

the WEDDING EXPERIENCE

A GUIDE FOR
ADORLEE

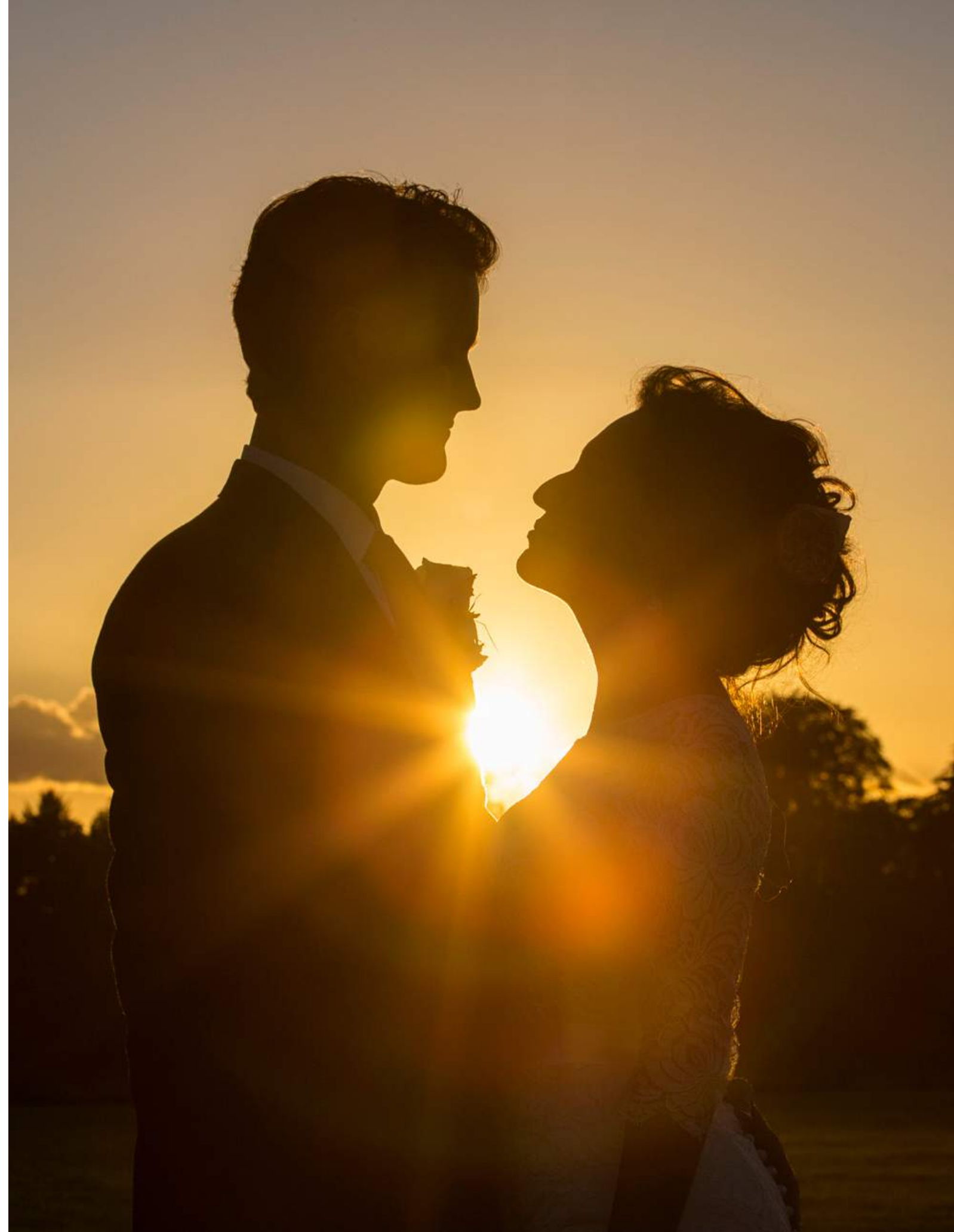
clients

get the MOST
OUT OF YOUR
Experience



WELCOME

Hello and Welcome to the Adorlee Wedding Guide. Whether you're a bride or groom-to-be, a fan or you just love weddings or photography, I'm thrilled you're here! If you're planning your wedding, then I'm sure your mind is racing with all that needs to be planned. It's all very exciting but it can also be somewhat overwhelming. You're planning the day that you've been anticipating your whole life and yet you only get one shot at it! By the time you get the hang of it, the planning is over! My goal as a wedding photographer is to make this one aspect of the planning process simple. Photography is more than just images, it's a huge part of your day. It's an important intimate and extremely personal day and your photographer is going to be around you a lot. Not only do you deserve beautiful images, you also deserve an amazing photographic experience. The goal of this guide is to help you plan your wedding day in a way that will allow me to provide you with the BEST experience possible. I say me, rather than your photographer, as this guide is written with my opinion, knowledge of what I have seen work/ not work and based on my experiences. Another photographer may not work like me or have equal views.





your ENGAGEMENT SESSION

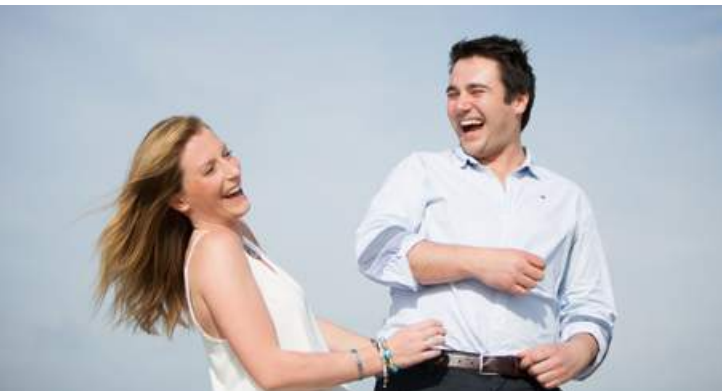
Now that you have picked a date, a photographer and a venue as well, you can celebrate! Those are some of the toughest decisions in wedding planning and you can cross them off your list! Woohoo!! Now on to the fun stuff.... have you chosen to book an engagement session? I would say around 25% of my clients opt for one but the ones who have, always say how pleased they are that they had one, it seems to put that thought of posing, how to look or put their arms - to rest and makes them feel at ease giving them one less thing to worry about. This can also really add to the Wedding Experience, you'll have the chance to get to know me, experience how I shoot and how I handle posing and lighting. Not that I need it, but it does give me a heads up - I'll arrive on your wedding day already knowing how you two interact, what your best poses are and how to photograph you in a genuine way! You will feel like a pro on your big day because of the fab practice you had during your engagement session and that's how it should be!

it at least 3-6 months in advance to avoid stress. Because my weekends are often filled with weddings, I tend to shoot engagements on weekday evenings, normally from 5-7pm depending on the light and the time of the year. In the winter months, 3-4pm is a normal time frame for an eshoot! As you start to plan for your engagement shoot, you will need to start brainstorming about some location ideas. A location that is special or sentimental to you is a lovely idea! If you can't think of anywhere specific that you would like to have your shoot, I can help you decide on a location - the majority of shoots take place local to me in Chichester with the Goodwood woods, the beach or Cathedral gardens being popular choices. As long as the light is great, I can make ANY location look awesome!

