

EST. 1705

# FETCHAM

PARK

## HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR WEDDING VENUE



*We completely understand how daunting deciding on your wedding venue can be. To help you, we've put this checklist together and hope you find it useful, whether or not you choose Fetcham Park.*

It can be printed out and taken with you on any venue visits that you make and I hope it will help you gather all the relevant details that you can refer back to when you're making decisions after the visit.

Enjoy choosing your wedding venue – it's such an important part of the day and is so often one of the first decisions that you make on your wedding planning journey. The excitement starts here!

Love,  
Laura

### *Researching...*

Starting to research venues is one of the really enjoyable parts of wedding planning. For most couples, it's also the first tangible thing they do towards the day after the essential (but not very enthralling) tasks of budgeting and organising. There are quite a few ways to start your research:

**Wedding Websites** – A check through any of the major wedding websites or blogs is a great idea. Most have venue directories where you can search by area or venue type and many come with reviews from past brides.

**Registry Office** – Most can provide you with a list of approved venues that fall within their jurisdiction if you ask them. Office details can be found in your phonebook or on-line if you're looking at a venue further afield.

**Magazines** – Lots of venues advertise in wedding magazines and there are indeed some that are completely dedicated to sites suitable for receptions or ceremonies. The 'real weddings' section can also be a good place to look for inspiration.

**Social Media** – Forums, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram – there are so many places to get inspiration from. Ask some questions, have a look around and see what you discover.



**Web Search** – Enter ‘Wedding Venue’ and your preferred county or area into any of the major search engines and you’ll be rewarded with a long list of possibilities.

**Friends & Family** – Does anyone know of any fantastic hotels or venues? Have they heard great things about a particular venue recently? Ask around and you never know what you might find out.

So, now you’ve got a long list of venues in the area that you’re looking for. The next step is to start gathering some information on each of them so you can begin to narrow down your selection. Either call or e-mail each venue to provisionally check their availability on your date and to request their wedding information pack (some venue websites have their brochures available for download directly which is great for saving time). I have to admit that my supplier selection starts well before I even receive a brochure or pack – I mentally mark down venues or companies that don’t reply promptly and courteously, make errors with my address or name or don’t actually send me what I’ve asked for.

It doesn’t take long to reply to an e-mail or to put information in an envelope and you want a venue that is interested enough in you to get back to you as quickly as possible when you request something. Once you’ve received all the relevant packs you can start wading through them and noting the following:-

**Costs** – Is it within your budget? If not, there’s really no point in going any further with that venue, however gorgeous it looks. Breaking your budget so early on in the planning will have huge knock-on effects for funds you’ve allocated to other suppliers, so be strict with yourselves.

**Size** – can they accommodate wedding parties of the size that you’re planning on inviting? Do they have overnight accommodation if you require it?

**Location** – is the location convenient for you? Does it have areas for photographs?

**Catering** – do you like the look of the sample menus and drinks lists?

**Suppliers** – are you allowed free reign on your suppliers or do you make your selection from their approved lists? How do suppliers come to be ‘recommended’? Do they pay commissions to the venue or is it purely on the quality of their work?

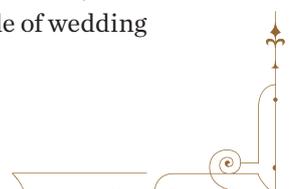
**Other weddings** – will there be other wedding parties there on the same day or do they only hold one per day?

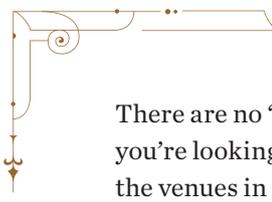
**Flexibility** – how flexible are they? Do you have to make your choices from a set number of packages or can you put things together to suit yourselves?

**Payments** – when are you required to pay balances? How much is the deposit?

**Notes** – is there anything of interest noted in the ‘small print’ such as restrictions on decoration or minimum required numbers that must be catered for?

**Overall** – what is your overall impression of the venue from the information that you’ve received? Is it well put together? Does the look of the venue match the style of wedding you’re hoping for? Have you been treated well by the venue so far?





There are no ‘right and wrong’ answers to the above questions, it’s a purely personal choice and what you’re looking for will be different to another couple so take your time. It’s quite useful to try to rank the venues in order of preference at this stage as well because however many are still in the running, it’s a good idea to try and limit the number that you actually visit.

Venue visits undeniably take up quite a bit of time, especially when you factor in travelling and the more you see, the more confusing it can become.

Try and organise visits to your top four in one weekend and go from there. It’s always best to make an appointment to visit so that you can be sure an appropriate member of staff will be available to show you around and answer your questions. Now you’ve done your research, you’re ready to get out there and make a choice.

### *Visiting...*

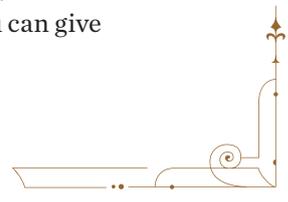
Remember that first impressions count, so what does the place look like as you drive up to it? Does it look well maintained and are there plenty of parking spaces? Another thing to look at is obviously the staff. These are quite likely to be the people who’ll be looking after you and your guests so do you want happy and efficient or bored and uninterested? On your visit, you should get a full tour of the venue, including a look at the ceremony room (if applicable), dining room, bars, function rooms and loos! It’s also a good idea to have a look around the grounds to see what photo opportunities there might be.

