

# How to Plan Your Vermont Wedding

Practical Tips & Honest Advice

by Vermont Wedding Expert, Alison Ellis



# Welcome to Vermont.

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## Congratulations on your engagement!

You're getting married in Vermont which means you are a lover of the outdoors, a nature enthusiast, a hiker, a skier or rider, a college alum, a native-Vermonter or simply that you want to surround yourselves and your guests with a beautiful setting. **VT is an incredible destination.**

My intention for putting these tips together for you is simple: **Planning a wedding takes a lot of work & you've never done this before.** This guide will help streamline your planning process...whether you're planning from in-state or across the country.

Here are **10 Essential Planning Tips** based on over 14 years in the Vermont wedding industry. (I also speak from personal experience since my husband and I planned our own Vermont wedding in 2003.) I want to help set you on the right path & jumpstart your planning.

**You deserve the wedding of your dreams...so let's get started.**



# #1 Location, location, location.

Truly, your first step is to choose your venue. Your location determines so much about your wedding day. Do they provide tables? Have an in-house caterer? Each site has its own attributes & potential challenges so you need to lock down a date & place before you can do anything else.

**Visit your site around the time of year you plan to marry.** You'll see what's in bloom, surrounding views, and whether there are any aspects of the environment that detract from the aesthetic. Hopefully you'll feel confident that this is the right place for you.

**Hugely helpful hint:** You'll want to have a guest count before booking a venue. Also, if a venue tells you they can fit "up to 200 guests" you'd be wise to aim for fewer on your list if you also plan to have a band & dance floor. A room filled to "maximum capacity" can have so many tables & chairs that make the space feel crowded.

## #2 Pick a team.

As soon as you've secured your date and venue it's time to search for **all of your vendors**. The order in which you book is less important than the overall timeline; **don't wait to hire your key players**.

Start with a caterer or floral designer, or photographer, or DJ/Band; get some ideas about your cake/desserts and secure your rentals.

If you're a busy professional or graduate student you may find it's best to hire out about 12-14 months ahead. Ideally you'll have all of your vendors hired no less than 6-9 months in advance.

You do not want to find yourselves 3 months before your big day without a member of your wedding team! Don't delay.

**Hugely helpful hint:** You may find that with a full-service caterer or site coordinator + experienced floral designer you'll get the benefits of a day-of point-person and an event stylist on your team.

## #3 Don't waste time.

Your time is valuable. It's important to be realistic about your budget expectations. Be honest with potential vendors from the start about what you're hoping to spend. Why interview a \$5k photographer or florist if you're only comfortable spending up to \$3,500?

No good will come from "just seeing" what a florist or caterer can come up with. If you don't share your expectations with your vendors their desire to create & "wow" will likely come through in price. You may fall in love with ideas or designs that are unattainable & unrealistic.

If you're reluctant to share your parameters you're more apt to find unrealistic quotes. Help your vendors create for YOU—not a fantasy version of your wedding. You'll get the most out of your communication and wedding professionals appreciate when you allow us to suit your needs within your budget.

**On the flip-side:** This is also important for couples with an ample budget. If you seek to create a one-of-a-kind experience let your vendors know they have some freedom. With a little creative license your vendors can rise to the occasion & really show off their talents.

## #4 Contract, deposit, repeat.

It seems obvious, but without a contract & deposit your date is still “open” & available to others.

**Once you’ve found a vendor you trust get her/him under contract.**

Be prompt about sending your contracts & deposits because vendors cannot hold your date without an official commitment from you.

I can speak from experience here—there are always about 5 dates a season that are “hot”. I’ll get multiple inquiries for those same few dates and I know that other vendors are booked, too, because they’re referring couples to me. Book your June-September weddings asap.

**Don’t risk losing part of your dream team due to contract limbo.**

## #5 Get a room.

Perhaps you’ve chosen a venue with accommodations for all of your guests, but if that’s not the case **you must secure a room block in one or more hotels for out-of-town guests.** You may also want to provide transportation to and from your ceremony & reception.

**Hugely helpful hint:** It’s wise to scope out accommodations at the same time you’ve looking at venues! Get a room block asap & let your guests know in your save-the-date.



