



Venue Tour Checklist

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1. Plan B

Being completely happy with your 'Plan B' is essential for a stress-free wedding day. It's not just about rain, Plan B options also cover heatwaves, high winds, and fire risk. Yes, even summer weddings need a solid backup plan!

Most venues have well-thought-out alternatives ready to go. Some are built-in options, while others may require additional hire items. Ask your venue contact for the details as they've likely done most of the groundwork for you.

WHEN TO ASK: During your tour. This allows your venue contact to show you Plan B locations so there's no confusion later.

notes

2. Function Times

Your venue will likely have set times for key moments—like when the function must end, last drinks are served, buses depart, and when you can drop off styling items or BYO beverages before the big day. To avoid any confusion, it's important to clarify the following:

PRE-WEDDING ACCESS: Most weddings happen on Fridays or Saturdays, but mid-week events are becoming more common. If your venue hosts multiple weddings or operates as a public space (like a restaurant), ask exactly when you're allowed to drop off items like signage, drinks, or styling pieces.

WEDDING TIMELINE: Many venues have a set earliest and latest ceremony time to ensure smooth setup and flow of the evening. While some flexibility may be offered, be aware it could incur extra fees for staffing and admin.

LAST DRINKS & DANCING: Timing matters! Confirm when last drinks are served, live music must stop, and the final dance can happen. These details often tie in with council regulations and your venue's function conclusion policies. Be sure to coordinate this with your vendors—DJ, caterer, bar service, and photographer—so everyone's on the same page.

FUNCTION CONCLUSION: This is the official end of your wedding, and it's usually non-negotiable. Depending on the venue and day of the week, this could mean "music down" or all guests off-site by a specific time.

POST-WEDDING ACCESS: Just like pre-wedding drop-offs, confirm when you (or someone you nominate) can return to collect your belongings. This is especially important if another wedding is scheduled the next day or your venue is open to the public.

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3. Package Inclusions

Every venue is different, so it's essential to get a detailed list of inclusions before you compare quotes—otherwise, it's not really apples with apples! Some venues are venue-only, meaning you'll need to hire everything in, while others include the lot—from napkins to lighting. Some even partner with hire companies or stylists, while others leave it all to you. The quote price is only part of the picture; what's included (or not) can make a huge difference.

WHEN TO ASK: During your venue tour, clarify what's provided at each stage of your day—ceremony, pre-reception, and reception—as inclusions can vary by location on the property. Keep a copy of the package on hand to tick off as you go, and ask upfront about any additional hire items you'll be responsible for.

notes

4. Terms & Conditions

Your venue's T&Cs are not the place to skim—make sure you know exactly what you're agreeing to. Pay close attention to:

- Deposit amounts (usually non-refundable and required to secure your date)
- Refund and cancellation policies
- Final payment deadlines
- Your responsibilities around damages

If anything is unclear, ask your venue contact—they'll appreciate that you've actually read them.

Most venues require a signed copy of the full Terms & Conditions when booking, so take the time to go through them together before signing.

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5. Who Does What

This is a big one! If your venue provides a coordinator, be sure to confirm exactly what they will (and won't) handle, so you know what's left for you or your vendors to organise.

WHAT A VENUE COORDINATOR USUALLY COVERS:

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS: They'll set up everything that's part of your venue package. Personal styling items you bring in are generally not included unless agreed otherwise.

VENUE MANAGEMENT: Overseeing the space, liaising with other vendors, and offering general assistance on the day.

VENUE-SPECIFIC SUPPORT: In the lead-up, coordinators may also help with things like: Reviewing your run sheet, advising on table layouts, catering and bar management, setting tables (within inclusions), placing signage or stationery, cleaning and pack-down

WHEN TO HIRE EXTRA HELP:

If you want styling, full wedding planning, or services beyond your venue's inclusions, you'll likely need to hire a planner or stylist.

notes

6. Availability & Holding Dates

When booking your wedding venue, timing is everything. We recommend completing our Pre-Site Tour Checklist so you're armed with all the details you need, and coming to your tours with a few possible dates in mind. This avoids endless back-and-forth and reduces the risk of missing out.

AVAILABILITY: In the South West, peak-season dates (October–April) can book out 18 months to 2 years in advance. Don't panic, though—there are usually dates still available, just not always your first pick. Established venues tend to book out earlier, while newer venues may have more flexibility. (Check out Losari Retreat and Sabina River Farm—two stunning new additions well worth a look!)

HOLDING DATES: Most venues, especially established ones, won't hold dates long-term—it's too tricky logistically. Some may give you a short courtesy hold (usually over a weekend) to finish tours and confirm. If a venue does hold a date and you go elsewhere, send them a quick courtesy email rather than leaving them hanging.

