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YOUR BIG DAY SIMPLIFIED

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the *plan*



OUR GUIDE TO WEDDINGS IN
LA, SAN DIEGO & BEYOND

how to marry in

SoCal



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JODEE DEBES PHOTOGRAPHY; KATELYN JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY; SHELLY ANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY (SHELLYANDERSONPHOTOGRAPHY.COM); RYAN GARVIN; JODEE DEBES PHOTOGRAPHY; SHANE AND LAUREN PHOTOGRAPHY (DESIREESHUE.COM); INNER SONG (TOURNINERSONS.COM)

by **CARRIE BELL**

More Sweet Spots

With loads of creative, classic or cool celebration sites — and a deep list of reliable pros — these three regions are worth the road trip.

➔ **TEMECULA** Plan a grape-escape to this up-and-coming wine valley less than 90 miles from LA and San Diego. Dance under the stars at **Temecula Creek Inn's** Stone House, combining towering oaks, pendant lamps, grassy knolls and a 180-year-old quarrymen's bunkhouse. Napa-rivaling winery **Ponte Family Estate** is a 300-acre compound of gardens, a barrel room, an after-hours bar (a rarity) and an inn. Load welcome bags with drafts from Old Town Rootbeer Co. and Temecula Lavender Co. soaps.

➔ **ORANGE COUNTY** Most of the orchards that inspired the area's name are long gone; now the words *OC* conjure images of swank seaside cities. **Surf & Sand Resort** in Laguna Beach is known for uninterrupted wave watching from its event terraces, as well as its house-made initial cookies. Or evoke a vintage-chic feel at **The Colony**

House, an Anaheim event space of reclaimed wood, filament lighting and vaulted ceilings.

➔ **SANTA BARBARA** Nicknamed the American Riviera, this posh playground Oprah calls home is framed by mountains on one side and a wide swath of Pacific blue on the other. **Belmond El Encanto's** name is Spanish for *charm*, and betrothed couples toss a commemorative coin into the wishing well before I do's by the shady lily pond. Goleta's **The Goodland, A Kimpton Hotel** flaunts retro photo props aplenty, including a woodie surf wagon and an Airstream trailer.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 'Maids and 'men at Martin Johnson House. Vows at La Valencia. Driving down the 101. Aisle style at Temecula Creek Inn. Young at heart in the New Children's Museum. Sitting a spell at Big Daddy's Antiques. PREVIOUS PAGE: Sunnies, Santa Monica, sandals, smooches, sweets, Santa Barbara, sprigs and smiles.



San Diego

America's Finest City earns the nickname with its chill vibe, craft beer and 70 miles of coast.

➔ **STAY** In 2015, **Manchester Grand Hyatt** revamped its ballrooms and introduced 32 Bayview, the area's highest outdoor terrace. *Rooms from \$199; weddings from \$10,000.*

Set on a 15-acre private peninsula, **Loews Coronado Bay Resort** coordinates toes-in-the-sand ceremonies. Snag romantic shots in the gondolas that float through Coronado Island's canals. *Rooms from \$209; weddings from \$108 per person.*

At **La Valencia** (above), perched atop an ocean cove in the upscale enclave of La Jolla, tiered balconies and garden terraces make for one heck of a bouquet toss. *Rooms from \$265; weddings from \$135 per person.*

Cal-A-Vie wellness retreat hosts events in a 400-year old candlelit chapel and L'Orangerie, a former convent imported from Dijon, France. *All-inclusive three-day stay from \$3,350 per person (minimum 26 guests); weddings from \$21,500.*

➔ **PLAY** Throw a beach barbecue complete with a volleyball tourney and

longboard lessons from **Surf Diva**. Zoo/museum-hop in 1,200-acre **Balboa Park**. Whale-watch on an **Aolani Catamaran**. Hike **Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve**. Refuel on a taco-and-tequila crawl, including a stop at **Don Chido**.

