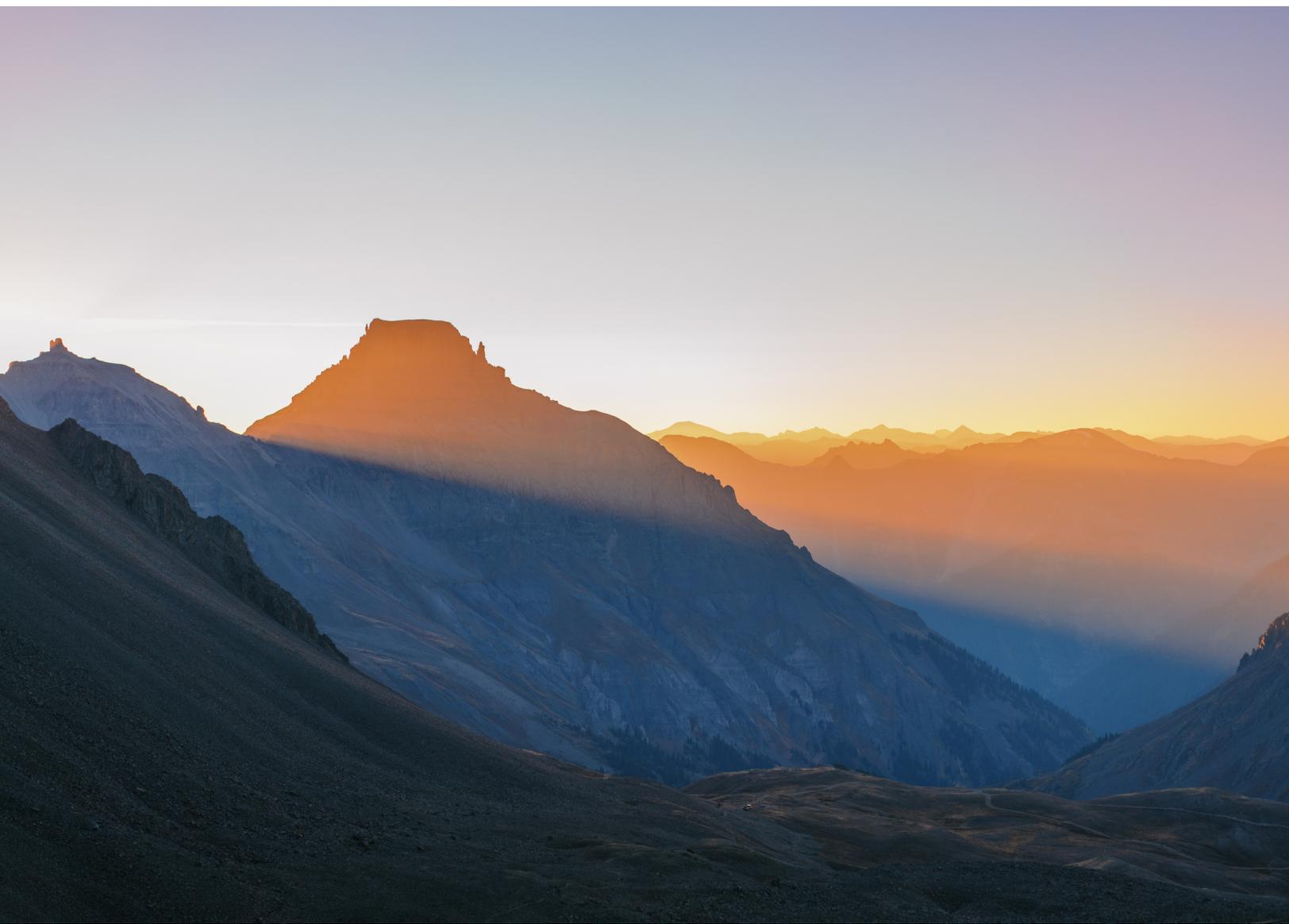


HOW TO ELOPE

A Guide  
To Your  
Intimate Wedding  
Experience



*Exclusive Client Guide from  
Shell Creek Photography*

QUALITY ELOPEMENTS



COLORADO & BEYOND

*Bold + Adventurous*

# Shell Creek

PHOTOGRAPHY





# A Note From Me

Hey you two! I can't tell you how excited I am that you both have chosen to throw tradition to the wind, grab hold of what's important to both of you, and create an incredibly unique wedding experience that's a true reflection of who you are.

There aren't a lot of couples that are brave enough to follow their hearts instead of following the "rules," so, I'll just say it outright—congrats on being pretty damn awesome.

The most amazing thing about choosing to elope is that you can forget all expectations, opinions, and obligations about what you're "supposed" to do, and instead focus entirely on what matters most to you two, with nothing holding you back.

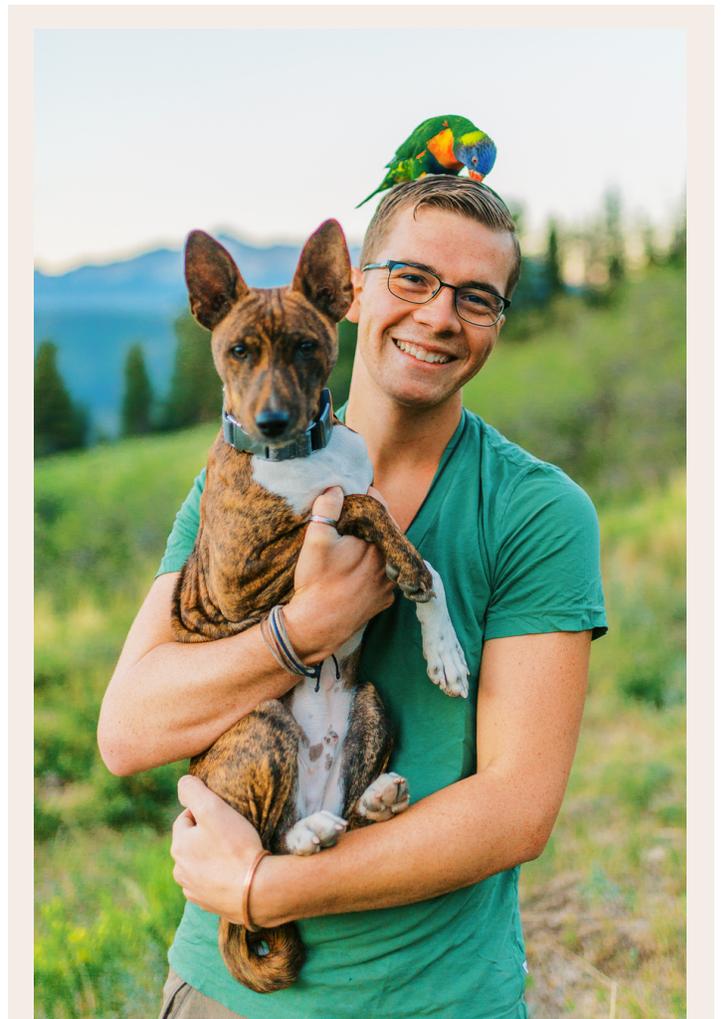
All of this freedom can be a bit overwhelming though—when there's no longer any "rules" or "formula" on what your wedding day is "supposed" to be, then how do you plan it?

That's where me & this guide come in—to help make the process of dreaming and planning your unique wedding day as simple and stress-free as possible.

I'm here for you every step of the way. So sit back, relax, and enjoy the process of creating a wedding experience that you'll love every minute of.

I can't wait to get to know you two better and help you create an incredible elopement day!

**- Malachi Lewis**





# How This Works

## 6 Steps to planning your elopement

Just like there's not just one way to elope, there's also not just one way to plan an elopement. So while these are generally the steps to follow, it's not always a linear process. And if you need help along the way, I'm here for you!

### 01 Dream up your best day (Pages 7-10)

The first step in any great creative process is to dream & brainstorm. This is where you and your partner explore all of the possibilities of what your day could look like—without being hindered by details or logistics yet.

### 02 Make the big decisions first (Pages 11-24)

Once you have an overall vision for what you two want out of your day, it's time to make the biggest decisions that will affect your elopement experience the most: who are you inviting, where are you going, and how long you're going for.

### 03 Plan out the details (Pages 25-55)

The next step is plan out all of your details for your day including booking your travel and a place to stay, choosing your vendors, deciding on activities, picking out your wedding day attire, and gathering any other items or gear you may need.

### 04 Craft your timeline (Pages 56-82)

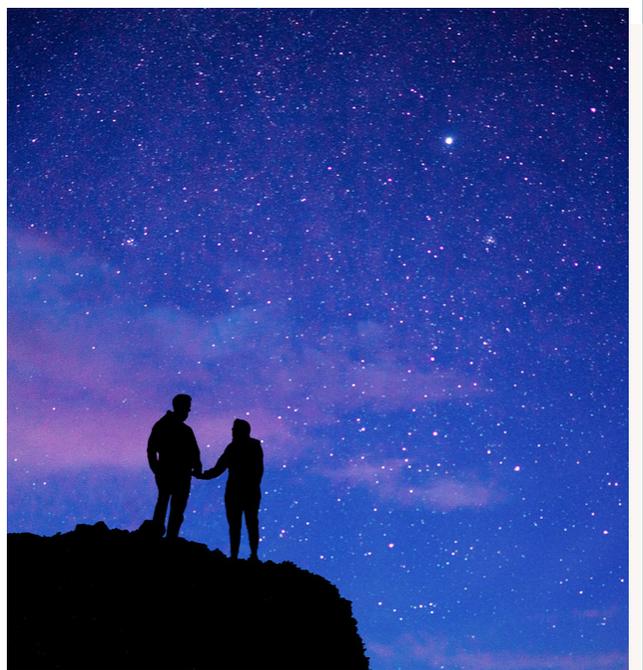
Once you have all of the details decided on, it's time to put your vision all together and create a timeline for your elopement or intimate wedding day (or multiple days) that fits everything you want to experience.

### 05 Get ready to go (Pages 57-86)

Now the planning is done and you just need to gather everything you need, pack for your trip, make sure you communicate with your guests (if you have any), and get ready to have an amazing day!

### 06 Have the best day ever (Pages 87-92)

You did it! Your day is here. Relax and soak in every moment and be fully present with your partner. Enjoy the incredible experience you created together as you say your vows and commit your lives to each other.



# 01

## Dream Up Your Best Day

### What would your wedding day look like if there were no boundaries?

When you first start planning your elopement—the best mindset you and your partner can have is one with no boundaries. This part of the process has nothing to do with limits, so forget for a moment about what’s “feasible,” and just let yourself dream.

I whole-heartedly believe that no single elopement or intimate wedding is exactly like another—just like there’s no couple out there that’s exactly the same. So don’t limit yourself to what you’ve seen on blogs, social media, from friends and family, or even from me. Your wedding day is about creating a day that’s going to make you feel the most alive, happy, relaxed, and in-love.

This part of the planning process is all about letting your imagination go wild, and envisioning the most enjoyable day for the two of you, that would celebrate your relationship in the most authentic way. Forget about any restrictions for a moment and just dream big—that’s where you’ll find what speaks most to you. You’ll have time to figure out the details later.

### Pro Tip: Make brainstorming about your best wedding experience a date night!

Cuddle up on the sofa, have a delicious dinner, or go for a walk to your favorite place—whatever’s your favorite way to spend quality time with your partner, go do it!

Start thinking about what the perfect elopement day would look like for you both if there were no obstacles in your way.

Grab your partner’s hand (seriously, do it!) and shut your eyes. Think hard about the day you’re going to stand next to each other, holding each other’s hands like you’re doing right now, and saying your vows. Try to picture it all.

Now, ask yourself: Where are you? What do you see?

You don’t need to know specifics to give this experiment a go—this can be super vague to start. Are you on top of a mountain you’ve just hiked up? Are you hanging out in a rooftop bar looking out at the city lights? Are you standing between vines tasting wines? Are you sitting in a kayak on a river? Are you running hand-and-hand down a moody, sandy beach toward a picnic blanket decked out with your favorite treats?

There are no wrong answers. The most important thing is to try to let go of what anyone else thinks and to avoid shooting down ideas for not being practical (just yet).



# Prompts to inspire you as your brainstorm:

**Looking for a few creative questions to get the brainstorming going? Here's some questions to think about together:**

- What have been the best days that you two have had together as a couple? Where were you and what did you do together?
- Describe how the perfect elopement day would feel—are you relaxed? Excited? Happy? Content? Free of any and all stress? Really talk about the feeling you're chasing.
- Close your eyes and picture your wedding day—what's it like? Are there other people around? Or is it just you? Do you see busy streets, family & friends, your dog(s) or an empty landscape?
- What does the scenery look like? Do you see mountains? A city skyline? A waterfall? An ocean? Cliffs? A desert? A lake? A cabin in the woods? A vineyard? A beach?
- What about the weather, temperature, and what you are wearing? What would be the most comfortable and the most "you"?
- How much time are you dedicating to your elopement? Is it part of a honeymoon trip? Is it a weekend adventure in your favorite spot or a multi-week trek somewhere new?
- Who do you see there with you on your day? Your friends? Family members? Your furry best friend? Or are you craving a "just for us" day?
- What are you doing on your day together on your wedding day—are you going out for a drive or going on a hike? What about relaxing in a hammock or soaking in a hot spring?
- What does your ceremony look like? Are you reading vows? Are there religious or traditional aspects? Is there something meaningful you'd love to include that's special for you?
- How did you fall in love—are there ways you want to implement that into your ceremony? A special place? A special moment? A special song?
- Are you eating your favorite foods on your elopement day? Drinking your favorite beverages?

**Pro Tip: Write down all of the ideas that are sparked during this process so that you can refer back to them later when you're making concrete decisions.**





# 02

## Make the Big Decisions First

Once you have come up with the overall vision for your day, the next step of the planning process is about making the biggest decisions that will most affect your elopement experience: who you're inviting, where you're getting married, and how long your whole trip is going to be.

Take your time with these and make sure what you choose is in alignment with what you two decided you wanted out of your wedding experience when you were brainstorming.



# Decide On "Who"

## ARE YOU INVITING ANY FRIENDS OR FAMILY?

For some couples, this is a super easy question to answer—and for others, it's more of a debate. The truth is—an elopement doesn't have to be just two people. You can definitely still have an intimate elopement experience and a day that's fully centered on your relationship with your closest friends and/or family involved.

However, if you do decide to invite family or friends along, whether it's just a celebratory meal, the getting ready portion of the day, just the ceremony, or the whole day, make sure they're fully on board with your vision and understand that you're not having a big traditional wedding—but a unique celebration that's authentic to your relationship.





## Things to consider when considering eloping with family or friends

- Out of the people you're considering inviting, is everyone on that list going to be just as excited as you about the experience and be fully on board for what you have envisioned for your day?
- Is there someone who you think it would be really meaningful to hear your vows, or would you rather read them privately to your partner without anyone else listening?
- Do you feel like inviting a few people could result in a "snowball effect" where you have to continue to invite more, or is there a clearly defined "short list" that you don't imagine would spiral out of control?
- Is there anyone you're planning to invite that may try to take over or take control of your experience, try to shift focus away from what matters to the two of you, or who makes you uncomfortable, nervous, or stressed out?
- How accessible do you envision your ceremony location is going to be? Can everyone you want to invite physically make it to that kind of spot?
- What about transportation and lodging? Where is everyone traveling from and is it possible for them to get to and from your location? Are there going to be suitable places for everyone to stay nearby?

As you decide, remember that there are many beautiful ways to include family or friends in your "getting married" experience, even if they're not physically present when you say your vows. There's no right or wrong answer here as you're following your heart. Don't compromise. Don't fall victim to expectations. Don't let anyone else tell you how to have your day (that's what big weddings are for).

# How to involve friends & family on your elopement day

If you do decide to bring friends and family along to your elopement, there are multiple options on how you can include them in your day.

## HAVE ONE, INTIMATE CEREMONY

Planning a single ceremony to include your family and friends in your elopement is a beautiful way to have the people closest to you standing right by your side as you commit your lives to each other. The only caveat is that you might have to consider making compromises about the ceremony location to make sure to accommodate everyone's needs.



## SPREAD IT OVER TWO DAYS

If you like the idea of doing two ceremonies but feel like that would make for a very long day—spreading your elopement experience over two days can be the perfect solution to really being able to relax and not feel super rushed or exhausted. You can include your friends and family on the first day, and then have a second day all to yourselves. Or, you can have your dream 2-person elopement experience on Day 1, and then celebrate and take photos with your friends and family on the following day.

## SPLIT UP THE DAY

If you want to involve your family and friends in your ceremony, but don't want to make compromises on your ceremony location you can have a private vow-reading with just you and your partner, and then have another ceremony with your family and friends during a different part of the day. You can choose to read the same vows for both ceremonies or you can keep your vows private and have a different type of ceremony in front of your family and friends. This way, you get to read your vows in total privacy, in the exact location you're envisioning, but also have a meaningful ceremony with your closest people next to you.

## INCLUDE THEM IN OTHER INTIMATE MOMENTS

Your family and friends can be physically present and involved in your wedding day, even if you don't necessarily want to have a ceremony with them. You can invite them to help you get ready or see your first look, before sending you off to have an entirely private ceremony by yourselves. Or you can invite them to just take some formal portraits with you afterward and have a celebratory dinner in the evening.

# How to involve friends & family if they're not physically present

If you choose to have a “just us” 2-person wedding, or if you have family members or friends who aren't able to be physically present—you can still involve them in the process of you getting married in many creative and beautiful ways.



- Throw an engagement party
- Ask them to help you pick out your wedding attire
- Invite them to watch you sign your marriage license before you leave for your trip
- Include family heirlooms as detail items in your day
- Facetime, Skype, or Zoom them on your day
- Invite them to write letters that you'll read during your ceremony
- Invite them to write letters that you'll read during your day
- Send them photos, videos, and selfies during your day
- Open gifts or cards from them on your day
- Bring something back for them from your trip
- Have a party or reception with them after your elopement
- Share your full gallery of photos with them (you can even have a photo reveal party!)
- Gift them prints or an album

# How to tell your friends & family of your plans



Whether you're eloping just the two of you or inviting some friends & family but not others, it's important to think through how you want to communicate your decision to have a wedding day that's unique to the two of you.

You can choose to tell everyone in advance and even send out an announcement, or you can tell a select few people only or keep your plans entirely secret and announce it after. Do what feels the most empowering to the two of you that will enable you to relax and fully enjoy your day, without anyone else's opinions or expectations. These are my best tips on how to make the news go over as smoothly as possible if you choose to share.

## **TIP 1: Drop Hints And Be Obvious**

Dropping hints before getting engaged or announcing your elopement can ease friends and family into the idea of you eloping without you formally having to tell them yet—reducing objections and any surprises. If there are certain people you expect will be more skeptical of the idea of an elopement, you can also ask other friends and family members to help you drop hints too.

## **TIP 2: Tell Them Face To Face (Or on a Video Call)**

Many couples opt for telling their friends and family that they are eloping in-person because it makes it easier to explain why you are choosing an elopement and to share your genuine excitement through your expression and voice. If they don't live close by, video chat is the closest replacement to telling them in-person.

