

Winter Weddings



What could be more festive than a holiday wedding? Here are some great ideas for a festive ceremony that no one could ever forget (along with your anniversary date).



Unwrap a Christmas Wedding

COLOR SCHEME

These are as numerous as the options for your trees, but the classic option is red and green. Also look to gold and silver or bright jewel tones for a nontraditional look. If you've got a striking backdrop for the ceremony, like a gloriously decorated church or other venue, opt for all white.

FAVORS MADE EASY

Hit up the Christmas aisle for easy ideas for favors. Try these on for size:

- Customized ornaments with your name and date, made from clear, fillable ornaments.

- Tiny tree seedlings wrapped in burlap and tied with a bow. Make sure to include planting instructions.

- Stockings stuffed with care with local Christmas cookies for your guests.

CREATIVE FLOWER IDEAS

Use seasonal favorites in your floral arrangements. Try studding your

blooms with snips of fir or other holiday greenery, frosted miniature pine cones, holly or elegant berries. Talk to your florist about your options for weaving in some holiday cheer.

GLITZ IT UP

Weddings are already glamorous affairs, but the holidays offer a new reason to get a little glam. Look to sparkly gowns and glittering accessories to add a spark to a cold winter's night. Best news? Your bridal party will almost

definitely find a reason to reuse dresses and accessories as the season rolls on.

ADD A SPARK

Nothing's more beautiful than a candlelight Christmas service and you can certainly incorporate this into your ceremony.

Having the bridal party process in with candles aglow, line the altar, and arrange candles of all sizes on tables around the venue for a warm, romantic glow.

Warm it Up

A winter wedding means you'll need a little more to keep you warm than just those fuzzy feelings of love, and so will your guests. Here are some ideas for keeping everyone comfortable on a chilly day.

WHAT TO WEAR

Layers all around! Guys, pick tuxes with a vest and, for fun, make a gift of a warm, snazzy scarf for the groomsmen. For the women, if you need to, pack a pair of long Johns under that long gown or a pair of gloves. Outwardly, choose glam furs (faux, if you'd prefer) in a wrap or a stole to keep you cozy, especially outdoors. Gloves for you, too, if you'd like. Your bridal shop can help you pick a pair that perfectly complements your dress.

KEEPING GUESTS COZY

First, consider your venue. If any part of the wedding will be outdoors, check with a rental company for heaters. Make sure they will have staff on hand to tend to and manage the heaters. Also looked for tents with walls to help keep the heat in. If your venue has fireplaces, ask that they be lit and that there's staff to keep the fires going.

BUT DON'T LET THEM BOIL

Watch that they don't get too hot, though, especially if people are cutting a rug on the dance floor. Have venue staff lower the temperature or crack a window if guests are starting to break a sweat.

LIQUID WARMTH

If you're going to have a bar,



© ADOBE STOCK

you might want it stocked with a little more than just wine and beer. Also entertain warm ideas like a hot cocoa bar, a variety of hot teas and coffee, and nonal-

coholic ways to drink warmly.

FOOTWEAR

Dress shoes and ice don't mix. Be OK with the wedding

party and guests switching between formal footwear and boots or slippers, especially as they go from one place to another. Also make sure all of

your venues keep walkways as ice- and snow-free as possible, even if that's employing a little cousin to keep everything salted.

Hiring a Wedding Planner

If all of these details are starting to make your head spin, it might be time to consider hiring a wedding planner. These professionals plan and organize weddings and are probably familiar with a lot of the venues and challenges in your area.

Here are some tips for choosing a wedding planner.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Ask friends, family and, if your wedding is at a church, church officials for recommendations. Churches, especially, may have a limited group they work with. Also look for awards and memberships in professional organizations like the American Association of Certified Wedding Planners and the Association of Bridal Consultants.

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU

In short, everything. Bring pictures of ceremonies, dresses, accessories, flowers and anything else you can think of to your first meeting with your planner. Scour bridal magazines, but also look on social media, Pinterest and other sites for ideas. Your planner can help you suss out what would work for you in your area and what won't. She can also help you stick to your budget, so have your financial plans worked out before then as well.

After the meeting, if you liked what you heard from the planner, make sure to check references. Ask those brides to send photos of their weddings and ask plenty of questions like how the planner was to work with and how closely she stuck



© ADOBE STOCK

to his budget.

SIGNED AND SEALED

When you sign a contract

with the planner (and you should), make sure it goes over it thoroughly. Make sure it clearly outlines your expectations

of her and, also very important, her expectations of you. If you have any questions at all, ask. Clear communication is

going to be key to this relationship and to a beautiful wedding. Might as well start now.

The Anti-Winter Bash

If you're not feeling the cold, take your wedding on the road with a wedding in a warmer locale.

Destination weddings tend to be smaller affairs because of the cost, but hitting the beach in the off-season can mean some savings. Sound good to you? Let's plan a destination wedding.

PICK THE RIGHT PLACE

Choose a destination that speaks to you. If you love the beach, start looking for the right strand. If you love wine and food, hit up a winery. Start by making a list of places and what you love about them. Also keep in mind that these places will need facilities for your ceremony, like an acceptable place for a reception and plenty of parking. The right destination will also need accommodations for your guests.

