

Wedding Planning Guide

This comprehensive timeline provides you with advice that will help you plan a wedding to remember, without forgetting the most important details. Keep in mind however, this is meant only as a general guide and as there certainly will be additional steps unique to your wedding. Good luck and enjoy!

Step 1: Vision

You and your future life-partner may have totally different visions of the “perfect wedding.” Talk to each other and manage expectations. Go wild with ideas and sort through the reality of those ideas as you plan. Talk it over (separately and possibly then together) with both sets of parents to ensure that everyone is on the same page and that there are no last-minute surprises.

Tips:

- The bride and groom should each write down a full page describing their version of a “perfect wedding”. Exchange notes and discuss.
- Decide on who the decision makers are for everything or for certain topics and ensure everyone is aware.
- Ideally these discussions should take place 6-12 months before the wedding.

Step 2: Plan your Engagement Party

This is usually done in your hometown or in the hometown of your soon-to-be life partner. Celebrations can range from a simple family-only get together at home to a full-on reception-style celebration in a hotel ballroom or outdoor venue. It is recommended to work with a local organiser from the place where the event will be held. Depending on the scale of your celebration, you can use information from this document to help you accordingly.

Step 3: Initial Budgets

Different cultures have different expectations when it comes to paying for weddings, so know that this is a sensitive subject that should be approached gently. Decide in the beginning who will foot the bills. There are no rules set in stone; it depends on several factors, such as:

- Financial resources available to either person or family
- Number of guests expected by either person or family
- Cultural expectations of either person or family
- Where the wedding is being planned and who is planning it
- Whether there will be a contribution from parents or relatives

A list of questions to help you plan your budgets:

- How many guests does each person or family expect?
- How many functions will there be and for how many days/nights?

- What category of hotel do you wish to use?
- Do you wish to pay for your guests' accommodations?
- Do you wish to pay for your relatives' accommodations? It does not have to be the same for both families.
- What kind of entertainment do you expect?
- How much are you prepared to spend on live bands, singers, DJs, performers, etc?
- What kind of menus do you have in mind?
- What kind of alcohol (if any) would you like to serve?

Here are some rough budget ranges to expect for weddings in Thailand:

- Accommodation at a 5-star hotel: \$120 to \$300 per night
- Accommodation at a 4-star hotel: \$70 to \$120 per night
- Accommodation at a 3-star hotel: \$45 to \$70 per night
- Buffet in a 5-star hotel: \$50 to 90 per person
- Buffet in a 4-star hotel: \$30 to \$50 per person

Tips:

- If you decide on a hotel, ask for a contract and sign it and pay the initial deposit as soon as possible. Email confirmations may not be enough to block the rooms. Hotels often have several different people working on various inquiries at the same time and only consider reservations confirmed once the contract is signed and deposit is paid.
- Read the fine print carefully and ensure that all expectations are clearly understood. The last thing you want is to have any unpleasant surprises during the festivities.
- If the hotel has a booking for a function in the morning, they may require you to begin dismantling your decorations at a certain time the night before. If you expect your party to go on till quite late, it would be a good idea to discuss the timings acceptable to both parties.
- Discuss the time requirements for setting up the function spaces with your wedding planner or decorator. Often they will need 6 to 12 hours prior to the start of the function. Discuss this with the hotel, as some hotels may charge you for the use of the ballroom during this period, if they have to forgo another reservation during the same period. Often hotels will waive this charge if there is no reservation.

Step 4: Dates & Hotel Options

Decide what time of the year you'd like to get married and set the dates. It's important to bear in mind that due to the high volume of tourism Thailand attracts, one day – either before or after your chosen date – can see a dramatic change in price. Where possible, enquire about the availability over a five-day range of dates. The monsoon season in Thailand runs from May to November but it does not rain every day and when it does rain, it may only last for a couple of hours.

Tips:

- Prices tend to be lower and room availabilities tend to be higher from March to September. However, it all depends on the specific dates, and if a hotel is running at high occupancy during this period, the prices could be as high as the busy months.
- If you have a couple of date options in mind, check to see if they coincide with public holidays or festivals in Thailand. During Buddhist public holidays and elections, “dry days” may be declared with the sale of alcohol may be prohibited. However, exceptions are often made for private events in hotels where only overseas guests are expected. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Step 5: Location

The location you choose will influence the theme and style of your wedding.

