

A full-length photograph of a bride standing in a white, strapless wedding gown. She is holding a bouquet of white flowers. The background is a soft, light blue-grey color with a heavy overlay of white, out-of-focus snowflakes, creating a winter atmosphere. The bride is positioned on the right side of the frame, looking towards the camera.

WINTER
Weddings

Plan a Winter Wedding

So you want to plan a winter wedding? Say hello to your new best (or worst) friend – Mother Nature. Weather likely will dictate whether or not your wedding goes off without a hitch, so it is important to understand the risk.

BE PREPARED!

There isn't much you can do to overcome 2 feet of snow or a dangerous ice storm. Planning a great winter wedding will come down to the details that are actually in your control, such as wardrobe, transportation for guests and a winter-inspired theme.

Also, you should be emotionally prepared for some guests who will not be willing to take on the risk of driving or flying through winter conditions to make your event. The elderly or friends with young children may be worried about potentially dangerous road conditions. As long as you can appreciate the needs of these guests – even on your special day – you will remain in positive wedding spirits.

WEDDING INSURANCE

With your wedding at the mercy of wintry conditions, you may consider wedding insurance to protect some of your investment. Many policies will safeguard you from losing your deposit money to a weather-related cancellation.

In this case, you could use the refunded money to hire a new vendor for a make-up date if any your original vendors can't fit it into their schedules. And this is a real possibility, as many DJs, photographers, venues and videographers may already have their next few weekends booked.

WEATHER TRENDS

Maybe you live in a part of the country where it generally doesn't snow in January. This type of climate situation can be ideal for an off-season beach wedding. For brides in the rest of the country, weather research may become your new favorite past time.

You may find yourself checking five-year weather trends to find out the frequency of snowfall on your special date or reaching out to local TV weather professionals for the long-term forecast.

While your efforts may make you feel in control, your time is better spent on planning all of the other aspects of your winter wedding.



Winter Design

You wouldn't don a snowflake-themed wedding dress in August, so why would you wear a pastel-colored one in December? Planning a winter wedding means embracing the season and unique design opportunities.

THE SNOWFLAKE

A versatile symbol of winter, the snowflake can serve as the perfect decoration adorning your invitations. Snowflake embellishments on a silvery gown form a subtle nod to the wintertime, as do snowflake cutouts hanging randomly from your reception hall's ceiling.

THE RIBBON

Red ribbons aren't limited to presents. They can be a beautiful piece to add to shoes, bouquets or table settings. Think of creative ways to incorporate them, such as the outfits of your flower girl or ring bearer.

FROSTED BRANCHES

Natural vegetation is almost always a refreshing addition to a wedding design theme. The use of frosted branches in centerpieces or table accents can provide some sparkle to an otherwise one- or two-color tablecloth.

ICY LIGHTING

Depending on your color scheme, consider adding icy blue or red lights to your design. Sparkling icicle lights can infuse an almost whimsical look to either your ceremony or reception – or both.

DRINKS

Spiked hot chocolate or eggnog can make for a winter-themed cocktail. You also could opt for non-alcoholic versions of the wintertime favorites or select an assortment of unique coffees from which your guests can choose.

FOOD

Baked chicken is traditional fare for many weddings. But why not feed your guests a more substantial meal, such as juicy turkey or a glazed ham? Your menu also could include other wintertime standbys, such as cranberries, mashed potatoes and stuffing.



Must-Have Photos

Falling snow as the bride walks down the aisle. Vapor escaping from the mouth of the groom as he recites his vows. Some photographs are simply must-haves for a winter wedding.

Before settling on a primary photographer, it is wise to interview photographers to ask about their winter-shooting backgrounds.

Have they shot outdoor winter weddings before? Can they show a portfolio of their past work? What are a couple of ideas for really unique shots that you can expect? You're likely paying your photographer a pretty penny for his services, so it is definitely within your rights to check on his creative capabilities.

PUT TOGETHER A PLAN

Discuss with your photographer ahead of time to plan specific photos on your wish list.

Be sure to encourage creativity as well because photographers are trained to take into consideration lighting and other factors to spot the most resounding images.

Have a list of the shots you think are crucial, as well as some quirky ones that could make for memorable photos. Also, be sure to put together a vendor contract that lays out the combined time you expect to be spent at both the ceremony and reception, as well as overall payment.



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SKI RESORT WEDDINGS

Getting married at a ski resort? Take advantage of the amenities for these photos:

- On the lift: The bride and groom snuggling on the lift will be a perpetual reminder of the

wedding location.

- On the Slopes: Plan to outfit the wedding party in skis and goggles for a cheeky photo opportunity.

WINTER PROPS

The wintertime offers a col-

lection of traditional props that can make for stunning photos.

- The Ring: Place your wedding rings on a pine tree to tie together the symbol of marriage with the symbol of Christmas. The shiny silver or gold of the ring against the vibrant green of the tree will

create a splendid visual.

- The Venue: Is the hall or church decorated for the holidays? Be sure to snap a photo next to the lit tree or other festive spreads. Request that your photographer take both close-ups and far-away shots to capture all of the decorations.

