

WEDDING

The Ultimate Guide

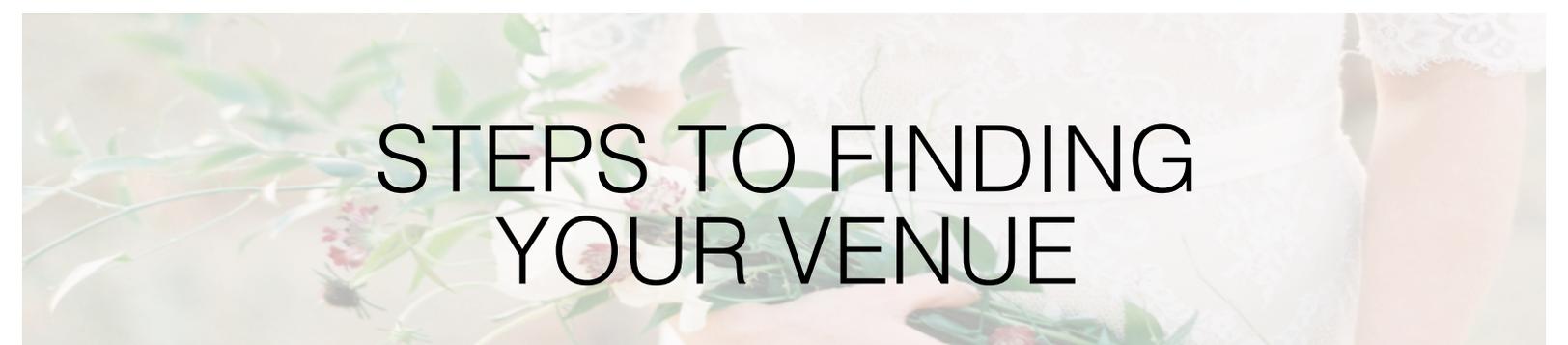
- to -

Finding Your **PERFECT** Wedding Venue



***PLUS** a workbook to
make it super simple!*

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STEPS TO FINDING YOUR VENUE

COMPILE THE GUEST LIST

You can't decide on a venue until you know how many guests you are expecting. Sit down and create a 'draft' guest list, so you can really start to gauge that number. Believe it or not, this number often ends up being slightly different once you actually start writing people down.

Be sure to also speak to your parents during this process. They may have guest list already prepared, and you want to be sure your venue can accommodate all the necessary guests.

CREATE A BUDGET

I know this isn't the fun part of planning a wedding, but I strongly urge you to sit down with you fiancé and chat money before you even begin looking into venues. Having an idea of how much you are willing, and able, to spend is going to narrow down the venue options for you, and is going to help guide you in the right direction. You also don't want to book a venue prior to this, only to realize later that it consumed your entire budget.

PICK A DATE

When I tell you to pick a date, what I really mean is pick a time frame. (Ex. the first two weeks of August) Many venues book up months (sometimes years) in advance. If you are set on a very specific date, then you are going to be limiting your options. Having a short time frame is going to make things easier on potential venues, and is going to allow you to keep your options open.

UNDERSTAND YOUR VISION

Before diving into the venue search, it's important to sit down with your fiancé and talk about your joint vision. For example, are you picturing a luxurious ballroom wedding for 200 people? A small intimate wedding on the beach with 20 of your closest friends? Or a backyard wedding with 75 of your closest friends?

It's also important to talk through the aesthetic or the day. Are you picturing something romantic and gardenesque? Bohemian and free? Clean and modern? Simple and rustic? Having an idea of this visual is going to help direct you to spaces that embody those vibes. Believe it or not, this will actually be a cost saver down the road, as you won't feel the need to dress up, or change, the feel of the space.

SET PRIORITIES

What three things do you and your fiancé care MOST about? Maybe it's awesome photos. Maybe it's dancing until 2am. Maybe it's the flexibility to bring in your own vendors. Or maybe it's tying the knot somewhere with a gorgeous view. Knowing what you care the most about is then going to narrow your venue options. These three priorities should be your non-negotiable, and any venue you choose should be able to accommodate them.

