
Weddings on a budget by Valerie Kerri

THE FRUGAL



Get married fabulously in London on a budget.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Dear Future Bride,

I hope you are still in the glow and ecstasy from your engagement day! I have been there and I want to tell you to enjoy this time as much as possible. It goes by so quickly!

The first time I got engaged I planned to take 2 years to do it! That didn't work out QUITE the way I thought that would go. We never made it down the aisle that time, but the hassle of dealing with the planning was one of the main pitfalls of the process. The second time around we didn't want the process to be stressful and we wanted to get it out of the way as much as possible.

My partner and I decided to get married in 14 weeks after we got engaged again, by the time we started planning we had 12 weeks to go and we actually DID IT! I cant tell you how many questions we got about how we did it with the budget we had (tiny!) , in the time we had (not a lot) and still got the result we had!

It was a beautiful 160-guest wedding in London. I got to wear three wedding dresses (yes!) and my partner had his wish of a stress-free wedding. All our guests seemed happy and we had the best day of our life (so far)!

I hope this guide helps you and I wish you the best day ever.

Sincerely,

Valerie Kerri

www.valeriekerri.com

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SAVE

ON INVITATIONS

My biggest savings was on Invitations. Invitations I designed and printed myself. I used Canva which is a free tool and printed with Moo.com. We also used paperless post to send most of our invites to the younger guests. We saved £200-£300 on stamps / printing.

SPLURGE

ON PHOTOGRAPHS

The one thing we did not want to get wrong was the photographs. A good photographer will keep the memories of the day long after the day has gone.

A good photographer can make anything look amazing. From £1500 for 8 hrs.

SKIP

CHAIR COVERS

One of the most useless things was chair covers. I was told that everyone needed them but I very rarely see good looking chair covers for hire. We instead got a venue that came with amazing chairs and skipped the covers altogether. We saved £350 +VAT

➔ Food Menus

An easy and classy addition to your wedding is to print fancy looking food menu on a printing site like vistaprint / Moo.com (See Food + Drink Page)



Placing them on the table as part of the table decorations and its an easy way to get your guests up to speed on what the menu is.

Cost: £40 for 250; Design: Free- Canva

➔ Videography



We played around with if we wanted to get a Videographer or not. It was the least priority item on our list so we waited to see if we kept to our budget elsewhere.

Once we had some left over dosh, we found one online. I asked for a discount due to the last minute booking and he offered a 25% reduction on regular rates. Always ask.

➔ Wedding Favours

I hate wedding favours that cannot be used (i.e I would have got one in everyday life normally) or eaten. We went with eaten and got edibles.



We got luxury sweets in bulk from Amazon for a fraction of the retail price and some gourmet Nigerian Chin-chin. We filled up little favour boxes and placed them on the charger plates. The boxes we in the same theme as the rest of the wedding so tied in nicely. They were also an unusual shape which was lush.

Sweets: £60; Boxes (150): £40; Chin-Chin; £20



THE VENUE

Pick a weekday like Thursday or Friday to save up to 40%! If your guests are willing a mid week date will get a discount of up to 60%. An all-in-one venue saves a lot of money compared to having your ceremony and reception at different locations. It also means you don't worry about transport between venues and your guest don't worry about parking two times in one day.

Check for corkage and VAT costs BEFORE paying a deposit down. Check the vendors are happy with the venue as well. We had to change an initial venue choice due to one venue not having space for cooking in the kitchen.

Ask for extra's discounts, we got a further 20% off for just asking if we could get a last minute booking discount. We got it and a free table plan easel.



TRADITIONAL YET MODERN

One of the elements of our wedding was incorporating the traditional aspects of our Nigerian Igbo heritage. On the day we paid homage to our culture by having the elder guests share our table and we broke kola nut and gave a piece to all our guests by way of welcome.

Our food was also predominantly Nigerian so that our non-Nigerian guests could experience the diversity of our food and flavours.

We also had a 'high table' with the elder guests rather than the bridal party.

