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The Ojai Valley
Inn & Spa lobby

COVER: A romantic interlude — imagine a private candlelit dinner at the end of a pier decorated with hundreds of lights or supper on your own private island for the day — Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Resort.



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SPRING 2010

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Travellin' News

By Anthony Verombeck

Travel Health Tips

The key to successful travel is planning ahead.

Travelers should make an appointment six months before traveling to the most exotic locations because some vaccines, such as hepatitis A and B, require six months to receive both the first dose and booster. However, if you do not have six months, getting the first vaccine will provide some protection.

For travelers visiting more mainstream destinations, such as the tourist areas of Mexico or the Caribbean check with your doctor who can tell you about any necessary precautions or recommended vaccines or prescribe important medications, such as an antibiotic to bring with you in case you develop traveler's diarrhea or a patch to prevent sea sickness.

FIVE HEALTHY AND SAFE TRAVEL TIPS

1. Pack smart: Make sure to bring plenty of your regular medications, both prescribed and over-the-counter, in your carry-on luggage. However, controlled substances must be in their original pharmacy container and over-the-counter liquid medications must meet the Transportation Security Administration (www.tsa.gov/travelers) guidelines. In addition to your regular medications, don't forget the basics: pain relievers, medicine for nausea and heart burn, bandages, antibacterial ointment and antibacterial hand wipes.

2. Enjoy the sun, safely: Using a sunscreen with a minimum of a 30 SPF is especially important when visiting tropical destinations.

3. Keep the bugs away with a bug spray with 30 to 50 percent DEET is important if you are traveling to places where malaria is present.

4. Be cautious about what you eat and drink especially when traveling to Mexico and the Caribbean. In addition to water and ice, if it's not peeled, boiled or cooked, avoid it. This includes fresh vegetables and fruits, undercooked meats and raw fish. Be careful when purchasing food and drinks from street vendors

and make sure the seal is not broken on bottled water.

5. Bring your personal health information: Store the information in your suitcase, on a USB drive or on a small card in your wallet, but make sure someone knows where the information is stored in case you are unconscious.

For more information visit our website at www.WeddingsHoneymoons.com/RomanceTravel.

Tips courtesy H. Thomas Johnson, M.D., a Saint Louis University family physician. - RT



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HONEYMOON EXPRESS



The Other Florida

THE DANCING WATERS' CHAPEL WHICH FEATURES 12-FOOT TALL STAINED

*It's called The Other Florida,
the Florida that isn't the party town*

JENIVA BERGER

It's called The Other Florida, the Florida that isn't the party town of its more glamorous (and pricey) big resort hotels and condos of south Florida, or the lively cities of the east coast that beckon rambunctious college students during spring break, or the steady hum of Miami's colorful South Beach, or the hustle bustle of Disney's Orlando. North Florida is something different, a Florida you probably don't know, and might surprise you with its gentle pace and southern hospitality, its history (America's first Christmas celebration was held here), and its romantic atmosphere found in the picturesque scenery that combines the natural beauty of its lush rolling hills and forests with the lure of its sprawling plantations.

A leisurely driving tour is the best way to experience North Florida, starting with Florida's capital city, Tallahassee. With its nearly quarter-of-a-million residents, and the seat of the state government, Tallahassee isn't quite as laid back as its neighboring cities to the east, but its southern flavor is apparent. Nestled in Florida's Panhandle, Tallahassee is a mere

14 miles south of Georgia and is closer to Atlanta than Miami. You can walk down Tallahassee's city lanes for a sampling of the south's famous moss-draped live oaks.

Tallahassee (www.seetallahassee.com) has six "official" canopy roads listed among the Top 10 Scenic Byways in America. It also has America's largest concentration of original plantations that exist between Tallahassee and Thomasville, Georgia, just 28 miles away. Goodwood is one of Tallahassee's famous plantation gardens estate that is a picture perfect place for a wedding (nestled in a grove of live oak trees), with its reflecting pool and heirloom gardens. Along with Maclay State Gardens, where I spent a delightful few hours admiring its stunning floral show, you won't find anything prettier for a lazy day picnic or an afternoon walk about.

Like many of the cities in North Florida, Tallahassee has a wide variety of hotels, though I found the elegant B&B's a perfect place for honeymooners or

Continued on the next page.

