

Every Wedding is a Custom Event at Hotel Viking

Ask a hundred different couples to describe their dream wedding celebration and their answers will reveal a hundred different scenarios. Whether it's a custom game-filled Groom's Room or an arrival on a white steed, every wedding is a custom event at Hotel Viking.

At Hotel Viking, the staff includes two long-time wedding planners — Linda Ferguson and Nancy Rusiloski — who work directly with couples from their very first inquiry right up through the reception. Together, Ferguson and Rusiloski have planned in the vicinity of 500 weddings.

"From the minute they inquire, to the day they exchange vows, we are here to assist," says Ferguson. "We go above and beyond to ensure their dream wedding becomes a reality. It's a very personal long-term relationship."

Rusiloski recalled one of the most remarkable weddings she helped plan. A highlight of the traditional Indian ceremony, called a *baraat*, marks the groom's arrival at the wedding venue.

"The groom arrived in the courtyard on a majestic white horse with the bride adorably peeking at him from behind a tree dressed in her vibrant, jewel encrusted sari and her traditional *mendhi* painted hands. All of their family and friends were in the courtyard waiting for him to arrive. They surrounded him as he dismounted the horse and proceeded into the wedding ceremony, which was special and unique."

Juliana Oates, publisher and creative director, The Newport Bride, began blogging about her Hotel Viking wedding planning experience as a way of keeping track of details. While her blog has since morphed into a multi-purpose wedding-planning site, Oates fondly recalls working with Hotel Viking's Rusiloski while planning her own wedding.

"She handled all of my requests with grace and ease," Oates says. "She valued what I was saying and I knew I was being listened to."

One of Oates key requests was an alcohol-free reception. Without hesitation, Rusiloski worked with the hotel's bartender to create a custom mocktail that complemented the celebration.

"The easiness and go-with-the-flow approach took so much stress off me," she says.

The confidence Ferguson and Rusiloski instill in couples planning their weddings stems from years of experience. Here's a look at the Top 5 wedding planning tips they've developed during the course of planning more than 500 weddings.

Establish A Budget: Having a budget will help in all areas of planning. If you allocated more funds for flowers, but want a five-piece band, then you can move funds around to get what you want. Budgets help plan everything from number of guests, food, beverage, décor to all the extras you can add or subtract.

Express What Is Essential: Let your wedding planners and vendors know what is most important to you. Want a dairy-free, gluten-free wedding cake the most important thing? Want welcome gifts delivered to each room? Desire a signature drink? Don't want the Chicken Dance song to ever play? Make a list and note which items are a priority.

Verify Vendors: Hire reputable vendors who are professional, proactive, friendly and who have your best interest in mind. The old saying "you get what you pay for" is very true in this regard.

Make A List & Work From It: Create a list of things that need to be done before the wedding and check items off as they are completed. There are many tools available on wedding websites such as The Knot and WeddingWire designed to help organize the planning process.

Block And Book: If you are planning a destination wedding, research guest room rates as early as possible establish blocks so your guests have a place to stay. Many couples get caught up in the wedding planning and forget about the guest rooms — and rates tend to rise as you get closer to the wedding date, especially in Newport Rhode Island.

In addition to the expertise and support of Ferguson and Rusiloski, couples who choose Hotel Viking are also privy to an array of unique venues and amenities. The Groom's Room, a comfortable salon located in Kay Chapel at the hotel's on-site non-denominational chapel, is the ultimate wedding-day man cave. Featuring comfortable seating, a 55-inch flat-screen television, XBOX with more than a dozen games and wireless controllers, playing cards, an indoor putting green and a bar, it's a private hangout where the groom and his groomsmen can kick back while they await the bride's arrival.

Hotel's Viking's Spa Fjör offers a full roster of relaxing massages, facials and body treatments including the Bridal Bliss Package. Offered for groups of four or more and priced at \$160 per person, the experience invites each guest to choose one treatment: a 50-minute Relaxation Massage, a Newport Glow Facial, a Milk and Honey Body Wrap or a Signature Manicure and Pedicure. Additional amenities include a reserved indoor poolside table, a glass of champagne, miniature cupcakes and a gift for the bride.

Reception venues include two ballrooms, the Bellevue Room and the Viking Ballroom, with separate locations, including an outdoor courtyard, for pre-reception cocktails. Wedding package rates begin at \$79 per person.

Dating to 1869, Kay Chapel is a Newport landmark. After it was officially closed in the 1970s, Hotel Viking purchased and restored the historic chapel. Today, it's one of Newport's most unique private settings for weddings, accommodating 180 guests.

Another unique venue at Hotel Viking is the Top of Newport. The city's premier rooftop bar and kitchen is also available for post-wedding brunches the day after the ceremony. With 360-degree views of Newport and its environs, the newly married couple and their guests feel like they're on top of the world. It's an apropos setting to begin the next phase of their life journey.

Photo Credit: Soozie Sundlun Photography