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## HOT

Our experts solve  
your problems

## TOPIC:

Venues

Meet the  
expertsAan Barnes  
PhotographerChanelle Aristide  
SingerDanielle Harvey  
Features editorDevika Lambert  
Event plannerRebecca Ellis  
Florist

## Setting the scene

**Q** My fiancé and I are in the process of choosing our venue. Our priority is to have really great photographs to remember the day by. From a photographer's point of view, what should we keep in mind when looking for a potential setting?

**A** *Alan says:* If excellent photography opportunities are your priority, it's best to start by visualising the overall style you require; a countryside setting with pictures in the grounds or maybe a town wedding with images of you both walking in the streets. I've covered both extremes and they can be equally fantastic.

Consider the following:

- The size of the wedding, will the venue cramp

your guests?

- Do the surroundings offer a wide range of options for photography?
- Most venues have a sample album and website gallery, do these inspire you?
- What if it rains, are there indoor or sheltered areas that can be used?
- If you want to get married at the venue too, is the ceremony room is suitable?

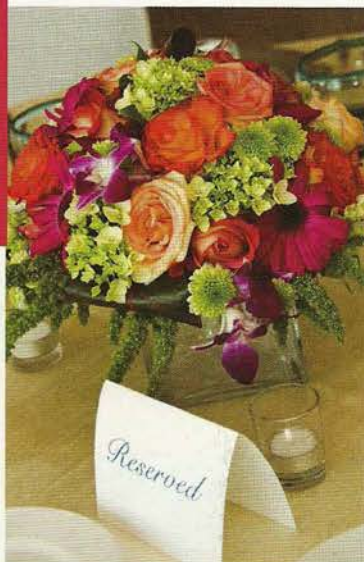
Finally, why not arrange an engagement shoot with your chosen photographer at the venue? That way you'll feel more at ease on the day and have time to reflect on the best locations around the property.

## Utilising decorations

**Q** We're getting married in our local church and we're hoping to decorate it with lots of flowers. As we're planning to spend quite a lot on our arrangements, am I right to assume that we can bring the displays with us to the reception?

**A** *Rebecca says:* We strongly advise a bride to design her church and venue flowers to complement each other so the displays from the church can be brought to the venue. As you're only at the church for a short time it would be advisable to re-use arrangements where possible. Rather than having pew ends, we've suggested to previous brides to use beautiful cream candle stands which can be placed along the aisle with an enclosed candle and flowers, these can then be easily moved. Our staff are happy to set up the flowers at the church, wait outside while the ceremony is taking place and deliver them to your venue, although check with your chosen florist they offer this service.

As a gesture of good will, always remember to ask your vicar or priest if they want one or two arrangements to be left at the church.





## I'm with the band

**Q** We would love a live band at our wedding reception, what do you suggest we bear in mind when choosing our venue?

**A** *Chanelle says:* I recommend you consider the entertainment you want at the reception before the beginning of your venue search.

If you'd like a full live band ranging from four to seven musicians, you'll need a large room with plenty of space between the performers and your guests, so that the music can be enjoyed without being too overpowering.

For small to medium sized venues, you could use solo performers, duos or a three-piece band; these will fit in easier to a room with limited floor space.

The musicians will ask about the environment, room capacity and the number of guests filling the space, as this can all have an effect on the sound. However, if the act doesn't have quality and powerful equipment and PA system, the sound may not fill a large room for 300 people, likewise a group of 30 people don't need to be drowned by the sound of super-sized speakers in a small room.

I recommend you confirm such details with the event organiser showing you around the venue, this way you can make a better judgement on the suitability of certain performances when booking your entertainment.

Be sure to ask where the power sockets are in the room and check there's one close to where you wish the band to set up. Most venues and hotels will also require a PAT test certificate and Public Liability Insurance from the performers, and won't let them perform at the venue without this. Therefore don't hand over a deposit for a band without checking if the venue requires these certificates. Musicians are required to annually update their PAT and Liability Insurance certificates, so be sure to check these are current.

## TAKING CENTRE STAGE

**Q** Our Broadway-themed reception is going to feature a big band and lots of dancing; what type of venue might suit our celebration?

**A** *Danielle says:* A grand and spacious setting is a must to cater for your choice of entertainment, as well as allowing for a great party atmosphere. Look for hotels with large, ornate ballrooms, or go one better and hire a theatre to really bring your dramatic ideas to the fore.

A marquee reception could also work well, giving you a blank canvas to decorate as you see fit. Add a disco ball and starlit dancefloor for a decadent dancing space, and hire props from a theatre company to complete the look.

## Contact our experts...

Alan Barnes Photography, [www.alanbarnesphotography.com](http://www.alanbarnesphotography.com)

Chanelle Aristide, [www.chanellearistide.com](http://www.chanellearistide.com)

Danielle Harvey, [www.countyweddingmagazines.com](http://www.countyweddingmagazines.com)

Devika Lambert, [www.eliteinspirations-events.com](http://www.eliteinspirations-events.com)

Rebecca Ellis, [www.lilyflowers.co.uk](http://www.lilyflowers.co.uk)



## City or country?

**Q** There are so many beautiful venues close to where we live on the Surrey/London border that my fiancé and I are finding it difficult to pick one. We can't decide if we want a wedding near the city or something more rural in the surrounding countryside. How would we know which suits us best?

**A** *Devika says:* When choosing a venue it's important that it reflects you as a couple. Many venues can make you think "I'd really like to have my wedding here," however; before you get carried away make a list of all the requirements.

Narrow it down to your favourite four venues two from London and two from Surrey and visit them with the list.

An important factor to consider when choosing your venue is where will your pictures be taken? Surrey can offer some of the most breathtaking gardens and grounds, while a city location will have magnificent architecture and skylines.

Finally, what time of the year is the wedding? If it's a summer wedding, a rural countryside location would be more fitting, ensure you take this into consideration.