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Photograph by Molly Anne Photography

## 6 Dazzling North Shore Wedding Venues

Looking for an amazing and out-of-the-box place to have your wedding ceremony or event? Check out these north of Boston venues that are sure to wow your guests.

With its striking coastline, bucolic woodlands, historic architecture, and beloved cultural institutions, it's hard to find a better place to say "I do" than the North Shore. But with so many enticing venues available, the challenge will be choosing just one. To get you started, here are several exciting options.



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## **At the Museum**

For an artful affair framed by rare treasures, consider the new wing at the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) in Salem. "It's a very contemporary space, and the glass ceiling and light gray granite pillars are a large part of the experience," says PEM's Natalia Laskaris, manager of functions and rentals. Most couples say their vows in East India Marine Hall, elegantly outfitted with crystal chandeliers and arched floor-to-ceiling Palladian windows, before descending the spiral staircase into the garden atrium for cocktails, followed by dinner in the adjacent glass-ceilinged atrium, which is roomy enough for 270 seated guests and dancing.



“Couples are looking for drama at their wedding and want their guests to still be talking five years later about the whatever,” says Amy Porchenick of Boston’s Gourmet Caterers, PEM’s exclusive caterer. To wit, Gourmet Caterers has offered composed dinner plates as artful as the treasures on PEM’s walls and “Oh wow!” desserts like mirror-glazed cakes. “And couples still want an after party,” she adds, noting that donuts are still very popular, as are mini burgers and fries.

[pem.org \(https://www.pem.org/\)](https://www.pem.org/)

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## On the Water

Want something old and something new for your ceremony and reception? Wed at the 1907 Beauport, Sleeper-McCann House, overlooking Gloucester Harbor, and then embark on Beauport Cruiselines for a snazzy seafaring reception. “We make the grounds and gardens available for couples and a maximum of fifty guests,” says Martha Van Koevering, Beauport’s site manager. “The

property appeals to couples looking for a unique outdoor space in an intimate setting” awash in a rainbow of blooms.  
[historicnewengland.org/property/beauport-sleeper-mccann-house/](https://www.historicnewengland.org/property/beauport-sleeper-mccann-house/) (<https://www.historicnewengland.org/property/beauport-sleeper-mccann-house/>)



Photograph by Sharon's Studio of Gloucester

Three miles away from Beauport lies Beauport Cruiselines, featuring a 124-foot-long vessel with an open-air cocktail deck and two lower dining decks, each with a dance floor. “It’s a unique venue for a couple that thinks outside the box,” says Beauport Hospitality Group’s director of events, Danielle Maccini. “They get the boat for four and a half hours and it cruises Gloucester Harbor, passing Sleeper-McCann House.”



Photograph courtesy of Beauport Hospitality Group

“It has a full catering kitchen in the belly of the boat, so we can do any type of menu,” says Bridget Jaramillo of Vinwood Caterers, Beauport Cruiselines’ exclusive caterer. A raw bar is served in an antique dayboat and upscale lobster bakes with precracked lobsters and all the fixins.

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## In a Rustic Retreat



Photograph courtesy of Briar Barn Inn, by Bob Packert

If a barn-style wedding in a farm-to-table restaurant nails your aesthetic, Grove at the Briar Barn Inn in Rowley has it all, including a spa and 30 guestrooms on the premises. “We’re for the couple who wants a rustic aesthetic with all the comforts of a rural retreat,” says Sarah Boucher, vice president of marketing and communications at the inn. The airy, window-filled post-and-beam barn restaurant seats 100 guests with room for dancing.

Two adjacent spaces, The Burrow and The Bramble House, can be used for cocktails and dessert. “Most couples have their ceremony on the lower patio area outside the restaurant overlooking the forest,” says Boucher. Should it rain or snow, however, couples can hold the ceremony in Grove, have cocktails in The Bramble House, and move back to Grove for dinner, where executive chef [Ben Lightbody \(https://www.nshoremag.com/eat-drink/groves-ben-lightbody-combines-michelin-star-cooking-with-local-ingredients/\)](https://www.nshoremag.com/eat-drink/groves-ben-lightbody-combines-michelin-star-cooking-with-local-ingredients/) offers upscale comfort food, like braised beef short ribs over polenta with wild mushrooms and kale and homemade hand pies stuffed with local fruit.

[briarbarninn.com \(https://www.briarbarninn.com/bramble-hospitality/\)](https://www.briarbarninn.com/bramble-hospitality/)

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## On the Stage



Photograph by Correira Photography

Does tying the knot on an orchestral stage sound like music to your ears? Then consider the Shalin Liu Performance Center (SLPC) in Rockport. This soaring wood space with state-of-the-art acoustics has a performance stage with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Rockport Harbor and a second-floor reception area with water views as well. "Who doesn't want to get married on a stage with the ocean as a backdrop?" says Michelle Alekson, director of rental events at SLPC. "You look out over beautiful Cape Ann and it's not uncommon to see a boat or seagull passing by. The view is dramatic regardless of the weather. In fact, a storm can be even more dramatic."



Photograph by Brian Samuels

“Most of the weddings we do are smaller, 100 guest or less,” says Kate Monteiro of Stoneham-based Capers Catering, one of SLPC’s preferred caterers. “And seated dinners work really well.” Wildly popular are the passed mini lobster rolls and fresh-caught cod loin and local veggies. Essex-based Timothy S. Hopkins Catering takes the same locavore approach, offering starters like yam croquettes with bacon, maple, and cheddar and entrées like New England crab cakes with remoulade sauce.

[rockportmusic.org](https://rockportmusic.org/) (<https://rockportmusic.org/>)

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## In an Orchard



Photograph courtesy of Connemara House, by Bharat Parmar Photography

How about getting hitched in an apple orchard? You can at Connemara House, a 1920s Georgian Colonial-style mansion in Topsfield with its own tent surrounded by fruit trees, fields, and a pond. “You feel like you’re in the middle of the country, it’s so quiet and secluded,” says Deborah Guinee, property owner with her husband. “You can do smaller weddings inside the house, which seats up to 125, or larger ones inside the tent, which seats 200.” Preferred caterers, like Relish Catering and Events in Manchester-by-the-Sea, harvest Connemara House’s vegetables and orchard fruits to create noshes like bountiful bruschetta bars served in a wooden wagon as well as caramel apples and cider donuts.

[connemarahousefarm.com](https://connemarahousefarm.com/) (<https://connemarahousefarm.com/>)

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## In a Downtown Loft

Want edgy and industrial for your nuptials? Look no further than Olio, the renovated former 1921 Strand Theatre in Peabody, owned by event planner Sarah Narcus and her mother. Roomy enough to seat 250 guests with dancing, the 6,000-square-foot loft has salvaged wooden floors, striking concrete walls, 15-foot windows, and up to 40-foot ceilings.



Photograph by Jason Wessel

“Most couples have the ceremony in the park across the street or in front of the loft’s windows,” says Narcus. “But no wedding looks the same here because we fit the space to suit each couple.” Indeed, past weddings have ranged from boho with a big ‘ol BBQ to Venetian romance with real candles and a multicourse tasting.

[oliopeabody.com](https://www.oliopeabody.com/) (<https://www.oliopeabody.com/>)

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