

#ADVENTUREELOPEMENT:

# Elope WITH US

BY NINA LARY



*"The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes "Awww!"*

-Jack Kerouac\*

Like Kerouac, a vagabond, rockhopper, and speed-devil roadtripper, we here at Wedventure swoon for the wild at heart. For the couples that spend their Saturdays hiking high into sharp pine forests and

their nights star-hunting in the desert. For those whose native language is wanderlust and the only rule is break all the rules. Don't get us wrong, we love urban nuptials, the glamour and grit of old industrial buildings and glassy facades, but there's some iconic about an al fresco wedding for the ages. Maybe it's because here in Central Oregon we have it all — the dusky red spires of Smith Rock, alpine lakes and snow-capped peaks, the sagebrush and sand of the desert — but we can't imagine any more beautiful witness to an exchange of vows than Mother Nature herself. It's a union between two people, and between them and the land.

In record numbers, the wild ones are not only embracing the great outdoors, but they're eloping. We love outdoor elopements, especially when a community of local vendors collaborate to bring a couple's creative vision to life in a unique and thrilling setting. Wedventure territory has plenty of killer settings to choose from and a do-it-your-way Oregon spirit. A thriving tourist industry and adventurous outdoorsy vibe make Central Oregon destination wedding-central during any season. There are some logistics to consider when planning an adventure elopement, but don't worry, we've got you covered. Here are some tips to make your elopement all that you envision!

### WHAT DO WE CALL AN ADVENTURE ELOPEMENT?

Traditional elopements were often spontaneous and secretive, but today more people than ever are eloping and their ceremonies are often just as planned as a blowout, but with none of the crowd and little of the cost. While you won't have to cater to a crowd (literally or figuratively) and eloping can save you money, it's not always the cheap-o option. But here at Wedventure, we are obsessed with

adventure elopement because it's one of the most intimate and flexible ways to say "I do." Since you don't have to worry about a grand set-up or the details of a 100-person reception, you can relax and focus on the two of you. And with fewer people to worry about, location is more flexible. Let's face it, Aunt Mildred might not hike to the top of a snowy peak to watch you exchange vows. We think adventure elopement consists of very few people — typically the couple, an officiant for vows, a photographer, and maybe a planner. Some couples invite parents, siblings, a best friend, or even just bring along their pet.

### WHEN PHOTO QUALITY & PHOTOGRAPHER EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Adventure elopements often utilize out-of-the way settings and nontraditional venues, so be sure your photographer has both the spirit and equipment to capture your shots. Do they have experience working with couple in all kinds of landscapes and weather? Have they shot in shady old-growth forests and on the top of mountaintops in full sun? Consider visiting and doing a trial run location-wise to save time on your big day, especially if your



PHOTOGRAPHY: LAUREN MILES; FLORALS: BELLA BLOOM FLORALS; MAKEUP: POWDER INC



THIS PAGE: NICOLE MASON PHOTOGRAPHY;  
DRESS: RUE DE SEINE; OPPOSITE PAGE:  
BETHANY SMALL PHOTOGRAPHY; VENUE:  
RANCH AT THE CANYON; PLANNER: MAE & CO.  
CREATIVE; RENTALS: EVENTS BY DESIGN

photographer hasn't. For example, it's essential to know where and when the sun sets to capture the best shots during the best light. One of the most exciting things about an adventure elopement — the unpredictable nature elements — can spoil your vision if elements particular to the climate aren't considered. On the other hand, flexibility and sense of adventure are key. Try not to get too attached to a particular outcome.

Also, will you be using the photos for more than just social media posts for example? While books, prints, and wall art made from wedding photos were a standby in the past, today many photographers and couples opt to share pictures exclusively via social media, which can mean a different approach to sizing and image quality. If you plan to print or want the option, it's important to talk to your photographer about what they're working with. Engagement photos are a great way to test the waters with a photographer. After the shoot, you can test print their photos with a printer of your choice and ensure they're what you're looking for.

## EXTRAS: ALL THE DETAILS THAT MAKE YOUR DAY UNIQUE

A planner that specializes in elopements is key. They can help you make all these decisions and hire the vendors that understand the unique elements of an elopement. For example, should you plan a picnic, bring drinks and/or dessert and from where do you get all of these, especially when you are not from the area. They will also be great at giving advice on things like when you should cut your photographer loose and just be together as a couple on that picnic. We recommend planners be creative and The Greatest Adventure Weddings.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER:

### All things permits and licenses:

Special park permits, an officiant, your witnesses, a simple flower crown, a cozy cabin to get ready in, a delicious meal to share together afterward. There are so many elements to an elopement other than the photos.



