

# Transport and Wedding Cars

## Unit

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Arriving in style on your wedding day is the only way to go in the eyes of many modern day brides.

There is something truly unique about the ambience that is created as a bride arrives at her wedding day ceremony venue. The air is full of anticipation as everyone eagerly waits his or her first glimpse of the bride as she steps out of her wedding car (or whatever mode of transport she has utilised).

#### Transportation

So you think you have coordinated the perfect wedding? Your client selected gorgeous flowers designed by the best florist in town and gourmet food from an elite caterer. The reception looked like something straight out of the pages of Grace Ormonde Wedding Style magazine. You begin to congratulate yourself on a job well done when you discover there is a backup at the door, and it is taking guests 45 minutes to retrieve their cars from valet parking.

#### Choosing the Wedding Vehicles

In the bigger scheme of things, the wedding vehicles may not seem a top priority in comparison to other elements such as the dress, cake, or reception venue. And whilst in one way this may seem true, you do however; need to consider your options early in order to avoid disappointment.

It is not uncommon for wedding transport companies to book out up to 12 months in advance. Ensure that you allow yourself enough time to explore and book the wedding transport.

From horse-drawn carriages and vintage classics to modern stretch limousines and even wedding 'trikes', there are various options to choose from when it comes to planning the wedding vehicles.

Consider the overall style and formality of the wedding and choose vehicles that complement this style. If the wedding is a formal or traditional affair, classic and vintage cars, along with horse-drawn or princess carriages are a perfect choice. On the other hand a more modern wedding may call for a sporty convertible or stylish limo.

## Inspecting the Vehicles

Once you have found some potential companies, it's time to give them a call to arrange an appointment to personally inspect the vehicles and meet the staff. It's a good idea to choose 3-4, if possible.

It is advisable that you do not book vehicles without inspecting them first. Whilst the photos in the magazines may look impressive, looks can be deceiving. Take your time when inspecting the vehicle, taking into account the size of the vehicle, cleanliness, it's condition both inside and out, interior comforts, maintenance and repair of the vehicle, whether there are any scratches, rust or damage, whether the vehicle has any odour, whether the vehicle is heated and air-conditioned and the overall appearance of the vehicle.

It is also advisable to view uniforms or attire that the staff may wear on the wedding day. Should you be having a horse-drawn vehicle, be sure to view the horses to ensure that they are in good health and of a quiet nature.

Ask the company whether they have any display albums or videos of their staff and vehicles 'in action'. Ask plenty of questions and decide which company appeals to your client's style and transportation needs.

Make sure that you also enquire as to whether the company is licensed. Car hire companies may be fined if they are operating without a license and police have the right to stop a vehicle from travelling any further if they are pulled over.

## Question To Ask

Ensure that you prepare some questions to ask each company before you meet with them. The list below may be of assistance to you.

- Do they have recent examples of weddings that they have attended? This will usually be in the form of display albums or videos.
- Are the vehicles that you actually inspect and the staff that you meet with (at your appointment) the ones that will be used for the wedding day?
- How many people do the vehicles seat?
- Are the vehicles used for other weddings on the same day, or only one wedding?
- Are any food and beverages provided in the vehicle?
- Is the company licensed to operate as a wedding car hire company?
- How many staff / chauffeurs are provided with the vehicle?
- What wedding packages are available and what do they include?
- Are there any special offers available with the venue's wedding packages (reduced price for off-peak, winter or Sunday weddings etc)?
- Do the chauffeurs carry umbrellas and assist the bride in and out of the vehicle?
- How long is the vehicle hire for?

- Are the vehicles heated and air-conditioned?
- What happens in the event of a vehicle breaking down?
- Are 'back up' vehicles always available?
- Are there any extra costs associated with the hire of the vehicle?
- When are deposits, instalments and final payments due? How much will they be?
- Are there any cancellation fees?

## Other Consideration

In addition to these questions, you may wish to consider the following:

- Are the car hire company's costs within your client's budget?
- Are the vehicles in keeping with the style and theme of the wedding?
- Are the vehicles available on the date of the wedding?
- Are their chauffeurs familiar with the locations of the ceremony and reception areas?
- Do the chauffeurs carry mobile phones, in the event of an emergency? This really is a must.
- If you have signed a contract, ensure that you have a copy, have read it and understand what you are signing.
- Quality over price is usually the best way to go.

