



A Life Celebrant

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BEACH WEDDINGS & CEREMONIES

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We certainly do live on the world's largest island and so are surrounded by incredible beaches. A beach wedding can be magnificent but be prepared so as to ensure it is as wonderful as you imagined.

I surveyed Celebrants across Australia and compiled this list of considerations to make sure your beach wedding or ceremony is a success.

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Location

The ocean is nature at her very best and who doesn't love a beach!

Apart from the most magical wedding backdrop and beauty of a beach, we know that there is always a breeze, and sand, and sunburn, waves, probably some strangers, and maybe a creature or two.

These are a part of the joy of a beach but can also be distractions.

Many breaches also have accessibility issues but you want to be certain that you, your guests and of course the Celebrant, can get there and back, easily and safely.

Pick a beach that has:

- Toilets nearby
- accessible parking,
- a sheltered area away from the wind and wave line
- a grass area or a mat so nothing and no one, gets buried in the sand

Here are some tips:

- Pick an area on an esplanade, or on flat sand/grass/boardwalk.
- A spot with a beach view rather than being actually on the beach, removes some of the hazards and makes for nice photos
- Avoid wet sand areas unless you want to get wet.
- Not too close to the rocks where there will be extra wave sounds.
- The rocks can be subject to sudden, freak waves.
- A shaded area such as sails, a gazebo, or a natural cove will offer wind protection and reduce glare as well as the risk of sunburn.
- Portable gazebos can be picked up by wind gusts
- Check wind direction as it can cause havoc with sand being blown into your face, and can interfere with the mic, sound and decorations.
- If the beach is prone to an onshore wind there may be larger waves and louder wave noise.
- Accessible toilets are needed for the comfort of all
- Will you need a change room?
- Check if you will have to share the use of the area (public) or is an exclusive site available.
- Plodding through sand, can be laborious so make sure to remind guests to avoid high heels
- Signing your certificates in the ocean breeze can be problematic and so a folder might be better or consider having a signing table off the beach, or undercover e.g. a nearby cabin veranda so that the breeze and sand don't soil the certificates or blow them out to sea
- Be prepared with lots of clips for documents, readings and ceremony scripts.
- The Couple, guests and Celebrant should not be looking into the sun, as scrunched faces and closed eyes can ruin photos & can give glare headaches (*you need to be certain that the Celebrant, readers, witnesses, and of course the couple will be able to read and documents*).
- Check the position of the sun and tide as they wait for no one. You could get sunburned, washed away, or even get very cold when the sun is on the horizon.
- Check with the photographer about lighting etc.
- Consider having a rehearsal the day before at the same time to check for tide, sound, sun, crowds and interruptions etc. but remember that the beach can change with each tide.
- Check councils, newspapers, the local surf club, and posters, to make sure that there won't be any other big 'permitted', regular or unexpected events on the day
- Provide your guests with a simple map if the location is secluded or not directly in front of a landmark.
- Always have a Plan B!!!**

Permits

- Check if it is a Local Council, Land Council or National Park Beach that manages the beach as different rules and restrictions may apply. The majority of beaches along this incredible and beautiful stretch are managed by:
 - Shoalhaven Council
 - National Parks & Wildlife
 - Booderee Botanic Gardens/ Booderee National Park
 - Eurobodalla Council
- Make sure a permit is obtained for the site, noting permissible guest numbers, any sound restrictions, and time period where applicable and comply with the restrictions spelled out in the permit.
- Arrange permit/s (re clean-up requirements, restrictions around use of umbrellas, chairs, marquees, flags, signs or arbours, licences for alcohol and/or catering and use of toilet facilities etc.).
- Check if mats, walkways, arbours etc are permitted and if there is a time limit including for set up, ceremony, and take down/pack up.

Public Access

- You cannot stop the public from joining in so watch out for beach cricket, footie games and riders bursting through the middle of your ceremony and guests.
- Check councils, newspapers, the local surf club, and posters, to make sure that there won't be any other big 'permitted', regular or unexpected events on the day (*even if at the other end of the beach, noise can travel*).

Comfort of Guests

- Arrange for an usher, guide or escort to direct and assists guests
- Consider the distance to and ease of access to the ceremony site.
- Can your guest all get there and back?
 - i) Getting down onto the beach and back up again, can be a challenge.
 - ii) Elderly and disabled guest may not be able to access the beach
- Guests may arrive 20-30 minutes before the bride, remain for the ceremony itself, and then stay for photos afterwards, and so offer water and seating if possible.
- Offer favours such as sunscreen, thongs, fans, bottled water, ice creams & insect repellent.
- How far away are the toilets?