## **TIP 3: Share Your Reasons Why**

Some friends and family members might react to your plans based upon the misconception that your elopement means excluding them—and explaining your reasoning behind why you decided to elope can help relieve those negative feelings.

A few common reasons you can share are:

- We wanted to do something incredibly meaningful to us on our wedding day
- We wanted our wedding day to be truly intimate and not performative
- We wanted to spend as much time together on our wedding day, making each other happy instead of any guests
- We wanted to say our vows in a beautiful and private place that just won't fit a huge group
- We wanted the process of getting married to be as stress-free as possible
- We don't want to wait to plan and pay for a big traditional wedding, and we are ready to celebrate our love sooner by eloping
- We decided to save for a house, a travel experience, or another investment instead of spending that money on a party

## **TIP 4: Keep Them Involved & Share As Many Details As You Can**

Asking your friends and family to participate in your planning process can help them feel like they are still involved in your big day in some way while also reassuring them that they are not being excluded. Telling your friends and family about all the details of your elopement day can help them understand the time, energy, effort, and thought that you've put into creating your elopement ceremony—and why it's perfect for you and your relationship. Keeping them informed allows them to feel involved and excited since they know what you are planning.

## **TIP 5: Share Your Photos With Them**

Some couples reveal their elopement with their friends and family by surprising them with the elopement pictures—which are the best and most tangible way to show how much fun you had on your actual elopement day. Sharing your photos can help those who weren't present understand what your elopement was all about because they can see your joy, your happiness, and overall how incredible the day was for you and your partner.

## **TIP 6: Remember The Day Is For You**

It's good to empathize with friends and family who may be initially disappointed in your plans—but don't forget that your wedding day is a celebration of your love with your partner (not anybody else) and that you deserve to have the day that feels right and authentic to you

# Decide On "Where"

## WHERE DO YOU WANT TO SAY YOUR VOWS?

There are a ton of factors that will affect your elopement day, but picking your location is one of the biggest pieces of the puzzle that will determine the experience of your elopement day.

Your location should feel right for you—it should be somewhere you feel overwhelmingly happy, somewhere you feel absolutely alive, somewhere you know you and your partner can focus on each other and truly be in the moment.

## FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN PICKING YOUR LOCATION

### 1 SCENERY & VIEWS

What type of scenery do you and your partner feel connected to? What views fill you with a sense of happiness, inspiration, and peace? Where would feel the most “you” to say your vows? Remember back to your brainstorming stage of the process and what you two determined about your vision for your day. What scenery would fulfil that experience that you’re dreaming of?

### 2 SEASONS & WEATHER

Some types of scenery and landscapes really shine at certain times of year—so consider the season you’ve chosen to elope, and what types of scenery are best at that time of year. If you’re getting married in the spring, waterfalls tend to be flowing there best, there’s usually a lot of snow at high altitudes, and the desert can be quite pleasant. If you’re eloping in the middle of summer, you could go somewhere with blooming wildflowers and high-elevations are more accessible. If you’re eloping in the fall, consider where the best fall colors may be.

### 3 ACCESSIBILITY

How accessible your location is will greatly affect your elopement-day experience. What types of transportation are you and any potential guests willing to take to get to your spot? A long car ride? A bumpy 4x4 road? A bush plane, float plane, helicopter, gondola, or ferry? Are you (and any potential guests) excited about hiking to a location? Make sure you deeply consider what experience would be the most fun, relaxing and totally “you.” How accessible you want your spot to be can help you narrow down your location options. Also keep in mind any other guests that might be attending and their capacity to travel or hike.

## **4 SECLUSION**

In a perfect world—your elopement location would ideally have world-class postcard scenery, super easy accessibility, and total seclusion—but most of the time you usually have to prioritize two out of those three. Some locations that are easier to access usually have less privacy because of it. The general rule of thumb (although not a set rule) is that the further you are willing to travel, the more secluded your spot will probably be—so ask yourself how many people you would be comfortable having around or how much privacy you would be willing to give up for a Instagram-trending view. You can also find great seclusion at “hidden gem” locations that are just as gorgeous as the Instagram trendy spots—just less well known. Eloping at sunrise is another way to get more privacy at a typically busy spot.

## **5 MEANING**

Be intentional about the place you decide on and the significance it has to you now or could have to you in the future. Maybe it is a favorite place to travel to with your partner, a place you’ve always wanted to go, or a place that you could travel back to every year to celebrate your anniversary.

## **6 EXPERIENCE & ACTIVITIES**

Beyond saying your vows and taking portraits, what else do you want to do on your elopement day (or weekend or longer)? Whether you want to relax in a hammock between the trees, take a helicopter or float plane ride, go sailing, kayaking, paddleboarding, skiing, paragliding, wine tasting, or stargazing—some locations will lend themselves better to certain activities. When you are planning these activities as a part of your day and your overall trip, keep in mind realistically how long they will take and how long it might take to get from one to the next (with a buffer just in case)! If you have your heart set on a particular activity—this could help you narrow down where you choose to elope.

## **7 GUESTS**

Do you want others to be involved in your elopement or just the two of you? If you do opt to invite guests, be intentional with how many people you invite, aware of any accessibility or travel needs, and decide on how much of the day they will be involved in. Figuring out the number of guests involved is an important component of choosing a location since some locations have very specific limits on the number of guests that can be in attendance—but don’t be discouraged because there are gorgeous places out there that can accommodate more guests! Just be certain that you are setting realistic expectations with any guests in attendance about how much traveling is involved and how much they are going to be involved with your elopement day.

# Tips for Picking the Best Location For You!



## PRIORITIZE YOUR EXPERIENCE

You've chose to elope in the first place because you and your partner wanted to be true to your authentic selves and have a fun, stress-free day—so don't pick a location that isn't aligned with what you two know about yourselves and what you really enjoy doing together on an everyday basis. There are endless beautiful places in the world—so don't feel any pressure to travel too far, hike too far, or do anything that isn't you, just to get to a certain backdrop. The most important thing is that you two enjoy your day —so make sure the spot you pick and what's required to get there, is aligned with that.

## DON'T RULE OUT A MULTI-LOCATION ELOPEMENT

Can't decide on a single spot for your elopement location? Then don't! Going to more than one location is a really great way to get a ton of variety of scenery, activities, and experiences. If you two love touring around, sightseeing, and soaking in as much as possible—a multi-location elopement could be perfect for you!

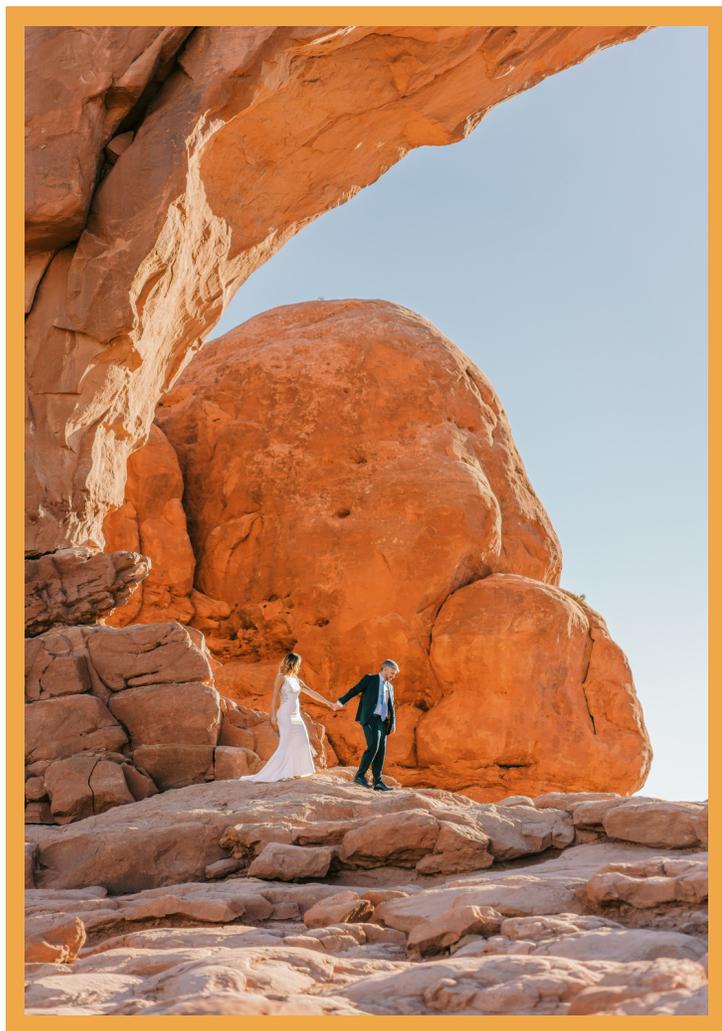
Also remember that you don't have to fit your elopement experience into one single day—if there are several spots you want to visit and see together, don't be afraid to spread your experience across more than one day.

## START THINKING ABOUT BACKUP LOCATIONS

While it's important to consider all of the factors that will help you narrow down to the most ideal elopement location—it's just as important to think about backup locations. When deciding on your first choice location, remember that sometimes conditions can be unpredictable (like road closures or bad weather)—especially if you want to elope outdoors. Having a flexible attitude toward where exactly you end up saying your vows can really help your wedding day be perfect, no matter what circumstances you run into. I recommend deciding on a few backup options in the early stages of the planning process so you'll feel super prepared in case they are needed.

## DON'T FORGET TO THINK ABOUT PERMITS

Many locations on public lands (like National Parks, State Parks, National Forest Land, BLM Land, etc) require permits in order to have a ceremony or have a photographer/videographer document it professionally. Before finalizing your location, make sure you contact the designated person or entity in charge of that location (like a ranger station or park staff in charge of special events, special use, or commercial use permits) and get first-hand information on what's required for your specific event. Some locations don't require a permit for smaller events, but it's important to always check ahead of time.



Ask about how much time would be needed to secure the permit, possible restrictions of the permits, how many guests that permit would allow for, whether or not the photographer would need to apply for a separate commercial use permit, and what the costs of the permits are. It's best to get permit information in writing in case you are asked to show proof.

## BE READY TO LEAVE NO TRACE

Leave No Trace is a set of ethics that everyone who recreationally uses the outdoors should strive to practice in order to do their part in protecting the environment. It is made up of 7 principles that guide decisions to leave the least amount of impact possible on outside spaces:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of other Visitors

To best follow Leave No Trace, you should do research beforehand so that you can make a plan to stick to trails and other durable surfaces, be ready to leave everything you find and pack out everything that you bring in, and be prepared in case you encounter any local wildlife.

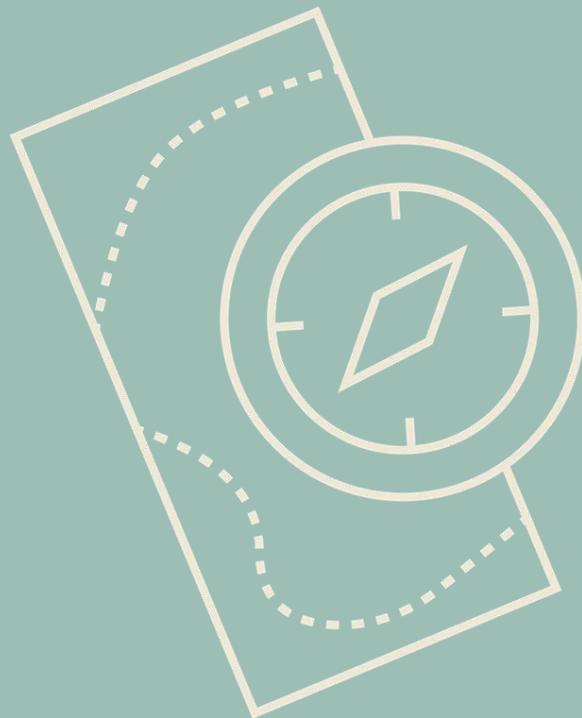
Following the Leave No Trace ethics helps preserve outdoor spaces and our access to them by making sure that we use them sustainably and responsibly—so that you can return to whatever location you choose to have a vow renewal or anniversary session and still have it be as pristine as the day that you got married.

# Decide on length of trip & celebrations

The journey from dating to being married can have many steps and “thresholds” that you two cross as a couple—so the final big-picture decision to make about your experience of getting married is how many days your whole trip is going to be and if there’s any additional celebrations you plan to have along the way.

## MULTI-DAY ELOPEMENT

Who says your wedding has to all fit into one single day? It doesn’t. Many couples choose to spread the joy over multiple days. You may want to consider a multi-day elopement if you want some of your time to be with friends & family, and some of it to be just you two. You may also have grand plans of exploring multiple places or going on a lengthy adventure just the two of you that spans multiple days. Make sure the overall trip you are planning includes time for your celebration to extend beyond just one day so that after you book travel & lodging, so you don’t look back and wish “Ah, I wish we had carved out more time!” In my experience, no one has ever said they wish they had planned a shorter trip, so when in doubt, go for more days rather than less.

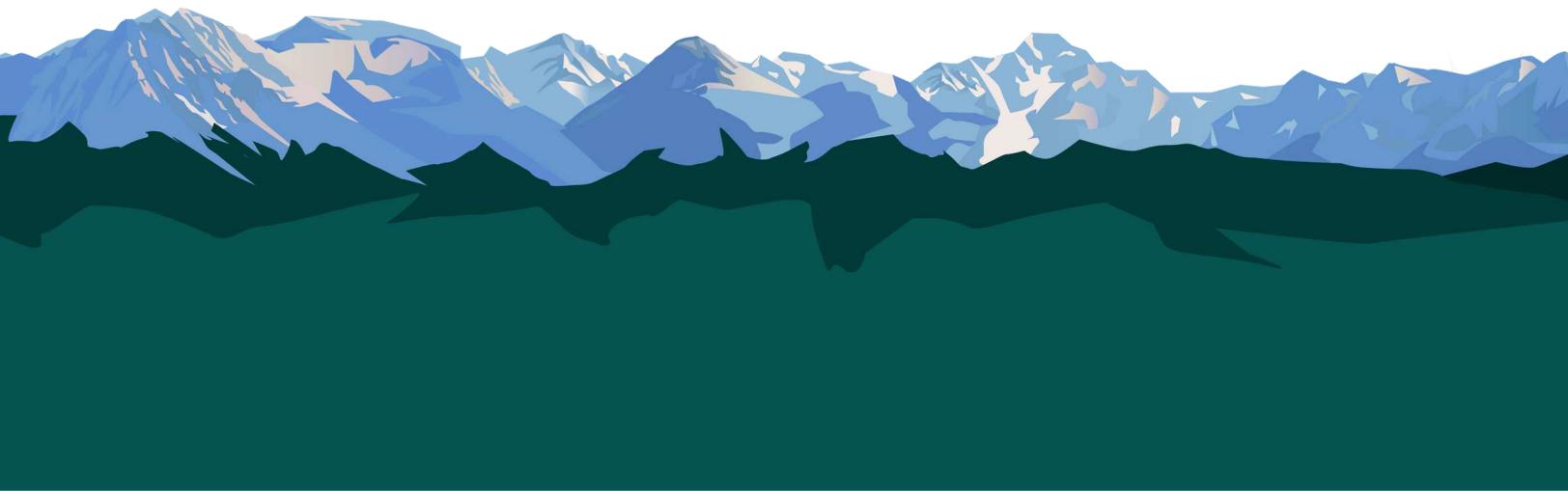


## POST-ELOPEMENT RECEPTION

One very popular route many couples take that helps more friends and family feel included is to have a party or celebration after their elopement day. You can have a reception the day-after your elopement, or in the same week—but from experience, I'd suggest you plan it 3-6 months afterward, so it's not stressing you out on your actual wedding day. A reception can be anything from a casual BBQ in your backyard, to taking over a local brewery or restaurant, to doing something fancy in a catered venue. Deciding to have a reception may change who you want to invite to your actual wedding day, or where you decide you want to elope—so this is a great decision to make early in the process, before you're too deep into planning.

## ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Just because you're eloping doesn't mean you shouldn't still have an engagement session! Engagement sessions are a fantastic way to enjoy the excitement of being engaged, have another fun adventure with your partner, and practice being relaxed in front of the camera. If you two have never been photographed professionally before, it can be really fun to go out on a totally casual adventure with me (your photographer) in your everyday attire and do something fun together that I'll document before your wedding day. Engagement photos are also perfect to use in elopement announcements, intimate wedding invitations, a guest book, or in decor for your elopement. If you'd like to chat more about doing an engagement session—just shoot me an email and I'd be stoked to chat about it with you!





# Plan Out the Details

# 03



Once you've figured out the big picture decisions for your day: who you're inviting, where you're going, and how long your trip is going to be –the next step of your elopement planning process is to plan out the details. You're going to need to book your travel, book a place to stay (either for just the two of you or also for your guests), choose what vendors to hire, what activities you two want to include in your experience, pick out your wedding day attire, and gather any extra gear you may need.



I'll be honest, this step can feel a bit overwhelming and lengthy—and yeah, there's a lot going on. Just remember that your elopement day is all about what you want—so if your vision doesn't include some of the things I go over here, don't sweat it. What matters most is that you two are planning the day that speaks to you!

Take your time with all of these decisions and most of all, have fun with it!

I'm here for you every step of the way, so if you have any questions or want more ideas or suggestions, feel free to reach out with questions—I've got your back..



# Book Your Travel

First of all—before booking your travel, make sure you’ve confirmed your chosen elopement location with me. That way I can make sure everything’s squared away and even give you some travel advice that’s specific to the spot you’re headed!

## TRAVEL BOOKING PRO TIPS

I basically travel for a living, so along the way, I’ve picked up a few must-know tips for booking your best travel experience.

### **TIP 1: Schedule So You Can Get to Your Location Early**

One thing I’ve learned by traveling is to not fly in the day before a big activity—so if at all possible, I highly suggest getting to your wedding location as early as your schedule allows. If there’s a time change from your home to your destination, giving yourself a few days to get adjusted really helps. If you’re going to a high-elevation location, it’s extremely helpful to have at least 48-72 hours to acclimate to the altitude before doing anything strenuous to best avoid altitude sickness. No matter how far you’re headed, giving yourself time to get settled and gather all of your day-of details without any stress (flowers, marriage licenses, wedding cake, etc.) is a much more relaxing experience.

### **TIP 2: Check Flight Sales & Use Rewards (if you have them)**

If you have been collecting travel rewards with credit cards, this could be a great reason to redeem them and splurge on your travel experience! Oftentimes, business class or first class flights are a really good value to redeem with points. If you haven’t explored credit card rewards for travel yet, exploring these 2 sites is a great place to start!

[thepointsguy.com](http://thepointsguy.com)

[millionmilessecrets.com](http://millionmilessecrets.com)

Flight sales may make more sense than using points. You can use the following to set flight alerts for sales from your local airport, to monitor sales for particular routes you are interested in, or to use their explore or map functions to find the best flight deals:

[google.com/flights](http://google.com/flights)

[kayak.com](http://kayak.com)

[scottscheapflights.com](http://scottscheapflights.com)

[Airfarewatchdog.com](http://Airfarewatchdog.com)



# Book Your Lodging

When it comes to planning your elopement, picking where you'll stay is almost as fun as choosing your ceremony spot. It's the place you'll wake up on your wedding day and where you'll come back to after you're married.

