

ADVENTURE WEDDINGS 101:
**Everything You Need
to Start Planning Your
Adventure Wedding
or Elopement**



CREATED BY
CHOOSING WILD
ADVENTURE WEDDINGS & ELOPEMENTS
www.ChoosingWild.com



A Note From Us

Hey friend! We can't tell you how excited we are that you're here with us.

Maybe you're here because you want to throw tradition to the wind and have a totally unique, totally *you* wedding day.

Maybe you're here because you want to grab hold of what's important to you and have a wedding experience that's a real representation of your love story.

Or, maybe you're not entirely sure why you're here! You just know that traditional weddings aren't quite your vibe and that you want a wedding that's actually a reflection of who you are.

Whatever the reason may be, we're so happy that you've downloaded our e-book. It can be scary for couples to follow their hearts instead of following the “rules”, so we'll say it now—congrats on being badass.

The best part of choosing to have an adventure wedding or elopement is that you can forget the expectations, opinions, and obligations about what you're “supposed” to do for your wedding. Instead, you can focus entirely on what matters most to you two, with nothing holding you back!

That much freedom can be overwhelming though—when there's no more “rules” or “formula” telling you what your wedding day is “supposed” to be, how do you plan it?

That's where we come in! We made this guide to help make the process of dreaming and planning your adventure wedding or elopement as simple and stress-free as possible.

Happy planning!

Aly & Justin

Choosing Wild— Adventure Weddings & Elopements

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Eloppements us. Adventure Weddings

First things first: What's the difference between an elopement and an adventure wedding?

Adventure elopements have been getting increasingly popular the past few years, which has given the word "elopement" a different definition than it used to have. People familiar with adventure elopements use the term to refer to a wedding that happens somewhere outdoors, with few or no guests. However, when most people hear the word "elopement" they think of a quickly planned wedding that has no guests.

That's created a lot of confusion about what an elopement is! Specifically, many people get confused about whether or not someone can have guests if they elope. Although many photographers use the terms "adventure wedding" and "elopement" interchangeably (which is totally fine), we choose to use them to describe different things so couples aren't confused about if they're allowed to have guests or not. So, since you're reading our e-book and we'll use these terms a lot, here's our definitions:

ELOPEMENTS

- **No guests**

Like we mentioned above, the way we use the term elopement is to refer to outdoor weddings that don't have any guests. If a couple has guests involved in any part of their day, we don't call that an elopement. While many photographers refer to elopements as any outdoor wedding with under XX guests, we realized it was less confusing for people if we made a clear difference between the two.

- **Primarily takes place outdoors**

However, the ceremony is usually in a more remote spot than adventure weddings. Having no guests means that a couple doesn't have to factor in physical abilities of guests when choosing a location. Also, couples are more likely to be allowed to have their ceremonies in more remote locations if they don't have guests. This is due to limits on group sizes that often exist with wedding permits at parks & public lands.

ADVENTURE WEDDINGS

- **Up to 15 guests**

While adventure weddings and elopements are essentially the same thing, the primary difference is that adventure weddings have guests. Guests can be present at the ceremony or throughout other parts of the day, but if there are guests involved, we refer to that as an adventure wedding. Also, it's important to note that every photographer will have a different number of guests that they consider the adventure wedding "limit", but ours is 15.

- **Primarily takes place outdoors**

However, the ceremony is usually in a more "front country"/accessible location and sometimes has things like chairs or decorations. This is due to the fact that ceremony locations are chosen based on the mobility limitations and/or general physical abilities of the guests.





How It Works

4 Steps to get started planning your adventure wedding or elopement

Now that we've explained some definitions, let's get started! Just like there's not one set way to have an adventure wedding or elopement, there's also not one set way to plan one either. Even though these are generally the steps you'll want to follow when you start planning, it might not always be a linear process.

01 Find your "Wedding Why" (Pages 8-11)

The first thing you and your partner should do is figure out what we like to call your "Wedding Why". It can be easy to get lost in the sea of details and logistics of wedding planning. Finding your "wedding why" and sticking to it as you plan will help you focus on what's important to you as you make decisions.

02 Dream up your day (Pages 12-15)

The next step after you've discovered your "wedding why" is brainstorming about your day. This is when you and your partner get to explore all the possibilities of what your wedding day could look like—without being constrained by details or logistics yet. Dream big!

