



Bonnet Island Estate

— THE —  
**PHILADELPHIA  
BRIDE'S GUIDE**  
— TO —  
**SHORE  
VENUES**

THERE'S SOMETHING SO MAGICAL ABOUT a beach wedding: the sand as your aisle, the waves crashing in the distance, the salty breeze rippling through your veil. It's the quintessential summer party. And whether you plan on saying "I do" directly on the beach or on dry land overlooking the water, the seaside venues at the nearby Jersey Shore offer plenty of options for your warm-weather affair.

BY ALEXANDRA LESHNER

# BONNET ISLAND ESTATE

2380 East Bay Avenue, Manahawkin, 609-494-9100, [bonnetislandestate.com](http://bonnetislandestate.com)

**OVERVIEW:** If you like the notion of getting married on a private island, this Nantucket-inspired retreat will certainly fit the bill. The secluded mansion, with its sprawling staircases and stately decor, sits on its own coastal island off Long Beach Island and is surrounded by water as far as the eye can see.

**SPECS:** It all begins in the intimate Boathouse Chapel, an original wooden barn from Rutland, Vermont, that was transported and reassembled beam by beam on the Bonnet Island property. Inside you'll find a stone-hearth fireplace, whitewashed benches, and ceremony seating for up to 168 guests. (The first floor seats 140, and the balcony fits 28.) Cocktail hour will be held on the expansive veranda overlooking the water, before guests head inside for the reception in Bonnet Island Estate's rustic ballroom (which holds 250), where a 30-foot cathedral ceiling and floor-to-ceiling windows make the space feel open and bright, with panoramic views of the bay. The estate itself houses 12 private bedroom suites, including junior and master bridal suites,

that feature in-room fireplaces, Jacuzzis, and balconies with unmatched views. Catering for the entire property is provided exclusively by Merri-Makers.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** The scenic grounds are just begging to be photographed—the lush English garden and fountain, the arbor and gazebo and the man-made sand dune all offer plenty of variety for your portrait session. You'll also want to take a stroll along the dock, where a darling park bench and lamppost await you at the very end. (It's a top spot to pose for evening photos.)

**SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS:** Bonnet Island Estate is available to host weddings year-round; rates are adjusted seasonally. (In-season is May to October; off-season is November to April.)



## AVALON YACHT CLUB

704 7th Street, Avalon, 609-967-4444,  
[avalonyachtclub.com](http://avalonyachtclub.com)

**OVERVIEW:** There's a rich history behind this Avalon landmark, which first opened in 1942. (It was rebuilt in 1998.) The founding members wanted a place where they could drink and dance, so it only seems fitting that the club is now a popular party venue for weddings and other events.