THE OUTFITS

WHAT TO WEAR

It's always a little intimidating to have your picture taken even if it's just a photo on an iphone that is taken by a friend, we still want to look nice, make sure nothing is in our teeth and that our hair is behaving - I, for one, hate seeing photos of myself!. Here are some tips for outfits and accessories that will make the e-shoot preparation a little more managable!



- Don't try to MATCH...try to pick outfits and accesories that coordinate instead. If everyone wore the same exact color at their e-shoot, how boring would those images be?
- Don't be afraid to be BOLD! Accessorize and make your outfits your own! Scarves, bold necklaces and fun shoes are always welcomed!
- MOST PATTERNS are actually ok.... however, graphics are not favorable for portraits. If you're wearing a pattern, make sure it's not overwhelming and distracting.
- Be sure to check out my pinterest boards for more outfits inspiration if you're having trouble! adorleephoto
- Empty your pockets! Literally. You don't want to have key chains or phones showing through your pockets or bulges. (This is for the guys!)

- Some couples like to have one casual, everyday outfit and then one outfit that is dressier! This will give your shoot two totally different "looks". I recommend beginning with the dressy outfit first!
- Make sure you're comfortable in what you're wearing. And ladies, if the top is super low cut, that will limit the amount of angles I can shoot from.
- BE ON TIME! The sun is only out for so long ! The later you arrive, the less time we have to shoot! And nobody wants that!
- Clean the ring! I love to shoot a few engagement ring shots while you change outfits! The cleaner the better!
- Relax! You don't have to be a pro at this! That's my job, and I'm going to help you along the way. Enjoy this time together and make a date out of it! Plan dinner afterwards and celebrate!!





outfit INSPIRATION

YOUR
Wedding
DAY



your TIMELINE

details

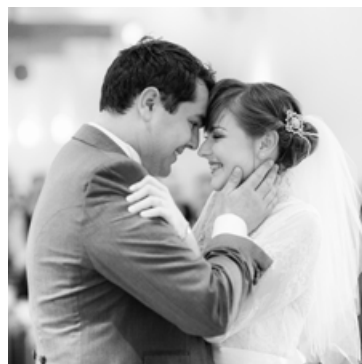
11:00-11:30



Every bride loves having those beautiful shots of her bridal details. It's an important part of the story and I love having some time to shoot the dress, shoes, jewellery, invitations, etc. These shots allow me to get warmed up for the rest of the Wedding day. I normally like to allow around 30 minutes for this part of the day. While I'm shooting details, I'm also capturing some shots of the bride and her girls getting ready!

After the details have been photographed, I love capturing some behind the scenes of hair and make-up - these are always some of my favourite photos. Then, it's time for the bride to get into her dress! This is a big moment! It's nice if the mother of the bride and all of the bridesmaids are dressed when the bride is ready to get into her dress.

This ensures that everyone will look nice in those images. After the bride is in her gown, she can put on her jewellery, veil, shoes, etc and if time, I will shoot some additional bridal portraits!



11:30-12:45

bridal prep

groom prep

11:00-12:45

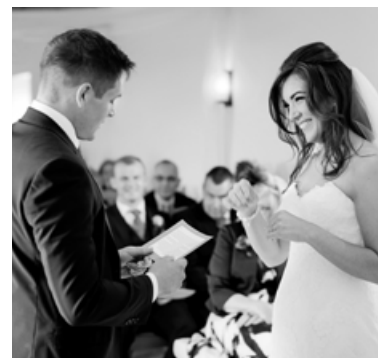


If you have booked a second photographer then he/ she will use this time to capture some photographs of the groom and groomsmen getting ready, having a sneaky drink at the pub, final prep at the Church/ ceremony room, and finally welcoming your guests. Just ask me for more info.

Here's the page that can be somewhat intimidating! The TIMELINE! I know this isn't the most exciting aspect of the wedding day but this is the one thing that can make or break your photography! The next two pages will outline an ideal wedding day working off of a 1pm ceremony timeframe. Remember that all wedding days are different and your timeline may differ due to travel times and unique situations.

ceremony

1:00-1:50



It's time to get married!! Most ceremonies are 30 minutes long. If your ceremony is longer than 30 mins (particularly Catholic or Hindu ceremonies), you'll need to make adjustments to your timeline! Your ceremony will pass by so quickly so I always allow extra time for those congratulations, hellos and a confetti throw.

If the reception is in the same location as the ceremony, I will use this time to shoot your reception details UNTOUCHED. If the ceremony and reception are in different locations, I recommend having a cocktail hour or two outside of the main reception area if possible so that I can grab some great shots of your reception room before the Wedding Breakfast begins.



1:50-2:15

reception details

family portraits

2:15-2:45

Family formals normally take place immediately following the ceremony (once you've said your hellos and had a drink). It's best to capture the family formals soon after the ceremony because ALL family members will be present at that time. I'll need about 30 minutes for family formals and I shall require you to complete my questionnaire and photo list before the wedding, where you can list out the formal shots that you want. I recommend having



these portraits outdoors where possible and if weather permits so that they resemble more natural family portraits in the more flattering natural light, especially if the ceremony location is dark!

continued...

your TIMELINE CONTINUED

BRIDAL PARTY *portraits* 3:00-3:30



Now it's time for Bridal Party shots!
During Bridal Party portraits, I try to take some great shots of the guys and girls both separately AND together! These photos can be natural and relaxed, or formal and staged or fun and silly. We can discuss these in more detail in the lead up to your day.

Now as I request that my clients give me a maximum of 10 family formals, the happy couple should now have time to mingle, and this is when I can capture those favourite shots that everyone loves - the natural candid and unknown ones!



3:30-4:00 details & candid

portraits 4:00-4:30



After the bride and groom take some time away from their guests, I will begin taking a few romantic portrait, I love having this time with the newlyweds to take a few "Just Married" portraits. I will find the locations for these shots as well! Remember, the LIGHT determines where we shoot and so I won't decide on exact portrait locations until the day-of. As we shoot these portraits, I will direct the couple to help with posing and positioning and where to look or put your hands etc.

NB: Remember this is my job, if you are nervous about this and need some tips or help on the day just ask.

WEDDING *breakfast*

4:30-6:45

This is when the fun, laughter, tears, embarrassing speeches, emotion, and the drinking happens.... this is where I capture some crackers! Natural photos of you, your family and your friends showing real emotion. In this time you will also sit to eat, relax, loosen a couple of buttons and catch up with your loved ones. During your meal, I will take my break and eat at the same time as you, so that I am ready for speeches.



NB: Please do let me know if you are planning on having your speeches before food.