I personally suggest viewing your lodging as part of your whole wedding experience. Think outside the box and give yourself permission to consider really fun rentals like cute Airbnbs, A-frames in the woods, treehouses, yurts, oceanside villas, or any kind of place that's you think is aesthetically appealing, super enjoyable, and fits the vibe for the rest of your day. Pick somewhere that you two will thoroughly love spending time together.

## ACCOMMODATION BOOKING PRO TIPS

When it comes to planning your elopement, picking where you'll stay is almost as fun as choosing your ceremony spot. Try to think outside the box to truly maximize your whole experience—consider fun rentals, cute Airbnbs, A-frames in the woods, or any kind of place that's aesthetically appealing to you and fits the vibe for the rest of your day.

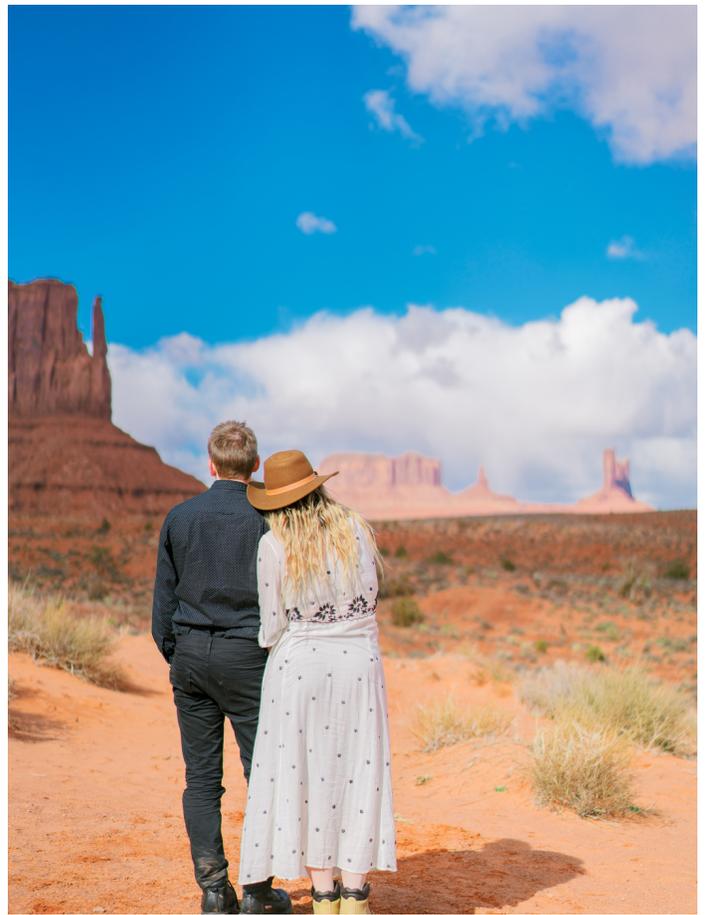
### Pro Tips for Booking Lodging:

- **Think about natural light and aesthetics**
- Are there good windows in your space? Does the decor vibe with the vision you have for your day? You might want some getting ready or other photos where you're staying and good lighting and decor can make a huge difference in your photos.
- **Check reviews**
- Especially when it comes to lodging, it's important to read listing descriptions and reviews thoroughly before booking to avoid any unwanted surprises.
- **How far is it from your ceremony spot?**
- Map your route on Google Maps between your ceremony spot and where you plan to stay. I suggest trying to find lodging as close to your location as possible (within 60 minutes drive if you can) so that you don't have to spend too much of your day driving. Some more remote areas may require more travel, but the closer you can stay to your ceremony location, the smoother your timeline will be.
- **Get some privacy**
- If you're having an intimate wedding with guests, think about booking your own space the night before and after your elopement so you can get plenty of rest and enjoy even more time together, just the two of you.

### NEED SOME ACCOMMODATION INSPIRATION? I'M HERE FOR YOU.

Where you stay for your elopement will absolutely affect your experience, so find a place that makes you happy! Here are a few resources I like to scope out when I'm looking for fun, unique places to stay.

- a) Airbnb
- b) VRBO
- c) Glamping Hub
- d) Boutique Homes
- e) Under Canvas
- f) InvitedHome
- g) Book a Treehouse
- h) Castle Rentals



# Choose Your Vendors & Details



## Vendors aren't just for traditional weddings, I promise!

While it's not required to hire any particular vendors (hair & makeup artist, florist, etc.) for your day, partnering with a few high-quality, amazing vendors who are on board with helping you create your dream elopement can absolutely elevate your experience and showcase your unique style.

Hiring vendors isn't necessarily about turning your day into a big production, but about getting some help so you don't have to do everything yourself. High quality vendors means you can relax, knowing some of the big day-of "to do's" are in the hands of a professional, and you can just sit back and enjoy the experience.

The most common vendors that couples hire for elopements & intimate weddings are florists, hair & makeup artists, officiants, chefs & caterers, and videographers. If you have an idea and aren't sure who to hire to help, just ask.

Here's my best advice on how to pick the best high-quality vendors:

- Before you hire any vendor, read lots of reviews to make sure they not only have the professional skills required but also fit with the vibe and experience you're looking for.
- If a vendor is going to be physically present on your day, see if you can talk to them on the phone or a video call to get a feel for their personality and make sure you enjoy being around them.
- Read contracts carefully and make sure everything you've agreed upon is in writing.
- If you're not sure where to start when it comes to looking for vendors, don't worry, there are plenty of resources to search through, like: [The Knot](#), [Wedding Wire](#), [Google](#), [Junebug Weddings](#), [Green Wedding Shoes](#), Instagram Hashtags, [Pinterest](#), & more

Remember, I have a lot of suggestions for talented vendors based in or around the locations I shoot in frequently—I'd be more than happy to share them all with you! Just ask me!

# Things to Consider When Hiring These Vendors

## HAIR & MAKEUP ARTIST

I've gotten a lot of feedback from couples that they were happiest with their photos when they looked closer to their everyday selves. For example, if you typically wear your hair down, a fancy updo might not be the best option for you on your wedding day. Similarly, if you don't wear a lot of makeup on a daily basis, you might not feel comfortable with a heavy makeup style on your wedding day.

To keep your skin looking true to life, it's best to avoid mineral sunscreens, spray tans, and self-tanner on or before your elopement day.

## FLORIST

Professionally designed florals can add so much color and romantic "wedding vibes" to your day in a way that can be totally customized to your style. The floral arrangements I've seen that work the best for elopements need to hold up to transport well and also potential outdoor elements such as hot or cold temperatures or wind. Ask your florist for hearty blooms that aren't super fragile and look for things like dried flowers, grasses, plants with woody stems, sustainably sourced feathers, and materials that don't produce seed. Depending on your location, you may need to go with native, non-invasive species.

When talking with your florist:

- Let them know your budget, color schemes, season, location, and vision for your day
- 
- Tell them if you are hiking or expect the flowers to be jostled around a lot. If so, communicate that you're looking for a hearty bouquet that will last
- Send photos and inspiration of what you're looking for. Are you looking for a more "wild" bouquet, or something more round and traditional?
- Would you like any floral hair pieces? Boutonnieres? Corsages? Additional florals for decorating? Loose stems to use for photos of your details?
- Be sure to trust in the professional and let them guide you through color theory and the creative process. Do your best to remain open to the ideas— a collaborative process always results in the most wonderful outcomes!



## OFFICIANT

Marriage laws vary greatly throughout countries and states. For example, in some U.S. states you can legally self-solemnize (marry yourselves), while others may require an officiant and/or witness(es). In some states, you can even have a friend or family member get ordained easily and for free through an organization like the Universal Life Church, which is recognized in most U.S. states. If you do choose to have an officiant, they will play an important role in your ceremony, so it's important to make sure you find someone you really click and connect with.

## VIDEOGRAPHER

Video can be a great additional way to document your elopement story! When considering adding video to your day, it's key to find a videographer with a similar shooting approach to your photographer. I personally prefer collaborating with non-intrusive, documentary-style, videographers who don't turn your day into a production.

To keep an intimate and private feel to your elopement day, consider hiring a solo videographer instead of a team of videographers.

## CATERING + PRIVATE CHEFS

It's super important to stay well fed and hydrated during your day, and one of the easiest things to forget about is food! Hiring a private chef to create you a stunning and delicious one-of-a-kind meal is a well-worth-the-indulgence experience that you'll never forget. Don't be afraid to treat yourself and remember that this is your wedding day, and while hiring your top-choice chef or caterer might cost more per person than someone would typically spend on a plate of food for a big wedding— with less guests (or just the two of you), it's something definitely worth considering splurging on!

## MUSICIAN

A musician can be a great touch to your elopement day. Having live music can really amplify your elopement day experience-- whether you plan to invite someone to play softly during your ceremony or you hire your favorite local band to perform a private concert as you enjoy dinner and dancing.

Some considerations:

- Not all locations allow amplified music, especially in National Parks and public spaces, so a live musician can be a great alternative.
- Your lodging can offer a great private space for your wedding concert, especially if amplified music is not permitted at your ceremony site.
- Consider the mood you're setting. Are you looking for something mellow and acoustic? Or something more upbeat for dancing and celebrations?
- Will you be doing a first dance? Are there specific songs you'd like played?
- Remember, music can be a great source of entertainment for all, especially if there will be some "down time" for guests while you're out taking portraits.

## DESSERTS + WEDDING CAKES

Many eloping couples choose to indulge in some sort of sweets on their wedding day. Hey, why not?! Traditionally the dessert of choice is wedding cake, but you could absolutely think outside of the box and choose any favorite dessert--pies, cookies, cupcakes, ice cream, donuts, etc.!

Your baker will be able to guide you with portion sizes for the number of guests and will work with you to create the perfect design. Pinterest is a great place to gather some inspiration ahead of time too!

If this isn't an area you'd like to splurge on, but you'd still like to enjoy a nice treat, consider going to a nearby bakery or organic grocery store and purchasing a pre-made dessert. You can easily transfer it to a beautiful plate, add some floral decorations around the edges, and have a professional looking dessert in no time!

## PLANNERS

While I love helping couples find amazing outdoor locations for wedding ceremonies & portraits and giving all of the advice I have, I'm not a full-service elopement planner who will book vendors for you. If you need in-depth assistance with booking lodging & catering, would like to have someone do all the coordination with your vendors, or are looking for a day-of coordinator who could help with set up and tear down, I'd suggest reaching out to a full-service planner who specializes in elopement and intimate wedding planning.

## OUT OF THE BOX VENDOR IDEAS

Some unique ideas to infuse into your wedding day

- A jeweler that will let you make your own rings
- A tattoo artist who will give you wedding day tattoos
- A hot air balloon, helicopter, or float plane pilot
- A professional 4x4 or vintage vehicle driver
- A rock climbing, canyoneering, or mountaineering guide



# Choose Your Activities



While big traditional weddings have a pretty set plan of events they tend to follow, when you elope—the activities you can do during your day aren't limited to just a ceremony and a reception. Open your mind to your wedding day being a lot more than saying vows and taking a few portraits—this is your chance to craft an entire day together, from start to finish that is as much fun, and representative of who you two actually are as possible.

The best place to start this process? With a few questions. Ask yourselves things like:

- What are our favorite activities to do together?
- What do we do for fun on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis?
- How could we incorporate what we love to do on our elopement day?
- Is there a new activity that we want to try together on our elopement day?

Think outside the box! Get creative and don't be afraid to splurge—it's your wedding day, after all!



# Activity Ideas

## HIKING

From a 2-mile hike to a 2-day trek, nothing says badass elopement like a hiking adventure to your ceremony spot. Whether you love a casual jaunt in the woods to connect with nature or absolutely love tackling a tough hike together, there are so many trails out there I'd be happy to show you!

## 4X4 ROADS

If your ideal spot is on a 4x4 road, consider renting a jeep or hiring a driver so you can access it (and relax and enjoy the ride). You can also access 4x4 locations by renting ATV or UTV vehicles.

## HELICOPTERS & PLANE RIDES

Not a hiking fan? You don't have to be. Easily access amazing places in the backcountry with total privacy by helicopter or plane! Get dropped off on a mountain, a glacier, a remote island—this is basically a cheat code for seeing multiple landscapes without hiking or driving. Taking a hot air balloon ride is another magical transportation experience where you can see the world from above.

## ADRENALINE PUMPING ACTIVITIES

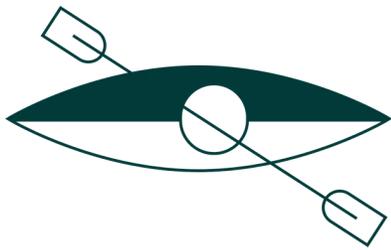
Unless you're a certified professional, you're going to want to hire a guide for some of these activities!

- Paragliding
- Rappelling
- Hiking a Via Ferrata
- Rock Climbing or Bouldering
- SkyDiving
- Base Jumping
- Bungee Jumping
- Slacklining or Highlining
- Canyoneering or Caving
- Sandboarding or Sandsledding
- Mountain biking
- Dancing

## RELAXING ACTIVITIES

- Sightseeing
- Laying or walking on a beach
- Going on a safari
- Taking a motorcycle ride
- Riding bikes
- Horseback riding
- Soaking in a hot tub
- Relaxing in a hammock together
- Doing yoga together
- Drawing or painting
- Hanging out in a treehouse
- Having a picnic
- Wine Tasting
- Drink tea or coffee
- Fishing





## WATER ACTIVITIES

Feel alive on the water? There are so many water activities you can do on your elopement day!

- Canoes
- Kayaks
- Paddleboards
- White water rafting
- Fishing
- Soaking in hot springs
- Cliff jumping
- Packrafting
- Scuba diving or snorkeling
- Jetskiing

## SNOW ACTIVITIES

Eloping in the winter or late spring in the mountains? There are so many water activities you can do on your elopement day!

- Snowmobiling
- Snowshoeing
- Skiing (downhill or cross-country)
- Snowboarding
- Sledding
- Snowball fight
- Ice Skating

## NIGHT ACTIVITIES

Just because the sun sets doesn't mean the fun is over. There are so many night activities you can include in your day!

- Stargazing
- Cozying up next to a campfire
- Making s'mores & cooking a campfire dinner
- First dance by firelight
- Night hiking



## CAMPING, GLAMPING, BACKPACKING & GLAMPACKING

If you think it would be fun to camp the night before or after your elopement, you can pitch a tent yourself or rent a glamping experience. You could take a few days to backpack on a trail you've always wanted to explore—or book a guided overnight where your stuff is carried for you and camp is all set up (glampacking!).

## ACTIVITIES WITH GUESTS, KIDS, & DOGS

Want to involve your friends, family, kiddoes or your fur babies in some activities on your day? Here's a few ideas!

- Go on a walk with your dog
- Play yard games
- Play card games
- Have a dance party
- Piñatas
- Photo or video booth
- Karaoke

## PLAN OUT YOUR ACTIVITIES

Some of these ideas don't require a lot of planning to incorporate them into your wedding day, while others you're going to want to book in advance or hiring a professional guide. Make sure you schedule enough time for these in your day (or days) so that you can enjoy them fully without feeling rushed.

# Purchasing your Attire and Gear

## WHAT DO YOU WANT TO WEAR ON YOUR WEDDING DAY?

I'm going to hit you with another disclaimer here before we dive right in. If it hasn't sunk in yet, your elopement day is all about doing exactly what you want to do—so your attire is no different.

Ultimately, you should feel 100% comfortable, happy, beautiful, and wonderful in whatever you wear, so please don't feel any pressure to wear something that doesn't speak to you.

My best advice in the beginning stages of picking out your wedding attire is to keep an open mind. Many couples have told me that they started shopping for one particular style in mind and ended up with choosing something completely different. It happens often!

It's helpful if you can find a local shop or boutique to try on a few styles in person. Even if you're planning to eventually make your purchase online, it's nice to see how different styles look and feel on you in person so you are confident that you have a good idea what you're looking for before making an online purchase.

When picking out attire, remember that you're likely going to be wearing it all day—so consider how heavy it is, how comfortable it is how easily you can move in it. Think about what activities you plan to do in your attire, and what kind of attire would work best without holding you back from having tons of fun.

Your perfect wedding attire is the one that best "fits" you—if you're happy, comfortable, and feel amazing, you're doing it right. There are no rules—pick what you love the most!



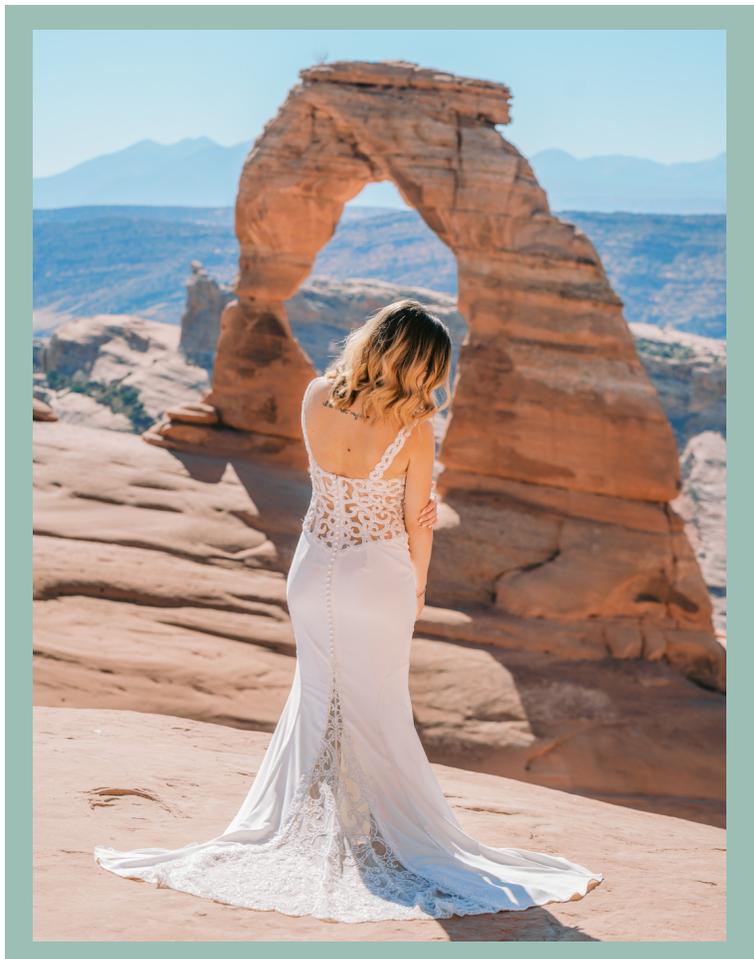
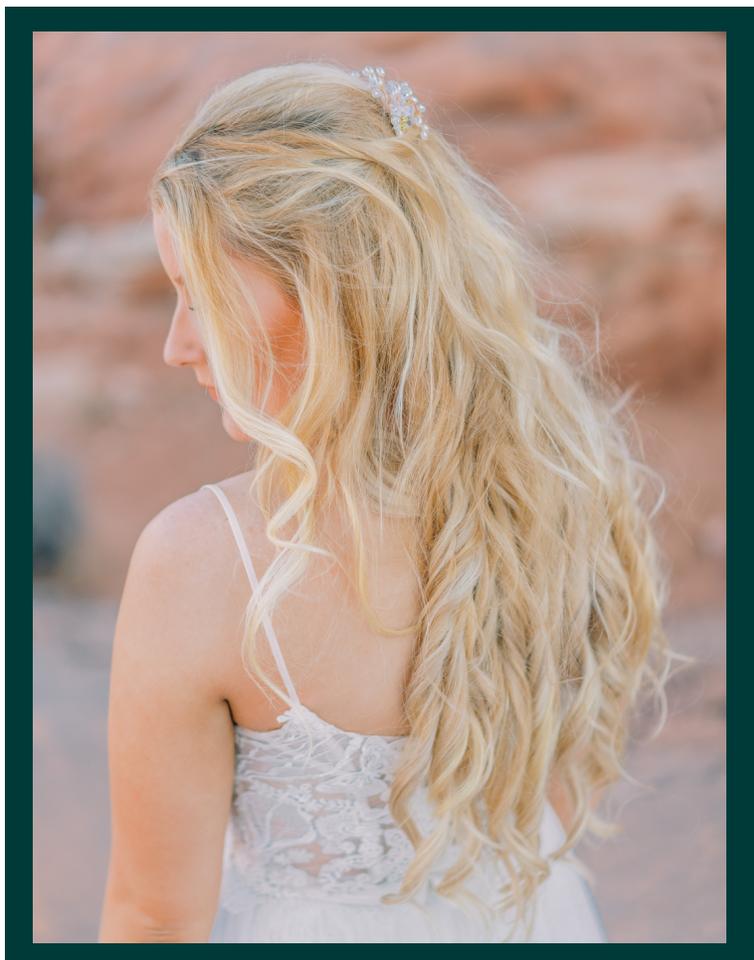