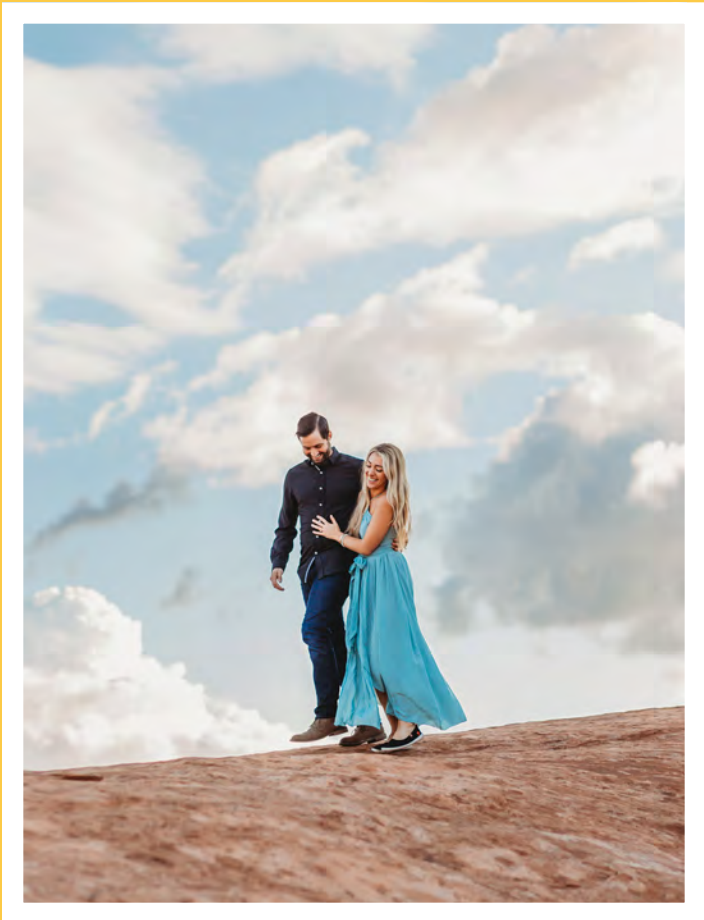
03 Figure out the big details (Pages 16-31)

Once you have a general vision for what you two want, the next step is making the decisions that will affect your wedding experience the most: the who and the where. After those details have been determined, you'll plan the other details.

04 Find your photographer (Pages 32-39)

Congrats, you've planned all the major details of your day! Now it's time to find an experienced adventure wedding or elopement photographer. Having the help of an experienced professional when planning the smaller details & logistics will make your life so much easier and less stressful.





Find Your "Wedding Why"

WHAT THE HECK IS A "WEDDING WHY"?

Wed-ding Why: the underlying factors that drive someone's desire to have a non-traditional wedding

When planning your wedding, the first thing you and your partner should do is sit down and figure out what we like to call your "Wedding Why". This can basically be defined as "the underlying reason(s) why you want to have a non-traditional wedding". There are probably a million different factors that contribute to someone wanting to have a non-traditional wedding, so every person's "wedding why" is different.

In our opinion, figuring out the underlying reason that's driving you to want a non-traditional wedding is the most important step of planning an adventure wedding or elopement (even though it's one you've probably never heard about).

Why is it so important? Well, it...

- Helps ensure that you and your partner are on the same page about why you each want a non-traditional wedding
- Helps you focus on what's important to you by remembering why you're getting married in the first place
- Helps reduce stress when making wedding-related decisions
- Helps you feel more confident about your decision
- Helps you know how to explain your choice to loved ones who may question it or be disappointed. Explaining your "wedding why" to people can help them understand your reasoning and be happy for you

... The list goes on and on!

How to Find Your "Wedding Why"



Finding your "wedding why" might seem like a daunting or scary task, but we promise that it's not! Just follow these steps and you'll be golden.

THE SUGGESTED PROCESS:

- 1.** Set aside a time to sit down with your partner somewhere quiet and relaxing, and read the list of prompts out loud together.
- 2.** Don't try to answer the prompts right away. You probably won't know the answers immediately, but even if you feel like you do, spending time reflecting on them will probably bring new insights.
- 3.** Think about the prompts for a week. We highly recommend you and your partner journal about them (seperately), as writing can be a great way to facilitate more in-depth reflection when it comes to deeper questions.
- 4.** One week later, sit down again with your partner in a quiet and relaxing place. Each of you should discuss your answers to the prompts, any other related thoughts, and what conclusions you came to about why you want to have a non-traditional wedding.
- 5.** After the discussion, both of you should consolidate your own "wedding why" into one or two sentences. Write it down on a sticky note or piece of paper, and put it somewhere visible so you'll be reminded of it as you go through the process of planning your adventure wedding or elopement.

