

Fairytale WEDDINGS

WILDFLOWER-FILLED MEADOWS, SERENE CHAPELS AND
GLITTERING BALLROOMS—HOUSTON'S FABULOUS
EVENT VENUES OFFER SUBLIME CELEBRATION SPACES.

All fairytales require a princess, her prince, a love story and a magical setting. A fairytale wedding requires the exact same elements—as well as outstanding service, exceptional food and lots of room to dance. From city lights to countryside, and plenty in between, these 11 diverse Houston-area venues each provide a picturesque jumping off point for “happily ever after.”

writer AUTUMN RHEA CARPENTER - *photo* AKIL BENNETT PHOTOGRAPHY



location: chateau polonez

THE CORINTHIAN

Downtown

The Corinthian hosts only one event per day, making it an ideal space to bring your one-of-a-kind fairytale dream to life. Everything in this venue is magnificent, including its 90-foot aisle, 24 regal 35-foot-tall Corinthian columns, and a grand hall that boasts over 10,000 square feet of soaring ceilings.

“Some of the great elements we offer include a Champagne lounge in the ladies’ powder room, a groom’s lounge with a whiskey bar, plenty of room for your guests to be serenaded during dinner by a pianist at a grand piano, and, finally, fireworks highlighting the couple’s departure in a vintage Rolls-Royce,” says sales director Kelly Biggs.

MADERA ESTATES

Conroe

For couples seeking a fairytale setting with a Latin touch, Conroe’s Madera Estates (“madera” is Spanish for “wood” and pays tribute to the property’s expansive piney woods) takes its inspiration from the rich traditions of the Mexican highlands’ San Miguel de Allende. Surrounded by 17 acres of pristine forestland, the venue’s rustic outdoor ceremony sites shine with twinkly lights, traditional Cantera-stone columns, fountains, wood-burning fireplaces, hand-carved tables and iron accents.

“Brides have ridden in on horses and grooms have landed in helicopters,” says Amanda Haley-Johnston, general manger of Madera Estates. “We have a tower for unique pictures

that capture the property in all of its magical expanse. Weddings held on the acreage all around us create a kind of whimsy for any couple who wants more of an ‘enchanted’ memory.”

MOFFITT OAKS

Tomball

Set upon the shore of a shimmering lake, in a meadow filled with Indian Hawthorn, this venue makes rustic fairytale wedding dreams come true, with horse-drawn carriages, water-front ceremonies and fireworks. This event venue offers couples several options, including a romantic lakeside arbor, a rustic-elegant barn, and a grand ballroom hung with Swarovski chandeliers.

“We offer a honeymoon suite for our bride and groom to escape after



an eventful night. The suite provides a secluded, romantic and intimate time for them to privately review their memories of their wedding day," says Melissa Barnard, Moffitt Oaks event coordinator. "Our 47 acres allow our couples to drift off with their photographer after the ceremony to capture the essence of their love while being immersed in nature."

HEATHER'S GLEN

Conroe

An enchanted garden, lush with greenery and dense with flowers. A private chapel nestled in a forest clearing. Heather's Glen offers both of these, and more. Its sun-dappled secret garden includes waterfalls, seasonal blooms and brick pathways with charming vignettes throughout the inviting

grounds. Meanwhile, the chapel has both Victorian and garden accents, along with a spiral staircase fit for a grand entrance.

"The property has an incredible timelessness," says Heather George, owner of Heather's Glen. "The lighting in the garden makes the grounds feel enchanted and romantic. As the sun goes down, chandeliers and lanterns in the garden and reception room light up, along with uplighting in the trees and twinkling lights on the trellises."

ASHTON GARDENS

Katy and North Houston

Couples who wish to invite a little nature into their weddings are drawn to this enchanting venue, where wood beams frame floor-to-ceiling windows, offering a view of the verdant forest

surroundings, with "the comforts and security of being indoors," says Stephanie Selaiden, corporate director of sales and marketing at Ashton Gardens.

The ballroom is adorned with Austrian-crystal chandeliers, while a grand staircase makes for a spotlight entrance that would make any princess proud.

Looking for an extra-romantic fairytale touch? "For evening weddings in our chapel we have a moonlight candle package that includes over 100 candles placed throughout the chapel to create a very romantic and intimate ceremony setting that will be unforgettable for you and your guests."

And for something completely new, look for Ashton Gardens' new West Houston location, opening in Katy this summer.



