

Kilie Mullins

Popular Article

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Avoiding the Modern Wedding Drain

Weddings – They are supposed to be fun events, right?

Weddings celebrate a couple's commitment to each other, in the presence of mostly treasured friends and family members. Perhaps wedding days are the start to a lifetime of happiness. What most couples often forget is the cost of planning and throwing a wedding celebration. The costs of weddings nowadays can often run into the thousands, if not tens of thousands of dollars. From venue costs to catering fees, from flowers to attire for the bridal party, wedding costs can quickly deplete the couple's bank account. No wonder they are winded after the party is over.



All of the price tags can scare a couple away from wanting to celebrate their union, let alone appease older family members who always want the large, traditional weddings. So, the question we're must ask is this: What are the ways a modern couple can use to avoid a high cost wedding, but still have that traditional wedding experience?

First, it's important to understand those aspects of a wedding that can quickly get costly. A quick look at a popular wedding help website, WeddingWire, indicates that couples spent an average of \$16,000 on their wedding and served around 110 guests in 2007. Today's average is \$28,000 for 124 guests. Which means that most couples spent even more than that outrageous amount. According to WeddingWire's survey and others, the ten factors that sent the price of weddings through the roof are reception and ceremony venues, the engagement ring, catering, attire, music, photography and videography, flowers, invites, a planner, and the honeymoon.



Let's take a look at each of these categories and some methods of getting around the madness of modern wedding planning.

Ceremony and Reception Venues



A simplistic wedding venue.

Not many people want to get married in a shack, or in the preacher's living room--although my mother did this and swears it is the easiest and least expensive way to get married. Thanks to the proliferation of views share via social media, couples today are pressured more than ever to find the most picturesque, outrageous, hip, effortlessly cool venue to host this huge party. Problem arise, though, when they find out these venues rent for around a minimum average of \$15,000. Let's

talk about the scenery – old churches, vineyards, gardens, historic estates, and designated

wedding sites carry a hefty price tag mainly because they're so beautiful to look at. Couples are paying for that view. Additionally, many wedding venues attach hidden costs to their packages. They allow couples to bring their own booze? \$15 corking fee per bottle. There are small children in the party? \$100 insurance premium. The view looks great and they have the couple's date free? Get ready to shell out for all the decorations, seating, and tables, because they won't provide any of it for free! Don't despair at these claims; you don't have to pull a Bruno Mars and find a little chapel. There are tons of affordable and free venues if couples look harder.



Outdoor parks make great ceremony spaces!

First, find a place that lets you do the ceremony and reception at the same place. Look for public parks with rentable shelters; local churches that are newer, yet still pleasing to look at; or family members' backyards, if they are disciplined landscapers. All of these options can keep the costs down, and make your wedding affordable.

Rings:



Pricey rings can set you back a few thousand dollars.

Diamond encrusted engagement rings and solid gold wedding bands aren't affordable options for most couples. The average price of \$5,764 for an engagement ring equals six months of rent for most people. Add in the high cost of solid gold bands and you're looking at a lot of dough spent on a bit of metal and some shiny rocks. Instead of going the typical retail route, look for online, handmade jewelry. Sites like Etsy and Amazon provide high quality, often handmade items at a fraction of the cost. Ask your partner their preferred style. Go for the non-traditional colored gemstones, silver plating, or carved designs to add low-cost flare to your choices. Bonus: no one has to die in a diamond mine for your jewelry.



Go for a simpler design to save money, like these rings from online store Etsy.

Catering

Both the rehearsal dinner and traditional reception dinner are expected aspects of a wedding celebration. Families, friends, and your social media sites are looking for rich, luxurious meals for both events – but no one has money for that! At an average \$1,285 for the rehearsal dinner and \$70 per guest for the reception, you're looking at the possibility of eating well for one day and nearly starving the next few months. If you have a particular restaurant that you love – yes,



Try a summer barbeque instead of a sit down meal.

we're talking Bojangle's, Little Caesar's, or the Lord's choice – Chick-fil-A – order from them! The food is delicious and typically reasonably priced for large groups. Serve a variety of hors d'oeuvres! If you've got grannies used to cooking for large families, have a potluck!



If you like fast food, then get fast food! It's your wedding!

Attire

You want to look good for your wedding day – that’s a given. No one wants to look like the swamp monster, especially if you’re documenting the day with photos. That doesn’t mean you need a designer gown or an expensive tux. Look for local bridal salons, or even on Amazon, for beautiful, cheap gowns in thousands of styles. If you’re skeptical about online shopping for something so personal, read the reviews! Lots of online retailers for bridal gowns will offer custom measurements, try-on fittings,



Not everyone has to wear matching outfits, which will please bridesmaids and groomsmen.

and rush orders for custom jobs.

Grooms can find affordable options at large chain retailers like Kohl’s, Wal-Mart, or even Target. Be open to the idea of mismatched party attire. Stay in the same color family, and let your bridesmaids and groomsmen go wild with the styles. They’ll often find clothes that fit their budget, but still work with your ideas.



Try funky, mismatched styles to get a laidback vibe.

