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A Beginner's Guide to Hosting a Traditional Marquee Event

Welcome to our most recent blog post, where we walk you through classic marquee occasions.

Marquees provide a versatile and elegant setting for a wedding, corporate event, or summer garden party. Their timeless appeal offers the perfect blend of grandeur and intimacy. However, if you're new to this, planning a marquee event can be daunting.

This guide walks you through the essential steps of hosting a successful [traditional marquee](#) event, from selecting the right marquee to finalising the decorations.

Choosing the Right Marquee

Choosing the right marquee is the first and most crucial step in hosting a traditional marquee event. The marquee you select sets the tone for your event, influencing the atmosphere, aesthetics, and overall experience.

Traditional marquees are renowned for their classic aesthetics and flexibility, offering a range of options to suit various event types and sizes.

Types of Traditional Marquees

When it comes to traditional marquees, there are several types to consider, each with its unique characteristics and charm. Let's delve into the details of each type to help you make an informed decision.

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Pole Marquees

Pole marquees, known as pole tents, are popular for summer events, including weddings, festivals, and garden parties. They are characterised by their central poles, known as "king poles", and side lines connected to ground pins. While the side poles mould the fabric, the king poles support the most weight.

Originally made from cotton canvas covers, wooden poles, and hessian rope, modern pole marquees often feature PVC covers, aluminium poles, and nylon ropes. The canvas versions are still available and have grown in popularity due to their breathability, making them comfortable in hot summer weather while remaining watertight in the event of rain.

Frame Marquees

Frame marquees, known for their sturdy aluminium frames, offer a different aesthetic and functional appeal. Unlike pole marquees, frame marquees do not have interior poles, providing an unobstructed space. This makes them a versatile choice for various events, as they can be fitted into smaller spaces without additional room for guy ropes.

Sailcloth Tents

Sailcloth tents are notable for their romantic appeal. These tents, made of translucent fabric, let in natural light to produce a cosy and welcoming ambience. They are a popular choice for weddings and other romantic events.

The choice of marquee will depend on the nature of your event, the number of guests, the location, and your personal preference. The classic elegance of a pole marquee, the modern simplicity of a frame marquee, the romantic charm of a sailcloth tent, or the unique appeal of a yurt. Each choice offers its unique charm to make your event truly memorable.

Securing the Perfect Location

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Choosing the perfect location for your marquee event is a crucial first step in planning. The venue affects the logistics, establishes the mood for your event, and may even affect how your guests feel. It's not just about finding a beautiful spot; it's about finding a place that aligns with your event's theme, can accommodate your marquee, and provides the necessary facilities.

The following are some crucial aspects to take into account when selecting a location:

Size and Shape of the Site

The size and shape of your chosen site will directly impact the type and size of the marquee you can erect.

Marquees come in various styles and sizes, from small canopies ideal for intimate gatherings to large structures that accommodate hundreds of guests. If you opt for a traditional marquee, the site must be large enough to accommodate the marquee and any additional space required for guy ropes.

Accessibility for Guests and Suppliers

Accessibility is another crucial factor when choosing a location for your marquee event. The site should be easily accessible for your guests, suppliers, and any equipment required for the event.

Consider the site's proximity to major roads, public transport links, and accommodation options for guests. If your event location is remote, you might need to arrange transport for your guests.

Additionally, you should ensure suitable facilities for guests, such as [luxury loos](#), particularly if your event is in a remote location.

Availability of Power and Water Supply

A successful marquee event requires a reliable power and water supply. You'll need power for lighting, catering, entertainment, and heating or cooling systems.

Similarly, a water supply is essential for catering and restroom facilities. If your chosen site doesn't have access to mains power or water, you may need to hire additional equipment, such as [generators](#), to meet these needs.

Surrounding Views and Aesthetics

The aesthetics of your event location can significantly enhance the atmosphere of your marquee event.

A picturesque surrounding can add a unique charm to your event, whether a stunning countryside view, a serene beachfront, or a historic estate. Choose a location that complements your event's theme and creates a memorable backdrop for your guests.

Remember, the perfect location for your marquee event is not just about practicality; it's about finding a place that adds to the magic of your event.

Planning the Layout

Planning the layout of your marquee event is a crucial step in ensuring a seamless flow of activities and an enhanced guest experience. It involves the strategic placement of various elements within the marquee space.

This section will guide you through the key aspects to consider when planning your layout, from the positioning of entrances and exits to the arrangement of tables and chairs.

Placement of the Entrance and Exit

The entrance and exit points are the first and last areas guests will interact with at your event. It's essential to position these in a way that allows easy access and egress, ensuring a smooth traffic flow.

Consider factors such as the size of the area, the expected number of guests, and the land's topography when deciding on the placement of these points.

Allocation of Spaces for Dining, Dancing, and Lounging

The allocation of spaces within your marquee is key to creating an enjoyable atmosphere for your guests.

You'll need to designate areas for dining, dancing, and lounging. The size of these areas will depend on the number of guests and the nature of your event. For instance, a formal seated dinner will require more dining space than a casual buffet-style event.

Consider using quality [tables and chairs](#) to enhance the comfort of your guests.

Location of the Bar and Catering Area

The bar and catering area are vital components of any marquee event. Position these in a central location that's easily accessible to all guests. This ensures that everyone can easily get refreshments as needed. An [LED bar](#) can add a touch of elegance to your event.

Arrangement of Tables, Chairs, and Other Furnishings

The arrangement of tables, chairs, and other furnishings can significantly impact the atmosphere of your event.

