



entimate ELOPEMENT GUIDE

HOW TO ELOPE: STEP BY STEP GUIDE

5 STEPS TO ELOPEMENT PLANNING

Elopement planning doesn't always follow a straightforward, step-by-step path. It unfolds in stages. Similar to ascending a mountain, there are multiple routes to the summit. However, if you ever find yourself unsure of the way, this guide is here to provide direction.

DREAM & BRAINSTORM

Craft a comprehensive vision for your special day, including your desired location in the world and the time of year that suits your elopement plans.

RESEARCH & CONSIDER LOGISTICS

Begin transforming your vision into reality by delving into the logistical aspects, discovering what's feasible (and remember, as your elopement photographer and guide, I'm here to assist with this).

MAKE CHOICES & START BOOKING

Solidify your plans by selecting your dream elopement location. Secure nearby accommodations and organize your transportation arrangements.

FINALIZE DETAILS & GET READY

Wrap up the details by confirming your other vendors, acquiring your attire, orchestrating activities, and creating a comprehensive timeline.

HAVE THE BEST ELOPEMENT DAY!

Witness your vision materialize and savor each moment of your extraordinary elopement day!

STAGE 1: Dream & Brainstorm

The foundation of any successful plan lies in a thorough brainstorming session. One of the remarkable aspects of elopement is the freedom to choose some of the most breathtaking locations worldwide for your vows.

SO... IF YOU COULD GO ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD TO GET MARRIED... WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

The aim during the dreaming and brainstorming phase is to shape a holistic vision for your special day, encompassing the desired geographic region and the season you envision for your elopement.

HOW TO BRAINSTORM - 3 TIPS

GET IN A RELAXED SPACE

The most effective approach to dreaming and brainstorming is to find a cozy spot with your partner and envision your ideal elopement day, detailing it from the beginning to the end. You might consider doing this during your cherished date night or while snuggled up at home with your favorite drink in hand.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

The dreaming and brainstorming phase isn't about becoming mired in particulars, feasibility, or realism. It's perfectly fine to keep your ideas abstract. Enjoy the process of envisioning all the potential possibilities.

GET IN A RELAXED SPACE

To facilitate your planning, seek inspiration and kindle excitement about fresh concepts, utilize platforms like Pinterest, Instagram, travel resources, literature, Google Earth Pro, or maps.

WHEN YOU'RE DREAMING ABOUT YOUR ELOPEMENT DAY... ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE
OVERALL MEANING
AND INTENTION OF
YOUR DAY?

Is this day just for the two of you? Do others play a role in your day?

WHAT DOES THE SCENERY LOOK LIKE?

Are you in the mountains, desert, on a cliff, in a forest, in front of a waterfall, or on the beach?

WHAT SEASON IS IT?

Do you prefer cold or warm weather? Do you imagine there being snow, or fall colors? Do you two enjoy hot or cold weather?

HOW MUCH TIME ARE YOU ABLE TO USE FOR THE TRIP?

Is the elopement day part of a larger trip or combined with your honeymoon? How much time are you able to take off from work?

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS TOO...

WILL IT BE JUST THE TWO OF YOU? OR WILL YOU INCLUDE OTHERS?

This will help determine any permits you will need or accessibility concerns.

WHAT DOES THE CEREMONY LOOK LIKE?

Are there important cultural or religious traditions you'd like to incorporate into the ceremony?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO WEAR?

A dress or suit? Something more casual? Are you wearing shoes - or not? If it's cold, will you need to wear extra layers? What footwear do you need?

WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU SEE YOURSELVES DOING?

These can be activities that you enjoy doing together or ones you've never tried before. Hiking, stargazing, stand up paddleboarding?

HOWEVER FUZZY IT IS, THAT'S A GREAT PLACE TO START!

At some juncture in either Stage 1 or Stage 2, many couples opt to reach out to me as their elopement photographers and guide. I take immense joy in assisting couples in transforming their somewhat abstract vision into a well-defined plan, leveraging my wealth of elopement expertise, travel insights, location recommendations, and planning resources. If you don't already have a photographer who can assist with the planning and logistics of your elopement, it's worth contemplating the prospect of engaging a local wedding planner.



STAGE 2: RESEARCH & LOGISTICS

After you've crafted the comprehensive vision for your special day, Stage 2 revolves around delving into thorough research to determine feasibility. Your objective in this research phase is to transform your adventure elopement dream into a tangible reality, ensuring it's realized in the most optimal manner. This sets the stage for commencing the finalization of specific details.