Transportation

Dashing through the snow in a one-horse open sleigh doesn't have to be merely song lore.

You can make it a reality with a little pre-planning and a willing horse.

Your guests will rejoice at the sight of you pulling into the reception on a sleigh adorned with bells, ribbon and the works.

A winter wedding offers brides the chance to differentiate their wedding transportation from the traditional limousine ride.

If you're getting married in a location that hosts a lot of winter weddings, the possibilities may be endless. Consult with your wedding planner or local venues on transportation ideas they have used in the past.

SNOWMOBILES

What says extreme winter weather like revving along to the party on snowmobiles? Especially if you and your future spouse are fans of winter activities, this can be the perfect symbol of your love and how you like to enjoy time together.

Remember that helmets are recommended for riding snowmobiles at fast speeds, so be prepared for a little helmet hair if you opt for this transportation mode.

HELICOPTERS

One of the most spectacular wedding arrivals and departures is by helicopter. Many helicopter-for-hire services have popped up across the country, offering brides and grooms a dramatic way to make their presence felt.

Most of these services offer bride-only entrances, as well. If you choose to go this route, be sure to keep it a secret from your guests and even the groom, if possible. The look on their faces when you descend loudly in a helicopter will be worth the price!

SKIS & SNOWBOARDS

Along the same lines of the snowmobile, using skis or a snowboard for your grand entrance will surely resonate with your guests.

And given that the prices of renting skis or a snowboard from your venue will be much less expensive than a snowmobile, you may be able to include your entire wedding party. With even a small nearby hill, you can plan for your wedding party to make their way to the alter on a memorable ski or snowboard ride.



Dress for the Occasion

As you stand at the alter gazing deeply into the eyes of your future life partner, the last thing you want to be focused on is shivering toes. With a winter wedding, you may not have a choice.

The colder temperatures may cause you to literally get cold feet. Incorporate non-traditional wedding wear, such as boots, gloves, scarves or hats. So get creative and remember that you can have fashion fun while maintaining an elegant look.

FOR THE GROOM

Sweaters and vests are in for the winter. Many tux designers have added the warmer wardrobe options as winter weddings become more popular. If the idea of a sweater doesn't seem formal enough to you, check with your bridal consultants on your options. Many of the designs actually look like jackets but with a textured, more sweater-like feel.

To help your groom stand apart from his groomsmen, add a scarf to his wardrobe. A bright white scarf with a midnight blue tux is striking combination.

FOR THE BRIDE

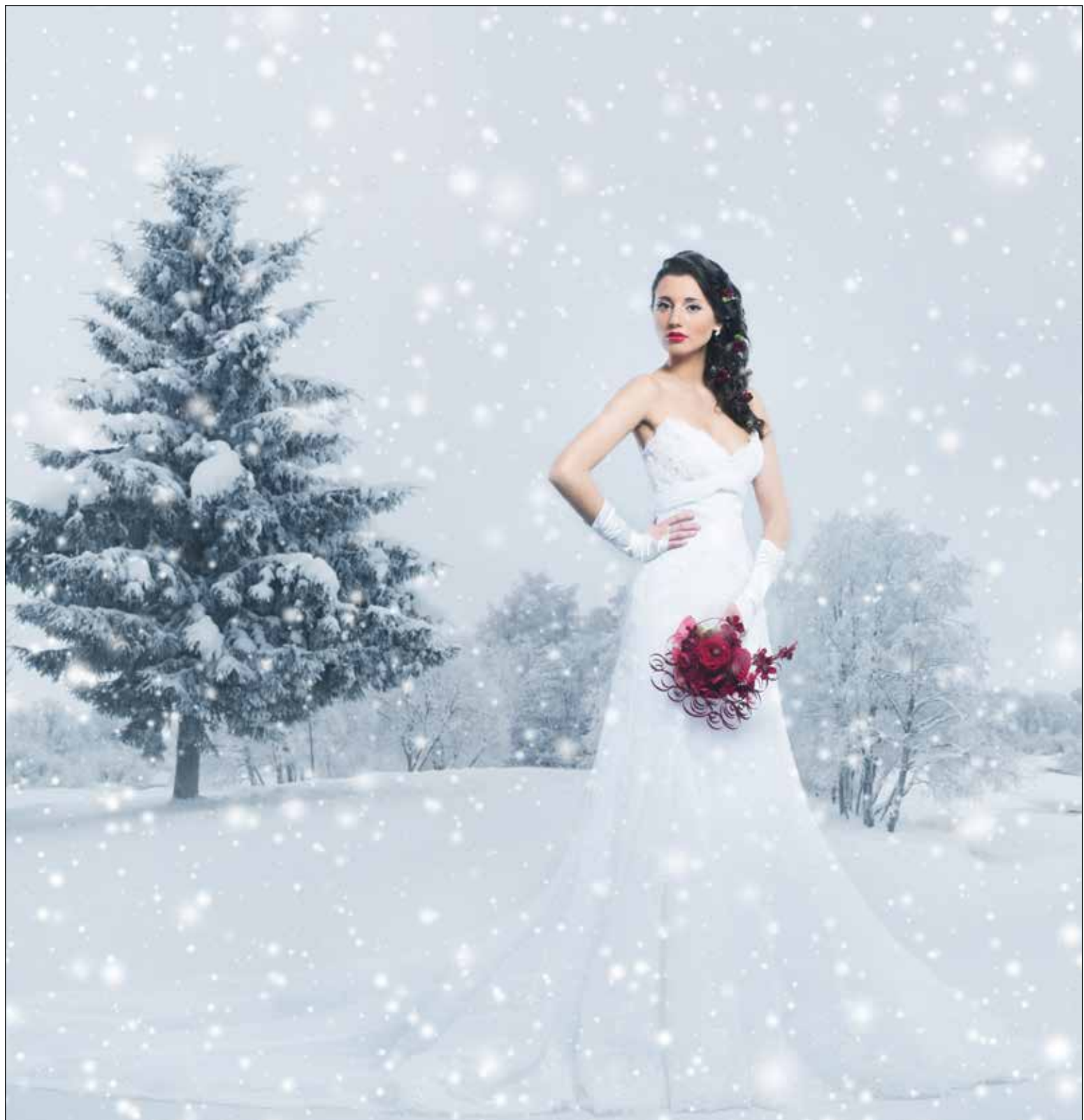
The magic is in the accessories. A regal cape or winter white coat can be the perfect touch on a cold winter day, while also protecting your skin from the cold. Elbow-length gloves are another option for a classy yet functional addition to your bridal wear or that of your bridesmaids.