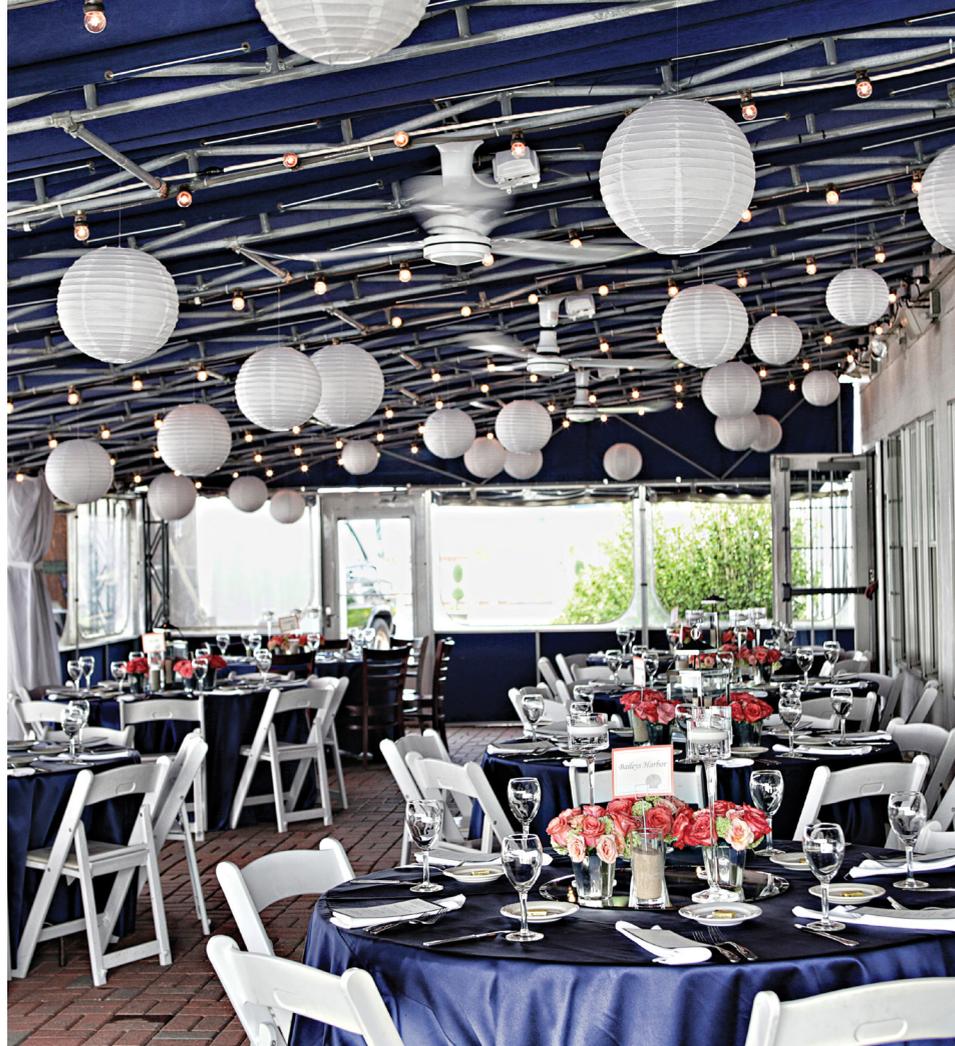
**SPECS:** Wedding ceremonies take place on the club's North Deck, overlooking the Intra-coastal Waterway; you'll say "I do" with the sea, sky and glistening horizon as your backdrop. (If the weather misbehaves, the club's indoor balcony will work for your ceremony, too.) Your guests can play lawn games behind the club during cocktail hour before moving inside for a reception in the Main Ballroom—the space is a blank canvas for you to decorate as you and your florist see fit. You're also welcome to make use of the property's smaller South Deck and the upstairs club room. If your wedding is held on a Saturday or Sunday, you'll have exclusive use of the entire club, which can accommodate up to 230 guests. On Fridays, however, the main bar area will be closed off for members-only use. (In this case, the max is 150 guests.)

**HIGHLIGHTS:** It's all about location here: The property is quietly tucked away at the north end of Avalon, where there are plenty of unobstructed views of the water and crowds are non-existent. Combine that with the club's top-notch service—the events coordinator and executive chef have been here for 20 and 26 years, respectively, so they've planned quite a few Big Day celebrations—and you're all set for the party of a lifetime.

**SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS:** Avalon Yacht Club doesn't hold weddings between Memorial Day and Labor Day, so you'll want to keep that in mind when choosing your date. Guest minimums vary depending on the month and day.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: STEVENE SMYTH. THIS PAGE: MARIE LABBANCZ

ALISON CONKLIN, DECK, AVALON YACHT CLUB



# REEDS AT SHELTER HAVEN

9601 Third Avenue, Stone Harbor, 609-368-0100, reedsatshelterhaven.com

**OVERVIEW:** The boutique hotel opened its doors in Stone Harbor during the summer of 2013 and has since become a waterside getaway for locals and visitors alike. The coastal-chic design—which is carried throughout the 37 guest rooms and suites—is both elegant and relaxed, with a mix of warm woods, soft linen, and a neutral ocean-inspired color palette.