## #6 Just kick it.

**Once you've secured your vendors you can relax a bit.** Take a small break from planning & only focus on details that require your own personal touch; menu selection, signature cocktails, invitations & escort cards, rehearsal dinner plans, wedding party attire, etc. You'll get back into full-swing planning 3-4 months before the big day.

## #7 Follow through.

**In a perfect world vendors would be on top of all of your follow up, but this is definitely a shared responsibility.** Don't be late with your guest count for rentals, transportation, catering & centerpieces.

Follow up and check in with your team of vendors 3 months before your big day to find out what additional information they need from you. Late payments may incur a penalty so you'll want to follow up on that as well. (Mark a calendar for all of your final payments.)

## #8 Is everybody in?

Don't be shy about inquiring with late rsvp's. This goes double when planning a destination wedding since your guests will likely know months in advance whether or not they plan to book a hotel & travel for the weekend. Get them to confirm early! **There's no reason you can't ask for rsvp's 8-10 weeks out.**

**Hugely helpful hint:** The importance of your guest count cannot be overstated. The number of guests impacts every aspect of your planning, not the least of which is budget. **More people=More everything.**

## #9 Show ‘em how we do.

You chose Vermont for your wedding for a reason—now’s your chance to show your guests what we do best. Plan a welcome reception for your guests with a taste of VT! You and your families will be able to greet & mingle with all who came to celebrate with you.

Plan to have something Vermonty (technically a word in my book!) for guests at their hotel. Share your favorite local craft brew or a sweet or savory treat.

Arrange a group hike. Encourage guests to explore. Direct them to the nearest Farmers’ Market.

**“Farm to table” isn’t a trend up here, it’s how we live. Embrace this quality. Celebrate Vermont’s agricultural heritage!**

## #10 Be your guest.

On your wedding day you should show up as guests who are ready to party and enjoy the fruits of your planning labor.

Savor every moment.

Don’t micromanage.

Trust your vendors to work their magic.

...and go with the flow.

Unexpected things may happen, but so what? **At the end of the day you’re going to be married and that’s what really counts.**

# Final thoughts & Tips.

**It's your wedding so it should be a reflection of you as a couple...** your taste, your aesthetic, your style. It's OK to break some rules to make your wedding day your own!

If you're planning an outdoor ceremony please embrace your backup plan. **Your rain plan is hugely important.** The weather is 100% out of your control so the best you can do is plan accordingly. You're not allowed to be disappointed if it rains on your wedding day.

**When setting a time for your ceremony & reception it's often smart to plan backwards!** Determine what time your reception will end and then start your ceremony about 5-6 hours beforehand. In agricultural areas there is usually a noise curfew. 4pm is a good start-time for your ceremony if you'd like to serve dinner around 7pm. You can wind things down around 10-10:30ish or invite people to an after party or a bonfire with s'mores or hire a food truck to keep the celebration going.



photo credit (left): Lauren Carnes Photography. photo (right): Daria Bishop

[floralartvt.com](http://floralartvt.com)



# About the author



photo credit: Ashley Largesse

Hi. I'm Alison.

I help engaged couples express their personal style by using my experience to translate ideas into unique floral designs that are more than you could envision, yet truly represent your taste.

**I'm a wedding specialist.** I make the planning process easy.

I've been working as a floral designer for more than 20 years. I started my home-studio floral design business, Floral Artistry, in 2001 and began blogging about Vermont weddings in 2009 on my site [floralartvt.com](http://floralartvt.com).

[Click here](#) to find out more about working with me or drop me a line.  
e-mail: [info@floralartvt.com](mailto:info@floralartvt.com)

**You'll find more free resources on  
the next page!**

# Resources



From the Floral Artistry Blog:

[Tips for Introverted Couples](#)

[How to Add Color to Your Wedding Day](#)

[Wedding Consultation Tips](#)

[The Truth About Expensive Wedding Flowers](#)

[Gilding The Lily & Hosting Your Guests](#)



State-wide vendor listings:

[VermontWeddings.com](#) provides a listing of wedding professionals throughout the state. You'll see both paid listings & free listings here so it's inclusive & comprehensive.

Vermont Association of Wedding Professionals provides a listing of wedding vendors throughout the state who are members of VAWP. [yourvermontwedding.com](#)



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