



# A WEDDING WONDERLAND

A PAIR OF LIFELONG SKI ENTHUSIASTS FOUND LOVE AT HIGH ALTITUDE. IT'S NO WONDER, THEN, THAT THEY TOOK TO THE SLOPES OF COLORADO—WITH THE STUNNING SNOWCAPPED ROCKIES AS BACKDROP—TO MAKE IT OFFICIAL.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LACIE HANSEN TEXT BY LEIGH CRANDALL



## PEEK ON THE PEAK

For their first look, Hughes O'Winter rode the gondola to the top of Aspen Mountain, where Ashley Sands was waiting.





## MOUNTAIN HIGH

1. The ceremony was held on the roof of the Shigeru Ban–designed Aspen Art Museum. Bare aspen trees served as the ceremony marker, while logs and lanterns lined the aisle. 2. Ashley’s sister Courtney officiated the ceremony. “She’s a beautiful writer, and she’s been my rock,” says the bride, who wore a dress by Tara LaTour. The groom donned a jacket by Samuelsohn and pants by Ermenegildo Zegna.

Ask Ashley O’Winter who the better skier is, she or her husband, Hughes, and you’ll get a diplomatic answer. “It’s technical. Alpine skiing, that’s me,” Ashley, a documentary producer and interior and event designer, explains. “But Hughes can telemark [an Alpine variation in which the skier’s heel comes up] and snowboard, so it depends...” There’s little doubt, though, that both of them can hold their own on the slopes.

Skiing is at the heart of the Denver-based couple’s relationship, and it was their love of the sport that led them to each other: Ashley and her family were on a heli-skiing vacation at the start of 2011 in British Columbia, and Hughes was staying at the same resort. “My brother Hudson befriended him and introduced him as my ‘future fiancé,’” Ashley recalls. “Big brothers can be so embarrassing.” But he was onto something. She kept bumping into Hughes around the lodge, “and I became smitten.” The feeling was mutual.

After several months of distance while Ashley finished college in Chicago, she moved to Denver to be with Hughes, who works for his family’s ski- and-snowboard business. In April 2015, Hughes proposed during an adventure-filled vacation in New Zealand and Australia. Before they’d departed, Ashley’s sister Lyndsay, a jewelry

designer, had helped him create the ring. His first thought was moonstone, but “Ashley’s a bit of a bull in a china shop,” Hughes says affectionately. “So we decided on a sturdier colored diamond.” He presented her with the ring and a romantic letter when they were midway through a mountain-biking excursion, and, true to form, Ashley had banged up her legs. “I was bloody and messy, but so excited,” she recalls.

The pair quickly settled on a winter wedding in Aspen, Colorado. “It holds a special place in our hearts because, growing up, we both took trips there with our families,” says Hughes. They made the most of the location, planning a day of backcountry skiing for friends and family early in the week, and a rehearsal dinner in a remote wooded spot that guests could get to by ski or sleigh. “I think Hughes even took a couple of runs on our wedding day,” laughs Ashley.

On March 19, 2016, 145 guests gathered on the rooftop of the Aspen Art Museum just before sunset to watch the couple exchange vows against the background of Aspen Mountain’s snow-covered slopes. The party that followed lasted until the early hours of the morning, but, Ashley says, they still managed to make it to brunch at the base of the mountain the next day—“dressed in our ski gear, of course.”



## BLUEBIRD DAY

1. Vintage ski posters and postcards inspired the couple’s custom stationery suite. Monogrammed compasses served as both escort cards and favors.

2. An inviting play area stocked with toys was set up for the couple’s nieces and nephews. 3. One niece snapped a pic with an Instax camera. The cameras were set out on the guest-book table so friends and family could leave photos alongside their well-wishes. 4. Guests enjoyed cocktail hour on the museum’s rooftop before moving indoors for a three-course dinner. 5. Wooden welcome boxes bearing the couple’s crest included such mountain essentials as sunscreen and lip balm.





## ALPINE ACCENTS

1. Tables were set with lush garlands of heather, eucalyptus, eryngium, magnolia, salal, and grevillea. 2. Ashley changed into her grandmother's circa-1947 wedding dress for dancing. 3. Arrangements created from the same flora as the table garlands (with the addition of Italian ruscus) were suspended above the reception tables. 4. The three-tiered vanilla-bean cake featured lemon and coconut, and was decorated with olive leaves and seeded eucalyptus.