**SPECS:** Couples who say “I do” at the Reeds have three beautiful ceremony locations to choose from. On the second-story sundeck, you’ll exchange vows in complete privacy underneath a custom trellis overlooking the water. Or, closer to the bay, the lush lawn can be set up with delicate string lights and seating for up to 220 guests. You can also get married directly on the beach; the Reeds staff will escort the entire bridal party the few blocks to the ceremony in electric motor cars. Cocktails and hors d’oeuvres will be served at Water Star Grille, and the reception will take place at the Reeds’ Sweet Grass Ballroom, an open-concept space—it accommodates up to 220 people for dinner and dancing—featuring a sliding glass wall that leads out onto a covered veranda. All food and beverage services are taken care of by the in-house catering team.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Since the Reeds is situated directly on the bay, you can expect amazing views of the sunset over the water; couples often pose for pictures on the docks before the sun dips below the horizon. Another advantage of the location: boat arrivals. Many couples who marry at the Reeds opt to have the groom and groomsmen arrive at the ceremony by boat—or the couple will make a grand entrance by pulling up to the dock during cocktail hour.

**SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS:** Smaller weddings, with shorter guest lists (between 75 and 100 people), are common during the cooler months, when the venue’s package options are more flexible. For an in-season wedding with full access to the outdoor amenities, minimums can range from 125 to 175 guests depending on the month and day of the week.



# CORINTHIAN YACHT CLUB

1819 Delaware Avenue, Cape May, 609-884-8000, cyccm.com

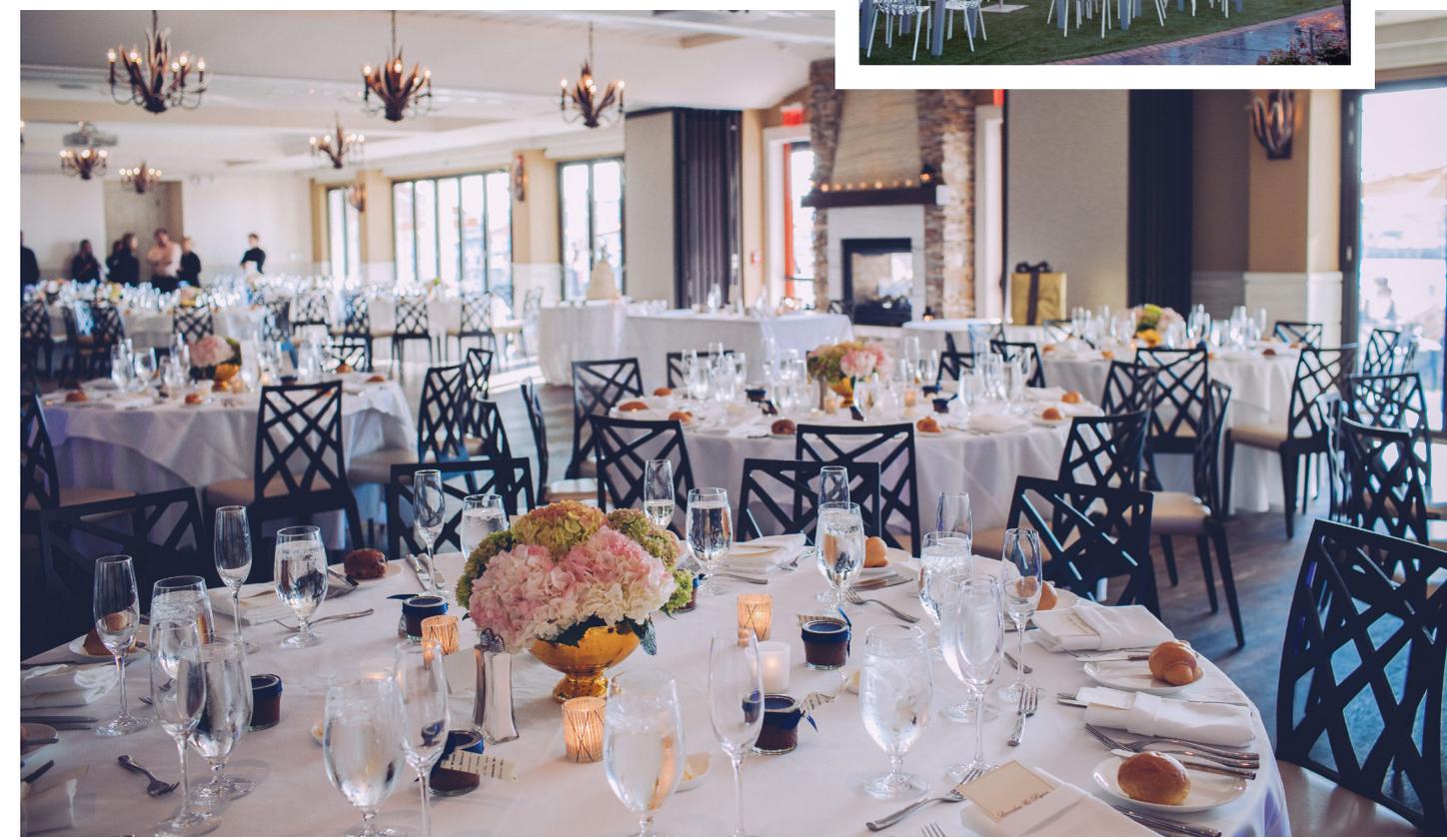
**OVERVIEW:** You won’t find a Shore venue more historic than the Corinthian Yacht Club—it’s one of the oldest yacht clubs in the country (it was founded in 1872 and relocated in the early 1960s) and is located on the harbor in Cape May, America’s oldest seashore resort town.

