**15 Cheap Wedding Venue Ideas for an Affordable Ceremony or Reception**

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**Additional Resources**

You know what they say: Location, location, location. And it matters for your wedding as much as real estate. The venue you pick influences everything else about the wedding, including the price tag.

But a unique wedding venue doesn’t have to break the bank. If you want something special and affordable, you have plenty of options.

For some couples, the venue cost is one of the most significant wedding expenses, running into the thousands of dollars. If you’d rather use that cash for something else, look into one of these cheaper venue types.

**1. A Backyard**

A backyard wedding doesn’t have to be casual or simple. You can have just as fancy a wedding in your childhood home’s yard as in a church.

If a friend or family member hosts, your venue costs will probably be free. Even if you pay to use a stranger’s yard, you still end up paying a lot less. A friend of a friend might even let you use their space in exchange for a free meal or unlimited drinks at the reception.

Backyards work best for small weddings unless you know someone with lots of land. But that makes it the perfect excuse to limit the number of guests.

But be cautious about the weather when planning a backyard wedding. Rent a tent large enough to accommodate the ceremony seating and reception tables if it rains. You might not need it, but it’s wise to be prepared. Besides, in some regions, it can protect you from the sun even if the weather’s clear.

When decorating, use the space around you to your advantage. If there are lots of trees in the yard, decorate them with string lights. And use flowers or greenery from or matching the yard’s garden as part of your centerpieces.

**2. City Hall or a Courthouse**

Everyone knows you can make an appointment at your local city hall and get married without any bells and whistles.

But some courthouses or city halls also let you rent a room for a formal ceremony and reception. Often, the rooms cost about half as much as a typical venue.

And many city halls are architectural marvels, which makes for attractive [wedding photos](https://www.moneycrashers.com/cheap-professional-wedding-photographers-videographers/). For example, Philadelphia’s city hall features a 19th-century aesthetic complete with a clock tower. Atlanta’s is topped with an eco-friendly green roof, perfect for outdoor nuptials.

**3. A Community Center**

If community centers make you think of middle school dances and basketball practice, think again.

A community center is perfect for the couple who wants a DIY wedding. You’ll have to take care of all the wedding details, from the decor to the drinks. But no one will push you into choosing a particular caterer or florist.

On the flip side, you might have to bring everything to the center and clear it out at the end of the event, which can be a hassle and may add to your overall costs if you need to hire help.

Also, some community centers prohibit alcohol and have rules about the types of decorations you can use. Ask about any restrictions before you book.

Since they serve a local community, rental rates at community centers are usually around a couple hundred dollars per hour.

**4. A Park**

If you and your fiance love nature, a park makes the ideal setting for an outdoor dream wedding.

The cost varies based on the type of park and event. You can usually expect to pay a small fee.

If you want to get married in a national park, apply for a permit first. You can apply up to 12 months in advance. But note that getting a permit doesn’t mean you have the park to yourselves.

State and local park rules vary. For example, if you want to get married in a Pennsylvania state park, you need approval from the state park bureau.

Some parks offer all-inclusive wedding packages. For instance, if you dream of getting married in New York’s Central Park, you can book a package for a few thousand dollars. It’s more than the cost of a permit but much less than a typical New York wedding.

Remember to leave the land as you found it and ask guests not to litter or disturb any wildlife.

**5. A Beach**

What’s more romantic than the sound of waves crashing on the sand? The beach is the perfect setting for a romantic budget-friendly wedding.

But you need a permit from the municipality first. It usually costs less than a couple hundred dollars. Often, the only fee associated with a beach wedding is that permit fee, so you can save thousands of dollars.

Choose the spot on the beach and the time of your wedding carefully, or the tide may come in as you’re saying I do.

Also, be aware of the typical weather on your wedding day. For example, if you want to get married on a beach in Hawaii in December, you can pretty much count on rain. And there’s a risk of hurricanes in Florida from June through November.

**6. A Library**

Many libraries rent out rooms for events. And some are truly breathtaking. But major venues like the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building of the New York public library and the central branch of the Boston public library can be just as expensive as major hotels.

But if you can find a less famous or more out-of-the-way library, like the central branch of the Kansas City public library in Missouri, you can really save.

Even if you don’t live close to a big city, check with your local branch. A room or two in a small municipal library will probably set you back less than a couple thousand, but don’t expect it to include wedding essentials like catering or tables and chairs.

**7. A Museum**

Like libraries, museums tend to be ornate buildings that provide the perfect backdrop for a sophisticated wedding.

Getting married in a museum helps you save on wedding decor too. The area’s already decked out in beautiful paintings, sculptures, or artifacts.

Often, museums have a preferred vendor list they expect couples to use. If that’s the case, scrutinize the list before you book to ensure they have options in your price range.

But prominent museums in major cities charge much more than small museums. You can save a few grand if you choose a less well-known museum for your big day.

**8. A Historical Site**

Whether it’s a house designed by a famous architect or the childhood home of a significant figure, you can rent a historical site for your special day.

Pick a site that has meaning for you and your betrothed. For example, if you’re both U.S. history buffs, you can host your nuptials at [Lincoln’s Cottage](https://www.lincolncottage.org/" \t "_blank). If you can’t get enough of modernist architecture, book [Edith Farnsworth House](https://edithfarnsworthhouse.org/" \t "_blank).

