

How to Save 90% on Your Wedding

And Still Have a Honeymoon



JUST ELOPED

From the Editors of  *Where to Elope*
the easiest way to "Just Married"!

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How to Save 90% on Your Wedding and Still Have a Honeymoon?

Elope, The Hottest Alternative to a Traditional Wedding!

**By Dave Westfall and
the Editors of
WhereToElope.com**

 **DEWPOINTE PRESS**

About The Author

One of the questions that we get asked frequently is: “Why are you so passionate about helping couples elope?” It all started with our website owner, Dave Westfall. Here is his story:

The answer probably lies in how I got married back in 1968. Paraphrasing from one of the lines in Reba McEntire’s song: “I eloped before eloping was cool!”

We didn’t call it “eloping”, but based on the definition today, that is what it was. The large traditional churches had turned down our “small wedding” ceremony requests. But we were young, very much in love and wanted to get married now, so we sought out “non-traditional” options. As a 19 year old “broke” student working full time as an Orderly to put myself thru college we got married in the chapel of the Mayo Clinic hospital in Rochester, Minnesota that we both worked in and it lasted 26 years.

Plus, later in my career as the Meeting Planner at RE/MAX, I had produced over 100 events and in 1994 I was the Wedding Planner for my Daughter’s small outdoor wedding at the Gallup Gardens in Denver. After the wedding ceremony the seasoned Minister said: “This is the best planned wedding I’ve ever attended.” My second marriage was also a small intimate affair with a hand fasting and unity candle ceremony performed by her Cousin held in the spacious walk out basement of my Denver Tech Center condo. So, I’ve lived and felt the emotions you are going through and made the decisions that you are facing with no regrets.

Recently, in 2011, I re-discovered the “elopement niche” while consulting with the Innkeepers and Tourism industry in Northern California about the “small wedding” market. With the help of my team I have created WheretoElope.com, the easiest way from engaged to just married!

Acknowledgements

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How to Save 90% On Your Wedding and Still Have a Honeymoon?

WhereToElope.com guides you to the best wedding elopement packages and small romantic places to elope in the USA, Beaches, Cruises, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, Europe and Asia so you can get married with less stress, cost and time than traditional weddings. Traditional weddings can cost \$25,533 or more.

However, many Elopement Packages start at \$200 for the ceremony only; all-inclusive wedding elopement packages are \$2,500 or 90% less than a traditional wedding. The Officiants and small romantic boutique and breakfast inns listed on WhereToElope.com offer a wide variety of wedding elopement packages to fit almost any budget. We've discovered how hard it can be to find packages or romantic places for your small wedding on a budget. This is illustrated by the comparison below.

	WEDDING ELOPEMENT PACKAGE	TRADITIONAL WEDDING COST*	+ OR - WHEN ELOPING	% OF COUPLES USING SERVICE (TRADITIONAL)
TOTAL BUDGET	\$2,495.00	\$25,533.70	-\$23,038.70	
Attire & Accessories	\$200.00	\$1,657.50	-\$1,457.50	85%
Ceremony Officiant	\$375.00	\$406.80	-\$31.80	90%
Venue, Catering & Rentals	\$200.00	\$12,139.20	-\$11,939.20	90%
Flowers & Decor	\$120.00	\$1,632.00	-\$1,512.00	85%
Invitations & Announcements	\$50.00	\$703.50	-\$653.50	75%
Photography & Video	\$250.00	\$2,752.00	-\$2,502.00	80%
Entertainment & Music	\$0.00	\$501.60	-\$501.60	33%
Jewelry	\$250.00	\$4,275.00	-\$4,025.00	90%
Gifts & Favors	\$100.00	\$662.15	-\$562.15	85%
Beauty & Spa	\$70.00	\$147.25	-\$77.25	95%
Travel Expenses	\$230.00	\$0.00	\$230.00	0%
Planner / Consultant	\$0.00	\$656.70	-\$656.70	33%
Meals (2 days)	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$150.00	
Lodging (2 days)	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	
TOTAL COSTS	\$2,495.00	\$25,533.70	-\$23,038.70	-90%

Note: The figures used in this comparison are based on a June 2014 wedding in Clackamas, Oregon. This particular area was chosen because it represents the current average cost for a traditional wedding (\$25,533*). As you can see from this Apples to Apples comparison in the table above there are some considerable savings to be made in most areas of your wedding when you choose to elope.

Sources:

*Traditional Wedding Costs:

<http://www.costofwedding.com/index.cfm/action/search.weddingcost?zipcode=97222>

Wedding Elopement Package Costs:

<http://packages.wheretoelope.com/listings/the-stone-hill-elopement-package/>

Check on this link to see the Traditional Wedding vs. Elopement Comparison Cost Table:

<http://www.wheretoelope.com/save-90-percent-on-your-wedding/>

You Can Save 90% On Your Wedding Costs By Eloping

As we have noted on wheretoelope.com, you can elope for as little as \$200, but in order to make a fair comparison between eloping and a traditional wedding we have used an all-inclusive elopement package as our example.

The table above shows that the biggest savings are made on some of the main aspects of a traditional wedding. These are the basic expenses which you cannot really avoid if you are having a traditional wedding, such as booking a venue, hiring caterers, hosting a reception and renting equipment. When you choose to elope instead you will have no need for caterers or rentals. The average cost of the venue for an elopement is around \$200, saving you almost \$1,800 right from the beginning! Similarly, there is no need to spend the average \$1,632 on flowers and decorations if you are going to elope. If you want to have a bouquet and a boutonniere then you can arrange this for around \$120 giving you another great saving on what is considered a traditional wedding expense!

Other savings are made on expenses such as wedding attire, rings and gifts. For most elopements, the bride will not want to wear a big white wedding gown (although its perfectly fine if you want to!). Instead, she will generally be looking for a much simpler dress which will travel well and which will not carry the hefty price tag that is usually associated with a traditional wedding gown. If the bride is keeping things more understated, then the groom will also want to forgo the traditional tuxedo and opt for something less formal - perhaps from his existing wardrobe. The majority of couples don't shell out more than a couple of hundred dollars on wedding attire for an elopement. There also seems to be a tendency to spend much less on the wedding rings when eloping - perhaps because it seems extravagant to pay more for the rings than the entire elopement!

Some of the expensive extras such as invitations and entertainment can also be reduced or eliminated when you choose to elope. You also have the added bonus that most elopement packages include the services of a planner or wedding coordinator making it even easier to sort out all of the details. Plus the Traditional Wedding costs shown above do not include \$4,500 for the average honeymoon that would increase the real average comparable cost to over \$30,000. Plus if you have the money you can always elope now and go on a traditional honeymoon later.

Real Elopement Package Examples

It's all very well looking at average numbers and theorizing about having a wedding and honeymoon for less than \$2,500, but what really matters is being able to put that into practice. With

that in mind, let's take a look at some of the real wedding elopement packages that are available in that \$2,500 price range.

MD Resort, TX - \$2,097

One of the packages listed on our website is the '[Destination Wedding](#)' package from MD Resort in Aurora, TX. This covers 4 nights and includes the ceremony, bridal bouquet, wedding cake, Officiant, photographs and the honeymoon suite complete with keepsake glasses, picnic basket, snack tray and jacuzzi tub! That is a fairly inclusive package which still leaves around \$400 in the budget for some additional extras. This might involve hiring a professional photographer to supplement the in-house photographs taken with your own camera.

Stone Hill Inn, VT - \$2,100

The '[Stone Hill Elopement](#)' package includes 3 nights accommodation and allows for up to 6 guests at your ceremony. The guest room offers a working fireplace, jacuzzi bath and three course breakfast each morning. The ceremony is presided over by a Justice of the Peace and includes a bridal bouquet and groom's boutonniere along with keepsake wine glasses, wedding cake and chocolate covered strawberries. Each couple gets a \$120 dinner certificate to use at a local restaurant. One of the signature details is a lovely rose petal turn down service on the wedding night. This package allows for \$400 in the budget that can be used for photography.

