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STROLL THE PRISTINE WHITE SAND CARPET VIA The Islander

by **Dawn Dickson Van Ness**

The Islander of the Florida village of Islamorada is cradled by a large expanse of white sand dotted with mature, idyllic palms and iconic tropical waters. This 25-acre ocean-side retreat with an updated 1950's charm can host quite the beach party, and serves as a charming, beachy backdrop for all the photos you can imagine. If the 1,100-square feet of sand will only do for part of your event, their beautiful stone patios and spacious banquet rooms can lend you a more domesticated scene to set your stage for dining and dancing. You can decide if you want to keep your shoes on all during your wedding or at some point drop them off in a basket before putting your toes in the sands.

How sweet it can be!



Resort,

A GUY HARVEY OUTPOST

You may know The Islander name already as it has been around since the height of the resort movement, which was made iconic in movies. Today, the resort offers a variety of both modern and classic touches - its suites providing wireless connections and LCD wide-screen televisions alongside high, vaulted ceilings, neutral walls, and tiled floors decorated with simple painted white wood furniture with Baltic blue upholstery. This classic beach resort décor makes The Islander a perfect pool-side living experience. Windows are tall and open so you can enjoy the view of the palms and beaches. All suites enjoy indoor and outdoor living/



entertaining areas. And while there are rows of suites with “beach house” independence that allow you to walk right out to the water, there are also townhomes perfect for groups and families that want to stay together with shared kitchen and living areas. No matter the size and make-up of your party, there is a beach house to meet your needs.

While your event may be catered in the banquet room, you can dine poolside in view of the Atlantic Ocean at Guy’s Beachside Bar and Grill, the freshest local seafood, flank steaks, and more always on the menu. Whether you are in need of a sophisticated dining experience or a casual lunch, Guy’s Beachside Bar and Grill will serve up something satisfying. Eating early? From 7 to 11 am there is a second restaurant,



Bonefish Flats, open to meet your needs. This resort will have you covered no matter if you want to dine inside, outside, in your room, or if you want to take something boxed to go.

If you would prefer to taste the local fare dished up outside of the resort, The Islander staff are not shy to recommend over a dozen dining establishments who are their neighbors. From grills to markets and from seaside dining to live entertainment, a short drive or even a short bike ride can give you a different flavor of the village of Islamorada. Whether you are wanting to tap into a coffee house or pick-up some sushi, you are only moments away.

And the surrounding area you will want to explore. Islamorada, Florida, hosts boutiques for shopping, salons for pampering, watersport outlets for gear and rentals, art from the inspired, and museums for a deeper understanding of diving.

Additionally, don’t forget that you can’t leave without meeting some of The Florida Keys’ favorite residents – the bottlenose dolphins, or getting to know historic figures like Ernest Hemmingway. From Islamorada, get to know Key Largo, Marathon, Big Pine Key, the Lower Keys, and Key West. All are less than two hours from your stay at The Islander. You won’t be at a loss for exploration or entertainment, but you will need to study up and make a plan if you want to make the most of your time in such a hot bed of attractions all vying for your attention.



While The Islander doesn't wish to hold you hostage, you may not find a reason to leave them as they have all sorts of water adventure available at Islander's Watersports. A perfect and memorable way to enjoy your wedding festivities would be to schedule a sailing catamaran tour of the water. The "Horizon Cat" sailing catamaran can host 24 guests to cast off in the late afternoon to witness the legendary ocean sunset. Afterwards, sail back on the island breezes to continue your perfect evening.

Beyond the wedding, people can enjoy a plethora of watersports. There are wave runner tours and eco-tours by boat, as well as snorkeling, sailing, and boating rentals. Guests can rent kayaks and bicycles, or a quirky, colorful watercycle perfect for shallow, protected water exploration. Learn to sail if you wish - they have so much to offer!

If you want to relax and lounge after your big event instead, rent one of their sun covers and take a picnic out on the sands. Put your feet up. Unwind and take in what makes The Islander such a remarkable destination even before you mention their décor and amenities, their manicured beach with waving palms, and their calm, sparkling turquoise waters. ♥



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VIRGINIA BRIDE | SUMMER / FALL 2016

SECLUDED LUXURY

at
the

IRIS INN

by **Erin Kelley**

Just a short drive west of Charlottesville off Interstate 64, the Iris Inn offers visitors a warm and relaxing experience. Although located within a few hundred yards of the convenience of an interstate highway, the surrounding forest and foliage, as well as the sloping hillsides and luxurious appointments of The Inn, create an atmosphere of tranquility and seclusion that is like stepping into another world.

Whether visiting for a weekend, a week, or even more, there is plenty to do in the surrounding area to keep even the most active sightseers busy. More than two-dozen wineries are within a thirty-minute drive of The Inn, and numerous cideries and breweries are also nearby.