FACTOR IN EXTRA EXPENSES

With the right planning, destination weddings can be on par with weddings at home. But you'll need to account for some expenses a regular wedding wouldn't have. Here are just a few:

Airfare. Bear in mind you'll need to make at least one planning trip in addition to airfare for the big day.

• Hotel accommodations for everyone.



© ADOBE STOCK

- Welcome bags for traveling guests.
- Importing certain decorations and vendors.

LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

You'll also need to research

wedding requirements for the destination. Is there a residency requirement? How do you go about applying for a wedding license? What kind of officiation do you need? Have all this sorted well

before the ceremony. Your venue may be able to help with some of it.

GIVE YOUR WEDDING PARTY AN OUT

If you've got your heart set

on a beach wedding in January, you may not get the wedding party of your dreams. Be aware that your friends' finances may be tight and be gracious if they can't accept your invitation.



© ADOBE STOCK

Time to Get Away

Once you've got the big details of the ceremony down, it's time to tackle the honeymoon. Just like in planning a destination wedding, traveling to a warm-weather destination in the off season may save you some money. Or maybe you've got visions of a snow-covered getaway. Either way, you can still plan the perfect honeymoon for a winter wedding.

CONSIDER HIRING A PRO

With online booking sites galore, travel agents seem like a thing of the past. But they're still around and can help you out tremendously, especially if you're up to your eyebrows in wedding details. A travel agent can vet vendors, destinations and lay out the perfect, cus-

tom itinerary for you. They can also help you sort out travel rules and regulations so you don't miss any important deadlines.

Check with family and friends and the Better Business Bureau for recommendations on finding the perfect travel agent for you.

Your bridal shop or wedding planner may also be connected to pros that do great work for honeymoons.

DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT

Work together to make this the perfect trip for both of you. It's a special, so consider getting outside your travel box. If

you usually go to the beach, hit the mountains. Or if you're a city traveler, kick one off your bucket list. And while you're working together, try to work in some surprises, romantic or otherwise.

DON'T PILE ON

You just planned and exe-

cuted one of the biggest events of your life. You are going to be zapped. So don't plan to spend seven consecutive days traipsing around New York on foot or hiking in the mountains. Leave lots of time for relaxation and work in things like massages or spa days to get some of your energy back.

Hiring a Photographer

The photographs from your special day are priceless. You only get one shot at getting it right so it's critical to find the perfect photographer to work with you on capturing your big day. Here are some questions from wedding site The Knot that can help you find the perfect photographer.

- Will the photos be retouched?
- Will I see proofs before or after this is done?
- How many weddings have you shot?
- What's your favorite part of the wedding?
- What exactly is included in your packages?
- Do you shoot film and digital? If you shoot film, are they black and white?
- What is your charge for overtime?
- Will you be my photographer or will it be one of your associates?
- Do you have backup if you're sick or have an emergency?
- Do you use assistants and will there be an additional fee?
- How long after the wedding will we get to see the photos?
- Have you ever shot at my venue before?
- Do you use a shot list or do you prefer to shoot as you see fit?
- What type of paper will you use for the pictures and the album?
- Can I share the pictures online?
- Do you bring your own lighting?
- What will you wear?



© ADOBE STOCK

vendors, make sure that you read and understand the contract. Also make sure that the

photographer can work in your venue with the lighting and other equipment they'll

need. Some venues restrict the type of lighting that can be used during the ceremony. If

you're minding a budget, make sure you also understand any extra fees that can arise.

MAKING THE DEAL

As with any of your wedding

'Tis the Season

There are plenty of ways to bring touches of winter into your wedding. Here are some tiny touches that can make a big difference in your day.

INVITATIONS

Consider invitations that touch on the season with elegant tree or snow motifs. Go all out and hire a professional calligrapher to custom make your invitations on a creamy quality paper in ink that matches your color scheme.

OUTDOORS, INDOORS

Bring the outside in. Incorporate tiny trees on tables, greenery on place settings, across mantles or in arrangements. Circles of wood can be coasters or part of place settings, or can even be place or escort cards.

PRETTY RIBBONS

Also think of using ribbons on anything that needs a tag or to festoon things like chairs. Choose ribbons in your color palette but with holiday touches like gilded edging or sparkles.

ADD SOME BLING

Make it icy inside, too, with strands of crystals on tables or hanging from lighting, imitating icicles.

BLANKET STATIONS

Leave piles of blankets around the reception area in case guests take a chill.

SEASONAL COCKTAILS

Have your bartender whip up a spiked hot cocoa, mulled wine, hot toddies or eggnog



© ADOBE STOCK

as a signature cocktail at your reception.

SERVE UP COMFORT FOOD

Winter weddings are not the time to skimp on food. Give your guests a warm bel-

lyful of good eats. To give your ceremony a sense of place, choose regional favorites. Preferably warm ones.

ICY CAKES

Add a bit of snow to your wedding cake with sprinkles

of sparkling sugar and sprays of wintertime berries. Talk to your baker about adding some seasonal touches.

EMBRACE THE ELEMENTS

Winter weather can be

unpredictable. Take whatever Mother Nature throws at you in stride and try not to let a little snow or ice get you down. Have a plan B, C and D, if necessary, and select venues and vendors that can handle anything.