



SUMMER LOVING By Michelle Winner

Summertime in the Valley can melt the enthusiasm of even the most determined bride. Instead, escape to a temperate wedding paradise nearby. Just two hours north of Phoenix, Hwy I-17 descends into the Verde Valley where astounding vistas unveil before you. Punched with shades of reds and defined by purple shadows, Sedona's Red Rocks reach up from the canyon floor to the brilliant sky. Below, the sparkling waters of

Oak Creek promise effortless romance.

With names like Cathedral, Bell and Chapel Spire, the Red Rocks connect couples in Sedona with a primal spirit of its native ancestors. In prehistoric times, Sedona was a sacred ceremonial meeting area; today, Sedona has evolved into a popular wedding destination for couples, according to Jennifer Wesselhoff, director of tourism and public relations at the Sedona-Oak Creek Canyon Chamber of Commerce. "The wedding party and guests are spending a few extra days enjoying the natural beauty and all Sedona has to offer."

Newlyweds Jenn Wojcik and Ryan Aguirre met in Arizona and "absolutely fell in love with Sedona." Married in Sedona last spring, Wojcik says, "there is no backdrop for wedding pictures more beautiful in our eyes. Having a destination wedding also allowed us to spend more time with our guests. We wanted our families to see such an amazing part of the country."



New and Hot

Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa

Looking for a swanky hot spot for your private party? If so, consider the new

Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa. Upon arrival, you will know this place is unique. The entryway's vibrant red glass-scape interpretation of the surrounding Red Rocks invites you inside. Liberal splashes of leather, stone and bamboo accented with carved wood are part of Sedona Rouge's sophisticated vibe.

After a groom's dinner, order a round of spirits at Reds American Bistro, also on the property. "Reds," as it's called by the locals, offers classic American fare with Southwest pizzazz and provides a relaxing lounge to ease the anticipation before the big day.

Say your vows in the Column Garden surrounded by exquisite hand-carved white stone pillars, then head up to the Rooftop Terrace for a Red Rock reception. "You can have a rehearsal dinner, cocktail party or reception looking out to Thunder Mountain," says Karla Lewis, director of sales for Sedona Rouge.