A month before her destination wedding at The Homestead, a four-seasons, amenity-packed resort tucked in the heart of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, the television program Good Morning America revealed that the national park had won the show’s online vote for the Most Beautiful Place in America. “After the announcement, all of our guests were really excited to visit!” says the bride, a registered dietician from Columbus, Ohio.

While the timing of the Sleeping Bear award was a happy coincidence, the area’s beauty was no secret to the couple, given that Chris was raised in Traverse City, just a half hour away. With their September date, Jessica and Chris were dreaming of an outdoor ceremony graced with fall foliage and mild temperatures—a pleasant contrast from Scottsdale, Arizona, where they lived at the time.

The weather did not disappoint. The day dawned sunny and warmed to a pleasant 65 degrees. And the Most Beautiful Place in America? Naturally, the location was magnificent, as the guests discovered after chairlifts whisked them up the mountain to The Homestead’s outdoor chapel and its drop-away view of Lake Michigan’s Sleeping Bear Bay with the Manitou Islands floating on the azure-blue horizon.

After the ceremony the couple shared a quiet moment together on the beach, captured by their photographer. Guests, meanwhile, took the lovely trip down the mountain by chairlift to find cocktails waiting on the patio at The Homestead’s Mountain Flowers Lodge—set beside a small pond landscaped with gentle waterfalls.

At the indoor reception, distinctly Northern Michigan details tied the event to its spectacular backdrop. A cherry sauce for the pan-roasted chicken and cherry pie for dessert were nods to the Leelanau Peninsula’s famous cherries, a mushroom risotto played off the morels that Northern Michiganers forage in the spring, and the subtly intricate beauty of hops buds—locally grown—lent a natural elegance to the centerpieces. From start to finish it was a wedding worthy of its widely beloved setting.

The guests, says Jessica, left gushing that it was the best wedding ever.
Opposite page: The bride carried a bouquet of organic green succulents, artichoke, and ferns wrapped in her grandmother’s lace handkerchief as a “something borrowed.” A hand-painted wooden sign reading “reserved” held the first two rows for close family. Wearing an aubergine dress and a flowered head wreath, the bride’s cousin tossed pink rose petals.

This page: The picture perfect ceremony was held on top of the mountain overlooking Lake Michigan at The Homestead in Glen Arbor. The sermon played off the couple’s shared love of running, comparing marriage to a marathon, not a sprint. The bride’s mother-in-law, Irene Scott, spray-painted lanterns bronze for a rustic look. Tabletops showcased wreaths of succulents, chocolate brown artichokes, chocolate cosmos, and white Gerber daisies. The nature-inspired theme paved the way for unique details including birch wood escort cardholders.
This page: As the sun set over Lake Michigan, the couple shared a moment on the beach, captured by their photographers, Beth Price and Brian Confer. To pay homage to the groom’s Northern Michigan roots, the couple served up slices of cherry pie from Grand Traverse Pie Company. Rustic chalkboards creatively displayed the drink menu, ice cream flavors, and the pie options. Guests relaxed in wooden Adirondack chairs next to an indoor/outdoor fireplace at the Mountain Flowers Lodge.
This page: A chairlift whisked the newlyweds to the Homestead’s Mountain Top Deck. Guests received homemade jars of Minnesota honey stamped with a twine-tied thank-you note. A three-tiered wedding cake, created by Traverse City’s Aunt B’s Cakes and Desserts, was covered in candied vines and topped with kissing beagle figurines—as children the bride and groom both had beagles as family pets and hope to have their own soon. Flowers by Marla Courtney Wood created organic green and purple bridesmaid bouquets delicately arranged with lush succulents, ferns, chocolate cosmos, and purple flowers.