Once you've found your "wedding why", use it as a guiding compass to help you navigate the maze of wedding-related choices you'll need to make. This will help you focus on what's important to you by remembering why you're getting married in the first place! It can be easy to get caught up in details and logistics— [Zola reports](#) that 35% of couples say planning the details is the most frustrating part of wedding planning. But finding your "Wedding Why" and sticking to it will help to limit your stress from the get-go.

PROMPTS TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR "WEDDING WHY"

- Why do you want to get married?
- What guides you (individually and as a couple)?
- What brings you happiness?
- Where do you find peace?
- What do you do when you need a break?
- Who do you go to when you want to share exciting news? Why?
- Think about your favorite place. Why is it meaningful to you?
- If you're having a bad day and need support, what do you do? Why?
- What things do you value as an individual?
- What are you most passionate about?
- Is there anything about traditional weddings that make you *not* want to have one?





02

Dream Up Your Day

What would your wedding day look like if you had no limitations?

When you and your partner first start to plan your adventure wedding or elopement, the best mindset you can have is one with no limits. This part of the process has nothing to do with what's "realistic". Just forget about that for a bit and let yourselves dream!

We 100% believe that just like no two couples are exactly the same, no elopement or adventure wedding is just like another. Don't create limits for yourself based on what you've seen on social media, blogs, or from people you know. Your adventure wedding is all about creating an experience that allows you to feel happy, peaceful, and in-love... however that looks for you.

At this point in the planning process, it's all about letting your imagination run wild! Just think of what the perfect day for the two of you would look like, a day that would celebrate and honor your relationship in the most authentic way possible. Forget about limits and just dream. You can figure out the details later.

Pro Tip: Make your wedding brainstorming into a date night!

Go out to eat, cuddle up on the couch, or go for a walk somewhere you love—whatever your favorite way to spend quality time together is, do it while you brainstorm!

You and your partner should both think about how your perfect wedding day would look if you had no limitations or boundaries.

Now, let's do a little exercise. Hold hands with your partner, close your eyes, and think hard about the day when you'll stand just like you are now and say your vows to each other. Try to picture it.

Where are you? What kind of things do you see?

You two don't need to know any specifics to do this exercise. It's okay if it's super vague at the start! Just try to picture it. Are you guys in a canoe on a lake? Are you at a gorgeous mountain overlook you've just hiked to? In a cabin in the woods? At your favorite restaurant?

There are no wrong answers here! This exercise is to help you let go of what other people think and get an idea of what you might like to do. Also, make sure you don't shoot down ideas because they're not realistic/practical (yet).



Prompts to Help You Brainstorm:

Need some help coming up with ideas? Here's a few questions to help get your creative juices flowing.

- What was the best day (or days) that you've had as a couple? Where were you? What did you do together?
- How would the perfect wedding *feel*? Would you feel happy? Excited? Exhilarated? Peaceful? Stress-free? Really focus on the feeling(s) you're chasing.
- Close your eyes (really!) and think about your wedding day. What's it like? Do you see other people there? Friends, family, pets? Or is it just you and your partner?
- Close your eyes and think about how your wedding day *looks*. What kind of scenery do you see? Lake? Desert? Beach? Mountains? City? Ocean?
- Close your eyes and think about what you and your partner are doing together on your wedding day. Are you Hiking? Kayaking? Going for a drive? Swimming?
- Close your eyes and think about your ceremony. What does it look like? Are there traditional aspects? Are you reading vows? Is there something meaningful you want to include?
- Think back to when you fell in love with your partner. How did it happen? Are there any aspects of that which you want to implement in your ceremony? A special song? Place?

Pro Tip: Write down every idea that comes up during this brainstorming process, and refer back to them later when you're making decisions.





Figure Out the Big Details

03



Now that you and your partner have both found your "wedding why" and you've brainstormed about your wedding day, it's time to make a few decisions:

- The who
- The where

These are the decisions that will have the most impact on your wedding day and on your overall wedding experience.