WHAT IF I HATE RESEARCHING?

Don't worry! This isn't anything like writing a thesis or policy paper. You'll have fun!

Just as in Stage 1, I recommend creating a laid-back and enjoyable setting to relish this process. Whether it's on your patio, your cozy couch with laptops or phones, or maybe spending time in the travel book section of a bookstore following a coffee date—make it an enjoyable experience.

And if you ever find yourself stuck, remember that there are numerous individuals you can consider hiring for assistance, such as a seasoned photographer, a wedding planner, or a local guide. As an elopement photographer and guide, I find that Stage 2 is often when I provide the most support in the planning process. I'm more than delighted to offer my assistance!

HOW TO RESEARCH 3 TIPS



DIG DEEP

Conduct thorough research, get into the details as extensively as you can. It's best to uncover any potential logistical challenges related to weather, seasonal closures, accessibility, timing, or any other factors that could impact your dream day. Identifying these aspects prior to making final decisions and bookings (which takes place in Stage 3) is the wisest approach.

STAY POSITIVE

Don't be disheartened if you discover that some of the concepts you envisioned during Stage 1 prove to be unattainable. Instead, continue to explore alternative options and relish the journey of discovering "your spot" for your remarkable day. Elopements thrive on adaptability and spontaneity.

ASK FOR HELP

If you ever find yourself in a predicament, don't hesitate to seek assistance from a knowledgeable guide. If you lack an experienced photographer, consider reaching out to well-traveled friends who have explored your dream location. You can also seek advice from fellow enthusiasts on social media, get in touch with a local guide company, or connect with a nearby wedding planner. There's a wealth of resources available to help you along the way.

IMPORTANT LOGISTICS TO CONSIDER

What are the local marriage laws & requirements?

Do you want other people to be there?

How accessible is your site? How will you get there?

What kind of activities do you want to do?

Do you want to do some sort of celebratory meal/drink?

What is the weather like? How do you need to prepare?

How busy/secluded is your chosen ceremony location?

Do you need a permit to a have a ceremony or photos?

Do you want to do a "first Look"?

What vendors do you need? How easy are they to find?

DIGGING INTO MARRIAGE LAWS

MARRIAGE LAWS VARY A LOT BY STATE AND COUNTRY

Ensuring the legal aspects of your marriage are in order is essential, regardless of your chosen elopement location. It's crucial to be well-informed about the necessary paperwork both before and after the ceremony. Depending on your specific location, you might require an officiant and witnesses to officiate and formalize your union.

BUT DON'T LET PAPERWORK KEEP YOU FROM HAVING THE DAY OF YOUR DREAMS!

If the process of obtaining a marriage license at your elopement destination appears complex, remember that handling the legal paperwork in your hometown is a viable alternative. Most couples decide to manage the paperwork either before or after their elopement day. This approach ensures that their special day remains unaffected by paperwork concerns, location limitations for officiants, or the need to find witnesses.

YOU GET MARRIED ON THE DAY YOU SAY YOUR VOWS AND COMMIT YOUR LIFE TO YOUR PARTNER.

PERMITS & REGULATIONS

LEGALITIES & ETHICS

When pinpointing the precise location for your vow exchange, it's essential to assess the legality and ethical implications of conducting a wedding ceremony there. Certain locales may have regulations or restrictions against any form of ceremony, and some places may not be suitable for hosting a wedding ceremony.

DO YOU NEED A PERMIT?

On most public lands and private properties, obtaining a permit is typically a prerequisite for conducting a wedding ceremony. Many locations also mandate a permit for your photographer to capture images there. As a general guideline, it's advisable to presume that permission is required unless explicitly informed otherwise.

"LEAVE NO TRACE" PRINCIPLES

It's crucial to adhere to the seven Leave No Trace principles throughout your outdoor adventure elopement. Preserve the natural beauty of the landscape and ensure that you don't tread upon or host your ceremony in delicate environments.

WEATHER & SEASONS

HIGH & LOW SEASON

Certain locations have distinct "high" and "low" seasons, and these variations can influence the degree of seclusion at your elopement venue. Additionally, they may influence the local costs for accommodations and dining. To gain insights into the most suitable time to visit your chosen location, it's advisable to reach out to a local resident, park ranger, or guide who possesses local knowledge. As your elopement guide all this information is included in your EXCLUSIVE ELOPEMENT GUIDE when you book me as your photographer.