OTHER FLA from page 6

romantic sojourns through North Florida. My B&B, the Inn at Park Avenue, a beautifully restored Victorian home built in 1838 and located in the Historic District in Tallahassee, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. I found its charm - large, high-ceiling rooms, seven beautiful fireplaces, hardwood floors, and a grand staircase – to be as ingratiating as its warm and spirited innkeeper, Ann Chittenden, who will plan your trip for you if you like, recommend what to see and where to eat at the city's many good restaurants, and even regale you with the latest political gossip.

If you want to take a piece of real southern Americana home with you, you need look no farther than Madison, Florida, a tiny perfect town of 3,000, nestled close to the Georgia border and only one hour away from Tallahassee. It's a city that was established long before Florida joined the union in 1845. Today, Madison enjoys all the amenities of a big city: arts, crafts, culture and history, without the hassle of big city crowds. Stroll the historic district and enjoy the many sites and shops, especially its superb antique shops that display everything from porcelain dolls and old jewelry to Civil War memorabilia.

Madison's appeal lies not only in its beauty, lush surroundings and photographic antebellum and Victorian homes, many 200-years-old, which dot the quiet streets, but in the friendliness of its people. "What can you do if you live in a big city?" asks Madison's public relations people, then answers, "We suggest you adopt our small town!" Madison's appeal to wedding planners is world wide



The Inn at Park Avenue

whose clients like the idea of having a real down home neighborhood wedding. "Your big day becomes a big deal for the whole neighborhood!" they boast. And they're not exaggerating.

Madison (www.madisonfl.org) calls its famous Four Freedoms Wedding Chapel and Bed and Breakfast a slice of a bygone era. The historic and romantic pre-civil war chapel was built in 1851 by many generations of local families and its simple elegance extends from its crystal globes, magnificent 1851 stained-glass windows and hand carved wooden pews to its beautifully landscaped exterior. Next door, the Four Freedoms Bed and Breakfast opens its doors to us for a tour of the richly decorative accommodations and a special lunch for which the mayor herself made homemade delicacies.

Once the home to Native Americans for 12,000 years, Madison is a city that thrives in its heritage. Named after U.S. President James Madison, its Four Freedoms Monument in the town square was inspired by President Franklin Roosevelt in the State of the Union Address he delivered to Congress on January 6, 1941. But beyond the city is another kind of

heritage: a huge 716 square mile land mass which defines the whole of Madison County with its lakes, rivers, rolling hills and forests teeming with wildlife and birdlife, untouched beauty is a testament to how well North Florida preserves its environment so that everyone can enjoy its many attractions.

Not far from Madison is one of North Florida's great cultural preserves that just happens to have a state park at its doorstep. The Stephen Foster Folk Culture Centre in White Springs is a jewel of a museum that pays colorful tribute to American's first original songwriter and troubadour. Foster composed 286 works, a 20-year prodigious output from a man who died a pauper on the streets of New York, but has managed to touch the hearts of everyone who loves folk music. Along with the amazing dioramas in the centre itself which illustrate the words of each of ten songs by Foster, The Center offers 45 beautiful campsites for RV's and tents, and five lovely cabins often booked by couples who want something out of the way and close to nature.

OTHER FLORIDA
continued on page 14



Fiji: Islands of Paradise

That's the charm of Fiji. The welcome mat is always accompanied with a smile and a unique greeting from everyone.

JENIVA BERGER

Welcome to Paradise," it was music to our ears after a flight from Los Angeles to Fiji's Yasawa Island Resort. It was just what we needed to begin the first of our three island resorts stays.

The fact that absolutely everyone knows and remembers your name is like a sunny homecoming. You're met with a special "Bula" ("Hello" in Fijian) as well as a song when you arrive and a traditional farewell song when you depart.

Yasawa Island Resort, one of the more remote spots in the jewel-like Yasawa Islands chain, lives up to its name. "Yasawa" is one of 15 words in the Fijian language for "heaven" and it's an apt description

Named South Pacific's best resort in 2003, Yasawa has only 18 thatched bures, or private villas. Bure means "sanctuary" in Fijian and from the moment you cross the threshold you're guaranteed the best of care and comfort in a totally stress-free atmosphere. Day beds on the veranda as well as inside the bure — for a little reading or relaxation midday — and one's own hammock out back which just happens to be set on a wide expanse of lush vegetation facing the ocean is not a bad way to unwind. If you've never had a massage with the open air sea breezes - you're in for a special treat.