Don't rush these decisions. Take your time, and make sure that whatever choices you make are in line with your "wedding why" and the things you two decided you wanted while brainstorming.



Decide the “Who”

ARE YOU INVITING ANY FRIENDS OR FAMILY?

For some people, this is an easy question to answer, but for others it's more of a debate. In the end, what it comes down to is this: just because you're having a non-traditional wedding doesn't mean you aren't allowed to have guests. It's totally possible to have an epic and badass adventure wedding (that's still centered on you and your relationship) with a small handful of guests involved.

If you do decide to invite friends or family along for any part of your day, it's super important to make sure that they're 100% on board with your choice. Make sure that they understand your wedding is non-traditional but it's exactly what you want, and help them understand why it's important to you. This will reduce stress on you and your partner on your day.





A few things to consider when thinking about inviting family or friends

- Is every person on your list 100% on board with your vision and equally as excited about the experience as you are?
- Do you want to read your vows privately with your partner so nobody else is listening? Is there anyone that's meaningful to you so you want them to hear your vows?
- Could inviting a few people end up having a "snowball effect" where you have to keep inviting more? Or do you have a short, clearly defined list that you know won't get out of control?
- Out of the people you're planning to invite, is there anyone that could try to take over, shift focus from what matters to you, or who makes you nervous/uncomfortable/stressed out?
- What kind of ceremony location are you planning to pick? Will all of your guests be able to make it to that kind of location?
- How about transportation and lodging? Where would your guests be traveling from? Will they have transportation to and from your location? Will they have somewhere suitable to stay?

Remember: there are tons of ways to include your family and friends in your wedding experience, even if they aren't physically present while you say your vows! There are no right or wrong answers when it comes to planning an adventure wedding. Don't compromise or fall victim to expectations. Don't let anyone else tell you how your wedding day should look. That's what big weddings are for!



How to Involve Friends & Family On Your Adventure Wedding Day

If you and your partner choose to invite friends or family to your adventure wedding, there's a lot of ways to include them. Here's a few suggestions!

HAVE AN ADVENTURE CEREMONY

If you want to have your closest loved ones standing by your side as you get married in a beautiful location, having your ceremony in a spot that's accessible for everyone is the best way to do that. If you don't want to spend your *entire* day with your guests, you can have your ceremony with them and then part ways and do other activities with just your partner for the rest of the day. The only possible drawback is that you might have to compromise on your dream ceremony location if your guests won't be able to access it.



INCLUDE THEM IN OTHER WEDDING MOMENTS

Not digging the idea of having your guests involved in your ceremony at all? Don't worry! There are plenty of ways to involve your guests in your wedding day even if they're not at the ceremony. You can have them help you get ready, watch your first look with your partner (or you can have a first look with them), or even just take pictures and have a celebratory dinner/small reception together. These are just a few ideas, there's plenty more!

HAVE TWO CEREMONIES

If you and your partner want to have guests at your ceremony but you don't want to compromise on your ceremony location, this option is for you! You two can read your vows in a private ceremony at your dream spot, and then have a different ceremony with your guests in another part of the day. You can read the same vows at both ceremonies, or have a different kind of ceremony with your guests if you'd rather keep your vows private. This gives you the chance to have your ceremony in the exact place you want, while still also having meaningful time with your loved ones.

SPLIT YOUR WEDDING EXPERIENCE INTO TWO DAYS

Like the thought of having two ceremonies but feel like it would make your wedding day too rushed or exhausting? Have a multi-day wedding experience! If there's a lot of things you want to do on your adventure wedding day, spreading your wedding out over two days is a good solution so you and your partner have time to relax. The options for this are endless, plus you have more time to do what you want AND spend time with your guests, without compromising on one or the other. It's a win-win!

How to Involve Friends & Family If They're Not Physically Present

If you and your partner choose to have a “just us” wedding, or if you have loved ones who aren't able to be physically present at your wedding, there's still plenty of fun, creative, and beautiful ways you can involve them in your wedding process!



- Have an engagement party
- Ask them to help you pick out your wedding clothes
- Invite them to watch you sign your marriage license before you leave for your trip, and celebrate with champagne or cake
- Include family heirlooms as detail items on your day
- Gift them prints or an album when you get your pictures back
- Facetime, Skype, or Zoom them on your day
- Invite them to write letters that you and your partner will read during your ceremony
- Open gifts or cards from them on your day
- Bring something back for them from your trip
- Have a party or reception with them after your elopement
- Share your full gallery of photos with them (you can even have a photo reveal party!)