APPROXIMATE TIMES:

DETAILS & PREP : 2.5 HOURS

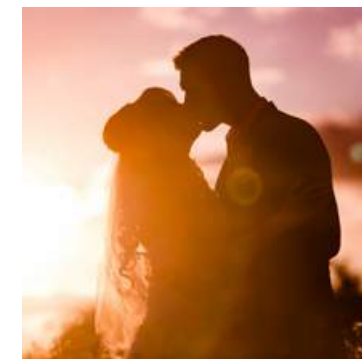
PORTRAITS : 20-40 MINS

BRIDAL PARTY : 20-30 MINS

FAMILY FORMALS: 30 MINS

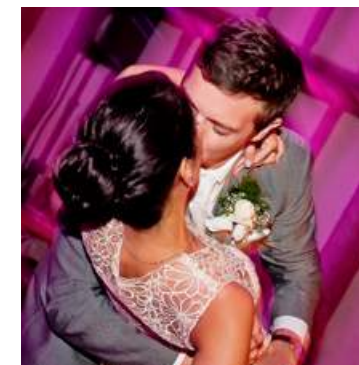
"EXTRA PORTRAIT TIME" : AS MUCH TIME AS YOU'LL GIVE ME!

romantic portraits 7:15-9:00



When there's a gap, I will try to use this time to grab some romantic evening portraits. You'll be nice and relaxed at this point in your day too. Twilight starts around 45 minutes before sunset. It's usually the BEST time of day for those romantic portraits in the late spring, summer and early fall! This is when the sun is glowy and golden. In the Winter Months the Sun tends to set during or sometimes even before the Wedding breakfast - hehe I will drag the couple away if I see a sunset. If my coverage is due to end before sunset and you can have your heart set on sunset photos, you can always add coverage, just get in touch.

This timeline is a 9 hour coverage from getting ready to about 15-20 minutes after your first dance, so that I can be present for the main events of the reception and a bit of dancing! If you're interested in having your exit or evening photographed, you can add additional coverage or plan a faux exit with just your bridal party!



7:30-8:00 *the party begins!*



PRECE



let the day begin!

This portion of The Wedding Experience really sets the stage for the entire wedding day. The next few pages will share tips and tricks that will ensure a seamless morning of bridal preparation and beautiful portraits!



GETTING READY

It's the morning of your wedding! Hopefully all of the little details are taken care of and you're relaxing with your best friends while your hair is being done. If certain items haven't been checked off of the to-do list, it's time to hand them over to someone else. Delegation is a key part of a stress-free wedding day. I know it's hard to hand over the decorating duties and all of the last minute things that need to be done but it really is important to relax the morning of your wedding. The rest of the day is going to be fast paced and filled with a lot of emotions! Take advantage of this down time! There are a few things to consider about the "getting ready" portion of the day. Do you want to share a "first look" with your dad or any other man that plays a huge role in your life?

Will you and your groom be exchanging gifts during this time? If so, who would you like to deliver them? Are there certain women in your life that would appreciate seeing you get into your gown? Some brides want very few people around for this moment. Other brides love having aunts and grandmas present! It's totally up to you! A few other things to consider.... as you get ready to put your dress on, refrain from putting any jewelry on. I love shooting all of those final steps when you're in your gown! Speaking of the gown, if your gown is on a plastic hanger, try to make a note to bring a wooden or pretty hanger along for picture sake. Keep reading along for more "getting ready" tips to help you prepare!



THE *Window* EFFECT

By having just *one* simple window in the bridal prep area, I am able to create beautiful portraits with soft light. I prefer natural light so the more windows, the better!



The whole day begins with the DETAILS! This is one of my favorite parts of the wedding day because it allows me to prepare and get my creative side warmed up for the rest of the day! I photograph a bride's details in a way that matches and extenuates the style of the entire wedding day. So, in some ways, the details set the stage for the look of the whole wedding and I love having ample time to stylize and shoot everything from the dress to the jewelry to grandma's handkerchief! To the right you'll find a list of the most common details that I shoot. I ask brides to gather any details they have before I arrive so that I can walk in, say hello, give you a huge hug and then begin with all the goodies! (Please ensure your mum that I will take GREAT care of the dress, I promise!). NB: This doesn't just apply to the Bride, if you have booked a second photographer or there if this is a same sex marriage then please still have all of your details ready.

what to gather

- DRESS / SUIT
- VEIL/HAIR PIECES
- RINGS (ALL THREE)
- SHOES
- JEWELLERY / CUFFLINKS
- PERFUME / AFTERSHAVE
- INVITATIONS & STATIONARY
- YOUR SOMETHING
- BORROWED & BLUE
- BOUQUET & BOUTS

DETAIL *Tips*



gather the GOODS

If possible, collect all of your details before I arrive so that I can begin quickly and have more time for some “getting ready” shots of you and your girls/ boys!

extra ELEMENTS

Sometimes, depending on the theme and “look” of the wedding day, there may be some extra elements that you could include when you gather your details. For example, if you’re having a country themed wedding, you could include a piece of burlap or lace. If you’re having a rustic themed wedding that includes some wooden elements, maybe save a small piece of wood for me to use when I’m shooting your rings and jewellery. This REALLY makes for beautiful, consistent album spreads!

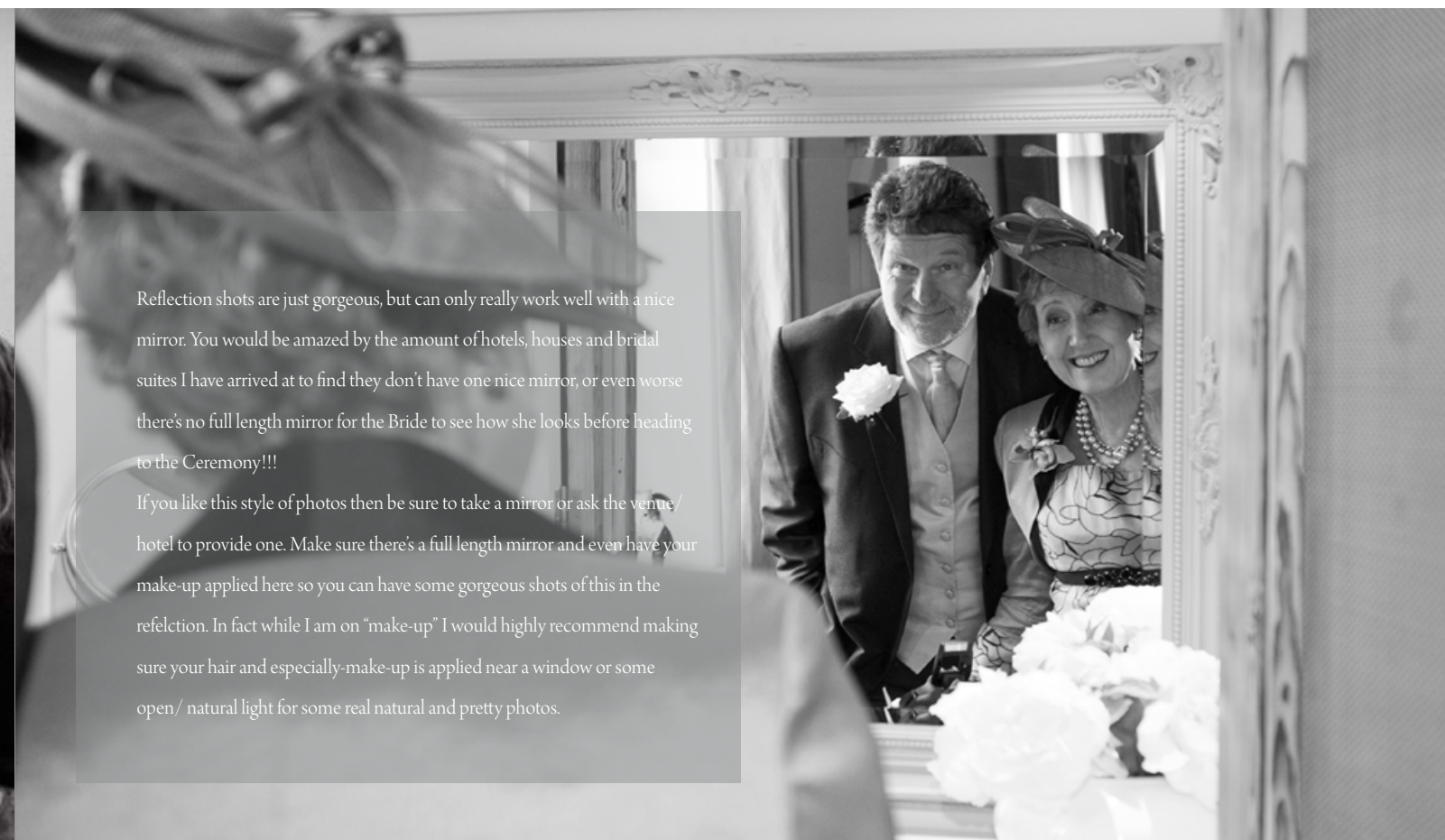
Keep the RINGS!

