

# WEDDING VENUE SEARCH SURVIVAL GUIDE

Your best friend when searching for a Wedding Venue.



Photograph taken by: Casandra Vrieling | Photograph of: Brookstreet Hotel Outdoor Venue

## WEDDING PLANNER CASANDRA VRIELING

Educating Couples for a Stress Free Wedding Journey

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# INTRO

Searching for a venue isn't for the faint of heart. It can be one of the most stressful things to decide when planning a wedding, next to picking out what flavor of cake you land on of course.

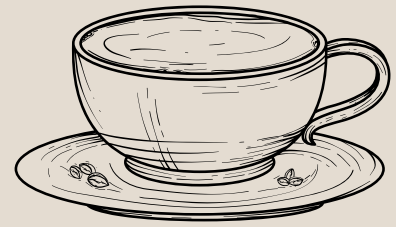
I have created this step-by-step guide in hopes of alleviating some stress from couples who aren't familiar with the venue searching process or even for couples who just need a little bit of help getting organized.

In this booklet, you will learn how to successfully find the perfect venue for you, how to build a budget, what kind of venue vibe you are looking for and learn what the red and green flags are when communicating with a venue.

This booklet also includes a free pros and cons list template, a vendor email template and a notes section to jot down those wonderful ideas.

After reading this you should feel comfortable and confident getting started on your venue search. Remember to take breaks and walk away from your computer often, the stress of wedding planning is real and it can be a lot.

Make yourself a cup of coffee or tea, pour some wine, make yourself a cocktail or a mocktail and buckle up.



# Are you prepared to start looking for a wedding venue?

Are you recently engaged? Soon to be? A date in mind? Perhaps the season? Have you taken a deep breath and meditated for about an hour or so? If the answer is yes to all of the above, great let's do this thing!

In order to start searching for a venue you and your partner must have these 4 things sorted out:

- Wedding date if not season of the year decided make sure to have multiple dates in case (trust me this matters)
- How many guests you want to attend your wedding, at least a rough estimate will work. However lock down a MAX amount you want to commit to
- A rough budget of how much you are willing to spend on your wedding as a whole
- Wedding theme/vibe

Once you have all of these figured out you are ready to move to the next step of this booklet.

## A note section for you:

Wedding date:

Guest count:

Rough budget for wedding:

Wedding theme/vibe:



# GUEST LIST. HAVING AN A LIST AND A B LIST.

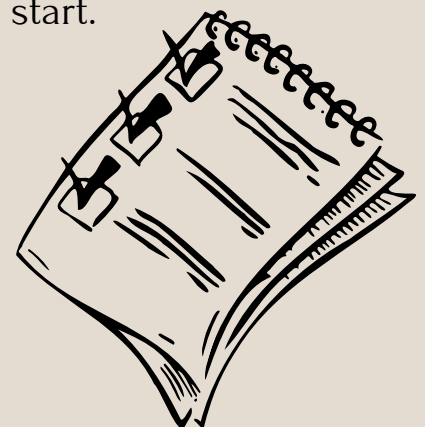
Yes, you read the above correctly. Having an A list and B (backup) list of guests is equally important. I know it sounds more harsh than it really is. What is an A and B list you ask? Well...

A list = This is for the immediate family of the couple getting married and for the close friends and wedding party.

B list = This is for those long distant relatives you aren't so sure about. Just kidding! This list is for people that are equally loved and appreciated friends and maybe distant family or extra people you can invite if the budget allows it.

The reason this is at the top of the guide is that in order to know what size of venue you are to go with you need to decide how many people you want to attend. The number of people can also determine your budget (by a lot), the more people the more money the venue will cost. It also will determine exactly what kind of venue you can get. The one that's right up your alley may only be able to accommodate 75 guests but your guest list is 100! Figuring this out right away can save broken hearts about beautiful venues.

You may go back and forth on this a bit deciding if it's worth having a larger wedding or a smaller one. Remember it is YOUR day as a couple. You get to decide who attends. Think of it like this, who would you want over for a Sunday dinner? Or a warm summer day in the park having a picnic? Can you imagine those people? Perfect write their names down! It's a good start.



# First things First, what is your budget?

This can be the most difficult part of venue searching. Staying within the budget and not overspending your allotted funding. The venue is always the most expensive part of the entire wedding. You will need to budget the largest amount of your whole wedding budget for this portion.

How do you determine how to calculate this? Typically you would allot roughly 40% of your entire budget to the venue. That's right... I know it's a lot. Take a moment if you need to. I did when I was learning this in school too.

