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WEDDINGS IN THE ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER AREA **FACT SHEET**

A wedding in the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area can be held anywhere from a botanical garden overflowing with floral and fauna to a quiet bed and breakfast or in a grand-scale ballroom that seats 500. With so many options, it may not be surprising that the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area hosted more than 7,000 weddings in 1999. There are more than 35 hotels in the area with event facilities and more than 60 additional properties that welcome special events. The opportunities for a memorable occasion are endless on Florida's Beach. Here are just a few of the popular wedding locations in the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area:

Renaissance Vinoy Resort – Located on Tampa Bay at 501 5th Avenue NE, St. Petersburg, FL 33701. Phone: (727) 894-1000. Built in 1925, the \$3.5 million Vinoy Park Hotel was the largest construction project in Florida's history. The 375-room property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a member of the Historic Hotels of America. In its heyday, the Mediterranean Revival-style hotel was frequented by Calvin Coolidge, Babe Ruth, Herbert Hoover and numerous celebrities and entertainers. The Vinoy has undergone a \$93 million restoration and expansion adding a tower and recreational facilities including an 18-hole, Ron Garl golf course, 74-slip marina and Mediterranean spa.

The historic Vinoy Resort has an expert staff of event managers that can handle all of the wedding details. Several options for the wedding's location include:

- The Tea Garden, providing a tranquil outdoor setting for an intimate gathering
- Vinoy Grand Ballroom, which holds more than 450 and is designed in a 1920's Mediterranean décor
- The Esplanade offers an outdoor private area with superb views of the bay and marina
- Sunset Ballroom, which is similar in style to the Grand Ballroom but geared more towards intimate gatherings.

The Vinoy's Wedding & Event Planner Resource Guide is available upon request by calling the hotel. Website: www.renaissancehotels.com

Andrews Memorial Chapel – Located in Dunedin, FL in Hammock Park. For more information, call the Dunedin Historical Society at (727) 736-1176. Constructed in 1888, the chapel is considered a prime example of Victorian architecture in Florida and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The unique setting is a popular wedding location and the chapel hosts more than 150 weddings a year. The chapel is constructed with two foyers with Gothic archways leading into the sanctuary where the original stained glass windows still remain. Its ceiling, which is styled like the bottom of a ship, is hand-carved, as are all of the pews. The chapel is available 7 days a week.

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Egmont Key - Located at the mouth of Tampa Bay, Egmont Key is accessible by private charter or aboard excursion vessels. For more information, call 727-893-2627. This historic 360-acre island has unique natural and cultural histories including a lighthouse (built in 1858) that is still in operation. The lighthouse continues to operate as Florida's sixth brightest lighthouse and the spot for wedding ceremonies is at the base of the lighthouse. E-mail: Egmontkey@juno.com

Sunken Gardens –1825 Fourth Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33704. Phone: 727-551-3100. An exotic collection of more than 50,000 tropical plants and flowers including more than 200 species bloom year-round at the six-acre garden which includes a wedding lawn and a butterfly garden. Owned by the City of St. Petersburg, the Gardens are managed by the Parks Department. Weddings require a \$100 permit and the use of the Wedding Lawn is \$150 for up to 50 guests and \$300 for 50 to 100 guests. The cost includes the assistance of a wedding coordinator. The Oak Pavilion and the Butterfly Garden may be used for more intimate gatherings. The gardens are available 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to dusk.

Don CeSar Resort & Spa - Located on the Gulf of Mexico at 3400 Gulf Blvd., St. Pete Beach, FL 33706. Phone: (727) 367-3609. The Don CeSar is as rich in luxury as it is in history. Originally opened in 1928, this “pink palace” features Mediterranean and Moorish architecture and includes numerous balconies and terraces. Original owner Thomas Rowe named the 340-room property after a character in the Italian opera *Maritana*. The Don was a favorite of high society including F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda as well as many other well-known names, like Al Capone and baseball-player Lou Gehrig. A member of the Historic Hotels of North America and the National Register of Historic Places, the Don was also named a historical monument by the National Archives.

The Don Cesar hosts more than 300 weddings per year and their event professionals can assist in everything from an intimate gathering on the beach to 1,000 guests classically attired for a traditional ceremony. The resort's powdery beaches, sweeping staircases and tropical gardens are breathtaking accents for wedding ceremonies and portraits. A comprehensive program at the Don allows brides to arrange either a select few or all wedding details through the resort, from videographers and bands to flowers and cakes. In addition to 7½ miles of white-sand beaches, the Don also includes a Beach Club & Spa featuring sea salt body scrubs and surfside massages to relax any pre-wedding stress. Website: www.media.don-cesar.com

Mirror Lake Lyceum:

Located on the west bank of Mirror Lake in historically-rich downtown St. Petersburg, the former First Christian Church, built circa-1926, recently re-opened in early 2000 as a meeting and special events venue. For more information, call (727) 821-1926

The 3-story structure offers a subtle yet unique elegance from the first-floor entrance foyer and main lobby to the yet-to-be-completed third floor corporate wing, where board rooms and meeting rooms are under renovation. The main floor features the 3,478 square-foot grand hall and 2,720 square-foot ballroom and boasts a capacity of 25 to 800. The 1920s stained glass windows have been entirely restored, and the original hardwood floors and inlaid terrazzo enhance the delicate detail of the hand-carved ornamental plaster moldings. Chandeliers and fixtures made of plaster, crystal and alabaster decorate the grand hall with its 53-foot domed ceiling. Wedding parties can also make use of the Bridal and Groom suites or for the grandest traditional weddings, a Horse Carriage Service.