A list of questions to help you decide:

- Are you looking for a city, riverside, island, beach, or hill-station experience? Click [HERE](#) to get more information about destinations in Thailand.
- Are you willing to select a destination that involves a domestic flight within Thailand?
- Do you want outdoor events?
- Do you want a resort-style wedding within driving distance from Bangkok?
- Do you want chain hotels or boutique hotels?
- How many guests do you expect? Smaller towns or islands are likely to have smaller hotels with less capacity.

Step 6: Wedding Organisers & Vendors

Choosing to have your wedding far from home is not a decision to be taken lightly. The planning can be complicated threefold if you choose to organise it alone. Thailand has several professional wedding organisers (mostly of Indian origin) who can make your planning process smoother, simpler, and more cost-effective. Enquire with local wedding organisers about their services; they have already done the legwork and have strong contacts to make sure your marriage celebration is full of a lifetime of memories. From your enquiries, the wedding organisers will respond with quotes for their fees as well as recommended hotels. They can also check availability of venues for you.

It is suggested to arrange a trip to Bangkok to meet with some of them and find one you are comfortable working with.

Tips:

- Wedding organisers in Thailand are high in demand during peak wedding seasons. Be sure to ask them if they have accepted another wedding within a few days of yours.

- Ask to see photographs and testimonials from their most recent weddings.
- When you have decided on a wedding organiser, ask for a contract and be clear on the expectations from both sides. The understanding of the scope of work for organisers in India and Thailand might not be the same.
- Work with the suppliers your organiser suggests, as they will have likely worked together before. Ask for price ranges and make this a consideration in selecting the organiser. Often organisers will insist on working with their regular suppliers.
- Wedding organiser rates generally range from USD 10,000 to USD 20,000 per wedding.

Decorators / Light & Sound Vendors

Wedding organisers usually outsource the decorations to a decorator. They often work with the same decorator for most of their weddings. It is best to work with a decorator the organiser is familiar with.

The decorators are mostly Thais and often have limited English-speaking abilities. So the organiser will represent the decorator for most or all discussions.

Your wedding organiser can suggest and create themes for your functions. Ask to see images of the different decorative elements that would go into the themes such as flower arrangements, fabrics, props, furniture, table-top decorations, candles, entrances, lighting, sound systems and etc.

Step 7: Catering

Some hotels offer Indian cuisine, others work with a preferred local Indian caterer, and others do not have Indian cuisine options at all.

Thailand has some of the best food in the world and attracts millions of tourists every year who travel long distances to enjoy the country's culinary delights, including restaurants in the Michelin guide and some of the Asia's 50 Best Restaurants.

There are some highly reputable Indian caterers in Thailand who can offer you the same if not a better level of service than that in India.

Tips:

- Check with your caterer if you can do a food tasting when you visit Bangkok.
- Often the caterer will invite you to their restaurant for a meal.
- Sometimes the caterer will charge for the tasting and deduct it from final bill later.

Step 8: Recce Trip

It is recommended to make a recce trip to check your options before making any decisions. Plan to spend 3-4 days if possible.

On this trip, you can do the following:

1. Meet local wedding organisers
2. Visit hotels for inspections
3. Visit other venues for inspections
4. Meet local caterers and sample their food.

How to prepare for the recce trip:

1. Contact organisers, hotels, venues, and caterers in advance to check their availability and initial rates for your preferred wedding dates. If they are available, make appointments during your visit, allowing for plenty of time with each and for transfer time between venues. Remember you are likely to spend more time at each place than originally anticipated.
2. If a hotel is not available during your preferred wedding dates, see if there are alternate dates that work for you. It is possible that you fall in love with a hotel during your visit and would be willing to change your dates.

Questions to ask during your recce Trip:

1. Will the hotel allow open-flame *pheras* in their ballroom?
2. Will the hotel allow outside food from a caterer of your choice? Is there a charge for the use of the kitchen?
3. Are elephants or horses allowed on the property for the *baraat*?
4. Can you play loud music past 10 pm in an outdoor venue?
5. Check what time you can use of the venue and if there are there any additional charges for an extension?
6. How much time can the venue give your wedding organiser to begin setting up? Is there an additional charge?