The person who shows you around should be able to answer your questions and you should try and find out the answers to the questions on the last pages. The list of details you could check is literally endless but just make sure you find out the things that are most important to you, not simply what the venue wants to tell you! If you’re not happy with the answer given, question again or shop around a little more. I would suggest the last three on the list are absolute ‘must asks’ but only you know whether being able to dance until dawn is the crucial factor in deciding on your venue. It’s incredibly important to be clear on your priorities before you visit to make sure that your selected site meets all your criteria.

If you’re feeling positive about a venue, make sure that they still have availability for your date before you leave. Are they able to ‘pencil you in’ for a few weeks to give you time to make your decision? Ask about the booking procedure before you depart as well – how much are you required to pay as a deposit? If you’re then heading off to visit another venue, make a few quick notes or take a few snaps before you arrive at the next location because it’s quite easy for things to become a little blurred once you’ve seen a few rooms and gardens!

Once you’ve visited your shortlisted venues, it’s quite likely that you’ll have a pretty clear idea which one it will be that you book. If not, think about the pros and cons of each site or even book a second visit and take someone else for a second opinion. Whilst you’re making your decision, do keep in contact with the venue because it isn’t unknown for someone else to book in the interim period. Ask that they keep you informed if anyone else shows an interest in your date so that you’re not disappointed.

When you’ve made your decision, let the venue know as soon as possible. Some might require you to put your confirmation in writing before they send out contracts and others will be happy with a verbal ‘yes’ over the phone. Then, once you’ve signed your contracts and paid your deposit, you can give yourselves a huge pat on the back because you’ve found your wedding venue!



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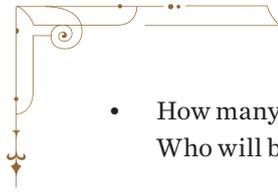
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## QUESTIONS TO ASK



- How many people can they accommodate in the various rooms, either seating or standing?
- Do they offer full meals or various buffets? Can they cater for barbecues, hog roasts or something different?
- Is there a minimum catering spend?
- Are they planning any price increases to food, drink and other items between your visit and your wedding date?
- Are there any planned room refurbishments or building works?
- How do they cater for vegetarians or people with other dietary requirements?
- Do they allow confetti, rice, bubbles, fireworks or other outdoors entertainments?
- Are you allowed to use candles?
- Do they provide a stand for the cake/table plan or any other table stationery such as menus or place cards?
- Do they provide linen napkins/table covers?
- Do they supply chair covers/sashes, if needed?
- How many different ways can they lay the tables out in the room?
- Can you bring suppliers such as photographers or florists for pre-wedding visits?
- What's the venue's policy on smoking?
- When can suppliers get in to the venue to set up in the morning?
- Can the Bride get ready at the venue? Is there plenty of space for hair, make-up and dressing?
- When does everything have to be cleared by? Can guests leave cars overnight if needed?
- Can you get a late licence for the bar? Is there a charge for this?
- Will they be changing their prices before you wedding? If so, do they expect you to pay any increases?





- How many waiting/bar staff will be allocated to you on the day?  
Who will be there to oversee the whole event?
- Is there sufficient parking?
- Can you see the toilet facilities?
- What is the current availability for the date or dates you're interested in?
- Find out exactly when they need final numbers and what their policy is on alterations to details after that point.
- What is their social media policy?
- Is there some 'quiet space' for older guests or children who might like a little peace during the evening?
- Do they have someone who can act as toastmaster if required?
- If you pay for a certain amount of alcohol, what happens if it's not all used? Also, what would happen if what you've paid for runs out?
- What are their booking terms with regards to deposits and balances?
- Does the venue provide, or can they recommend, accommodation? Are there any discounts on offer to you and your guests?
- Can you taste test the food or wine before you make a final decision? Is there a charge for this?
- If you're planning a summer wedding with drinks outside etc, find out what would happen in the event of bad weather.
- If you're having a band/DJ, is there somewhere they can change?
- Are there sufficient power points for your band/DJ?
- Are there any noise restrictions?
- Is there somewhere secure where you can store wedding gifts?
- How easy is it for guests to get to the venue? Is it close to train stations for guests who don't drive?
- What options are available for payment? Bank transfer? Credit or Debit Card? Direct Debit or cheque? Is there a surcharge for credit card payments?
- Can you see a copy of the bar price list (including water)? This can often add a significant extra cost to the day, either for you or for your guests. Will the bar only accept cash on the day or are card payments possible?
- Do you have to serve drinks provided by the venue or can you supply your own?
- Can they recommend suppliers? If so, how do they choose the suppliers they recommend? Do suppliers pay commissions to the venue or do they pay to be on the list of recommendations? Or are suppliers simply chosen because of their skill and professionalism?
- Is VAT included in the prices they quote to you? If not, don't forget to factor in another 20% before comparing with other venues' prices.