These are just two of the many packages that are listed on www.WeddingElopementPackages.com that will fit under the \$2,500 suggested elopement budget **saving you 90% on the average cost of a traditional wedding while still proving a short honeymoon or what is sometimes called a “minimoon”**.

Still Not Convinced?

If you are still not sure about choosing elopement, then you need to ask yourself a couple of key questions:

- Are you overwhelmed with all of the wedding planning options for “tying the knot”, getting married or becoming a couple?
- Have you wondered how you will navigate all of the planning for your big event and then all those receptions and other events surrounding your wedding?

Not to mention all of the issues and emotions regarding his family and your family, friends, the budget, picking the place, the Excel spreadsheets, the sitting charts, the guest lists, and the disagreements. Where is the romance in that? Entering the new uncharted waters of marriage is scary enough!

Have you seriously considered eloping? Read on and discover why we say: WhereToElope.com is the easiest way to “Just Married”! On our www.WeddingElopementPackages.com website we have done all of the work for you (we built the World’s Largest Searchable Database of Wedding Elopement Packages by Location, Package Type or Price Range! We’ve searched and sifted through thousands of unrelated or off target results that come up when you search online to produce this Elopement guide for you.

What Is Eloping?

We talk about eloping a lot and because it is something we are dealing with on a day to day basis we can often forget that not everyone is completely sure about what eloping is. That is why we wanted right up front to answer the question: What Is Eloping?

Defining Elopement

Let's start by taking a look at the official definition of the term 'elope'. According to the Oxford Dictionaries (US English) "elope" is a verb which means 'to run away secretly in order to get married, especially without parental consent'. When you read our chapter on the history of elopement you will notice that this fits with the common definition of eloping that most people know about – which is to say it is the one that fits in with the idea of young people running off to marry someone that their family does not approve of!

What We Consider Eloping To Be

However, when we talk about eloping, we mean much more than that! For our purposes, an elopement is a small intimate wedding. This could be a destination wedding or it could be in your own home town. Your elopement may consist only of you and your partner in front of your Officiant and witnesses if required, but it could also include a small group of guests! Similarly, your elopement ceremony can be as simple or as elaborate as you wish!

If we had to sum up an elopement in one sentence then it would be this – An elopement is a wedding that has been scaled way back from what we think of as a 'traditional' wedding.

So if you are more interested in getting married than you are in having a wedding or if you do not want to participate in the extravagance and pageantry that is associated with a traditional wedding then you are most likely looking for some sort of elopement! You may not necessarily want to marry in secret and the chances are fair that your parents actually really like your intended. A modern elopement simply means that you are not looking for a big traditional wedding with all of the time, stress and expense.

The History of Elopement

Today, what we term as eloping is a small, intimate wedding that is either restricted to just the bride and groom or where only a small handful of guests are invited to attend. However, this is very different from what the term meant when it first came into use hundreds of years ago. We thought it would be a lot of fun to take a look at the history of elopement and how it has changed through the ages.

An Alternative Meaning For Elope

The earliest elopements can be traced back to around 1338 when ‘elope’ was actually a term used to describe when a married woman left her husband in order to run away with her lover. This meaning was in use until approximately 1800. It was at this time that the meaning seems to have changed to describe lovers who were running away in order to marry rather than the original meaning which relates to running away from an existing marriage to be with someone else!

Circumventing Strict Marriage Laws

What we now consider as a ‘traditional’ elopement – that is where the couple “run off” in secret to get married – began around 1753 in England. Under the Marriage Act of 1753 anyone under the age of 21 needed their parents’ permission to get married. At that time, marriage was often used as a way to join particular families as per the father’s wishes and often the bride had no say in who she was to marry. It was common for men to marry their daughters off to rich friends often twice the young woman’s age. Weddings were about contracts rather than romance!

It is easy to see why many young women were looking for an escape – especially if they had fallen in love with someone their own age! Luckily, the marriage laws in Scotland were (and still are) quite different from those enforced in England. The biggest difference between the marriage laws was that young people did not need parental consent. In fact, in 18th century Scotland girls as young as 12 and boys of 14 were able to marry. It was these relaxed laws which attracted eloping couples who were trying to marry against the wishes of their families.

Runaway Brides Eloped To Gretna Green

One of the first villages that is encountered on crossing the border from England into Scotland is the famous Gretna Green – a place that is now synonymous with elopements every bit as much as Las Vegas is for quickie marriages! It was customary for the blacksmiths or ‘anvil priests’ as they were known of the village to perform weddings on the anvil. Today the Gretna Green blacksmith anvil is booked up years in advance for weddings! In 1856 Scottish marriage laws were changed to try and stem the flow of runaways crossing the border in order to get married. The new requirement was that the couple should be resident in the parish for 21 days prior to marriage and was designed to allow families time to put a stop to these runaway marriages. However, a whole new business sprung up around this law as many innkeepers would secretly allow couples to stay for the required three weeks keeping them hidden from anyone who might come looking. Scotland still allows those aged 16 and over to marry without consent and while the 21 day notice period remains in effect the residency requirement does not.

Gradually the practice of eloping has spread to many other countries and while disapproving families may still be one of the reasons behind making the choice to elope, it is less of a cloak and dagger affair! The more common reasons that couples give now for choosing to elope include saving money and avoiding the time and stress of planning a big traditional wedding.

Who Should Consider Eloping?

One of the questions that comes up fairly frequently is about what sort of people elope. The simple answer here is absolutely anyone! In the past, eloping was really only an option for those who were "running away" to marry someone secretly that their parents did not approve of. However, today eloping is a more popular choice for many different reasons. These reasons vary from a need to avoid the stress of planning a big wedding to just not having the time to spend organizing one. This means that people of all ages and backgrounds are now choosing to elope.

What Sort of People Elope?

Let's take a look at some of the different types of people who might choose to elope:

- Those who are getting married for the second or third time and have already done the whole big white wedding thing.
- People who cannot afford to have a traditional wedding.
- Couples who would prefer to spend their money on their first home rather than a wedding.
- Those who lead busy lives and just want to get married quickly.
- Couples who want to be married but not necessarily have a wedding.
- People who want to avoid the stress of planning a big wedding.
- Those who want to escape family politics.
- Couples where one partner is facing military deployment.
- People who wish to get married quickly due to unexpected circumstances such as a terminal illness.

As you can see, eloping is something that works for pretty much anyone. The only time it may not be appropriate for you is if you feel that you may later come to regret not having had your family with you on your special day. This is something what we cover in our next chapter about deciding if elopement is the right choice for you.

Is Eloping Right For You?

We often talk about the many benefits that can be associated with eloping. However, there are also some downsides and it is because of these that we are the first to admit eloping is not for everyone! No matter the 90% cost savings and other advantages, there are some aspects that certain people just cannot get past when it comes to eloping. The last thing you want is to start off your married life with regrets. So just how do you decide if eloping is right for you?

As always WhereToElope.com is on hand to help you with this question! We have put together some of the most common things to consider when you are trying to decide whether or not elopement is the right option for you.

Is The Marriage More Important Than The Wedding?

For lots of couples who choose to elope, the key thing is that they just want to marry each other and are not too concerned about having an actual wedding! The truth is, not every little girl dreams of a big fairytale wedding! Many women just don't get the point of staging an elaborate wedding to impress friends and family. We once heard a wedding planner refer to this as the 'reality TV test'. She said that if you sit through any wedding themed reality show like Say Yes To The Dress or Four Weddings and your most dominant thoughts are along the lines of 'they paid how much for a dress?' then an elopement is probably a good choice for you!

Could You Put The Money To Better Use?