Coordinating transportation logistics may make you feel like a glorified dispatcher, but, at the end of the wedding, getting the guests home in a timely fashion becomes one of the most important details. While they may not remember seamless transportation, they are sure to recall the wedding where they had a seemingly endless wait in the cold because the transportation was disorganized. Arranging transportation for your client's wedding involves five main areas: (1) getting started; (2) transportation to the ceremony venue; (3) transportation from the ceremony to the reception; (4) transportation from the reception to the final destination; and (5) transportation costs and final details. getting started When you meet with your clients to discuss their transportation needs, a good place to start is to have them consider the number of people who will need transportation at various times throughout the wedding festivities. You will need to have a clear understanding of all transportation requirements from picking up guests at the airport to arranging a vintage Rolls-Royce to bring the newlyweds home after their honeymoon has ended.

Prepare a list of questions to ask your clients so that you can begin to understand their unique transportation needs. These questions will pertain to what, who, and when. First, what style or styles of vehicles will they want for their wedding day? Are they interested in a

white stretch limo, Hummer, SUV, Lincoln town car, or vintage automobile? The number of choices is limited only by your client's imagination and their transportation budget.

Second, who needs to be transported? Have your clients spell out exactly who will need to be moved from point A to point B on the wedding day. It is important for you to know the exact number of people who require transportation so that you can recommend the appropriate vehicles. Have your clients prepare a list of the names of the wedding party and the guests needing transportation so that you will know exactly who needs to be picked up and from where. If the bride's grandmother is confined to a wheelchair, this will influence the type of transportation you send to pick her up. All of this information is useful in shaping your vehicle recommendations.

Third, when will individuals need to be transported? For destination weddings, the transportation needs can get out of control if not coordinated. Cross-check flight schedules to determine the various arrivals and departures so that the number of trips to the airport can be minimized. As introduced in Chapter 8, having a separate timeline specific to transportation can help make the wedding run smoothly.

### Transportation to the ceremony

After determining the number of people requiring transportation, the next step involves deciding how to transport the bride and her attendants to the ceremony. The bride will need wedding day transportation from the location where she is dressing to the wedding ceremony location. The bride takes this last ride as a single woman accompanied by her father, mother, or her bridesmaids. Since it is typically the father who escorts the bride down the aisle, it is wise to keep them together prior to the wedding ceremony.

For just the two of them, the transportation can be a classic car, a horse and buggy, or another intimate type of vehicle. If the wedding takes place on the family farm, the vehicle of choice might be an antique Ford truck or a hot air balloon. As long as you can match the vehicle style to the theme of the wedding, you will be well on your way to successfully conveying your bride and her father to one of the most important events of their lives. If, however, the bride wishes to meet her father at the ceremony venue and ride with her attendants, you will need to find a comfortable vehicle to hold all of the women. A stretch limo holds 10 to 12 passengers, while a regular limo can accommodate 6 to 10 passengers comfortably. A town car can hold two to four passengers. Take a head count and then see which type of vehicle will best suit the size of the wedding party.

After planning the bride's transportation, you should discuss the arrangements for getting the groom to the ceremony. Perhaps you will hire another limo to pick up the groom and his family at their home or hotel. Maybe the groom wants to ride with his groomsmen to the ceremony in a stretch Hummer. Whatever the plan is for the groom, make sure that you are aware of all the arrangements and that you have a contact phone number even if the groom

is simply riding with his brother in the family minivan. You will want to be aware of the groom's exact location throughout the wedding day.

You will next want to assist the rest of the bridal party, the families, and the guests with transportation. Again, the mode of transportation selected will be dictated by the style of the wedding and the number of people requiring assistance. Secure the transportation well in advance if your client's wedding is during prom or graduation season, when most limos and other luxury cars will be in high demand. It is a thoughtful gesture on the part of the bride and groom to arrange for buses to shuttle guests to the wedding and bring them back to their lodging at the end of the reception. This will ensure the guests' safety and will cut down on late arrivals. Motor coaches can seat around 50 people, while executive coaches can accommodate up to 20 passengers (Rodriguez, 2004). Hiring a fleet of vehicles is another option. In addition to the standard types of vehicles, you can suggest a trolley, a double-decker bus, or a boat to make the trip more interesting and enjoyable for all passengers. If the time spent during transport is going to be substantial, advise your clients to hire a tour guide or local expert to entertain the guests with stories and anecdotes along the way.

