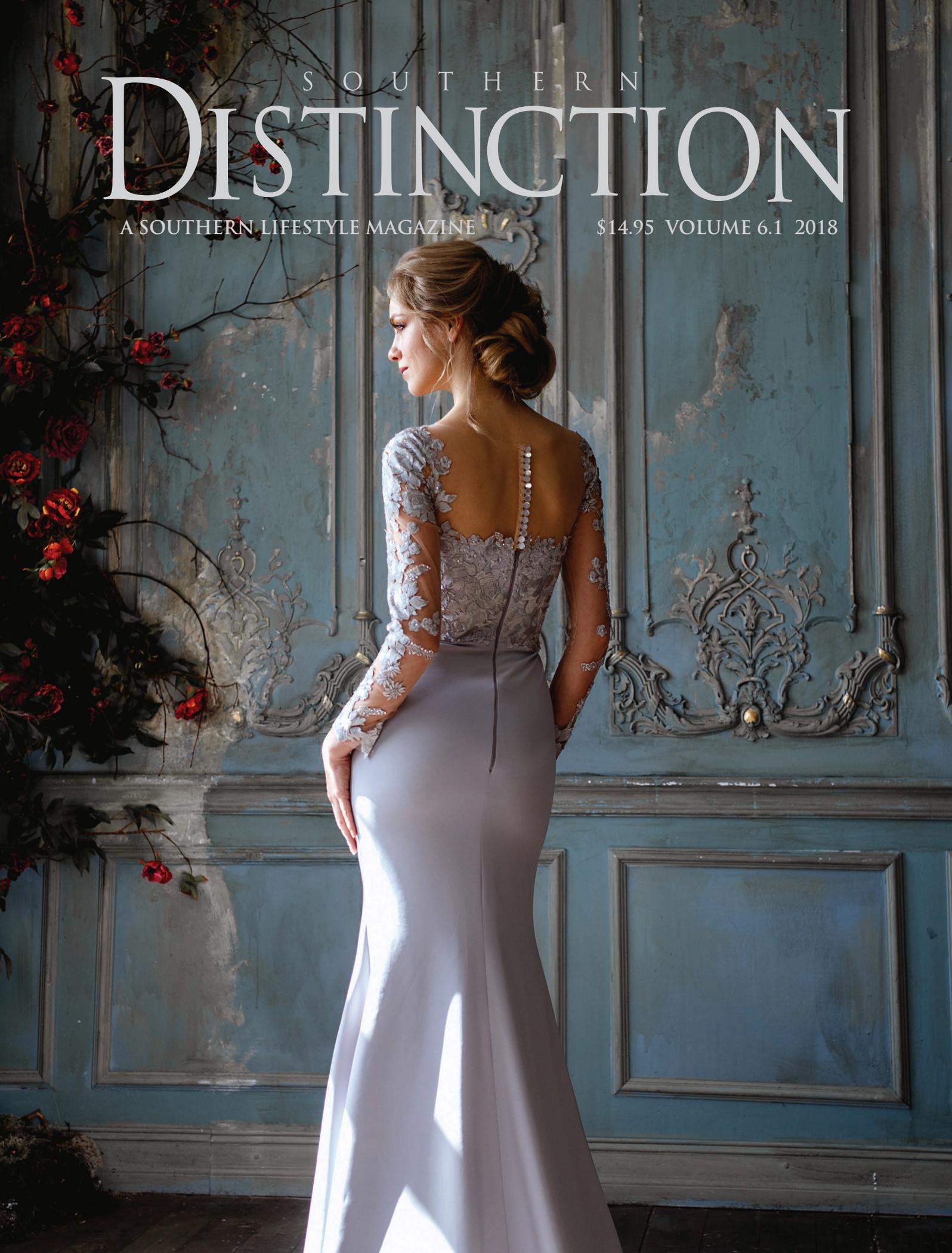


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CELEBRATING LOVE  
IN THE  
LOWCOUNTRY



Photo credit Crystal Stokes Photography



Story by Kathleen Mansfield

The lowcountry geography of Georgia and South Carolina's coast is a romantic natural landscape with waving marsh grasses, gently rippling waters and sturdy oak trees dripping with Spanish moss. Add a historic plantation or a horse and carriage, perhaps a fishing boat or playful dolphin, and there lies a quintessential Southern coastal scene. This timeless setting, enhanced by the luxury of modern convenience and entertainment, is a backdrop meant for a Southern bride, lending itself to photogenic celebrations before, on, and after her wedding day.

A short drive from the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport in several directions takes the celebratory party on an adventure in history and pampering. Here in the lowcountry, a bride can make the most of wedding traditions like bachelorette weekends, intimate wedding ceremonies, extravagant receptions, or romantic honeymoon getaways.