How to Tell Your Friends & Family About Your Plans



Whether you're eloping with no guests or you're inviting just a few people, it's important to think through how you'll communicate your decision to your friends and family.

You can tell everyone in advance (and even send an announcement so people aren't surprised), only tell a few people, or keep it completely secret and announce it later. You and your partner should do whatever feels the most empowering to you. Here's a few tips to help the news go over as smoothly as possible if you decide to share beforehand.

TIP 1: Be Obvious

If you drop hints before you get engaged or announce your unique wedding plans, this can help ease people into the idea without you actually having to tell them yet, which reduces surprises and objections. If there are any specific people who you anticipate being more skeptical or critical of the idea, you can ask other family or friends to help you out by dropping hints too.

TIP 2: Tell Them Face To Face (Or on a Video Call)

Most couples choose to tell their family and friends about their elopement in person. It's significantly easier to explain why you're choosing to have an adventure wedding or elopement in person, and it helps when they can see your genuine excitement. If they don't live close by, video chat is the next best thing.

TIP 3: Share Your "Wedding Why"

Some people might react to your plans because they feel like you're excluding them. Explaining a bit about the reasons you chose to have an adventure wedding or elopement can help reduce those negative feelings. Share with them your "wedding why", if you're comfortable doing so.

A few other reasons you could share:

- We want our wedding day to be truly meaningful to us
- We want to celebrate our love by doing something that's an accurate representation of who we are
- We want to spend our wedding day focused on each other, instead of focusing on guests
- We don't want to have a big party for our wedding because we're private/introverted people and that doesn't sound like fun
- We want the process of getting married to be as stress-free as possible
- We want our wedding day to feel authentic, not determined by outdated traditions

TIP 4: Keep Them Involved & Share As Many Details As You Can

Having your friends and family participate in the planning process can help them feel like they're still involved in your wedding and reassure them that they're not being excluded. If you tell them about the details of your day as you plan it, they'll be able to understand the time, effort, thought, and energy that you're putting into planning your day. Keeping them informed helps them feel involved and excited for you, since they know what you're planning and why.

TIP 5: Share Your Photos With Them

One fun way to reveal your elopement to family and friends after the fact is to surprise them with the gallery of pictures from your photographer. Those are the most tangible way to show them how much fun you had on your elopement day. Sharing the pictures with people who weren't there can help them better understand what your elopement was all about, because they can see the joy and excitement on your faces.

TIP 6: Remember: The Day Is For YOU

It's definitely good to empathize with family and friends who are initially disappointed by your wedding plans. However, don't forget that this day isn't about them. It's about you and your partner, and you deserve to have a day that feels authentic to who you are and what you want. If people don't like your wedding plans, that's their problem, not yours.

Decide the "Where"



IF YOU'RE HAVING AN ADVENTURE WEDDING OR ELOPEMENT, IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE THE FIRST THING YOU SHOULD DO IS FIGURE OUT EXACTLY WHERE YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED.

However, you don't have to figure out an exact location just yet. In fact, most couples who have adventure weddings don't know exactly where they want to get married before booking their photographer (Step #4).

We suggest figuring out a general area or type of landscape that you want to get married in, and then start looking for your photographer.

Many adventure wedding photographers travel, however not all do, so having a general area in mind will help you not be so overwhelmed by options when you start looking. There are great photographers all around the world, so instead of saying "we want to have our adventure wedding somewhere in the US", narrowing it down to something like "we want to have our adventure wedding in Utah" will make it SO much easier to find a photographer!



How to Choose Your Location

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO SAY YOUR VOWS?

There's a lot of choices you'll need to make when planning your adventure wedding or elopement, but out of all the decisions you'll make, your location is one of the biggest. Where you have your adventure wedding or elopement will influence so many other factors about your day, and it essentially determines what your overall experience looks like. In the end, the most important thing is that you choose somewhere that feels right for you as a couple— don't choose your location based on what other people think. Take your time and do some research to find somewhere that you'll feel completely happy and at peace, and where you two will be able to focus just on each other.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PICKING A LOCATION

1 VIEWS & SCENERY

What kind(s) of scenery do you and your partner feel most connected to? What views bring you the most inspiration, happiness, and peace? What type of location would feel the most *you*? Think back on your "wedding why" and the list you came up with while brainstorming. What scenery would give you the experience you're dreaming of?