➔ **PARTY** Unique venues include the airy industrial **Luce Loft**; the **Martin Johnson House** (a historic La Jolla cottage and deck enveloped by cypress trees); the **Bistro & Gardens at Stone Brewing Co.**; and the **New Children's Museum** (below).



Quick Hits

BEST WEDDING MONTHS ➔ March, May, October **AVG. TEMP** ➔ 75°F **STATE FLOWER** ➔ California poppy **STATE GEM** ➔ Benitoite **STATE COLORS** ➔ Blue and gold

Los Angeles

The Entertainment Capital of the World offers an embarrassment of planning riches to ensure a blockbuster LA (wedding) story.

➔ **STAY** Once a beach club for Roaring '20s high society, **Hotel Casa Del Mar** is still a celeb-spotting hot spot. You can't help but feel giddy when the Santa Monica Ferris wheel illuminates every terrace photo. *Rooms from \$495; weddings from \$15,000.*

If the **InterContinental Century City** can pull off a presidential stay without incident, trust they've got your special day covered. An overhaul of the event spaces, public areas and rooms wrapped up in late 2015. The ceremony garden was even the setting for a *Bachelorette* group date. *Rooms from \$449; weddings from \$95 per person.*

Mr. C hotel in Beverly Hills recently said ciao to the old 12th-floor ballroom and introduced a sleeker, mostly white one with tufted sofas, custom metal Chiavari chairs and views from downtown to the ocean. *Rooms from \$325; weddings from \$150 per person.*

➔ **PLAY** Outdoor movie screenings abound — **Eat|See|Hear** also doubles as a concert and a food-truck

gathering. Massage/nail/facial salon **The Lounge Spa** throws themed gatherings with optional cocktails and catering in Culver City. A trip to the land of hard bodies isn't complete without barely surviving a new fitness fad like **Hiking Yoga**.

➔ **PARTY** 2016 is the last year couples can wed at the **Huron Substation**, built in 1906 to house electrical equipment for Yellow Cars (trolleys); grab a photo op in front of its huge barn doors. At **Baltaire**, event spaces include a catalog-worthy all-season patio. **Big Daddy's Antiques** (below) in Culver City is a retail store by day, an inviting venue by night; the expert staff will walk you through its eclectic vignettes to find the perfect backdrop.



➔ EIGHT COUNTIES, ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES. WHETHER YOU'RE DREAMING OF AN EVENT THAT'S FARM-FRESH, HIGH-RISE HAUTE, ECO-CHIC, BAREFOOT ON THE BEACH OR WAREHOUSE-LEVEL HIPSTER — SUNNY, STYLISH AND SPRAWLING SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HAS ONE GOLDEN RULE WHEN IT COMES TO WEDDINGS: ALL ARE WELCOME.

The Details

LOCAL COLOR

THE REVEL IS IN THE DETAILS.

TRANSPORTATION

SoCal is a car culture, so not just any shuttle will do. Get creative with pedicabs, Big Woody Limos or electric bikes (Pedego rental stores line the coast).



FLOWERS

Jillian Ziska of Coaststyle Events says succulents are still going strong, but air plants, honeycombs, berries and big bulbs are gaining momentum.



WEATHER

"Fall is just as hot as summer, and winter temps are in the 50s/60s. March has been the rainiest month for the last three years," says Margaux Fraise of Harmony Creative Studio.



WELCOME BAGS

Beach essentials are best — flip-flops, organic sunscreen, Turkish towels, local treats (See's Candies was founded in LA) and sips from Pressed Juicery.



FROM TOP: SHELLY ANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY (SHELLYANDERSONPHOTOGRAPHY.COM); © AMY AND STUART PHOTOGRAPHY; SHUTTERSTOCK (4) CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY LA VALENCIA HOTEL; KATELYN JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY; INNER SONG (YOURINNERSONG.COM); SUSAN YEE | EN POINTE PHOTOGRAPHY