One of the main considerations in choosing to elope is the cost. With most elopements coming in at at least 90% cheaper than a traditional wedding it is easy to see why more couples are foregoing a big ceremony. Think about where you will be financially in 5 years. If you are already secure in a home of your own, or have already saved some money for your wedding, or even if your parents are footing the bill then you might feel like the extravagance of a traditional wedding is something that you can handle without any regrets. However, if you think that in 5 years you might still be struggling to find the money to get out of a crappy rented apartment or to start a family then there is a good chance that you will look back on the thousands of dollars that were spent on your wedding and wonder if you could have spent that money more wisely. If this sounds like it could be you then elopement is something to seriously consider.

How Important Is It To Have Your Family Present?

Many couples elope in order to escape from the family politics. If you think about your guest list and start having to make decisions like cutting Auntie Wendy from the list because otherwise your favorite Uncle Ben won't come which is bound to upset your mother, then running off to elope is bound to seem like an attractive option. However, the downside to this is that you may not have any of your family there to support you on your wedding day. You need to ask yourself if it is important for you to have your Mom there or for your Father to walk you down the aisle. If the answer is yes then you either need to include them in your elopement plans, have a "small wedding" instead or bite the bullet and deal with your traditional wedding guest list nightmare! If you are not really perturbed by the prospect of not having your family with you then you still need to think about the aftermath of the elopement. Someone is going to be upset that you went off to get married without them and you need to prepare yourself to deal with that. This is something we have discussed in the past, so rather than going into detail here we will simply say that if you cannot deal with the family being upset then it might not be a good idea to elope.

These are just a few of the things that you might want to consider if you are struggling to decide

whether or not elopement is for you. At the end of the day it is important that you are happy on your wedding day and that you do not look back on it with regrets. Sure, you may need to make a few compromises along the way but if you feel that eloping is going to make you happy then you will soon find a way to get around any issues that it might raise!

Why Eloping Is The Hottest Alternative To a Traditional Marriage?

Now that the exciting and romantic part - i.e. the proposal – is over with, it is time to get down to making plans for the next big event – the wedding itself! Wouldn't it be great if you could just jump right from the engagement to the main event? Unfortunately, with a traditional big wedding there is a massive amount of planning that lies between the two events and things are about to get tricky!

Planning your wedding should be a really special time in your life, but unfortunately it is one of the most stressful things that you will ever tackle. Not only do you have to deal with budgets, logistics, catering, venues and a whole host of issues, but everybody – and I do mean everybody – is going to have an opinion. Keeping both sets of parents happy and deciding which family members you should invite is a minefield. It sounds harsh, but during the planning of a wedding most couples end up fighting not just with each other but with friends and family. It's not very romantic is it?

Finding The Solution

So are you doomed right from the start? No, of course not. You have a number of options that will help you through the planning:

- If you are a strong willed person with a thick skin simply tell everyone that it is your day and you will do it your way!
- If you have the funds, hire a wedding planner and leave her to it!
- Grab your sweetheart and elope!

I don't know about you, but to me the only one of those options that sounds remotely romantic is eloping! Imagine running off to some romantic destination and tying the knot in secret. Not only is it romantic and adventurous, but it also lets you start married life without letting the wedding itself cause any stress! Let's take a look at some of the advantages of eloping instead of having a traditional wedding.

Marriage traditions are changing. With more “millennial” couples 18-35 years old attending churches less and choosing to co-habit prior to marriage, it is becoming far less common for the bride's family to pay for and arrange the wedding. An increasing number of couples are going the independent route planning and funding their own weddings. With many of the old traditions becoming outdated, couples are seeking new and exciting options when it comes to getting married. What could be more exciting than eloping? Where traditional weddings come hand and hand with stress, elopement offers an opportunity for adventure!

Traditionally, eloping is something very spontaneous with little planning, but depending on where you choose there may be some notice required. However, the great thing about eloping is that the planning is easy. Check out some of the romantic boutique inns and bed & breakfasts listed on the state and countries pages of WhereToElope.com. All of these boutique and breakfast inns, Officiants and venues have experience in hosting elopements or small weddings and will be happy to help make arrangements for you. One of the big pluses of eloping is that you may be able to combine your honeymoon, vacation and wedding into what we like to call an 'elopocation'! Lots of couples choose a destination which offers plenty of attractions in order to make the most of their stay. For example, if you choose a mountain, oceanside or lakeside inn for your elopement destination, you can extend your stay and make the most of the time you have to explore your beautiful surroundings.

Say Goodbye To The Complications

Planning a traditional wedding can get complicated, which is why many couples opt for a wedding planner to help them keep their planning on track. However, this can be expensive and when added to the cost of the wedding itself many couples end up having to take out loans to cover the wedding expenses. Just take a look at some of the average costs of having a traditional wedding. Starting your new life together off with the weight of a hefty debt on your shoulders is not the best way to begin your marriage and yet many couples do exactly that! In the United States, the average traditional wedding carries a \$25,533 price tag. With all-inclusive elopement packages averaging around \$2,500, this is a great way to get married. What would you do with the other 90% of your wedding budget? Maybe you could buy a car, or use it for the down payment on your first home. In our ongoing poll about the reasons couples elope, 50% of participants choose elopement as a way to save money! Most elopements involve a very simple ceremony requiring little more than a license, an Officiant and perhaps a couple of witnesses. Extras such as flowers and photography can be booked via whichever elopement service you opt for and the entire wedding will work out far less expensive than a traditional ceremony and reception.

Who Chooses Elopement Over A Traditional Wedding?

There is no shame or stigma attached to eloping these days, no-one is going to think that you are rushing off to get married because of an unplanned pregnancy or anything! Couples from all walks of life and a wide range of ages are choosing elopement over traditional ceremonies these days with varying reasons. It could be that they just don't want the stress of planning a big wedding or maybe it's their second time around or they have lived together for years already. Whatever the reason elopement can be very alluring for any couple.

Eloping does not even mean having to exchange vows without your loved ones. One of the best things about an elopement is that you have total control over the guest list. Since you may be traveling to another state or another country, people will be more understanding about being left off the guest list, in fact in our 'Why Are You Eloping?' poll, 16.7% of couples cited avoiding family politics as the main reason for choosing to elope. That means that you could elope with just your parents or your best friends in tow. Lots of couples then choose to have an announcement party when they return home for those who missed the ceremony. Eloping truly is one of the most versatile ways of getting married.

Eloping offers a practical, affordable and relaxing way to get married to your true love without losing the romance under a pile of contracts and deposits! It is possible to elope to almost anywhere in the world so your wedding can be as exotic or as low key as you desire without blowing your bank balance! Not only that, but it's going to be a great story to tell the grandkids!

5 Reasons Why Big Weddings Are Overrated!

If you have been following our WhereToElope.com blog for any length of time then you have probably realized that we believe that when it comes to weddings, good things definitely come in small packages! We often point out the money saving aspects of elopement and the lack of stress attached to an intimate wedding, but today we want to share with you five reasons why we think that big weddings are overrated!

1. The Endless Round of Parties Gets Tiresome

Now don't get us wrong, we love a good excuse for a party, but when it comes to weddings it seems like everyone goes overboard and your lives become one big round of endless parties. With engagement parties, bridal showers, bachelorette parties, bridesmaid's luncheons and rehearsal dinners, it can be easy for you and your guests to rack up thousands of dollars before the wedding day itself! Weddings are about the only life event that sees this level of celebration and we just can't figure out why!

2. Starting Out Your Life Together In Debt Is A Recipe For Disaster

Did you know that financial trouble is one of the most common reasons why a marriage fails? With that in mind is it really a good idea to start out your life together as man and wife with \$25,000 of debt on your shoulders? While tradition dictates that the bride's parents foot the bill for the wedding, in today's society it is more common for the couple to pay all or part of their own way, and very few couples have that sort of cold, hard cash saved up! That means that they need to borrow money to pay for their wedding!