2 SEASONS & WEATHER

Some kinds of landscapes and scenery really shine at specific times of year! Make sure you keep in mind the season in which you're getting married and consider what types of scenery are best during that time of year. If you're getting married in the winter, think about where there will be snow and if that will impact the accessibility of any locations you have in mind. If you're getting married in the spring, that's when temperatures in the desert are the most pleasant, and when waterfalls will be flowing the strongest. If you're getting married in the summer, higher elevation locations that were covered in snow during the winter and spring will have blooming wildflowers and mild temperatures. If you're getting married in the fall, think about where the best fall colors will be.

3 ACCESSIBILITY

The accessibility of your location will have a huge effect on the experience of your wedding day! What kind of transportation are you (and your guests, if you'll have any) willing to take to get to your location? A long car ride? A really bumpy 4x4 road? A ferry, helicopter, bush plane, or float plane? What about hiking, are you excited about the idea of hiking to a location? Are your guests excited about hiking, if you'll have any? Be sure to truly consider what would be the most fun, relaxing, and *you* way to spend your day. How accessible you want your location to be can help you narrow down your options. Also, keep in mind any guests you might have and their ability to hike or travel.

4 SECLUSION

So, we're going to be real with you here: in a perfect world, your location would have breathtaking scenery, easy accessibility, and full seclusion... but most of the time you'll have to prioritize two of those three things. Places that are easier to access usually have less privacy as a result. We like to say that the general rule of thumb (although not set in stone) is that the farther you're willing to travel to get to your location, the more secluded and private it will likely be. Think about how many people you'd be comfortable having around you as you say your vows, or how much seclusion you'd be willing to give up to get that Insta-worthy view. Keep in mind that there are always "hidden gem" locations that are just as beautiful as the popular spots, but they usually offer more privacy and seclusion because they're not as well-known. Also, having your ceremony at sunrise is a great option for having more privacy in places that are typically busy!

5 MEANING

Be intentional. This is a day that you'll look back on every year for the rest of your lives together. When picking a location, think about the significance the spot has to you now or could have in the future. Maybe it's your favorite place to travel with your partner, or a place that you've always wanted to visit. Having an adventure wedding or elopement is all about doing things intentionally, and the location is no different!

6 EXPERIENCE & ACTIVITIES

Think about everything you want to do during your adventure wedding or elopement, besides saying your vows and taking pictures. What do you want to do? Do you have any specific "must-have" activities? Whether you want to go canoeing, horseback riding, rock climbing, stargazing, hammocking, Jeeping, or anything else, keep in mind that some locations are better for certain activities than others. If you're planning specific activities as part of your day, keep in mind the time it will take to realistically get from one thing to the next (with an extra buffer, just in case). If you have your heart set on a certain activity for your day, use that as a guide to help you narrow down your location.

7 GUESTS

Think back to your "wedding why" and the brainstorming that you and your partner did together. Did you decide that you want to have any other people involved in your day? Or do you want it to be just the two of you? If you decide to invite guests, the most important piece of advice we can give you is to be intentional about how many people you invite, and who you invite. When you choose a location, be aware of any accessibility needs and know how much of the day you want your guests to be involved in. Knowing your exact guest count before picking a location is important because some locations have very specific limits on group sizes. However, there are plenty of amazing places that can accommodate more guests so don't be discouraged! Just make sure that when you invite your guests, you set realistic expectations about how much traveling will be involved (and what kind), as well as how much they'll be involved in your wedding day.

Tips for Picking the Best Location For You!



PRIORITIZE YOUR EXPERIENCE

Think back to your "wedding why" and the reasons you and your partner decided to have an adventure wedding or elopement. Most likely, one of the biggest reasons you chose this is because you want to have a wedding day that's fun, stress-free, and true to your authentic selves. So don't pick a location that isn't in line with who you two are and what you enjoy! This day is all about you two, so don't feel pressured to do something for that you wouldn't actually enjoy. You don't have to hike too far, travel too far, spend too much money, or do anything that isn't *you*, just because that's what other people do. There are tons of beautiful places in the world, and the most important thing is that you and your partner enjoy the day.