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ROSEMARY'S GARDEN

Bellaire

With its charming gazebo and serene chapel, Rosemary's Garden is a sweet, budget-friendly location for low-key weddings with a fairytale feel. The large windows in the venue's ballroom look out onto lush magnolia trees, and a green vista that transports guests away from Houston's busy city streets. This relaxed venue is ideal for a no-fuss wedding with Southern hospitality and plenty of storybook touches.

"Our chapel, with red carpet and French-style doors, the candelabras and piano, the Roman columns and angelic statues—these, put together with white flower arrangements, create a very romantic experience for our brides and grooms," says Rosemary Pham, CEO and owner of this Bellaire gem.

SHEPARD HILL ESTATES

Willis

If your fairytale wedding vision has you drifting back in time, to the era of grand estate houses filled with antiques, wraparound verandas looking out upon sprawling lawns, and a manicured rose garden sparkling in the sun, this venue is a great fit.

"From the traditional bridal suite to the gentlemen's game room, there are intimate areas throughout the estate," says Sammie Scott, owner of Shepard Hill Estates. "The property also has a private cottage for a romantic evening after the celebration in the grand ballroom. To personalize your special event, we can arrange a horse-drawn carriage for the bride's arrival, and for the new husband and wife to ride off into the sunset."

CHATEAU COCOMAR

North Houston

Any princess seeking a French-style castle decorated with a private collection of historic European art and antiques will be drawn to Chateau Cocomar. The "castle's" vaulted ceilings, spiral staircase and grand fireplaces make it the perfect setting for brides seeking the ultimate in grandeur. Chateau Cocomar's grand ballroom—the Salle de Versailles—evokes Old World elegance, with embellished hand-painted gold-leaf walls, Venetian-inspired murals, crystal chandeliers and gleaming marble floors.

"With an elegant red carpet on our front steps, the bride's farewell is always one to remember," says Chateau Cocomar's Sherry Alvarez. "And a beautiful display of fireworks is the perfect

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way to the seal the night with a kiss for an unforgettable fairytale ending.”

CHATEAU POLONEZ

Northwest Houston

Couples can write their own personal fairytale in this dramatic, European-inspired venue, located a short drive from downtown Houston—but infused with a faraway-land feel. Its most enchanting space, The Gazebo on the Lake, “is wrapped in wisteria that drips beautiful purple flowers in the spring and creates a lovely fairytale setting for a ceremony,” says Kasia Tran, venue director for Chateau Polonez.

From the chateau’s grand portecochere entrance, to its dramatic domed foyer, to its wooded fireplace courtyard and intimate back terrace, each unique space at Chateau Polonez is fit for a royal wedding experience, “on its own, without any additions,” Tran notes.

ASHELYNN MANOR

Magnolia

Known for its Southern charm, this venue is the perfect spot for the gracious and lovely maiden to wed her handsome country squire. The vintage-style “little white chapel” evokes memories of Sundays spent at Grandma’s quaint country church—but with modern seating for 275 guests. Outdoors, there is a beautiful Amish gazebo, set upon an open pasture backdrop with horses grazing in the distance.

“We have had a horse-and-carriage deliver the bride to the ceremony, and a helicopter take the couple away from our front lawn,” says venue owner Tessie Ash. “Many of our brides transform our Carriage House with pipe and drape into a beautiful formal ballroom. The possibilities are endless.”

ROCKIN' STAR RANCH

Brenham

Time stands still in the most magical spot on this venue's property, which is under the pecan tree, beside a tiny pond, in the heart of a working ranch. Imagine this natural setting juxtaposed with Victorian furniture, and a 7,000-square-foot ballroom with vaulted ceilings. What you picture is precisely the kind of countryside fairytale wedding—with just a touch of

glamour—that the owners of Rockin' Star Ranch have envisioned.

"We can host an intimate ceremony under the stars, a luxurious reception in our elegant ballroom, or a wildly fun Western affair in the arena," says Elaine Dillard, director of operations at Rockin' Star Ranch. "At sunset, wild elk, oryx and whitetail deer all make an appearance alongside the horses and cattle in our rolling pastures. We offer a constellation of scenarios to suit every

destination-wedding wish."

Should your wedding wishes include accommodations for a select group of guests, Rockin' Star can provide these, too. The property's eight private cottages and cabins are equipped with private baths and luxurious linens, and each has its own unique charm and character.

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