# Tips for Picking the Best Dress or Skirt



- Your dress doesn't have to be white—it can be any color you want! Black, blue, yellow, patterned, multi-colored—whatever you want, go for it!
- If you're having an outdoor elopement, it's likely there will be a natural breeze. See how the dress flows and reacts to movement. Pick up the bottom fabric and mimic wind, twirl and spin to see how flowy it is. A simple skirt can look epic if it's moved the right way, so sometimes the best "windblown" looks come from a dress that might seem a little boring on the hanger.
- If you plan to do a longer hiking elopement, it's a great idea to pack your dress in a backpack and then change when you get to your ceremony spot—consider avoiding heavier materials like corsets, boning, tulle, and super puffy skirts. Go for something lightweight!
- Even if you're not hiking, you'll likely want to be able to move around freely. Are you able to take a big upward step in the dress? Will you be able to climb up on a rock or tree stump for an epic photo? Raise both arms up, dance, skip, run, swish it! Make sure it has the movement you love.
- Is the dress lightweight enough for all day wear? Leave it on for an extended period of time and make sure it remains comfortable.
- Can you sit down in a chair comfortably in the dress? Can you sit comfortably on the ground?
- Do some jumping jacks and dance around! How does it feel? Does the dress bounce back into place or does it need a lot of adjusting after movement?

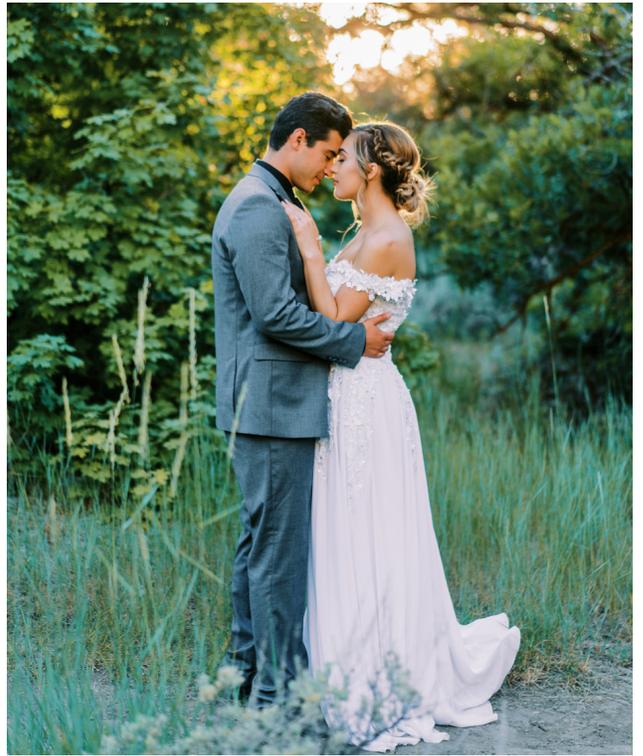
- Are you interested in any accessories? Veils, capes, and shoulder shawls can add extra movement and add tons of drama to your photos.
- Consider layering options that will go with the dress. If your elopement might have colder temperatures—find some cozy shawls or jackets that coordinate with your dress and that you would be excited about being photographed in.
- Not looking for a dress but still want something sort of flowy? Try looking for skirts and sweaters. Maybe even a jumpsuit!
- Think through who will be joining you while shopping and doing fittings (if anyone). I recommend only inviting people who are supportive of your vision, are totally on your team, and who can give you kind and honest feedback when asked.
- Keep in mind that some dress shops can take up to 6 months to actually get a gown in, then you'll also want to leave yourself with additional time for any necessary alterations.
- Never feel rushed or pressured into making a decision. It's ok to leave a shop having not found the perfect dress. You will find the one!



# Brand Recommendations: Wedding Dress, Skirts, & Separates

Where you purchase your attire is totally up to you, but if you're feeling stuck and could use a little extra inspiration, I've got a few must-check-out options to explore!

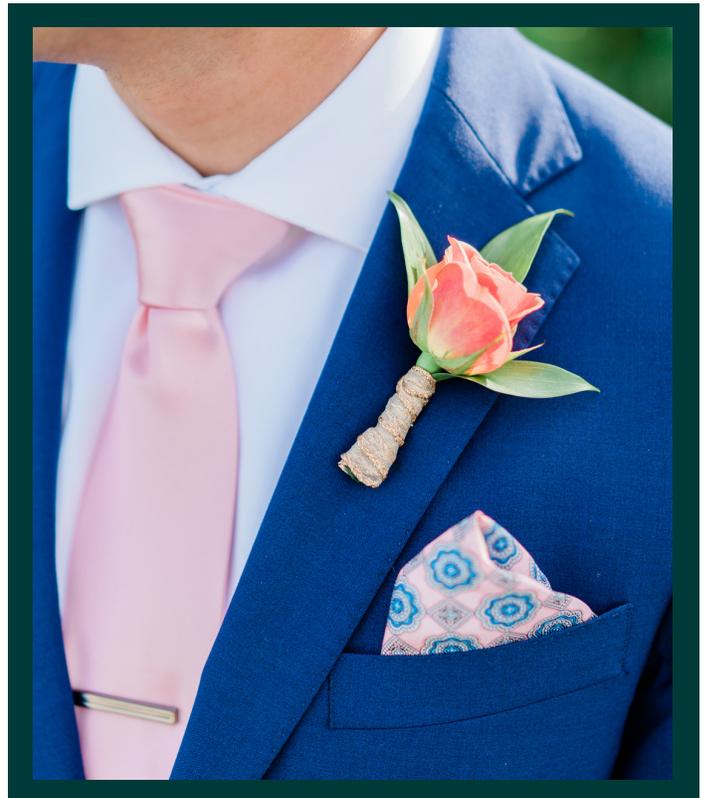
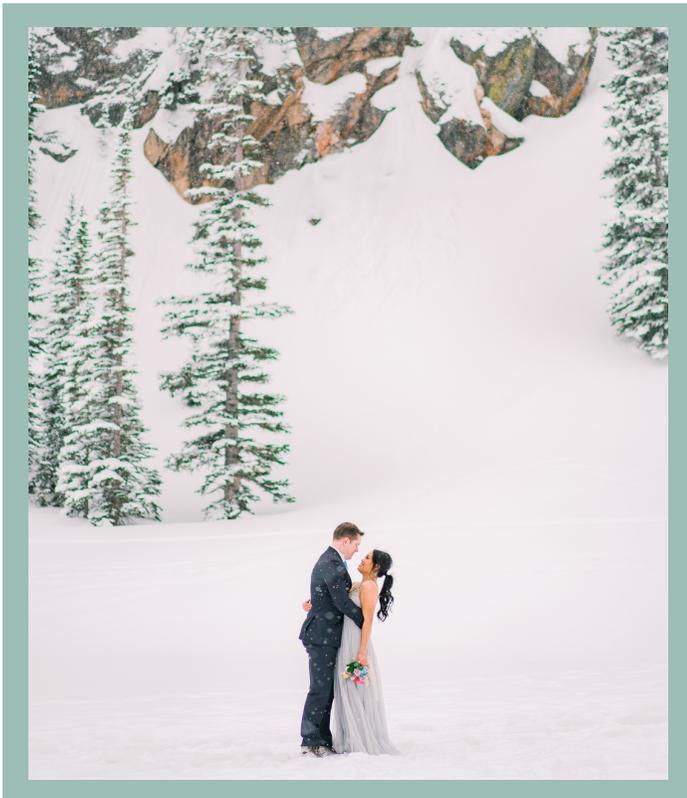
- **Reclamation Dresses** • [www.wearereclamation.com](http://www.wearereclamation.com)  
Reclamation designs very free flowing, romantic, and boho gowns. Prices range from \$500-\$1200 depending on the dress.
- **Rue de Seine** • [www.ruedeseine.com](http://www.ruedeseine.com)  
Rue de Seine designs a wide variety and styles of dresses that are all boho inspired. Prices range from about \$2000-\$4000 depending on the dress.
- **MYWONY** • [www.mywony.com](http://www.mywony.com)  
MYWONY designs very soft, romantic dresses with delicate accents. A lot of these dresses are lighter weight and free flowing. Prices range from about \$1000-\$2,000 depending on the dress.
- **BHLDN** • [www.bhldn.com](http://www.bhldn.com)  
BHLDN has a large variety of designs from very simple to complex floral designs and boho dresses. Prices range from \$500-\$2500 depending on the dress.
- **Free People** • [www.freepeople.com](http://www.freepeople.com)  
Free People doesn't really specialize in bridal dresses but they have a variety of formal dresses in white and other colors. Prices range from \$50-\$800 depending on the dress.
- **Willowby by Watters** • [www.watters.com](http://www.watters.com)  
Watters uses a lot of floral patterns in their dresses and has a large variety to choose from. Prices range from about \$800-\$2500 depending on the dress.
- **Lulus** • [www.lulus.com](http://www.lulus.com)  
Lulus has a variety of more affordable wedding dresses, also be sure to check out there other white or colored dresses. Prices range from about \$50-\$300 depending on the dress.
- **Grace Loves Lace** • [www.graceloveslace.com](http://www.graceloveslace.com)  
Grace Loves Lace has simple designs as well as more complex lace designed dresses. Prices range from about \$1,000-\$3,000 depending on the dress.
- **Chantel Lauren** • [www.chantellauren.com](http://www.chantellauren.com)  
Chantel Lauren has a lot of dress selections from simple to custom and complex including hand painted dresses. Prices range from about \$1500-\$4000 depending on the dress.
- **Sweet Caroline Styles** • [www.sweetcarolinestyles.com](http://www.sweetcarolinestyles.com)  
Sweet Caroline Styles has some unique colored dresses as well as some more traditional dresses. Prices range from about \$800-\$2500 depending on the dress.
- **Azazie** • [www.azazie.com](http://www.azazie.com)  
Azazie has a large variety of styles of dresses that are more affordable. Prices range from about \$100-\$900 depending on the dress.



# Tips for Picking the Best Suit or Tux



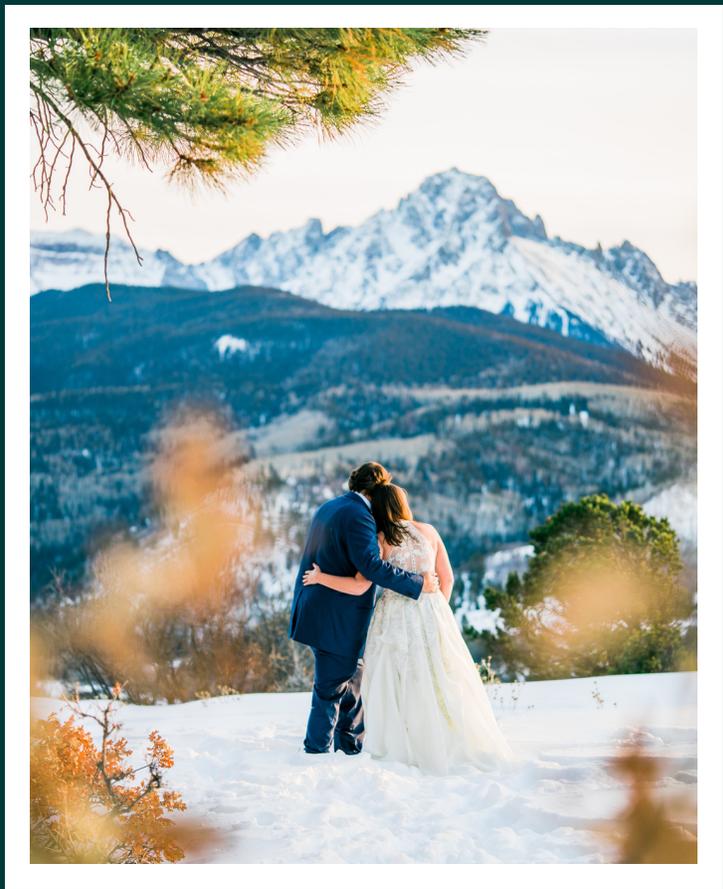
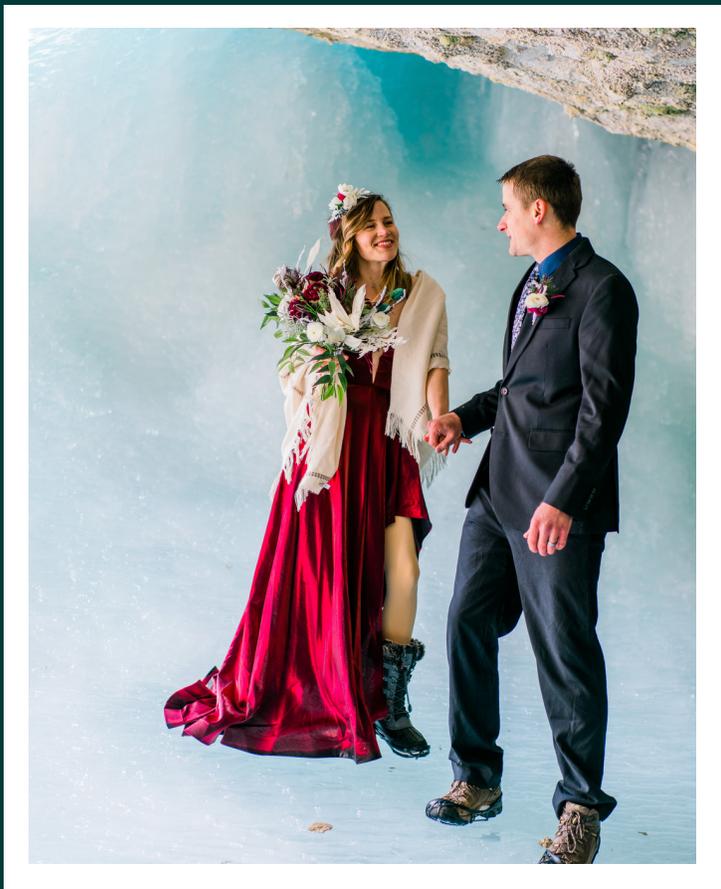
- Your suit doesn't have to be black and the top doesn't have to match the bottom! Mixing and matching colors and materials for jackets and pants can be a fun way to add personality to your attire. Don't be afraid to think outside the traditional box.
- Consider fun patterns and materials in your ensemble. It's okay to go for corduroy pants, a leather jacket, a shirt with penguins on it, or a knitted cardigan. Not everything has to be black tie formal or traditional linen.
- Don't forget about accessories! Adding unique details like suspenders, vests, bolo ties, bow ties, neckerchiefs, scarves, hats, belts, belt-buckles, pocket watches, cufflinks, and pocket squares can be another way to add more interest, detail, and personality into your attire.



- Make sure your choices are easy to move around in and don't fall off too easily. Try taking big strides, squatting down, sitting in a chair, sitting on the ground, stretching, and jumping around. See how easy it is to move in the attire, and make sure it'd be comfortable enough to adventure in! Do this when trying outfits on, and during alterations, and if you encounter issues with your attire staying in place, suspenders or a belt could help.
- Consider bringing along a few trusted people to help you make your selection and give you kind feedback on what works best for you.
- Consider leaving some additional room to add a base layer underneath your suit if you'll be in a cold environment on your wedding day.

Again, the most important thing about your wedding attire is how it makes you feel. Be authentic to that.





# Brand Recommendations: Suit, Tux, & Other Formal Wear

Where you purchase your attire is totally up to you, but if you're feeling stuck and could use a little extra inspiration, I've got you covered right here. Depending on where you are eloping, choosing a colored suit can definitely help you stand out against the landscape. I love colors like teal or burgundy, because they pop against any landscape. The darkest navy blues or also grays sometimes get lost in the scenery just a little bit. Of course, black suits are classic and always look nice. Although it is 100% up to you what you want to wear! For fabrics, usually fabrics like polyester or wool are best for adventure elopements. Cotton can absorb more sweat and won't repel water or dry as much.

- **J. Crew** • [www.jcrew.com](http://www.jcrew.com)

J. Crew has a large variety of suits and suit separates in various styles and colors. This brand is also available in a variety of in-person retail stores.

- **Indochino** • [www.indochino.com](http://www.indochino.com)

Indochino is one of my favorite online shops for suits. They have some suits available that come in different colors and some are even stretch suits, perfect for wearing for all day elopements.

- **Express** • [www.express.com](http://www.express.com)

Express sells online and in their stores. They have a large variety of more modern men's clothing and also have slimmer suits and shirts available. There's also shirts, and jacket and pant separates.

- **State and Liberty** • [www.stateandliberty.com](http://www.stateandliberty.com)

State and Liberty has some great options for mens' wear that is comfortable, low maintenance, and stretchy. They have great shirts, suits, jackets, and overcoats.

- **Men's Wearhouse** • [www.menswearhouse.com](http://www.menswearhouse.com)

Men's Wearhouse has both online and in-person shopping available and a wide variety of classic suits. They also have a simple selection of other clothing and also have rentals. Be sure to ask about custom suits! They can be cheaper than you think and will fit really well.

- **The Black Tux** • [www.theblacktux.com](http://www.theblacktux.com)

The Black Tux has online sales and rentals for suits. They have classic suit colors as well as more colorful suits. This is one of the best places to get suit rentals online and they also have free trials.

- **Nordstrom** • [www.nordstrom.com](http://www.nordstrom.com)

Nordstrom has a lot of men's clothing options available

- **DAZI** • [www.daziusa.com](http://www.daziusa.com)

DAZI is well known for its beautiful selection of floral ties. They also have other accessories such as hair ties, pocket squares, bow ties, and tie bars.