DON'T RULE OUT A MULTI-LOCATION WEDDING

If you can't decide on just one spot, that's okay! You can go to more than one location on your day, as long as they're in the same general vicinity. Our usual guideline is within a few hours by car, but this varies depending on the situation and timeline. This is a great way to experience

different scenery and activities on your day. Also, keep in mind that you don't have to fit your whole wedding experience into one day. If there are multiple spots that you want to visit and you can't narrow them down, consider spreading your wedding experience over more than one day!

THINK ABOUT POSSIBLE BACKUP LOCATIONS

Even though right now you're just starting to figure out where you want to go, and you most likely don't have any specific locations in mind at this point, when you're choosing where you want to go for your adventure wedding or elopement it's important to think about what possible backup choices would be for each location. If you're getting married outdoors, things can be unpredictable sometimes. Bad weather, road closures, and wildfires are just a few things that could potentially impact your ability to access your location on your wedding day. Even though it would be ideal to go to the spot you chose and planned for, having a flexible attitude towards the exact location will help your wedding experience be perfect, regardless of the circumstances.

CONSIDER THE PERMITS

A lot of public lands (national parks, state parks, national forest, etc) require permits to have a wedding and have a photographer/videographer there. Before you finalize your location, it's a good idea to do some research to know if weddings are allowed there. Google searches can be good, but usually the official ".gov" website for that area will have the most accurate information. While you don't need to know everything about the permit process (it's super confusing), if you choose a specific spot it is wise to know the rules so you aren't disappointed later on. It would be such a bummer to fall in love with a spot, only to find out later from your photographer that you can't actually have a ceremony there (or get fined if you get married there anyway!).



UNDERSTAND LEAVE NO TRACE

Leave No Trace (LNT) is a set of ethics that helps to preserve outdoor spaces and our access to them, by making sure our actions are sustainable and responsible. Everyone who spends time outdoors should strive to follow the 7 LNT principles. These principles help us leave the least amount of impact on our outdoor spaces that we possibly can. The principles are:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of other Visitors

We'd suggest reading about Leave No Trace before your wedding and integrating these principles into your life now to start getting used to them (and to start making a difference in the outdoor places you spend time in!). As a general summary, to best follow Leave No Trace you should do research before you visit an outdoor space so you can understand the type of terrain and make a plan about what trails and durable surfaces you'll travel on. You should be prepared to leave everything you find, pack out everything you bring in, and know what to do if you encounter wildlife.

Leave No Trace can be overwhelming, but remember that it isn't a strict set of rules, and nobody is perfect. If you learn about LNT now and start adhering to it before your wedding day, you'll feel like a seasoned pro when the day comes! By following LNT on your wedding day, you help ensure that you'll be able to return to your location in the future, and it'll still be as pristine as the day you got married.

Learn more about Leave No Trace: www.LNT.org

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04

Find Your Photographer

Congrats, you've planned all the major details of your day! The first thing you should do now, before booking anything else, is find an experienced adventure wedding/elopement photographer (if you haven't already by this point). Having the help of an experienced professional when planning the smaller details & logistics will make your life so much easier and less stressful. Another benefit of booking your photographer before anything else is that an experienced elopement photographer will be able to give you some travel advice that's specific to the spot you're headed, which could save you time, stress, and possibly money.

WHY IS THE PHOTOGRAPHER SO IMPORTANT?

To put it simply: the pictures your photographer takes will not only document your wedding day for you and your partner, but those pictures will be even more meaningful to friends and family who weren't at the wedding.

Since you won't have many guests (if any at all), having an experienced adventure wedding/elopement photographer should be a top priority. Wondering how much of your day you should have documented by a photographer? Here's our honest opinion:

Your wedding day deserves just as much documentation as anyone else getting married—and maybe even more.

Why? Well, here's a few reasons.

1. Some people think elopements are just saying vows and taking pictures for a few hours... but we both know that's not true! Your wedding day is the day you'll remember every year on your anniversary for the rest of your life together. Everything that happens that day, from the moment you wake up until the time you fall asleep, is part of your experience. Couples having big weddings get the entire story of their day documented, and you deserve that too.
2. You and your partner are spending all of this time planning an intentional, authentic, beautiful wedding experience. You deserve to be able to relive it all and remember every detail precisely.
3. If you're not having any guests (or only having a few), then photos from your day are truly the only way to share the experience with people who weren't present for your day.

