

Scott Surplice Photography's

CEREMONY LOCATION GUIDE



*How to choose the best
location for your ceremony*

CONTENTS

3 | DO NOT MAKE THIS MISTAKE

4 | INTRO

5 | FACTORS

6 | LIGHTING

7 | THE GOOD

9 | THE BAD

11 | THE UGLY

12 | THE PERFECT CONDITIONS

13 | COMFORT

14 | AESTHETICS

15 | CONVENIENCE

16 | TIME OF DAY

17 | DISTRACTIONS

18 | WET WEATHER

19 | ALWAYS REMEMBER

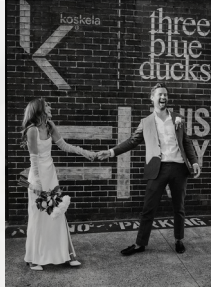


DO NOT MAKE THIS MISTAKE*

*extremely poor lighting letting the couple down in this situation



INTRO



Choosing the location for your ceremony can often be decided upon without considering many important factors.

Most often a ceremony location will be chosen based on its capacity or convenience (how close it is to the reception).

Sometimes that exact positioning of the ceremony at a location will be chosen by the first vendors to appear at the scene i.e. the furniture hire people, florists etc

Do not let Nanna suffer heat stroke because you decided to have your ceremony in the direct sun on a 40 degree day because you thought it was your only option.

After reading this guide you will be fully equipped to make the best call on your ceremony location



FACTORS

Some of the factors that determine the quality of a ceremony location:

Lighting

Comfort

Size

Aesthetics

Convenience

Time of Day

Distractions

LIGHTING



The one thing that will affect your photos the most and rarely considered when selecting a location is the lighting. With over 500 weddings photographed, I can say with confidence that I have experienced every lighting scenario known to man. Even though I have photographed some horrendous lighting situations, I have always drawn upon my experience and knowledge to get the best possible photos from the situation.

Something that is critical for photography is exposure. Exposure refers to the amount of light that is falling on a scene. If the light throughout the entire scene is the same or very similar, then we would say that is an even exposure. If the light in a scene varies greatly, some direct sun, some dark shade and varying levels in between, then you have an uneven or mixed exposure and this can be very difficult for the camera to capture well.

THE GOOD

Full Shade

You can never go wrong with having your ceremony in full shade. The light in full shade is soft and even, and celebrated by photographers everywhere. In addition it's also a comfortable place for you and your guests to be. It's win-win for everyone.

Shade + Sun

Staying in the realm of shady locations (sounds dodgy) there are also places that are mostly shade, with some sun coming through. This is ok as long as the sun is primarily coming from behind the ceremony. This is why ceremony orientation is so important! Having the sun coming in from behind the ceremony = good. If that sun is coming through the trees from in front of the ceremony i.e. the sun is falling directly on your front side, then that is definitely not as good. This is where we can start having situations of dappled light or mixed light, which can be a nightmare for the camera to handle (more coming on this).

Full Sun

Surprisingly, full sun can be pretty good. This is when there is zero shade at all. The reason that this is good is because full sun is consistent and even because it is all the same type of light. It won't be soft like the shade, but it does offer some nice contrast. However I wouldn't recommend the full sun if you're getting married in summer unless it was very late in the day, or you were well prepared (more coming up on this).

Indoors with Natural Light

Another great lighting option is an indoor location where the whole scene is flooded with beautiful natural window light.

I'm not talking having the ceremony in front of the only window in the place, or in a dark room in comparison with a bright window behind (this is quite a bad setup). I'm taking about a room that is bathed in natural light. Big south facing windows will usually do it, or thin white curtains that help diffuse any direct sun. Artificial lights, especially downlights should be avoided at all costs.



THE BAD

Dappled or Mixed Light

During the ceremony, if one of you is in direct sunlight and the other is in shade then we have a mixed lighting situation on our hands. This is bad with a capital B. The camera will struggle with this situation because it doesn't do well with varying levels of exposure. An experienced photographer will know what to do if that situation arises mid ceremony.

Bright Background

A ceremony with an overly bright background is never a consideration for a couple, but the first thing a photographer notices. An overly bright background is a background that is brighter than the light that is falling on the subject in the foreground. Usually it's very manageable but if that difference is significant then we could have a problem on our hands.

Some examples that come to mind are a ceremony with the ocean/harbour/waterway in the background. This seems like an idyllic scene most of the time but when the sun is low behind the ceremony and ALSO reflecting off the water it can make things tricky.



Bright Background cont...

Another bad bright background situation is a ceremony on a balcony. Usually the couple will be in the shade, with the background blindingly bright in comparison.

But by far the worst bright background situation is a dark indoor location with the ceremony setup directly in front of the only window in the place. No matter how great the view is from the window, you will never see it in the photos due to the varying levels of exposure.

The only way to combat this situation is with flash. This is fine in small doses, but will drive you crazy if there are hundreds of flashes during your ceremony.



THE UGLY

Now this is where we really get into the nitty gritty. Every now and then when luck isn't going your way, some of these bad lighting situations join forces to create utterly horrendous conditions. One nightmare that comes to mind was a location on the harbour that was chosen by the supplier who arrived first to the scene to deliver the chairs for the ceremony. At a glance it was easy to think that it could be an ok spot. A partially shaded grassed area, overlooking the harbour. The problem was that at the ceremony time, not only did we have an overly bright background situation thanks to the background being bathed in full sunshine and the ceremony being in (mostly) shade, but some of the sun was also poking through the trees to light one of them up like a Christmas tree, while the other remained in full shade.

