

# NEW FOREST HOTELS

## Wedding Wisdom from New Forest Hotels: Tips & Trends from Real Weddings

Planning your dream wedding in the enchanting New Forest? We've gathered unique tips and insights straight from New Forest Hotels' wedding experts and couples who've celebrated at **Bartley Lodge**, **Burley Manor**, **Forest Lodge**, and **Beaulieu Inn**. From clever budgeting hacks that don't skimp on style to trending ideas that make the most of these venues' rustic elegance and natural beauty, each tip comes with a real-life quote to inspire your own big day. Let's dive into this collection of quotes and savvy advice to help you plan a magical, stress-free wedding day in the New Forest.

### Embrace Weekday Weddings for Great Value

"Got married here on October 1st and it was perfect... The location, the rooms, the staff – I couldn't ask for more at a very reasonable price." – *Wedding couple at Forest Lodge.*

If you're flexible with dates, a weekday or off-peak wedding can save you thousands without compromising on the experience. New Forest Hotels often offer special packages for Sunday–Thursday celebrations – even **free ceremony room hire** on those days. You'll get the same stunning venue and top-notch service for less competition and cost. It's a smart strategy to **stretch your budget** while still enjoying everything from gorgeous grounds to gourmet dining. In short, don't be afraid to pick a weekday – your guests and your wallet will thank you!

### Lean on Your Venue's Wedding Team

"Thank you so much for all your help in making our special day run so smoothly... You made my day absolutely stress free as you dealt with everything perfectly." – *Katie, bride at Bartley Lodge.*

One of the biggest assets of hosting your wedding at a New Forest Collection hotel is the **dedicated wedding coordinator** and staff on hand. These pros have orchestrated countless weddings and know the venue inside-out. Take advantage of their expertise – ask questions during planning, share your vision, and then breathe easy on the day. Couples consistently praise how coordinators like Sophie at Bartley Lodge or Gina at Burley Manor went above and beyond to handle every detail, so they could fully enjoy the moment. The lesson: trust the in-house team to sweat the small stuff. As one bride put it, having an experienced coordinator "made our special day more amazing than we could have ever asked for... everything we asked for

was never too much trouble.” Handing over the reins to the venue’s experts means less stress and more time for *you* to savour your wedding day.

### **Personalise the Décor – The Staff Will Help Make It Happen**

“Every little idea my daughter had was catered for... On the big day everything was in place and perfect!” – *Liz, mother-of-the-bride at Bartley Lodge*.

Your wedding should reflect *you*, and a great venue will help bring your personal touches to life. New Forest Hotels encourage couples to get creative with décor and details – and their staff will gladly do the heavy lifting. Want to hang strings of fairy lights across the ceiling or set up a candy bar? Go for it! Liz, a mother-of-the-bride, recalls delivering boxes of DIY décor (from fairy lights to children’s activity packs and even a postbox for cards) to Bartley Lodge the night before. By the time the reception started, **“everything was in place and perfect,”** thanks to the team’s help. These venues provide essentials like linens, chairs, cake stands, etc., as part of their packages, so you can add your unique decorations without needing to rent a thing. The result is a bespoke atmosphere – with minimal hassle on your part – that truly feels like *your* wedding.

### **Get Creative (and Budget-Friendly) with Catering**

“We had afternoon tea for 72 at lunchtime and an evening BBQ with chips – these proved extremely popular with all the guests who said they were the best they had ever tasted!” – *Liz, mother-of-the-bride at Bartley Lodge*.

Who says your wedding breakfast must be a formal sit-down meal? One big trend – especially fitting for the relaxed, rustic vibe of New Forest venues – is to **think outside the box with food**. Couples have served anything from elegant afternoon tea spreads to casual hog roast suppers, and the feedback has been fantastic. Not only do these choices showcase your personality, they can also be budget-friendly. For instance, at a Bartley Lodge wedding, the couple swapped a traditional dinner for a quaint afternoon tea and later a barbecue, and guests raved about it. Similarly, one Burley Manor duo opted for a **hog roast with loads of lovely sides and a dessert buffet**, which had everyone complimenting the food. New Forest Hotels’ chefs are open to tailoring menus – whether it’s sharing boards of local Hampshire fare or a plant-based feast – so you can **delight your guests without breaking the bank**. The key is to prioritize quality and fun: serve crowd-pleasers (maybe inspired by local ingredients or your favourite foods) and skip the overly fussy courses. You’ll save money and your guests will definitely remember the unique dining experience.

