



Wedding Celebrations Guide

Congratulations on your engagement and forthcoming wedding!

We're thrilled that you're considering our amazing Left Bank as the venue for your celebration. We have now run several full wedding seasons and have some valuable advice to pass on to help you make your celebration as wonderful as possible. The environment outside and the building itself present some questions/challenges which you may not find covered in your shop bought 'how to plan a wedding' guide, so hopefully you will find the information below useful.

Left Bank is pretty much a (beautiful) big empty space. Whilst this means that a lot of thought, planning and organisation is needed to get the venue ready for your wedding, the up side is that it is wonderfully versatile. The possibilities are only limited by your own imagination (or stamina!) as those who have attended weddings and events already will testify.

As we run more large events we can call on the brainpower of numerous staff, past hirers, suppliers and volunteers for ideas and solutions. If you have a particular idea or fantastic scheme for your wedding, please contact us so we can find out if it is possible and, if so, advise how to do it.

Licences

Left Bank does not currently hold a marriage licence. If you want your marriage to be legally recognised, you will need to arrange a separate ceremony in either a church, registry office or other licensed venue. Some couples use Left Bank just for their reception while others chose to hold an alternative (not legally binding) ceremony either in addition to or in place of a registered marriage.

If you need further information on marriage licences and licenced venues, please contact your local registry office.

Ceremonies

As a non-licenced venue, if you want to have a ceremony, you can choose whoever you want to conduct your ceremony. Close friends, children, family members, Left Bank staff, willing pastors from other churches have all been used by previous couples but you could use a professional celebrant, conduct the ceremony yourself or even hire a celebrity lookalike if you want.

Unlike licenced venues, there is no restriction on sacred or secular content so you are free to create whatever ceremony suits you.

Invitations

It may be useful to include a signpost or hyperlink to Left Bank for your guests along with directions. Relying on Sat Nav could leave your guests driving around Burley for some time. As there's no parking at Left Bank you may find it easier to encourage guests to use public transport, shared cars or taxis to get to the venue. We can give you a list of local taxi firms.

NB. There are several B&Bs on Cardigan Road. Any guests coming from further afield could stay at one of these, leave their car and walk to the Left Bank!

Decorating Left Bank

This will obviously vary according to your chosen theme but you may find it useful to delve into the list of decorations which have been left / donated by previous celebrations. There is a growing selection of photographs of previous wedding celebrations to give you ideas as to how the space has been used before. The key for any decorating thoughts are THINK BIG. Small, intricate floral arrangements may well be lost in the space.

Due to the size of the building decorations can turn out to be a runaway overspend on your budget; if you want to run banners, garlands or drapes along either side of the main space, for example, you will need around 70metres in length! To keep costs down but make the big ideas a reality, it is definitely worth getting in contact with others who are planning events at Left Bank to see if they have any similar ideas and are willing to share costs, or if they have already come up with a solution. We have had two "Wedding Collectives" so far, which have been a great source of shared resources and mutual support. If a friend or relative is willing to make something for you, remember that the size of what you'll need will take time to create so ask well in advance (no asking Auntie Maud for the world's longest paper chain with 3 days to go!)

Catering

Left Bank has a list of caterers / suppliers who have been used successfully in the past. It is important to remember when discussing your requirements with caterers that there isn't a kitchen! The kitchen in the Cardigan Centre next door can be hired separately but many caterers will be able to bring their own equipment or prepare food off site and bring it in.

The lack of facilities does make a sit down formal meal something of a challenge (though it has been done with style on more than one occasion) but there are alternative options that may work for your wedding such as BBQs, cold finger buffets, hot meals served from heated bain-maries (works really well for curries, stir fries, pasta dishes, meat with sauces or even pie & mash), tea parties, picnics, bring-a-dish buffets or you could hire a fish & chip/burger/ice cream van to pull up outside the building.

Whatever you chose, ensure your caterer (if you use one) is well aware of what is required and that any equipment (remember plates, cups, cutlery and a cake knife for that photo!) that are providing has been factored into the quote.

If you are bringing your own food or your catering staff are leaving before the end of the night, consider who will wash up (in a bowl with hot water from the urn, so no easy task) and when.

Bar

There are a number of options for providing drinks for your wedding. If you want Left Bank to provide a pay bar this will need to be arranged well in advance as it requires a Temporary Events Notice (TEN) from the council. If you plan to hire an outside company to provide a pay bar, a TEN will still be required. As the venue is only allowed a limited number of TENs each year, these are strictly controlled and you will need to check with us to confirm whether a TEN is available.

Of course, you don't have to have a pay bar and you won't need a TEN if drinks are not going to be sold. Obviously you could have an alcohol free wedding and serve hot and soft drinks. If you plan to provide all of the drinks yourself consider whether you need someone to serve the drinks during the day or whether drinks will be left on a table for guests to serve themselves.

Another option is to ask guests to bring a bottle/carton/4-pack either for themselves to keep at their own table or to add to a wedding bar. This method can work well as most guests will be happy to pay for a bottle or two if it means they don't have to buy rounds for the rest of the day. And you'll probably end up with a stock to take home at the end of the night.

Left Bank provides staff for their own bar and may be able to recruit volunteers to serve drinks if you are having your own bar. Previous experience has shown that there will usually be several guests at the wedding who are more than happy to help out serving drinks behind a bar if it means they don't have to dance! Ask around, people are often keen to be involved in your day.