WHAT IF THE WEATHER IS BAD?

The initial step in preparing for adverse weather conditions involves conducting advanced research to ascertain the typical seasonal conditions, encompassing temperatures, precipitation, cloud cover, and wind patterns, in your selected region. If your intention is to deliberately opt for a "shoulder season" or "off season" to avoid the crowds, it's essential to investigate potential seasonal road closures and transportation interruptions that might affect your plans. Additionally, it's prudent to monitor recurring natural events such as wildfires, floods, landslides, monsoons, typhoons, tornadoes, and so forth.

Keep in mind that outdoor elopements inherently carry a risk of inclement weather, so it's wise to contemplate alternative locations in the vicinity, maintain a degree of flexibility in your schedule, and be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances. Ultimately, what truly matters is uniting with your beloved in matrimony.

ACTIVITIES, CELEBRATION & FUN!

FOOD & DRINKS

Is there a certiain meal or type of cuisine that you just have to have on your wedding day? Is there a restaurant you can go to, or should you hire a private chef? If you're hiking, can you take a picnic with you?

ACTIVITES - FUN THINGS TO DO!

What fun things do you want to be a part of your elopement day? Do you want to soak in a hot spring, go stargazing, ski, stand up paddleboard, or kayak?

CHAMPAGNE, CONFETTI & SPARKLERS

Celebrating is important, but make sure to leave no trace with your activities. Find and pick up that champagne cork, find a eco-friendly confetti option (like local leaves or native wild flower petals)—and look into fire codes and fire bans before planning to light sparklers.

MUSIC

If you want music (live or recorded) to be a part of your day, make sure you plan how you will play it (or have someone play it for you). Also make sure to check if you're allowed to play amplified music at your location.

ARE YOU READY?! HAVE YOU MADE SOME PROGRESS TO FIND OUT WHAT'S POSSIBLE FOR YOUR ELOPEMENT DAY?

AWESOME! YOU'RE MAKING REMARKABLE PROGRESS TOWARDS EMBARKING ON YOUR JOURNEY TO MARRIAGE IN A TRULY INCREDIBLE, INTIMATE, AND SIGNIFICANT WAY!

If you've encountered any challenges at this stage or feel like you're encountering roadblocks, please don't hesitate to reach out for assistance. It's absolutely worthwhile to seek the right support to transform your dream elopement day into a reality. This moment is truly one of a kind, and you rightfully deserve to exchange your vows in the extraordinary manner you envision.

As in my role as an elopement photographer and guide, Stage 2 is typically where I contribute the MOST to assist couples throughout their elopement planning journey. I am wholeheartedly dedicated to helping bring your vision to life.

STAGE 3: MAKE CHOICES & START BOOKING

With your priorities in clear focus and comprehensive research at your disposal, it's time to transition into the decision-making and booking phase!

The objective of this stage isn't to iron out every single detail but rather to establish the most critical elements, allowing you to proceed with fine-tuning the specifics in the subsequent phase (Stage 4).

WHAT TO DECIDE FIRST

PICK YOUR DATE

Does a particular date hold deep significance for both of you? Does this date harmonize with your planned accommodations, location, and the availability of your preferred photographer? Is it suitable for those who will be sharing your special day with you? Moreover, it's essential to take into account any holidays and significant events that could potentially affect your chosen elopement venue.

PICK YOUR ELOPEMENT LOCATION

Select the general region where you imagine your ceremony unfolding. For instance, you might envision saying your vows at the edge of that canyon, on the summit of that mountain, or within the vastness of those sand dunes. While the exact spot for your vows can be determined spontaneously on the day, having a clear notion of the general area allows you to securely organize your accommodations and transportation.

WHAT TO BOOK FIRST

BOOK LODGING Nearby

Explore VRBO, Airbnb, Hotels.com, booking.com, Google Maps, and Google to uncover distinctive lodging options for your elopement. Employ Google Maps to gauge the drive time between your chosen lodging and ceremony location. The closer your lodging aligns with your ceremony site, the smoother your day's logistics will be. However, for remote locales, it's not uncommon for the nearest accommodations to be 1-2 hours away.

Consider your lodging needs:
Will it be an intimate affair
with just the two of you? Or do
you have additional guests? If
multiple lodging spaces are
required, are you interested in
having them in proximity? Will
you be having a "first look"? In
that case, accommodations with
separate rooms may be necessary
to facilitate separate preparation
spaces.