→ The cake

We were really cheeky with our cake. We did not say it was for a wedding. If your cake design tastes are simple and standard, you can get a much better discount with your cake by not mentioning that its a 'wedding cake'. Just order it as a cake. No further info required. Skip any wedding sections on the bakers website and just order a cake!



→ Games + Entertainment



Our good friend Midé performed a live song during the reception and we had a lot of outdoor games for the guests to play during the cocktail hour.

We chose the Mr and Mrs question game as it involved the guests and it was a fun way to connect to my new Husband! Thankfully we answered almost all questions in sync!!!

Outdoor Games: Giant Jenga + Connect 4: £50

→ Transportation



To avoid spending too much money on transportation, we made sure the venue was super close to the hotel we stayed in the night before.

Thankfully we were blessed to know some very successful people so we simply asked everyone we knew who had a really nice car, if we could borrow it (and them as drivers) for the day. My brother drove me in his car and I got to spend the 10 minute ride laughing with my nearest and dearest to calm my nerves.

3 Range Rovers: £0; Time with family: Priceless

Speak to your catering team about desserts they offer, most offer a cake dessert option. It is usually cheaper to get a modest wedding cake, cut it for the 'Feed your new husband/ Wife' part, then serve the catering staff option.

Cake topper (Amazon) £5, Cake knives (Ali- Express) £4, Mr & Mrs sign (Amazon) £5, Cake: @PaddyCakes

**“WHEN YOU
REALIZE YOU
WANT TO SPEND
THE REST OF
YOUR LIFE WITH
SOMEBODY, YOU
WANT THE REST
OF YOUR LIFE TO
START AS SOON
AS POSSIBLE.”**

—WHEN HARRY MET SALLY



Finding *the Dress*

TOP TIPS

1. Take no more than two trusted friends to the store. Less is more.
2. Don't buy right away. If you find 'the one' come back in 48 hours
- 3 Check the return and refund policy on all items.
4. Take your heels + wedding underwear with you.
5. 'Second-hand' can also be just as new!
6. If you don't want to keep your dress after the day, sell it on pre-loved.com

Picking the dress was an interesting experience. It started off weirdly because I didn't really want a 'white' dress. I always wanted a pale golden ethereal creation, like a cross between a Greek & African princess.

Alas, I conformed and started the hunt for something traditional. After several failed starts (I left a store once in tears as they didn't stock anything over a size 8), I ended up at David's Bridal in Stratford with 3 of my bridesmaids. It was a fun few hours but the moment I put on the Oleg Cassini ball gown I felt like a princess.

As I had yet to find ANY dress at this point I paid for it, thinking I could always return it if I changed my mind. It was very pricey and I was hoping to find something cheaper. Little did I know that David's Bridal has a **NO REFUND/ NO EXCHANGE** policy.

On the next visit to see get the measured, I realised, I loved the dress but didn't LOVE it enough to wear for the whole day! It was huge! I wanted to dance & move.

"I WENT BACK TO TRY THE DRESS AGAIN 4 TIMES BUT I HAD PAID SO I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO TAKE IT!!"

Around the same time, I tried a simple yet elegant Mori Lee dress in a small store by my home. I was in love! I went back to try my original dress 4 times but I had paid so I had no choice but to take it. My wedding planner even came with me once when I had a meltdown!

I searched on **www.preloved.com** and found my simple dress for less than £200 from a bride that cancelled her wedding. I bought it! So now I had two white dresses. I wore them both!!! Haha. Actually I wore 3 as I changed into a sexy glittery evening dress later in the evening.





The Bridal Party group was amazing, they were our nearest and dearest who went above and beyond to help us make the day happen. They agreed to pay for the outfits they wore and all the accessories They also helped us immensely with tasks for the day. This really helped us on the day to manage tasks and cut down on costs. We needed help with the following;

1. Handling of money /gifts
2. Serving High table + VIP guests
3. Confirming the wedding cake + items were returned to the van
4. Ensuring the brides wedding dress + groom's suits are returned to the hotel
5. Movement of Chairs after ceremony
6. Movement of left over drinks / decorations back to the van
7. Bar Assistance rotation

TOP TIP

Make sure you ASK the members of your party before you labour them with the bill. They are giving YOU a gift by spending money on these things for YOUR day. Don't assume they will.