I would recommend adding a 5% to 10% buffer on top of that cost in case you go over. Commonly, it will happen so it's good to over budget so you aren't left in debt. So if you are a visual learner, like myself here is a breakdown of how that calculation would work:

Entire wedding budget: \$30,000.00

Venue budget:  $40\% \times \$30,000.00 = \$12,000.00$

Buffer:  $10\% \times \$12,000.00 = \$1,200.00$

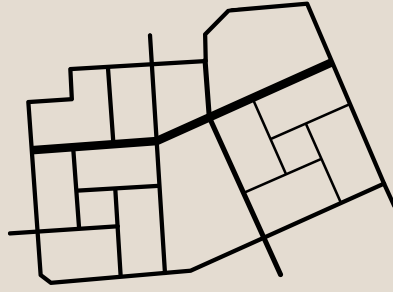
Grand total of venue budget: \$13,200.00

Once you have landed on how much money you are willing to fork into your wedding, you'll be able to narrow down the search pretty easily. Now you don't have to follow the 40% rule. You can always change this and adapt how much you and your partner want to spend on a venue. Every couple is different, some spend more on the venue, others on the photography and some its music! Just choose what you both feel most comfortable with.

You can either take a break or keep on reading. Take a sip of whatever it is you're drinking and let's keep on going.



# LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!!!



You may not realize how important the location of the venue is. Whether the venue is 1-2 hours away from your home, in your backyard or across provinces, the location matters.

You wouldn't want to have a venue next to a concert hall blasting some heavy metal playing while you're trying to get married? Unless you're into that thing, then rock on! For real though it's best to check the venue's surroundings for not only potential disturbances but is there a highway nearby? A car accident could delay your guests. Are there enough hotels nearby for out-of-towners? All of this is vital information to know.

I recommend searching around the venue for these things below JUST to make sure it's the best possible choice:

- Highways
- Construction nearby
- Hotels (more than one is better)
- Restaurants for out-of-town guests
- Schools - you wouldn't want to hear class bells ringing all-day
- Distance from the airport or train station
- Malls
- If you decide to have the ceremony at a different location, how far is the reception hall? You might need to assist with arranging carpooling for out-of-town guests

Small tip: Venues typically have a list of hotels nearby that they recommend or know they provide "room blocks" for group discounts. A room block is when you book either a whole floor or more than 10 rooms for your guests to use. You don't have to pay for this however there may be a deposit fee that you get back after the wedding.

## What kind of venue are you and your partner looking for?

It is time to look deeper and discover what both you and your partner like. It's time to get real with each other. Is it a barn vibe? Is it a dark and moody church vibe? Do we want glamour and glitz? No? How about minimalism? Perhaps maximalist? Maybe a magical garden theme?

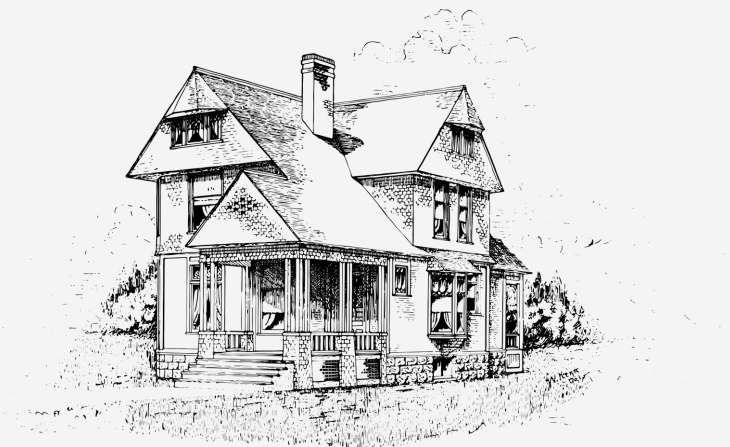
For this exercise, I would like for you and your partner to grab a blank piece of paper or print off the Sorting Venue Template (it contains a non-negotiable section and can be persuaded to change sections), a pros and cons list as well in case you get stuck on 2-3 venues to pick from and a pen.

Next, sit down together. Now write out what you want and like. If you are a person that doesn't like writing or making lists and again is a visual person try using Pinterest or Canva to make a mood board of the vibes and feel you are going for. Set a timer for 15-20 minutes. Once the bells have rung it's time to compare.

Take a look at your options together and circle the things that match, if there are any. If not, don't stress, it's okay! You two can talk to each other and figure out what options have some similarities.

Next you can create a Pinterest board together and combine your vibes. Once you are both comfortable with the vibe, you are ready.

Okay now that you have your guest count sorted out, your rough budget estimate, the vibe picked, you are ready to start searching for the perfect wedding venue!





# VENUE SORTING TABLE

## Non-Negotiable

Can be persuaded to change

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# PROS AND CONS



Pros

Cons

# RED FLAGS AND GREEN FLAGS. HOW TO SPOT THEM AND HOW TO AVOID A TERRIBLE VENUE EXPERIENCE.

The way the venue treats you during JUST the initial contact stage may exactly be how they continue to treat you through the whole planning phase. Repeat after me, the way they treat you while you are searching and gathering information can be the way they treat you the whole time. This can apply to the good and the bad.

If your venue ghosts you for weeks on end, isn't professional, unhelpful, keeps messing up invoicing and important information or down right uneducated when it comes to weddings. This may very be what you will experience throughout it all on your big day.

Now not ALL venues are like this of course. Most venues are very eager to work with you, are incredibly knowledgeable in the industry and go above and beyond to ensure you have all the information you need to choose from and to make your wedding special and easy. This is the kind of venue you want.