The most common detail missing when I arrive are the rings! Mums, officiants and planners will tell you to hand over the wedding rings to the best man before the day begins. However, it’s actually better to hand it over when we first arrive to the ceremony, so that I can shoot some great ring shots in the AM! If you forget, no worries, I can always shoot the rings shot during your reception wedding breakfast.

bring the BOUQUET

Don’t forget the Bouquet! Have the bouquets and bouts delivered to the bride in the morning so that I can snap some pics of it with your rings and jewellery. No worries, if it’s hot, we’ll be sure to keep it in water as much as possible before the ceremony!

IN THAT *reflection*



Reflection shots are just gorgeous, but can only really work well with a nice mirror. You would be amazed by the amount of hotels, houses and bridal suites I have arrived at to find they don't have one nice mirror, or even worse there's no full length mirror for the Bride to see how she looks before heading to the Ceremony!!!

If you like this style of photos then be sure to take a mirror or ask the venue/hotel to provide one. Make sure there's a full length mirror and even have your make-up applied here so you can have some gorgeous shots of this in the reflection. In fact while I am on "make-up" I would highly recommend making sure your hair and especially make-up is applied near a window or some open/natural light for some real natural and pretty photos.

W

hen you're planning a wedding day timeline, the best advice I could give is to ADD CUSHION TIME! Sometimes the most simple things can take an extra 20 minutes and then all of a sudden, the whole morning is thrown off. I have seen "getting the bride in her dress" take almost 40 minutes because of a button malfunction. It's a smart idea to add in an extra ten minutes here and there so that we have some wiggle room to work with! This way, if one part of the day gets thrown off by 20 minutes, I can help you compensate that time in other areas. There are so many different things to think about when you're planning a wedding day and so here are some tips for the preceremony timeline! I realise that every single wedding day is different and so not all of these tips will apply to every wedding day schedule. Something else to consider is that not EVERYTHING will go as planned, and I promise you, that is completely normal!!



BOUQUET + BOUTS

You will need your Bouquet & Bouts! Have them delivered to the room where the bride is getting ready at least one hour before getting in the dress - the earlier the better.

HAIR + MAKEUP

You may prefer to have at your base makeup done before I finish with your details so you don't have a ton of shots with-out makeup on?!

TRAVEL TIME

Be sure to think about the travel time and TRAFFIC to and from your getting ready location and your venue!

GROOMSMEN PREP

If you have booked my second shooter he/ she will capture the guys getting ready - suit, shoes, watch, last touches, getting dressed and guests arriving.

Timing TIPS



GETTING DRESSED

Plan a time to get into your dress close to a window and it would be fabulous to have your bridesmaids dressed when you're getting in your gown!

CREATING A CUSHION

A 10 minute cushion every now and then is a GREAT idea! It's amazing how fast time slips away the day of!



YOUR *first look*

Your first look is an amazing part of your wedding day! This trend isn't as popular in England, yet, and you may not be sure about this new tradition, the next few pages will explain why it would be a romantic addition to your wedding day celebration, if chosen, that not only adds to the experience but also reduces stress. Personally I think this is more suited to and perfect for destination weddings or late ceremonies around 3pm onwards. This section explains why this new tradition is so popular with Brides across America.



I have never confessed my deep love for “First Looks”. There is a reason for this, they’re “un-traditional” and so most couples write it off. They’re AWESOME. However, not everyone is aware of how awesome they are because they get caught up in how “un-traditional”. You may want a REACTION....wanted your husband-to-be to be so surprised and overcome with joy when you walk down the aisle that he bawls at the first sight of you! Isn’t that EVERY girl’s dream? Who doesn’t want that reaction?... you can still share an intimate “First Look” moment on your wedding day AND he will still LOSE IT when you come down the aisle. You can even do a “NO” First Look where he is blindfolded but can feel you and speak to you. A chance to be alone and calm the nerves, whisper sweet nothings and he still won’t “see” you until you walk up the aisle!

Here’s what fellow photographer and friend over in the USA, Katelyn, says of her first look :

“After experiencing my own wedding and shooting over 100 others.... I’ve come to this conclusion. Some brides love “traditions” but what a bride REALLY wants when it comes to her groom seeing her for the first time is a REACTION. Those that are not interested in a First Look usually think that by seeing each other beforehand, they will lose part of that reaction. They also assume that it will not be as emotional or as intimate as it would be if they were coming down the aisle. What I have found (this is starting to sound like a research paper!) is so ironic! Everyone knows that wedding days are a bit stressful for the bride and groom. The whole day is focused on them, they need to look their best, they need to be on time, the groom has no idea what side the boutonniere is supposed to go on and little by little... the tension grows.

