



INDOOR LOCATION GUIDE



Spence Cabin – Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Vibe:

Dreamy, riverside charm meets vintage Smoky Mountain history. This pink-painted cabin sits along the Little River, tucked into the magical, mossy woods of Elkmont—truly one of the most romantic indoor elopement locations in the Smokies. It's a favorite for a reason!

Best Time of Day to Shoot:

Late morning to early afternoon works beautifully here thanks to the tree canopy—it softens the light and gives that dappled forest glow. Evening can be stunning too, especially by the water, but keep in mind the cabin must be vacated by 6 PM.

Permit Requirements:

You'll need to reserve the cabin through [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov)

A separate wedding permit through GSMNP is also required for ceremonies (I help guide you through this!)

It's day-use only (no overnight stays), with a max group size of 40.



Accessibility:

- Wheelchair accessible
- Paved parking area and accessible pathway right to the door.
- Bathrooms onsite.
- Easy walk from the parking lot, no hiking necessary!

Pro Tips from Me:

- The riverside stone steps are chef's kiss for portraits.
- If you love vintage details, peek inside the fireplace room—it makes a cozy spot for vows.
- Nearby Elkmont Troll Bridge is just a short stroll away for a post-ceremony photo adventure.

Heads up:

This is one of the most popular wedding locations in the park—if you're dreaming of Spence Cabin, plan to book well in advance!



Appalachian Clubhouse – Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Vibe:

Rustic lodge meets mountain elegance. With its stone fireplace, wood-paneled walls, and wraparound porch, the Appalachian Clubhouse has old-school national park charm with room to spread out. Perfect for couples who want a cozy indoor ceremony and a bit of room for guests to mingle.

Best Time of Day to Shoot:

Midday to afternoon is best for this spot—light streams beautifully through the windows during golden hour, especially onto the porch. As with Spence, events must wrap by 6 PM.

Permit Requirements:

Reservation required through [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov)

GSMNP wedding permit is required for ceremonies held here

Day-use only, with group capacity up to 96 people (though it still feels great for more intimate events too!)



Accessibility:

- Large gravel parking lot
- Short, easy walk to the entrance
- Indoor restrooms available

Pro Tips from Me:

- The porch is perfect for first looks or rainy-day portraits.
- There's a dreamy old chimney out back that makes a unique photo backdrop.
- You can easily pair this location with portraits at nearby spots like the Troll Bridge or Little River Trail.

Bonus: it's less competitive than Spence Cabin, but still books fast in peak seasons—spring and fall dates go quick!



The Barn at Havenwood – Maryville, TN

Vibe:

Whimsical, woodsy, and warm. Tucked away in the forest, The Barn at Havenwood offers cozy cabin charm with a bit of modern flair. It's an intimate, peaceful setting perfect for couples who want privacy, comfort, and a nature-inspired backdrop—without hiking into the woods to get it.

Best Time of Day to Shoot:

Golden hour here is magical. The soft light filters beautifully through the surrounding trees, giving everything a gentle, enchanted glow. Inside the barn, the natural light and warm wood tones photograph beautifully all day long.

Permit Requirements:

No national park permit required since it's a private venue

Rental includes the barn, surrounding wooded grounds, and getting-ready space

Reach out to the venue via [Peerspace](#) for pricing and availability



Accessibility:

- Onsite parking
- Bathrooms available
- Easy walk to the ceremony area, no hills or hiking trails
- Great choice for guests with mobility needs

Pro Tips from Me:

- The outdoor firepit and twinkle lights add a cozy, romantic touch—especially in fall or winter.
- The barn doors are stunning for your ceremony backdrop or a dramatic entrance.
- The wooded setting makes this feel like a fairytale forest elopement without ever stepping foot on a trail.
- Perfect option for couples who want the nature vibes without relying on national park logistics or weather.



Why I love this spot so much!

This venue is truly a gem for elopements and intimate weddings. It's perfect for couples who want to celebrate with their closest people – whether you're dreaming of a sweet, simple ceremony or a lively reception with catering, a full bar, cake, music, and dancing. There's even a beautiful upstairs space for getting ready, which makes the whole day feel seamless and relaxed.

I also happen to know Amber personally and absolutely love working with her – she pours so much heart into every event. This venue was made with elopements and small weddings in mind, making it an ideal choice for couples on any budget.



Ely's Mill Cabin – Gatlinburg, TN

Vibe:

Historic, rustic, and wildly charming. Ely's Mill is a family-owned treasure nestled right at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The cabin and surrounding property offer a warm, nostalgic setting that feels like stepping back in time—with plenty of woodsy magic.

Best Time of Day to Shoot:

Late afternoon light here is gorgeous, especially when it filters through the trees and hits the little stream nearby. Morning light works well too—this spot is pretty shaded, so you get soft light most of the day.

Permit Requirements:

No national park permit required

Contact Ely's Mill directly through [their website](#) to inquire about availability and pricing.

They offer micro-wedding packages and elopement-friendly options.

Keep in mind this is a working property, so ceremonies must be scheduled in advance and are often available on select days/times.

