

Before you set the date, **Emma Simper** shares a selection of top venue must-haves that aren't up for debate

What might be an absolute essential to you as a couple, might be lower down the priority list for another. The *do we or don't we?* of decision making may seem incredibly overwhelming – especially if you're factoring in what your mum, neighbour and colleague think you should be doing. But at the end of the day, it all boils down to 'don't need', 'would be nice to have' and your 'non-negotiables'. With so many venues to choose from (unless you're entirely at odds with perhaps an at-home or abroad venue) it's very likely you'll be able to score a place that meets both you and your partner's 'I do' demands. So, here are eight of the most popular must-haves and a perfectly paired venue to start you off...

Top-notch menu

Is the way to your hearts through your stomachs? Do you consider yourselves a foodie couple? Are you already day-dreaming of your wedding meal whilst reading this? If you answered yes to all of the above, it's likely your w-day non-negotiable is having an outstanding menu. Well, you and your guests will certainly be impressed by the culinary delights of Ubiquitous Chip.

The Ashton Lane institution's events and marketing manager Rachel Stakes says, "At the Chip, we don't believe in a one-size-fits-all wedding menu. Instead, our food is innovative, seasonal, and always fresh. You and your partner will choose from our current restaurant menu, meaning each wedding meal is unique and never duplicated." Head chef Doug also personally oversees every wedding meal, Rachel reveals, "crafting dishes that are not just a part of your day, but a highlight of it."

A weather-proofed 'wow'

There's a current trend for couples to 'bury a sausage' the day before their wedding to 'guarantee' them sunshine on their wedding date. The reality is that even submerging a full butcher's counter is unlikely to alter natural weather patterns!

If you want to host part of your day outdoors, rain and

wind may scupper those plans and with it, potentially the decor and visual impact you had hoped for. A last minute-location change from indoor to out needn't be the end of the world if you choose a venue like The Dougarie Boathouse on Arran. Events manager Malin Stewart says, "Even on a rainy day, the interior feels connected to the exterior with the vast windows blurring the lines between inside and out. Guests can stay warm and dry while still being immersed in the beauty of the setting, making it an ideal choice for couples who want a 'weatherproof' wedding without compromising on the view."

Luxury honeymoon lodgings

The day you and your partner have spent months, or likely years, planning and preparing for has finally happened – you did it, woohoo! – and now there's nothing your dancing-weary feet and cake-filled bellies would love more than to melt into relaxation. If your dream is a luxurious honeymoon suite, The Redhurst Hotel's Garden House is a space you won't be able to resist.

Once a residential bungalow, this romantic oasis includes a personal gated entrance, grand bedroom with a fabulous copper bathtub, wet room with a double rainfall shower, living area with a bar, and a special rear garden complete with a hot tub, firepit, and TV. Wedding and events manager, Susan Spence reveals that "a wedding night stay is included with all wedding packages" at the Giffnock hotel. Result.

Dedicated dancefloor

If you're itching to get those dancing shoes on, it's likely your non-negotiable will be a venue with a dedicated dancefloor and stage space. Mansfield Traquair, a spectacular exclusive-use venue, is magical to look at – thanks to its grand neo-Romanesque architecture, exquisite murals, stained glass windows and soaring ceilings – but it's also extremely spacious with loads of room for everyone to bust their moves or ceilidh till late.

The chancel arch at the far end of the venue makes for the perfect backdrop as you glide your way across →

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THE
NON-
NEGOTIABLES



[From top] The Dougarie Boathouse's expansive window walls afford stunning indoor views of the sea and the Mull of Kintyre; bride Mairi and groom Robert sure knew how to make the most of Mansfield Traquair's spacious dancefloor; The Redhurst Hotel's Garden House boasts a stunning statement copper bathtub [Left] Newlyweds Ellen and Ben prioritised exceptional food and drink at their Glasgow bash at Ubiquitous Chip



[Below] Rosebery Steading's sweet on-site chapel sits upon unconsecrated ground, meaning couples are welcome to have any type of ceremony – religious or otherwise – they desire

[Below] It's not just the wine cellar at Hotel du Vin Glasgow that's impressive – the exterior is too



Photo Amy McGilly Photography

the smooth dancefloors under the twinkling lights. With plenty of space for a full-band set-up, your musical acts are bound to love it too.

On-site chapel

Thanks to the rise in celebrant- and registrar-led ceremonies, it's become more common for the ceremony and reception to be held at the same venue. If the convenience of this appeals to you, but you can't see past that traditional church setting, your non-negotiable might be a venue that can offer you the best of both worlds.

Set amidst rolling hills near Edinburgh, Rosebery Steading is a beautiful 18th-century gem that has a private unconsecrated chapel. It can accommodate up to 100 guests and is available to hire for an additional fee. Afterwards, continue the celebrations in the venue's expansive barn or central courtyard.

Winning wine pairings

If your wedding must-have is sipping on some of the most sought-after wines in the world, you can't go wrong with One Devonshire Gardens, owned by the Hotel du Vin

brand. Literally the 'Hotel of Wine', it goes without saying that when it comes to vino, Hotel du Vin Glasgow, with its very own wine cellar, is a *premier cru* choice.

As part of their wedding services, sales manager Paige McGhee shares that all couples are invited to enjoy a complimentary tasting of their selected menu, paired with the wines that will be served on their special day. "This ensures that everything meets their expectations," says Paige. The west-end hotel's drinks packages range from £30-£42 (2024 prices) and include an arrival drink, toast drink and wine for the meal. The 'Willi Opitz' selection, for example, at £42 per person includes two glasses of champers and a half bottle of wine to complement your menu. Cheers!

All-accommodating accommodation

For a lot of us, what makes a moment truly special is the people we're spending it with. So when it comes to your big day, if you don't want to be without your friends and family at any single solitary point, you'll love the all-accommodating scope of Achnagairn Castle near Inverness.

In total across the estate, the Highland venue can sleep up to 138 people, ideal if you're planning a big bash. 55 guests can stay in the castle's 24 luxury, individually designed bedrooms and 75 guests can stay in the seven Mini Manors, which are five/six bedroom houses, just 200 metres away.

Depending on the size of the party and the number of additional friends and relatives staying on-site, couples can choose to allocate the rooms or allow their guests to book themselves, while the glorious bridal suite will be reserved for the newlyweds.

Paw-esome guests

For many couples, four-legged friends are just as crucial to the guest list as their friends and family – they simply can't imagine the start of their happily fur-ever after without them by their sides.

If your priority is to find a venue that'll love your pup as much as you do, The Lodge on Loch Lomond is a stunning location to consider. Sales manager Sandra Cunningham says: "We are dog lovers here. As the demand for pooches to be included in weddings has increased, we've fine-tuned our offering to match. We've introduced dog watering stations around the hotel, dog-friendly areas, specific bedrooms and complimentary dog goody bags. We can even recommend dog chaperones that our couples can book directly with."

No additional charges are applied for having your pup present on the day other than a £25 overnight fee which acts as a standard hotel servicing charge for the bedroom.



Photo CIA Photography

[Above] French bulldog Bonnie was able to join paw-rents Kathleen and Paul at every step of their The Lodge on Loch Lomond wedding



[Below] Staying at Achnagairn Castle with all of your friends and family is bound to be unforgettable

Photo Photographs by Eve