It’s before the ceremony and the gravity of what is about to happen starts to sink in and the calm, collected groom that was playing golf just a few short hours ago is now starting to feel a little anxious. So what happens next? The groom waits in a little room somewhere just waiting for his que from the coordinator. It seems like it’s taking FOREVER. Finally, the coordinator leans her head in and hurries the groom to get ready. With clammy hands, the groom enters the ceremony and what does he find? he finds anywhere from 80-300 people and they’re all looking where? Right at his face... because everyone has expectations and anticipation about his first reaction. This is the farthest thing from a private, intimate moment. Sure, it’s SO powerful and SO wonderful. ... I already said that walking down the aisle was one of the BEST PARTS of my WHOLE wedding day!! It’s magical!! But when I walked down the aisle... Michael wasn’t a nervous wreck...he had spent the morning with me and our best friends , having photos done and dusted and the pressure was OFF. By the time our ceremony rolled around he was ready to ENJOY our beautiful day! The nerves were gone and when the nerves are gone...

true emotions are free to be expressed. And OH were they expressed! (Seriously, he bawled!). So if I were to condense what I just wrote... basically, Grooms normally become incredibly nervous on wedding days.... even if they seem cool and collected. For most grooms, the nerves kick in before they see their bride because when they see her, everything becomes VERY real! So when the nerves start creeping up, instead of keeping the groom in a secluded space until his time to enter the ceremony, what if you took him to a private place... no people, no on-lookers, no distractions.... and you let his beautiful bride, the love of his life, walk up to him and gently tap his shoulder. He would turn around and finally get his first look at his stunning bride and not only would he get to see her... he could embrace her... cry with her.... kiss her... and ENJOY that moment with her for as LONG as they wanted. As she shows him her dress, twirls a few times and then asks him what he thinks... his nerves start to diminish. After all, she’s the one that can make him most comfortable anyway, and all of this has been captured on camera!”

While no one is around, this is the perfect opportunity for some private romantic portraits. It’s just the two of you and me - your photographer..... This is your time to be TOGETHER...and to be ALONE. When does that happen on a wedding day? If planned well your bridal party can then join you and I can capture your bridal party portraits.

After portraits are done, the girls and guys separate and prepare for the ceremony. The guests begin to arrive and the ushers are in place. Pretty soon it’s time for the processional music to begin. As the groom clasps his hands... they aren’t clasped out of nervousness but excitement. The music builds, the mother of the bride stands and all of the guests follow her lead. The groom looks up and here comes the BRIDE!!! His best friend, his companion, his sweetheart.....she’s stunning.... ABSOLUTELY stunning. The closer she gets, the bigger he smiles.



Now let me put a disclaimer on here before we continue...my clients are not required to do a First Look by any means! However, I’ve seen the benefits of a first look over and over again and so I only share this because I want the BEST for my couples!! It’s totally ok if couples choose not to share a first look!

The First Look idealy suits Weddings where the ceremony takes place later in the day, this is to allow time for the photos and moments together. Many destination weddings start later in the day too so I think it’s a perfect choice for these couples. Get in touch to discuss an option for your First Look.



THE *Ceremony*

Here it is! The moment everyone has been waiting for! The music is playing and the guests have been seated. Ushers make their way to the back of the church and the coordinator is lining up the bridesmaids while giving the musicians a 5 minute warning. The bride is about to walk down the aisle to the love of her life..... and if she's like most girls, she's dreamed about this moment for a long time! Vows will be shared and promises will be made... this is what it's all about!! In a world full of wedding blogs, Pinterest and bridal magazines, it's easy to be overwhelmed and consumed by the "prettiness" of the event. While details do matter and planning is necessary, it's important to never lose sight of the real purpose of this amazing day!



lighting

Lighting plays an important role on your wedding day and as we all know, especially in the UK, it is quite unpredictable. In recent years our weather has definitely improved. But what can we control?... Getting ready - make sure you have lots of natural light in the room, it means no need for flash leaving a more natural look and feel to your photos with a softer and more flattering light on your skin!

For an indoor ceremony, it is always best to have EVEN lighting - a soft, even light across the whole altar. Avoid rooms with tapestries!!!

Do we need a sunset for romantic photos? The lower the sun, the more romantic the lighting and colours, but you'll be AMAZED what I can do just with a little under-exposure and a long narrow beam of flash! It's always worth capturing some portraits of the two of you at twilight.

order of service

I have seen so many couples do so many AMAZING things during their ceremony. I've photographed couples washing each other's feet, symbolizing that they want to serve each other for the rest of their life. Some couples share in communion while some light a unity candle. I've seen ring ceremonies, rope ceremonies and the signing of the family bible. The options are limitless!! As you plan your ceremony, make sure you design it to be exactly what the two of you envision it to be. This is your day!! If you have the freedom to be creative, then by all means, be creative!!

If you decide to be more traditional, be sure to choose readings and hymns / songs that mean something to you, be it a memory, the words or even ask someone special to choose one and read it for you (or sing!).

programs and details

The BEST advice I have for the program making process is to remember that not EVERY guest needs a program! In fact a vast majority of weddings don't even have a program for the guests. Some, however, do opt for a program to be written up on a chalkboard.

Before ordering your programs/ order of service/ menu or any stationary, have SEVERAL people check it for spelling and grammatical errors. *if you're struggling to find a wedding font for your stationary, check out the font, *Bellucia*.

Programs and the ceremony decor is something that the bride can plan in advance but then delegate the actual job of setting it up to a friend or coordinator. The last thing a bride needs to be doing the morning of her wedding is running around setting up final decor arrangements! This leads me into my next column!

coordination

Hiring either a full event planner or just a day-of coordinator is a fantastic idea! Brides realise very quickly that if they do not have someone in charge of the coordination of the day, that responsibility will automatically fall on the mother of the bride, the photographer or the BRIDE!

Stressful wedding situations are caused by a lack of organisation and coordination. It's so important to make this a priority. If you need any recommendations on wedding coordination services check if your venue has their own co-ordinator who will take charge on the day knowing you can relax and enjoy your day. Do remember no wedding runs exactly to time, just take a breather, stepback, take it all in and enjoy. This is your day, relax and leave any responsibilities to who you've allocated them to.

A full-page background image showing a bride and groom in wedding attire standing on a balcony with a green metal railing. They are looking at each other and smiling. The background features a clear blue sky, a deep blue ocean, and a rocky coastline with some buildings visible in the distance. A large bush of purple flowers is on the right side of the balcony.

destination

WEDDINGS

If you are planning a destination wedding, a lot of the details in this guide will not apply to you! Your details, your timeline and even your preparation for the big day will most likely be much simpler. However, it is a good idea to start thinking about a few key components of the day such as: your ceremony time and your ceremony/portrait locations (some destination weddings require some planning to find portrait locations without tourists in the background). I usually arrive a couple of days early so I can find some scenic backdrops for your photos. Be sure to check the sunset times in your wedding location before settling on your ceremony time. As your wedding day draws closer, we'll begin to chat about the timeline of the day and the travel arrangements. Get excited!! This is going to be amazing!!



POSITANO BRIDE



natsaha's tips

1. Learn to do your own make up. No one knows your face better than you and you might not have the luxury of a trial session with a make up artist at a destination wedding before you book them. I was travelling from Australia to Italy so a trial was not really an option.
2. Same with hair... Either go for a simple style that a good local can do that you know works in photos, or learn to do your own up do!
3. Be prepared to also be a travel agent/tour guide for all your guests.
4. Find a trusted photographer that you know can come up with the goods ... What's the point in having a destination wedding if you can't have the beautiful photos to prove it!
5. Take every moment as it comes and don't sweat the small stuff, the best fun happens from the unplanned.





