

California couple
Hilary Terrel and Alex
Salazar chose The
Ritz-Carlton, Amelia
Island, for their July
2008 nuptials.

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HAZEL R PHOTOGRAPHERS

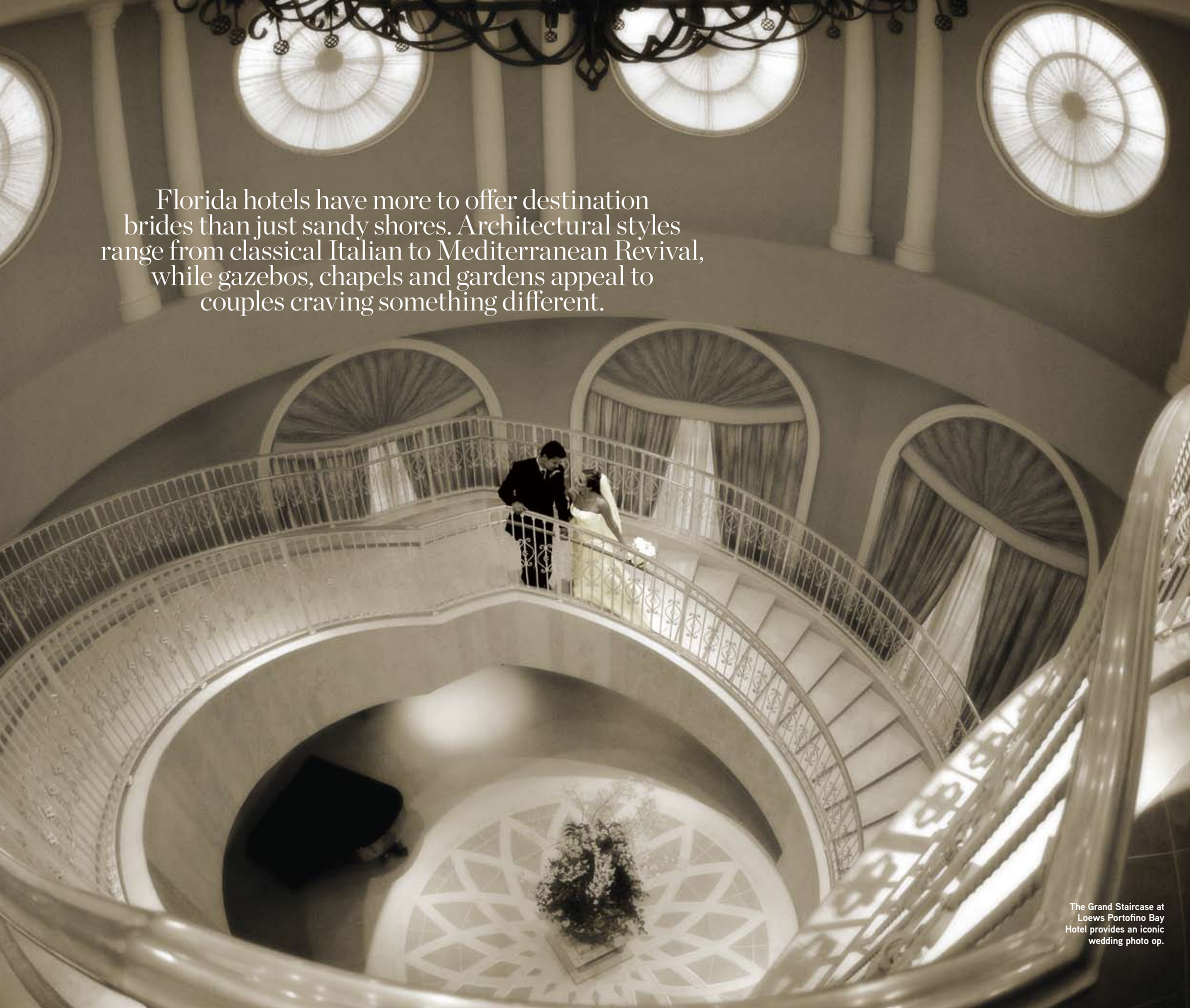
love in the sunshine state

by
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25 wedding resorts to suit any style

It's no secret that brides love back, it's a slice of paradise right in your back of its many wedding-ready properties, from resorts. No matter your MO, the Sunshine State

Florida. Easy to reach, balmy and laid-yard. What's not so well known is the diversity quaint inns to historic hotels to sprawling beach has the site you're seeking. Here are our picks.



Florida hotels have more to offer destination brides than just sandy shores. Architectural styles range from classical Italian to Mediterranean Revival, while gazebos, chapels and gardens appeal to couples craving something different.

The Grand Staircase at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel provides an iconic wedding photo op.

opt for the Tea Garden, or go big with a 450-person bash in the grand ballroom, where Florida governor Charlie Crist celebrated his nuptials in December 2008. Rooms from \$199; wedding packages from \$132 per person.

southern style

The Gasparilla Inn & Club, Boca Grande

Quaint cottages and palm-tree-lined walkways give a neighborhood feel to this Old Florida resort, which dates to 1913. Guests love the upscale yet casual vibe, accessibility to the Gulf of Mexico, and storied fishing history. (Boca Grande is considered the tarpon-fishing capital of the world.) Arrive via a 90-minute drive from Fort Myers or Sarasota, then get around the property on golf cart.

● **DIGS** The Inn features 62 rooms and suites with Tempur-Pedic beds and soft Southern decor, while 17 individual cottages house private parlors, screened porches and kitchenettes. Pets are welcome here too. For prewedding prep, the full-service spa features a private pool and cabana perfect for bonding with your girls.

● **PARTY** Ceremony sites include the Inn's Beach Club, the Golf Course Gazebo (seats 100), the banyan tree shading the fifth hole of the golf course, and the Inn's spacious living room (buyouts only; seats 300). An outdoor reception, with seated dinners available poolside or on the Croquet Lawn overlooking the bayou, is a must here.

● **INFO** Rooms from \$245; reception food service from \$95 per person, based on wedding-cake and menu selections. Note: The resort is closed from mid-June through mid-October.

2 other options

Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island This 249-room resort rests on 1,350 oak- and marsh-dotted acres. Hold your ceremony in the Amelia Plantation Chapel overlooking Red Maple Lake. For the reception, move to the amply windowed Walker's Landing pavilion, where you'll likely spy herons, egrets and other tropical birds. Rooms from \$179; wedding packages from \$998.

Useppa Island Club, Useppa Island Up to 80 can witness your vows on the private beach of this limited-access island, then enjoy cocktails at the Tarpon Bar, which proudly showcases the club's fishing heritage. Conch chowder and Key-lime pie highlight reception menus in the dining room of the century-old Collier Inn, the island's centerpiece. Rooms from \$195; wedding packages from \$275 per person.

theme-park access

Celebration Hotel, Celebration

Located in the center of Disney's New Urbanist community, this elegant property brings back the innocence of Old Florida with its hometown feel. Boutique shops, restaurants, nightly entertainment and nature trails are within a short stroll, while the Disney theme parks are just a complimentary five-minute shuttle ride away.

● **DIGS** Each of the 115 guest rooms and suites are designed with a warm color palette of gold, green and ruby, complementing four-poster beds, plush linens and Bose CD radios. When you aren't

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