The Mirror Lake Lyceum can be rented in its entirety or by the room at rates that range from \$400 to \$3,000, with no minimums for food and beverages, which is contracted exclusively to Orange Blossom Catering and Catering by Lundy's under separate agreements. Other services and options are priced separately and include presentation equipment, and training and seminar supplies, among others. Valet parking and security subcontract options are available. E-mail: asset@mindspring.com.

Bellevue Biltmore Resort & Spa – 25 Bellevue Blvd, Clearwater. For more information, call (800) 237-8947 or 727-442-6171. Built in 1897, the Biltmore rests on a high coastal bluff overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. Today, the 292-room resort holds a position on the National Register of Historic Places and hosts more than 140 weddings a year. With unique indoor-banquet facilities, including the classical, 13,000-sq. ft Tiffany Ballroom, as well as beautiful grounds, the highly trained event professionals will assist with every detail. It also features a Donald Ross golf course, a newly renovated spa, tennis facilities, boat dock and a 2 ½-mile off-site, semi-private beach. Website: www.bellevuebiltmore.com

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Harborview Center: 300 Cleveland St. Clearwater, FL 33755. Ph: (727) 462-6778. The Harborview Center can host an event for 40 to 1,400 people, and can provide all the amenities for the occasion. The 35,000 square foot conference level includes a 17,000 square foot ballroom, divisible in halves or quarters that can hold 300 to 450 guests each. The 3,900 square foot Clearwater Room, with its inviting view of the harbor and beachfront skyline, is an impressive site for a reception or luncheon. Wedding Packages include room rental, dance floor, white linens and napkins, skirted DJ Table, Head table for 16, gift table and a cake cutting service. The Harborview offers several menu options ranging from large buffet to a simple luncheon. Website: www.harborv.com

Wedding Butterfly Release by Monarch Butterfly Farm - For more information call (727) 381-1932. In addition to a wide variety of facilities and locations for weddings, St. Petersburg is also home to a unique business that caters to wedding events. The Monarch Butterfly Farm provides Monarch Butterflies as well as a variety of other butterfly species to be released at weddings by guests and the wedding party. The 3-year old business has provided butterflies for more than 75 weddings in the past year throughout the United States (Note: The Monarch Butterfly Farm does not distribute to states west of the 100th Meridian (Rocky Mountains.) The Farm can provide anywhere from 15 butterflies upward to 200 and provides a keepsake envelope for the butterfly to be released from for a small additional fee. Prices range from \$125 for 15 butterflies to \$375 for 50 butterflies with an average price of \$7 per additional butterfly. Website: www.floridamonarch.com

Starlite Cruises – For more information, call (727) 462-2628. Starlite Cruises offers two distinctive vessels with elegant decor and first-class service. Each unique vessel features plush comfortable interiors with large picture windows for unobstructed viewing. Cruises depart from Clearwater Municipal Marina and St. Petersburg and the Starlite Princess Riverboat or the Starlite Majesty Dining Yacht are a popular setting for many weddings on Florida's Beach. More than 300 weddings have been celebrated on the cruises with elegant decor, fine dining, first-rate musicians, and an ever-changing water view on smooth inland waters, which all combine to make a truly memorable night.

Tradewinds Island Grand – 5500 Gulf Blvd. St. Pete Beach. For reservations and information on planning a TradeWinds wedding, call toll free 800-562-1240. Located on the island of St. Pete Beach, the romantic flagship property, TradeWinds Island Grand, showcases the best of the area's tropical scenery in a number of venues, including the Garden Courtyard Gazebo and the Island Ballroom. Couples looking for a unique getaway can cruise into the sunset sipping champagne aboard a beautiful gondola that meanders through the lush waterways of the TradeWinds Island Grand.

The TradeWinds Island Grand's neighboring property - the TradeWinds Sirata Beach Resort - also provides options for traditional and unique wedding services. Happy couples can wed on the beach, host a poolside cocktail party and share their first dance in a dazzling ballroom, all at one resort. The Royal Palm, popular for wedding receptions, has a magnificent panoramic view of the Gulf of Mexico and the Intercoastal Waterway.

The TradeWinds Island Resorts host more than 120 weddings annually and in the past, these ceremonies have included different ethnic and religious weddings, from Hawaiian to Hindu. Boasting the only designated kosher kitchen in the county, the TradeWinds Sandpiper Hotel & Suites also hosts many Jewish ceremonies and receptions.

Newlyweds can share their first days together cruising the lush waterways of the TradeWinds Island Grand, soaking in the sunset under a beach cabana at the TradeWinds Sandpiper Hotel & Suites, or parasailing along the shores at the TradeWinds Sirata Beach Resort. Other resort amenities include complete spa services, beachfront lounges and hammocks and exclusive golf privileges at one of the area's private clubs. Guests of each resort share amenities with all three properties, which are a short walking distance (or complimentary shuttle ride) from one another.

Brides selecting a wedding reception package at any of the TradeWinds Island Resorts receive a free wedding planner from the lovely Beverly Clark Collection.
Website: www.tradewindsresort.com.

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