CALIFORNIA WEDDING ASSOCIATION

California Wedding Venue Tour Checklist

A room-by-room, contract-by-contract guide for comparing venues without missing the expensive details.

A complimentary planning resource for California couples

Venue details

- [ ] Venue: _____ Tour date: _____
- [ ] Contact: _____ Phone: _____
- [ ] Available date(s): _____ Quoted total: $_____
- [ ] Comfortable seated capacity: _____ Required minimum: _____

Cost and contract

- [ ] Request a written estimate showing rental, food-and-beverage minimum, service charge, taxes, staffing, security, cleaning, insurance, and overtime.
- [ ] Confirm deposit, payment schedule, cancellation, postponement, and date-transfer terms.
- [ ] Ask whether gratuity is included or separate from the service charge.
- [ ] Identify required vendors, outside-vendor fees, and corkage or cake-cutting fees.
- [ ] Confirm exactly how many event hours and setup/breakdown hours are included.

Ceremony and reception flow

- [ ] Walk the entire guest journey: arrival, ceremony, cocktails, dinner, dancing, restrooms, and departure.
- [ ] Confirm processional length, aisle width, chair layout, sound, shade, and accessibility.
- [ ] Ask where the couple and wedding party wait before the ceremony.
- [ ] Confirm cocktail-hour capacity and whether the room flip can happen without disrupting guests.
- [ ] Stand where the dance floor, entertainment, bars, and tables would actually be placed.

Included items and rentals

- [ ] List every included table, chair, linen, heater, umbrella, china, glass, flatware, stage, dance floor, and decor item.
- [ ] Inspect included items rather than relying on brochure photographs.
- [ ] Ask who sets, moves, and removes each item.
- [ ] Confirm load-in doors, elevator dimensions, stairs, storage, and delivery restrictions.

Food, beverage, and service

- [ ] Confirm kitchen capability and whether cooking must occur off-site.
- [ ] Ask about menu customization, allergies, vendor meals, children's meals, and tasting policies.
- [ ] Confirm bar locations, last call, licensing, security, and liquor-liability responsibility.
- [ ] Ask how leftovers, cake, personal alcohol, and late-night food are handled.

California weather and emergency planning

- [ ] See the actual indoor backup space and verify that it fits the full guest count.
- [ ] Ask who decides when to activate rain, heat, wind, smoke, or cold-weather plans and by what deadline.
- [ ] Confirm shade, heaters, cooling, ventilation, drainage, tenting, and generator options.
- [ ] Discuss wildfire smoke, evacuation routes, utility shutoffs, and communication procedures.
- [ ] Ask whether weather-plan changes create additional fees.

Sound, power, lighting, and internet

- [ ] Confirm amplified-sound limits, decibel monitoring, music cutoff, and neighborhood restrictions.
- [ ] Locate power outlets and ask whether dedicated circuits or generators are required.
- [ ] View spaces near the same time of day as the wedding to understand natural light and temperature.
- [ ] Check Wi-Fi and cellular service where vendors and guests will need it.

Guest comfort and accessibility

- [ ] Count restrooms and confirm accessible routes, parking, seating, and elevators.
- [ ] Ask about changing tables, nursing space, coat storage, and quiet space.
- [ ] Confirm parking count, valet, rideshare pickup, shuttle access, and overnight parking.
- [ ] Check walking surfaces, hills, gravel, stairs, lighting, and distance between spaces.

Operations and restrictions

- [ ] Identify the day-of venue manager and clarify what that person does versus a wedding coordinator.
- [ ] Confirm candle, confetti, sparkler, pet, drone, hanging-decor, open-flame, and floral restrictions.
- [ ] Ask where vendors park, eat, store cases, and dispose of trash.
- [ ] Confirm rehearsal access, dressing-room hours, security, and end-of-night item pickup.

Venue scorecard

Category	Score 1-5	Notes
Overall feeling		
True total cost		
Guest comfort		
Ceremony space		
Reception flow		
Weather backup		
Accessibility		
Staff and communication		
Contract flexibility		
Location and travel		

What we loved / concerns / follow-up questions