

BRIDE'SGUIDE

[home](#) [fashion](#) [beauty](#) [style](#) [planning](#)

Posted on: July 2, 2009

Turn Any Place into a Party

How to audit an out-of-the-ordinary venue to see if it would work for your wedding

By Anna Sachse
CTW Features

Have you ever thought about getting married in a water park? How about a pumpkin patch? Or a racetrack?

While opting for an unconventional location is an easy way to add character to your festivities, there are some logistical components you should consider before you start sending out your save-the-dates.



Go Your Own Way

“The most obvious upside of an unusual venue, such as a summer camp or a train depot, is that it’s inherently a little more interesting than most traditional venues,” says Christina Friedrichsen, author of “Intimate Weddings: Planning a Small Wedding that Fits Your Budget and Style” (North Light Books, 2004). “It naturally has that ‘wow’ factor that your guests will really remember.” In other words, you probably won’t have to work as hard or spend as much money to decorate or make the space feel personal and unique. For example, a bookish couple could wed in a library, while history buffs may select a museum, sports nuts would feel at home in a baseball stadium, animal lovers could take over a zoo.

Another perk of unusual locations, is that you tend to have a lot more flexibility. “Most traditional venues usually have a formula in place for how things must be done to ensure they go as smoothly as possible,” says Danielle Venokur, founder and principle planner at the sustainable event design company dvGreen in New York City. These rules can stifle creativity, require you to pay pricey fees or reach minimums and may limit your options when it comes to vendors. But there’s a good chance unconventional venues will be more open to your ideas and suggestions, such as composting the food

and floral waste or using a sustainability-minded caterer, especially if they rarely or never do events and are interested in exploring a new revenue stream.

Assessing Space

First, scope out the size and layout to make sure it can accommodate all your guests, entertainment, a dance floor and anything else you might want that requires space, Venokur says. If you truly love the venue, it could dictate the kind of event you have. According to Friedrichsen, you need approximately 18-square-feet per person if you want a seated dinner and dancing.

If the space seems sufficient, then it's time to start asking questions. Find out if they provide any supplies or if you need to bring it all in. Does the venue include a kitchen, or is there ample space for the caterer to set one up? Are there enough bathrooms? Is there enough on-site parking, is the venue accessible by mass transit, or will you need to hire a valet or provide shuttles?

Next, you should inquire about any rules or requirements, such as time or noise restrictions, fire codes, insurance, security, if you have to use certain vendors, if tents are allowed, if you can bring in your own alcohol, etc. If you do need to bring things in, how difficult is it?

You'll also want to find out if the space has enough electrical outlets for everything you need, including the caterer, entertainment and lighting, says Venokur. You may need to bring in a generator. And when considering electricity, make sure there will be sufficient air conditioning or heat at the time of your event, Friedrichsen adds.

Best Locale Bets

If you would prefer a venue that's off the beaten path, Venokur recommends going with something that's truly personal and makes sense to your guests. Venokur herself is getting married this August at a fishing lodge in upstate New York, in part because her fiancé is a big fly fisherman. The couple already has a house nearby, but didn't want to take on all the responsibility of hosting the event in their own home. The fishing resort they selected comes complete with a restaurant and quaint little cabins. "It has a lot of character and it's only 10 minutes from our house, where we can have an intimate brunch on Sunday," Venokur says.

To make things easy on you, Friedrichsen recommends looking at country inns and bed-and-breakfasts, as they are well-equipped and usually have lovely spaces both indoors and out. For smaller weddings, she also likes restaurants because it's easy to ascertain the food quality and atmosphere, and they tend to throw in lots of extras. Or go with an art gallery – they already have all the decoration they need.