3. Planning a Wedding is One of The Most Stressful Life Events

The average traditional wedding has around 150 guests. Planning a party of that size, which often includes a sit-down meal, is no easy feat and it can take a great deal of time and effort. Add to that the legal side of things and the additional details such as attire, decoration and transportation and you have an all day event of near epic proportions! There have been many cases of couples not even making it down the aisle as the stress of planning the wedding ends up driving them apart! We have also heard stories of brides who have suffered from stress related illnesses. Is having an elaborate wedding really worth it?

4. Nothing Brings Out The Worst In Family & Friends Like a Wedding!

As soon as you announce your intention to get married you will start getting input from friends and family – whether you have asked for it or not. It is only during wedding planning that the differences between parents and their children really show up. Your parents will feel justified in criticizing every choice that is not 'how we did things in my day' while friends will suddenly become demanding when it comes down to choosing their attire as a bridesmaid! The guest list is also a veritable minefield with your cousin Lucy insisting you invite her boyfriend of 3 weeks and your Mom insisting on having her bridge club friends in attendance even though you have never met them! Family politics are one of the main reasons why a growing number of people are choosing to elope!

5. The Wedding Industry Often Has Ridiculous Markup

One of the reasons why weddings get so expensive is the huge markups favored by the industry. You might choose a basic 3-tiered cake with a regular retail value of around \$250, but call it a

wedding cake and the price tag suddenly jumps to around \$700! The same can be said of florists, caterers and limos! This means that you could very well be paying way more than the services are actually worth, which can seem a lot like throwing your money away! Thankfully, the elopement sector of the wedding industry does not seem to participate in this type of elevated pricing structure.

These are just a few of the many reasons why having a big traditional wedding can be overrated, but there are many more! All of these issues can be avoided by choosing to elope instead! When you elope, the marriage becomes more important than the pageantry of the wedding which can only be a good thing!

Why Should You Elope?

Way back when, eloping was often the only option for those who wanted to marry for love rather than based on their father's wishes. However, today people choose to elope rather than a traditional wedding for a variety of reasons. At WhereToElope.com we are always interested in what those reasons are. That's why we have our ongoing survey regarding why couples choose to elope. Some of the answers seemed like they made a great deal of sense while others were a little more unexpected! Let's take a closer look at some of the top reasons why you should elope!

Eloping Saves You Money

The number one reason why couples choose to elope comes down to money! The average traditional wedding in the United States carries a \$25,533 price tag, when we compare this to the cost of the average all-inclusive elopement at just \$2,500 it is easy to see why a growing number of couples are considering elopement. Let's not forget that this is the average for an all-inclusive elopement, but you could find a basic ceremony for less than \$200 if you don't care for all of the trappings and just want to make it legal but not at the court house! Think of it this way: eloping saves you up to 90% of the average cost of a wedding, so what will you do with that extra cash? Go on a Honeymoon! Many couples are choosing elopement so that they can invest in buying a home rather than having a lavish party! Our poll revealed that for 67% of couples saving money is a huge factor in choosing elopement over a traditional wedding!

Have It Your Way

Our poll also revealed that 50% of couples are interested in eloping in order to have a little fun creating their own ceremony. Eloping is a great way to escape the norm and have a wedding that is more unique to you. If you are a fan of the outdoors then saying your vows in front of a waterfall may be much more 'you' than a church ceremony. Similarly, if you are looking for something more offbeat you could go the Las Vegas route complete with Elvis impersonator! The beauty of elopement is that you can get married almost anywhere providing you have the right wedding license and a willing Officiant, with 17% of couples looking to escape from the norm you are sure to be in good company! Why not check out the 'Where?' on our WhereToElope.com website for some inspiration?

Leave All The Politics At Home

Given that eloping first started out as a way to avoid disapproving family members we were somewhat surprised that family politics only made 5th place in our poll. A quarter of the couples who responded said that they were eloping because they wanted to escape family drama caused by a variety of issues including divorced parents, family feuds and of course overbearing relatives who insist on sharing their opinions on every detail! This also goes some way towards explaining why 33% of couples said choosing elopement was a way to preserve their sanity. Although it is not just family drama that can cause stress while planning a wedding, arranging everything is a huge source of stress for many couples, especially when coupled with the financial strain of planning a wedding.

The good news is that whatever your reason for eloping is you have found WhereToElope.com the easiest way to, "Just Married!". With our free referral service you will soon find the elopement services that suit your needs. Let us show you the easiest path from engaged to just married!

Do Elopements Really Last?

One of the biggest stigmas attached to choosing an elopement over a traditional marriage is that people believe these marriages will not last! This is based on the assumption that most elopements are shotgun affairs which are done on the spur of the moment rather than being planned ahead of time after a long term relationship. However, this is simply not the case! Readers of the WhereToElope blog will know that some of the most popular elopement venues actually book up months in advance and while some couples do choose to get married on a whim, most elopements are planned very carefully! There is very little evidence to suggest that eloping increases the chances of divorce.

Long Lasting Elopements

If ever there was an endorsement for elopement, it is probably the story of John and Ann Betar of Connecticut who are America's longest married couple. On November 25th 1932 the couple fled Connecticut to avoid Ann (now 98 years old) having to marry a man 20 years her senior in accordance with her father's wishes. John, who is now aged 102 drove Ann all the way to New York State where the young couple married. In a recent interview, Ann reminisced about how John, the boy across the street would drive her to school in his Ford Roadster. John insists that it was the car that the young Ann fell for rather than his charms! The marriage caused quite a stir back home and John recalls how his wife's aunt tried to console his new father-in-law by "telling him not to worry, the marriage won't last!" Looks like the pair proved everyone wrong and have watched the world change around them in their 81 years together.

The Betars aren't the only long standing couple from an elopement! I've noted before that the concept for the WhereToElope site came about based on my own experience of eloping when I was in my teens. My first marriage may have come to an end like many do these days, but I still think that our 26 year together following our own elopement in Minnesota was a great achievement.

Another slightly more famous elopement was Beatle John Lennon and Yoko Ono who eloped to Gibraltar back in 1969. Bette Midler is another fan of eloping. The legendary singer and actress eloped to Las Vegas with artist Martin Von Haselberg in 1984 after knowing him for just a couple of weeks and the couple are now approaching their 30th wedding anniversary. Hollywood stars like Harrison Ford and Calista Flockhart eloped to Sante Fe in 2010 and Megan Fox chose a Hawaii beach elopement in 2012. More recently American Idol Kelly Clarkson eloped in 2013.

When Is The Best Time To Elope?

One of the most common questions we get from couples who are considering elopement is 'When should we elope?' The truth is that there really is no short answer to that question. Like so many other facets of elopement it all comes down to your personal preferences. Traditionally, wedding 'season' typically runs from May through September, but as we should all know by now – traditional rules do not apply when it comes to eloping!

When The Timing Is Right

When it comes to choosing when to elope, budget and location are usually the two biggest deciding factors. If you are thinking of getting married at a venue that hosts traditional weddings too, or that is a big tourist destination then it may be a better option to choose a date that is off season. Not only will your location be little quieter allowing for a more intimate elopement, but the chances are fair that you will also be able to save a lot of money! The same goes for weekday elopements – for any wedding it is usually a little cheaper to get married on a weekday simply because weekends are much more popular among traditional weddings since the majority of friends and family will not have to work on weekends. Just check out the many mid-week packages offered on www.WeddingsOnWednesday.com for some examples.

Speaking of work, another thing that is going to impact your choice regarding when to elope is choosing a time when both partners are able to take some time off from work that coincides. If you are planning to have a short (or an extended) elopation then it will be necessary to co-ordinate vacation time at work. If this isn't possible, then you may need to opt for a quick weekend elopement!

Taking The Destination Into Consideration

As noted, aside from the budget concerns and timing issues, where you choose to elope is also going to be a big factor in choosing when to elope. Here are just a few things to consider in terms of some popular destinations.