BOOK Transportation

Once you have booked your lodging and decided on your ceremony location, find out the best way to travel between them. If you have other people coming, do you need multiple rental cars or would a shuttle make more sense? Do you need to reserve ferry crossing tickets or book a helicopter tour? Will any of your locations poten- tially require a 4WD vehicle? Are you comfortable with 4WD roads? If not, look into hiring a professional 4WD company.

As you elopement guide I provide you with this in your exclusive elopement guide which includes lodging & vendor recommendations as well as transportation information.

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS TOO...

WILL IT BE JUST THE TWO OF YOU? OR WILL YOU INCLUDE OTHERS?

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WHAT DOES THE CEREMONY LOOK LIKE?

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ONE MORE THING

SHOULD YOU TELL YOUR FAMILY?

If your family won't be physically present on your elopement day, you have the choice of sharing your plans with them in advance or keeping it as a delightful surprise. A creative way to reveal your elopement intentions to your loved ones is by hosting a dinner party. During this gathering, you can showcase images of your incredible elopement location, your chosen lodging, and generate enthusiasm around your upcoming adventure.

To keep your family and friends involved, despite your decision to elope, you can engage them in other aspects of the planning process. Invite them to participate in dress or suit shopping, or even arrange an engagement party or post-elopement reception. They can craft heartfelt letters of love and support for you and your partner to cherish on your elopement day. Alternatively, they could accompany you on your travels, celebrating both before and after your elopement.

A popular compromise for many couples is to host an enjoyable dinner party or casual reception following their elopement.

REMEMBER THIS IS YOUR DAY AND ALL OF THESE DECISIONS ARE ENTIRELY UP TO YOU AND YOUR PARTNER.

FANTASTIC! HAVE YOU ESTABLISHED THE CORE ELEMENTS FOR YOUR ELOPEMENT DAY?

AMAZING! THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF THE PLANNING PROCESS ARE NOW BEHIND YOU, AND THE REST IS ALL ABOUT THE FINER DETAILS.

Now that you've locked in your date, secured your dream location, and arranged your accommodations, the most critical and challenging elements of your planning are checked off. It's time to pause, celebrate this milestone, share the joy with your loved ones (if that's your choice), and savor the fact that you're just a step away from your envisioned elopement day!

STAGE 4: FINALIZE DETAILS & GET READY

Excitement is building as you approach the final stretch of your elopement preparations! Stage 4 is where you dive into the finer points, now that the main components of your plan are securely in place.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO KEEP THINGS ORGANIZED?

This stage involves keeping tabs on numerous details, and to help you manage them effectively, I've structured it like a handy checklist. I recommend breaking down these decisions into manageable steps. You can mark deadlines on your calendar or maintain an ongoing to-do list.

PLANNING ATTIRE & ACCESSORIES

Checklist

	DRESS/SUIT
	Bridal shops can be be strict with their timelines and most suggest shopping 6-12 months in advance with 3 fittings before your day. But don't worry! There are so many great places to buy dresses online or in local stores. Try searching for a "white maxi dress" if you want a gorgeous dress without a wedding price tag.
	SHOES
	Make sure to wear comfortable shoes with good support and good tread on the soles—if you're adventuring outside all day this is crucial!
	LAYERS
	If your'e eloping somewhere that might be cold or windy, make sure to have fun warm layers that you'd be happy being photographed in.
	JEWELRY & ACCESSORIES

PLANNING CHCEKLIST

Vendors & Details

PHOTOGRAPHER
If you haven't already booked your dream photog- rapher, make sure to find someone you personally connect with & is experienced with elopements.
HAIR & MAKEUP
Are you doing your hair & makeup yourself or professionally? How will you touch it up?
FLOWERS
Is a bouquet important to you? Can you get one close to your location or do you need to pick one up in a bigger city before you go?
OFFICIANT
Do you need/want an officiant or do you plan to "self-solemnize"?
MUSIC/MUSICIANS
PRIVATE CHEF/CATERING

PLANNING CHECKLIST ACTIVITIES & FUN

HIKING

For couples venturing on a hike to reach their chosen elopement destination, some additional must-haves come into play. Seek out a durable hiking backpack with top-notch weight distribution and comfortable hip belts designed to accommodate all your essentials. If your hike is scheduled for sunrise, contemplate packing your attire in your bag and changing on-site. Remember to include extra layers for both the ascent and the moments when you're in your wedding attire. It's a prudent move to have a trail map, hand warmers, headlamps, sunscreen, bug repellent, rain gear, and an ample stock of food and water.