Flowers

- All floral arrangements, greenery or sprays should be low-line and be pegged, securely tied or have weights or stones in the vase or base so as not to come loose in the breeze.
- If in a National Park, there may be restrictions on what can be brought in i.e. use native plants to avoid concerns

Hazards

- Watch out for seagulls, biting bugs, wind and water, and light reflecting from sand and sea
- Use insect repellent, and sunscreen
- Take umbrellas to shade from the sun and/or rain and spray
- Have bottles of cold water available for guests
- Have lots of weights and clips on hand to hold down tables, mats, paperwork, arbour, table clothes, umbrellas etc.
- Watch out for wind & sand blasting
- Be aware of the possibility of nasties lurking in the sand such as semi-naked gawkers.
- Sand gets in everywhere and into everything
- Wear a hat and lots of sunscreen to avoid sunburn
- Check the tide beforehand to make sure you will not get washed away
- Check the pathway to the site to avoid rocky areas, trip hazards on pathways, and/or difficult dunes.
- umbrellas offer great shade and protection from elements, but can also be a hazard in a breeze and of course, can block the view

Photography & Lighting

- Check with the photographer about lighting etc.
- A shaded area such as sails, a gazebo, or a natural cove will offer wind protection, reduce glare and may simplify or create shadowing
- When choosing your location, look at what will appear in the background of photos
- Hats can cast facial shadows
- The eyes are the window into the soul, revealing emotions and while Sunglasses provide sun protection they also cover the eyes & conceal emotions, and so are not usually compatible with great photos
- The Couple, guests and Celebrant should not be looking into the sun, as scrunch-face and winced eyes, ruin photos and can give glare headaches.
- A spot with a beach view rather than on the sand, can remove some of the hazards while still enabling beautiful photos
- Grey paper rather than white, reduces the glare from paper.

Rings

- The exchanging of rings should be over a mat in case the ring is dropped
- If the mat slopes inward to the centre, it will be easier to quickly recover a dropped ring without it rolling off the mat.

Setup

- Will the council or parks provide seating?
- Keep decorations simple to avoid wind hazards
- Place weights on everything to keep them from moving in the breeze.
- A pull along cart that can be used on sand will help with the setup.
- lay a platform to prevent chairs sinking into the sand and throwing guests over

Sound

- Amplified sound on some beaches in National Parks may not be permitted
- Sand can play havoc with sound equipment or damage it and so it may need to be protectively covered, including while it is transported across sand.
- Wind can also play havoc with sound and so microphones should have windsocks
- Be prepared to tolerate jet ski, surf club announcements, party and wave sounds
- Deeper voices can carry better over the sound of waves crashing.
- Wave sounds can inhibit the ability to hear what is going on.
- PA's need to be powerful enough to be audible above shouts from other beach goers, jet skis and high winds.
- Radio signals in congested areas such as boat ramps & bays can create sound interference
- Ensure that your chosen music is amplified and doesn't require mains power.

Sunburn

- Wear a secure hat rather than a veil which can flap around in a breeze
- Apply lots of sunscreen, including under light or flimsy garments
- Sunglasses don't work well in photos
- Have lots of cold water available for everyone to drink to avoid dehydration

Stability

- Where allowed, a large sheet of Perspex, matting or boarding can be buried just under the surface of the sand to provide stability for the bridal party, seats, tripods, sound equipment, signing table etc.

What to Wear

- Wear suitable beach footwear or go barefoot (sand gets into everything and can burn)
- Hats will shade the face but may show shadows in pictures
- Veils can get caught in the breeze and flap around.
- Avoid longer veils, but if the bride is wearing a veil, consider how will it be managed in a breeze e.g. pin it down leaving enough space to allow the Bride to turn her head
- The veil can be released for great photos at the right moment
- Sunglasses shield the eyes but ruin photos as the eyes are the window into the soul, showing emotions.
- Having a basket of thongs or slippers can be useful for the comfort of guests
- Adapt your clothing style to the surroundings, so as comfortable as possible.
- Offer favours such as sunscreen, umbrellas, and thongs

Weather, Wind, Tides & Waves

- Always have a Plan B as beach weather can be unpredictable.
- Always set-up above the high tide point
- NEVER set up on wet sand or you will meet the waves
- If crossing even a small channel, check if it will be passable when the tide turns
- The mornings usually have less wind, glare and more stable/pleasant weather
- If the bride is wearing a veil, how will it be managed if there is a breeze
- Avoid extreme reflections from the sun
- Check wind direction for interference with the mic and sound