top: Add an international flavor in the Japanese Gardens at the Lodge of the Four Seasons. Enjoy a romantic cruise on the Missouri River on the St. Charles Empress. Butterflies add beauty in Chesterfield.



COURTESY OF LODGE OF THE FOUR SEASONS.

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LINDA RIVARD PHOTOGRAPHY