- mountain elopements – will snow make access to your venue dangerous in the Winter months?
- beach elopements – have you checked the tides to see how they differ from season to season?
- national parks and monuments – are there permits required or restrictions on opening times from season to season?
- coastal elopements – is it hurricane season?
- cruise elopements – will the marriage be legal where you live?

It is safe to say, that in terms of when to elope at certain destinations, the weather is what plays the biggest role in making a decision. Of course, there are plenty of elopement destinations where weather is fairly constant all year round such as California, Hawaii, Georgia and Florida to name just a few. However, there are just as many that are best avoided in the winter months since the roads are often impassable thanks to snow and ice.

Should You Elope To The Courthouse?

So, you want to get married and you want to do it as soon as yesterday!. Eloping has become a more popular and trendy thing among couples today for a variety of reasons plus there are many options when it comes to eloping. Some couples use the tried and true low cost option of a courthouse elopement for good reasons. The average price of a traditional weddings reached \$27,000 in 2012.

What is the cost of eloping to the courthouse? The price of the marriage license, that averages about \$40, depending on the state. Going to the courthouse to elope is the easiest, fastest, and cheapest way to get married. It creates less fuss, involves little to no planning, and provides a sense of spontaneity that some people seek. Of course there are guidelines, laws or rules that have to be obeyed, such as time, fees, required documents and blood tests in some states. But it's still and probably always will be the most cost and time efficient way to elope.

Or Not?

Of course with the sweet comes the sour. With any elopement a couple can run into some problems. These can come from friends and family having hurt feelings that they weren't involved in such an important time in a couple's life. Some couples feel that eloping to the courthouse robs them of a wedding and all the experiences that come with that. Some traditions are lost, such as giving the bride away, unity candles, scripture readings, tossing of the bouquet, not to mention a less than desirable backdrop for your wedding photos. Sometimes eloping to the courthouse was a hasty decision that maybe should have been thought out or waited on.

But there are elopement options now that can give you the best of both worlds. There are so many places now, like small romantic inns, bed and breakfasts, beaches, the mountains, some cruises plus wedding chapels that offer low cost elopement packages to fit almost any budget, give a couple the sense of that spontaneity, yet allow for a "real" wedding feel. Today you can elope and still have the dress, the music, the champagne, the photos and even some friends and family plus a honeymoon in a romantic place while still avoiding falling into that traditional wedding trap of months of planning, all of the stress plus spending a small fortune.

Courthouse or Not?

Either way, eloping has a great sense of romance behind it, courthouse, in the great outdoors or a wedding chapel, it's all about the two people making their lives one.

What To Look For In An Elopement Package?

When it comes to pin-pointing the main reasons why couples choose to elope rather than having a traditional wedding at home the two main considerations are budget and stress avoidance! The average traditional wedding in America costs \$25,533, where as an all-inclusive elopement averages just \$2,500. That 90% budget reduction is enough to reduce anyone's stress levels considerably before you even consider other stress factors! When you choose to elope you are choosing to leave behind the stress of making a guest list, booking a venue, arranging a reception and the endless list of other details that go hand in hand with planning a wedding! In fact, if you look for a readymade elopement package you will basically have to simply get a marriage license and show up on the day!

Elopement Package Checklist

To help you get things moving, here is our checklist of things to look for in a wedding package.

- 1. The Perfect All Inclusive Venue** There are various different venues all across the country which offer elopement packages, so the best place to start is to think about where to elope. If there is a state that you have never visited then now would be the ideal opportunity to do so. Similarly, if you want to marry on the beach, or atop a mountain then you need to choose a state which can offer these types of locations. Once you have chosen the ideal area you can begin to look at specific venues. You should be looking for a venue which offers a complete package including accommodation for you and your guests if anyone is accompanying you. The last thing you want is hidden additional costs. You should also look for somewhere with a nice setting for your ceremony.
- 2. An Authorized Officiant** The best elopement packages will also include an Officiant to perform the ceremony. In some locations, a member of staff is ordained or licensed so that they can act as a wedding coordinator and Officiant rolled into one. It is worth asking if they can guide you through the marriage license application as well if you live out of state since rules may be different from state to state. The Officiants included in most elopement packages are non-denominational, so if you have a particular desire to be married according to your own faith you may need to book your own Officiant outside of the package.
- 3. Additional Features or Accessories** Even if you are eloping, that doesn't mean that you don't want or need all of the trappings of a traditional wedding like a bouquet and boutonniere, wedding cake, music and photographs. If this is the case, then please look for the elopement packages which include these additional features or accessories. Some packages will offer them as optional add-ons to the main package. Even if they are not listed, you should ask the venue if they can provide these things as most will know of local vendors. Other additions to elopement packages might include a candlelit dinner, spa treatments, a gift basket or champagne toast. Eloping need not mean settling for less than your dream wedding!
- 4. A Great Package Price** As noted, one of the key considerations that prompt couples to choose elopement is the high cost of having a traditional wedding. Regardless of your budget you are sure to find a package that you can afford with prices ranging from just \$100 for a basic exchange of vows up to \$2,500 for an all-inclusive elopement package. Some venues also offer small wedding packages with receptions for 30-40 guests in the \$4,000-

\$5,000 range. Decide on your budget and look for a venue and elopement package on www.WhereToElope.com or our www.WeddingElopementPackages.com that fits it. Just make sure to check that everything is included in the package price so that there are no nasty surprises!

More Tips for Finding Elopement Packages

Once you have gone through each of the four main points listed you will hopefully have come up with at the very least a short list of potential elopement packages. However, before you go ahead and book one you must take the time to go over all of the terms and conditions to make sure that you agree. Do not be afraid to ask questions – this is your wedding and you have every right to know exactly what you are getting.

Where Not To Elope?

WhereToElope typically focuses on the best places to elope worldwide. We've demonstrated that it's possible to elope just about anywhere!

But there are some places couples simply are prohibited from eloping, and even a few locales that you probably shouldn't consider under any circumstances.

While the positives far outweigh the negatives of elopement, we want to make the journey from engagement to "Just Married" as easy as possible. WhereToElope believes it's important that couples are aware of those places they should NOT elope.

Sometimes An Elopement Can Be Difficult To Arrange

The traditional definition of eloping once meant a couple would run off for a romantic and spontaneous wedding. Today the term 'elope' has taken on a different meaning with names like casual wedding, destination wedding, non-traditional wedding, small wedding or tiny wedding. Many couples plan their elopement months or even years in advance.

This is especially true for those who wish to marry abroad. It is necessary to contact the embassy of the country in which the marriage will occur in order to learn the legal requirements couples must follow.

This process might include a three- to four-week waiting period. There are official documents to be completed. Sometimes, a country will require at least one of those being wed to reside in that country.

Such regulations may make it difficult to arrange an elopement in certain countries. Among those known to be most difficult for a foreign visitor to be married include:

- **Spain** – Spain has a 21-day waiting period to obtain a marriage license, which translates into a lengthy stay or multiple trips to the country. Plus, all documents must be translated into Spanish and authenticated by the Spanish consulate. It can take up to eight weeks for the authorities to approve a marriage license. Couples might have to wait as many as 12 weeks simply to secure the license.
- **France** – France's residency requirement states that the couple must reside in the same district as city hall for a minimum of 40 days prior to the wedding. Proof of residency, including utility bills, is required. So, that romantic elopement to Paris might be just a bit more difficult to pull off. You may want to get married first then honeymoon in Paris!
- **Germany** – Foreign couples traditionally have difficulty getting married in Germany. In addition to providing a complex series of documents, the cost of marriage in Germany is directly related to your financial status (the more you earn the more you pay). You'll need to supply bank records. If you wish to have a religious ceremony, you will first need to have a legal wedding with the registrar. You also need to allow a minimum of six weeks of notice prior to your wedding.