# ASHLEY & HUGHES'S SNOWCAPPED SOIRÉE

*“We cross-country-skied to the rehearsal-dinner restaurant, racing each other through a forest of dormant aspen trees. After getting changed, Hughes and I headed back outside to take photos, just in time to find the rest of our guests arriving by horse-drawn sleigh.”*

—ASHLEY, ON THE MAGIC OF THEIR REMOTE REHEARSAL-DINNER LOCATION, PINE CREEK COOKHOUSE

## DRESS THAT IMPRESSED

Despite taking a trip to New York City specifically to shop for a wedding dress, Ashley ended up falling for a gown at a boutique around the corner from her home in Denver. “It just called to me,” she says of the Tara LaTour design, which featured dotted point-d’esprit lace that reminded her of snow. “I loved the simple, modern silhouette.” For the ceremony, Ashley paired the dress with a Dennis Basso white fur cape, which she had purchased on a wedding-planning trip to Aspen.

## HONEYMOON DISPATCH

Six months after their wedding, Ashley and Hughes embarked on an island-hopping tour of Indonesia. Among the highlights was a three-day boat trip to Komodo, which included snorkeling, diving, and an excursion ashore to see Komodo dragons, the largest lizards on earth. “I felt like I was in *Jurassic Park*,” Ashley says. As for hotels, “I’ve never stayed anywhere as grand or unique as **Tugu Lombok** [[tuguhotels.com](http://tuguhotels.com)],” she says. “The Indonesian architecture is stunning—there are giant statues everywhere you turn. The pool was also gorgeous, and the beachfront seemed endless.”

## The Kids Are All Right

“We love our nieces and nephews, and they were all in the ceremony,” says Ashley. “After everyone walked down the aisle, I wanted them to have a fun, cozy place to go, so we set up a teepee with big shearling pillows and toys on the floor.” The couple also arranged an accessories table for the kids to pick pieces like necklaces, crowns, and scarves from beforehand. (“One of my nieces was way overaccessorized. It was an adorable free-for-all,” says Ashley.) The kids also enjoyed a special dinner of teriyaki grilled chicken, edamame, and rice.

## EXTRA EVENTS

### FRIDAY

The rehearsal dinner was held at **Pine Creek Cookhouse** ([pinecreekcookhouse.com](http://pinecreekcookhouse.com)), “a beautiful lodge at the base of the Elk Mountains,” says Hughes. “You access it via horse-drawn sleigh or cross-country skiing.” Guests made their choice and were rewarded with wine, beer, and a three-course meal.

### SATURDAY

For the after-party, the group moved to **Chefs Club** ([chefsclub.com](http://chefsclub.com)) at the St. Regis Aspen Resort, where guests played vintage games like Pac-Man and Skee-Ball in an arcade tent, took turns in the photo booth, and danced until 2 A.M.

### SUNDAY

The couple hosted a day-after brunch at **Chair 9 at the Nell** ([thelittlenell.com](http://thelittlenell.com)), at the base of Aspen Mountain, before hitting the slopes one last time.

## By the Numbers

1970

The year Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing in Blue River, British Columbia (where Hughes and Ashley first met), opened for business

675

Acres of skiable terrain on Aspen Mountain

1

Horse that pulled the “getaway carriage” the couple took from the reception to the after-party

11

Months between their engagement and the wedding

“99

Problems,” the name of the couple’s first-dance song. “It was Hugo’s [folksy] version of the Jay Z song,” says Hughes. “We wanted something fun to let loose to. The band nailed it.”

2014

Year the new Aspen Art Museum building was completed

8

Nieces and nephews in the wedding. “But Hughes’s brother just had a baby, so now there are nine!” Ashley says

## BOOK REPORT

During the reception, guests sipped on cocktails and dined at tables named for characters from the couple’s favorite book, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*. The fun-loving pair adore the story, says Ashley, “because it reminds us to live a little bigger, love a little better, and never grow up.”

## SOURCES

Ceremony and dinner location **Aspen Art Museum** Party location and wedding cake **Chefs Club** Event design **Ashley Sands O’Winter** Event planning **Bella Event Design & Planning** Event décor **Pink Monkey Solutions** Catering **Epicure** Flowers **Aspen Branch Studio** Photography **Lacie Hansen** Cinematography **Aflätis Films** Stationery **Wouldn’t It Be Lovely** Music **Daniel & Jake Sproul** of Rose Hill Drive; **Northstar Rentals** Borrowed **Blu** Bride’s gown **Tara LaTour** Accessories **Jennifer Behr** (crown); **Dennis Basso** (cape); **Ippolita** (earrings); **Mann’s Jewelers** (bracelets); **Caleo Jewelry** (engagement ring); **Beverly K** (wedding band); **Valentino** (shoes) Hair **Hair Artistry** by **Hilary** Makeup **Divine Beauty Artists** Kids’ attire **J.Crew**; **Mischka Aoki** Groom’s attire **Brunello Cucinelli** (overcoat); **Samuelsohn** (jacket); **Ermenegildo Zegna** (pants)