Make sure the colours/ prices /styles can work for most of the members of the party to ensure you are being fair

White Wedding Dresses :

1. Oleg Cassini (Davids Bridal)
2. Mori Lee (5108) (pre-loved.com)
3. Unknow designer (Fonthill Road)

Bridesmaids Dresses:

Oleg Cassini (Davids Bridal)

Groomsmen Suits:

MOSS BROS

Our Bridal Party was amazing. They paid for the outfits and accessories they wore and they really helped out with various tasks on the day (even clearing up!) .



FOOD

Food is of course a massive part of any wedding. If you have an specialist menu like a Nigerian / Asian Menu, it can be more difficult to find good caterers. Luckily for us food was not too much of an issue as I had already done some of the steps below ahead of time.

STEP 1 - Decide on the Menu!!!

I am serious, decide what exactly you MUST have on the menu ahead of time so you wont be swayed by tempting (more expensive) options.

STEP 2- Taste the food :)

Always taste the food at an official tasting. Probably best to combine with Step 3 so you can taste the 'real food' and not just the tasting event samples.

STEP 3- See them in action.

Ask if you can attend an event they are catering to for a few minute to see them work. The best place to get a caterer is to get the name of a caterer at an event you have been to.

STEP 4 - Visit the venue with them

To make sure you have no surprises, make sure you visit the venue with the Caterer. Some venues dont have kitchen space or have specific rules for what can an cannot be prepared on site. Its also helpful so the server

STEP 5- Confirm everything in writing at least 1 month before the day.

My Wedding planner was really helpful here as she took on the task of confirming every little thing I worried about. From little square tissues for the snacks to the colour of the silverware (I needed it to match the decor).

STEP 6- Trust them

If your family want to contribute to the food by bringing some dishes. make sure you tell the caterer. Also trust that they know what they are doing & leave them in charge.

STEP 7 - Thank them

Self- explanatory! Always say thank you at the end of the night.



DRINKS

My partner and I love a good drink up but alcohol can easily be the most expensive part of your wedding. Many people buy alcohol in small quantities over time to try and reduce the costs. I think this is a false saving as you need to store the purchases and each of those trips can add up.

We also wanted our personality to show through with the drinks menu as we both helped organise Events/ Party nights as part of our various businesses. Thankfully as part of that we had experience with getting cheap booze and getting more bang for our buck.

On a recommendation, we took a look at this amazing website

<https://www.calaiswine.co.uk/> where we could get wine from £1.79 and Champagne from £4. That was crazy! They even give you a free return ferry ride for spending more than £500. A day in France and cheap Booze? Win!

TOP TIP: get only one type of spirit to ensure it could be used multiple times and reduce waste. Rum was our favourite and we had two signature cocktails which were easy and run based.

Glass hire is FREE from Waitrose, if you register to an account (for free). We use this option regularly for smaller parties. We decided against this on the day as the hassle of making sure the glasses were returned and packed up was too much on the day for the manpower we had.

We had a lovely Vendor provide Mocktails during cocktail hour which were alcohol free but kept our guest occupied during the day till we started serving alcohol.

IG: @SipGeeks



GUESTS 160 - NO KIDS

VENUE

**LONDON SHENLEY CLUB
SUMMER MARQUEE**

PLANNER/COORDINATER:

**KIT EVENTS
@KITEVENTSUK**

MC:

**CHARLES EMEKA
@CHARLES_EMEKA1**

PHOTOGRAPHER:

**FDANPHOTOGRAPHY
@FDANPHOTOGRAPHY**

VIDEOGRAPHER:

**HAWAIIN SHIRT PHOTOGRAPHY
@HAWAIIANSHIRTPHOTOGRAPHY**

DJ:

**DJ MRI
@DJYUNGMILLI**

MOCKTAILS

**SIPWORKS
@SIPWORKS**

DECOR:

**BRIDE'S OWN+ HIRE ITEMS
@DRESSITYOURSELF**

CATERER:

**CHEF KENNY AND ABBY
+447496182497**

WWW.VALERIEKERRI.COM

VENDORS