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Same-Sex Destination Wedding Boom

Gay couples are flocking to Connecticut and Massachusetts to get married. For those planning—or attending—a destination wedding, here's how to do it right.

From [April 2009](#)

By Charlotte Savino

[Boston](#)-based wedding planner Bernadette Smith has helped arrange the same-sex nuptials of nearly 75 [Massachusetts](#) couples during her five-year career. But she's never seen quite the surge in business as she has during the past few months.

Smith's calendar first started filling up when the 1913 law that used to ban gay marriage for out-of-state couples was lifted in July, 2008. But, she says, things became even more hectic when Proposition 8, the California ballot proposal restricting marriage to heterosexual couples, passed in the November elections. With Massachusetts and [Connecticut](#) upholding the right to same-sex marriage, Smith and other marriage service providers have seen a surge in gays and lesbians traveling to New England to tie the knot.

Not surprisingly, hotels and resorts that cater to same-sex weddings are cashing in. One is the [Hob Knob](#) in Martha's Vineyard; its Escape & Elope package includes an intimate ceremony, along with Champagne and massages. And all their wedding packages come with access to Tulle, a destination wedding-and-gown specialist that can accommodate not just one picky bride, but two.

Another property capitalizing on the ruling is the [Mayflower Inn & Spa](#) in Washington, Connecticut. The inn's "At Last" package includes all the traditional trimmings of a wedding: rehearsal dinner, couples' massage, garden ceremony, and officiate, along with either "his and his" or "her and her" stylists. The hotel also offers 25 percent off room rates on the couples' wedding anniversary for life—much better than a Tupperware set.

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For those who want to plan on their own ceremony, Smith suggests the Exchange Conference Center overlooking Boston Harbor—it's where she'll be saying "I do" this summer.

Anne P. Worcester, Chief Marketing Officer of Market New Haven, a tourism and commerce organization for the New Haven area, suggests a few other same-sex-friendly Connecticut venues. There's the [New Haven Lawn Club](#), known for



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its large ballroom and experience in gay weddings; the [Union League Café](#) (“arguably the best restaurant in all of New Haven,” she says); and the quintessentially romantic carousel at [Lighthouse Point](#). For those traveling long distances, the [Omni New Haven Hotel](#) can accommodate out-of-town couples and their guests with in-house ballrooms, restaurants, and a spa.

Anne Stanback, executive director of Love Makes a Family (a pro-gay marriage organization in New Haven, Connecticut) has become an expert on same-sex wedding planning since she arranged her own nuptials without the help of bridal magazines. “We may not see the lesbian version of *Modern Bride* until a few more states legalize marriage for same-sex couples, but I have no doubt we eventually will,” she says.

Gay ceremonies, of course, come in all stripes, depending on the couple planning them. Audra Weisel, a gay rights activist and owner of Let 'em Eat Cake, a custom cake company in Avon, Connecticut, has seen an emerging trend of gay couples wanting traditionally fancy white wedding cakes. “Many gays and lesbians have dreamed their whole lives about being able to get married like everyone else,” she says. “And they really want the style of their cake to reflect that.

The biggest trend, wedding experts in these states agree, is acceptance. “People may be surprised at just how few ripples the change in the marriage law has caused here,” says Stanback. “There has been no backlash, there have been no protests. Just lots and lots of people who are pleased.”

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