TUSCANY BRIDE

anna's tips

On 21st July 2014 I photographed Anna's marriage to James at Castello di Modanella in Tuscany, Italy. Anna's also a photographer so was a perfectionist when it came to the finer details of how everything should look. She hired the help of professional Tuscany wedding planner BeA at Alfresco Weddings. I asked Anna if she had any advice for my future destination wedding clients, if she would recommend it, what they should consider, and what the best or most helpful things she did to make her wedding a success.

On 21st July 2014 I photographed Anna's marriage to James at Castello di Modanella in Tuscany, Italy. Anna's also a photographer so was a perfectionist when it came to the finer details of how everything should look. She hired the help of professional Tuscany wedding planner BeA at Alfresco Weddings. I asked Anna if she had any advice for my future destination wedding clients, if she would recommend it, what they should consider, and what the best or most helpful things she did to make her wedding a success.

Firstly I would definitely recommend finding a wedding planner, one who speaks English and lives in the area that you are planning to marry.

We went to Italy, to Tuscany to meet our planner once we had decided on a few venues to visit, we actually met 5 planners before we picked one. You can do this in 30 mins over coffee in one place. You know when you know, we chose BeA from Alfresco Weddings. Check this has been their full time occupation for a while and that he/ she knows what they're doing - many make out they are amazing but are not. Ask them to talk you through the process and make sure it matches up with your research and ask how she can source what you need for your day. Having a planner will open up your chances of having what you want and for a smooth lead up and run on the day. Also check if he/she has an office or space you can have wedding accessories stored at (either whatever they buy for you or what you might buy and send over or bring over).

Another plus to having a planner is they can get those finer details that you want. Check they use Pinterest! And also (for Italy for example) they know the complex rules for marrying abroad and all the contacts. They should stay with you on the day and not leave until the party is in full swing!



Planner

Speak to your planner about things to do before/after your wedding - we did pizza night at the villa where pizza chefs came in with pizza ovens and cooked on site, then dinner out the day after the wedding and a trip to a local natural thermal spa! Also taxis - make sure your planner sorts this for you, and check with the venue about cake options, often you can pay more and have the cake included in the price and then serve as a dessert!

Planners will usually have things you can use that they have from previous weddings. For example a seat plan board and stand. You can still make it your style but means you won't need to buy an easel or items like bird cages, wooden boards, table number card holders, candle holders, table cloths and other items to dress your card table.

BeA had loads of things we wanted or she bought it for our wedding then kept it to add to her kit. Items like old Italian

details & Venues

books and vases to put lemons in was our vision but Prob wouldn't have happened if we had had to buy and bring it ourselves! Ooh and don't forget hair and make up (your planner should know one!)

When visiting venues, make a list of 20 of your top questions and print multiple copies to take with you to the venue (just ask Nicci if you'd like to see a copy of ours)

And make sure you ask ALL these questions when visiting each venue. We saw 10 venues in 2 days (quite common to cram visit when planning a wedding abroad) and we would not have remembered everything if we hadn't noted the venue, took photos of the place and asked the questions (and written down the answers!!) - things like how long can we party to (ie at least 4-5am for us), what are the pricing options including payment options, and are you allowed fireworks or is the table linen included in the price. My

The Church

check list also included a question about wine and what is cost for the venue and if bringing our own was allowed, what the corkage price was. We didn't need to bring our own in the end but it's worth asking in case. Same for the bar if you are planning on putting money behind bar!

If getting married in Italy in a church you need to be Catholic and go to marriage classes and do a lot of paperwork. Similar to England but in Italy this starts about 8-12 months before your wedding date so sort this with your UK Catholic priest asap. Also the ceremony will need to be traditional with classical music (no modern favourites hour) for walking down the aisle or out of the church) and most church's require musicians (€350-450 per musician per so this can be expensive but worth it as it was very moving.

When visiting venues think of photography spots, and try and pick a church that's closeby. I went to a wedding in

location & taxis

Spain once that was 1.5 hours on a bus from church to venue! Not fun! Hot and no alcohol! People usually want a glass of prosecco in hand within 20 mins of leaving church. Ideal if you can walk from church to venue as if not, this will be another cost as you will need to get a bus to get your guests to your venue! You can't rely on everyone having hire cars or wanting to drive them to the venue and leave them there. Esp if taxis not readily available the next day to collect cars. Italian cab drivers like 1-3 days notice for a job, and most venues there are remote so calling for a cab when you decide to go home isn't usually an option! And lastly, note that stationary can be heavy - either order from Italy or send from England to your planner before you go by recorded post.

Make the most of time with friends and family, it's an incredible experience. ENJOY!

Tuscany

WEDDING PLANNER

BeA from Alfresco Weddings is a professional wedding planner based in Tuscany, Italy. She was Anna's wonderful planner and having met and worked with Bea myself, I asked if she could contribute just a few wise words for all you destination Brides & Grooms :

BeA has been kind enough to share her top tips and advice for planning a Wedding overseas, particularly in Tuscany.

Planning a destination wedding might seem crazy and stressfull, but it is better than it seems.

You have to plan it with a professionalist in this field, a destination wedding planner in the place you decide, so that you have all things under control to relieve you of any stress.

This way you need not worry about being away from your vendors, you don't have to meet them every weekend and instead can meet EVERYONE in one day!!!

Just come twice before the wedding; once to choose the venue, and secondly to meet all the vendors and to say "I do".

It is not complicated with the paperwork, even a catholic church wedding is possible - you need the same paperwork from your Church as you would in the UK.

"GO WHERE YOUR HEART TAKES YOU"

There are 4 huge advantages to having a destination wedding:

1. You can save a lot of money as not all of your friends will come anyway!!! Instead of having a 200 guests wedding at home...people you have never meet..... you can have your loved ones.
2. You can stay 2/3/4 days all together and enjoy the time, the wine and food. It is a non-stop party time!!!
3. It is an opportunity to present to your friends and family an experience for life.
4. You'll stand out from the crowd!



YOUR *Romantic* PORTRAITS

If we're being honest, all of the wedding day images are important but the real favorites are almost always from my time with the Bride and Groom! These romantic portraits of just the two of you will be the images that you frame beside your bed, over your mantle and they will also be the images that will fill your album for generations to enjoy. These images are always my favorite, not only because of their beauty but because this is such a sweet portion of the day. For this brief moment in time, you will be alone with your groom on your wedding day. You will have a chance to love on each other and really connect before the craziness begins! Romantic portraits are normally done either after the ceremony, or formal group photographs and then I LOVE shooting a few "twilight" portraits after the ceremony as well! This is when the light is low and golden! It's such a romantic time for bride and groom portraits and ultra flattering and pretty!

