

DESTINATION WEDDINGS & honeymoons

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A BEACH OF YOUR OWN



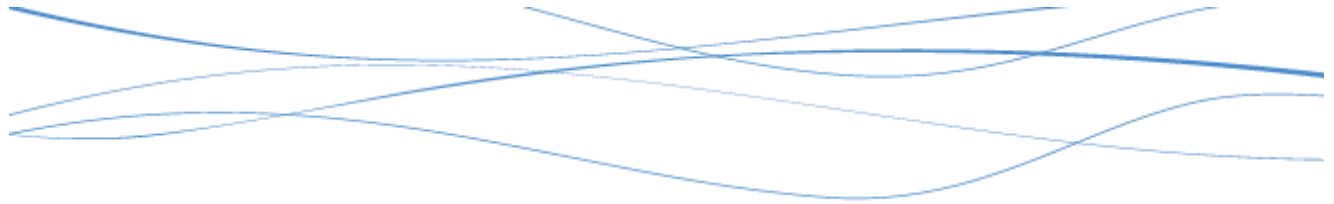
Dreaming of a beach wedding but worried about privacy, i.e., interruption from random frisbee-passing strangers? These 10 resorts offer private or semi-private (guest-only) beaches that ensure beautiful ceremonies with minimum interference.

By Jill Fergus

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hour south of Cancun, features 45 acres of mangroves and fresh-water lagoons, not to mention a 700-foot sugary-soft beach. On its far end, walk a shell-strewn aisle to exchange traditional vows, or opt for a Maya ceremony in which a local shaman blesses you and your beloved with copal incense, corn seeds, flower petals and seashells. Throw the reception right on the sand, with potted palms marking your space. Or reserve the lagoon-facing infinity pool, where you can arrive in dramatic style via *la lancha* — a small thatch-roof boat with a “just married” sign fastened to the back. Dance the night away, and between sets enjoy tequila tastings, plentiful margaritas and pitchers of sangria, along with Mexican specialties like *cochinita pibil* (slow-roasted pork) and *barbacoa de res* (spicy braised beef). It all amounts to a blowout fiesta of which even the Maya would approve. *Rooms from \$199; wedding packages from \$1,000.*

Sea Island, Georgia

Southern romance gets a seaside twist on the barrier islands off the southern Georgia coast. St. Simons gets loads of local visitors, so for more privacy, look to **SEA ISLAND**, an exclusive gated community

next door. Venue options include the charming Cloister Chapel and a serene lawn shaded by 80-year-old oak trees dripping with Spanish moss. But for many couples, only the beach — a gorgeous five-mile stretch fronting the genteel 175-room Cloister resort — will do. Amid tall sea grass and swaying palms, tie the knot under a wooden frame swathed with blooming vines of wisteria and confederate jasmine. When it's time to party, experience true Southern hospitality in the beachfront courtyard, where servers pass mint juleps and vodka lemonade in mason jars, along with sweet-potato crab cakes and Southern fried lobster pops, while a bluegrass band gets your toes a-tapping. Pull up a chiavari chair on the Ocean Room Terrace to savor a plated dinner (fried lobster tail, sweet-tea-marinated pork tenderloin) in the salty sea air, followed by scrumptious red-velvet cake. Back in the courtyard, dance the night away under the stars, and cap off your coastal celebration around a huge copper fire pit (a former cane-sugar melting pot), where you can congratulate yourselves with cigars and whiskey — Sea Island has its own blend of Woodford Reserve bourbon, which also makes a great groomsmen gift. *Rooms from \$425; wedding packages from \$290 per person.* ■

FOR MORE INFO, SEE THE 411 ON PAGE 119.



Twilight at Wequassett Resort, on Cape Cod. Opposite: A reception setup on the sand at Fairmont Mayakoba.