Yasawa Resort promised loads of lobster – and they delivered. Rock lobster omelets for breakfast, cold lobster for those intimate and wonderful picnics on a secluded beach somewhere, and lobster for dinners under the stars. Gourmet meals created by international chefs are a staple of each of the resorts we visited with menus that earn them their exclusive five-star rating.

The Yasawa Island Resort provided snorkeling in the care of the fine pros of one of Fiji's best diving locales, and my first taste of that celebrated Fijian drink, Kava, which has been used in Fiji's social and business life.

As in all of the resorts we visited, weddings and honeymoons are a large part of the Fijian resort business and no one does it with more panache than the island resorts. A Fijian wedding dress is historical and in an island resort wedding you'll dress the part. There will also be a Fijian choir and warriors to escort you along a waterway with floral decorations on the bamboo raft to color your world for the water procession, and a conch shell is blown to announce your arrival. Though the wedding dinner may be a private affair, you can opt to have everyone at the resort, including the staff, joining in the celebration.

Continued on next page/

Fiji (continued)

When it comes to weddings and honeymoons: few resorts can surpass the reputation of the multi-award winning Turtle Island Resort, another luxury resort found in the Yasawa Island Chain and the locale of that impossibly romantic film, *The Blue Lagoon* (1949 original movie with Jean Simmons and the 1979 remake with Brooke Shields).

Turtle Island Resort is a south pacific haven for celebrities who crave an exclusive but solitary atmosphere, and no where can you find the degree of pampering that you do at Turtle.

The resort's totally unique feature represents the height of luxury: Turtle's addition of a bure manager for each of the property's 14 beautifully appointed bures that are built along the shores of the famous Blue Lagoon. Bure managers are in charge of the laundry and housekeeping and cater, with a smile of course, to visitors' needs. From the moment you arrive at the resort, your bure manager is there with a camera to snap your picture during every activity through your stay. They will look after your needs, and accompany you on your island tours, help you set up your picnic on one of the 14 private beaches and even participate in sports activities with you.

Our last stop on this gorgeous tour of some of Fiji's most renowned resorts was Jean-Michel Cousteau, a resort located on the big island of Vanua Levu among a former 17-acre coconut plantation. The resort, which is an international

favorite for romance, honeymoons and weddings, water enthusiasts and families, won *Travel & Leisure* magazine's nod as best resort in Fiji in 2001. And it certainly lives up to its Cousteau namesake with its emphasis on ecology, certified world-class diving, day and night snorkeling and educational talks from the resort's on-site marine biologist. All of the fruits and vegetables are organically grown and a wellness program ensures a healthy as well as a happy stay. A friendly medicine man will also give you some fascinating lectures about local customs and herbal remedies.

The resort prides itself on creating the perfect wedding or romantic interlude — imagine a private candlelit dinner at the end of a pier decorated with hundreds of lights or supper on your own private island for the day — and the resort's Honeymoon Point Reef Suite, a 750 square foot bure with a private spa tub on the front balcony with breathtaking ocean views, a minibar, and a luxurious king bed with a custom-made mattress.

Spa services, the traditional Fijian massage, the Bobo, a decadent blend of tropical nut and coconut oils and special percussive techniques to relax tired muscles area also offered.

For shopping, a jaunt to the nearby town of Savusavu will introduce you to the island's young pearl industry, especially Fiji's renowned black pearls which are sold at wholesale prices by the small but friendly factory offices of J. Hunter Pearls. Other special reminders of your trip may be the many fine handmade shell jeweler



sold by the Fijian women at the market places or on the beaches, and beautiful woven baskets or Tapa cloth which is used in island dress and wall art hangings.

When all is said and done, it's still the people of Fiji you'll remember forever — whether it's the smiling children dressed in their Sunday best or the village chief welcoming you to his simple house. As everywhere, it's the friendship that makes any place a true paradise.

How to Go to Fiji

From Canada: Air Canada to Los Angeles and then Air Pacific to Nandi, Fiji. There are also flights from Los Angeles with Air New Zealand and United Airlines. From Nandi, there are island hoppers, which go to the various out islands.