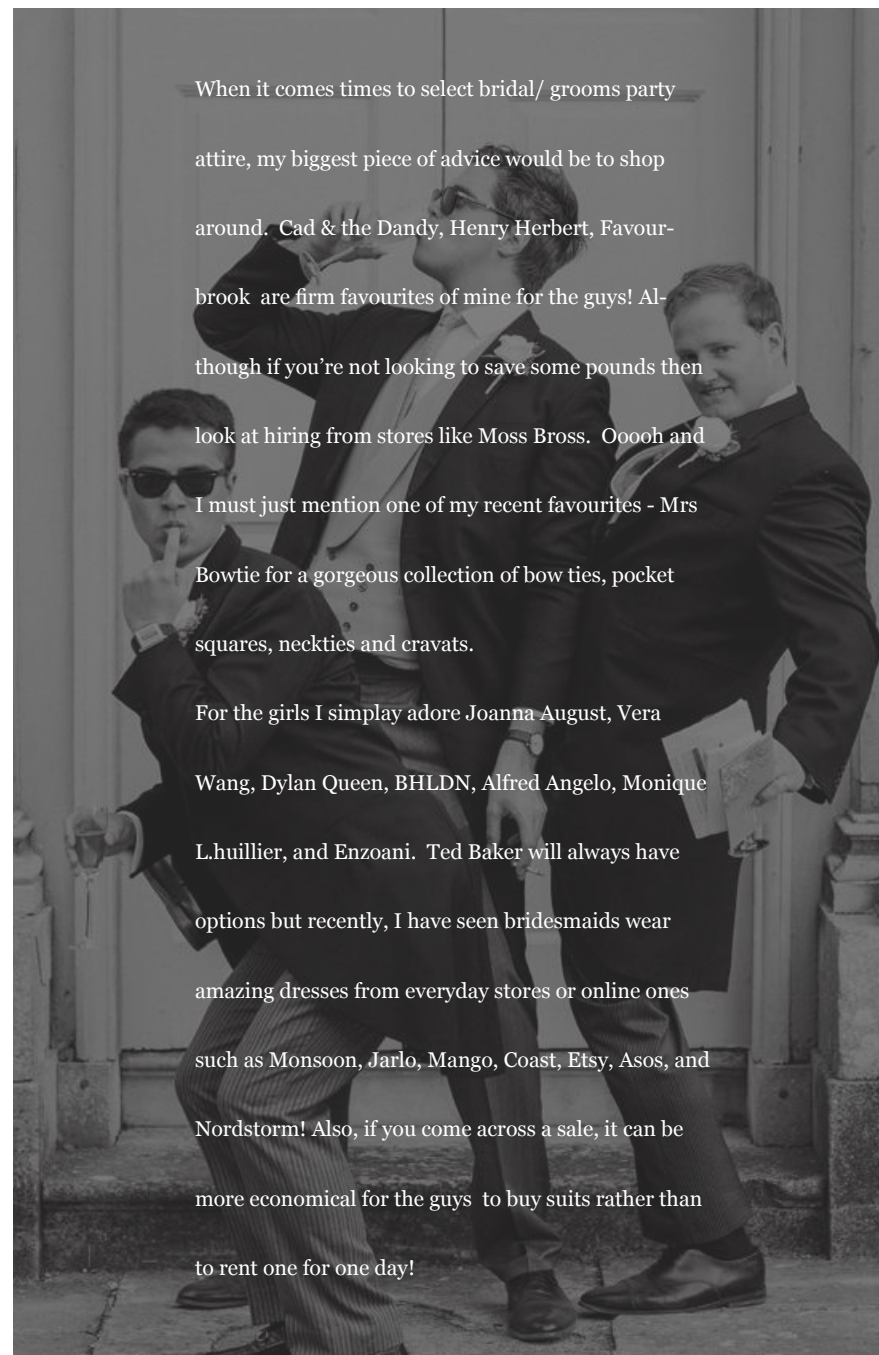
If you're having a first look, I will make the most of that of that opportunity to include most of your portraits saving time post ceremony.





BRIDAL *party*

Lets chat about your bridal party! This is when the fun REALLY begins! I know from experience that all brides want their closest friends to have an AMAZING time during their big day and I will make sure that happens! Bridal party portraits should be a ton of FUN! After your family formals, your bridal party will join us for portraits! If all goes well, we will be able to accomplish ALL of your bridal party portraits BEFORE the Wedding Breakfast. This means that your guys and gals will be free to drink, mingle, relax at dinner and party the night away if they wish! If there are flower girls and pageboys involved, I capture these first before they get messy. The Bridal Party includes the Best man, Ushers, Maid of Honor, Bridesmaids, Flowergirls, Pageboys, and of course the Bride & Groom. Some couples choose to includes Fathers or brothers if wearing matching suits.





RECEPTION *planning*



The party is here!! Receptions can be a blast! However, it’s important to make sure that you have your event well thought out. This is the job of your wedding/ venue coodinator and your DJ/Band. Your caterer will also play a big role in the design and set up of your event, so listen to their advice. Every aspect of your reception affects the overall outline of the evening. For example, if you’re not having a plated meal, your reception will need to be set up in a way that allows movement. Guests will need to be able to find the food stations easily and there will be a mixture of dinner tables and hightop cocktail tables. This will encourage guests to mix and mingle. If you are having a plated dinner, you will more than likely need place cards, full place settings and space for all of your guests to be seated comfortably. Whatever the style of your event, make sure that you plan out all of the events of the evening. Your coordinator and DJ can help you set up the evening so that guests won’t leave early or experience long periods of wating for the next thing to happen.

Much like the ceremony, you have the freedom to make your reception your own! It’s your party, it should be exactly how you want it to be! Here is a list of some key events that happen often at the evening reception:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| - First Dance | - Welcome by Father of the Bride |
| - Daddy-Daughter Dance | - Blessing |
| - Mother-Son Dance | - Cake Cutting |
| - Anniversary Dance | - Toasts and speeches |
| - Money Dance (Greek) | - Bouquet and Garter Toss |
| - Traditional Religious Dances | - Large group portraits with friends (hens & stags) |
| - Lots of dancing! | - The exit of the Bride and Groom |

RECEPTION *Tips*

The fun has begun! It's time to relax, dance and celebrate!! Your reception should be a BLAST! The last thing you need to be worrying about is your timeline. Your coordinator and DJ should take care of making sure that everything stays on schedule so that you can enjoy your night. Here are some helpful tips that will help your reception flow smoothly.

- Take your guests into consideration when planning your timeline. If you have a lot of elderly guests that will not be staying until the very end, make sure you schedule the cake cutting at a relatively early time so that they can be a part of it. Grandma's love seeing this sweet tradition!

- Keep it moving! Chat with your coordinator about how you can plan your reception in a way that will keep guests engaged and moving all night!

- Make it your own! If you want to have a special dance with your grandparents, do it! Make your reception a reflection of who you are and don't feel tied to traditions. Also, make sure you give your DJ or Band a "Do Not Play" list if there are some songs you really don't want to hear during your reception!

- Don't get too caught up in the formalities and the details. Sure, details are pretty and fun to photograph, but they can steal the joy of the day if you get too caught up in them. (Just speaking from experience of what I see). Plan your centerpieces, welcome table, etc. well before the wedding date and teach your coordinator or family friend how to set them up so that you aren't even thinking about those things the day of! *send pictures to your florist of the type of tablecentres and bouquets you like and are expecting.

