



Formerly a dairy barn, the popular Round Barn Farm in Red Wing holds up to 150 guests and features two levels and a 60-foot domed ceiling.



sweet Escape

by Jane Caffrey

From destination weddings to intimate elopements over long weekends, these Minnesota bed-and-breakfasts offer an escape into the world of luxury, romance and charm.

THE WHISPER OF A DEEP FOREST, A STRETCH OF ROLLING GREEN FIELDS, vivid flowers in elaborate gardens, and charming and historic towns; these are the backdrops for bed-and-breakfasts, a Minnesota tradition that offers elegant luxury and simple delight. These romantic retreats also have something for every bride and groom: the settings for beautiful destination weddings, intimate elopements, festive groom's dinners, or a long and relaxed honeymoon. And the morning after the big day, waking up on a wide feather bed to the aroma of freshly brewed coffee and hot scones provides the perfect way to welcome those first moments of marital bliss.

Shades of Summer BERWOOD HILL INN Lanesboro

Berwood Hill Inn stands out as a bright jewel in the crown of Lanesboro's scenic bluff country, with grounds for romantic summer weddings and intricate flower beds bursting with tangerine, fuchsia, crimson, and violet blossoms against a lush green backdrop. With acres of award-winning gardens designed by owner Fran Scibora, many couples seek out this flowery paradise to exchange vows under a blooming trellis that overlooks the Minnesota countryside.

"We have acres and acres of phenomenal gardens, especially in the summertime, and that's what really draws people," says Jan Engstrom, special events coordinator. "The gardens are very innovative."

Bride Jaclyn Roverud McMurray was overwhelmed by the beauty of the gardens, and chose to hold an outdoor ceremony at Berwood in July. "Our guests were seated on little white folding chairs and we were under a canopy of trees in the garden overlooking the valley. It was just such a beautiful setting," she says.

Roverud McMurray took advantage of the multihued scenery during her outdoor reception as well, serving fresh mojitos and using the wide lawns for lively wiffleball games, a wedding tradition among her husband's friends. The festivities later moved into Berwood's Lu Lu Belle's Roost, a reception space dreamily adorned in tulle and white lights, which comfortably accommodates 120 guests.

Much of Berwood Hill Inn's charm comes from the restored 1880s Victorian farmhouse, available to host the bridal couple and guests over a long weekend. Impeccably decorated with fine furnishings and antiques, the inn offers five cozy sleeping spaces, including the intimate Owl's Nest. "That's where I got ready with my bridesmaids, and it was really very romantic," Roverud McMurray says. Many brides don their gowns in this old-fashioned attic suite before walking down a rose-petal aisle in the most colorful summer ceremonies.

"The gardens are amazing," Roverud McMurray recalls. "We knew we wanted our wedding there just because it was so beautiful. We're hoping that in 10 years we could come back and have that be our anniversary location."

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Heart and Home CLASSIC ROSEWOOD INN Hastings

"Rosewood Inn really offers a home atmosphere," says owner Pam Thorsen. "Our goal is that guests have a chance to spend a wonderful time with their family, book the whole house, and spend the weekend together. It really is the way that families celebrated 100 ago."

Coming home is the overwhelming sentiment at this history-rich mansion, where family, tradition, and intimacy have remained treasured values throughout the years. Located just outside of the Twin Cities in historic downtown Hastings, those seeking an elopement or a smaller ceremony will find tradition and open-armed hospitality.

The intimate setting of the inn allowed the families of one Minneapolis couple to bond over the groom's dinner, which took the form of a finely catered afternoon tea. The two families had never met, yet when they discovered the inn's extensive collection of nearly 75 hats to model, all remaining awkwardness melted instantly. "It was such a wonderful ice-breaker; I don't know what it is about wearing hats, but it puts you on another level about being able to laugh at each other and begin reminiscing. It put everyone at ease from the start," Thorsen says.

Many couples embrace the familiarity of this bed-and-breakfast with simple ceremonies, like a vow renewal with a few close friends, or a secret weekend elopement featuring photographs, flowers, a delectable homemade dinner for two, wedding cake and an overnight stay in one of the luxurious suites. Other couples appreci-

ate the mansion's historical value by holding unique theme weddings, with motifs such as the 1930s or "Murder Mystery." Many newlyweds become local celebrities for the evening as white, Christmas lights surrounding the mansion alert locals to the wedding, and a cruise through downtown Hastings in a buggy or an old-fashioned car puts the pair in the spotlight.

Classic Rosewood Inn has also seen several couples return over the years. "One of our wedding presents to them is an overnight for their first anniversary," Thorsen says. As it turns out, home is where you always return.

Country Chic ROUND BARN FARM Red Wing

Weddings are weekend events in the rolling countryside at the Round Barn Farm. Bridal parties can head to this B&B in Red Wing for a two-night stay in the country manor farmhouse where they can enjoy piping-hot breakfasts, and of course, beautiful bucolic weddings and vivacious receptions in the Round Barn. "You'd be surprised how many people are enamored with round barns, plus the country setting," says owner Elaine Kleffman.

Built in 1914, the Round Barn is one of only a few dozen left in the state, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings. Originally a dairy barn with a milking parlor that held 20 cows, the structure was renovated in 2003 and has been a wedding destination ever since. Comfortably accommodating 150 guests, the space has two levels, stunning woodwork and a soaring 60-foot domed cathedral ceiling.

Deborah Spirn was inspired to host a country wedding and found that this B&B was the only location in Minnesota where she could hold her reception in a round barn; she was married at the farm in August. An interior designer, she played up the summery country theme with a green, yellow, brown and white color scheme throughout the barn, paying attention to details such as lemon and lime place card holders. "Simple elegance was what we were going for. The whole theme was vintage shabby-chic, but elegant at the same time," Spirn said.

Hosting a Jewish wedding, Spirn and her husband Daniel also wanted to carry on the tradition of throwing a wild dance party. Breaking between each meal course, 130 guests hit the dance floor of the Round Barn throughout the night. "We've seen every type of music; everything works here," Cleffman says. "And you can have a square dance in a round barn!"

Minneapolis couple Tor and Nicole Westguard, who were married in June, used the barn to embrace a unique Asian tradition. The couple folded 1,000 paper cranes, which they hung from ribbons in a gridwork pattern over the silo hole. Others have chosen to make the unique setting a backdrop for a unique wedding, such as Red Wing natives Andrew and Tira Petersen. Andrew owns a bicycle shop in town, and as a token of appreciation he presented a new bike to each bridesmaid and groomsman. Every member of the wedding party donned a different color—a rainbow of orange, yellow, green and lavender—and Andrew matched each bike to the different colors of the clothing. The pairs rode off into the sunset in a multihued band—a grand finale to a charming wedding in the countryside.

Romance By Firelight FIRELIGHT INN ON OREGON CREEK Duluth

Nestled among turn-of-the-century mansions in Duluth's historic East End, Firelight Inn offers peace, relaxation and Old World charm. Romance lingers in the air of this 1910 mansion, which specializes in honeymoons. For active types who want to venture out, Duluth offers a variety of activities from hiking along the North Shore to antique shopping to watching ships glide through the Lake Superior harbor. Many other couples seek a romantic weekend in, and Firelight Inn offers luxury and relaxed seclusion. "We're really all about romance here," Joy Fischer, owner and keeper with her husband Jim, says. "And always by firelight. We excel at firelight."