

Wedding Venue Shopping Guide

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO
BOOKING THE WEDDING VENUE
OF YOUR DREAMS



8 QUESTIONS

To Answer Before You Start Wedding Venue Shopping

You're newly engaged and now you're being bombarded with so, so many questions. When is the wedding? Have you picked a wedding venue? Do you have a dress yet? Who is going to be your florist? All the questions y'all! When this happens take a deep breath and with confidence say, "I don't know." Because it is totally okay for you to not know the answers immediately.

Weddings are a big deal and there is no need to rush decisions. Take planning one step at a time and it will all come together in the end.

Your first task is to decide where you want to get married. Selecting your wedding venue is the most influential decision you'll make for your wedding. Your wedding venue determines so much about your event. Many couples rush to book a venue, but before you go down the venue search rabbit hole it is important that you have an idea of several big picture items before starting your search. So, take a break to define what you're looking for in a wedding venue. Ask yourself these questions to narrow your search. Use the worksheet that follows to document your answers.



WHAT IS OUR TOTAL BUDGET?

There are plenty of traditions about who pays for what at a wedding, but rarely do I see the expenses divided based merely on these traditions. Start with an honest and open conversation with all the parties involved. A wedding is a very important day, but the expenses should not cause lasting financial hardship. You should not expect or feel entitled to a certain amount of money from anyone. Many couples pay for 100% of their wedding while some pay for 0%.

Ideally, all contributions should be given willingly and without strings attached. The realization that you may not be able to afford a 9-tier cake, 5-course meal, live band, and towering centerpieces may be difficult to accept. The sooner you embrace your reality, the sooner you can start making the most of the budget you do have. No matter what your budget is, know that your wedding day will be special.

Question #1

8 QUESTIONS

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WHAT'S OUR WEDDING VENUE BUDGET?

Determining your venue budget will require you to set your total wedding budget first. Typically, your venue should cost no more than 15-20% of your total wedding budget. The number you decide on should not be a steadfast limit because all venues include different things. For example, some venues include all your tables and chairs therefore you probably won't be spending the budgeted amount for rental items. Thus you can spend a little more on your venue. Along those same lines, some venues need more decorating than others. So a venue that requires minimal decor should allow you to spend more on the venue itself. Keep in mind that deposits will be due upfront to secure your wedding venue and vendors. Then, additional payments will be due throughout the planning process.

Question #2

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WE INVITING?

Start a spreadsheet of who you'd like to invite to your wedding. I recommend using a Google Sheet, The Knot, or my personal favorite, Aisle Planner. Think about who are the most important people in your life and add them to the list. Each guest will cost a substantial amount to host so be intentional about your guest list. Bigger is not necessarily better.

Question #3

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GET MARRIED?

Aim to host your wedding in a convenient location. For you, that may mean a central location for your guests or in your hometown. It's a balance between families, priorities and budget. Stay close to home if your families live nearby, you plan to DIY a lot or you want to decorate with a lot of stuff. Venture further from home if professionals are handling most of the details, your families are spread out and everyone can afford to travel.

Question #4

WHAT ARE 3 POTENTIAL WEDDING DATES?

Wedding venues book events months and sometimes even years in advance. Be flexible on your wedding date to give yourself more venue options. I recommend having three dates in mind that work for you and your family. If you decide far enough in advance people can plan around your event.

Question #5

8 QUESTIONS

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WHAT'S OUR IDEAL EVENT VIBE & STYLE?

Think about formal versus casual, traditional versus modern and elaborate versus simple. Make decisions based on your style and your budget, but recognize that all your decisions need to come together to create a cohesive look and feel. Every wedding venue has characteristics that lend themselves best to a certain range of styles. The further a venue is from your desired style, the more money and time you will have to spend to make it something that it isn't. Venue amenities can contribute to the flow and feel of a wedding day as much if not more than the venue style. For example, choose a venue with a bridal suite, groom's quarters and space for ALL the events of the day to avoid the complication and hassle of traveling between multiple locations.

Question #6

WHAT ARE OUR TOP 3 WEDDING PRIORITIES?

What do you care about? Sit down and decide what your top three priorities are and then budget accordingly. For example, if you are really into music it may be a priority for you to budget for a live band while for someone else they may be perfectly happy with Pandora playing in the background. Think about the importance of food, alcohol, photography, videography, venue, transportation, cake, bridal hair & makeup, floral design, rentals and staffing. Everyone wants a nice wedding, but everyone has a different definition of what that looks like. Prioritizing these factors will guide not only your wedding venue search, but all the other elements of your wedding.

Question #7

HOW MUCH PROFESSIONAL HELP DO WE WANT WITH YOUR WEDDING?

