



ELEVATION & *Elation* Tying the Knot in a Mountain Wedding

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There's nothing like mountain air and open fields to help you enjoy nature to the fullest! A mountain location has all of these attributes and more.

Whether you love skiing in the winter or biking in the summer, mountain resorts have something for everyone, plus they're sporty and pretty venues for a wedding.

Read on as *San Diego Style Weddings* takes you on a travel tour to some can't-miss mountain resorts that are perfect for weddings, honeymoons and relaxation too!

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

Mammoth Mountain in Mammoth Lakes, CA, is about a seven hour drive north from San Diego.

About three-quarters of all Mammoth Mountain weddings come from Southern California couples including those from the San Diego and Los Angeles areas.

"The majority of couples are skiers and snowboarders – they're definitely connected to natural scenery," says Jennifer Zeigler of *Mammoth Mountain*, where weddings average about 100 guests.

Many couples get hitched in a morning ceremony on top of the mountain, followed by an evening reception. Some brides wear traditional wedding gowns to the ceremony, while others suit up in all-white snow gear and ski down the mountain after the "I Do's."

Forest Chapel is a rustic outdoor ceremony venue for summer weddings, while "Top of the Sierra" which has an elevation of 11,000 feet is a winter ceremony site.

Snowcats, which hold 13 people, can caravan the bride, groom and their guests to the top of the mountain (11,000 feet), while guests enjoy champagne, hot chocolate or cider.

"They can sip on a beverage and then soak up the views," says Zeigler.

Parallax, an on-mountain restaurant, is a popular reception site for a wedding with 100 or fewer guests.

The Mill is also a popular wedding venue at Mammoth. The space can accommodate 60 people and often is used for rehearsal dinners.

"People love the Mill because of the mountain chalet feel," Zeigler explains. "They want to create a mountain feel whether it's the centerpiece or using snowboards or skis for the guestbook."

Golfing and mountain biking are two in-demand activities during the summer, while skiing is the winter activity of choice. "Who doesn't love a group activity with everybody hanging out?" Zeigler asks.

SQUAW VALLEY USA

Squaw Valley USA, which is located in Olympic Valley, CA, gets 300 days of sun each year and is a nine hour drive from San Diego. If you fly to Reno, Nevada, you can drive to *Squaw Valley* in about 40 minutes.

This Sierra Mountain resort, which has a base elevation of 6,200 feet, has memorable views of nearby Lake Tahoe. High camp which is 8,200 feet at the top of *Squaw Valley* has both alpine and lake views.

"On Lake Tahoe, it's crystal clear bright blue with mountains in the distance," says *Squaw Valley USA's* Amelia Richmond.

The venue's newly renovated conference center, which accommodates 600 people, was used in the 1960 Olympics as a dining hall. The renovation included audio and visual upgrades as well as new carpeting.

A *Squaw Valley USA* wedding is ideal for any couple, but it's a special match for outdoorsy brides and grooms.

"If the couple meets in the mountains, skiing is part of their relationship," says Richmond. "It's what brought them together."

Wedding guests enjoy experiencing nature on hiking trips; golfing; browsing European-style gift shops; and relaxing in the spa or by the pool and hot tub. Many grooms indulge in paintball bachelor parties.

The average size of a *Squaw Valley USA* wedding is about 125 guests. Summer weddings during June, August and September are trendy, as well as "weddings in April or early May," because they offer, "a ski wedding in 50 degree sunny weather," explains Richmond.

ST. REGIS DEER VALLEY

St. Regis Deer Valley in Park City, Utah opened in January 2010 and

has breathtaking mountain views. The 181-room resort is located one mile from Park City's Main Street.

"A mountain wedding at the *St. Regis Deer Valley* is unique for balancing elegance and romance with outdoor adventures and rustic charm," says Terri L. Gentry, the resort's director of catering and conference services.

The resort has over 10,000 square feet of event space, including the Astor ballroom which can accommodate up to 250 guests; the mountain terrace, which has 360 degree views of the slopes, the mountains and Park City, and also has a "fire garden" to warm your event on a chilly night; a nearby lawn which can be used for a ceremony or a reception dinner for up to 160 guests; and Astor terrace, which can fit up to 250 guests, and has a custom built fireplace and views of the Deer Hollow Ski Run.

"Approximately 70% of our wedding couples are from Southern California," says Gentry who notes summer and early fall are the most popular times for weddings.

"The backdrop of lush greenery on the mountains in the summer and the breathtaking changing colors of the leaves in the fall create the perfect setting for a wedding," Gentry explains.

Getting married here is easy with so many locations to consider.

"The bride and groom can choose to say their vows at the resort itself or at one of Park City's dozen churches, temples and chapels," explains Gentry. "Couples with a penchant for the great outdoors can also choose to wed at Sunset Cabin, a small cabin nestled within a *Deer Valley* ski run, or at the mountain's summit, at an altitude of 9,570 feet."

Couples looking to create a "weekend wedding" experience have lots of activities for their guests including Utah Olympic Park (home of the 2002 Olympic winter games), fly fishing, golfing, hiking and hot air balloon rides.

"Just a few minutes away from our resort is historic Main Street, a charming area home to fine dining establishments, art galleries, quaint shops, bars and music venues," says Gentry. "The Sundance Film Festival also takes place in Park City every January."

Honeymooners at *St. Regis Deer Park* relax in a luxury suite with a couple's massage, rose petal turndown and breakfast for two, among other amenities.

These mountain venues are stunning in person and in pictures. The resorts are busy throughout the year so book early to guarantee you can hold your wedding at one of these luxury hot spots. ■