
Make Invisible Wedding Savings AND Have The Best Wedding

Planning a perfect wedding and amazing honeymoon does not have to be expensive! Read our small but perfectly formed tips on how to save money on your wedding and find the perfect honeymoon at the lowest price! Read on.....

1. Affordable wedding dresses

You can easily reduce costs by making your own wedding dress. Although a wedding dress is a special purchase, don't allow your feelings to overrule good sense. Plan very carefully – work out how much you can afford before you start looking. If you must have something elaborate, find a designer shop where they'll create a made-to-measure stunner.

2. Make your own

You can cut costs by making your own dress, but remember there'll be lots of other things that need to be done in the months before the wedding. Find someone who has a good reputation and ask to see examples. You may be tempted by a relative or friend offering to make your special day gown but remember that it could get awkward if you're not happy with the final design or quality.

3. Shop around for everything

If your budget's less than your dreams, don't worry. No one sees price tags and labels. Look around for price reductions on designer dresses and keep an eye out for some elegant styles from modern manufacturers on show at many department stores and high-street shops. A wow-factor dress doesn't have to cost a lot – what's most important is how it fits and flatters. If you can find a store that carries many styles and makes, you can experiment with skirt shapes, necklines, colour (yes, there are many shades of white) and decorations such as lace, crystals, beads and appliqué to provide the finishing touch.

4. Vintage dresses

Increasingly vintage dresses are becoming popular for their timeless style and depending on where you shop, even yesterday's prices. Some designs are lifelong and you could save even more by wearing your mother's wedding dress if it suits and looks right.

5. Other ways of saving money

If you're looking for something less formal or if you just don't fancy the usual meringue, do think about an elegant cocktail dress or smart trouser suit teamed with pretty accessories. Informal or special occasion outfits that aren't described as 'bridal wear' will almost always cost a lot less.

You can always include the 'something old' tradition by being clever with your accessories. Look around for a dramatic bag or jewellery instead of splashing out on new items. Even Hollywood stars wear borrowed jewellery at the Oscars' red carpet.

Suits and bridesmaids' dresses

6. Bridesmaids

If you're planning big, expect a large clothing budget. It used to be traditional for the bride's family to pay for the bridesmaids' dresses, shoes and accessories but it's becoming more expensive and even if they don't you don't want to leave your bridesmaids with debt after your big day! As an alternative, go for cocktail dresses instead or find a talented seamstress.

7. Groom and attendants

Although the groom, best men and others can hire their outfits, it may be better if your groom buys a well-fitted suit, which could last him for years (if he stays off the beer and kebabs!).

See the next page on how to save on the reception costs but still have a great celebration!

Saving On Your Reception Gives You More Money for Your Honeymoon!

1. Favours

Favours are a very nice and romantic touch, but are not a must have wedding item. You could cut them out altogether or reduce the budget with bowls of old-fashioned sweets or small gifts such as seed packets.

2. Wedding cake

You may want your cake to be an edible work of art but you can save money by substituting a small decorated cake with less expensive cakes behind the scenes for serving. If you really want to save money, go for a cake without handcrafted icing and just top a plain tiered cake with fresh flowers that complement your bouquet.

A tower of fairy cakes will look pretty – even if they're homemade. For low-fuss yet elegant decoration, ice the cakes and top with edible flower petals or miniature sweets. You can ask your venue to waive any cake-cutting or knife hire charges.

3. Flowers

One of the biggest costs on the day itself are the floral garlands, arches, chair-back swags and candelabra draped in magnificent flowers. A clever way of saving here is to ask for in season varieties and ensure any the flowers at the ceremony are moved to the reception venue. You can easily add a splash of colour with bunches of cheap and cheerful flowers such as gerberas or tulips. If you want the effect but not the expense there are ways of creating impact, such as hiring topiary or add battery-powered fairy lights to existing plants and hedges.