- **And Collar** • [www.andcollar.com](http://www.andcollar.com)

And Collar has some pretty amazing shirts that are wrinkle resistant, water repellent, and stain resistant. They also have moisture wicking dress socks.

# Tips for Picking the Best Footwear

**The right type of footwear matters for most occasions—but especially on your wedding day.**

- Consider the environment that you're eloping in. Make sure your footwear is appropriate for where you're going and will enable you to have the most enjoyable time. I usually recommend going for function over form for shoes—as they don't tend to be the most important focal point of your photos, but uncomfortable footwear can really hinder your experience. Besides, I think a dress or suit looks great with hiking boots! It just adds to the adventurous feel of your photos
- If you're eloping outdoors, good footwear with actual tread is important when walking or hiking on natural surfaces. There could be great photo spots on top of rocks, boulders, etc. that require stable footing—so unless you plan to spend 100% of your day on flat pavement or a manicured lawn, you're likely going to want shoes with good grip.
- For most locations, I personally recommend against wearing heels or dress shoes that are completely smooth on the bottom—good tread and support means more options for exploring and moving around freely without worrying about tripping, falling, sliding, tripping, or twisting an ankle. And in some environments I will actually not allow heels or slick shoes! If you're anywhere near a cliff edge, shoes with good grip or going barefoot is better than slick shoes or any sort of heels.
- If your location is cold, you might want to leave extra room in your boots for thick socks and toe warmers. Make sure to get a great pair (and always bring an extra pair) of wool socks—which will wick moisture away from your skin and provide better insulation (even when wet). Toe warmers can also be a lifesaver for cold environments. Your extremities are the first to get cold, so I definitely suggest stuffing a few in your boots.
- If your location has the potential to be snowy or icy, get a pair of traction spikes that fit over your shoes to make sure you won't slip or fall.
- If your location is warm, you can consider an open-toed sandal, and if you're getting married on warm sand, you may even want to consider going barefoot (or wearing barefoot sandals only) for part of the day unless the sand is too hot.
- For hiking elopements, I recommend wearing a decent pair of hiking boots or shoes. You can choose to either keep them on for your ceremony and photos or change out of them, it's totally up to you! Just remember, if you opt to switch shoes, they'll still need good tread if you want to explore around freely for your photos.
- If you purchase a new pair of hiking boots or shoes for your day, make sure you break them in ahead of time to avoid blisters or finding out day-of that they aren't comfortable for all-day wear.
- I always like to take some sort of extra footwear that is lighter and can fit in my pack. Something like sandals or lightweight hiking shoes just in case my shoes get wet. Also another reminder—bring an extra pair of socks!

# Footwear Recommendations

Still trying to find the perfect footwear that's both totally you & functional, too? Check out options from these shops! Keep in mind that depending on the hike, boots can be heavier and not needed for some areas. Hiking shoes can be a great option for summer hiking or shorter hikes.

- **Vivobareboot** • [www.vivobarefoot.com](http://www.vivobarefoot.com)

Vivobarefoot is my personal favorite brand of footwear. I love their hiking boots and shoes because they are very flexible and comfortable and almost don't need breaking in.

- **Revivo** • [www.revivo.com](http://www.revivo.com)

Revivo is the same as Vivobarefoot, but it is their refurbished shoe shop. Great for getting the same shoes at big discounts. Vivobarefoot is also one of my favorite brands because of their commitment to sustainability.

- **Xero Shoes** • [www.xeroshoes.com](http://www.xeroshoes.com)

Xero shoes has a large selection of shoes available. They have hiking shoes and boots, as well as some great light weight sandals and hybrid sandal-shoes that are great for summer hiking or crossing streams.

- **Oboz Footwear** • [www.obozfootwear.com](http://www.obozfootwear.com)

Comfortable hiking shoes for both men and women. Their shoes break in very easily and they have a wide variety of shoes for different conditions.

- **Danner** • [www.danner.com](http://www.danner.com)

Danner has a great selection of boots and shoes for men and women. Their footwear is high quality with various waterproof options.



# Don't Forget to Layer Up



Weather can be very unpredictable in the great outdoors, so if you're eloping somewhere that could be chilly, cold, or windy—layers are going to be your best friend!

In high elevations in mountainous areas it can snow as late as June and as early as September, and snow can last year-round in some spots. Even if it's just a chilly morning, cloudy, or a bit windier than expected on your day, having an extra layer to put on, can make all the difference in the world to how much fun you're having.

Knowing how to layer and which layers to choose is going to be hugely important to ensure your elopement experience is comfortable and full of excitement—there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad gear! (OK, sometimes there's bad weather, but gear is going to make all the difference).

- Base layers. I highly suggest wearing fleece or wool leggings or yoga pants underneath. More than one layer can be beneficial, too (depending on the time of year and location). If your baselayer matches your skin color, it will blend in well for photos!
- Mid layers. Bring something warm like a sweater, shawl, fleece, or down jacket depending on your environment. Consider bringing an option to keep you warm that you won't mind being photographed in.
- Outer layer. This is your primary defense against the elements! A rain shell will protect you from rain, snow, and wind.
- Accessories. Keep those extremities warm! Gloves, mittens, a beanie, ear warmers, a scarf, a buff, etc.
- Blankets. This is a great option for warming up between exploring and makes for great, cuddly photos, too!
- Hand & body warmers. Total lifesavers, I swear by these! I highly recommend having some to stash in your pockets, gloves, mittens, and to pass out to any guests!

# Layer Recommendations

Check out some of these excellent sources for great layers that'll keep you warm and will help you stay true to your style. Also another pro tip for you- skin colored leggings look great and natural under a dress!

- **Smartwool** • [www.smartwool.com](http://www.smartwool.com)

Smartwool can be found online and in stores through many retailers. They are known for making high quality wool hiking socks. Get a few pairs because they may become your new favorite socks!

- **Icebreaker** • [www.icebreaker.com](http://www.icebreaker.com)

Icebreaker has a great selection of all sorts of base layers including tops, underwear, thermal shirts, jackets, vests, hats, neckwear, and more.

- **Fjallraven** • [www.fjallraven.com](http://www.fjallraven.com)

Fjallraven specializes in quality outdoor gear. They have the base layers to keep you warm and the waterproof and windproof shells to keep you dry and out of the wind.

- **Patagonia** • [www.patagonia.com](http://www.patagonia.com)

Patagonia has a little bit of everything! From clothing to packs and other gear. Also be sure to check out their used gear sections for discounted outdoor gear.

- **Pendleton** • [www.pendleton-usa.com](http://www.pendleton-usa.com)

For quality blankets, Pendleton has great blankets to keep you warm on your elopement day and they are sure to last and make great keepsakes.



# Adventure Gear Pro Tips

Some adventures call for a bit more gear—don't worry, I've got you covered! You might need a few of these things to make your elopement experience even more epic.

## BACKPACKS:

If you're hiking or even just exploring one area, you may want to consider a backpack to hold your extra layers, water, snacks, vow books, etc. If you are carrying quite a bit of weight and/or hiking far, you will want to get one with sturdy hip straps to help take the weight off of your shoulders.

## HEADLAMPS:

A must-have if you're hiking in the dark! And so great for star photos, too. If you're hiking or exploring in time to catch a sunrise or after sunset, you each need one of these!

## WATER:

Drink plenty of water! Staying hydrated will also help keep you from getting altitude sickness. Bring it along in a hydration pack or water bottle. For longer hikes and overnight backpacking, I recommend bringing along a water filtration system.

## FOOD/SNACKS:

Don't forget to pack tons of snacks to keep your energy up. I find for early morning hikes when I don't have much appetite, runner's gels or energy chews are great options to get quick calories and energy. Also consider packing a picnic to enjoy and celebrate after saying your vows.

## THERMOS:

Warming up from the inside out in cold conditions is always a treat! Consider bringing along some hot soup or a warm drink like tea, coffee, hot chocolate, a hot toddy, etc. in a thermos.

## BACKPACKING STOVE:

This is a great option for doing some light cooking in the backcountry (which includes more remote areas that are not heavily trafficked by tourists and other guests). Boil water for a hot cup of tea or coffee, or cook up some oatmeal, scrambled eggs, or a backpacker's meal!

## TREKKING POLES:

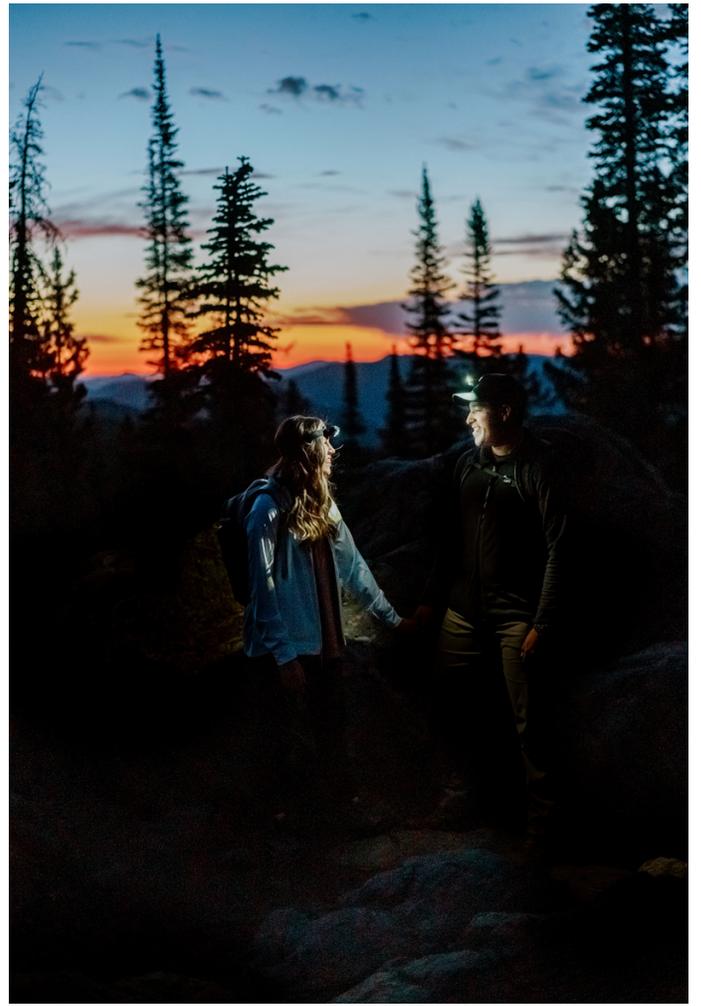
Recommended for long and particularly steep hikes to give your knees a break. They can also help if you are hiking through any snow and need some extra stability!

## SKIN PROTECTION:

Sunscreen is so important to wear every day, but especially when at high altitudes and on sunny days when in the snow. Depending on your location, bug spray may be a lifesaver as well.

## CAMP BATHROOM:

When outdoors, it's important to be prepared if you need to relieve yourself in the woods. I recommend always following [Leave No Trace Principles](#) and using [Wag Bags](#) to dispose of waste when in an area with no bathroom facilities.



## Adventure Gear Recommendations

To find the best adventure gear to help make sure your elopement experience runs smoothly and seamlessly, check out some of these options!

- **REI** • [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com)

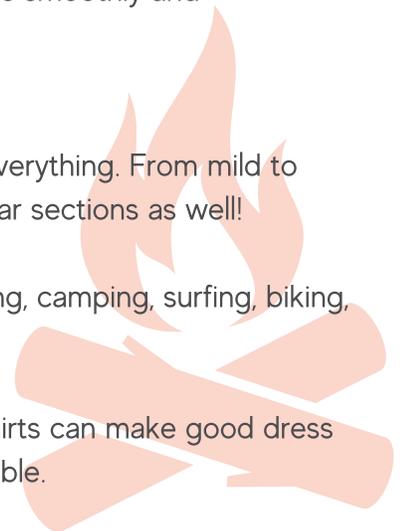
REI is one of the best go to places for outdoor gear. They have a little bit of everything. From mild to wild, they have something for every adventure. Be sure to check their used gear sections as well!

- **Backcountry** • [www.backcountry.com](http://www.backcountry.com)

Backcountry has a large selection of outdoor gear for things like hiking, climbing, camping, surfing, biking, and more. They also have a great section for dog gear!

- **Outdoor Research** • [www.outdoorresearch.com](http://www.outdoorresearch.com)

Outdoor Research also has a large selection of outdoor gear. Some of their shirts can make good dress shirts for adventure elopements because they are fast drying and very breathable.



# 04

## Craft Your Timeline

Once you have some decisions made, travel and lodging booked, activities, attire and gear picked out—it's time to put everything together and plan out the timeline of your day (or multiple days). This is where your elopement or intimate wedding experience starts to feel super real as you see your vision coming together into a seamless, exciting plan. Don't worry—it's not about scheduling out every minute of your day, but rather making sure that you have time for everything you want to do, see, and experience together—leaving room for spontaneity and relaxation.

### How Much Coverage is Enough?

When planning out the timeline for your elopement day (or days), you might be wondering, how much of it should you have documented by me?

Want my honest opinion? Well here it is:

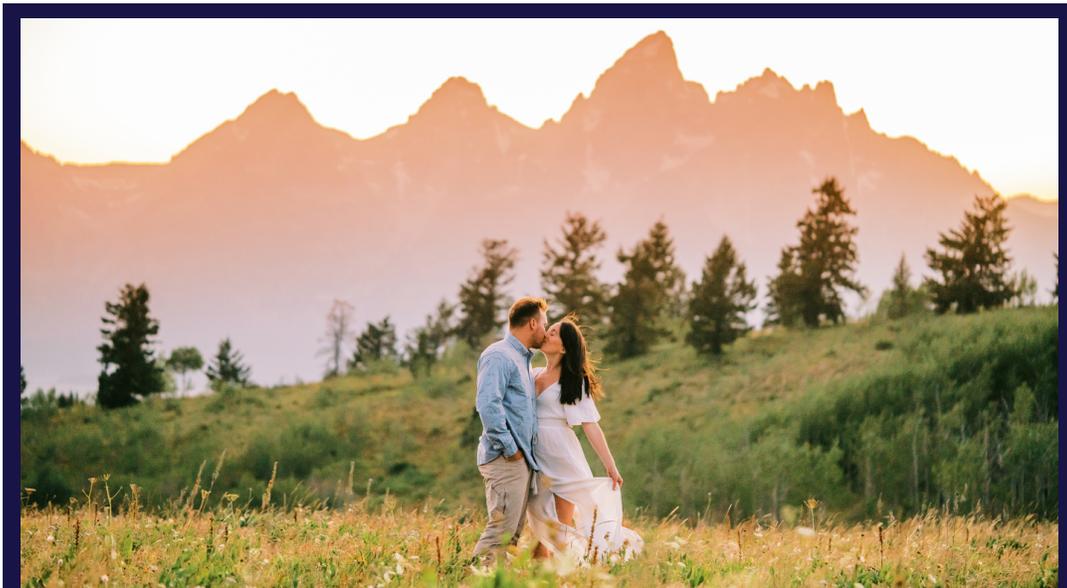
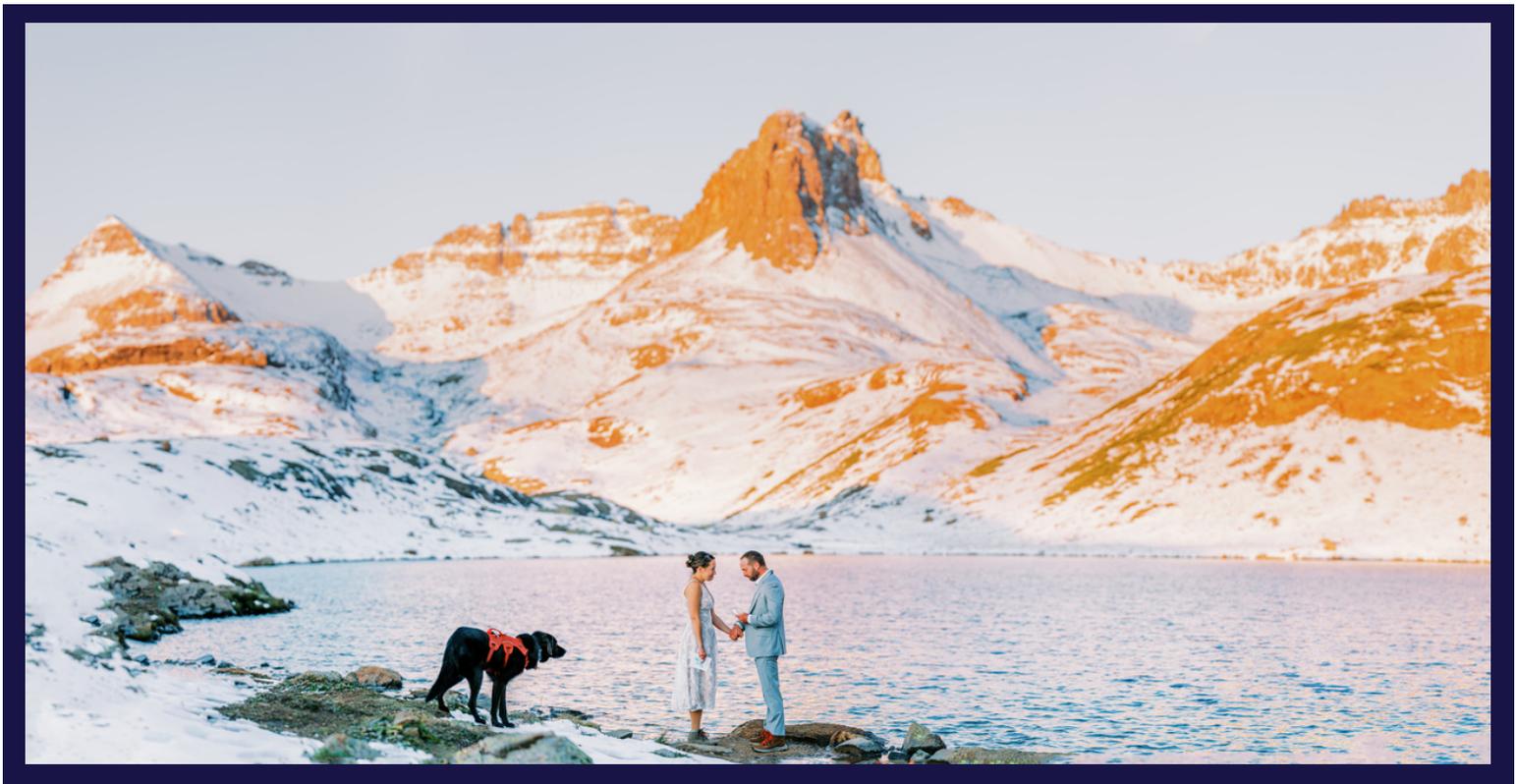
**Your day deserves just as much documentation as anyone else getting married—and maybe even more.**

Why? Well, here are three reasons.

1. While sometimes people think an elopement is just saying your vows and spending an hour or two taking portraits—the day you get married is so much more than that. Your wedding day is going to be the day you remember every year on your anniversary for the rest of your life together—and everything that happened that day from sun up to sun down is a part of your experience. Couples having big weddings get the entire story of their day documented, so why shouldn't you?
2. If you're spending all of this time intentionally planning the absolute best, most authentic experience for you and your partner—don't you want to be able to relive all of it and remember it precisely, in full-color detail?
3. If you're not having as many people attend your event in-person, the photos of your day are truly the only way to share your experience with others—don't you want to be able to do that?

