

ROMANCE

A SEASIDE® Wedding

This idyllic town is perfect for a destination wedding

By Wendy O. Dixon

Seaside has always been special to Lauren Coshatt's family. Growing up spending summers in Seaside, she loved splashing in the gentle waves and building sand castles on the pristine white beach. "I have such fond childhood memories of my times in Seaside," she says. "But the ones that stick out the most would be riding bicycles and eating ice cream."

Lauren, from Birmingham, Ala., and her fiancé Michael Athas, from Boston, Mass., met while working

for the same Washington, D.C.-based company. Once Lauren introduced Michael to Seaside, he, too, fell in love with this charming town. Having their wedding here was an easy decision, but planning the festivities from afar required some expert local help.

Heather Archdeacon-Williams, owner and lead wedding planner for Defining Moments Weddings & Events, has been planning weddings and special events in Seaside for years, hosting guests ranging in number from two to 300 people. She says most of the happy couples who marry in Seaside are those who have dreamed of a fabulous destination wedding, and chose Seaside because of its unique qualities.

"Seaside is an idyllic setting, which is unique to the area," she says. "With the Seaside Interfaith Chapel and the beach pavilions, the town has a very storybook quality to it."

Most couples begin planning their Seaside wedding six to 12 months before the big day, Archdeacon-Williams says. "And while we can certainly plan a wedding in less time, for optimal availability of venues, the more time allowed the better."

Defining Moments makes recommendations for local vendors and works within the bride's style and preferences. "We take care of setup and breakdown to make it seamless for the family," says Arch-



Newlyweds Michael and Lauren Athas at the Seaside Interfaith Chapel Photo by Neil Sjoblom



Wedding cake by Bake My Day Photo by Neil Sjoblom

deacon-Williams, "so they don't have to worry about anything on their wedding day."

In planning for their May 4 wedding, Lauren and Michael carefully incorporated all they love about Seaside — the cottages, restaurants, services and shops, as well as the beautiful Emerald Coast waters.

The wedding festivities began with a fishing trip in the Gulf for the men on Thursday and a fish fry for the wedding guests that evening. The couple then hosted a golf tournament on Friday at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort, and welcomed all of their 100 guests Friday

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Wedding

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evening with pizza, pasta and salads at Bud & Alley's Pizza Bar. Guests were also greeted with welcome bags filled with beach towels and sunscreen, as well as snacks from Modica Market.

Adorned in a dress by Amy Kuschel, Lauren glowed in a strapless cream gown while her bridesmaids — all sisters of the bride and groom — wore pale blush Erin Fetherston dresses.

Inspired by the colors and textures of the Gulf Coast, the groom and groomsmen each sported a Vineyard Vines tie, blue with a white coral print, as well as a white linen pocket square and bouton-

niere made from a piece of coral.

Lauren and Michael, both seafood lovers, wanted their guests to enjoy a feast of local foods, including raw Apalachicola oysters, Gulf shrimp, potato-crust red snapper and filet mignon with scampi.

Like most brides, Lauren wanted to pamper her bridesmaids, and Beach Ready Spa was the ideal place for a manicure and pedicure. "They were incredible," she says. "They gave us Champagne and mimosas. The ladies pampered us all day, it was fantastic."

After a weekend of blissful wedding festivities, the newlyweds bid their guests adieu with a farewell brunch they playfully called Cinco de Married — a play on words for the day that coincided with Mexican holiday Cinco de Mayo — in the Wilder by the Sea cottage,

Cottage Rentals – Cottage Rental Agency
Wedding Coordinator – Defining Moments by Heather (Heather Archdeacon-Williams)
Welcome Party – Bud & Alley's Pizza Bar
Bridal Party Pampering – Beach Ready Spa
Hair – Rollands Beauty Bar & Art Gallery
Makeup – Lanna Bloodworth
Bridesmaids Luncheon – Wilder by the Sea Cottage
Groomsmen Lunch – Shrimp Shack Pavilion
Wedding Ceremony – Seaside Chapel
Reception – Lyceum Lawn, catered Blue Mountain Catering Company
Farewell Brunch – Wilder by the Sea Cottage
Photography – Neil Sjoblom
Flowers – Bella Flora
Cake – Bake My Day
Entertainment – Bobby Moore & The Rhythm Aces (Gulf Talent Services Entertainment Group)

Editor's Note: Seaside's Great Southern Café and Modica Market also offer catering services and beautiful wedding cakes.

To reserve the Seaside Interfaith Chapel, contact Amy Wise-Coble at (855) 411-1557 or info@homeownerscollection.com



The newlyweds hosted a farewell brunch in the Wilder by the Sea cottage overlooking the emerald waters of the Gulf. Photo by Neil Sjoblom

located right on the beach with a perfect view of the Gulf.

Lauren says her Seaside wedding was all she imagined it to be, and has some advice for future Seaside brides. "Incorporate the entire town into your wedding weekend," she says. "Most of our guests had never been to Seaside and were able to explore all that the town had to offer through our weekend events. From our fish fry to our farewell brunch, the cottages played an integral role and set the tone for the wedding. Also, the weekend would not have been as successful with-

out our wonderful wedding coordinator, Heather Archdeacon-Williams."

Lauren also recommends taking a few minutes to capture some intimate sunset photos on the beach, a popular spot for many couples who marry in Seaside. "These were precious moments and made for unbelievable photos," Lauren recalls. "It was the perfect place to have the wedding. We're all planning a reunion trip here next year." 🌊

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