OTHER FUN THINGS TO DO

Your elopement day serves as a blank canvas, ready to be painted with your individual strokes of creativity. Throughout our journey, we've had the privilege of witnessing couples craft remarkable experiences, spanning activities like skiing, kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, skydiving, horseback riding, white water rafting, zip-lining, stargazing, hot air balloon rides, and even scuba diving. Tailor your day according to your desires and ensure you have the necessary equipment and any additional support from vendors. You might even consider enlisting a helicopter pilot, sailboat captain, or a seasoned sherpa to infuse that extra touch of enchantment into your celebration.

CEREMONY & TIMELINE

Checklist

FINALIZE YOUR CEREMONY

Craft your vows, assemble meaningful items, and select your wedding bands. Design your ceremony structure, incorporating any readings, cultural or religious elements that hold significance. Additionally, contemplate orchestrating a surprise for your partner. It could be a heartfelt moment during the ceremony, such as reading letters from family members, playing a cherished song, or presenting a thoughtful surprise gift.

SKETCH OUT YOUR TIMELINE

Ensure you allocate ample time for a tranquil day free from haste or worry. Keep space for spontaneity, as some of the most memorable elopement moments are the unscripted ones. Collaborate with your photographer to determine the ideal time of day for your photos. And of course, remember to set aside enough time for savoring delicious meals, toasting with drinks, and celebrating the love you share!

PLANNING CHECKLIST 1 WEEK BEFORE CHECKLIST

GET PACKED
Prepare in advance. Confirm that you have your rings, vows, and any keepsakes, and arrange any gifts, letters, or delightful surprises you've prepared for one another. Double-check that you've gathered all the clothing accessories, jewelry, shoes, and layers required for your special day.
CHECK WEATHER
Monitor the weather forecast during the week leading up to your journey and make any required adaptations. Revisit your contingency plans for alternative locations, just as a precaution. It's advisable to also verify if there have been any recent updates regarding closures at your destination. A final call to the local ranger can provide that extra peace of mind.
FINALIZE YOUR TIMELINE
Examine and put the finishing touches on your elopement day schedule with your vendors. Ensure all payments to your vendors are squared away and give some thought to how you plan to express your appreciation with tips.
PICK UP YOUR MARRIAGE LICENSE
Pick up your marriage license and any other legal documents, if required.
WHEN YOU ARRIVE
Take care of your body. Help your body acclimate so that you can have the most enjoyable elopement day.

PLANNING CHECKLIST DAY BEFORE CHECKLIST

THE DAY BEFORE

Relax, take it easy, and make sure you go to bed early. You have an important day ahead of you!

- Relax
- Eat well
- Drink lots of water Get good sleep

YAY! YOUR ELOPEMENT DAY IS NEARLY HERE!

STAGE 5: HAVE THE BEST ELOPEMENT DAY

Hooray, you've reached the finish line! All the brainstorming, research, and planning have come together. Now, all that remains is to savor every moment of your elopement day. My sincerest wish is that it unfolds as everything you've ever dreamt of and more.

Be sure to relish each and every moment, cherishing the time you spend together. Embrace your easygoing schedule, and let go of any concerns about your appearance. No need to fret; when you have a wonderful experience together, amazing photos will naturally ensue.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RETURN

TELL YOUR FRIENDS & FAMILY!

Spread the joy with your friends and family! Reach out to your photographer for a sneak peek of images that you can share with your loved ones.

HAVE A PARTY TO CELEBRATE!

You're officially married! Time to celebrate in style. Host a party, barbecue, dinner, or a delightful reception, all in the company of your nearest and dearest.

RELIVE THE EXPERIENCE OVER & OVER AGAIN

Contemplate the option of ordering an album from your photographer. It's a wonderful way to revisit the entire story of your day and cherish those memories. Arrange to showcase your printed photos around your home, creating a constant reminder of your perfect day.

THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN THE SENSATION

of leaving behind the stress of a big wedding and opting for a day that authentically celebrates and mirrors your remarkable relationship is unparalleled. It's my aspiration that this guide illuminates your path to planning your elopement and brings you nearer to your dream day.

As your new bestie, I'm here for you throughout this journey. Feel free to reach out anytime; I'm just a message away!

LET'S CREATE YOUR DREAM ELOPEMENT TOGETHER!