Accessibility:

- Easy access from downtown Gatlinburg
- Limited parking, so best for very small weddings/elopements
- Bathrooms available onsite
- Short, uneven gravel paths—may be tricky for guests with mobility concerns

Pro Tips from Me:

- The stone fireplace is one of my favorite spots for a cozy ceremony or vows.
- There's a footbridge and stream nearby that make dreamy portrait backdrops.
- Ely's Mill is a great alternative for couples who love the vintage cabin feel but want something quieter and more private than Gatlinburg's usual busy scene.

Fun fact: the mill shop sells handmade crafts, local honey, and other goodies—perfect for wedding favors or a post-ceremony stroll.

Cades Cove Churches & Cabins – Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Vibe:

Historic and breathtaking. Cades Cove is like stepping into a Smoky Mountain time capsule—rolling fields, mountain backdrops, and 1800s-era buildings make it one of the most iconic places to elope or hold a small ceremony. The loop road is rich with natural beauty, wildlife, and rustic charm, making every stop along the way feel like a scene out of a storybook.



Primitive Baptist Church

Vibe: Simple, whitewashed, and full of soul. This tiny church sits in a peaceful grove and feels like the most romantic little secret tucked into the Cove.

Best Time to Shoot: Morning for soft light filtering through the trees. Late afternoon can be glowy too, but expect more crowds then.

Permit Requirements: A GSMNP wedding permit is required (I take care of this process)

Accessibility: Gravel parking, short walk to the church. No electricity or bathrooms on site.

Pro Tips: The soft natural wood inside and creaky floorboards add so much character. Try for a weekday morning if you want it quiet and private.



Cades Cove Methodist Church

Vibe: Light, bright, and welcoming. With its classic white facade and mountain views nearby, it's a timeless spot for a quiet ceremony.

Best Time to Shoot: Midday to afternoon for the best light inside the church.

Permit Requirements: GSMNP wedding permit required.

Accessibility: Similar to the Primitive Baptist Church—easy walk, rustic interior, no electricity or restrooms.

Pro Tips: The windows let in beautiful light, and there's a big open space just outside that works well for family photos or a picnic-style celebration.



John Oliver Cabin

Vibe: Rustic, romantic, and tucked away. This is one of the oldest structures in the Smokies, and it has major "off-grid elopement" energy.

Best Time to Shoot: Early morning to avoid hikers; late afternoon also works well in fall when the golden light hits just right.

Permit Requirements: GSMNP wedding permit required

Accessibility: About a 0.5 mile walk from the main loop road—uneven and sometimes muddy, but worth it for the privacy.

Pro Tips: Wear comfy shoes and pack light! The view from the cabin looking back toward the mountains is unreal. This one is best for very small ceremonies or private vows.

Disclaimer: these photos are edited in an old editing style. Shot and edited in 2022



Overall Cades Cove Tips:

✨ **Expect a slow drive—it's an 11-mile one-way loop, and traffic can back up, especially on weekends.**

✨ **No cell service.**

✨ **Always build in extra time for travel + wildlife stops. (hello, bears and deer!)**

✨ **Bathrooms available at a few stops around the loop.**

✨ **Best visited early morning on weekdays for fewer crowds and dreamy light.**

✨ **GSMNP permits are required for all weddings here, and I help make sure you're covered.**

Bonus Tip: Using Your Airbnb or Cabin as Your Venue

Want to keep things ultra-intimate, laid-back, and close to home base? Using your Airbnb or cabin as your ceremony backdrop can be the perfect solution—especially if you're dreaming of a cozy porch elopement, mountaintop deck vows, or a twinkle-lit backyard dinner.

Here's what to keep in mind:

Always check with the host first. Not all Airbnbs or cabin rentals allow events or gatherings, even small ones. Be upfront about your plans before booking.

Respect the guest count. Make sure the total number of people (you, your partner, guests, vendors) falls within the home's allowed capacity.

Keep noise and parking in check. Even if your celebration is chill, remember you're in someone else's space—so follow quiet hours and parking rules.

Consider cleanup + logistics. You're not at a staffed venue, so plan to handle chairs, décor, trash, and cleanup yourselves (or hire a team—I can help with this!)

Look for features you love. Fire pits, mountain views, big decks, hot tubs, forest nooks... all can double as dreamy photo backdrops and celebration spaces.

Pro Tip from Me: I've helped couples turn tiny A-frame cabins and rental homes into unforgettable elopement spots. If you find a space you love, I'm happy to help you plan the flow, scout photo spots, and make sure it all goes smoothly (and by the rules)!



Let's Make Your Smoky Mountain Elopement Unforgettable

You've got the dream location—now let's bring your day to life with intention, ease, and heart. I'm more than just your photographer. I'm your hype woman, location scout, timeline wizard, weather whisperer, and calm presence on the wildest (and most beautiful) day of your life. Whether you're eloping just the two of you or inviting your closest crew, I'll help you craft a day that reflects who you are—joyfully, authentically, and without pressure.

Here's what's next:

- ✨ Browse real elopement stories and planning tips on my [blog](#)
- ✨ Inquire about availability + custom elopement packages
- ✨ Let's dream up a plan that fits your vision, your vibe, and your values

👉 [SME Package Website](#), [R Photos Instagram](#)

READY TO INQUIRE AND SAVE THE DATE

👉 [Book Your Elopement Experience](#)

I can't wait to hear your story. Let's create something unforgettable in these mountains together. 💙