Other countries might present similar obstacles. Do your homework. Research is essential.

WhereToElope.com is not saying couples cannot elope to these countries; only that it is a lot more difficult to attain a legal marriage. You may even need to spend an extended period of time living in that country in order to qualify. You might have to allow as much as a year to plan your wedding or just have a 'ceremony' abroad, then get married again legally when you return home. For some couples this cancels out the financial savings and reduced stress levels usually associated with eloping.

Where You Should Not Consider Eloping

In countries with strict marriage laws, eloping is considered to be illegal due to religious or cultural reasons. In some countries, eloping is a crime. As outrageous as it might sound, those who elope could face punishments ranging from whippings or even a death penalty by stoning.

Other countries follow a more relaxed approach, but while eloping is technically legal, it is often frowned upon. Anyone taking part in such a ceremony could be risking personal attacks from extremists. This is a common issue in countries just starting to emerge from the grip of very strict regimes. While these countries are beginning to see an increase in elopements, couples are still hiding their marriages in order to avoid repercussions from family members who still believe in arranged marriages. Therefore, it is not advisable to travel to these countries to get married.

These scenarios might be difficult to comprehend, especially in a time when marriage equality is being accepted in a growing number of states and countries.

Common Misconceptions About Elopement

In the past, eloping was considered more than a little scandalous! In the past eloping couples were doing so because they were forced to run off to be married in secret, either because they were marrying someone from a different class, thus deemed unsuitable, or because the bride was pregnant and wanted to marry before people found out. These days, the reasons for elopement are far less dramatic. In our ongoing poll on the topic, most couples cite one of three main reasons for choosing elopement over a traditional wedding. Those reasons are:

- **To save money** – it is possible to elope for a couple of hundred dollars and the average elopement costs a total of \$2,500, while a traditional wedding will cost on average, \$25,533!
- **To maintain their sanity** – planning a wedding is one of the most stressful events in anyone's life and it can cause so many arguments among family and friends that it is often easier to just run off and tie the knot by yourselves!
- **To have fun** – eloping is both romantic and adventurous, and many couples just love the idea of doing something a little bit crazy!

The term elopement has developed over time to become a colloquialism which is applied to any marriage done spontaneously, one done in private, a marriage with no engagement period and even very small weddings with a handful of guests. Although there is no longer any need for an elopement to involve running away, most couples choose to travel away from home for an elopement, either to combine it with a vacation– something we like to call an elopocation – or to just get away from everyone back home! With elopement becoming such an increasingly popular choice we wanted to unravel some of the most common misconceptions that people have about eloping.

Elopement Does Not Mean Rushing Into Marriage

One of the most common misconceptions about elopement is that those who choose it are marrying without proper consideration. The famous Las Vegas wedding chapels are a prime example of this misconception. How often have you seen a television show or movie where the protagonist gets drunk in Vegas and marries a stranger? In reality this is incredibly rare – the state of Nevada does not issue marriage licenses in Las Vegas between the hours of midnight and 8am and they are never issued to someone who is inebriated. It is true that some elopements may happen on the spur of the moment, but most occur within a long term relationship with at least some advanced planning. Even when the elopement seems to be spur of the moment; it is often the case that long term cohabiting partners have decided that it is time to make things official. Far from being the irresponsible choice, elopement is often a practical approach to marriage.

Eloperments Are Not Just For The Second Time Around

Another common misconception is that those who decide to elope are individuals who have already been married before. It is true that many of couples embarking on a second or third marriage do decide to forgo the traditional big family wedding, they do not necessarily elope. In fact, there are just as many first time marriages which begin with elopement as there are second marriages. It is possible for any couple to elope if they so choose.

Building A Strong Marriage With an Elopement

In a related note, it is often suggested that elopements are more likely to result in an unsuccessful marriage, something that no doubt stems from the belief that elopements are often rushed into.

However, many of the couples who choose to elope have been together for some time and most have a very traditional view of marriage. In fact, many couples choose to elope because they just want to have an intimate ceremony to celebrate their union without all of the trappings of a glamorous wedding. Think about a small wedding with just the couple and their closest family. This could be seen to be much more focused on what marriage is about, rather than a massive event with people you haven't seen in years! As for elopements not creating successful unions – Bette Midler eloped in 1984 and she and her husband Martin Rochus Sebastien von Haselberg have been together ever since!

Romance and Elopement Go Hand in Hand

It is often thought that an elopement is unromantic and tacky. Once again, movies and television has a lot to answer for as elopements are always depicted as trashy affairs in gaudy wedding chapels. However, most elopements are held on stunning beaches, or in intimate little inns or cabins. It is possible to personalize an elopement to be as romantic or as basic as the couple prefers. So whether you are envisioning a romantic unity ceremony complete with rose petals and doves or a quick courthouse legal marriage, elopement can fit both profiles.

In short, elopement is not really all that different from any other marriage. Couples still get married for the same reasons; they are just choosing to do it that little bit differently than what is considered the norm. Keep an open mind about elopement and you will see that the most common misconceptions are unfounded and there is actually a long list of excellent reasons for choosing an elopement over a traditional wedding.

Is There Such A Thing As Elopement Etiquette?

One of the big things about a traditional wedding is the etiquette! There are so many different 'rules' about everything from how to word your invites and where to seat your guests that it is easy to see why these occasions can be so stressful! Eloping is an easy way to avoid stress, but unfortunately wedding etiquette is not so easily escaped! Let's take a look at the etiquette rules associated with eloping!

Dealing With The Family

There are a long list of reasons to choose elopement, including reducing the cost of your wedding and eliminating the stress of planning a traditional wedding, but unless you are specifically eloping because of the disapproval of your family then etiquette demands that you do take their feelings into account. In order to avoid hurt feelings it is important to sit down with both sets of parents before eloping so that you can explain the situation.

Making Your Announcements

Even if you are eloping, you may still wish to send out announcements letting everyone know. Etiquette suggests that these are worded in exactly the same way as you would for a traditional ceremony. Usually the announcement is made by the bride's parents on behalf of the couple although modern conventions state that if the couple are paying for their own wedding then they should announce the wedding themselves. Here are a few examples of formal wording you may use:

- Sample wording from the couple: Jessica Reed and John Black were married in a private ceremony in Las Vegas on December 20th 2013.
- Sample wording from the bride's parents: Mr & Mrs R Reed are delighted to announce the marriage of their daughter Jessica to John Black. The couple took their vows in a private ceremony in Las Vegas on December 20th 2013.
- Sample Wording with reception invite: Jessica and John are pleased to announce that they were married on December 20, 2013 in a private ceremony while on vacation in Las Vegas. They invite you to celebrate their marriage at a brunch reception on January 28th 2014 at RiverView Country Club.

Wedding Gifts & Elopement

One of the major sticking points when it comes to elopement etiquette is whether or not it is okay to register for gifts. What many couples fail to realize is that it is actually considered rude to enclose a gift list even in a traditional wedding announcement! However, with that being said everyone has come to expect this anyway, so why shouldn't you register even if you elope? This is a topic we looked at in great detail a few months ago and we determined that it was wise to have a gift registry for anyone who wants to celebrate your marriage and we added one for you to use on www.wheretoelope.com/gift-registry.

While eloping will not allow you to circumvent wedding etiquette altogether it will cut it down to the bare minimum. However, it is important to remember that this is your wedding and ultimately you do what pleases you. It is fine to be polite to others about it, but there is no need to compromise your wishes to do things 'the right way'.

How Do I Tell My Family?

When it comes to thoughts of a dream wedding, it is not just the bride and her groom who spend hours thinking about how the big day is going to pan out. Our parents, grandparents and even our siblings may have very strong ideas about what our weddings should be like. It seems like when it comes to getting married everyone quickly forgets who this special occasion is all about – the happy couple! A growing number of couples are choosing elopement in order to avoid the stress of trying to please everyone as highlighted by our ongoing survey about why people choose to elope.