If your client is planning to provide transportation for the guests, this information needs to be communicated well in advance so that the guests can take full advantage of the arrangement. Sending out a mailing with the invitations or to confirmed guests is an excellent way to coordinate this information. The information can also be posted on the couple's Web site. Tell the guests exactly where to find the transportation and when the vehicle will depart for the ceremony. You may want to pad this time by 10 to 15 minutes to accommodate stragglers.

### Transportation from the ceremony to the reception

After your clients are pronounced husband and wife, there will be an excited press of guests anxious to proceed to the reception. To facilitate this movement of people, it again makes sense to transport guests en masse, especially if the reception venue is located in a major city. Using the same transportation that brought them to the ceremony to drive them to the reception is the most economical option. If you think, however, that the majority of the guests will drive their personal vehicles to the reception, then it might be more sensible to hire a valet service to assist with parking and retrieving the cars. Most valet services charge \$20 to \$25 per attendant per hour, plus gratuity. If the reception is in a crowded downtown district, then having a valet service will save the guests the time and aggravation of looking for an open parking space or the expense of putting the car in a pay lot.

Figure on five to six valets per 100 guests. Give special consideration to the end of the evening when you will need additional staff to make sure all the guests get their cars quickly. You don't want to keep guests waiting for more than 5 to 10 minutes. Guests who drive their own cars should be provided with clear directions to the reception with the starting point as the ceremony venue. Special attendants can hand out directions after the

ceremony has ended. If directions are mailed far in advance, chances are the guests will forget them, so it is best to hand them out or, minimally, have extra copies available on the day of the wedding.

Another way your clients can take care of their guests is to prepay the parking fee if there is a charge at the venue. Have this fee built into the contract with the venue. If you are estimating 200 guests, then count on about 100 cars. If the hotel charges a flat fee of £15 per car, your client will pay £1,500 to the hotel to ensure their guests park at no charge. This is a gracious gesture that should be communicated to all guests so they don't end up accidentally paying for parking.

Once your clients are married, they will certainly want to depart for the reception in style. Their ride will be determined by how far the reception venue is from the ceremony. If it is just a few steps away, then perhaps they will walk hand in hand to the accompaniment of a string trio. If the reception site is a few blocks away, then perhaps a horse-drawn carriage will add just the right touch. However, if the reception is a good distance away, then the couple will want to be as comfortable and cozy as possible and perhaps a vintage car is the way to go. Whatever type of transportation your clients select, make sure that you get all the details in writing, including arrival time (which you should pad by 15 minutes or so to be sure the transportation is on time), reception departure time, addresses of all locations, the size, color, and model of the car the client is renting, the name of the driver, cost, gratuity, special requests, and the duration of time that you have contracted the vehicle. If you want the driver to take the scenic route on the way to the reception, make sure this information is included as well. Be as specific as possible and familiarize yourself with the limitations of each vehicle type. For example, if the couple yearns for a horse-drawn carriage, but the wedding is held in Seattle, it will be best to ensure that it is a covered carriage because Seattle is notorious for rain.

As the reception winds down and the last dance has ended, the bride and groom, as well as their wedding party and guests, will be anxious to leave the reception and head off to their final destinations. For the newlyweds' exit, it is important that you ascertain from them exactly how they want to make their departure. Do they want to quietly steal away? Do they want to dash through an arch of sparklers into a waiting limo? Perhaps they want a Vespa scooter at the ready to whisk them to their hotel. Before you book the exit vehicle, you must understand their wishes and translate them into reality. Table 19.1 includes a list of creative modes of transportation that can be used for a memorable exit or at any other point during the wedding day.

For the guests and wedding party, it is important to ferry them back to where they started the day so that they can pick up their cars or fall into bed at their hotels. Leaving guests without a ride is very inconsiderate. As a wedding planner, you should encourage your clients to think about their obligations as hosts for the evening and

**TABLE 19.1** Creative Modes of Transportation

- All terrain vehicles • Ice cream truck
- Antique fire engine • Mini Cooper
- Bicycle built for two • Monster truck
- Camel • Moped
- Canoe • Motorcycle with sidecar
- Chinese rickshaw • Sailboat
- Cross country skis • Sleigh
- Dog sled • Snowboard
- Duck boat • Snowmobile
- Elephant • Subway
- Golf cart • Surfboard
- Horseback • Vintage VW Beetle

