

HOT

This issue our experts answer your questions on organisation

TOPIC: *Planning ahead*

Meet the experts



Nic Cleave
Photographer



Nicola Mathew
Stationer



Rowena
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Travel editor



Ruth Hunter
Wedding
planner

Timing our getaway

Q We are getting married in September 2012 and are very excited about planning a honeymoon for straight after the wedding. How soon should we book?

A Rowena says: I would suggest booking your honeymoon as soon as you can. Autumn is a good time to travel in terms of the weather, having said that, September is still considered peak season for many destinations. If you're getting married towards the end of the month, then early October can open up better hotel and flight deals.

I strongly suggest that you speak to a tour operator that specialises in the region or destination that you want to visit. Do your research and check if there is a major event taking place at the time of your stay. For example, you wouldn't really want to visit a city on the same day that the World Cup finals are scheduled as most hotels will be

fully booked and rates would be higher.

It's also worth asking if the company you arrange your trip with offers an online honeymoon wedding list service. Ensure that you get travel insurance for extra protection and peace of mind.



Is it too soon to book?

Q We have two years to plan our wedding but haven't yet decided on a venue or who we would hire to photograph our day. When should we start looking for a photographer?

A Nic says: It is never too early to book your photographer, although realistically you should look to confirm the date and venue first, then approach your short-listed photographers and check their availability for your date. Most photographers will not

be able to hold dates open and will only be able to confirm the booking once you have completed a contract and paid a booking fee to secure their services. Once you have a short-list, be sure to call the photographers and arrange a time to meet them in person at their studio, or in a location of your choice. This meeting will be crucial in allowing you to make a final decision.

Some photographers may prefer not to book dates more than 12 to 18 months in advance, however, you might find that many are happy enough to confirm a booking earlier than this.



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Winter wedding worries

Q We are getting married in December next year and I'm beginning to worry that we won't have enough time for exterior shots in the daylight. How will our photographer ensure that we get good images?

A Nic says: Talk to your photographer as soon as possible to run through the timings of the day. At the end of December, on a dark, overcast or wet day, available light for outdoor photography could disappear completely by around 3pm. If outdoor photography is important to you, try to plan the ceremony to take place as early as possible to ensure that you leave enough time for your outdoor snaps. If this isn't possible though, don't panic.

An experienced photographer should be able to offer creative suggestions for outdoor shots in the dark and these can add to the romantic and cosy feel of a traditional winter wedding. They will also be able to take some indoor shots that also have the wow factor.

The key here is to choose a photographer that specialises in winter weddings and speak to him or her about your concerns. The resulting conversation should put you at ease as they come up with creative ways to work around the low-light levels of a winter celebration.



Plenty of notice

Q We will be inviting lots of friends and family from abroad to our wedding, which is in about 14 months from now. How early should we be sending out the invitations and what deadline should be given for the RSVP?

A Nicola says: You might want to consider sending out a save-the-date card in the first instance; all you need to do is give out the date and location at this stage, with a reminder that a formal invitation will follow. I would then say that eight to 10 months ahead of the wedding would be more than enough time to send out invites to your guests who are abroad. Be sure to include an information card with some local accommodation options, as well as useful websites about transport to and from the airport. Keep in mind that many hotels won't make reservations more than 12 months in advance while, similarly, most airlines only release their schedules every year.

Ask for RSVP cards to be sent back around four months in advance of the day. This way, you can make plans accordingly and will leave yourselves plenty of time to organise your guest list.

Where do we start?

Q My fiancé and I plan to get married in a year's time but we're both completely disorganised and don't know where to begin. Do you have any practical tips and advice on how we can ease the stress a little bit?

A Ruth says: The first thing I would suggest you do is work out your budget. It becomes almost impossible to make any decisions unless you know for sure how much you are willing to spend on certain aspects such as the venue, the catering and your photography. Once you have worked out how much you can afford, try visiting some wedding fairs for inspiration. Here you'll find some great suppliers and will be able to see examples of their work. If you find that it all becomes too much, consider hiring a wedding planner who can offer an hourly consultation to help with budgeting or developing themes and ideas. You could even contact a professional to oversee the whole of the planning process, leaving you free to enjoy the build up to the day.

Contact our experts...

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