I honestly have never photographed an elopement that I thought the couple had me there for too long—but there have been countless days that I wish I could have documented a fuller picture of how awesome their entire experience was.

So when deciding how much of your day to have me along for—remember that just because I'm there doesn't mean that it's going to feel like an all-day photoshoot. I'm there to melt into the background, to make sure you have the best experience possible, and to just document you two having the time of your life.



# Sunrise vs. Sunset

One big decision when it comes to creating a timeline for your elopement timeline is what time of day you want to have your elopement ceremony and have your couples portraits taken. Sunrise and sunset are favorite times among photographers to take pictures because of the golden lighting and vibrant colors that are caused by the sun being low in the sky. In sunny climates, midday sunlight can create harsh under-eye shadows, which is why the middle of the day is when I usually recommend doing indoor photos, getting ready photos, traveling or hiking, doing activities, or hanging out and relaxing.

## BENEFITS OF ELOPING AT SUNRISE

- **Can be more secluded**
  - If you are concerned about how much privacy you are going to have while you are saying your vows to your partner, then a sunrise elopement or intimate wedding might be a good idea—especially if you choose a heavily-trafficked or well-known area.
- **Potentially better weather**
  - This is entirely region-dependent, but some areas regularly forecast rain more commonly in the afternoon which means that a sunrise elopement increases your chances of clear skies. If you're eloping in a hot climate or wanting to hike, going for sunrise can also mean cooler temperatures and less sweating.
- **"Alpenglow" on East-Facing Locations**
  - If you're eloping in a mountainous region on a clear day, if the main dramatic view faces east, sunrise is ideal because it means that the sunlight will hit that view first—causing the mountains to glow with gorgeous pinks, oranges, and yellow colors.
- **It's a great way to start your day**
  - Starting early and having your elopement or intimate wedding ceremony right at sunrise is an incredible way to start out your wedding day. It also gives you plenty of time to relax for the rest of your day and enjoy any other activities that you and your partner want to do.

## BENEFITS OF ELOPING AT SUNSET

- **Can be Secluded**
  - In the evening, most people, whether they are tourists or locals, tend to return home or wherever they are staying to have dinner, which means that many locations become less busy at sunset. So similar to sunrise, you can get privacy if you say your vows toward sunset. However, this doesn't hold true for every location, as some spots are particularly known for their sunsets.
- **You can sleep in.**
  - If you decide to do your elopement ceremony at sunset, then you will have more flexibility regarding what time you wake up and be able to get ready in the daylight. If you know that you are not a morning person, you'll want to keep in mind that a sunrise elopement could potentially leave you groggy and tired on your wedding day—so you may want to seriously consider the benefits of a sunset elopement instead.
- **Great light for west-facing views.**
  - If you are wanting to say your vows with a beautiful west-facing view behind you, then eloping at sunset means that the sun's final rays will be hitting the features behind you—and if the view behind you includes mountains to the west, then they will be illuminated with alpenglow towards sunset on a clear day.
- **You'll be all warmed up**
  - It can take some people a bit of time to get comfortable being photographed, and your awareness of me as your photographer will likely be greatest at the beginning of our time together. A benefit of eloping at sunset is that we will probably have already spent a good chunk of the day together, which means that you will have had time to get more comfortable with having a camera pointed at you—especially right before you say your vows to your partner, which many couples consider to be the most intimate part of an elopement day.

## YOU CAN ALSO DO BOTH!

It's also always an option to do a full-day elopement that spans both sunrise to sunset or a multi-day elopement where you get to experience both as well.





# Getting Ready

## WHY GETTING READY & DETAILS PHOTOS MATTER

The getting ready portion of the day is one of my favorite times of the day to document! During these moments, the excitement is high, and things are starting to feel so real. The day you've waited so long for is finally coming together, you're about to marry your best friend! Including this portion of the day into your photo coverage really helps weave together a complete story of your wedding experience. It's also a helpful way to start getting warmed up to the camera, and a great time for me to document your important wedding details.

I recommend starting your day off in a relaxed manner, waking up with plenty of time to get ready so that you can feel really prepared, be present, and just soak in the excitement before heading off to the first location.

During this time I will photograph all of your special wedding details that you've put so much time and effort into. It's helpful to have all of these details ready and laid out in advance. I recommend doing this the day before so you have one less thing on your mind day-of. Typically these details will include your wedding attire, rings, jewelry, vow books, florals, family heirlooms, invitations or announcements, etc. This is also a great time to give your partner any special gifts.

## WILL YOU GET READY TOGETHER OR SEPARATELY?

Some couples choose to get ready separately, especially if they've kept their wedding attire a surprise from each other or plan to do a first look. If you get ready separately, it's helpful to choose getting ready locations that are close to one another, and even better if you can get ready in nearby rooms at the same home. A lovely thought if you chose to get ready separately is that I will be able to photograph a unique glimpse into your partner's experience that you wouldn't see otherwise.

Other couples choose to get ready together. This enables you to spend the entirety of your wedding day together. Some of the sweetest photo opportunities include, sharing a mirror as you fix your hair, zipping your partner up into their wedding dress, tying a bow tie, or lacing up boots for each other. There is no wrong way to do this, it's all up to you and how you envision your day panning out!

You could even choose a combination of the two! Starting your day off snuggled in your pjs, making breakfast together and enjoying it in bed or on the deck of your Airbnb with a view. Then when it comes time to get dressed in your wedding attire, you can choose to keep that portion of the getting ready process a surprise.

# Tips on how to have the best getting ready & detail photos

While choosing your lodging and getting ready location, keep in mind the aesthetics, and look for lodging that fit the general vibe you're going for. It's best to keep the rooms you are getting ready in neat and do any necessary tidying up the day before. Try to pick up any loose clothing on the floor, move any luggage or miscellaneous items to one side of the room, or out of the rooms altogether. This will allow me to candidly photograph you two without any clutter or distractions in the frame. It will also create a more calm and peaceful environment for you to get ready in.

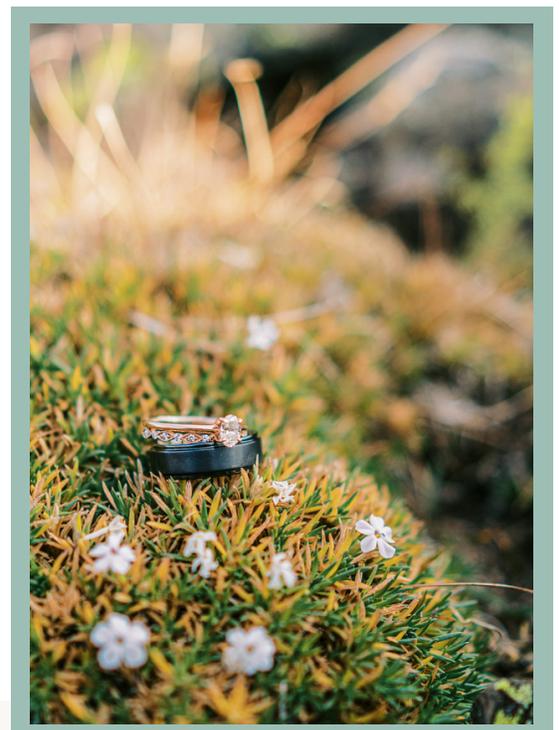
When searching for photogenic places to stay, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Always look for a nice, clean, calm, and open space
- The more natural window light, the better
- The less busy and distracting the space and decor is, the better
- Consider the general aesthetics and decor—do they match the vibe you're going for?

Once I arrive, I may do some slight rearranging depending on lighting scenario, but don't worry, I'll put everything back in its place for you when we wrap up!

Amazing & heartfelt moments to incorporate into your getting ready photos

- Copying your vows into your vow books
- Writing and reading each other love notes
- Giving a gift to your partner
- Reading letters from family or friends
- Facetiming with loved ones who are not present
- Reading love notes or cards from early on in your relationship
- Framed photos set up of loved ones who have passed





Additional things to consider to further elevate your getting ready photos:

- Sit by a window when you're having your hair & makeup done. This will enable me to capture getting ready portraits in the most flattering light. Your hair and makeup artist will likely be in search of the best light in the room to apply your makeup anyhow. Having your makeup done in window light will also help ensure it will look natural once you are outdoors.
- Think about what you will be wearing before you put on your dress or wedding attire! I will be capturing portraits of you before you put on your wedding attire, so consider opting for a nice casual outfit, robe, nightgown, or pajama set rather than sweatpants and a neon-colored graphic tee. You'll be just as comfortable but it'll bring that extra something special to your getting ready portraits.
- Consider including details that are important to the two of you or that help illustrate the story of your wedding day that are outside of the norm. Perhaps a postcard from the location you are saying your vows, extra loose flower stems from your florist, a special ring box or jewelry case, the bottle of perfume or cologne you've chosen to wear on your day, and a nice hanger for your dress or wedding attire.

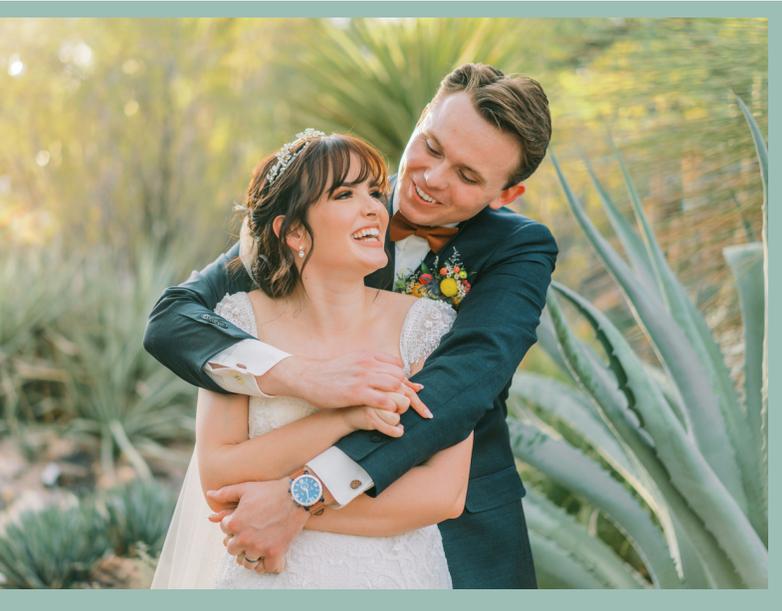
## HOW MUCH TIME DO I NEED FOR GETTING READY PHOTOS?

There are a couple of factors that go into determining this. How many people will be present? Are there any specific moments that you'd like to make sure are included like FaceTiming your mom, a first look with your dad, or making breakfast with your partner? Generally one to two hours is enough time for most, enabling me to fully capture the details you put so much time and thought into, and the getting ready finishing touches that will help tell the full story of your day.

## YOUR GETTING READY CHECKLIST:

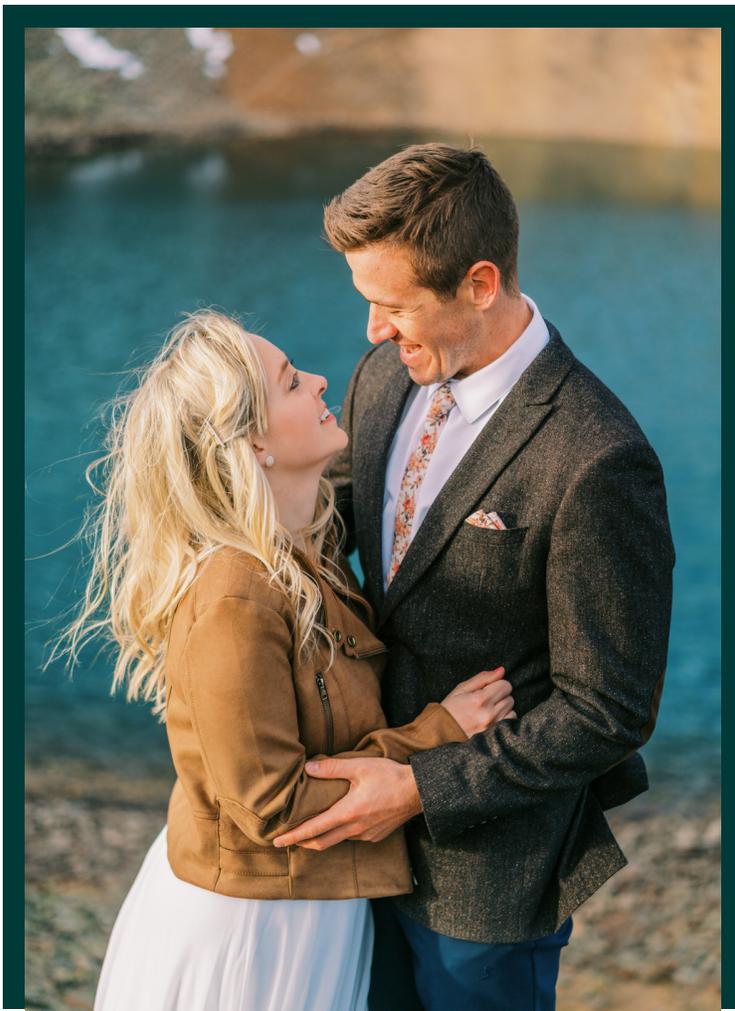
- Declutter your space. Tuck all clothing, suitcases, and miscellaneous items away.
- Collect all details you'd like to have photographed.
- Create a calm atmosphere with music, candles or incense, and window light.
- Relax with a warm cup of tea, coffee, hot coco, or a mimosa.
- Enjoy these precious first moments of your wedding day.

# First Look



## FIRST OF ALL, WHAT'S A FIRST LOOK?

Your first look is the moment you see your partner for the first time on your wedding day, all done up and looking incredible. If it hasn't felt like your wedding day is really here and happening up until this point, it will now. First looks are often emotional at first, followed by a stream of pure excitement and joy. Your first look is typically when any nerves and stress begin to fall away too. You realize you're right where you're supposed to be, standing before the person that makes you feel the most comfortable in this world, about to have one of your best experiences yet together.



## WHY HAVE A FIRST LOOK?

Traditionally, at big weddings the couple does not see one another until they are walking down the aisle during their ceremony in the afternoon after so much of their wedding day has already flown by. But you're here because you've chosen to throw tradition to the wind—so having a first look is your opportunity to see your partner for the first time in their wedding attire! It allows you to see your partner earlier in the day so you can spend as much time as possible together, even if you want to get ready separately. It's a moment where you can fully be present without distraction. It doesn't make your ceremony any less emotional or special, in fact most often couples feel infinitely less nervous and more excited once they have had their first look to themselves. When it comes to eloping, choosing to have a first look also opens up a vast amount of possibilities when it comes to the rest of your day's untraditional timeline.

## Where do couples have their first look?



Some couples choose to have their first look at their getting ready location, maybe in the front or back yard, out on a spacious deck, a stylized room indoors, or in any scenic corner of the property. Don't forget to consider this when you're booking lodging! The benefit of doing your first look right at the getting ready location is that you'll be able to diminish any nerves right from the start, spend the maximum amount of time with your partner, and enjoy the journey to your next location together.

Other couples will choose to travel separately to their first portrait location or trailhead and do a first look there. You can have a friend or family member drive you, take two cars, or even ride in the same car with one partner in the backseat (if you promise not to peek!).

If you are doing a hiking elopement, many couples will hike up to their destination in normal hiking attire, change into their wedding attire once they reach their destination, and then have their first look there. This is also a great option for sunrise elopements if it has been dark outside up until this point.



I'm always here for you and happy to help give you guidance on the perfect nearby first look location and help make it as epic as possible. I'll also give you guidance on where to stand and make sure you don't see one another beforehand.

I love when couples stand there for a moment before the grand reveal, maybe exchanging sweet words as the anticipation builds. Once you've turned around to see each other, take it all in. I'll be capturing both of your reactions, the only thing you two have to do in this moment is enjoy it.

# Planning Your Ceremony

When it comes to your ceremony, it's up to you what traditions you want to honor and which ones you would rather leave behind. Your ceremony can be completely personalized to you, your partner, and the relationship that you've built together.

## THE LEGAL SIDE OF YOUR CEREMONY

The legal side of getting married depends entirely on where you live and where you elope—so do your research beforehand and familiarize yourself with local laws and regulations and decide if you want to go through the steps of getting legally married on your actual wedding day, or if you'd prefer to do it before, after, or not at all.

### OPTIONS FOR GETTING LEGALLY MARRIED ON YOUR WEDDING DAY:

- **Officiant & Witnesses**
- Most U.S. States require you to have an officiant and witnesses for your ceremony and sign your license. You can hire a professional officiant, ask a friend or family member that's attending to get ordained online (if that's legal in that state), or (lucky you), I'm already ordained, so as long as my ordination from the Universal Life Church (a non-denominational organization) is valid where you want to elope, I'd be happy to sign your paperwork if you let me know in advance. As far as witnesses go, make sure to research the exact regulations for your location, but in most states, anyone over 18 can be a witness. You can ask friends or family members, any of your wedding vendors, or even random hikers on the trail to be witnesses
- **Self Solemnize**
- Some U.S. states like Colorado, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Washington D.C. allow you to self-solemnize—which is a law that grants you and your partner to legally marry each other without any officiant or witnesses coco, or a mimosa.
- **Courthouse**
- If you want to get legally married on the same day that you say your vows, you could have your ceremony in a courthouse, or simply swing by and do the paperwork and read your vows in another location on that same day. Research beforehand whether you need an appointment and have all of your required documents gathered, so that it's not something you need to stress about day-of.

## OPTIONS FOR GETTING MARRIED WITHOUT THE LEGAL PART ON YOUR WEDDING DAY:

- **Commitment Ceremony**
  - Many couples choose to not worry about the legal part of getting married on the day they say their vows. This is called a “commitment ceremony,” “symbolic ceremony,” or “promise ceremony.” It’s essentially getting married without a marriage license. Having a commitment ceremony means your wedding day plans are completely unhindered by rules or legalities, and can open the door for more location possibilities and require less people involved. If you choose to have a commitment ceremony, you can still do the paperwork and make it legal on another day, but some couples choose not to do the legal side, or aren’t able to get legally married per the law.
- **Sign Before or After**
  - If you want to get legally married without worrying about an officiant, witnesses, or paperwork on the day you get married, a great option is to go to the courthouse or county clerk and recorder before your trip or after you get back. For some couples, it’s advantageous to get legally married for tax or benefit purposes before the day they read their vows. If you want, you can invite your family or friends to get ordained or be witnesses and make a fun experience out of signing the paperwork back home.



# What to do During Your Ceremony

Regardless of how you choose to do the legal side of getting married, there are numerous traditions that you can decide to incorporate on the day you say your vows—or you can skip them all and totally decide on your own.

Here are some ideas of what exactly you can do during your elopement or intimate wedding ceremony:

## **Read Personalized Vows**

Reflect upon your relationship so far, declare any promises that you want to share about your future together, express any emotions that you are feeling, and commit your life to your partner.