### **Leverage the Natural Beauty (Less Décor Needed!)**

“It was the most perfect day! The hotel and grounds are just beautiful. The gardens are superb...” – *Harriet, bride at Bartley Lodge*.

One of the best parts of a New Forest wedding? The backdrop is already breathtaking. All four venues sit amid gorgeous landscapes – from Bartley Lodge’s

ancient oak trees to Beaulieu Inn's vast open heath where New Forest ponies roam free. This means you can **save on décor by letting nature do the talking**. Plan an outdoor ceremony under a blooming arbor or use the golden light filtering through the trees for magical photos. Your photographer will have a field day capturing moments against woodland scenery, historic brick manor walls, or even a herd of deer grazing by Burley Manor's fence (a view that wows every guest!). Many couples say their guests couldn't stop commenting on the **beauty of the venue and surroundings**, which is testament to how little you need to add to make it special. A few well-placed floral arrangements or rustic lanterns to accent the venue's character is often enough. So go ahead and embrace the New Forest charm – you'll get million-dollar views at no extra cost, and unforgettable photos to boot. *(As one witty New Forest Hotels planner quipped, "Is it even a New Forest wedding if there isn't a pony on the guest list?" — indeed, don't be surprised if a curious pony or two makes a cameo in your wedding album!)*

### **Keep Guests (Young and Furry) Happy**

"Our venue had plenty of room outside in the courtyard for the children to run around (and the odd adult)... Even the addition of our dog to the wedding party didn't faze anyone – he attended the whole day and was made to feel very welcome with his own bowls and big biscuit so he didn't feel left out." – *Bride at Burley Manor*.

Weddings are about celebrating with your nearest and dearest – and that can include kids and pets! New Forest Hotels are wonderfully **family-friendly and pet-friendly**, which can make your wedding even more special (and less stressful for everyone attending). If you're inviting children, venues like Bartley Lodge and Burley Manor offer expansive lawns and gardens where kids can play safely. During one Bartley Lodge reception, six little ones were happily running free on the grass, which meant *"contented children [and] happy parents,"* as one guest noted. Consider setting up lawn games or a kids' corner; the space is there, and the staff can help supervise or set things up so parents can relax.

And don't forget your four-legged friend! It's increasingly popular to include dogs in the ceremony or photos, and at New Forest venues this is entirely doable. The quote above is from a bride whose dog was treated like an honoured guest at Burley Manor – the team even prepared a water bowl and a treat for him. If having your pup as a ring-bearer or just by your side for the day is your dream, you're in the right place. Just give your coordinator a heads-up, and they'll ensure your pet pal is looked after. Keeping kids entertained and pets accommodated will make your wedding feel warm, inclusive, and memorable for all. After all, *happy guests = a happy couple*, and that includes guests of every age (and species)!

## Wow with a Personalised Menu (Don't Skimp on the Food)

"One main highlight for us was the food – the amazing chef created a gorgeous bespoke menu for us and all of our guests were wowed by it all." – *Jenni, bride at Burley Manor.*

If there's one thing guests always remember, it's the food. The good news is New Forest Collection venues are known for **fantastic cuisine**, so you can maintain high quality while still being budget-savvy. A top tip from past couples is to work with the in-house catering team to craft a menu that reflects you as a couple. The chefs are flexible – whether you want a fully plant-based spread, a late-night fish & chips station, or a themed menu from your heritage, they can do it. One bride at Burley Manor said the chef went above and beyond to create a custom menu that wowed everyone. Another couple mentioned "*the food is out of this world*" and all their guests kept raving about it. This level of culinary excellence comes without the markup of hiring external caterers, since **packages usually include a seasonal three-course wedding breakfast** made from local New Forest ingredients. To save money, you might choose the plentiful buffet or family-style serving options (often offered as part of packages) instead of individual plated courses – it cuts costs and encourages guests to mingle. And for the toasts, consider swapping expensive imported Champagne for sparkling wine from England or a Prosecco toast; the packages include these bubbly alternatives and your guests won't mind a bit. Bottom line: don't compromise on food quality – with these venues, you don't have to. You can have a delicious, abundant spread that fits your budget and leaves everyone talking about how great everything tasted.