However, while eloping may avoid the stress of the planning it does come at a price – telling the family! Just how are you going to explain to your Mom that, no, you won't be getting married in front of all of her friends in Grandma's antique lace gown? Is your best friend who has been dreaming of playing bridesmaid since the third grade ever going to forgive you? How is Daddy going to feel about not being able to give you away? It seems like a difficult choice, and at the risk of coming off a little harsh – they are just going to have to deal with it! It's your day and you are doing it your way, so do not be put off by potential bad reactions to the news that you are going to elope! Your friends and family may be disappointed, but at the end of the day they just want you to be happy and they might not ever understand, but they will forgive you!

If you still feel a little uneasy, then here are our top 3 tips for telling the family about your elopement!

Don't Leave It Until Afterwards

It may be tempting to keep your elopement under wraps and then spring the surprise on everyone when you return from your vacation as man and wife, but most experts suggest that this is not the best approach. It is far better to sit everyone down beforehand and explain that you have chosen to elope along with the reasons why you are going down this route. This may be an awkward conversation, but it will be less of a blow. If you at least give them the chance to air their opinions then they will feel at least a little bit included. However, do be prepared for some negativity from a few people – just don't let it bring you down. They will get over it!

Throw A Party At Home

Some couples find that it placates the family if they throw a little party for everyone on coming home from the elopement. This is far less expensive than a traditional wedding reception and can be as informal as you choose. It gives your loved ones a chance to celebrate with you while still allowing you the intimate ceremony of your dreams. Alternatively you could have an engagement party beforehand.

Have More Than Just Two

While a traditional elopement may suggest the bride and groom alone with the Officiant, modern elopements are often a little bigger. Even if you do not want the big white church wedding with 200 guests, you can still include your immediate family. Many wedding elopement packages cover 8-40 guests. Your ceremony can still be very intimate and devoid of the circus of most weddings while having your parents and friends there to witness the joyous occasions.

However you decide to break the news the key things to remember are to be honest and to focus on why you have chosen to elope.

How To Make People Understand Your Decision To Elope?

One of the big issues when it comes to elopement will always be other people! When you decide to elope you are shedding the stress of making elaborate wedding plans and saving up enough money to cover the costs, but you are unfortunately opening yourself up to stress caused by family and friends who just don't get it!

One of the biggest reasons that couples choose to elope is to avoid family politics such as whether or not to invite Dad's new girlfriend and risk upsetting Mom! However, when you leave these issues behind you may find that you pick up a whole new set! No matter how you present the idea that you are going to elope, there is always going to be a handful of people who are upset that they cannot attend your wedding. Likely candidates are your parents and your best friends. So how can you help them come to terms with not being invited to your wedding?

Be Prepared To Explain Your Elopement

One of the things that you need to be prepared for is that you need to explain your reasons for eloping, so sit down and get that clear in your mind. If you are not 100% sure why you are doing it then you cannot expect your family to accept your choice! However, you may need to edit your reasoning to spare some feelings! If you are eloping because you just can't handle your Mom's constant interfering in the wedding plans, then telling her this will no doubt break her heart! Try to be diplomatic.

Be Consistent in Terms of Who Can Attend

Some couples choose to have a small group of guests (usually no more than 8) attend their intimate wedding. If you do choose to do this then you need to be consistent. If the bride wants her Mom there, then it is only fair that the Groom has his there too. Sometimes having just the parents there makes it easier for people to accept because you can simply tell people that you are going to have a very small wedding with just your parents in attendance. If you are part of a group of friends you will want to avoid inviting only one friend. It is best not to invite any of them to avoid hurt feelings.

You Don't Need To Invite Witnesses

Some couples feel pressured into inviting at least one couple to attend the wedding to serve as witnesses. However, this is not necessary. Some elopement packages include witnesses, and if they don't it is perfectly acceptable to have the photographer and the venue manager act in that capacity. This frees you from making a choice about who gets to come along!

What's The Deal With Secret Weddings?

In the past, eloping meant having to keep your intentions of getting married a closely guarded secret. This was largely do to the fact that most couples who opted for an elopement were doing so in order to escape disapproving family members and arranged marriages. These days this is not so much of a problem, but that does not stop some couples from wanting to keep their wedding a secret! We wanted to address some of the common questions we get asked about secret weddings!

Why Keep Your Wedding Secret?

For many couples getting married is something that they want to shout about and thus they cannot wait to tell all of their friends and family. However for others, they would prefer to just keep the details of their relationship as something intimate between the two of them. This results in some couples keeping their wedding a secret. This leaves 'outsiders' asking why? After chatting to a few couples who went down the secret road we were able to determine that there are 3 main reasons why people keep their wedding – or at least their wedding plans – secret.

1. **To avoid the drama and the pressure** – Everyone has an opinion when it comes to how to plan a wedding. Many couples choose to elope in order to avoid these opinions and some even keep the elopement a secret until the big day! This means that there is no chance for relatives to try and convince you to do things the traditional way instead!
2. **For the romance element of it all** – Lots of couple have a secret elopement because for them it makes their wedding a little bit more intimate and romantic. One couple recently told us that they felt like their wedding should be the one time that they could be selfish and share something special only with each other.
3. **For legal or financial reasons** – Some couples feel that they need to get married for legal reasons even though they are happy remaining in a long term relationship without making things official. For example, a couple may get married when one partner is diagnosed with a terminal illness to ensure that the surviving partner is entitled to financial support only offered to a spouse. These couples may not particularly agree with the concept of marriage, but require a legal marriage in which case it makes sense to keep it between themselves.

How Long Should You Keep Your Elopement Secret?

There is no easy way to answer this question! It's all a matter of personal preference. There are some couples who actually keep their marriage completely secret for their entire lives. There may be reasons behind this choice or it may be a simple case of finding the idea of a secret marriage a secret. However, most couples only keep their marriage a secret up until they go ahead and tie the knot.

One of the key considerations in deciding how long to keep your wedding a secret is how your family is going to feel. When you elope without telling them they are bound to be a little upset. However, if you do not tell them you have done so until several years later, then it is going to be even harder for them to understand. It is important to think carefully about your reasons for keeping your nuptials under wraps.

Is Having A Secret Wedding Even Legal?

Given that there are certain legal requirements in some states and countries that require couples to declare their intention to marry in advance, some people wonder if a secret marriage is even legal! The answer is yes! While you do need to inform the local authorities as per local marriage laws in order to obtain your marriage license, there is no requirement for you to announce your wedding to anyone else!

However, there will be a public record of the marriage, so in theory if anyone was suspicious, they could look it up and blow your secret! This is only really a problem if the couple is intending to keep their entire marriage a secret instead of just their plans. The only exceptions to this are in Michigan and California.

In Michigan, there has been a little known law in place since 1897 which allows couples to request a secret marriage when they apply for a license. This means that when you get married the Officiant returns your certificate to you and the clerk will not record it. Aside from your copy, the only proof of your marriage would be sealed in the judge's files.

The laws surrounding secret marriages in California are slightly different. The couple must already be cohabiting as husband and wife, but can apply for a confidential license to get married. This is exactly the same as any other marriage apart from the fact that it will not be on public record. This law has been in effect since 1878, when only pastors could offer this type of marriage, but in the 1970's this right was extended without the clergy involved.

How to Plan Your Elopement?

So, you have settled on elopement as your choice of wedding – what next? Many couples know they want to elope, but are unsure about exactly how to elope! One of the first things that you will need to do is create an elopement checklist. We appreciate that this might be difficult if you don't know where to begin, so why not take a look at our Ultimate Elopement Checklist for some inspiration? We also have a few tips to get you started. All of this is why WhereToElope.com is the easiest way to 'Just Married'!