## **Exchange Rings or another token**

Rings are traditional since they represent an infinity with no beginning and no end, but you could exchange any other symbol that is important to and honors your relationship

## **First Kiss & First Dance**

Celebrate some exciting firsts in your new married life together with your first kiss as a married couple and your first dance.

## **Incorporate Music**

Play your favorite song on a portable speaker, have a musician play your favorite tune, or surprise your partner with your musical talent by playing your own instrument or singing an original song.

## **Sage Smudging**

If allowed and safe (please check fire bans and always leave no trace) this ceremony requires a bundle of sage, a way of lighting it, and a bowl. The intention is that you light the sage, which is symbolic for replacing any negative energies with positive, healing ones. You can also use an essential oil sage spray if fire isn't safe.

## **Handfasting**

This is originally a Celtic pagan ceremony where the hands of you and your partner are bound together by a braided rope, and it both figuratively and literally joins you and your partner. You can also have friends or family members participating in tying cords around your hands.

## **Unity Ceremony**

A unity ceremony consists of joining two parts of something into a singular piece, and it is representative of merging your life together with your partner's life. Traditionally, this has been done by lighting a unity candle, but you can also combine two different colors of sand or plant a tree together—whatever feels like a unification of you and your partner.

### **Read Letters**

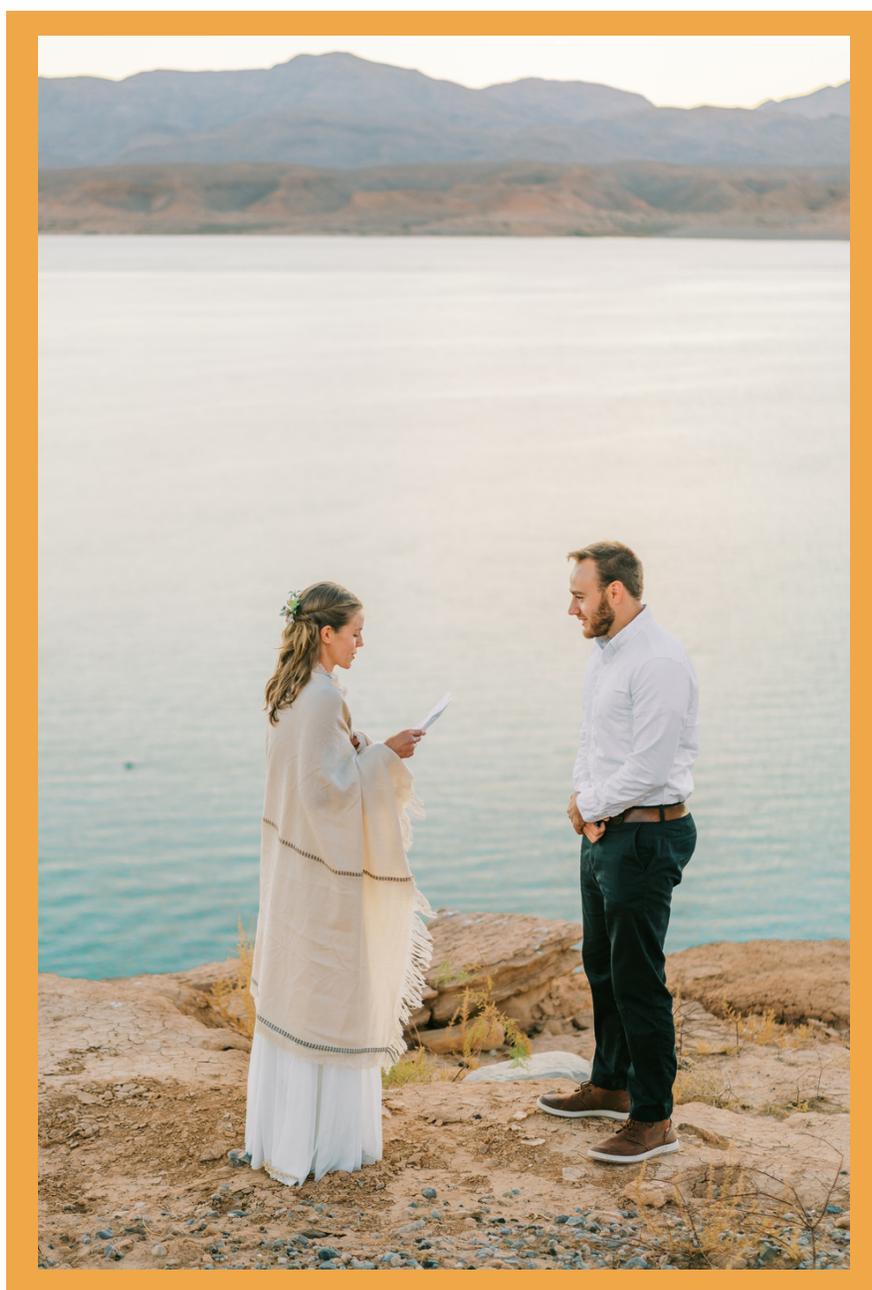
You can ask friends or family members who aren't physically present on your day to write you a letter for you to read during your ceremony. This is a beautiful way to feel their presence and support.

### **Surprises & Gifts**

If you have a special surprise or gift for your partner, whether it's a handmade gift, jewelry, or something else, giving it to your partner during your ceremony can be really special!

### **Create Space for Those Not Present**

As a gesture to a special person or people who could not physically attend your day, you can include a moment of silence during your ceremony, or incorporate a memento from them into your wedding day.



# Portraits

## COUPLES PORTRAITS

It's incredibly common for couples to fear being awkward in front of the camera. Trust me, I hear this from almost everyone I talk to. I want to assure you that letting those worries fall away will be easier than you anticipate. Remember that you're going to be looking SO GOOD and you will be experiencing so many wonderful emotions on your wedding day—and those feelings of overwhelming joy will shine through to your photos

This designated portrait time is a great chance for you two to enjoy some slower-paced alone time. My best photos happen when you two actually forget that I'm there and are just wrapped up in each other and the stunning scenery around you. If any "posing" adjustments needs to be made, I will speak up and give you two some gentle directions. I'll never leave you hanging or wondering what to do.

The more time we have for portraits, the more relaxed you two will feel and the more great portraits I'll be able to take! The magic typically begins to happen after spending at least 20-30 minutes at a location.

## QUICK TIPS FOR LOOKING GREAT IN YOUR PHOTOS

- Trust me! I do this professionally, and we have the same goal in mind. I want your photos to look as incredible as you do (if not more).
- You'll find yourself quickly forgetting about any cameras the more you focus on being present with your partner and the beautiful scenery around you. That's what the day is all about, after all.
- If you're ever unsure what to do with your hands, reach for your partner.
- You never have to be statues, movement is good! Don't be afraid to interact with one another how you normally would and explore the landscape you are in.
- Keep each other smiling. Reminisce over all the amazing stories, adventures, and misadventures that brought you to where you are. Remind your partner how great they look and how much you love them often.
- Have fun and enjoy yourself! Happy looks good on you.





## Family Portraits

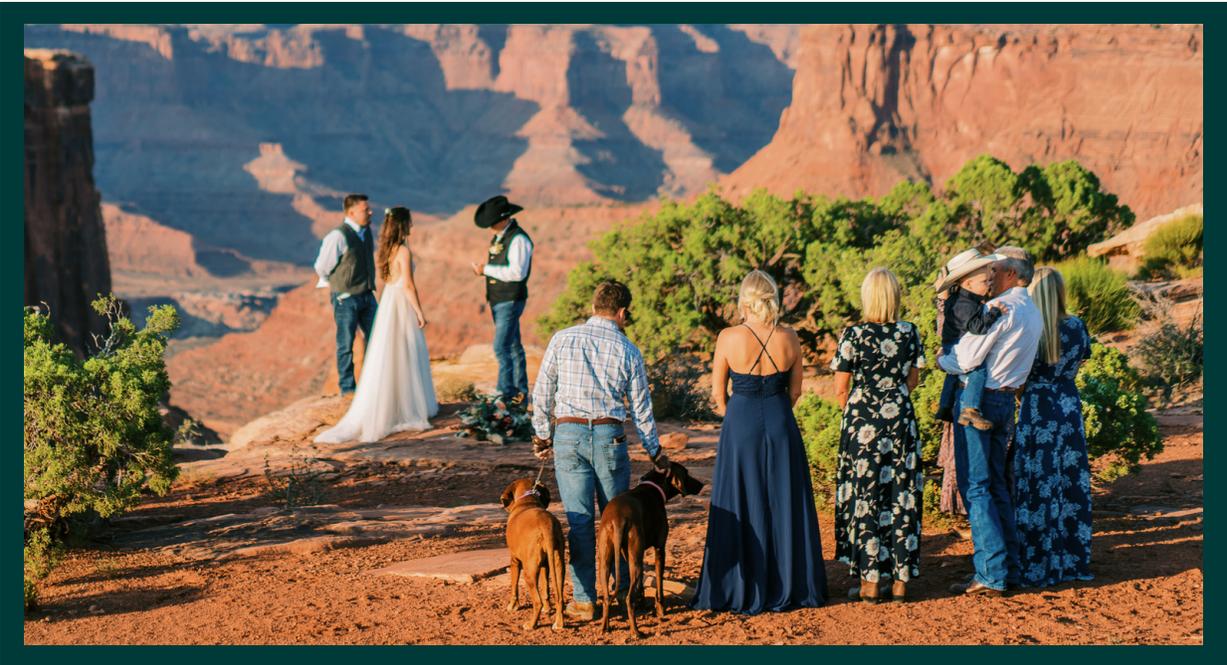
Most often I photograph family portraits immediately after the ceremony while everyone is still in one place and looking great! If you make a list of desired family portrait combinations beforehand, this process can be seamless and relatively quick! You can anticipate each family portrait combination taking about 3 minutes to complete. Here's a short and simple example:

- Couple, parents
- Couple, parents, siblings
- Couple, siblings
- Couple, friends
- Couple, dogs
- Group photo of everyone

### Tips for your family portraits:

- Have your guests remove all sunglasses and/or transition eyeglasses.
- Empty all pockets! No phones or wallets making your pockets bulky.
- Set any purses, bags, or jackets/layers that they don't want to be photographed in, to the side.
- Have fun with it! Yes, I will make sure to capture plenty of each group looking at the camera and smiling, but don't be afraid to get candid after the "serious" photos are captured too. Hugs, laughs, goofy poses, and bunny ears are all welcome





# Activities

When you are thinking about your elopement timeline, you will also want to consider any other meaningful activities that you might want to incorporate into your day—either to celebrate your relationship or take a moment to reflect upon the commitment that you are making.

Here are a few ideas for some activities that you don't necessarily need to book ahead of time but might still want to leave space for in your elopement day:

- Dedicating time to write in a journal so that you can capture all of the emotions of the day and revisit how you felt on your wedding day in the future.
- Reading letters from friends and family members who might not be in attendance during your actual elopement day.
- Playing instruments together—whether you are both talented musicians or just started learning together, this can be a special way to spend time together and communicate your joy through music.
- Creating something together, like painting a blank canvas together, throwing some pottery, making your own rings, or blending your own wedding-day wine. This will also give you a unique memento from your special day unlike any other.
- Spending some time taking a nearby walk or hike to really be present, take in your surroundings, and commit them to memory.
- Taking a trip to the local tattoo parlor to get matching tattoos in celebration of your new marriage.
- Planting trees, flowers, or other foliage (but only in places where it is appropriate to do so!) to represent rooting yourself in your relationship and being ready to grow together.
- Playing a game—from video games to board games to backyard games, there are so many options, and this is a great activity to include some guests while also having a lot of fun.

When budgeting time in your day for activities, I recommend leaving some extra space so that you don't feel rushed to "perform" an activity in a short amount of time—but rather have time to relax and enjoy it. Also remember that some activities can take a while to set up, so leave space for travel and those transitions when planning out activities.



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# Celebratory Meal or Party

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It's super important to stay fueled & sustained during your elopement, especially if there's activities involved. A meal is the perfect time to sit back, relax, and simply soak in the excitement of the day. There are many routes you can go to incorporate food into your day. Will you choose a more luxurious route? Or is it more your style to do something casual?

## HERE ARE SOME FUN FOOD-RELATED IDEAS TO CONSIDER:

- Do you want to feel pampered and have a private chef prepare special meals for you?
- Would you like to pack a picnic and enjoy it someplace scenic?
- Will you make a charcuterie board of all of your favorite foods?
- Will you tailgate on the side of a 4x4 road?
- Would you like to cook something together over a fire?
- Would you like a more casual potluck style meal with guests at an Airbnb?
- Will you seek a favorite food? Or try something new?
- Will you be dining out of a JetBoil outside of your tent?
- Would you like to swing by a nearby restaurant, distillery or brewery? Maybe reserve a private room or tasting?
- Is spontaneously finding a random street vendor more your style?
- Will you be on the go? If so, maybe you'll prefer to swing by a caterer or restaurant and pick up something prepackaged.
- Will you celebrate with sparkling water or champagne? Or do you have a favorite beverage you'd like to enjoy together?
- What would be the most awesome scenario for you two on your wedding day?

If you're having an intimate wedding, you can also use the time around a celebratory meal to have a first dance and toasts—similar to how you would at a traditional reception. This is also a great time to read letters or cards from friends and family who aren't physically there with you and reminisce about highlights of the day so far. I highly recommend putting some time aside to enjoy these moments on your wedding day without feeling rushed. I will be documenting this time very candidly, but will also leave space for you two to enjoy yourselves without the camera present, especially while you're consuming food.

## Putting it all together – Timeline Examples

You've already made the brave choice to elope, to throw tradition to the wind, and get married in a way that truly reflects who you are together. So it's not a surprise that your timeline will look a little untraditional too. While at some point in the day you will have your ceremony where you commit your lives to one another—the journey to that moment and how you choose to celebrate afterwards can truly look a million different ways. Use these timeline examples as a jumping off point and to spark your imagination. Anything is possible.



## 2-Day 2-Person Elopement

This option is perfect for those that love activities and want to include a multitude of different types of scenery in their day. Spend your first day road tripping someplace new, stopping for short hikes and amazing view points along the way. Then use your second day for a fun activity like a helicopter flight into the wilderness, sailing from one island to another, off-roading in the desert, or a day at a vineyard blending your own bottles of wine. There is plenty of room for spontaneity too so feel free to relax while soaking up a beautiful view.



### DAY 1 - GUESTS: 0 (JUST YOU TWO)

- **5:30 am** – Meet at location one & set up for first look
- **6:00 am** – Sunrise first look in location one followed by portraits
- **7:00 am** – Head to location two (15 min drive)
- **7:15 am** – Arrive at the trailhead, gear up
- **7:30 am** – Begin hike, taking portraits along the way (2.0 mile hike in)
- **9:30 am** – Arrive at alpine lake for ceremony & picnic brunch
- **12:00 pm** – Hike back to the trailhead, taking portraits along the way (2.0 mile hike out)
- **1:30 pm** – Arrive at the trailhead, head to location three (45 min drive)
- **2:15 pm** – Arrive at location three for exploring & kayaking
- **5:30 pm** – Return kayaks, photo coverage wraps up

### DAY 2 - GUESTS: 0 (JUST YOU TWO)

- **6:00 am** – Meet at helicopter pad to check in
- **6:30 am** – Helicopter take off, flight one
- **7:00 am** – Land at location one for portraits
- **8:00 am** – Take off, flight two
- **8:30 am** – Land at location two for portraits
- **9:30 am** – Take off, flight three

## 2-Day Elopement with Family

This option is perfect for those that love activities and want to include a multitude of different types of scenery in their day. Spend your first day road tripping someplace new, stopping for short hikes and amazing view points along the way. Then use your second day for a fun activity like a helicopter flight into the wilderness, sailing from one island to another, off-roading in the desert, or a day at a vineyard blending your own bottles of wine. There is plenty of room for spontaneity too so feel free to relax while soaking up a beautiful view.

### DAY 1 - GUESTS: 25

- **2:45 pm** – Meet at ceremony location & set up for first look
- **3:15 pm** – First look followed by capturing details
- **4:00 pm** – Family arrives & set up for ceremony
- **4:30 pm** – Ceremony begins
- **5:15 pm** – Ceremony wraps up, pop champagne to celebrate
- **5:45 pm** – Family photos
- **6:30 pm** – Family photos wrap up & family heads into town
- **6:45 pm** – Exploring & portraits with just the couple
- **7:45 pm** – Sunset, head to restaurant (1 hour drive)
- **8:45 pm** – Arrive at restaurant & meet family for dinner, toasts, and cake
- **10:45 pm** – Photo coverage wraps up

### DAY 2 - GUESTS: 0 (JUST YOU TWO)

- **3:30 am** – Meet at trailhead, begin hiking up trail in the dark (2.5 mile hike in)
- **6:00 am** – Arrive at summit, change into wedding attire
- **6:30 am** – Sunrise portraits & exploring
- **8:30 am** – Begin hike back down, portraits along the way (2.5 mile hike out)
- **11:30 am** – Arrive back at the trailhead, photo coverage ends

# All-Day 2-Person Elopement

This is just enough time to tell the story of your incredible elopement day. Enough time to capture getting ready photos, your adventure to your ceremony location, portraits, and a celebration of your elopement together. You can choose to tackle climbing a mountain together, have a relaxing day spent by the sea, or anything in between.

- **9:30 am** – Photographer arrives at cabin to capture details & finishing touches
- **10:45 am** – First look outside cabin
- **11:00 am** – Head to ceremony location, stop along the way for photos with VW van
- **2:30 pm** – Arrive at location; ceremony followed by exploring & portraits
- **5:00 pm** – Head back to cabin (30 min drive)
- **5:30 pm** – Arrive back at the cabin for private chef dinner overlooking the water
- **7:30 pm** – Photo coverage wraps up





# All-Day Elopement with Family

Your intimate wedding day with loved ones can include an adventure for just the two of you as well! Start your day with a hike above the clouds at sunrise or a morning paddleboarding session before reuniting with your family for a ceremony and delicious meal together. Or opt for an off-roading adventure ending in expansive views, easily accessible for everyone to explore together and then have your ceremony and picnic right there! The possibilities are endless.

- **3:00 am** – Meet at the trailhead, gear up
- **3:15 am** – Begin hike in the dark (2.1 miles)
- **4:45 am** – Arrive at first look location, alpenglow begins, change into wedding attire
- **5:30 am** – Sunrise first look followed by portraits & exploring
- **8:00 am** – Begin hike back to trailhead, portraits along the way (2.1 miles)
- **9:30 am** – Arrive back at trailhead, head to Airbnb (30 min drive)
- **10:00 am** – Arrive at Airbnb for ceremony
- **10:30 am** – Ceremony
- **11:00 am** – Family photos
- **11:30 pm** – Brunch party with champagne popping & Bloody Marys
- **1:00 pm** – Photo coverage ends

No matter how you choose to structure your elopement day keep in mind these couple of tips:

Leave room for spontaneity. You ditched the big traditional wedding so you wouldn't feel rushed and stressed, so don't allow those feelings to creep into your elopement day either. Give yourself lots of extra cushion in your day for transitions, spontaneous adventure, and for if you end up running a bit behind at some point. Worst case scenario? You end up with extra time to spend soaking up a gorgeous view.