**SPECS:** On-the-water weddings are certainly a popular choice for couples who get married here, but the club has plenty of room to host your affair indoors as well. Larger parties occupy the main floor, which houses two reception spaces, a bar and a screened-in porch, and accommodates seating for up to 200 guests—you can also add a tent overlooking the harbor if your group requires extra space. The second floor is better suited for smaller receptions (of up to 50 guests) and features a separate bar and an outdoor covered porch and deck. The club’s manager, chef Harry Gleason, handles all of the catering and will create a menu based on your tastes and preferences.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** This Cape May landmark offers couples the quintessential yacht-club experience, complete with nautical decor and the most stunning views of the water—the sunset over the harbor is truly spectacular, so you’ll want to steal a few quiet moments with your groom to enjoy it (perhaps with your photographer in tow).

**SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS:** The club is closed from mid-December through mid-February, though they’re willing to accommodate Christmas or holiday weddings.

MARIE LABBANZ/EXTERIOR  
SUNSET: DOYLE DOWDELL



FROM TOP: SPARK PHOTOGRAPHY; DANIELLE NOWAK

# CONGRESS HALL

200 Congress Place, Cape May, 888-944-1816, caperesorts.com

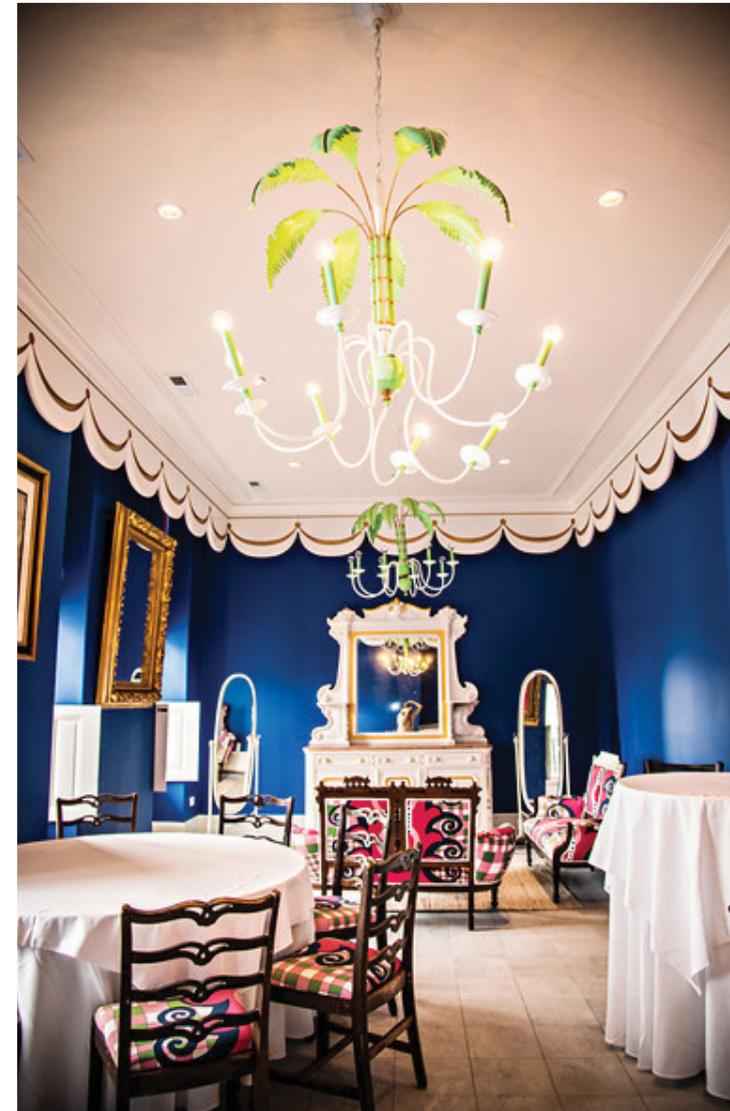
**OVERVIEW:** As America's oldest seaside hotel, Congress Hall exudes charm and old-world elegance and is the type of seaside resort that families return to year after year. Located in the heart of Cape May, the historic hotel—the building itself is 136 years old—has been a beloved wedding venue for more than a century.