Get Ready To Elope

There are a few things that need to be considered very early on as these are going to shape how your elopement actually turns out. The first one is perhaps the biggest consideration – **set your budget!** You can have a very low cost elopement for just a couple of hundred bucks, or you can push the boat out and have something more extravagant. It all comes down to the budget as this will make the difference between a basic courthouse affair in your home town and a more elaborate destination wedding. Think carefully about how much you have available to spend. It might be worth looking at our elopement budget and we'll do that in the next chapter.

The next thing to do is **choose a date**. If you are having an intimate elopement with just the two of you then you only need to think about when you are both able to take time away from work and other commitments. However, if you plan on taking a handful of guests, choosing a date might pose more of a problem. Elopements can be planned in advance; you don't have to run off at the last minute. In fact – some of the most popular elopement venues have lengthy waiting lists!

Once the date and the budget are settled it will become far easier **to choose your location** and venue. Take some time to browse the destinations we have discussed in the where section of WhereToElope.com for inspiration.

Don't Forget The Legal Side!

Once you have a location in mind it is essential that you **find out what the legal requirements are** for marrying in that location. Some states may require waiting periods or blood tests and the required documentation may also vary from one place to another. Make sure that you have everything you need in order to get your marriage license in plenty of time to avoid hiccups on the big day! We've provided a summary of the Marriage Requirements by State and Province on WhereToElope.com.

These are the basic steps you need to take in order to elope, but you will also need to flesh out the smaller details such as what to wear and other details listed in our Ultimate Elopement checklist chapter.

How Can I Keep My Elopement On Budget?

According to our ongoing survey regarding why couples choose to elope, the number one reason for choosing elopement is that this type of wedding can be pulled off for around 10% or less of the cost of a traditional wedding. It could be that you do not have the money to spend on a lavish wedding, which with many couples footing the bill for their own nuptials is perhaps more common than you might think. Alternatively, you may be one of those couples who just do not see the point in spending vast sums of money on a wedding ceremony when it could be used to buy your first home! Whatever your reasons for wanting to spend less on your wedding, it is important to decide on a budget and stick to it. That's why the elopement budget spreadsheet is part of our commitment to the easiest way to "just married".

Download the Elopement Budget Spreadsheet!

When planning a wedding, even an intimate elopement, it is easy to get carried away. There are hundreds of couples out there who started out thinking that they only wanted a basic courthouse wedding with just the two of them and end up with a much more lavish affair because they got carried away once they saw some of the services being offered including cakes, flowers and romantic carriage rides! We totally get it! Weddings are exciting and everyone wants a special day and with so many romantic places to elope listed on WhereToElope.com it is very easy to get carried away!

That's why we have created the elopement budget spreadsheet. Once you have figured out exactly how much money you have available in your elopement budget, you can use our helpful spreadsheet to decide how much of your money to allocate to each area of your wedding. That way you can budget for the essential items and then in the event that you overspend on any area you will be able to clearly see where adjustments can be made.

You can download the WhereToElope.com Budget Spreadsheet by visiting www.wheretoelope.com/budget/.

The Ultimate Elopement Checklist

Regardless of whether you have decided to have a traditional wedding or an elopement, one thing is certain – you have some planning ahead of you! When it comes to planning a wedding there is a lot to think about and because it is also very exciting it becomes easy for some important decisions to slip under the radar. No-one wants to suddenly realize that they have missed an important piece of paperwork or forgotten to order the wedding rings. That is why wedding checklists have become a key feature of many wedding websites and magazines. They offer a step by step guide for couples to help them get from engagement to just married.

Of course, by their very nature elopements involve much less planning, but there is potentially still a fair amount of planning to get through. Often a traditional wedding checklist is no use as an elopement does not have the same considerations and time lines. With that in mind, and as part of our ongoing commitment to showing couples the easiest way to 'just married' we have created a wedding checklist especially for couples who are choosing to elope.

A Checklist Designed Specifically For Elopements

Our simplified wedding checklist covers all of the important factors to consider when planning an elopement including setting a budget, choosing the date and deciding where to elope. This checklist will ensure that you do not miss important arrangements such as legal documentation, booking an Officiant or making travel arrangements. You can simply download and print the checklist and tick the items off as you arrange and confirm them. The checklist is provided in Word format so that you are able to go ahead and add in additional items that are unique to your own wedding.

Don't get bogged down by the planning, your elopement should be stress free and when you use our elopement wedding checklist you will be taking the first step to ensuring that your wedding goes off without any problems.

Elopement Checklist

Now that you are engaged, it is likely that you will already have seen some of the wedding planning checklists that are available from most wedding magazines and websites. If so, then you have probably found it fairly daunting to see all of the things that should be done as much as a full year prior to your wedding. The good news is that when you choose to elope, the checklist is much shorter! Below you will find our basic elopement checklist, which can be adapted to meet your own requirements.

Elopement Wedding Checklist

	Decide on your budget – this will impact many other decisions so should be nailed down as early as possible. The average cost of an all-inclusive elopement package is around \$2,500, but eloping is possible for under \$100.
	Choose the date – It depends where you want to marry as you will be bound by availability, but it is wise to establish a rough idea of a suitable date, especially if you are restricted by vacation time at work.
	Pick where to elope – Once you have a date range in mind you can start thinking about where you will elope to. This means not only nailing down the state or the city, but also the venue itself. Be sure to check out our destination pages for ideas.
	Make a guest list – Eloping does not necessarily mean that you cannot have guests. Some couples do go it alone, but just as many include their parents or best friends. Many venues do provide elopement ceremonies for up to 20 guests. Decide how many people you wish to include (or how many your budget will allow) and ensure that your chosen venue can accommodate this number.
	Arrange additional extras – If you will be looking for additional wedding services such as flowers, photography and wedding cake then you will need to research local suppliers or check if your venue can arrange these on your behalf as part of an elopement package.
	Book your elopement package – Once you have chosen your venue and finalized a date, you can go ahead and book everything. If you have chosen a venue which offers elopement packages then this might involve just one booking.
	Book an Officiant – If there is no Officiant included with your elopement package then you will need to secure one of your own and book them for the wedding date.
	Take care of the legal requirements – You will need to check the legal requirements for your chosen location and make the necessary arrangements to apply for your marriage license. You may also need to submit to a blood test in certain areas. This is perhaps the most important point on the checklist as without it there will be no wedding.
	Book your accommodations – If you intend to stay at the venue, or someplace close by then you will need to book accommodation for you and any guests who will attend the elopement ceremony.
	Make your travel arrangements – If you are traveling out of state – or out of the country then you will need to make arrangements for travel. Will you fly to the wedding destination or is it within driving distance?
	Choose your wedding attire – You will need to think about wedding attire. Often eloping means that the bride can ditch the dress mess, but she may wish to pick out something special to wear. Choose fabrics that will travel well if necessary.
	Buy your rings – Don't forget to pick up wedding rings to exchange during the ceremony!
	Elope – Once you have taken care of everything else on the list, all that is left to do is to wait for your wedding day to roll around and go ahead and elope.

You can also download a copy of this checklist by visiting www.wheretoelope.com/checklist/.

Elope And Save 90% On Your Wedding

At WhereToElope we truly do believe that eloping is the best alternative to the traditional marriage!


As shown on the pages of this book and on WhereToElope.com there are overwhelming and indisputable evidence now that you can save 90% on your wedding and still have a honeymoon.

We hope that after reading this book you agree and we look forward to helping you find the perfect place to elope and an elopement package that fits your style and budget.

Please visit one of our elopement related websites listed below in the near future.

Thanks for considering eloping as your alternative.

Let's help couples elope,



Dave Westfall, Publisher



Please Visit Our Websites:

www.wheretoelope.com

www.weddingelopementpackges.com

www.weddingsonwednesday.com

www.bestplacestoelope.com

You can email us at:

questions@wheretoelope.com

Download our Mobile App



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