Step 9: Get the Full Picture

Read all contracts carefully. Make sure that you understand what you have agreed to. Early check-in, late-check out, mini-bar use, use of function spaces after hours, damages to the property, charges for using function spaces for set up prior to functions, corkage charges, charges for bringing outside caterers, what is included and excluded in each function – all these points should be clarified before signing the hotel contract. Check in advance if the band will be prepared to stay on if you and your friends want to dance longer, and what extra cost will be. You don't want any surprises on your special day!

Step 10: Sign Contracts & Pay Deposits

1. Hotels & Venues

- a. After visiting and receiving proposals from the hotels you are interested in, narrow down the list to your top 3. Negotiate rates, inclusions, terms and conditions until you are satisfied.
- b. Once a decision has been made, pay an initial deposit as soon as possible. Without a signed contract and paid deposit, the booking may be released to another customer, even though you have been told that the “rooms are blocked.” Hotels generally ask for around 10% as an initial deposit.

2. Wedding Organiser

- a. The rates of wedding organizers are generally fixed so don't bargain with them too much, as a reduced budget may affect the amount of time they devote to your wedding.
- b. Once you are happy with a wedding planner, sign a contract and pay an initial deposit. Wedding organisers generally ask for 10% to 30% deposit.

3. Caterers

- a. Caterers generally have starting rates for a buffet but can offer optional live cooking stations for an additional charge. There may also be catering or transportation charges. Thailand has some high-quality Indian food – including restaurants in the Michelin guide that also provide catering for weddings.
- b. Once you are happy with a caterer, sign a contract and pay an initial deposit. Caterers generally ask for between 20% to 30% deposit.

Step 11: Save The Date!

Once you have confirmed your dates, it is time to send out a “Save The Date” to your guests. This can be done electronically, via post, via messenger, or in person. Please do this as soon as possible to give your guests enough time to make their travel plans and arrangements. Guests who work may need to apply six months in advance for vacation leave. Your wedding organiser may be able to design your Save The Date.

Here are some options online:

- www.applycouple.com
- www.paperlesspost.com
- www.facebook.com

Step 12: Website / Mobile Application

Couples often opt to create an official wedding website that is encrypted with a password. Some wedding organisers might provide this service for you – and design it in such a way that the different section designs correspond to the different events. A wedding website is a good way to communicate with your guests about the various functions, travel information, updates, and reminders. Guest often misplace invitation cards and can easily refer to a website (or mobile application) on the go.

Some websites we recommend to help you do the above:

- www.applycouple.com
- www.paperlesspost.com
- www.facebook.com

Step 13: Invitation Cards

If you are based in India and plan to have your celebrations in Thailand, we suggest that you contact a local wedding card supplier in India. The prices tend to be cheaper and you will save on shipping time and expenses. Your wedding planner may be able to help design the cards or suggest design ideas to your card supplier that are in sync with the wedding theme(s).

Tips:

- Order 10 to 20% extra cards, as you are likely to remember at the last-minute people you have forgotten to invite.
- If both families are from the same city or community, speak to each other regularly about the invitation lists to ensure there aren't duplicates.

Step 14: Outfits, Jewellery, and Accessories

Talk to friends and family about recommended designers, boutiques, and jewellers and research what you are looking for. You might want to select certain colours that are related to the themes of each event, or invite family and friends to wear similar colours to identify themselves. Discuss time frames and schedules for fittings and be sure to allow enough time in between. Pay deposits as necessary. Discuss with your family who is paying for what and how much is to be spent.

Tips:

- The initial measurements you take for your outfits may change closer to your wedding date depending on whether you go on a diet or not!
- For last minute outfit changes, Bangkok is home to number of well-known Indian that could help you.
- Make a list of items you need for each function including jewellery, accessories etc, so that you don't panic at the last minute.

Step 15: Bachelor/Bachelorette Celebrations

This is normally the job of the best man and the bridesmaid. Whether it is a small intimate dinner for friends, or a wild weekend, this is going to be a celebration you will always remember!

Step 16: Entertainment

Think about each event and what kind of entertainment you would prefer. There are plenty of options for DJs, live bands, performers, and other forms of entertainment available in Thailand. Talk to your wedding planner for ideas and they can set up appointments for you to meet with the local talent. Ask for videos and photographs of their prior work and discuss budgets.

Tips:

- Be sure that the DJ / band is in regular contact with the organiser so that the music is in sync with the function schedules.
- Discuss your music/entertainment preferences well in advance so that you and your guests are not disappointed.