Flowers are dearer around Valentine's Day, Easter and Christmas so keep that in mind when setting your date. Alternatively, some venues will be decked out in flowers on these dates so perhaps you could plan the date around these dates. There are alternatives to floral centrepieces such as dramatic candle arrangements.

4. Food and drink - money-saving menu options

Traditional buffets are usually cheaper than sit-down meals. You may want to impress your guests but sit down meals are the most expensive options.

Traditional buffets are usually cheaper, requiring less prep time and fewer staff. A stylish cocktail party reception with canapés instead of a meal is also a great idea, as is afternoon tea. It's sophisticated even if you have to spend more on decadent cakes.

Another tip is to limit expensive food such as roast beef or seafood to the starters rather than a main course. Some guests enjoy more relaxed (and inexpensive) food such as roast chicken, bangers and mash or fish and chips.

Save on the dessert budget by using your wedding cake as the pudding. Or try a chocolate fountain with fruit, marshmallows and old fashioned sweets.

5. Reducing the drinks bill

Drink is always the largest element of the reception bill, so plan carefully. If you're paying, then restrict the bar to wine and beer only or simply put money behind the bar for the first round. If you can use your own drink on the day, see if booze cruise to France is cheaper. Midweek or Sunday receptions might not be as rowdy (or last as long) as some guests have to work the next day, meaning extra savings on the bill.

At the reception serve sparkling wine or Buck's Fizz and keep the champagne for the toasts. If you have formal dinner, ensure that waiters ask guests if they'd like more wine, instead of automatically topping up glasses.

If you want to host a free bar, do so until the post dinner period then change to a pay bar for the evening. Let your guests know beforehand.

6. Entertainment

Before you deafen your guests, remember that a live band may be overwhelming in a small reception room, so have a look before you commit to anything.

You could save a little bit by using music CDs when the centre of attention is elsewhere, such as during the meal and then bring in the disco. An alternative, but a brave one, is karaoke. It works. Sometimes.

7. Hotels

When looking for a venue, ask the hotel manager about complimentary extras, perhaps a bottle of champagne or some chocolates.

If you're planning to party until dawn, a romantic honeymoon suite might be wasted so save that money for your honeymoon hotel instead.

8. Finally, the perfect honeymoon

For your honeymoon, there's only one thing to do. Go and see those wonderfully friendly and helpful people at Trailblazer Travel and they'll find you an amazing honeymoon whatever your budget.

Seriously, whether you're looking for a budget or affordable honeymoon or want to splash out on a luxury honeymoon you're best going to an independent travel agent.

Tour operators that specialise in honeymoon travel are very competitive and offer good deals to travel agents for their clients. Searching for your perfect honeymoon is easy:

- Agree a honeymoon budget, a choice of locations and dates
- Call or email Trailblazer Travel with your requirements
- Leave the rest to us! We'll get the best honeymoon deal for you.

Remember that independent travel agents work with hundreds more tour operators than the traditional High Street agencies such as TUI or First Choice.

If you're looking for the best honeymoon but want to stay within your budget, travel slightly out of season for better honeymoon deals depending on your dates (but avoid monsoon weather or sweltering droughts).

Finally, don't be embarrassed to tell everyone know it's your honeymoon and you might get a free upgrade at the hotel and even sometimes on the flight.

If you're looking for some honeymoon destinations, here's a list of the popular places to go:

Month	Month
January: Indian Ocean (Maldives, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Goa sunshine), Northern Lights in the Arctic circle.	July: Mediterranean resort or cruises.
February: Canada winter wonderland, winter sports in Europe and USA	August: Canaries, Red Sea, USA Fly Drive, Cruises
March: South Africa, United States, e.g. Florida Keys or Hawaii.	September: Australia, USA - New England Fall
April: South America or the Bahamas	October: Bali, Singapore, South East Asia
May: Thailand	November: Australia, New Zealand, Round The World
June: Lakes & Mountains of Europe, USA	December: Caribbean. Winter Sun in Cape Verde, Canaries, Tunisia.

Other useful websites:

'www.wednetwork.co.uk'

'www.weddingchaos.co.uk'