Websites:

- Sheraton Resort, Denarau Island: www.sheraton.com or starwoodhotels.com/sheraton.
 - Fiji: www.BulaFiji.com.
 - Turtle Island Resort: www.turtlefiji.com.
 - Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Resort: www.fijiresort.com.
 - Yasawa: www.yasawa.com
- W&H

GREAT PLACES ON A BUDGET

A Honeymoon in Slovenia



Preseren Square

SLOVENIA IS FAMOUS FOR ITS ALPINE BEAUTY, LAKES AND ROMANTIC WALKS IN THE MOUNTAINS. A WONDERFUL PLACE TO SPEND A HONEYMOON.

IRWIN PATTERSON

I chose a tour called Alpine Lakes of Slovenia and the eight day tour lived up to its expectations.

The capitol, Ljubljana, has a population of 350,000 and a café scene on par with Paris or Vienna. In 34 B.C., the Romans founded Emona on the this site of Ljubljana. A walk along the Ljubljana River in the city takes you past many cafes, willow trees and light architecture towards Preseren Square highlighted by the pink Franciscan Church, very visible as you walk around a curve in the river.

The cobblestone square is round with a statue of the great Slovenian Poet France Preseren dominating your attention. One of his poems is the Slovenian national anthem. Off the square is a walking street, and to the left of the Franciscan Church, and a few steps away is the empty former business bank with a

beautiful reddish painted wall and colorful designs around the windows.

Cross the impressive triple bridge in the square to the market and tourist office on your left. If you continue to walk straight across the bridge to the old town and turn right, you will see the Town Hall built in 1718. The courtyard is worth a visit.

Look to your left towards the fountain, modeled after one in Rome. Featured are male figures of vases and water. Cast your eyes up to the impressive Ljubljana Church, started in 1701. Not to be missed is the main door made of bronze and created in 1996 representing 1250 years of Christianity in the country. It was blessed by the Pope whose figure is on the door. The bronze side door is even more remarkable.

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SLOVENIA continued from page 10

High above the city is the Ljubljana Castle, worth a visit if only for the view of the city in the morning sun from the tower observation deck. The Town of Skofja Loka is dominated by its castle overlooking the old town. The castle museum is worth a visit.

One of the most magnificent mountain resorts in Europe is Lake Bled, surrounded by forests nestled within a circle of mountains with a castle on one side and a lovely baroque church on an island in the lake. You may choose a romantic two-hour walk around the lake, past swans, water lilies flowers, chestnut and willow trees or take an old fashioned canopied wooden boat called plenta, propelled by oarsmen, to the island church.

From Lake Bohinj we walked through the Julian Alps to the Savica Waterfall. The cascade of water tumbles into a pool 60 metres below.

Later, a walk through a village, past mountain haps, wooden structures to dry hay, and a trip on a cable car to enjoy lunch and a breathtaking view of the lake below. You will have an opportunity to go river rafting or horseback riding here.

A highlight is a 5 kilometre walk through the Skocjan Limestone Caves, the most impressive I have seen. A river flows below, some of the rooms in the cave are very large, and the stalagmites (carbonate of lime) and stalactites (carbonate of lime hanging like icicles from the roof of caves) grow one inch per 100 years.

Next stop is Piran, population 4,800, situated on the Slovenian Adriatic Sea and across from Trieste, Italy. The town is a gem of Venetian gothic architecture with narrow little streets, an oval square and the St. George Parish Church dominating the city from above. The view of the city and oval below and the old walls even higher above provides a romantic view. A statue of Giuseppe Tartini, the local violinist and composer is in the middle of the square that bears his name.

On the way back to Ljubljana we visited the Predjamski Castle, built into a mountain, a most impressive site. A robber baron hid himself in this castle perched on a vertical cliff. He had been taunting his besiegers, even sending down fresh fruit, until an aid was persuaded to reveal his schedule. He was killed sitting in his lavatory.