Step 17: Videographers/Photographers

Thailand has many talented videographers and photographers. Some are mentioned on this website. Your wedding planner may also have people who they regularly work with.

Tip:

- Send photos of your family members to your photographer/videographer in advance so that they know whom to make sure they include whenever possible.
- Send photo style references
- Make sure they know the itinerary and any changes in the schedules

Step 18: Plan the *Baraat*

You may need to make arrangements for a horse, elephant, carriage, helicopter, jet ski (or, whatever captures your imagination) and your wedding planner can make this happen. Talk to your planner about *dhol* players, live bands, mobile DJ booths and more. The sky is often the limit in terms of possibilities in Thailand so feel free to dream BIG!

Tips:

- Discuss options and budgets with your organiser well in advance. There is a big range in both.
- In case the *baraat* is planned as an outdoor activity, have an indoor backup option available.
- You may need permission from the local authorities if you plan to do it on a public road. Your organiser can advise further.

Step 19: Hair, Makeup, Mehendi, and Sari Tying

If you need to use the services of local vendors for hair, make-up, *mehendi*, and sari tying, speak to your wedding organiser as early on as possible. Make-up artists are in high demand during peak wedding seasons and often get booked 12 months in advance. We recommend doing a trial during your recce trips.

Step 20: Transportation & visas

Communicate as regularly as possible with your wedding organiser to relay information on guest arrivals. As soon as they touch down on Thai soil, the travel arrangements will ensure the celebration begins in style, whether it's a collective or individual transfer. All guests should be advised to obtain a tourist visa from their local Thai consulate one month prior to departure and ensure that all passports have more than six months validity.

Step 21: Start to think about your Honeymoon and check availabilities

Talk to your partner about locations, budgets, time frames and what you would both like to do. Thailand has many exotic destinations that are perfect for a fun-filled intimate honeymoon.

Step 22: Put together a gift hamper to be placed in guest rooms if you wish

Your wedding organiser can help you with this.

Step 23: Alcohol

If you are planning on serving alcohol, discuss this with your wedding organiser. Decide on what you would like to serve at each event and discuss the expected quantities. Your caterer can also advise on this.

Tips:

- Talk to the hotel and other venues if there are any corkage charges. Often you can negotiate to have these charges waived.
- Clarify who will be providing mixers, glassware, ice, straws, napkins etc.
- Ask for quotations from suppliers and compare prices. Clarify payment terms and delivery schedules. Appoint someone to take charge of all alcohol inventories.
- Some hotels and suppliers will be kind enough to create special cocktails based on what you and your partner enjoy, and name them after you or the places you have visited together.
- Some suppliers may be willing to take back up to 30% of the alcohol ordered if it is not consumed, and the labels are in their original condition.

Step 24: Revisit Thailand

This is almost a dress rehearsal; it's time to meet with your local organiser to ensure that nothing has been overlooked, and meet with suppliers.

Step 25: Look into Details

- See if your hotel will provide guest books, pens, and penholders.
- Purchase gifts for your bridal party and close family members.
- Contact close family members and friends for sangeet performances and speeches during the reception and other events.
- Determine the order of the entrance of your bridal party line-up.
- Prepare a list of assignments for your bridal party and family members.

Step 26: Final Preparations

- Get an updated list of all guests who have confirmed they will be attending and ensure that the hotel, wedding organiser transportation company all have the latest information.
- Create seating charts and place cards as necessary. Your planner can organise this for you.
- Prepare your toasts and thanks to family and friends.
- Confirm all your final payments and have them ready to be mailed out or handed to vendors.
- Hand over all favours, guest books, place cards, and programmes to your wedding organiser or the venue managers.
- Make a list of what you need to take along with you and ensure everything is packed and ready to go.
- Update the schedules for the functions.

Step 27: Leading up to the day

Plan to be in Bangkok several days before the first event so that you can do a run through of the events, talk to your wedding organiser, take care of any last-minute things, and also enjoy Thailand's warm hospitality. Go to a spa, go for a swim, enjoy world-class cuisine, relax and enjoy your time in the Land of Smiles!

The Wedding

This is what you have been waiting for! Enjoy your friends, relatives, and partner-to-be! Smile, laugh, dance, and treasure every moment. Take photographs with your loved ones. Enjoy every function and feel the energy, knowing that you are getting married in Thailand!