If you are wanting video as well, you might need permits for drone usage, etc. Be sure to ask your videographer and photographer if they need these. Note that city, state parks, and forest service land all require at least a 90-day wait for permits. In Oregon, you need a licensed officiant and two witnesses for a legal ceremony. Your photographer can count as one.

**Consider eloping on a weekday:** Our Central Oregon outdoor hotspots are always popular, but even more so on weekends when the tourists arrive. If you choose a weekday, you'll have a better chance of having the space to yourselves.

If you choose to do both a big wedding reception AND a special elopement, many couples wonder if they should elope before, during, or after the big wedding. **Wedventure recommendation:** Elope just for you. Celebrate with your guests at a later date or vice versa. You will enjoy it so much more.

For couples planning a wedding or vow renewal, we cannot stress enough the importance of vendor chemistry. "Using vendors who have worked together in the past helps the whole atmosphere of the event. They are most likely comfortable with each other and know how to work in tandem." - Faith & Connor, eloped 2017 at the Painted Hills, Oregon

## WHERE TO ELOPE IN CENTRAL & EASTERN OREGON:

Skies the limit really, and we have peaks for days, but don't only think up! The PNW territory is brimming with lakes, rivers, and beautiful off-the-beaten paths.

### Sparks Lake:

- Dark-green forests, bright-green meadows, and deep-blue skies will linger on your real or imaginary canvas.



ALL PHOTOS BY ELY ROBERTS PHOTOGRAPHY

- Around 30 million years ago, massive amounts of ash and debris resulting from the eruptions of nearby volcanoes filled the caldera and hardened into rock. Smith Rock Tuff – the largest rock formation on the western rim was the outcome, creating massive walls and spires. The Crooked River then made its way through the rock layers to carve the features seen today. At 3200 feet high, the Smith Rock ridgeline rises 600 feet above the river gorge below.

**WV TIP:** Day use fees of \$5 to park at Smith Rock State Park are required year-round. They are charged per vehicle. Save some time and get your pass online. If you ride out with your photographer, ask if they have an annual pass to avoid purchasing another.

**WV TIP:** Flying a drone is not allowed at Smith Rock State Park. While yes, the views from above are incredible, the sheer number of people with drones these days takes away from the park's serenity for all, including the wildlife. And the neighbors don't appreciate them straying over adjacent private property.

### Shevlin Park:

A romantic covered bridge and sun dappled groves of Ponderosa. Tumalo Creek rambles through the park and under several foot bridges. Fall colors are glorious along the water. Located less than three miles from Bend, a 652-acre regional park was donated to the community in 1920. Although the park has a paved road, three developed picnic sites and Aspen Hall within its boundaries, most of the park remains undeveloped.

**WV TIP:** In spring 2018, the City of Bend will be doing a prescribed burn to mitigate increasing risk for forest fire. Dates are still to be determined, but will be sometime between April and early June based on weather and wind conditions. Check in with the Bend Parks and Recreation District for the most updated information before you book.



- Located about 25 miles west of Bend off Cascade Lakes Highway, a drive full of gorgeous views for an abundance of amazing photo opts.

- Once there, the spectacular lake setting (370 acres of lake alone) is dominated by South Sister, Broken Top, and Bachelor Mountain views.

**WV TIP:** Move carefully in the meadow's tall grass to avoid narrow, concealed water channels. Cold water and deep holes in these "beaver highways" can make for a frigid or accidental plunge. Also, there are mosquitoes and biting flies especially in early summer, so bring repellent.

### Smith Rock:

- Scenic views of deep river canyons and rock climbing. Over 650 acres to explore, hovers around 3000 feet in elevation. Open dawn 'til dusk, every day of the year.



### Elk Lake:

• Stunning alpine lake with front-row views of several Cascade peaks. Named for the large number of elk that populate the surrounding forest come summer.

• High altitude: 4,900 feet above sea level. Thirty miles west of Bend, six miles west of Mount Bachelor in the Deschutes Forest.

• Elk Lake is home to a private resort, as well as U.S. Forest Service campgrounds and picnic sites.

**WV TIP:** Although the resort does its best to create a private atmosphere for weddings, it is an outdoor venue with a lake open to the public at the same time. You will find (and possibly hear) hikers and motorboats especially during summer months. However, we invite you to embrace all the beauty that Elk Lake offers and let go the possibility of a little extra noise of others out adventuring. Enjoy.

### Meadow Camp:

• Just seven miles west of Bend on Cascade Lakes Highway. Whether driving or paddling up to this gorgeous riverside park, it's a sweet place to picnic alongside the Deschutes.