Music

If someone hasn’t said it before now, I will: You don’t need a DJ or a band! Find a friend with knowledge of streaming services, a speaker, and run with it. Private bands and DJs can cost upwards of \$6,000, and all they do is often perform



Try out any one of these music streaming services to craft a playlist that is special to you and your partner.

the same tasks you can accomplish from your phone or laptop. Music streaming services, such as Pandora or Google Music, will allow you to tune into channels that cater to your musical tastes. Another option is Spotify, a streaming service that allows you to create playlists with thousands of choices to cater to your taste.



DJ setups look fancy, but they can get ridiculously expensive.

Photography



Professional photographers are costly; see if a family member has a high end camera of their own.

If \$2,700 sounds like a ridiculous amount to pay for a photographer, then be on the lookout for affordable alternatives in the area. Throughout the year, photographers will offer sales, promotions, or giveaways for their services and packages. Keeping an eye on these deals will allow you to get quality services for a fraction of the price.



If all else fails, modern smartphones have stunning cameras built into their hardware.

Do you have a family member with a passion for photography? Do you know someone with a new iPhone or Android? Ask them if they'd be willing to take some photos for you. If you live in a town that houses a college or university offering visual arts degrees, ask if there are any student photographers that can work for class credit. If neither of these options work for you, then be watching for sales or promotions from local photographers.

Flowers and decorations

When it comes to decorations, Dollar Tree is your friend! Dollar Trees, and other similar dollar stores, provide DIY decoration supplies you can use as centerpieces, aisle runners, bouquets. Take an artsy friend along for ideas! Make sure to create a list of all the decorations you want for the ceremony and reception,



Try making the decorations yourself, like these rustic DIY examples.

then take that list with you to make sure you stay on track.

Professional florists and decorators will add on extra taxes just for their services, time and supplies. Get around these costs by making most of the decorations ahead of time, using materials from dollar stores or wholesale



Lavish affairs like this photo are often too pricey for a modern budget.

suppliers.

Invites

If you want to go the traditional route and send out paper invites, there are affordable ways to do



so. Online sites like Basic Invite or Vistaprint offer cheap invites with quality designs that you can order from their website. If you want an even less expensive, try Greetings Island online, a site that provides free greeting cards for all occasions, including weddings.

Customize their free template online, download the PDF, and then take the file to your local UPS or equivalent print shop. Get all the invites you need printed on sturdy



cardstock for less than \$10. Add in bulk envelopes from Wal-Mart and the cost of stamps to get a total cost of around \$30 for all of your invites. That amount is a far cry from the average \$408 couples spent on invites alone, excluding the price of other stationary.

Wedding planner



The average couple spent \$2,000 on a wedding planner to help them structure out their wedding timeline. I don't think you need me to tell you that this is a

superfluous cost that many couples can't afford. An affordable alternative can be found in any of the thousands of planning templates available online for free. These lists are comprehensive and include every possible option for you to customize and reference throughout the course of your wedding planning. If you're more comfortable with digital interfaces, there are apps available for download on both iOS and Android powered cell phones. WeddingWire and The Knot both supply apps that make it easy to create a guest list, to personalize a website, organize vendor conversations, and keep track of a comprehensive checklist of everything you need to get done.



Online templates like this one are plentiful. Just do a quick Google search for wedding planning timelines.

Honeymoon funds

After the wedding is over and your wallet is recovering from all the hits it's just taken in the



past few months, another expense that comes right behind is the honeymoon. Many couples choose to take a honeymoon trip, often for a few days, and to some exotic location popular with Instagram models and social media influencers. Couples spend mass amounts of money on their wedding – so they shouldn't have to shell out large amounts for the honeymoon! The honeymoon trip is supposed

to be a private period for the new couple that allows them time together to enjoy their status as

the newly minted Mr. and Mrs. Travel costs, hotel accommodations, food and activities can run the price up for the entire honeymoon. The most important thing to remember is that your honeymoon doesn't have to be influencer approved. You can take a trip that is special to you and your spouse. Find a town you've never visited that may not be a tourist town, but has activities and restaurants that you want to experience. Take small day trips if you can't afford hotel stays. Take the time to research the total costs of the trip and allow for adequate saving beforehand.



This is Richmond, Virginia, a beautiful city on the water with nightlife, museums, and parks to explore – all without breaking the budget!

Tips to remember

- Give yourself lots of time to plan everything out. If you're taking on the expenses and the planning yourself, don't mess up from the start by not giving yourself enough time to properly plan.
- Stick to a preplanned budget. It can be easy to get sidetracked, especially if there isn't any accountability outside of your own conscience. Make a budget and stay with it. Allow for a few changes, but don't let yourself get swept in by the flash sales or colorful envelope liners. After all, they won't matter in the end.
- Have fun! This is the most important point to remember. It is your wedding day, no matter how you celebrate it, and you should have a good time. Don't let everyone else's ideas of how the day should go cloud your choices when it comes to choosing things you love. You want McDonald's? Have McDonald's! You want to rent a bounce house? Budget for it and bounce away! Whatever you do, don't let the day run away from you without stopping to cherish some small portion of the experience you are having together.