How to tell the two apart? These four tricks can help you weed out the bad from the good:

- Reviews, always look at the reviews! Not just one comment, look for them all on different platforms
- How they communicate with you via email, on the phone or in person. If they ghost you, provide incorrect info constantly, or they don't know a thing about the wedding industry it will show
- Hidden costs and fees
- Poor coordination

A little tip: Check with wedding planners they always have an arsenal up their sleeve when it comes to good and bad venues to work with.

## Communicating with venues 101.

I promise it's not as intimidating as you think it might be. I know it can be overwhelming and you may not know what information to include and not include or what questions to ask! See below for the basics that they need to know to get started. See the next page for more questions to ask your venue!

Basic information to include in the your email body:

- Yours and your partners name
- Your phone number
- The dates or season you would like (ex. August 15, 16, 17, 2024 or Summer of 2024)
- How many guests you intend on having
- Your budget and MAX budget you are willing to spend on
- What type of vibe you are going for
- What room specifically you want to look at (this is if they have more than one option, you'd be surprised some small venues can have 4-6 rooms)

Questions to include in the body of your email:

- Are you able to come tour the venue before you commit?
- What packages do they have? And are you flexible on changing things around?
- What is the deadline for letting you know we want to work together?
- What dates are available in the month I have given you?
- What's your cancellation policy?
- What's your weather contingency (backup) plan for outdoor spaces?
- Do you have a list of vendors that your venue approves of?

Remember I know it can be overwhelming hunting for the right venue however if you decide not to go with one maybe let them know that so they aren't waiting to hear back. Typically they will follow up 2-3 times after just in case, but it's best practice to let them know you're not interested. Don't worry no one's feelings will be hurt, it's business at the end of the day.

# QUESTIONS TO ASK A VENUE DURING YOUR SEARCH.

1. Are we able to come to tour the venue before we commit?
2. What packages do you have? And are you flexible on changing things around?
3. When is the latest I need to let you know I want to work with you?
4. What dates are available in the month I have given you?
5. What's your cancellation policy?
6. What's your weather contingency (backup) plan for outdoor spaces?
7. Do you have a list of vendors that your venue approves of?
8. Do you have wedding coordinators on site?
9. What tasks are you responsible for and what tasks am I responsible for?
10. Do you accept outside catering? If so, is your kitchen equipped for this?
11. What is the capacity at your venue?
12. What are the hours we can access the venue space? And is there an overtime fee?
13. Do I need to hire a DJ or do you have speakers and sound equipment?
14. Do you have getting-ready rooms on site?
15. How many of my own vendors can I bring?
16. Can we bring our own alcohol if you don't carry something we want? If so, do we need a liquor license?
17. How many staff will be there on our wedding day?
18. Do you have a list of preferred vendors?
19. When can my vendors arrive on the wedding day?
20. When do we need to clear everything out? Ex. Decor, florals, leftover cake, backdrops.
21. Are there damage deposits? If so, how much does this cost?
22. Do you provide any decor or linen?
23. Is there an additional fee for decorating the space?
24. What kind of payment plan do you have? What schedule do you offer?
25. How much parking do you have? Is there a fee for this?
26. What is the corkage fee?
27. Do you have a list of hotels nearby for my out-of-town guests?

# FIRST EMAIL CONTACT WITH A VENUE TEMPLATE

Feel free to make adjustments to your liking. You can add and remove information based on what you find on the venue's website. Most times they will have all the information you need or you have to contact them to receive said information.

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Good afternoon/evening,

My partner and I are planning to get married in [add date or season here]. We are currently browsing for venues around this time. Is the date I provided you [add date] available? If not, can you provide what dates you have available for this month?

Would it be possible for you to send us an information package with your services and rooms? We plan on having [add the number of guests] at our wedding and we are wondering if your venue has the capacity for this amount.

Our budget for the venue portion of our funding is [enter number] and we are looking to stay within this amount. We love your venue as it has the [vibe you like/want] we are looking for. Do you provide decor of any kind? Is there a fee for this?

Would it be possible to tour the venue?

Please let us know if we need to provide further information so that you can better help us.

Thank you kindly,  
[your name here]



## WRAPPING UP THE VENUE SEARCH EXPERIENCE.

Now that you and your partner have created the guest list, made a budget, discovered the theme of your wedding and know how to identify a good venue from a bad venue you are ready to start searching.

Remember to take your time and think things through. I know it might seem like everything has to be done as soon as possible, but that's simply not true. Move at a pace that both of you are comfortable with. Wedding planning can take a toll on people very quickly thanks to decision fatigue. It's important to also enjoy this time as finances, you only do it once.

I wish you and your partner the best of luck with venue searching and also for all of your wedding planning endeavors.

-Love. ♥  
Casandra

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# WEDDING SURVIVAL GUIDES



Wedding planning doesn't have to be stressful if you have the right people and resources in your corner.

I believe everyone should have access to knowledge like this. Whether you have a planner or not, this is what I am here for.

To make wedding planning less painful.

CASANDRA VRIELING



## WEDDING PLANNER CASANDRA VRIELING

Educating Couples for a Stress Free Wedding Journey

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New Website Coming Soon