Be uniquely you. Consider carving out time in your day to enjoy an experience together that may be a bit unusual for a wedding day but is important to and uniquely you. Is your favorite way to spend a morning making french toast and hanging with your doggos? Do it! Love to play an instrument and want to surprise your partner with a song? Go for it!



# 05

## Get Ready to Go

### GATHER EVERYTHING YOU NEED & PACK

Whether you've been planning your elopement for one year or one month, it's probably felt like forever to get to this point—but you're finally getting married. It's time to pack! Use this checklist to pull together everything you need for your day. The sooner you begin to set things aside, the less stressed you'll be when the time comes to travel to your elopement destination.

#### **Necessities**

- Permit (if needed)
- All important travel ID's & documents
- Marriage license
- Water bottle & water
- Snacks
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Bug spray
- Extra socks
- Boots/shoes with good tread

#### **Wedding Attire & Ceremony Things**

- Vows
- Rings
- Ring box
- Paper invites, announcements, or postcards
- Flowers
- Wedding attire for partner 1 (dress, suit, jumpsuit, skirt, undergarments, etc)
- Wedding attire for partner 2 (dress, suit, jumpsuit, skirt, undergarments, etc)
- Accessories partner 1 (jewelry, veil, cape, watch, cufflinks, tie, bowtie, socks, pocket square, lapel pin, hair piece, etc)
- Accessories partner 2 (jewelry, veil, cape, watch, cufflinks, tie, bowtie, socks, pocket square, lapel pin, hair piece, etc)
- Perfume or cologne
- Makeup & hair supplies
- Garment bags for wedding attire during travel

- Champagne or sparkling water
- Plastic champagne flutes
- Tissues or hankie
- Speaker for music

#### **Adventure Gear**

- Backpack(s)
- Rain jacket
- Jacket (very warm & windproof)
- Warm layers (skin-toned fleece leggings)
- Hand Warmers + Body Warmers + Toe Warmers
- Traction (YakTrax, microspikes, and/or snowshoes)
- Gloves/mittens
- Headlamps
- Umbrellas
- Blanket to sit on

### DON'T FORGET YOUR MARRIAGE LICENSE!

You will need to attain your marriage license in advance! Even if you are having myself or another officiant sign, you are required to apply for your marriage license yourself. Marriage license requirements vary state-by-state and country-by-country, so it is always important to research your elopement location's requirements ahead of time.

# Communicate with your guests

## GUEST PREPAREDNESS

In order to have your guests be as prepared as possible for your elopement day and to avoid any awkward situations that could arise from miscommunications, you should consider sending your guests a pre-wedding email that preps them on the following:

- What to bring, including what sort of attire they might need to be comfortable in the climate, season, and time of day at your chosen location
- What not to bring, such as pets (if your location is not pet-friendly) or distracting electronics
- Timeline information of your day and when they need to be ready and when they need to arrive at certain locations
- Directions and location information including any maps, GPS coordinates they might need and a description of the accessibility and terrain of the spot that you've chosen.
- Whether or not the area you picked has cell phone reception (and if they will need to download any maps onto their phone ahead of time because of it)
- Parking instructions, especially if there is not a designated lot
- Safety information, including any wildlife that might be nearby, difficult travel conditions, or potentially unfavorable weather
- What restroom facilities are around—or especially let them know if there aren't any nearby
- Leave No Trace considerations, such as what materials you absolutely cannot have at your location (i.e. rice or confetti), any place that you might not be able to go because it would violate Leave No Trace ethics, and what you need to make sure that you pack out

By being upfront about these topics beforehand, you set expectations with your guests and help them also enjoy your wedding day as much as possible!



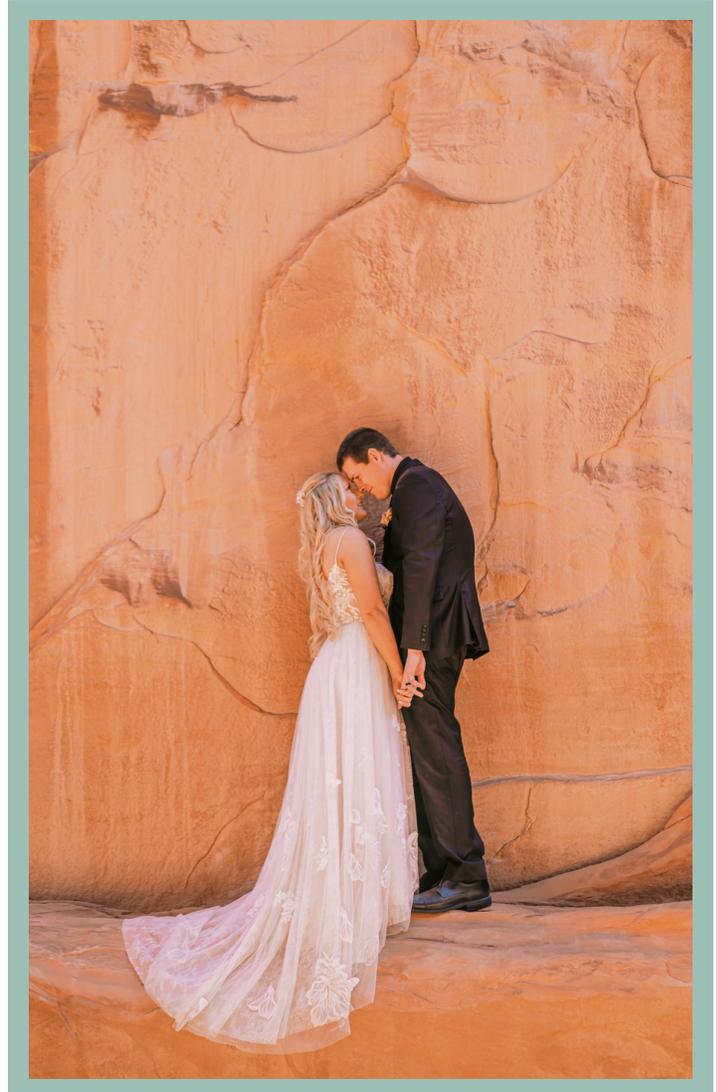


# Unplugged Weddings

For many reasons, I highly recommend asking guests to “unplug” and be fully present for your wedding day, especially when it comes to your ceremony.

When your guests are distracted by taking photos or recording videos, it’s difficult for them to also be focused on what is going on around them—you know, you getting married!! Cell phones, iPads, and other electronic devices will stand out and be a distraction in your photos. It also makes it very difficult for me to get candid photos of your guests’ reactions and emotions.

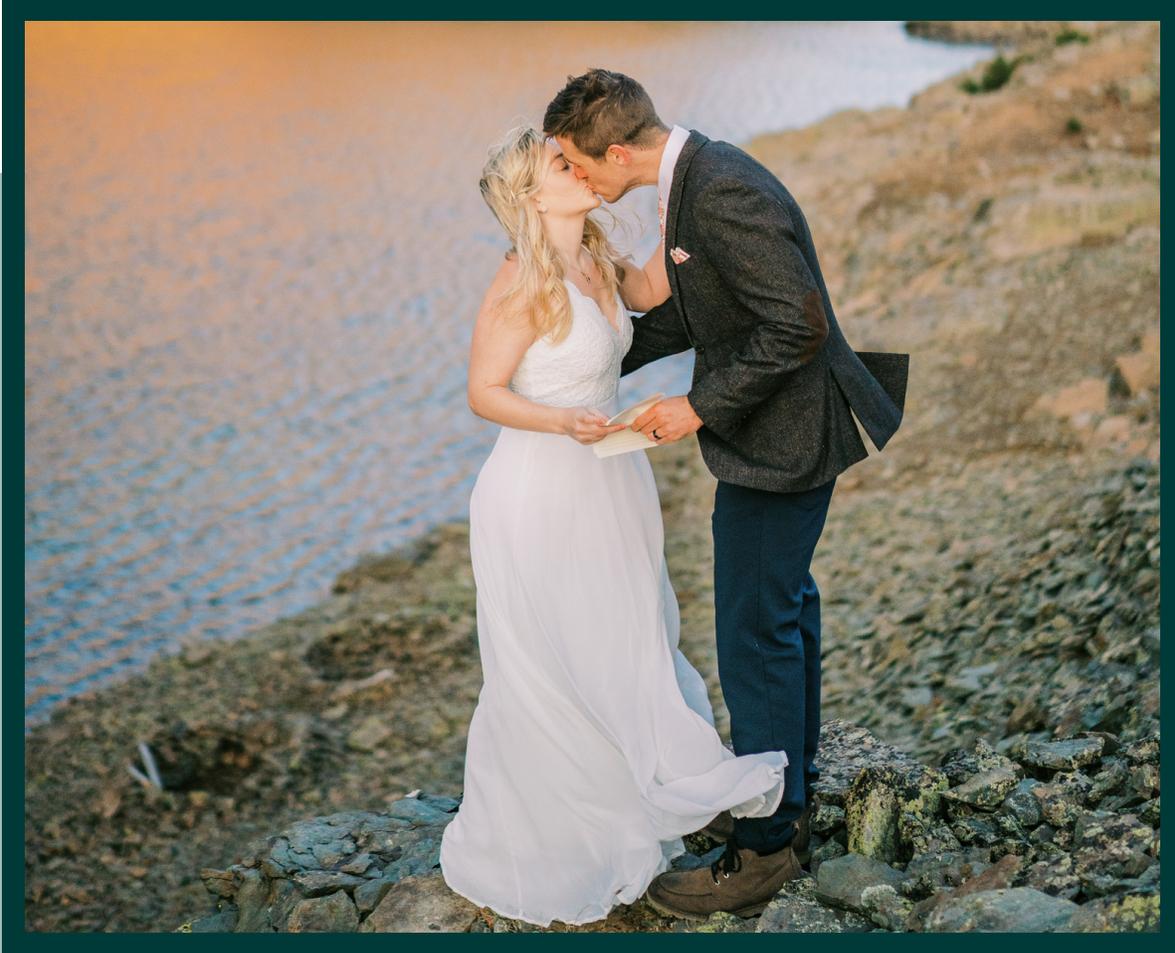
I’ve found it’s most effective to give your guests a heads up that this will be an unplugged experience in the days or weeks leading up to your wedding day. There are numerous gentle and kind ways to tell them this. Consider also reminding them just before your ceremony begins. Let them know that you would like them to be fully present with you, and that your photographer will do all the work to capture beautiful photos which they will be able to access through an online photo gallery. Remind them that they will have a sneak peek of beautiful and professional photos to enjoy very soon.



# Final tips

For the flight, for the trek, for the day before, too—these last-minute tips are here to help you have the best elopement experience ever!

- Start packing early and pack over a few days, so as you remember items you want to bring. You'll have plenty of time to add them to your bag and make sure you don't forget anything important.
- If you're flying, make sure you carry on the most important details of your wedding day, like your attire, ceremony details, rings, etc. Of course, what really matters is that you're getting married, not what you're wearing—but still, I'd love for you to have the day you've dreamed of in the attire you've dreamed of, so let's not leave it up to chance!
- If you're traveling somewhere that's a drier climate than you're used to or a higher elevation, be sure to drink tons of water and take care of yourself and get acclimated.
- In the days leading up to your elopement, make sure you eat, hydrate well, relax, and get plenty of sleep—you'll want plenty of energy on your day.
- Most of all, RELAX—you're about to have the best elopement day ever. You've planned a day that's a true reflection of the two of you, it's going to be amazing.



# 06

## Have the Best Day

**Be present, be you, & let your authentic emotions soar.**

**Soak in every moment and enjoy your intentional, meaningful, perfect-for-you day together.**

Remember, your day might not go exactly according to plan, but that's half the adventure. I will do everything I can to make your elopement dreams come true, but if you're willing to roll with the punches and embrace what comes your way, you're bound to have an amazing elopement experience (no matter what!).

**Relax, breathe, and don't stress about anything, photos included.**

If you have a beautiful experience together and feel alive throughout your day, great photos will follow.

# What happens next?

## AFTER YOUR ELOPEMENT OR INTIMATE WEDDING

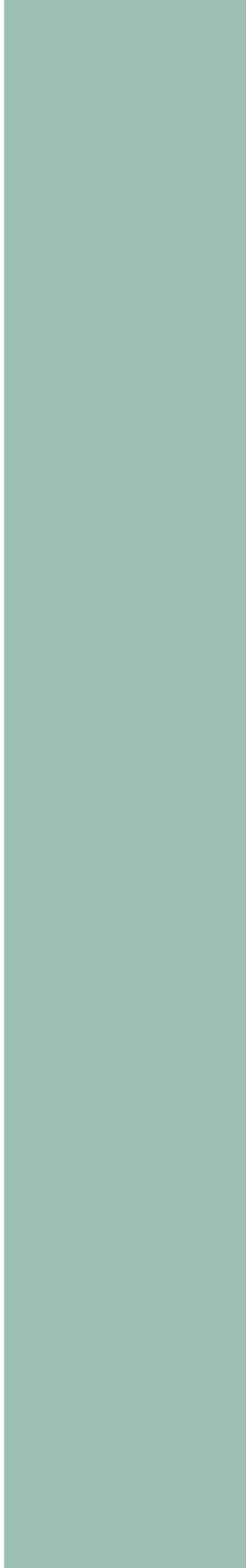
You've done it! You've had an incredible wedding day and I've taken photos of it all so you can remember every bit of it. Your next step is to sit back and relax while I carefully curate and edit your full gallery of photos from your day. This usually takes between 8-10 weeks for completion, but I will make sure you two have a sneak peek of 3-5 images within 1 week of your wedding day so you can make any announcements and begin to share glimpses of your day with your family and friends. Woohoo!

The images will be delivered as high-resolution jpegs via an online gallery. That way you'll have access to them wherever you are. You'll be able to easily print, share, and relive the awesomeness over and over. Feel free to share the gallery link with family and friends too! Anyone with the link will be able to access the gallery, make prints, order products, and download the images for themselves.

It's important to make sure you download your full gallery and back up the images in multiple safe places. I recommend using both external hard drives and online cloud storage to make sure the files stay safe and sound for years to come.







# Prints and Albums

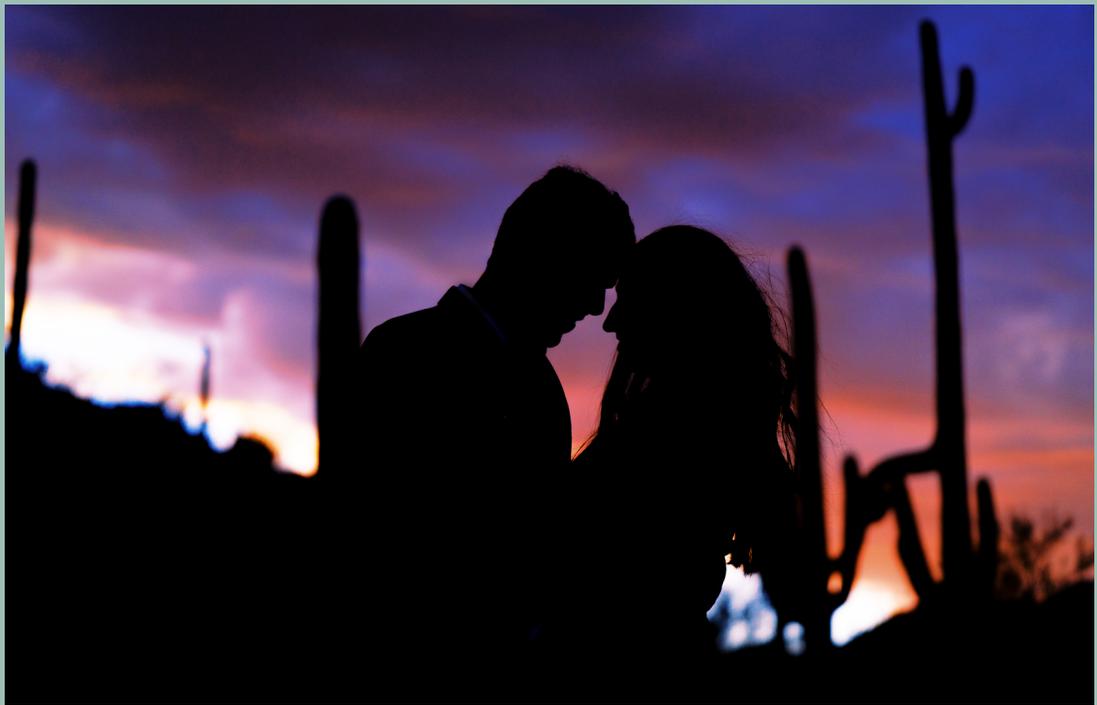
**“AN IMAGE ISN'T A PHOTOGRAPH UNTIL IT'S PRINTED.”  
- ANDREW FUNDERBURG**

The long awaited grand finale is here! It's time for you to print your photos and get your very own wedding album. I know you're not going to just let your photos sit on a computer, right? Right. ;) There are so many awesome ways to share and display your photos, and prints & albums are two of my favorites. There's nothing quite like picking up your wedding album and thumbing through the pages together or grabbing a stack of prints to pass around at your next gathering. It's the best way to reminisce, share your story, and experience those wedding-day-feels all over again. I strongly believe that your photos deserve a special place in your home, a special spot where you'll see them often. After you have received your online photo gallery, I will help you design the wedding album that's just right for you, and you'll easily be able to order products and prints of all sizes. You can expect albums within 5 weeks of ordering, and prints within just a few days! Everything will arrive beautifully packaged like the gifts they are, right to your home.

## **Creative ways to share and display your photos:**

- “We Eloped” announcements, postcards, & thank you cards
- A wedding album for the two of you
- A “parent album” for family & friends
- Unique prints on wood, canvas, or metal
- Framed leaning prints displayed on a mantel, bookshelf, or picture frame shelf
- Photo gallery accent wall
- Panoramic prints

Tada! You now have holiday gift ideas for everyone you know.



# Thank You!

Congratulations—you've made it to the end!

Remember, this guide isn't a rulebook and you don't have to memorize it. Instead, let this guide be here for you to come back to as you need it, for guidance, for inspiration, for reminders, for next steps.

And I know that this information might feel like a lot all at once, but trust me, at the end of the day, eloping is about enjoying the process of getting married and making decisions that are the most "you." Your day is going to be amazing, so take a deep breath and just dedicate some time to being honest with yourself about what you actually want your wedding day to look like—a day dedicated to celebrating your relationship with your partner, free of the burden of traditions, expectations, and obligations, and the freedom to just be yourselves.

You and your partner deserve to ditch all pressure and stress and instead honor who you are with an elopement or intimate wedding that speaks to you.

I'm so excited to be a part of helping you create this day. There's truly no better job in the whole wide world, and it's because of incredible couples like you who aren't afraid to abandon expectations that don't fit who you are, who decided to instead seek out an experience that is authentic and honest to the special relationship that you share, that I get to live this dream.

I can't wait to meet you—and, in the meantime, I'll be right here to answer any questions you have and help you plan your elopement or intimate wedding every single step of the way.

You're a badass couple doing something so brave—and your wedding day is going to be unforgettable, meaningful, and perfect. It will be an unforgettable beginning to all of the other adventures that will follow in your marriage.

Happy adventuring!

**-Malachi Lewis**



 Shell  
Creek

PHOTOGRAPHY