## Turn Your Wedding into a Mini Getaway

"Lots of us stayed the night in the hotel... Breakfast was fantastic. After breakfast we all gathered in the gardens for a relaxed farewell over tea, coffee and juices. I cannot fault the day and the staff were just super! It feels like a second home." – *Liz.*

Why limit the celebration to just a few hours? One of the charms of having your wedding at a hotel in the New Forest is the ability to **make a whole weekend of it**. Many couples and their families choose to book rooms at the venue, turning the event into a cozy retreat. Imagine the night before the wedding, having a low-key dinner with guests who've arrived early, or indulging in a spa treatment (Burley Manor even has wellness facilities for pre-wedding pampering). On the big day, there's no rushing off—your suite is steps away. And the next morning, the celebration continues over a hearty New Forest breakfast with all your nearest and dearest. The quote above paints this picture beautifully: after a picture-perfect wedding at Bartley Lodge, the couple and guests who stayed overnight enjoyed a relaxed post-wedding gathering in the garden. No one had to drive home or hurry off; they reminisced about the night and wound down together.

Hosting your wedding where guests can also lodge means more quality time with the people you love. Plus, New Forest Hotels often offer special group rates or a complimentary newlyweds' room (for example, a **free deluxe room for the couple on their wedding night** is included in some packages). It's the ideal way to end your festivities: waking up as a married couple in a beautiful country hotel, surrounded by friends, family, and the tranquil forest outside. So go ahead and savor the experience – you deserve that mini-holiday after all the planning!

### Tap Into Local Expertise and Perks

“Our wonderful team of wedding experts have done all the hard work for you and carefully hand-chosen a brilliant selection of New Forest Collection recommended suppliers... Should any of these suppliers take your fancy, be sure to mention New Forest Collection, as there may be a few perks to unlock!” – *New Forest Collection Weddings team*.

Another insider strategy is to use the **venue's recommended suppliers**. New Forest Hotels maintain a list of trusted local vendors – from florists and décor specialists to DJs and photographers – who know the venues well. Booking your florist or DJ through these recommendations can save you time *and* reduce risk (since they've worked at the venue before, they'll be familiar with the setup and what works best in the space). Even better, as the quote from the NFC wedding team suggests, don't forget to name-drop your venue when contacting these suppliers. Many offer special deals or little extras for New Forest Collection couples. That could mean a discount, a free upgrade (like extra hours of music or an additional centerpiece), or other cost-saving perks.

Using venue-approved vendors also streamlines your planning – your coordinator can liaise with them directly, making sure delivery times, setup, and pack-down all happen seamlessly on the day. It's one less thing for you to worry about. And because these pros are handpicked for quality, you can trust that they'll deliver top-notch service. In short, **local expertise is invaluable**: it ensures a smooth experience and might score you some nice savings or upgrades along the way. Work smarter, not harder, by assembling your vendor team with a little help from those who know the New Forest wedding scene best.

### Final Thoughts on New Forest Nuptials

From securing an amazing off-peak deal to making the most of the New Forest's natural splendor, these tips showcase how to plan a wedding that is both practical and truly enchanting. The **New Forest Collection** venues have a way of making every couple feel at home and every celebration feel one-of-a-kind. As you incorporate these insights – trusting your coordinators, personalizing your décor, feeding your guests well, and savoring every moment – you'll be set for a joyful wedding that reflects your style *and* stays on budget.

In the words of one happy bride, *"We couldn't have hoped for a better venue... frankly I can't say a bad word about anything! 100% recommend."*