**SPECS:** The setup options here are flexible depending on the vision you have for your Big Day. Outside, you'll exchange vows on the Grand Lawn and host your cocktail hour on the Veranda, both of which can be sectioned off to allow for some privacy. The Boiler Room in the basement of Congress Hall (it has the vibe of a posh Manhattan nightclub) is also a suitable spot for after-ceremony cocktails, especially in the case of inclement weather. For your reception—and your ceremony, too, if you choose to hold it indoors—the Tiffany blue ballroom, with its black-and-white checkered floor, is the perfect place for up to 220 guests

to celebrate. Catering is provided by Congress Hall's executive chef, and much of the produce featured on the menus is grown on 62-acre Plum Farm Beach, located just two miles from the property.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** With its distinctive yellow brick facade and towering white pillars, Congress Hall is a stunning summery backdrop for your wedding-day portraits. Every corner of the iconic hotel offers a unique photo opportunity, but you'll certainly want to pose out on the lawn, where striking views of the ocean and panoramic shots of the entire building abound.

**SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS:** Congress Hall is available for weddings year-round, but if you choose to book your affair during the winter season, you'll be limited to the indoor event spaces.



THIS PAGE: CONGRESS HALL. OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TINA MARKOE; DOYLE DOWDELL; SWEETWATER



# GOLDEN INN

7849 Dune Drive, Avalon, 609-368-5155, [goldeninn.com](http://goldeninn.com)



**OVERVIEW:** If you've always pictured yourself walking down the aisle barefoot, with your toes in the sand, this relaxed boutique hotel is a must-see: The property sits right on the beach in Avalon. Plus, you'll love the hotel's beachside bar, the Sandbar, which is a great place for you and your guests to recover and enjoy some extra time together after the Big Day.