PHOTOGRAPHY: PRICELESS PHOTOGRAPHY, INC., 231.929.4611, PRICELESSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM, STUDIO B PHOTOGRAPHY, 231.651.9080, STUDIOBPHOTO.COM
VENUE: THE HOMESTEAD, AMERICA’S FRESHWATER RESORT, 231.334.5000, THEHOMESTEADRESORT.COM
You’ll feel at home in one of our thoughtfully appointed guest rooms or enjoy the spaciousness of a privately owned condominium and exclusive setting of a vacation home. Stay in an historic Inn, a rustic retreat inside a modern, hilltop lodge or a romantic getaway nestled in the woods or on top of a lake-facing hillside. Choose a level of luxury that suits your mood and your means. We offer a seasonal range of rates, attractively priced packages and no minimum stays.

We’ve carefully paired our menus with our wedding settings, creating cuisine that complements your style. Choose your favorites during your tasting visit, with the help of your event coordinator and chef. To award-winning local wines, fresh food from local farms and pastries made from “scratch” in our kitchens, we add sparkling table settings and expert service from unassuming staff. These are The Homestead’s ingredients for fabulous dining on the most important day of your lives.

We invite you to visit a special place where generations of lovers have shared whispered promises, their faces caressed by Lake Michigan breezes, hearts touched by the vision of shimmering islands, souls stirred by watercolor sunsets over Sleeping Bear Bay and the world’s largest moving sand dunes. Here, at The Homestead, you’ll feel waves of emotion wash over you, as you discover the most wonderfully romantic and luxurious setting for your destination wedding. We’ve borrowed nature’s gifts to create three wedding venues with unmatched natural beauty. Each promises a succession of memorable moments you’ll treasure forever. To learn more, we invite you to call us. We will send you information filled with wonderful photos and warm reviews from recent brides. And, we will invite you to come for a visit. When you do, you’ll see that your perfect wedding, like your love, can begin with a look and a touch.
Almost touching the sky, and fresh as the flowers that scent its terraces, Bay Mountain offers panoramic views of majestic Lake Michigan, Glen Lake and the Manitou Passage. Guests of up to 180 can be seated here for a ceremony followed by a cocktail reception on another beautiful terrace.

When it’s time to dine and dance, we’ll whisk you and your groom from the peak to the valley below where you’ll find Mountain Flowers Lodge surrounded by country gardens and a sparkling waterfall. This timbered great hall seats up to 180 guests.

A bouquet’s throw from the beach, Café Manitou inspires Thoreau-like vows in an intimate, shoreside setting with endless blue views of lake and sky. Outdoor brick terraces welcome up to 50 guests, and an adjoining bistro accommodates the same.

Camp Firefly captures the charm of the north woods, inside and out. Celebrate your day with up to 90 guests on a lush lawn, surrounded by friendly forest and wildflowers, or in the rustic Great Hall of an Adirondack-style lodge set beside a waterfall and pond.

You and your guests will spend each carefree moment enjoying the resort’s many amenities while surrounded by the beauty of nature. Beach. Pools. Tennis. Golf. Kayaks. Fitness facilities. Ski runs and trails. Men enjoy “swinging” bachelor parties at our Orvis® fly fishing school or our Dave Pelz Scoring Game School. Ladies find bliss at Spa Amira, overlooking Lake Michigan, offering therapeutic massage, and lighthearted fun for bridesmaids around a spa pool. Then, bathed in natural light beside Lillyjade Salon’s reflecting pool, their locks will be coiffed and colored, their nails and toenails luxuriously buffed for the Big Day.

You can welcome your guests with a beachfront bonfire—S’mores and sunsets are included! Or with a pizza party at Beppi’s, a sports bar. Your rehearsal dinner, family get-togethers and wedding party luncheons can include sophisticated restaurant soirees or picnics to go. And, you can send your guests home with a bon voyage brunch.
Shhh…
We’ve quietly created stylish new sites for weddings and receptions. They meld the majesty of Lake Michigan with the beauty of Leelanau. Choose one…flavors will swirl, wines will sparkle and your day, your perfect day, will be made.

Come see. It’ll be love at first sight.