It's all about creating the
experience for the guest.

For history buffs, the birthplaces and homes of four former U.S. Presidents are within a short drive as well. One of those homes, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site along with the Rotunda and grounds of President Jefferson's University of Virginia. These sites draw hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world each year.

If you're up for a bit of culture, the American Shakespeare Center in nearby Staunton gives regular performances of works by Shakespeare and a handful of his contemporaries in the Blackfriars Playhouse, an accurate re-creation of the original Blackfriars Theatre in London, which was demolished in the seventeenth century.

If spending time in the outdoors is more your thing, grab a bagged lunch from The Inn's kitchen and head out for a scenic drive or traipse some of the area's five-hundred miles of hiking trails. The Inn is located just three miles from the convergence of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive, and the innkeepers will be happy to direct you to some of the more remote and idyllic trails, waterfalls, and vistas for a romantic picnic luncheon.

While there are a multitude of activities to be had in the area surrounding The Iris Inn, be forewarned: once you arrive, you may just find yourself so comfortable that in spite of all of your plans, you want to stay put. Reserve one of the recently constructed cabins and you'll be staying in a modern treehouse for adults that includes luxuries and amenities your childhood self couldn't even have imagined.

Nestled on a hillside, nothing has been overlooked in the construction of these getaways amongst the trees. Each comes with a platform king-sized bed draped in luxury linens, a self-igniting fireplace which blazes just high enough to take off the chill and provide that extra touch of romance that only firelight can really offer, and a screened deck with a private hot tub offering spectacular views of the sunset over the surrounding mountaintops. The spacious bathrooms feature heated floors and cozy, two-person rain-head showers, as well as thick, high-end bath towels and a beautifully fragrant hand-milled wildflower soap so popular with guests that the innkeepers sell it in the lobby. A fast wifi connection, individual climate control, a





For more information, check out **The Iris Inn** online at irisinn.com and visit their wedding gallery on Pinterest.

large TV with DVD player, your own clothes washer and dryer, and a fully appointed kitchen are all present to meet your more practical needs.

Request the Sip and Simmer Cabin Dinner package and a fully prepped dinner, along with wine pairings, will be delivered to your cabin, accompanied by simple-to-follow cooking instructions that will help even the most basic home cook create a full gourmet meal. These dinners are prepped in advance by the Inn's chef, Caitie Maharg, a superstar who has been working in professional kitchens since she was 13-years-old, and last year competed and won on the Food Network program "Guy's Grocery Games."

In addition to the cabins, the Inn offers accommodations in the main lodge and in four cottages. The cottages offer many of the same features as the cabins, with a bit more space and an additional queen-sized bed for slightly larger parties. Two of the four cottages are dog-friendly as well, so feel free to ask about bringing your four-legged friend.

Elegant and comfortable rooms in the main inn feature king-sized beds, luxury linens, and mini refrigerators. Whatever your accommodation preference, be sure to stop in to the Great Room for the nightly wine and cheese reception, or any time at all to sneak a treat from the bottomless cookie jar.

Chef Caitie offers cooked-to-order breakfasts each morning in the Great Room, and works to meet all individual dietary needs.

Luxuries aside, one of the most striking features of the Iris Inn is its staff. To say the twelve-person staff is hospitable is an understatement - these are people who really enjoy their jobs. They like each other; they like their customers. They genuinely want to make each guest's stay a warm and memorable experience, and happily go out of their way to make that happen.

Owners Dave and Heidi Lanford purchased the purpose-built lodge nearly ten years ago and have worked to create a congenial atmosphere that Dave describes as human, fun, and down-to-earth.

"We have fun," Manager Glenn Martin says, "but we also take our jobs seriously."

In addition to being an ideal honeymoon location, the Iris Inn can host events and weddings of up to seventy-five people, as well as quiet elopement parties of just two. Short of extras like flowers, Glenn says the Inn can offer smaller parties wedding packages that are virtually all-inclusive. Dave is commissioned to perform marriage ceremonies, and Glenn is an accomplished freelance photographer whose photos adorn the walls of local businesses.

"We're in the business of hospitality," Dave says. "It's all about creating the experience for the guest. We get a lot of unusual requests and we work with them all. ♥"