WHEN TO ASK: This is a great pre-visit question, but don't ask too far ahead—dates often change quickly. The week of your venue tour is the perfect time to send over your date list and check availability.

OUR TIP: Use our Event Calendar to check local events and public holidays before locking in a date—this way you avoid clashes and guest headaches.

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7. Accommodation & Transport

ACCOMMODATION:

A little research before your venue tour will give you most of the answers you need:

- Jump on Google Maps, zoom into your venue and note the nearby resorts, caravan parks, and other options
- Check platforms like Airbnb, Exclusive Escapes, and Private Properties
- Keep in mind your ceremony time versus standard check-in times—especially if you're planning a Friday wedding and guests are travelling down that day

TRANSPORT:

Most venues will recommend organising a bus to shuttle guests to and from the venue. This could be due to parking limitations—or simply peace of mind knowing your guests get home safely. Many South West venues work with specific charter companies, so ask for their recommendations.

WHEN TO ASK: Raise this during your venue tour Q&A. It's also handy to have your preliminary accommodation list with you so you can quickly add any extra suggestions.

OUR TIP: Offer a range of accommodation styles and budgets—some guests will love booking a luxe private residence for the weekend, others will prefer a cosy chalet or a resort. Once you know your bus route, include pickup/drop-off points on your invitations so guests can book nearby.

notes

8. Layouts

Don't reinvent the wheel—ask your venue for their tried-and-true table layouts.

From there you can tweak to suit your vision, but starting with a base plan saves hours of guesswork. If you know what you're aiming for (e.g. 150 guests on long tables), ask if they've hosted something similar recently and see if they'll share the final layout. It's a huge time-saver.

WHEN TO ASK: Some venues provide layout documents after booking. If not, you can still request examples or photos once you have guest numbers in mind. Just note you may not be able to access detailed layouts before your tour or booking.

notes

9. Your Venue's Recommendations

Your venue contact has seen it all—and knows what works (and what doesn't). Tap into their insider knowledge by asking:

- Their personal recommendations from ceremony to reception
- What layouts, timings, or setups have worked best—and which ones haven't (and why)
- If there's anything they'd love to see a couple try that hasn't been done yet
- Their favourite photo locations on the property
- The most practical (and least practical) table setups they've seen

notes

10. Additional Fees

Most of these should be outlined in your package info, but it's always smart to confirm. Potential extras include:

- Early check-in / late check-out
- Ceremony fees (particularly at restaurants or public venues that must close early)
- Earlier or later ceremony start times
- Breakages and damages (check the T&Cs)
- Using vendors outside the recommended/exclusive list
- Extra set-up by venue staff outside their normal scope
- Cake cutting
- Special bar requirements (e.g. cocktail service needing additional staff)

notes

11. What a Typical Wedding Day Looks Like

During your site tour, ask your venue contact to walk you through a standard wedding day.

This will differ depending on whether they host multiple weddings per weekend, so it's helpful to compare how things run on a Thursday vs Friday vs Saturday vs Sunday.

KNOWING THE "FLOW" WILL:

- Help you choose the right date with a clear understanding of potential differences
- Show you how much involvement you'll need on the day (and in the lead-up)
- Clarify what the venue takes care of, and what's left in your hands

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12. Recommended & Exclusive Vendors

This is a venue-specific (and very important!) question. There's a clear distinction between recommended and exclusive vendors, and knowing the difference will shape how you plan.

RECOMMENDED VENDORS: These are suppliers your venue knows and loves—people who work there regularly and come highly endorsed. The perks?

- Insider tips from vendors who know the space inside out
- Guidance on styling, photo locations, and logistics unique to that venue
- Some may even reserve dates specifically for that venue
- Not on the list? Don't stress—sometimes it just means they haven't worked there yet. Cross-check with your venue contact before ruling them out.

EXCLUSIVE VENDORS: This is a set list you must book from (often caterers or beverage providers).

- The list may be small—or even just one option
- It's usually non-negotiable, though if you have your heart set on someone else, it's worth asking the question

Some venues stick with set caterers or stylists (who often bring their own trusted team of florists, furniture hire, entertainment, etc.), while others give you total freedom to DIY. These rules can significantly impact your planning and budget, so make sure you're clear on the details.

Most venues will include vendor requirements in their website, package information, or T&Cs—but we always recommend confirming to avoid surprises.

WHEN TO ASK: Bring this up in your follow-up enquiry—after you've reviewed the package info and before you book your site tour. That way you can clarify any vendor requirements and get a full picture of your options.

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