ELOPED IN SOCAL

The Little Guide to Your Big Day

for elopements & intimate weddings

A thoughtful, easygoing planning companion for your ceremony in Southern California — from the first look to the last toast.

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WELCOME

Congratulations!



However you're saying "I do" — at golden hour on the cliffs, on a quiet morning beach, or somewhere in between — this guide is here to take the little things off your mind so you can enjoy the big one.

From the first look to the last toast, you'll find the details that make a wedding feel *effortless, personal, and completely you*. Read it start to finish or dip into the parts you need, tick off the checklists, and fill in your ceremony plan near the end.

With love, the Eloped In SoCal team ♥

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How to read this guide. Look for the small checkboxes to tick off as you go. Wherever you see **On-Site Coordinator**, it refers to the optional add-on — if you haven't booked it, a trusted friend or family member can take that role.

01

Pick your perfect time

Beautiful light makes an already magical moment feel even more special.

Golden-hour glow

1–3 HOURS BEFORE SUNSET

For warm, romantic light, aim to begin your ceremony about **1–3 hours before sunset**. That leaves room for vows, family photos, and couple portraits as the light softens.

The exact sweet spot depends on your location, season, and photography coverage.

Soft morning light

BEFORE 11:00 AM

Gentle light, a relaxed atmosphere, and often fewer visitors at popular public spaces. Bonus: you have the entire rest of the day for brunch, exploring, and celebrating!

Coastal mornings can be cloudy or foggy — which often creates beautiful, diffused light.

A few timing details worth remembering

- **Sunset shifts through the year.** Check the sunset time for your actual wedding date, not today.
- **Leave a buffer** for parking, walking to the ceremony spot, and photos afterward.
- **Plan for flexibility.** At beach and cliff locations, wind, tides, marine layer, and crowds can change the experience.
- **Booking hair & makeup?** Count backward from your *departure* time, not your ceremony time.

A sample wedding-day flow

Morning celebration

CEREMONY AT 9:30 AM

8:00 AM	Finishing touches
9:15 AM	Arrive & settle in
9:30 AM	**Ceremony**
10:00 AM	Portraits
11:30 AM	Celebratory brunch

Sunset celebration

CEREMONY AT 5:00 PM

3:30 PM	Finishing touches
4:45 PM	Arrive & settle in
5:00 PM	**Ceremony**
5:30 PM	Portraits
7:00 PM	Dinner

Examples only. Adjust to the season, actual sunset time, travel, your photography package, and your personalized itinerary. In San Diego, sunset ranges from roughly 4:45 PM in December to roughly 8:00 PM in June — shift the sunset timeline earlier or later to match your date.

02

Make the ceremony yours

Romantic, lighthearted, spiritual, traditional — or a little of everything.

Vows & readings

Tell your officiant about meaningful stories, readings, cultural traditions, religious preferences, or moments you'd rather skip.

- Writing personal vows? Aim for about **1–2 minutes each** (roughly 150–250 words).
- Bring a **printed copy** as a backup.

Rings & small details

- Choose **one trusted person** to hold the rings before the ceremony, or keep them securely with you.
- Bring vow cards, any meaningful keepsake, and a small bag for personal belongings.
- Practice putting rings on if they fit snugly — especially on warm days!

Make your entrance feel effortless

- **First look?** Decide whether it happens before the ceremony or as you walk in.
- Tell your coordinator about **flower children, pets, family escorts**, or anyone who may need extra assistance.
- Booked the On-Site Coordinator? Share the processional order, music cues, guest seating needs, announcements, and any personal items that need simple setup. They can help with guest guidance, first-look timing, entrances, and on-the-day flow.

1. **Who walks in**
2. **In what order**
3. **Together or separately?**

Stuck on the blank page? Finish a sentence

The moment I knew was...

I promise to...

What I love most about you is...

I can't wait to...

A few little traditions to weave in

- **Something old, new, borrowed & blue** — a heirloom, a fresh gift, a loved one's loan, a hint of blue.
- **A private moment** — a handwritten letter exchange before the ceremony, or a unity ritual with soft music.
- **A champagne toast** right after the ceremony — ask your photographer to be ready.

03

Your wedding soundtrack

Music makes the moment feel like your moment.



*A simple ceremony often needs only **three musical cues**. Choose your exact recordings — not just song titles — and note when each starts, who presses play, and who fades it out.*

Processional

CUE 1

The song played as you or your wedding party walk in.

Short aisle? Start the song at a favorite moment instead of the beginning.

Optional moment

CUE 2

Soft background music for a first look, unity ritual, or signing — if appropriate.