Such winter-themed pieces will serve as the perfect complement to your gown with textured white tiers that evoke the vision of snowy drifts. A gown with waving layers of lace will accomplish the same end goal: infusing the season into the dress.

FOR THE CROWD

It is important to remember your guests and members of your wedding party when considering wardrobe options. Fur wraps and warm boots for the flower girls and maid of honor will keep your littlest wedding participants shielded from the snow.

Be sure to give your guests warning if your ceremony will take place outdoors. A respectful heads-up will give them plenty of time to plan their own wardrobes.



Holiday Inspiration

Jingle bells, holly and mistletoe are traditional markers of the holiday season – and ones that you should consider incorporating into your winter wedding.

Even if your event isn't taking place in late December, you can find ways to creatively honor holiday traditions or symbols into your winter wedding.

THE COLORS

Picture a stunning, rich red wedding dress in front of a magnificent white backdrop of snow. Just because the tradition calls for a white wedding gown doesn't mean you have to follow it, especially if you're planning something as unique as a winter wedding.

The best part about stepping outside the norm of a tradition is the lack of limits. You are in the driver's seat when it comes to dress color, decorations, invitation design and the wardrobes of your bridesmaids and groomsmen.

That means feel free to incorporate a little holiday spirit into your wedding if you see fit. There are plenty of ways to do so without coming across as trying too hard.

THE LIGHTS

Think elegant white lights instead of the oversized colored bulbs from your childhood. Understated lights



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strewn from trees or an alter can serve as the perfect splash of light, both indoor and outdoor.

You can enhance the decorations with the strategic placement of lights, as well. Convert any venue immediately with lights at the

entrance, head table and guest seats to really light up the night.

THE SPECIAL TOUCHES

Ornaments and berries

make for classic table centerpieces, especially when combined with white flowers, water or even empty glass containers. You can decorate the chairs alongside the aisle with wintry plants, as well, being sure to match your colors with the

design.

As far as your wedding wardrobe, think creatively for a holiday-themed bouquet for you and your bridesmaids. You can even add a bit of holly to your groom's boutonniere for a Christmas touch.



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Winter Weddings Rise

A close look at wedding statistics reveals a slow trend away from the hot summer air and into the majestic winter chill.

Winter weddings definitely still represent the minority of weddings in the United States (7 percent in 2013, according to the XO Group, Inc.), but are on the rise. That number is up from 5 percent in 2012.

Some of the upward trend can be contributed to a downward one in summer weddings.

The XO Group, Inc., reports that 35 percent of couples opted for sunshine-filled nuptials in 2013,

down from 41 percent in 2009.

THE REASONS

The two primary factors driving the increase in winter wonderland weddings are beauty and cost. Breathtaking photographs and the ability to infuse a unique wardrobe scheme into the wedding are attracting many brides to the winter event.

Cost also is a key contributor to the decision, as many

venues will charge less for “off-season” events in an effort to drive revenue during the slower business months.

And it is a trend that many in the wedding industry expect to continue. As the economy steadily recovers from The Great Recession, cash-strapped brides and grooms likely will be on the lookout for ways to save money while still putting together a memorable event for all.

GLOBAL TREND

Across the pond, the UK’s Office for National Statistics shows the number of marriages in the winter months has increased by 7 percent over the past two years.

The unpredictability of England’s weather in the summer months is a main reason many brides are opting for the colder months. Simply booking a wedding during the summer does not

guarantee warm, sunny weather in England.

In Australia’s Northern Territory, most weddings actually take place in the continent’s winter months of June, July and August, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Again, summer unpredictability drives many brides and grooms into the decision of having a winter wedding.