Even if you're a DIY queen, there are certain things you will want a professional to handle on your wedding day. Think about how hands-on you will be the day of your event. If you are willing to stack all the chairs and take out the trash at the end of the night, a venue that offers fewer services may be a good fit for you. But, if you want to spend the day celebrating with family & friends, you may want to consider a venue that is fully staffed and includes additional services. It is also important to mention, that some venues have restrictions on what wedding vendors you can use at their facility.

Question #8

What's Next?

Selecting the perfect wedding venue can be a daunting task. It's hard to know where to start and what questions to ask. Don't worry! We're here to help. We want you to find the venue that best suits your needs and wants. So, before you start venue complete the following worksheet while you discuss these questions with your fiancé and family.

Wedding Basics Worksheet

Total Budget

Money from Bride's Family _____
+ Money from Groom's Family _____
+ Money from Bride & Groom _____
+ Money from other sources _____
= Total Wedding Budget _____

Venue Budget

Total Budget x .2 = Venue Budget
_____ x .2 = _____

Your budget should be flexible to accommodate for variations in what each venue includes (tables, chairs, table linens, etc.)

Guest Count

Actually type out a list of your essential guests to get the total number of invited guests.

Total Number of Guests Invited _____
x Estimated 80% will attend
= Estimated Total Guest Count _____

Ideal Location

Do you want your wedding in your hometown, your fiancé's hometown, a central location for your guests or a destination location everyone travels to?

Potential Wedding Dates

Desired Season:

Preferred Month(s):

List 3 dates in order of preference:

#1

#2

#3

Priorities

List your top three wedding priorities. Examples include venue, food, bar, music, decorations, photography, flowers, glam, etc.

#1

#2

#3

Inspiration

List three words to describe your wedding style & event vibe. Examples include laid-back vs. formal, rustic vs. refined, simple vs. eclectic, modern vs. traditional

1.

2.

3.

Involvement

How hands-on do you want to be with your wedding? Select one of the following:

- We want to plan, setup and cleanup everything
- We want to plan everything, but relax on our wedding day
- We want someone else to plan, setup and cleanup everything

10 DETAILS

To Know About a Wedding - Venue Before You Tour

Are you ready to start shopping for your wedding venue? Awesome! You may be tempted to log into The Knot and just start scheduling tours with every venue that has pretty profile pictures. But, that would be a mistake, a BIG mistake. I encourage you to take the time upfront to narrow your venue search down to three venues to tour.

Trust me, three is the magic number! If you do your research you won't waste time visiting places that aren't a good fit. You'll get lost in the details, everything will start running together and you'll lose enthusiasm if you visit many more than three. Even if you fall in love with the first venue you visit, still tour your other options. You learn so much about the entire planning process from venue tours. Every venue offers a little something different. If nothing else, you will come to appreciate what your favorite venue has to offer and feel more confident in booking!

To narrow your search, request as much information in writing before scheduling a tour. Don't go blind into a venue tour. At the very least you will want to know the following:

10 Venue Details To Know

VENUE CAPACITY : IS THE VENUE A GOOD SIZE FOR YOUR GUEST COUNT?

RENTAL RATE : IS THE RATE WITHIN YOUR BUDGET?

PROPERTY AMENITIES & INCLUSIONS : DOES THE VENUE INCLUDE THE ITEMS YOU'D LIKE? DOES THE PROPERTY HAVE THE FEATURES YOU WANT?

AVAILABILITY : IS THE VENUE AVAILABLE ON THE DATE YOU WANT?

CUSTOMER SERVICE : DOES THE VENUE PROVIDE GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE?

VENDOR RESTRICTIONS : DOES THE VENUE ALLOW THE VENDORS WHAT WE WANT OR DO WE HAVE TO PICK FROM A SET LIST?

VENUE LOCATION : IS THE VENUE LOCATED WHERE IT IS ACCESSIBLE TO MY GUESTS AND TO WEDDING DAY ESSENTIALS (EX. OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS, STORES & RESTAURANTS)?

VENUE STYLE : DOES THE VENUE STYLE FIT OUR VISION FOR OUR EVENT?

CLIENT REVIEWS : DOES THE VENUE HAVE GLOWING REVIEWS FROM THEIR CLIENTS?

LEGITIMACY : DOES THE VENUE MEET SAFETY AND BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS TO LEGALLY OPERATE? DO THEY CARRY THE PROPER INSURANCE?

Don't forget to look beyond the aesthetic of a venue to consider the logistics of your event too. Though certain amenities may not be important to you personally, they may be super important to that of your guests or vendors. Compare your options and make a decision that you're excited about, meets your needs and fits your budget. Remember, all the details are important, but so is your gut feeling!

Quick Venue Checklist

Once you've collected all the venue information, complete this quick reference checklist. Place a check mark in each box as you determine that the venue meets or exceeds your needs and wants.

