A Girly-Girl's Guide to a
SW Michigan Beach Wedding

A Beach Wedding in Southwestern Michigan

Beach weddings are some of the most beautiful and touching weddings I have had the privilege to plan and Officiate over and they do require a little extra planning and preparation.

So here's my short list of "must knows" when it comes to hosting a beach wedding on in Southwest Michigan; don't forget when you've found a location that suits you just be sure to check with the town or county about any local permit requirements.

The fist thing you need to know is that most Lake Michigan beaches in SW Michigan are on bluffs. The commonly used phrase "towering sand dunes" is definitely NOT an understatement...the walk down to a Lake Michigan Private or Public Beach can be very steep!

For the most part, and depending on your location, the climb down to the sand could be a couple of awkward jumps down a dune, a flights of wide wood stairs or a just small metal steps straight down; generally our beaches are not handicap accessible and can be quite difficult to get to for the elderly; the average stair case is 100 stairs and I have had to call emergency services for guests who have passed out on the way back up!

One other thing to remember is that Saugatuck Beaches Are Public! Even the rental homes are surrounded by other privately owed homes and Public Access Beaches; most people are respectful but if you have visions of walking miles down private sandy beaches with no one is site - this is NOT the place for you!

If waterfront, and not necessarily toes in the sand, is more what you want; SW Michigan boasts several very nice country clubs, sculpture gardens, nature and historic centers with water features.

There are also some fantastic B&B's and hotels in the area that are fabulous sites for wedding and receptions that are either lakeside or have a pond or water-feature on the grounds.

If I haven't scared you off a beach wedding yet - good for you!
Be sure to check out the next page for some extra useful beach wedding tips!

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Here are some great tips when it comes to any beach wedding.
First, do yourself a favor and forget the; high heels, veil and the big poufy dress...

Shoes and sand never mix - get your self some flip flops; if you don't you'll probably be barefoot before you get to your groom!

A big dress on the beach - plan on being hot and sweaty!! You can also plan on getting your dress sandy and possibly dirty before the ceremony even begins. Consider buying a dress that is appropriate for your ceremony setting; choose a dress that is lighter, slimmer, and shorter then the traditional poufy dress.

Beach, Sand, Wind + Veil...I promise the wind will be blowing on Lake Michigan and the veil will be blowing in your face, ruining your photo's, getting pulled and tugged as everyone hugs you - need I say more?

The beach is a pretty noisy place - The waves crashing, the breeze, and the birds are all beautiful sounds, but not when someone wants to hear the wedding vows. Consider a sound system!

Hairstylist - make sure your hairstylist know you are having a beach wedding!!
A knowledgeable stylist can suggest a hairstyle that not only compliments you and your dress but also will keep the hair from blowing in your face throughout your ceremony and pictures.

Your Men/Groom - Do your men/groom a favor and don't insist that he stand there in a dark suit or tux baking in the sun waiting for you and then taking pictures for an hour! Unless you want him stripping down at dinner let him wear something lighter or more casual - a comfy groom is an even happier groom!

Hire a Planner! - Whether it's me, or someone else, do yourself a favor and hire a professional wedding planner; someone who's actually done weddings on the beaches of SW MI. A qualified planner can help guide you to the right location, ask the right questions and will be able to make your dream a reality!

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Finding the right beach for your wedding is easy!

Start Early - Start researching and planning your beach wedding as soon as possible. Not only do you have to reserve your venue, but fulfilling the marriage and potential permit requirements of the state in which you are to be wed may take a longer then you'd expect.

If you are planning to have your reception on the beach too...make sure the beach allows you to do this, some will only allow the ceremony there. I've also found some local beaches prohibit alcohol and some public beaches, parks commissions may require you to detail explicitly all pieces of equipment you'll be bringing to the site, as well as all food & beverages to be served there.

Scout Out Locations - Choose a location based on your wedding style and your nonnegotiable guest list (if any). You'll want to compare facilities and, if you're marrying on a private beach, look into any permit fees, container laws, and clean-up charges.

Restroom Facilities - Make sure you know where the restrooms are if any. Portable potties can be rented but make sure the site is accessible and that they are allowed.

Always have a Back-up plan - Mother Nature works in mysterious ways! I can not stress this enough: always have a back-up plan in place for whatever she throws your way!

Once you've found the right location here's a few other things to consider…

Tide - Take into consideration where the tide will be at the time of your wedding. The last thing you want to see is your wedding décor washed up!

Sun - Keep in mind where the sun will be too & try your best to keep it out of everyone's eyes. Consider you guests comfort, it can be HOT on the beach - provide bottled water, set out a bucket of cheap sunglasses or a few cans of sunscreen. Ceremony programs that double as fans are also a great touch!

Bugs/Mosquitoes - Outdoor weddings often have some uninvited guests: bugs! For evening events Tiki torches or Citronella candles add that romantic touch and double as bug repellent but nothing beat plain old bug spray ~ essential for any outdoor summer event in Michigan!