**SPECS:** The Golden Inn's main event room is called Seaglass—it features a built-in dance floor and bar area, a stage for entertainment, and sliding floor-to-ceiling windows that open onto

the deck—and it can accommodate up to 220 guests. If you're set on an indoor party, Seaglass is fit for both your ceremony and reception (the hotel also has two smaller event rooms for more intimate groups), but you'll definitely want to consider the property's outdoor options, too. You can say "I do" on the beach or on the Golden Inn's spacious patio. Catering is provided by the hotel's executive chef and his team.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Perhaps the biggest perk of tying the knot at the Golden Inn is the property's close proximity to the beach—you can host your ceremony by the ocean, and when it's over, you're only a few steps away from your reception space at the hotel. Outdoors-obsessed couples will also love the option of having a tented reception on the Golden Inn's patio.

**SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS:** There are no seasonal restrictions at the Golden Inn; the property is available for weddings year-round.

PRAVDA PHOTOGRAPHY

# PETER SHIELDS INN

1301 Beach Avenue, Cape May, 609-884-9090, [petershieldsinn.com](http://petershieldsinn.com)

**OVERVIEW:** This Georgian Revival-style bed-and-breakfast has quite a long history, having originally been built in 1907 as a summer home for businessman Peter Shields and his family. Today, the original grandeur of the property remains (its crisp white exterior and massive pillars are reminiscent of a Southern plantation), but the nine newly renovated guest rooms bring a modern, colorful flair to the property.

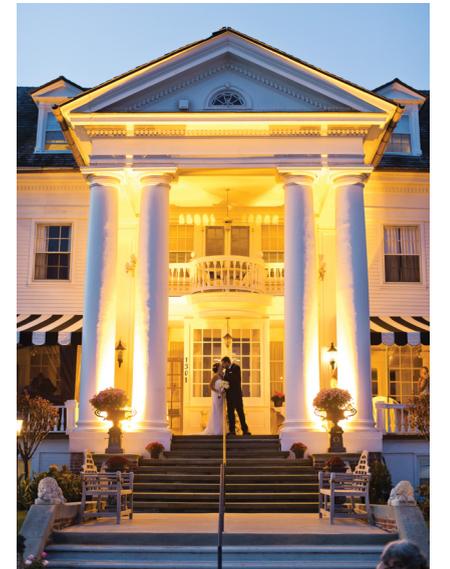
**SPECS:** You'll have your pick of three so-pretty ceremony spots: the beach across the street from Peter Shields Inn, outdoors on the front steps of the property, with its beautiful architectural details in the background, or on the grand staircase that's centrally located in the lobby. Afterward, the inn's award-winning restaurant will play host to your reception; they'll either reserve the entire restaurant level or just half of it, depending on the size of your party. (Minimum

capacity for weddings is 30 guests, and the max is 100.) **HIGHLIGHTS:** The inn's cozy ambience draws many couples to the venue—your wedding guests will feel right at home as soon as they walk into the bright, welcoming space. But as lovely as the interior is, we have a feeling the charming front porch will be everyone's favorite spot: With crystal-clear views of the beach and a black-and-white-striped awning to keep the sun at bay, there's no place better to enjoy a cold drink during the day or a glass of wine after dinner.

**SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS:** No time of year is off-limits, though the staff suggests that if you want to enjoy Cape May without the crowds or chaos, your best bet is to avoid the summer months.



PETER SHIELDS PAGE: CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: JENNIFER BAUMANN; DOYLE DOWDELL; PETER SHIELDS





# WINDRIFT

105 80th Street, Avalon, 609-368-5175, [windrifthotel.com](http://windrifthotel.com)

**OVERVIEW:** Just a few years ago, the Windrift underwent a major renovation, transforming the boutique hotel into a sleek contemporary venue. All of the guest rooms got revamped, too, so your friends and family can relax in comfort and style before and after the party.