So, when you're considering how much of the day to book your photographer for, remember that just because a photographer is there doesn't mean it'll feel like an all-day photoshoot. An experienced adventure wedding or elopement photographer will know how to melt into the background, help make sure you have the best experience as possible, and document you and your partner having an amazing wedding day.



Booking Your Photographer

PRO TIPS FOR FINDING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER

TIP 1: Choose a local adventure wedding/elopement photographer (if possible)

Sure, any photographer can research an area and hop on a plane to shoot a wedding in another state or country. However, local elopement photographers will have an unrivaled knowledge of their home state. They will be intimately familiar with the areas in which they shoot. They likely spend their free time recreating in the same places they photograph elopements, which makes them more invested in protecting that land and following Leave No Trace ethics while shooting. They'll be more familiar with the permit processes for their local area (it's different for every state and land management authority) and will have personal connections with vendors, so they can provide more reliable recommendations than someone from out-of-state.

TIP 2: Start looking early and book ASAP

We HIGHLY suggest choosing a photographer who specializes in adventure weddings and elopements. They have professional-level knowledge of the nuances of this type of wedding, which traditional wedding photographers (who may shoot elopements occasionally) don't have. Most adventure wedding and elopement photographers book couples between 4-12 months in advance. This means that we tend to book up faster. You should start looking for a photographer as soon as you know where you want to get married. Also, you may have more luck finding a photographer if you choose a date range for your wedding, rather than a set-in-stone date.

TIP 3: If you want videography, look for a company who does both

As mentioned above, adventure weddings and elopements are extremely different than traditional weddings (that's why you're having one, right?!) which applies not only to photography but also to videography. Most outdoor locations do not allow tripods, lighting setups, drones, and various other equipment traditional wedding videographers commonly use. Elopement videography requires a vastly different skillset than traditional wedding videography, so finding an elopement company that does both photo and video will be your best bet for a seamless experience and a professional-quality video.

Bonus Tips for Booking Your Photographer



TIP 1: Read lots of reviews

Before you hire a photographer (or any other vendors) read lots of reviews and see what the general consensus is. Make sure they have the professional experience you're looking for, but also that they're a good fit for the experience you want.

TIP 2: Chat on the phone

If you're going to spend a large chunk of your adventure wedding or elopement day with a photographer, it's super important to make sure you actually *like* them! Set up a phone call or video call so you can get a feel for their personality, and make sure you enjoy their presence enough to have them tag along on your wedding day.

TIP 3: Read contracts carefully

When you get to the point of booking with a photographer, make sure that everything you've agreed upon is in writing. They should send a contract for you to sign before booking, so when they send that be sure to read it carefully and make sure you understand what you're agreeing to.

TIP 4: Search online

There's a LOT of photographers on the internet. If you're not really sure where to start looking (which is totally understandable), here's a few resources we'd suggest checking out:

[Wedding Wire](#), [Google](#), [Junebug Weddings](#), [Green Wedding Shoes](#), Instagram Hashtags, [Pinterest](#)





Thank You!

Congrats—you made it to the end!

Now that you're here, just remember that this guide isn't meant to be a rulebook. Use it to get guidance, directions, and next steps... but don't feel like you're *required* to plan your adventure wedding or elopement how we suggest. Like we said before, every couple is unique!

This might feel like a lot at once, but what really matters at the end of the day is that you're getting married to the person you love. As you go forward in planning your wedding, try to remember your "wedding why" and keep it in mind as you make wedding-related choices.

We already know you're going to have an amazing wedding experience! Our hope is that you can use this guide as an opportunity to reflect on what you and your partner actually want out of your wedding—and stay focused on that going forward.

You and your partner deserve to have a marriage experience that is truly *you*. You deserve a wedding that honors your unique and beautiful relationship. You deserve to have a peaceful, intentional, and fulfilling wedding in the beauty of the great outdoors.

Thank you for taking time to download read our e-book! We're so happy to help you start planning your wedding. We love helping couples have the unique wedding experience they deserve, and there's really no better job in the whole world!

We wish you luck as you continue planning the adventure wedding of your dreams. If you're interested in receiving occasional wedding planning tips, you can join our email list [here](#). If you have any questions or if you're interested in getting information about our services, please feel free to contact us [here](#).

One last reminder: You and your partner are badass, and you're going to have an unforgettable wedding day.

Cheers to that!

Aly & Justin

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