

the inside scoop

Chicago's top planners share their juiciest info.



Shaina and Jason stepped outside The Elysian Hotel for a few nature-inspired shots.

secret spot

“If you’re looking for an off-the-beaten-path spot for photos, go to Lincoln Park Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool. It’s like stepping into a secret garden. You don’t even feel like it’s Chicago. It’s filled with stone paths, beautiful architecture, flowers, trees and, of course, a pond full of lilies.” —*Kristin*

planning tip

“The first thing couples need to consider is the timing of their wedding. Given the weather patterns in Chicago, the ideal time of year to have an outdoor wedding is from mid-May through the end of September. The second thing to consider is that most of these spots are public places, which means that the public may interrupt your wedding ceremony or reception. The Chicago Park District’s website (ChicagoParkDistrict.com) is an excellent resource for venues available for an outdoor wedding, as well as the pricing and permit information for each location.” —*Nicole*

travel tips

“Hotels and transportation can be the biggest challenge in this city. Make sure you book hotel room blocks early and check to see if there are going to be political, entertainment or sports events happening the weekend of your wedding.” —*Ali*

new venue

“One place I’m loving right now for rehearsal dinners and even receptions is Room 1520 (Room1520.com), a super-cool loft venue in the West Loop having its first big year. It’s really open and bright.” —*Ali*

hidden gem

“There is a suite called the Grand Terrace Suite at the Conrad Chicago (ConradChicago.com) that has a 1,000-square-foot terrace attached with gorgeous views of the city. I didn’t even know it existed until I was looking at suites in general for a hotel block. Sure enough, you can book events there. I think it’s perfect for an engagement party or rehearsal dinner.” —*Kristin*

must-ask question

“Many of the venues in the area are large and spread out, so I always tell my brides to ask about the proximity of the bathrooms to where dinner and dancing will be. Depending on the location, it might be a farther walk than you want your guests to take.” —*Ali*

money matters

“The city of Chicago unfortunately also comes with a 9.75 percent sales tax, and it’s very important to keep that in mind when budgeting for the venue, food, drink and vendors, as often the tax isn’t included in starting rates or quotes.” —*Nicole*

THE PLANNER

Nicole Zenner

Premier Planning Services,
Chicago, (773) 391-9997

YEARS IN THE BIZ

7 years

SECRET WEAPON

“Teamwork! Working fluidly and easily with the couple, guests and other vendors.”

THE PLANNER

Ali Phillips

Engaging Events by Ali,
Chicago, (773) 777-2299

YEARS IN THE BIZ

9 years

SECRET WEAPON

“My amazing team of assistants and consultants, and the incredible team of vendors we put together.”

THE PLANNER

Kristin Cavarretta

Sweet Pea Wedding Studio,
Chicago, (847) 431-4717

YEARS IN THE BIZ

5 years

SECRET WEAPON

“Working with any budget. No matter what you have to spend, we make sure you have a fabulous event.”



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