Tivoli Park

IRWIN'S TIPS:

- The bus from Ljubljana to the airport leaves from bus stand 28 at the train station. The trip took 40 minutes through farmland, and was a pleasant short tour to the airport.
- Tivoli Park in Ljubljana is well worth a walk through.
- Explorer Worldwide Tours through the Adventure Centre, Toronto, Phone 416-922-7584 1-800-267-3347, email: toronto@trekescapes.com Website: www.trekescapes.com.
- Ljubljana Hote: Pension Pri Mraku, Rimska cesta 4, 1000 Ljubljana, p.p.1623, email: daj-dam@daj-dam.si, Website: <http://www.daj-dam.si> - RT

ROMANCE TRAVEL

OJAI VALLEY INN & SPA'S CELEBRATED HISTORY

BILL COWPER

The Ojai Valley Inn & Spa Resort resembles a private estate with the residential feel and warmth of Old California. The resort is located on 220 acres in the oak-covered Ojai Valley, located in one of the last unspoiled areas in Southern California, just 90 minutes northwest of Los Angeles, and 45 minutes southeast of Santa Barbara.

Ojai (pronounced "oh hi") is an Indian name generally accepted as meaning "the nest," although some experts also interpret it as "the moon." The valley was home to the Chumash Indians who found sanctuary in its canyons and mountains.

During the late 1700s Ojai was settled by the



ENTRANCE TO THE OJAI VALLEY INN & SPA

Spanish and Mission societies, followed by Don Fernando Tico who established Rancho Ojai in 1837 with a Mexican land grant. In 1874, the valley's first settlement was named Nordhoff in honor of an east coast journalist who had publicized this special area. Not until 1917 did this little town become known as "Ojai."

In 1942 the Inn was transformed into Camp Oak and used as a military training centre for army troops. In 1944, the Army turned the base over to the Navy for a rest and recuperation facility. After World War II, the Inn was returned to private ownership and underwent a major renovation in 1986.

In 1986, new rooms were added, the golf course was redesigned, a second swimming pool, pictured, and fitness centre were added, and eight new tennis courts opened. At the same time, a 4,800 square foot conference centre was built and the dining rooms were modernized.

A 35,000-square foot luxury spa in the classic Spanish Colonial style opened in 1997.

Today, Ojai is an inspiring retreat with a surprising blend of cosmopolitan style and small-town charm. Home to an eclectic mix of writers, artists and philosophers as well as agricultural growers, the town also hosts a nationally acclaimed tennis tournament ("The Ojai"), and a music festival of international renown. Visit www.ojairesort.com.



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ESPA the award-winning spa in the Acqualina Resort and Spa in Sunny Isles, Florida, features 11 multi-functional treatment rooms, four beauty suites, a private spa suite for two, outdoor terrace with a spa pool and heated jet pool with a Roman waterfall. The Spa combines ancient and modern therapies with the latest in skin care advances and has a full line of ESPA marine, aromatherapy and plant active products.

For more information on Acqualina Resort & Spa on the Beach and ESPA at Acqualina visit www.acqualina.com.

- SW



CULTURAL CENTER

OTHER FLA from page 7

Though Foster was born in Pennsylvania and is buried there, Florida has adapted one of his songs as its state song (*Old Folks at Home*), and White Springs which houses the Cultural Center, pictured above, has been called “The Land of the Swanee River.” Perhaps Foster’s best loved song, *Way Down Upon the Swanee River* (1851) wasn’t penned because of his love for it. In fact Foster had never seen the river. He found the name “Swanee” in a book and liked the sound of it! The rest is musical history. These days everyone can enjoy the beauty of the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail which provides miles of opportunity for a variety of tours along the river. You can sleep under the stars (how romantic is that!), or under a tent, in a cabin, at a local motel or bed and breakfast.

Bed and Breakfast inns are the delight of couples who return again and again to some of the loveliest B & B’s found in the city of Gainesville. Looping southward from White Springs, Gainesville is a college town (one of the fifth largest universities in the U.S. and the oldest and largest in the state of Florida), the home of the Florida Gators, and the city that provided the first sports drink (Gatorade). But besides its medical research facil-

ities and marvelous schools, Gainesville is just plain lovely. Its preservation of historical buildings and its natural surroundings, parks, museums and lakes, make it a welcome town for tourists.

Located on a quiet street but within walking distance of Gainesville’s historic center, the Sweetwater Branch Inn “Devoted to guests who are seeking the exceptional,” is a dream B & B, promising absolute privacy, luxurious amenities and gourmet food. Comprised of two carefully restored Victorian-era mansions and surrounded by beautifully sculpted gardens, one of the two, the Mackenzie House, a magnificent three-story Queen Anne style Victorian home is known as one of the most elaborate Victorian buildings in Gainesville’s history, and has been featured on the popular PBS television show “Inn Country USA.” Not surprisingly, Sweetwater offers Romance Packages and will even customize weddings for that special day. (www.sweetwaterinn.com).