But the area of the site you book also influences the price. A tent wedding at Lincoln’s Cottage is a few thousand, while renting the entire cottage for the full day is around $20,000.

Also be mindful of vendor requirements, which could eat into your wedding budget if you originally planned for something cheaper.

**9. A Theater**

All the world’s a stage, and you’re about to get married on it. Even if you don’t have a penchant for the dramatic, a theater is an optimal spot for a wedding. It has built-in seating and a stage for you to say I do on.

Hold the reception in the lobby after the ceremony to save your guests the hassle of having to drive somewhere else.

How much a theater costs to rent depends on its size and history. You can expect to pay thousands for a Broadway stage. But a local community theater might let you rent the space for a couple hundred dollars per hour.

But if it’s a working theater, you have to plan your ceremony and reception around theater season. That can limit your choice of dates.

**10. A Zoo or Aquarium**

You don’t have to be Snow White and Prince Charming to get married with animals in attendance. A zoo or aquarium is a unique venue option that won’t bankrupt you.

Some zoos and aquariums even offer full wedding packages, providing catering, table and chair rentals, and shuttle service from the parking lot.

You can also usually rent in half-day increments. The cost typically ranges from around $1,000 for an outdoor event to a few grand for a space indoors.

Just keep in mind that you’re holding your event in someone’s home. You can incorporate the zoo animals into your big day by posing for pictures with them, but be respectful, or you may get kicked out or fined.

**11. A Garden**

A botanical garden provides you with a breathtaking outdoor space for a ceremony and reception. You can exchange vows surrounded by lush greenery and flowers and dance the night away under a canopy of leaves and stars.

If your local botanical garden allows ceremonies, it will probably have an approved-vendors list, so ensure they don’t push the overall price outside your range. They’ll probably also have rules about what areas you can be in and what you can do there — for example, candles may be out of the question.

One way to save even more on a garden wedding is to book in the off-season. You’ll miss out on certain flowers in bloom, but you’ll also knock about $1,000 off of the price.

**12. A Farm or Barn**

Plan a Pinterest-perfect wedding by choosing a farm or barn as your venue. Many rural landowners have capitalized on the demand for rustic weddings by renting out their barns as event spaces, sometimes for as little as a few hundred dollars per hour.

Barns aren’t usually cooled or heated, so they’re best suited for spring or fall weddings. Of course, if you can take the heat (or cold), you could save a bundle by booking a barn when the weather’s less pleasant.

Another thing to note is that some barns don’t have electricity. But it’s cheaper and safer to choose a barn with electricity than to rent a generator for the event.

Barns are also usually most appropriate for smaller weddings, as few can hold hundreds of people.

**13. A Restaurant or Cafe**

If you want to keep your wedding on the small side, book a private room at a favorite restaurant.

You’ll have to pay for the food and drinks, but the restaurant won’t charge you a rental fee.

If you want to go all out, rent the entire restaurant or cafe for the night. How much that costs depends on the size and length of the event. Some restaurants may add a base fee for the space in addition to charging for food and beverages.

**14. An Airbnb or Vrbo**

Airbnb and Vrbo aren’t just for vacations. You can book some rentals for a wedding or special event.

It can be tricky to find wedding venues when searching directly on Airbnb. It’s easier to run a Google search for “wedding venues site:airbnb.com” to get a list of results that have the word wedding in their description. But Vrbo lets you sort by listings that allow events.

How much a venue costs depends on the location and time of year. There are plenty for $1,000 or less, much cheaper than the cost of a typical wedding venue.

Before you book, check to ensure the type of party you want to have is OK. Message the host before booking and give them a rundown of events. Also, review the house rules to ensure they don’t interfere with your plans.

**15. A School or College**

If you met your significant other in college, hold your wedding at your alma mater.

That’s what my friends who graduated from Penn State did. The ceremony took place in the school’s chapel, and the reception was in the historic on-campus inn. It was a chance for them to reminisce about their college days while laying the groundwork for their future together.

You also don’t have to get married at your old school. If there’s a beautiful campus near you, check to see if you can rent it.

Consider the time of year when renting event space on a campus. Summer is often ideal since most of the students will be gone.

Some schools offer more extensive wedding packages than others or offer discounts to alums. Check to see what options are available.

Keep in mind that the bigger the school, the bigger the price tag. You can probably rent a chapel at a liberal arts college for a few hundred dollars, but an event at an Ivy League school could set you back thousands.

**Final Word**

As you search for affordable wedding venues, look for places that let you host the ceremony and reception. You’ll cut down transportation and related costs and can ensure your wedding is a seamless experience.

Make a list of possible options and contact each one for a quote. Get all the details about the venue, such as vendor requirements and restrictions.

One venue might charge a higher fee but allow you to work with cheaper caterers or florists, saving you money on your [wedding food and drink](https://www.moneycrashers.com/cheap-wedding-reception-food-drink-menu-ideas-budget/) or decor. Another might look affordable at first, but the cost of its preferred vendors can be more than you want to spend.

Visit lots of venues before you make your decision too. Looks can be deceiving, and some really beautiful (inexpensive) venues just don’t have the cash for a professional photographer. A venue that doesn’t look so great online might end up being your dream location.