Recessional

CUE 3

An upbeat song for your first walk together as a married couple.

Your music plan

CUE	SONG & RECORDING	START POINT	WHO PRESSES PLAY
Processional			
Optional moment			
Recessional			

Outdoor music tips

- **Download** the playlist onto your device beforehand.
- **Charge** your phone and speaker.
- **Test playback in airplane mode.** Bluetooth doesn't need cell service, but streaming music may.
- Confirm the venue **permits amplified sound**, and keep volume respectful.
- Instrumental versions keep lyrics out of the way of your vows.

Who will cue the music?

With the On-Site Coordinator: talk through your song order, processional lineup, and speaker setup in advance. They can cue entrances and play music on a speaker when arranged.

Without: designate one reliable guest to manage playback.

Live acoustic music is also available as an optional add-on.

04

Your California marriage license

The most important thing to bring — it must be issued before your ceremony.

90 days	*Any CA county*	*No residency*
License validity — can't be extended	Use it for a ceremony anywhere in California	You don't need to live in California

1

Book your appointment

Schedule a marriage-license appointment with a California county clerk. Some counties let you complete the application online in advance; in San Diego County, **book your appointment first**, then complete the online application.

2

Go together, with ID

Both partners generally attend together and bring **current government-issued photo ID**. Check the issuing county for fees and any extra documents.

3

Keep it safe

Obtain your license within **90 days before** your wedding. Store the original somewhere easy to find — and add it to your bag the day before.

4

Hand it to your officiant

On the wedding day, bring the **original issued license** and give it to your officiant. They complete and return it for registration.

5

Order your certificate

A certified marriage certificate is usually ordered separately after the license is registered — it isn't automatically mailed to you.

Public vs. confidential licenses

Public license

Most couples choose this one. It requires **at least one witness** to sign (California allows up to two).

Confidential license

Has different eligibility rules — including already living together — and **does not require witnesses**.

Confirm your license type with the issuing county. Eloped In SoCal packages list a witness, but the legal requirement depends on your license. Ask the clerk about fees, name changes, and certified copies, too.

Helpful links: San Diego County Clerk marriage license guide · California marriage information

05

Guests, location & photos

Make it easy for everyone you love to be there — and to look great doing it.

Send clear directions

Share the exact meeting point or map pin, parking instructions, and a recommended arrival time. A park name alone may not be enough.

Arrive early

Ask guests to arrive 15–30 minutes before the ceremony — more for tricky parking or long walks.

Dress for the setting

Heels and sand don't mix: suggest block heels, flats, or a change of shoes. Coastal evenings can be breezy and cool.

Accessibility

Check walking distance, stairs, slopes, restroom access, and seating for older guests or anyone with mobility needs.

Public spaces

Many outdoor locations stay open to the public even with a permit. Expect passersby and respect venue rules on decor, amplified sound, glass, confetti, and alcohol.

Weather backup

Discuss what happens in heavy rain, strong wind, unusual surf, or other unsafe conditions — and have a plan for telling guests.

Photos you'll love forever

Make a short list of your must-have combinations and ask a family member to help gather everyone quickly.

- ☐ Couple with parents
- ☐ Couple with siblings
- ☐ Couple with grandparents
- ☐ The entire group
- ☐ Just the two of us
- ☐ _____

Want more than a quick portrait?

If you want a first look, a champagne toast, or multiple portrait locations, ask about adding photography time so nothing feels rushed.

Going unplugged?

Keep phones tucked away during the vows for a more intimate, camera-friendly ceremony. Ask your officiant or coordinator to make a friendly announcement.

06

What to pack

Put it all in one bag the night before.

- [ ] Marriage license (the original!)
- [ ] Rings
- [ ] Vow cards + printed backup
- [ ] IDs
- [ ] Phone + downloaded music
- [ ] Charged speaker (if arranged)
- [ ] Comfortable walking shoes
- [ ] Water
- [ ] Tissues
- [ ] Sunscreen
- [ ] Lip color / touch-up makeup
- [ ] Hairpins
- [ ] A light layer
- [ ] Pen for signing
- [ ] Small bag for personal items
- [ ] A little snack

Assign someone to take the bag and any decor home afterward, so you can leave the ceremony empty-handed.

07

Celebrate after the “I do”

Your ceremony can be beautifully simple, and the celebration afterward can be anything you want: an intimate dinner, brunch with your favorite people, a coastal picnic, a sail, or a whole afternoon exploring San Diego.