Our route which starts to loop west after leaving Gainesville, has yet another surprise in store for us before we head back to Tallahassee. The tiny fishing village of Steinhatchee (www.steinhatcheelanding.com) lies in the very heart of Florida’s “Nature Coast,” unspoiled, and protected, free of urban sprawl and pollution. It’s a

mere 85 miles south of Tallahassee, but you might be in another world at Steinhatchee Landing Resort, whose 35 acres resemble a 19th century Southern village with its 40 charming completely equipped cottages and Victorian and Florida Cracker architecture.

Steinhatchee Landing in fact resembles a small town itself – without the commercial aspect. Narrow streets and paths wind between and around the property’s magnificent live oak, pine, palm, cedar, magnolia and cypress trees. Wooden bridge, creeks, picket fences, gazebos and swings, a vegetable, herb and spice garden, croquet lawn and a petting zoo are among its many country attractions. The Resort itself lies on the shady banks of the meandering Steinhatchee River which flows into the Gulf of Mexico, and its cottages offer wonderful scenery nestled in the woods along the Kings Creek, overlooking the river, or surrounded by landscaped gardens.

The serenity and beauty at Steinhatchee Landing is what attracts families and honeymooners alike. Families can take advantage of the recreational activities like the new Pool Pavilion and Fitness Centre, fishing, hiking, canoeing, swimming, kayaking and scuba and cave diving, as well as the many children’s programs, while honeymooners will find a romantic haven in one of eight honeymoon cottages that feature luxurious bedding, gas fireplaces and oversized hydrotherapy tubs. If the wedding is taking place at the Landing, what bridal couple wouldn’t fall in love with The Dancing Waters’ Chapel which features 12-foot tall stained glass windows, antique wood and Gothic architecture, a romantic setting for a memorable day.

Steinhatchee Landing lays claim to capturing the spirit and romance of Old Florida, but in remarkable North Florida, there’s always something to capture the spirit – and the heart.

For more information visit www.visitflorida.com. - RT

DESTINATION BRIDAL

dresses that travel well

Once you have decided on a destination wedding you have to consider the place, type of wedding, weather and how the dress will travel.

SHELLEY WAUGH

If you are planning to shop at the destination ask the local wedding consultant to assist you and check out their websites before you go.

Dresses that work well on the beach or in gardens are slip dresses, mermaid shapes, soft ruffles and semi-ballgowns that barely touch the ground in fabric choices in silks, chiffon, light lace and organza. Long trains catch the sand and long veils get caught in the wind easily and usually get in the way of the cer-



DAVID
DIXON

emony and pictures. Short veils, tiaras, fancy headbands, flowers or jewellery make good head pieces.

When you book your flight directly or with a travel agent, let the airline know that you will be carrying on your wedding outfits in garment bags and you require them to be placed in the first-class closet. There may be an extra fee for this and if your garment bags are oversized. Find out your guidelines before you start packing for the airport.

If you need to touch up your dress at the destination, try hanging it in the bathroom when you shower so that the steam will help the dress fall into place. Before you travel, ask the wedding consultant at the destination if they have steam irons to assist with wedding dresses.

Make a list of the fashion essentials you will be taking along with your dress such as your headpiece, wrap or stole, purse, shoes, bustier or undergarments, pantyhose, garter, and jewellery,

If you decided to get married in your bikini or sportswear on the beach - then check to make sure your outfits are accepted by the officiate and enjoy. - RT

Photography by Kin Wong/WI Network Media taken during Fashion Week Toronto.



CARLIE WONG



PAT McDONAGH

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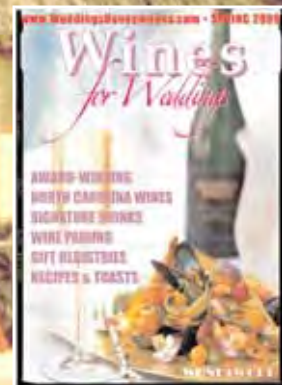
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