**TABLE 19.2** Sample Fee Structure for Common Forms of Wedding Transportation

- | Vehicle Type            | Hourly Rate | Minimum Rental Time |              |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Sedan 4 passengers      | £68/hour    | 3 HR                | □□\$204      |
| SUV 5 passengers        | £78/hour    | 3 HR                | □□\$234      |
| Limo 6 passengers       | £90/hour    | 3 HR                | □□\$270      |
| Limo 8 passengers       | £105/hour   | 3 HR                | □□\$315      |
| Limo 10 passengers      | £125/hour   | 3 HR                | □□\$375      |
| Limo Van 6 passengers   | £75/hour    | 3 HR                | □□\$225      |
| Limo Bus 18 passengers  | £140/hour   | 3 HR                | □□GT □□\$560 |
| Van 14 passengers       | £60/hour    | 3 HR                | □□GT □□\$240 |
| Van Terra 12 passengers | £80/hour    | 3 HR                | □□GT □□\$320 |
| Mini Bus 20 passengers  | £85/hour    | 3 HR                | □□GT □□\$340 |
| Mini Bus 25 passengers  | £90/hour    | 3 HR                | □□GT □□\$360 |
| Mini Bus 30 passengers  | £95/hour    | 3 HR                | □□GT □□\$380 |
| Mini Bus 35 passengers  | £100/hour   | 3 HR                | □□GT □□\$400 |
| Coach 55 passengers     | £120/hour   | 4 HR                | □□GT □□\$600 |
| Tour Guide              | £55/hour    | 4 HR                | □□\$220      |
| Greeter on-site         | £35/hour    | 4 HR                | □□\$140      |

**Notes:**

- The above-listed fees include fuel charge and gratuity.
- From mid-April through mid-June, there is a 6-hour minimum on all limos for Friday and Saturday evenings.
- There is a \$12 early/late fee for trips from 11:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M.
- GT □□garage time (time needed to clean, refuel, and safety check each vehicle)

Web site: [www.restonlimo.com](http://www.restonlimo.com)

The importance of taking care of their guests. These small considerations will be remembered for years to come. So whether you provide a bus, a van, or a line of yellow taxis, it is very important to get the guests safely home, especially those who have been drinking. While transportation costs will vary from region to region, it is helpful to have a cost comparison. Most companies will require a 3- or 4-hour minimum for any form of transportation, so bear that in mind when comparing costs. Check with your transportation vendor to determine if the fee structure includes the fuel charge and gratuity. Furthermore, some high-maintenance vehicles will include a garage time (GT) fee for servicing after use. This fee usually pertains to large vehicles in which riders are eating and drinking. Table 19.2 includes a sample fee structure provided by Kristina Bowery of Reston Limo (2006). While these costs will vary based on the region where you reside, this table offers general guidelines.

The well-prepared wedding consultant has an eye for detail and an ear for trouble. Months prior to a wedding, you should check with local authorities on street closings, especially if your event is during a holiday weekend or in a large city where special events can snarl traffic for hours. For example, if your client's wedding reception will be held at a private club close to the United Nations headquarters in New York, call the city and speak to the department that issues permits to see if there will be a high-security event taking place. You should determine potential transportation difficulties with enough time to discuss options with your clients. In a post-September 11 world, street closings and heightened security have become a way of life. When you are planning for your client's transportation, remember to check with the city government or local law enforcement to make sure there is nothing that will interfere with the wedding.

### Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Hiring Transportation

- Know the couple's transportation preferences, determine who needs transport, and create a transportation timeline.
- Be aware of how the couple, bridal party, and guests will be transported to the ceremony site, from the ceremony to the reception, and to their final destination.
- Prepare a timeline that is specific to transportation.
- Make sure leave-taking from the ceremony and reception is efficient.
- Be aware of the restrictions and limitations of each vehicle type being considered.
- Determine if the transportation company's pricing structure includes the fuel charge, gratuity, and garage time.
- Confirm with transportation vendors and supply directions to each place a driver will be stopping.
- Get day-of phone numbers for the Transportation Company and drivers.
- Check with police and city government offices on street closings, parades demonstrations, and other special events.
- Encourage your clients to pay for the venue parking fees for their guests.
- Secure transportation early if the wedding is during prom or graduation season.