Sunset Cliffs area

- C Level
- Vessel Restaurant
- The Remy
- Seneca

San Diego

- The Prado
- Allegro Restaurant and Bar
- Vin de Syrah

La Jolla

- The Marine Room
- Piazza 1909
- The Amalfi Llama
- Eddie V’s Prime Seafood
- Javier’s La Jolla

When you call to reserve

- Say you’re celebrating a wedding.
- Confirm your **actual group size** and private or semi-private dining options.
- Ask about **deposits, minimum spends**, and whether they can accommodate a cake or flowers.
- Allow travel time and a little breathing room after photos.

These are our favorite ideas to explore — not confirmed availability or endorsements of private-event services. Restaurant offerings and group policies can change, so contact each restaurant directly before making plans.

08

Who handles what

A quick map of who's helping — so nothing falls through the cracks.



Planning Concierge

BEFORE THE DAY

Helps coordinate your booking details and vendor plans ahead of time. Not an in-person guest host.

On-Site Coordinator

OPTIONAL ADD-ON · ON THE DAY

Assists with the processional, music cues and playback, guest direction, first-look timing, announcements, and simple personal-item setup — as agreed.

Your officiant

CEREMONY

Leads your ceremony, so share vows, readings, names, and preferences in advance. Completes and returns your signed license for registration.

You & your helper

THE TWO OF YOU + ONE TRUSTED PERSON

You bring the license, rings, and vows. Your helper holds phones, bags, and small belongings — and plays music if there's no coordinator.

Need an extra touch?

- Ceremony chairs
- Arches
- Flowers
- Photography
- Videography
- Hair & makeup
- Live music
- Content creation
- On-site coordination

Availability and inclusions depend on your booking. Questions? ***info@elopedinsocal.com***

WE HANDLE THE DETAILS.

You make the memories.

09

Your planning timeline

From booked to married — a simple timeline to keep planning joyful.



As soon as you're booked

STEP 1

- [ ] Review your package, included services, and any add-ons
- [ ] Confirm date, location, guest count, and accessibility needs
- [ ] Share your plans with important guests and ask for RSVPs
- [ ] Arrange travel, lodging, and transportation if needed
- [ ] Research county clerk appointments for your license
- [ ] Reserve a restaurant or celebration, if desired
- [ ] Decide on personal vows, readings, or a first look

About 1–4 weeks before

STEP 2

- [ ] Make your license appointment (within the 90-day window)
- [ ] Choose processional and recessional songs; save offline copies
- [ ] Decide who walks in, in what order, and with whom
- [ ] Discuss ceremony cues with your On-Site Coordinator, if booked
- [ ] Finalize attire, shoes, rings, flowers, and personal details
- [ ] Plan parking and arrival instructions for guests and vendors
- [ ] Confirm restaurant reservation, party size, and travel time

During the final week

STEP 3

- [ ] Confirm your license is issued and stored safely
- [ ] Check the forecast; prepare layers, sunscreen, or umbrellas
- [ ] Confirm the exact meeting point and parking details
- [ ] Send guests arrival instructions and a contact number
- [ ] Send your officiant final vows, readings, and names
- [ ] Send music, first-look, and processional updates to your coordinator
- [ ] Confirm who brings the license, rings, vows, and personal items
- [ ] Choose someone to hold phones, bags, and belongings
- [ ] Confirm restaurant and transportation; allow for traffic

The day before & the day of

STEPS 4 & 5

- [ ] Put the license and IDs in a safe, easy-to-find spot
- [ ] Pack rings, vow cards, accessories, tissues, and comfy shoes
- [ ] Charge phones; download music for offline use
- [ ] Check attire for wrinkles, stains, and missing accessories
- [ ] Rest well and eat a proper meal
- [ ] **Wedding day:** give the license to your officiant
- [ ] Arrive at the agreed time; keep water handy
- [ ] Hand off logistics to your booked vendors — and enjoy it

10

Your ceremony plan

Keep this card with your wedding-day essentials.



OUR CEREMONY

Date / time: _____

Location / meeting point: _____

Guest arrival time: _____

Parking / transportation: _____

MUSIC + PEOPLE

Processional song(s): _____

Recessional song: _____

Person managing music: _____

Coordinator / key contact: _____

Do not forget

- ☐ Marriage license
- ☐ Rings
- ☐ Vows
- ☐ Phone + charger
- ☐ Water
- ☐ Comfortable shoes
- ☐ Layers
- ☐ Personal items

The best part of a small wedding? More room for the moments that matter.

Notes, vows & little ideas

Jot down anything you don't want to forget.



TAKE A MOMENT TOGETHER. THIS DAY IS ABOUT THE TWO OF YOU.