• The Deschutes River as it flows through Central Oregon toward the mouth of the Columbia River, is a nice segway to the Columbia River Gorge if you want to make a full trip of it.

• Parking requires a \$5/day recreation pass.

**WV TIP:** Experts Only Need Apply. If you're considering paddling in or out for a ceremony, make sure you are at the top of your game. Though the river here seems calm, the section between Bend and Meadow Camp is some of the Deschutes' most challenging water, filled with Class IV and V rapids and no chance for portage. Think "Eye of the Storm." Also: No potable water on site, so pack in all the water you may need.

LEFT & TOP RIGHT PHOTOS + FLORAL: ROSEMARY & PINE PHOTOGRAPHY; CREPE CAKE: PANTRY; REMAINING PHOTOS: CAT DOSSETT



### FURTHER OUT LOCALES

#### Crater Lake:

• An awe-inspiring ethereal blue alpine lake surrounded by over 170,000 acres of old growth forest.

• The deepest lake and many say cleanest lake in the U.S.; the seventh deepest in the world. Park is also home to more than 40 caves.

• 7,700 years in a violent eruption Mount Mazama blew its top collapsing and sunk into itself, creating a donut-shaped lake called a Caldera.

• Park contains two hotels, campgrounds, and a general store.

**WV TIP:** Make sure to plan ahead for any winter elopements. During the snowy season, North Entrance Road, Rim Drive and Pinnacles Road are often closed, which leaves only one access road. Also, gas up good ahead of time and maybe

bring an extra full can, because there are no gas stations open in the park during the winter and it's miles to the nearest fill up.

### Painted Hills:

• Eastern Oregon's Painted Hills shift with the light. Depending on the angle, the colorful striated layers morph from ochre to gold, deep reds turn terracotta, and wisps of black come into focus. Each band marks centuries, each color celebrates an era.

• Painted Hills are one of three units that make up the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, adjacent to scenic byways that travel through ghost towns, and the John Day River.

**WV TIP:** The light at Painted Hills is constantly changing, so look at photos or if possible visit not only different times of years, but times of day.

### COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE & HOOD RIVER:

There are so many waterfalls, gorgeous overlooks of the Gorge all along the Oregon and Washington side. Here are just a few of our faves:

### Hole in the Wall Falls:

While it doesn't boast the most romantic name, the 96-foot man made Hole in the Wall waterfall is a magical place for an adventure elopement. A small footbridge downstream of the elegant falls is a picture perfect-ceremony spot. Currently closed due to fire, Hole in the Wall will hopefully reopen summer 2018.

### Government Cove Peninsula:

A tucked-away cove with killer views of the Columbia River. On the right day/time, it can feel like your own private island.

### Mitchell Point:

The adventurous couple that takes on the steep ascent up Mitchell Point will be rewarded with 180-degree views of the Gorge.

### Skamania Old Stone House:

Couples craving a deep forest setting should check out Old Stone House (see the gorgeous remains in the image to the right), a rambling collection of open-air, moss-covered stone ruins. It's only a few minute walk from the highway, but feels worlds apart — think Lord of the Ring vibes.



### Vista House at Crown Point

If indoor elopement with an epic view is more your style, opt for Vista House, a historic building alongside the Historic Columbia River Highway with an Art Nouveau atrium and stunning Gorge-wide views.

### Maryhill Stonehenge

Looking to add a touch of history to your big day? This stonehenge (see bottom image.) was the first monument in the U.S. to honor those lost in World War I. The altar stone is placed to be aligned with sunrise on the summer solstice and overlooks the Columbia River from the Washington Side. Contact the Maryhill Museum of Art for more info availability and rental rates.

### HELICOPTER ELOPEMENT:

Couples seeking an exclusive, untouched

locale, should consider helicopter elopement. Big Mountain Heli Tours works with in-house wedding planner, ae creative, to capture each couple's vision. Partnering with Central Oregon's most scenic private ranches allows Big Mountain to offer couples access to High Desert locations unseen by most. Whether you choose a private ranch or a pristine mountain peak, a heli-elopement is an unforgettable way to go. -WV

*\*On the Road, novel by American writer Jack Kerouac*

TOP TWO PHOTOS: DAWN PHOTOGRAPHY;  
FLORALS: SUMMER ROBBINS FLOWERS;  
DRESS: BLISS NW BRIDAL; BOTTOM LEFT: KAYLA SPRINT PHOTOGRAPHY; DRESS: DIAMOND SEA BRIDAL; FLORALS: FLEURS UNIQUES; BOTTOM RIGHT: DRESS: LA BELLE SALON, REBECCA RIZZO PHOTOGRAPHY



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