- Have you purchased enough coverage time for your photography to capture any partying? I recommend planning your timeline so that you can have at least one hour of dancing photographed. The guests that dance during the first hour will still be dancing in the third hour! One hour of dancing will be enough time to really capture the joy of your reception!

- Lastly don't skimp on the band! An amazing band may cost more but will make a huge difference to the overall party, atmosphere, and the everyone's memories of the day! Trust me, this is when all your friends are talking after about what a great night they had and how awesome your band was!



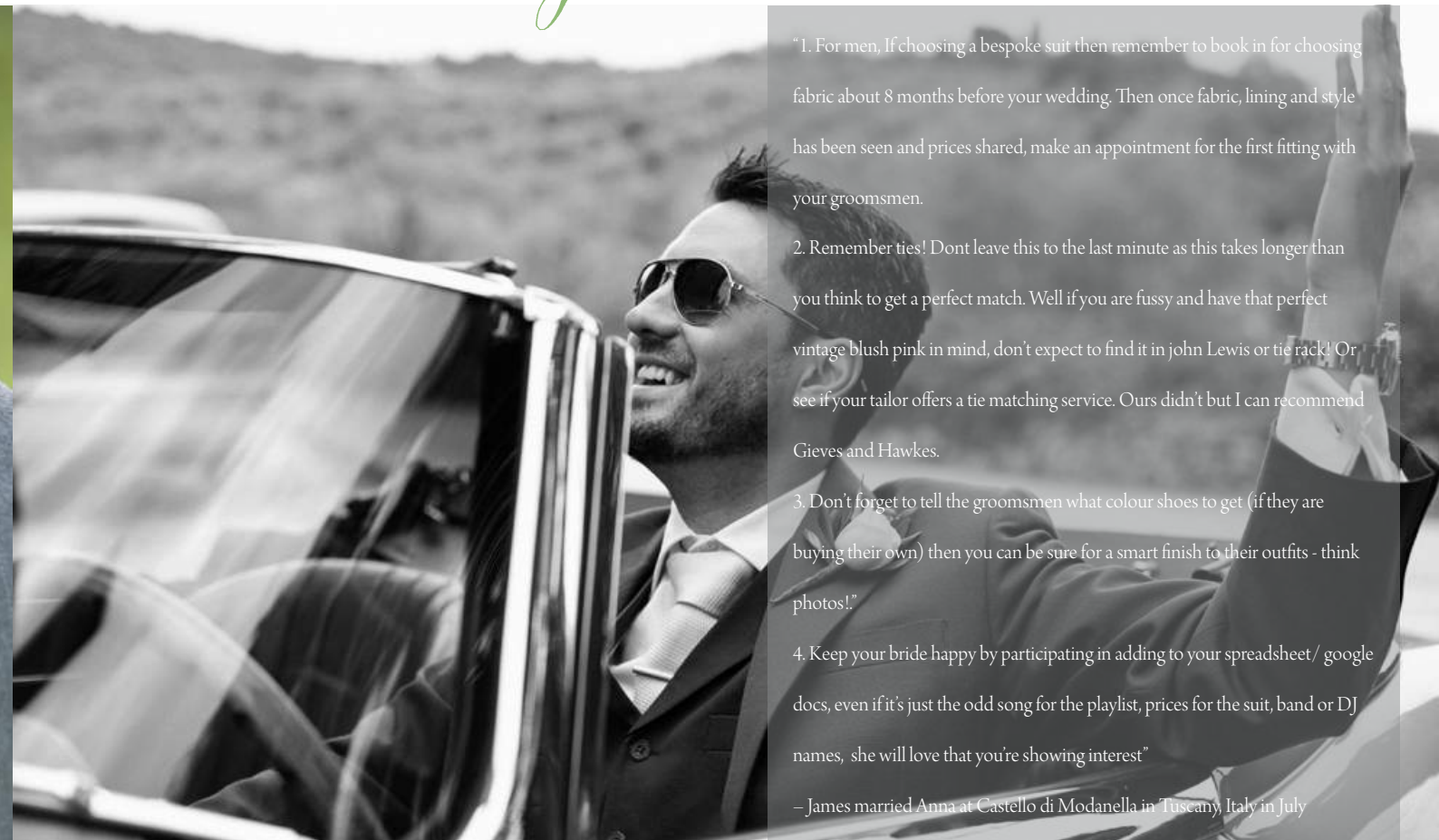
TIPS FROM A REAL *bride*



1. Try not to stress about the minor details too much, a lot of the time they go unnoticed and will reduce a lot of stress for the bride!
2. Try to sneak a bit of private time with each other away from the guests, to really take in the vows and promises you have made, but also to look over at everyone having a good time and to reflect on how your day has come together after all your hard work planning it.
3. Ignore the little things that go wrong. It is bound to happen. All that matters is you and your guests being together and celebrating your special day.
4. On the morning of the wedding try and find a nice little number to wear that represents you and your day, especially if you are having photographs getting ready. It's a special touch.
5. Everyone has someone in their family that is going to try and push the boundaries on your wedding day. Do not let anyone take over your day. It is all about you both and what you want. Those who love and care for you will be happy for you no matter what."

– Charleigh married Ross at Duncton Mill Fishery in June 2014

TIPS FROM A REAL *groom*



1. For men, If choosing a bespoke suit then remember to book in for choosing fabric about 8 months before your wedding. Then once fabric, lining and style has been seen and prices shared, make an appointment for the first fitting with your groomsmen.
2. Remember ties! Dont leave this to the last minute as this takes longer than you think to get a perfect match. Well if you are fussy and have that perfect vintage blush pink in mind, don't expect to find it in John Lewis or the rack! Or see if your tailor offers a tie matching service. Ours didn't but I can recommend Gieves and Hawkes.
3. Don't forget to tell the groomsmen what colour shoes to get (if they are buying their own) then you can be sure for a smart finish to their outfits - think photos!."
4. Keep your bride happy by participating in adding to your spreadsheet/ google docs, even if it's just the odd song for the playlist, prices for the suit, band or DJ names, she will love that you're showing interest"

– James married Anna at Castello di Modanella in Tuscany, Italy in July



Last, but certainly not least, THANK YOU for trusting me with your special day. I am so honored to be the one capturing your memories and I cannot WAIT to celebrate alongside of you! Enjoy this season of planning but also remember that your MARRIAGE is more important than the wedding. The wedding will come and go in a matter of hours but your marriage needs to stand the test of time. Continue to make time for one another, even with all that needs to get done. As you continue to plan, please feel free to contact me with ANY questions you may have along the way! Depending on your date, my next step would be to finalise a pre-wedding catch up or if you have one booked, an engagement session date! About 6-8 weeks before the wedding, you'll receive a questionnaire that will provide me with everything we need to know for your big day!! I hope this guide has been helpful as you continue to plan and prepare for your wedding day! Love,

Nicci

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