

Affordable bachelor and bachelorette party ideas

Pulling out all the stops can be exciting, but there's no guarantee these types of parties will be more enjoyable than simpler bachelor or bachelorette party. Taking steps to control costs can help couples and their friends. Here are some affordable ideas that can be fun for all involved.

- **Bar or winery crawl:** Partygoers typically want to enjoy a night out on the town, and traveling from one establishment to another can be a fun way to do just that. People can set themselves apart with a signature item (hat, T-shirt, or colored clothing), and make the rounds.

- **Attend a group event:** Group events include sports, concerts, theater shows or a night at a comedy club. Investigate discounted tickets for large groups.

- **Belt out the tunes:** Open mic nights at restaurants, bars and other establishments around town may make for a fun way for friends to share a few laughs together. Participants need not be professional singers to join in on the festivities.

- **Camp out:** Get in touch with nature by enjoying a camping trip, complete with a fire and a few brews. Spending time in the wilderness can restore focus and let stress melt away.

- **Poker or game night:** Groups can gather around the poker table to test their skills in poker and other card games. With some free-flowing beverages and snacks galore, games can get pretty animated.

- **Dinner party:** Hire a chef to visit your house and prepare a meal for guests. Serve a signature cocktail and let the conversation flow.

Wedding costs: What to expect

Newly engaged couples may experience an array of emotions when they sit down to plan their weddings. Some couples cannot wait to jump into planning and want to catalog every aspect of the process, while others may proceed with caution because they don't know what to expect — particularly in regard to cost.

Many couples find it difficult to create their wedding budgets because they have no previous experience to draw on. The wedding planning advisor CostofWedding.com indicates the average wedding cost in the United States is \$26,720, with most people spending between \$20,000 and \$34,000. Seventh Heaven Event Catering states that, in Canada, the average wedding costs around \$30,000. Such costs can vary greatly depending on couples' preferences, including where they hope to tie the knot.

By breaking down wedding expenses, couples can get a clearer picture of how much they may need to pay for their weddings and where they may

need to cut costs.

- **Reception site:** According to The Knot, a premiere wedding planning resource, couples can expect their receptions to eat up the largest chunk of their wedding budgets. Wedding reception venues may cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000. The average price for catering per person is roughly \$70. Bar service may be around \$2,000 for a three- to four-hour party. Some reception sites combine the room cost with the food and beverage costs, while others have à la carte fees.

- **Cake:** Wedding cakes tend to be multitiered intricate designs, so they will cost more than birthday cakes. According to Statistics Brain, wedding dessert will come in around \$390.

- **Music:** The Knot says wedding bands cost around \$3,500, which is more than twice as much as hiring a deejay (\$1,200). Soloists or ceremony musicians may cost around \$650.

- **Wedding planner:** Many couples employ wedding planners to make planning their weddings easier. Wed-

ding planners cost an average of \$1,300, says Thumbtack, a company that matches professionals with people who require their services.

- **Transportation:** Limousines and other transportation prices vary depending on the vehicle(s) couples choose. The Knot notes that budgeting between \$400 and \$500 for transportation might be wise.

- **Wedding gown:** Brides-to-be should expect their gowns to cost around \$1,100 and the veil or headpiece to be roughly \$120, according to the Association of Bridal Consultants.

- **Photography and Video:** Preserving wedding day memories costs around \$2,800 for video and photography services, based on data from Statistics Brain.

The smaller details, such as accessories, gifts, officiant fees, stationery, spa services and favors can quickly add up as well. Couples should be sure to leave some wiggle room in their budgets for incidental expenses that may pop up. — *Metro*

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