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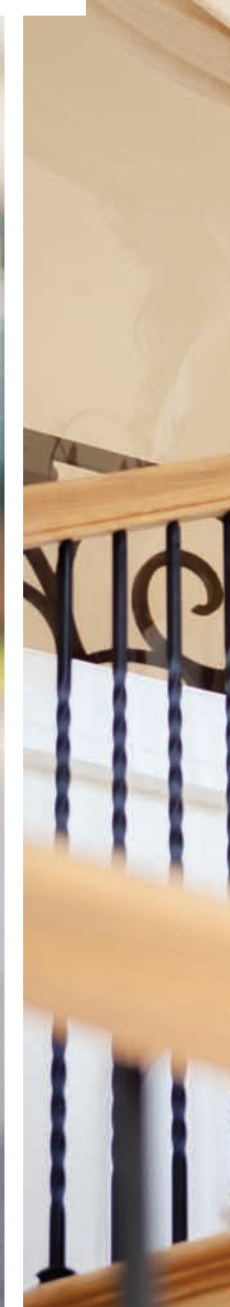
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We had a blast working with the venue. The weather was perfect, Ali looked amazing, and everything came together perfectly. Most of the vendors stayed for the entire shoot, made sure the day was perfect, and had every setting looking its best. Their attention to detail was amazing! The dresses were beautiful, hair and makeup was perfect, the flowers were stunning, and the stationary was lovely. We couldn't thank everyone enough for partnering with us.

— 180 Reflections





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PHOTO: Laura's Focus Photography



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Cake Details



PHOTO: Laura's Focus Photography



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PHOTO: Laura's Focus Photography

Taking the Cake

Top Virginia Bakeries, Professionals Reveal 2016 Themes, Trends

by **David Gignilliat**

Adventurous or traditional, opulent or understated, conventional or custom-made, penny-pinching or Pinterest-proud, the wedding cake continues to be one of the most unique ways for couples to express themselves on their wedding day.

"A wedding cake is much more than just a dessert that is served at the reception," says Graham Haddock, owner of Cakes by Graham in Richmond, Virginia. "The cake design should be a symbol that ties the couple to each other, or the cake to the event. [...] It could be a reflection of the couple's story, their personality, or even their wedding itself."

Virginia Bride Magazine spoke with some of the state's finest bakers, cake designers, and wedding professionals to get a "taste" of what's hot, in, new, and out for 2016.

Sarah Blanchard, Owner, Fresh Baked, Salem, Virginia
540.493.6812, freshbakedva.com, sarah@freshbakedva.com

"'Naked' wedding cakes are a continuing trend from 2015 that are extremely popular in the Roanoke, [Virginia] area this year. This trend is popular for rustic settings and elegant Virginia vineyard weddings."

"For couples who are looking for a romantic wedding cake, pink continues to be on trend for 2016 and is perfect for the most elegant affair or a simple outdoor event. Pink is easily incorporated into your wedding cake through fresh flowers, hand-painted floral designs, or buttercream accents. Sleek, straight edges are still in style and this year, we are mixing them with fun metallics including bronze paint, copper luster dust, and 24-karat gold leaf to accent the main wedding colors."

Liza Flojo, Owner, Cakes By Liza, Virginia Beach, Virginia
cakesbyliza.com, cakedesigner@cakesbyliza.com

"My brides this year [have] opted for more clean lines and elegance. Most of them are dictated by their venues too. One of my brides wanted a wedding cake design based on her wedding dress, so that would be lace on the cake, and her venue is the Chrysler Museum [in Hampton Roads], so she [wanted] it to be elegant ... [Another] bride wanted flowers - she will be getting married in spring at the [Norfolk] Botanical Gardens and her favorite flower is gardenia - so she wanted gardenias on her cake."

Kerrin Delaney, Director of Marketing, Amphora Bakery, Herndon, Virginia

703.964.0500 (Herndon) & 703.281.5631 (Vienna),
amphorabakery.com, amphorabakery@amphoragroup.com

- Luster & Metallic - "Very trendy right now with a focus on stylized glam. Metallics are great because they can adapt to any style; delicate embroidery in gold feels opulent while geometric shapes give off a fresh, modern feel."
- White on White - "The fresh new way to do a white wedding cake is to add interesting all-white embellishments. Dress up tiers with details, like piped embroidery or jeweled embellishments."
- Hand Painted/Watercolor Design - Vibrant floral patterns, meticulously hand-painted intricate blossoms, pairing hand-painted tiers with solid-colored layers or flower accents.
- Unique Designs and Requests - Hidden Designs (e.g., a bride and groom cake in one), naked cakes, rock-inspired cakes (geode, jewel-inspired, marble), Branding the Cake (e.g., a hidden crest or monogram in the back) - "It is a way to personalize the cake without making it gaudy."

Graham Haddock, Owner, Cakes by Graham, Richmond, Virginia
804.288.1920,
cakesbygraham.com,
cakes@cakesbygraham.com

"The ultimate in individual cake design is often to use the bride's dress as a pattern to design the cake, which normally involves a dress design visit. This means the bride would take her dress to the baker and have them design the cake with it being inspired by the dress. A lot of times fabric patterns and techniques can be used and duplicated onto the frosting." ♥



CAKE: Fresh Baked



CAKE: Cakes by Liza



PHOTO: Abigail Volkman Photography

CAKE: Amphora Bakery

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