ARE CLOUDS GOOD??

If you get a cloudy day then everything I have just mentioned is somewhat irrelevant. Clouds make for great lighting; soft and even conditions, very much like full shade. It makes things very easy. However you shouldn't rely on or hope for clouds. Do your due diligence because most people dream of that sunny blue sky day for their wedding.

The PERFECT Conditions

My absolute dream ceremony lighting conditions would be an outdoor ceremony in sunlight, but with a very thin layer of cirrus clouds that are extremely high in the atmosphere. That super high layer of very thin clouds takes the sting out of the direct sunlight, softening the shadows slightly, while still feeling the warmth of the sunlight. It's really beautiful and very reminiscent to the light you get in Europe which is filtered by the high amounts of pollution in the atmosphere.

So if you are going to say a little prayer to the wedding gods. Be specific and pray for some sunshine with a sprinkling of cirrus clouds.

COMFORT

This one is pretty simple. How comfortable are you and your guests going to be if it's sunny and 35+ degrees? If there is no other option, then you need to provide some things for your guests to be able to stay cool. This would include providing bottles of cold water as a bare minimum. Paper fans and parasols on those hot sunny days can also be a good idea



AESTHETICS

Most of the time you're choosing a ceremony location because it looks pretty and I'm all for that. However if that spot fails in regards to lighting and some other factors then I would be recommend considering your other options. Sometimes you can still have the super pretty location, but changing the orientation so the light is coming in from a different location can be all that is needed.

Visit your ceremony location on a sunny day at the ceremony time and see if the aesthetics are altered if the orientation is shifted 90 degrees clockwise or anti-clockwise.



CONVENIENCE

Often a ceremony location is chosen because it is convenient. i.e. it's close by and a short stroll to the reception. You might get lucky and it's a lovely spot for it, however there is a good chance it will fail on some critical factors.

The beautiful venue of Dunes on the Sydney northern beaches is a great place for a wedding. Dunes actually has a really lovely spot on site for a ceremony that ticks all of the boxes, but it can only accommodate so many people. For larger weddings, couples opt to go across the road to Governor Phillip Park because it is convenient, however it's a mistake. In the afternoon that ceremony location will always be in full sun (not great in summer), and if the ceremony is in the wrong spot the bride and groom can sometimes be partially shaded by the trees while everything else is in blindingly bright sun. It's not even pretty. The ocean is not really in view, and the grass is usually dry and yellow. You also have the car park as a background distraction. All it has going for it is convenience.

Advice: Is the most convenient option the best choice. What other options are nearby that are better?

TIME OF DAY

The time of the day that your ceremony begins is an important factor. You should always take the time to view your ceremony location at the exact time that your ceremony will be at and as close to the ceremony date as possible.

Stand in the exact spot and have someone take a photo of you. What's the sun's position and is there any mixed lighting happening? If unsure, share the photo with your photographer and get their opinion.

If you're unable to be there at the time of the ceremony, you could use the Sun Seeker app to track the path of the sun and see where it will be. at the time of the ceremony.



DISTRACTIONS

Yes, just when you think you have everything sorted, you also need to take distractions into account. 9 times out of 10 these distractions are parked cars or ugly signs. It's not a great look if you can see parked cars behind you when you're sealing the deal with a first kiss. There is a location in Centennial Park in Sydney where this is the case.

The more common scenario and a question you should be asking yourself if you're a bride is: do you want to be walking down the aisle from a car park? You might not care but the cars/car park will be in the background of the photos as you approach the aisle.



WET WEATHER



I'm not going to give you advice on choosing a wet weather backup option, as you don't usually get a lot of say in it.

BUT, something that is important is how long before the ceremony does a venue require you to decide on moving the ceremony to the wet weather option?

The best case scenario is being able to make the decision up to 30 mins before the ceremony.

What you don't want is having to make the call 3 hours before the ceremony.

3 hours can be too far out to tell if it'll be raining, and the last you want is having to use the wet weather option when the sun is shining outside.

Check with your venue on their policy in these situations and if it's 3 hours, try to negotiate a shorter period.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask

I really enjoy being involved in your planning, especially if it means that we're going to get better photos as a result. So please, if you are unsure or would like some advice on your ceremony setup, you should get in touch. In person location consultations are available by request.

With all of that said, you will well and truly be in good hands when using a true professional photographer who has experienced all possible ceremony lighting situations. My approach in those situations is to maximise photos from the angles where the lighting is good, while also keeping aesthetics and background distractions in mind.

Always Remember....

that the most important thing on the wedding day is that you're marrying the person of your dreams and nothing should get in the way of that beautiful commitment. Hiring true professionals means you can completely de-stress and relax on the day and let them take care of your worries for you.

Thank you!

To arrange a time to meet just drop me an email,
call or text and we'll get the ball rolling.

+61 415 314 836

enquiries@scottsurplice.com.au

Niche Space 4/2 Cawarra Rd Caringbah NSW 2229

