



## Location Temptation: Top Tips in Choosing your Dream Wedding Venue

### *What to Think About*

#### **Number crunch**

With the average UK wedding costing £21k, and of course a raging recession to think about, it's important to sit down and discuss your budget as soon as possible. It sounds obvious, but eliminate venues that are out of your budget immediately, venues very rarely move on price. If a venue is reluctant to provide costs when you initially enquire, tell them of your budget *before* arranging a meeting. This will save you time, effort and heartbreak!

#### **The guest list**

Decide on a first draft of numbers and draw up a list (perhaps with parents/close family). Of course this won't be the final cut, but you will need a rough indication before you can research and confirm your venue. Capacity at a particular venue will dictate whether you host dinner for 80 or an evening cocktail reception for 120. Many venues insist on minimum numbers to guarantee profit; meaning you have to pay for the shortfall.

#### **Location**

Again, it sounds obvious, but if your wedding ceremony is at a separate venue think about the logistics. Is transport required for guests, will the route be busier on the day of your wedding, are there any local events on the day of your event that could obstruct traffic. Check the signage on the roads is suitable too. Also consider your evening guests; if your venue is a hidden gem tucked away then you should consider transport for them too.

#### **Availability**

If you have your heart set on a fashionable venue, book it yesterday! Think about seasons. If it's more popular in summer then why not consider a winter wedding? Also think about topical events; FA Cup finals, the Olympics, they all have knock on effects on cost and availability. If you don't have a venue in mind, shortlist your own venue menu and visit 3-5 until you find your perfect location that reflects the day that you're both visualising.

#### **Go For Sunday Lunch!**

The best way to suss out a venue is to 'mystery shop' on a particularly busy day like Sunday lunchtime. Here you can sample the food, service, cleanliness and toilets without any of the hard sell.

### *What to Look For*

#### **Accessibility**

Note if the reception, bar, dance floor and toilet facilities are on the same level or same room. Are there lifts available for elderly guests?

#### **Accommodation**

If the venue does not have on site accommodation, suss out local hotels as an alternative to guests. Ask about a 'bridal dressing area' to allow the bride and groom to freshen up throughout the day. If accommodation is available, enquire whether group bookings for guests can be discounted and ask about check in and out times.

*Bespoken Dreams, Beautiful Days...*

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### Backdrop

Photographs are the keepsake memories of your day to treasure forever. Does the venue have an attractive backdrop for photographs? Whether it's a sweeping staircase or magnificent grounds, bear this in mind when viewing. Don't bank on it being a dry day if your dream shots are outside. Always have a Plan B!

### Décor

If you have a colour scheme or design in mind for the day, be mindful of the venue's décor. Clashing colours are a no-no!

### Questions to Ask

#### Preferred Suppliers

Some venues have a list of preferred suppliers meaning you can't use any you've sourced yourself. Sometimes this is for safety or insurance purposes (fireworks, entertainment, catering), or because the venue receives commission from the supplier.

#### Exclusivity

Enquire whether your wedding will be the only one on that day. Some venues offer exclusivity at an additional cost, so be aware.

#### No Dancing!

Historic floors in country properties need protecting from dancing feet, especially in 4 inch heels! Some venues may stipulate a no dancing rule which means you would have to hire a marquee for the evening reception.

#### Carriages

And if you are planning on leading the Love Train into the wee hours, check beforehand what time the venue closes. Venues in residential areas may have an early finish of 11pm, and if there is a wedding on the next day, the venue may wish to set up the night before.

#### Read the Small Print

You love the venue and have deemed it 'the one'. Before signing *any* contracts, read the small print to ensure you have any unwelcome surprises boxed off. Hidden costs or quotes exclusive of VAT discovered after the ink is dry will alter your budget and could be the difference between champagne and cava!

***And finally, go with your instincts. Just like your betrothed, you will know when you've found the right one.***

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