Explore bustling cities like Savannah, where charming Southern hospitality and historic tradition meet lively experiences and palatable tastes. Bachelorette parties thrive on the energy of its romantic atmosphere. Discover unruffled towns like Bluffton, where a nature preserve also serves as a private community designed to relax and recharge. This coastal settlement is a quaint retreat for newlyweds and a welcoming host for wedding gatherings of all sizes and trends. At each of these locales, bridal guests will experience a sincere Southern welcome and fulfilling cuisine and leisure.



## BRIDAL FESTIVITIES IN SAVANNAH

One of the South's most iconic and historic cities is also one of its most fun. Savannah, Georgia is a coastal mecca of exploration and entertainment for its millions of visitors each year, feeding them with coastal dining, walking tours, cocktails, and ghost stories. Bachelorette parties make up many of those visitors, flocking to the city every weekend to celebrate the bride-to-be and give her a reprieve from the stress of wedding planning.

Bridal groups often begin their Savannah experience at one of the city's famed Kessler Collection hotels. Like Savannah, Mansion on Forsyth Park is both iconic and historic; the original mansion dates back to 1888, and the hotel embraces the mansion as part of its footprint by showcasing decorative elements of years past and custom additions such as Versace furniture and Verona pink marble columns. Mansion on Forsyth Park blends these elements with modern artistic elements like artwork by Kessler artists Peter Keil and Jean Claude Roy. Mansion's original art collection is second to none and is expanded upon at the hotel's Grand Bohemian Gallery, where paintings, sculptures, and jewelry are available from some of Richard Kessler's favorite artists around the world.

Original artwork lines the halls to Mansion's guest rooms, where elaborate white headboards are charmingly paired with taupe, espresso, silver and fuchsia decorative furnishings. Modern fixtures are softened by ornate trim and plush fabrics. On the entry table, a bottle of Kessler's Raymond Vineyards wine sits, ready to lead the next celebration.

Wine flows throughout Mansion at Forsyth Park, and is often

accompanied by fine dining. 700 Drayton Restaurant is a showcase of culinary art that also includes a Cooking School, a piano bar, and private event spaces in another part of the original mansion structure. The 700 Kitchen Cooking School is a bachelorette party favorite and hosts groups up to 20 for themed classes. There are around 14 different menus that rotate for classes, and they change every few months.

Mansion on Forsyth Park is recognized for its luxurious accommodations and dining experience. It also has a reputation as a spa destination. Brides shopping for a wedding venue at the hotel or just enjoying its amenities often visit Poseidon Spa, Mansion's full-service rejuvenation center with treatments like aromatherapy massage, signature facials, and nail services.

If Mansion is where brides go to relax, River Street is where they go to wake up. On River Street, the upbeat Bohemian Hotel Savannah Riverfront is a smaller, more contemporary sister hotel to The Mansion, featuring Russian and Ukrainian artwork from Kessler artists and an industrial interior with dark wood, gold-brushed accents, and leather. Rooftop bar Rocks on the Roof is one of Savannah's original rooftop bars and holds its reputation as the go-to bar for those who get dressed up and want to be on the waterfront on a weekend night. Downstairs at Rocks on the River, celebratory groups get their fill of bold Southern cuisine in a vibrant, trendy atmosphere with cocktails, wines, and craft beers. The Bohemian is a popular hotel for bachelorette groups with its location in the center of Savannah's nightlife. The city's Open Container law allows Bohemian guests to take their beverages in plastic cups with them to their next destination on River Street.



River Street is part of the Historic District, a very walkable area and a great way to explore Savannah day or night with a historic walking or riding tour and a shopping spree. Craft beer, locally distilled vodka, wine, and mead are all available for tasting in historic Savannah, as well as honey from Savannah Bee Company. Walking or carriage ghost tours reveal a spooky but fun side of the city in the evenings, and daytime tours showcase stunning historic homes and landmarks.

On the river front, a former power plant is undergoing renovations to be the newest Kessler hotel in Savannah. Plant Riverside District is set to open in 2019 with guest rooms, an expanded river walk, amphitheater, music venue, restaurants, shops, a museum, and much more. The concept was imagined to celebrate the history of power in the city and restore a defunct building to new glory, while at the same time enhancing a part of River Street that was in need of revitalization.

Savannah has it all for the celebratory bride and her closest friends and family seeking an all-encompassing bachelorette weekend destination. Hotels like Mansion on Forsyth Park and the Bohemian Savannah Riverfront, and soon the highly anticipated

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Plant Riverside District, are ready to host. Relaxing, exploring, shopping, and reveling are all within walking distance, and the experience will yield memories the entire group will never forget as the bride embarks on her new life with her significant other.

The Southeastern Coast isn't just for brides to be, however. Non-international destination weddings and honeymoons are on the rise, and lowcountry cities like Savannah and the nearby town of Bluffton, South Carolina have the perfect setting.

