



HOW TO PLAN YOUR NATIONAL PARK *elopement*

National Parks provide a beautiful backdrop with ample amounts of opportunity to pull in personal touches. From Jasper to White Sands, the vast diversity of the parks make it easy to select the one that best fits your style. Once you make up your mind, it's up to you to pull in the pieces that reflect your personality and the love you two share.

Eloperments often vary from weddings in size, decor and vendors, however, incorporating traditional wedding details that hold importance to you is a fun way to add a personal touch. Include a first look before the hike, a first dance under the sunset, or consider wearing something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.

Follow along as we share incredible elopement inspiration and tips to help you plan the ultimate I do with your fiancé.



PLANNING A MODERN-DAY ELOPEMENT

Portraying a modern-day Romeo and Juliet, like two young lovers running away to spend their lives together was the inspiration for Britt of Britt Jones Co. for this dreamy styled shoot. White Sands National Park in New Mexico was the perfect setting for the neutral palette of whites, creams, mauves, dusty rose, and gold.



IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

Just because you elope, doesn't mean you can't bring in traditional wedding details. Stunning neutral and romantic paper goods by Pink Umbrella Designs are a beautiful way to announce your nuptials to close family and friends. Whether you commit to an eternity with just the two of you or have a small crowd, nibbles and sips are a must. After reading handwritten vows to one another, celebrate with a charcuterie board, champagne toast, and custom wedding cake. Don't forget to save a slice for your one year anniversary.

Cheers to forever!





HOW TO ELOPE IN A NATIONAL PARK

Congratulations! You've decided to elope in a National Park. Now what? While elopements tend to be more intimate than a traditional wedding, there are a few items to check off your to-do list to ensure you have a flawless day. Wild places have equally wild unknowns, so get ready for a planning adventure to remember!

CHOOSE THE I DO LOCATION: First things first, determine where you want to elope. Every park offers its own unique geographical majesty, in addition to its own logistical requirements for special events. Take note of restricted areas, seasonal closures and entry requirements. Something that sets National Parks apart from other locations is that permits are required (National Park websites will guide you through the process). It's not a bad idea to also check peak visiting seasons. If you're hoping to elope at a popular viewpoint, you may not fancy it with 100 strangers taking selfies around you while you read vows to one another.

HAVE A PLAN B: Whether you're planning an elopement or wedding, a plan B is always necessary. Perhaps the first location you chose is taken or unavailable during the time you want to say I do. Having a backup will make it easier to continue on in your planning process.

BREAK OUT THE CALENDAR: The best thing about a Rocky Mountain elopement in the great outdoors may also be the worst thing: the weather. Planning around your own schedule and a four-season weather cycle can be a slippery slope, but a great place to start is to eliminate all the crowded holiday weekends.

START HIRING VENDORS: If you choose to hire a planner, that's a good place to start. Otherwise, a photographer that specializes in elopements is a must. We recommend choosing a photographer that has experience in the area you're eloping in. They'll know where to go, how to obtain permits, how long it will take to get there, how to avoid crowds, and what time of day will produce the best photos.

DETERMINE THE GUEST LIST: The best rule about an elopement guest list is there are no rules. It could be just the two of you (with an officiant) or a handful of guests. Keep in mind that guests will have to make the same trek as you.

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS: Incorporating some traditional wedding details into your elopement can help make your day feel more complete. Sprinkling in some details from stationery and bouquets to ceremony arches and vows is the perfect way to showcase your personal style and create a theme for your special day.

BRAND IT: Play up the National Park location by adding a punchy graphic of the park's main feature to save-the-date cards, a wedding website, wedding announcements, etc. If you choose not to have guests, this small detail may help family and friends feel connected.

PLAN FOR THE AFTER-PARTY: All high altitude excursions—especially heart-thumping elopements—deserve a celebratory meal. Whether it's just to the two of you or a small crew, make dinner reservations at a hot spot in the nearest town. Or better yet, let your planner work their magic to plan a pretty picnic at a private location. Further, take advantage of the nearby town by booking a honeymoon suite to crash for the night.

CREATE A TIMELINE: With your photographer (and planner if you've hired one), map out a timeline of the entire day and be sure to allow for ample magical moments. Box out enough time to get ready, travel to the location, take first look photos and say your vows.

MAKE A PACKING LIST: Comfort and ease are key. If you have to hike or walk to your destination, keep it simple. Wear comfortable footwear and pack lightweight layers. Plan ahead on where to get dressed and how to carry everything in and out. Flip to page 170 for a list of elopement essentials.

MAKE IT OFFICIAL: In the excitement of hiking to a peak to proclaim your love, it might be easy to forget the one thing that makes the elopement official: the marriage license. Check with local government on how to obtain a marriage license.

GO WITH THE FLOW: Just like a typical wedding, things can and probably will go amiss. Be okay with a freak end-of-summer snowstorm or record-breaking heat on a spring day. Chat with your planner or photographer ahead of time about situations that may arise and how to move forward. At the end of the day, you're marrying the love of your life and that's all that matters.