**SPECS:** You have a couple of options here when it comes to planning your Big Day. If you have your heart set on a beach wedding, they'll gladly set up your ceremony right on the sand (it's a 100-chair minimum), though the hotel's roof deck is also a bright, breezy choice for parties of up to 165. Then, for your reception, there's Level 2, a trendy restaurant and event space that was added during the renovation, when the Windrift became the only wedding venue on Seven Mile Island with a reception-ready second-level terrace. Level 2 can accommodate 240 guests for a reception, and you'll have your choice of buffet, plated or stationed dinner packages. If your party is on the smaller side (read: 70 guests or fewer), you can host your reception on the roof deck instead.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Level 2 is the real star of the Windrift—not only does the space offer amazing panoramic views of the ocean, but its retractable glass walls create an open-air environment that gives you complete access to the outside. (Your guests can meander onto the deck to enjoy



the warm breeze and festive fire pits.) The restaurant itself is sleek and glamorous, with deep blue walls, dark wood accents and cool pendant lighting; the atmosphere sets the tone for an upbeat celebration.

**SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS:** The Windrift is open for weddings from April through October; the spring and fall seasons are generally the most popular among marrying couples. A few items to take into consideration: Saturday weddings tend to book two years in advance, and a 125-guest minimum is required for winter weddings.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SALTWATER STUDIOS

# ONE ATLANTIC

1 Atlantic Ocean, suite 4106, Atlantic City, 609-343-9902, [oneatlanticevents.com](http://oneatlanticevents.com)

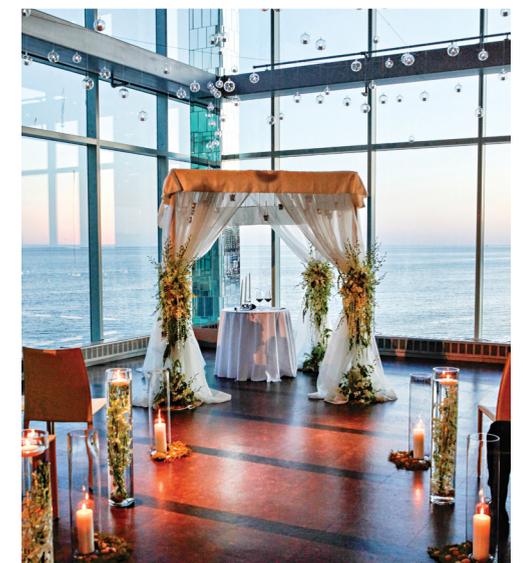
**OVERVIEW:** As far as wedding venues at the Shore go, One Atlantic is in a category all its own: The 10,000-square-foot event space sits atop the Pier Shops at Caesars and is the region's only over-water venue. (The property extends 100 yards out over and 80 feet above the Atlantic Ocean.) The design is elegant and contemporary, with an open floor plan that allows you to customize the entire look of your affair.

**SPECS:** Your celebration will take place in the Atlantic Room, a light-filled space defined by glossy sail-like ceiling panels and massive floor-to-ceiling windows that frame the Atlantic City skyline. The room is so large that it's often partitioned into thirds for the ceremony (or in half for parties of more than 200); once guests are escorted out into the gorgeous lobby for cocktail hour, the entire space is transformed for the reception. The Atlantic Room can accommodate 425 people for a seated dinner and dancing. Adjacent to the main event space is the Study, a more intimate area that's ideal for a photo booth or any other form of entertainment you might choose—it also opens up onto the 2,500-square-foot terrace. Farm-to-table catering is provided

by One Atlantic's in-house team. (Good to note: They love incorporating family recipes into their menus.)

**HIGHLIGHTS:** The aforementioned terrace is the crown jewel of One Atlantic, and your guests will love sneaking out to watch the waves crashing down below. The views you'll take in from this spot are expansive—you'll definitely want to spend a few minutes there with your photographer. The best part: You can host your ceremony on the terrace, too; it seats up to 200 people.

**SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS:** There are no date restrictions, but since the venue is located in a tourist area, it may be more difficult to secure accommodations for your guests during high season. In any case, the One Atlantic team will work with all of the local gaming and non-gaming properties to secure the best rates for your wedding weekend.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: MARIE LABBANCZ; ONE ATLANTIC