#### ROMANCE AT MONTAGE PALMETTO BLUFF

A "hidden gem" of South Carolina's coast is the growing town of Bluffton, located halfway between Savannah and Hilton Head, not quite 45 minutes from the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport. The "Old Town" district of Bluffton is a friendly residential town decorated with sun-bleached oyster shells and picturesque views of the May River winding through the marsh on its way to the Atlantic. Honeymooners can catch a fun bicycle tour through streets lined with timeless homes and ancient oak trees to local restaurants and shops, enjoying live music, outdoor folk art, and the salty breeze of the Lowcountry.

Honeymooners, wedding guests, and other visitors to Bluffton stay across the river from Old Town at Palmetto Bluff, Bluffton's 20,000-acre coastal nature preserve and private community. Palmetto Bluff epitomizes the town's hospitality with upscale Southern living in a storybook setting, complementing the quiet beauty of the nature preserve with handsome residential homes, boutique shops and restaurants, and assortment of outdoor activities tucked into the natural landscape with limited street signs and soft lighting at night. Anchoring the community is the renowned Montage Palmetto Bluff, a charming resort property that relaxes and engages all at once.

Montage Palmetto Bluff is an ideal wedding location for engaged couples seeking a charming coastal location in the South. It has thoughtfully designed ceremony and reception venues and features accommodations with enough amenities to keep out-of-town guests occupied before and after the nuptials. It's also ideal for newlyweds, offering an array of romantic experiences to help the bride and groom relax and recharge after their wedding has been arduously planned and joyfully executed.

The drive through Palmetto Bluff to the resort sets the scene for a stay at Montage Palmetto Bluff, offering a tour of the community itself. It's a peaceful drive, nearly silent except for the song of native birds and the whirl of bicycles coasting on hidden paths along lagoon waterways. The road ends at the Inn, where attendants escort new guests to an informal check-in area more like a living room than a lobby. If guests are lucky, one of the resort's four English Labrador "Canine Ambassadors" is there to greet them.

Like a grand southern home, Montage Palmetto Bluff is an airy, open place with expansive ceilings and windows and décor inspired to invoke Southern comfort. Its 74 luxuriously appointed rooms in the Inn are just some of the 200 guest room, suite and cottage accommodations at the resort, offering no shortage of options for wedding guests or a celebratory couple. Standout features in each room include ceiling fans, enormous soaking tubs with soothing bath salts, and adjustable mood lighting. Every detail at Montage Palmetto Bluff is artfully chosen to create a sense of place, to make a vacation stay feel more like home.

Event facilities at the resort are numerous and easily tailored to guests' needs for meetings, social events, and weddings. The Somerset Chapel and May River Chapel are elegant architectural centerpieces for a ceremony or small gathering. Montage Palmetto Bluff's two ballrooms can be adjusted to suit large galas or intimate receptions. Meeting rooms and public spaces, including bridges and lawns, can be set up for weddings and parties as needed.

For guests who need pampering before or after the big day, Spa Montage offers a menu of services like the Signature High Cotton Massage or the Kerstin Florian Caviar Facial in its 13 treatment rooms and Couple's Suite. The salon and nail spa are well-versed in hosting wedding

day prep, and steam rooms and saunas are some of the spa options available for detoxification.

Montage Palmetto Bluff treats its guests to Southern hospitality inside and outside. Nightly “Culinary Heirlooms” such as Lowcountry Boil or Shrimp and Grits are complimentary treats at the fire pit out back. They pair well with a signature Southern cocktail like Artillery Punch or one of Octagon Bar & Gathering Place’s popular mules.

Octagon Bar & Gathering Place at Montage Palmetto Bluff is one of seven food and beverage experiences at Montage; its name pays homage to the Octagon House, a plantation home that once stood on the Bluff. Each of the resort’s dining options has a unique attribute; for example, Fore & Aft’s casual outdoor atmosphere by the lagoon is perfect after a leisure activity, while riverfront Buffalo’s famous Biscuit Bar is standard breakfast fare for wedding guests and other visitors to Palmetto Bluff. Like nearly everything at Montage Palmetto Bluff, resort restaurants are accessible by walking or bicycling; guests can leave the car in the parking lot – or at home.

Entertainment is a tremendous part of Southern hospitality and marriage celebrations; the community of Palmetto Bluff does it well. Tennis, bocce, and croquet on the courts of the Wilson Lawn & Racquet Club as well as 18-holes on a Jack Nicklaus Signature golf course are some of guests’ favorite leisure recreation. Honeymooners will enjoy horseback riding at Longfield Stables and a little competition with sporting clays at the Palmetto Bluff Shooting Club. Kayaking in the lagoon, fishing, dolphin tours on the restored 1913 river yacht Grace, and of course bicycling round out what is certainly a plentiful array of activities that will make any wedding visit to Montage Palmetto Bluff worthwhile.

Honeymooners and wedding guests alike will enjoy a day trip into Savannah, Georgia or Beaufort, South Carolina for tours of some of the South’s most historic sites, ingestion of more authentic Southern cuisine, and exploration of local art galleries and shops. But there’s no need to leave the romantic community of Palmetto Bluff, where Montage Palmetto Bluff treats Southern hospitality like it’s a tradition.

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