Music / Dancing

There is a full, working PA available for hire which has been used for many events. Live bands have entertained wedding guests alongside DJs. Brides have been serenaded from the pulpit and guests have been entertained by cabaret, living statues and burlesque. The space is great for almost any sort of entertainment. Please make sure we are aware of your activity programme, so we can ensure it is covered by our licence and general hire conditions.

If your band/DJ/stand-up comic is bringing their own PA or equipment, remember to sort out extension leads ready for when they arrive. You don't want to be running a cable across a crowded dance floor or worse, searching for it in the middle of the wedding breakfast!

Children

Left Bank is a very tempting space for young children to run around. We have had various options for entertaining children including a designated area (a picket fence with Astroturf inside, affectionately known as the 'kid-pen'). This has been very successful and with toys, books and a rota of adults supervising, children have been happily entertained for hours.

The grass area outside is obviously an option on a nice day, but remember that Left Bank is next to a busy road and ensure that children, bouncy castles or anything else you put out there, are supervised at all times.

Photos

An important part of the whole day. The inside of the building is clearly the most attractive place for your photos with many options for effective backdrops. We would recommend you have a trial run with your photographer the day before to select some key spots for photos and times to take them. Watch out for unwanted notices/wires in the background. Also, at certain points on a sunny day the sun (rather beautifully) streams in through the altar windows. This makes the building look brilliant but it is impossible to take photos at the altar during this light show! It is possible to take photos outside which, with some creativity, will rival any photos taken in hotel gardens, or you can go alternative and make a feature of the red bricks and corrugated iron. There is also Burley Park, a 5 minute walk away across the road.

If your photographer needs access to the balcony for group shots (often easier to fit everyone in from a height) speak to Left Bank staff in advance as the doors to the balcony areas are usually kept locked.

MC

Your celebration at Left Bank will be unique. One aspect of a wedding held at a standard venue is the use of the MC from the venue who will provide quite an important service. Someone has to get the guests seated, toasting, in groups for photos, eating / restocking the bar / trouble shooting (need more toilet rolls) etc. Ideally this needs to be replicated by somebody; best man / woman / couple of friends / hire a professional MC? This is a key role and should be given some thought. Having someone who understands what you want to happen during the day means you are free to enjoy your wedding without being pulled away when the band arrives or the caterer has a hiccup. This role is even more useful if your wedding will be out of the ordinary and guests may not be able to guess what is going to happen next.

Setting up

Unless you're planning something very low key or have an army of friends and relatives who will arrive on the day and organize everything to your exact specifications, you will need to allow time for setting up. Unlike a traditional venue where the layout is pre-agreed and all the equipment is on hand, you will find there are items you need to bring into Left Bank and others that require tape, string, ladders or trolleys to get into place. This will all take more time than you expect and will most likely involve someone getting dirty (it's a dusty building).

Including time the day before your event in your hire period will allow you to get things set up the way you want. If you can persuade some people to help you, all the better. You can also use this time to meet your caterer on site, have a ceremony rehearsal, brief your ushers/MC, call a band rehearsal, practice walking down the aisle in the right shoes or whatever else you would like to have a dry run of before the big day.

Clearing away

Putting the venue back in place after the event is down to you. Anything you have brought into the building (equipment, decorations, flowers etc) will need to be taken away on the day after the wedding, Left Bank chairs and furniture put back in place, spillages mopped and all rubbish bagged up.

Most people organise their own friends to do this, but if you prefer you can pay Left Bank to do the clearing up. You would need to book the Left Bank clear up service at least a month before the wedding so that we can organise the necessary staff.

Consider whether you will want to get up early in the morning after your big day for a spot of sweeping (or if you will be halfway to your honeymoon destination by then). If the answer is no make sure you have nominated somebody who will organize the cleaning up for you and that they have been given keys and instructions from Left Bank staff.

If you have guests coming from a distance who are likely to be around the following day, a big clear up can be a fun (really!) way of saying hello to everyone again and thanking them before they leave. If you end up with lots of leftovers from the bar, you can send your guests home with some as a reward for helping you clean.

If you want others to help with the cleaning, let them know in advance (maybe as a cheeky addition to the timetable on the invites) so people can make their travel plans later in the day.

NB. Even if you are paying Left Bank to clear up, you will still need to take away any items you have brought into the building yourselves, such as decorations and equipment. Also, if you are having a Saturday wedding, hire equipment such as chairs, tables and catering equipment should be collected on the Sunday. Please discuss with us in advance if your hire company wants to collect on Monday, as this may affect other bookings and incur an additional cost.

Other staff/jobs

We ask you to provide a fire marshall for your wedding. This is a very straightforward role, but ensures that there is someone on site who knows where fire extinguishers are and is responsible for calling 999 in a fire emergency. Your fire marshall will need to be briefed by Left Bank staff before the event to go through the fire plan – we suggest either the day before or on the morning of the wedding. The only requirement is that they will be there for the whole event and will be staying sober (there's always someone!).

Insurance

Because your wedding at Left Bank is a private event we require you to provide your own public liability cover. Although this sounds complicated it can be added to most household insurance policies or included as part of a wedding insurance package, which you may be considering anyway.

We want to help you to make the most of a unique day in a unique space. Please get in touch if you'd like to arrange a visit or have any questions or crazy ideas to run by us.