CRITERIA	VENUE OPTIONS		
Venue capacity is a good fit			
Rate is within budget			
Property has the amenities we want			
Venue includes the items we need			
Venue is available on the date we want			
Venue provides great customer service			
Venue allows the vendors we want			
Venue location is feasible			
Venue style fits our style			
Venue has good client reviews			
Venue is up to code*			

*State and local regulations require venues to meet certain safety and building standards to operate legally. Venues should be able to provide you with a Certificate of Occupancy to prove they meet these standards.

5 TIPS

For Making the Most of Your Wedding Venue Tour



Ahhhhh! It is time to tour your potential wedding venue. Get excited! Since your engagement you've taken our advice from our posts, *8 Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Start Venue Shopping* & *10 Details to Know About A Wedding Venue Before You Schedule A Tour*, to narrow your choices down to three amazing venues. You've already decided these venues fit your event criteria. Now you, your fiancé and other key decision makers are ready to actually visit some venues! Here are five tips to help you with this part of your wedding planning journey.

Tip #1

CHOOSE YOUR SQUAD WISELY

If a picture is worth a thousand words then experiencing a place in person must be worth a million words. Bring everyone who is essential to your decision so they can see each venue for themselves. You don't want to have to miss out on booking the venue of your dreams because you don't have everyone there to make the decision. Additionally, be careful not to have too many people attend your tour. Over powering personalities and extremely opinionated people can make it especially difficult to get your questions answered and for you to form your opinion independently.

Tip #2

TAKE PICTURES

Take pictures of key spaces and features of each venue. After a few tours it may be difficult to remember all the details of each venue. Pictures will help with that. Pictures can also help when you're getting the opinion of those that weren't able to make it to your tour.

Tip #3

ASK QUESTIONS

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Venues recognize that venue shopping isn't something people do often. It is a part of our job to be clear and comprehensive on your tour. It is totally acceptable to ask your tour guide to define an industry term, explain the importance of a certain feature or elaborate on a specific detail.

5 TIPS

For Making the Most of Your Wedding Venue Tour

Tip #4

TAKE YOUR TIME

You want to leave your venue tour with a clear vision of what your day could look and feel like as well as what it will be like to work with this venue during the planning process. You don't want to plan every detail of your wedding on the spot, but you do want to think about the logistics of how the venue will function.

Tip #5

TRUST YOUR GUT

You can compare all the venue features, details and prices you want, but typically it comes down to a feeling. You can either envision yourself getting married there or not. All you type "A" personalities out there are having a panic attack right now worried that you can't calculate your way to a "right" answer. I feel ya sister. But, I'm here to tell you that your gut is worth trusting. Choose the venue you feel comfortable and happy in. It's as simple as that.

Bonus Tip

GIVE GRACE

Do not expect any venue to look wedding-ready for your tour. Understand that venues are in a constant cycle of setup → event → cleanup → repeat so it may or may not be polished and setup for an event. For example, if you're touring on a Sunday the property may or may not be in tip-top shape after hosting a wedding late into the night before. Venues are run by humans; real people with real lives. Cut venues some slack when you are inspecting the property. No venue is perfect, but everyone is doing their best to meet and exceed your needs. So, give grace and trust that when you arrive for your event the property will be stunning.

Now What?

Check out the next page for our Wedding Venue Tour Checklist! This would be great to look as you are getting ready to visit each property as a reminder of how to make the most of your tour. Enjoy your tours!!!

Wedding Venue Tour Checklist

MAKE SURE YOU ARE READY FOR EACH VENUE TOUR
BY REVIEWING THESE TIPS.

- ✓ My squad is by my side. I have everyone with me that I need to make a decision.
- ✓ I have my phone ready to take pictures of all the key venue features.
- ✓ I've reviewed the venue information and have some questions ready to ask.
- ✓ I've allotted at least 1-hour for my tour so I can take my time.
- ✓ I've narrowed down my venue options to only my favorites so I can trust my gut to book if I love it.

Nitty Gritty Venue Comparison

If you're the number-crunching, spreadsheet-loving type, you can take your venue shopping to the next level with this venue comparison chart. Collect all your venue information from websites, emails and your venue tours in the following spreadsheet.

[Click here for Chart](#)

Here is how I suggest using this tool.

Step #1

Review all the features in the far left column of the chart. Highlight the ones that are most important to you.

Step #2

Narrow your venue search down to three venues to tour. Trust me, three is the magic number! Write your venue options across the top of the chart.

Step #3

Request as much information upfront before scheduling a tour. As you gather all the details fill in this handy dandy chart. *

Step #4

Compare your options and make a decision that you're excited about, meets your needs & fits your budget. Remember, all the details are important, but so is your gut feeling!

*For your reference, we have placed information in the attached chart based on 2021 Warrenwood Manor rates, inclusions and amenities. These may change at any time. For Warrenwood's most recent offerings visit www.warrenwoodmanor.com.

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