BRAINSTORM CRAZY IDEAS

It's important for your wedding to embody who you and your fiancé are as a couple. Before picking a 'typical' venue, I encourage you to sit down and make a list of all the places that would be fun or meaningful to tie the knot. Think though things like: Where did you meet? Where was your first date? Where did you get engaged? Do you ever take stay-cations? Where have you always wanted to visit?

As you make this list, don't worry about whether or not it's realistic. It's going to get your mind going, and you would be amazed how often the best ideas come from a brainstorming session like this! Also, if you come up with a venue that doesn't typically hold weddings, pick up the phone, talk to the manager, and ask if they would be open to the idea. The answer might surprise you.

RESEARCH

Now it's time to start the fun research process. Dive into google and social media and start trying to find venues that match your criteria:

* You Guest Count * Your Budget * Your Vision * Your Priorities *

Don't get discouraged if this takes awhile. Finding the right venue can be a frustrating process and doesn't always happen over night. My advice is to be patient and to stick with it. The right place is out there, and you WILL find it.

ASK ABOUT PRICING & AVAILABILITY

Once you narrow your search to 10 or few places, you can start reaching out. This is when you are going to ask about availability for your date range and request general pricing information. As you are getting pricing quotes, I suggest you toss out the ones that are WAY over budget and keep the ones that are both in line and slightly over your budget.

TOUR THE VENUES

The final step of the process is to visit your favorite properties. I strongly urge you to ask LOTS of questions and to pay attention to how you 'feel.' Are you comfortable at the venue? Do you like the venue staff? Can you picture your wedding taking place there? Booking a place you feel comfortable is going to prevent you from stressing throughout the planning process, and more importantly, on your wedding day!

FINDING YOUR VENUE WORKSHEET

How many people does it need to accommodate? _____

What is your venue budget? _____

Describe the aesthetic you are looking for: _____

Are there any venue 'features' that are a must have?

(Gorgeous view, lodging on-site, privacy, ability to bring in your own caterer, etc)

What are your top three wedding priorities?

Brainstorm and think outside of the box. Are there any really meaningful places that you may want to tie the knot?

QUESTIONS TO ASK VENUE MANAGERS

How many people can each space accommodate?

What is the rental fee and what is included? What does it exclude?

Is there a discount for booking in an off-season? Sunday – Thursday?

What is the weather contingency plan?

Is there a place to hold the ceremony? Is there an additional charge?

Is there a bridal changing area? If so, are you allowed to bring in your own food and beverage?

How many hours do we get the space? Is there a fee for staying longer?

Are there decoration restrictions? Can I move things around? Can I use real candles?

How much time will we have for set-up?

Am I able to work with any vendors? Or do you have a required vendor list?

Are there music restrictions on the type of music that can be played or a time music must end? Can they accommodate a band or DJ?

Is there parking on-site? If so, is it complimentary? If there is no parking, where will guests be parking?

Are any permits required? If so, who obtains them and what is the cost?

Do they require insurance (from you and your vendors)?

Are there sufficient bathrooms? Would you need to bring in porta potties?

Is there power? Or do you need a generator?

Are there any additional regulations or fees that haven't been covered?

VENUE TOUR WORKSHEET

Venue Name: _____

Website: _____

Address: _____

Contact Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Available Dates: _____

Space(s) we are interested in: _____

What we like about it: _____

What we are worried about: _____

Is it within our budget? _____

Other Notes: _____



STEPS FOR COMPARING VENUE COSTS

1 MAKE LISTS

Make a list for each venue you are considering, and include EVERYTHING that is being provided by that venue. Be sure to use the table below to help you get

2 MAKE THE COST ESTIMATES MATCH

In order to accurately compare the lists, you need them to match. In order to do this, add everything that is NOT included to each list. Once again, use the table below as a guide.

3 ESTIMATE COSTS

Now that you have your lists created, you need to estimate the cost of the items that are NOT included. If your venue requires you to use a specific caterer, or bartending company, then I recommend you reach out for a proposal PRIOR to signing the venue's contract. If you aren't limited to certain vendors, then you can estimate the cost based on your budget.

4 ADD UP THE COSTS

Once you are able to estimate the costs of everything that is NOT included at each venue, the next step is to add up those estimated costs and the cost of the venue.

5 COMPARE VENUES

You now have a new grand total for each venue that includes ALL the same details. Compare these NEW totals to see a more accurate estimate and to see the bigger picture.