

The Bridal Extravaganza

Accommodations

A little advance planning will make attending your wedding an enjoyable experience for all invited. Your guests will feel welcome, and you will be able to see their shining faces celebrating with you.

Accommodations for Out-of-Town Guests

It is important to find lodging for your out-of-town guests, as it usually isn't possible or practical to accommodate them in your home. This is a busy time for you and your family, and your guests may feel that they are imposing upon you.

You can often arrange for group rates when you reserve a block of rooms. These are generally not available through 800-number reservations, but must be negotiated with the hotel's sales staff individually. If you know the number of travelers coming in, you may want to make arrangements with hotels in various price ranges to accommodate all of your guests' needs. Choose facilities near the ceremony and/or reception locations.

Evaluate amenities such as parking (free vs. paid), room service, restaurants, babysitting services, hospitality suites, pool and exercise facilities, check-in and checkout time, and the availability of transportation. Many hotels have preprinted reservation cards describing accommodations and rates. These can be included with your invitations and mailed to the hotel directly by your guests.

Transportation

If you have guests arriving by plane, train, or bus, you will need to arrange for their transportation around town. If there aren't too many coming, you may be able to designate drivers from your relatives and friends. These people would pick up your guests, transport them to and from the hotel, ceremony, and reception, and see them back on their return trip. This can be a big responsibility for the drivers. Other guests might welcome the opportunity to explore your hometown, and want to rent an automobile. Do some preliminary work for your guests; gather rental agencies' phone numbers and rate information.

Information Packet and Itinerary

When mailing your invitations, consider sending out-of-towners a "wedding packet." Include information on hotel accommodations, transportation arrangements, the weekend's itinerary, map and directions to everywhere they will need to go, local restaurants, and descriptions of local points of attraction.

Supply phone numbers and cost information when available. Include an itinerary of the weekend's festivities: the Friday morning brunch cruise and/or touch football game scheduled, the backyard barbecue, the rehearsal and dinner (if they are invited). If not, arrange for a friend or relative to host a small get-together for those not attending the rehearsal and dinner. Include addresses, phone numbers, maps, times, and style of dress for each occasion.

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Welcome Baskets

You can arrange to have gift baskets in your guests' hotel rooms. Include fresh fruits, candies, wine, soda and/or bottled water, a selection of hometown specialties, copies of the updated itinerary, brochures on local attractions, extra maps, and directions to the ceremony and reception.

Babysitting

If possible, arrange for a professional babysitter at least during the wedding ceremony and reception. Arrangements can be made at the hotel, or ceremony and reception sites. Out-of-town guests will appreciate your thoughtfulness, and will be able to enjoy your wedding more. If you host the children at the reception, consider setting up separate facilities for them—a centerpiece of balloons, lollipops, and goody bags to keep them occupied. If available, arrange for a separate room for them to play and run around in. Schedule physical activities as well as coloring and videotapes. Be sure to invite them on the dance floor, though, for the Hokey Pokey, Bird Dance, etc.