A well-organised layout can facilitate social interaction and movement, enhancing the overall guest experience. Remember, the layout should be flexible enough to accommodate any changes during the event.

Finalising the Décor

The décor is the soul of your marquee event. It's the palette with which you paint the atmosphere, set the mood, and tell a story.

Whether planning a wedding, a corporate event, or a summer garden party, the right décor can transform a simple marquee into a magical setting. Let's delve into the key aspects of marquee decorations that will help you create an unforgettable event.

Choice of Colour Scheme and Themes

The colour scheme and theme form the backbone of your event décor. They guide the selection of everything from table linens to floral arrangements.

In 2023, we're seeing a trend towards natural and earthy tones with accents of bold, vibrant colours. Themes can range from classic elegance to rustic charm, depending on your style and the nature of the event.

Remember, the theme should resonate with the occasion and reflect your personality or brand.

Selection of Lighting Fixtures

Setting the ambience for your event requires careful consideration of lighting. From fairy lights draped across the ceiling to elegant chandeliers, the right lighting can add warmth, depth, and drama to your marquee.

Consider the time of your event; soft, ambient lighting works well for evening events, while natural light is perfect for daytime celebrations. Explore various [marquee lighting options](#) to find the perfect fit for your event.

Use of Flowers, Curtains, and Other Decorative Items

Flowers, curtains, and other decorative items add texture and visual interest to your marquee. Floral arrangements can be used to create focal points, while curtains or drapes can add a touch of elegance and soften the interior of the marquee.

Don't be afraid to get creative with decorative items like lanterns, candles, or even bespoke signage. Discover a range of [marquee linings](#) to enhance your décor further.

Incorporation of Unique Features

Adding unique features like a dance floor or stage can elevate your marquee event to the next level. A dance floor invites your guests to let loose and enjoy the music, while a stage can be used for speeches, presentations, or performances.

Consider your event's flow and how these features can enhance your guests' experience. There are many [dance floor options](#) to consider if you want to give your event a little more fun. Remember, finalising the décor for your marquee event is not just about aesthetics; it's about creating an environment that reflects your vision and offers your guests an unforgettable experience.

Weather Preparations for Marquee Events

British weather is renowned for its unpredictability, which can pose a challenge when planning an outdoor event. However, with the right preparations, you can ensure that your marquee event is a success, come rain or shine.

In this section, we will discuss how to prepare for various weather conditions, including the installation of heating or cooling systems, provision of sheltered pathways, use of weighted sides for wind protection, and availability of additional coverings or umbrellas.

Installation of Heating or Cooling Systems

Whether hosting a winter wonderland or a summer soiree, maintaining a comfortable temperature inside your marquee is crucial.

For colder months, consider installing [marquee heaters](#) to keep your guests warm. On the other hand, during the summer, raising the sides of the marquee is the most effective way to keep cool. In extreme heat cooling systems or fans can help to circulate air and keep the interior of the marquee cool.

Provision of Sheltered Pathways and Outdoor Areas

Rain or shine, providing sheltered pathways and outdoor areas can enhance the comfort of your guests. This could be as simple as setting up a canopy walkway from the car park to the marquee entrance or providing covered outdoor seating areas.

Use of Weighted Sides for Wind Protection

In the UK, windy conditions can sometimes be a concern. Marquees are designed to withstand windy conditions - your marquee provider will assess the conditions and use extra staking or weights to ensure your marquee is erected safely. To safeguard against this, consider using weighted sides for your marquee. These can help to stabilise the structure and prevent it from being affected by strong winds.

Availability of Additional Coverings or Umbrellas

Despite our best efforts, the weather can sometimes catch us by surprise. Additional coverings or umbrellas can provide a quick solution in unexpected rain showers. Considering these elements, you can ensure that your marquee event is ready for any weather, enabling your guests to concentrate on having a good time.

Ensuring Legal Compliance

Hosting a marquee event is not just about setting up a tent and inviting guests. It involves a series of legal considerations that must be adhered to, ensuring your event runs smoothly and within the confines of the law.

From obtaining necessary permissions to meeting safety regulations, each aspect plays a crucial role in the success of your event. Let's delve into these legal aspects in more detail.

Obtaining Necessary Permissions from Landowners

If you're planning to host your marquee event on private land, obtaining permission from the landowner is essential.

This is not only a matter of courtesy but also a legal requirement. The landowner has the right to know and approve any activities on their property. It's crucial to discuss your plans in detail with the landowner and secure a written agreement, as outlined in the [Landowner's Guide to Permissive Access](#), to avoid any potential disputes.

Ensuring Compliance with Noise Restrictions

Noise restrictions are another critical aspect to consider when planning a marquee event. In the UK, local councils set noise limits to prevent nearby residents' disturbances, especially at night.

It's important to check with your local council about the specific noise restrictions in your area, as detailed in the [Noise regulations for outdoor events](#). Failure to comply may result in fines or even event cancellation.

Meeting Fire Safety Regulations

Fire safety is paramount at any event, and marquee events are no exception. According to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Regulation 2005, a fire risk assessment is required for all public events, including marquee events.

This involves identifying potential fire hazards, implementing measures to reduce risk, and ensuring adequate fire exits and extinguishers are available, as explained in the [Fire safety risk assessment: open-air events and venues](#) guide.

Acquiring a Licence for Alcohol, Music, and Public Events

Suppose your marquee event involves the sale of alcohol, playing of live or recorded music, or is open to the public.

In that case, you may need to obtain a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) from your local council. As described in the [Temporary event notices](#) guide, this legal document

allows you to carry out licensable activities at your event. Applying for this at least ten working days before your event is important.

Understanding and adhering to these legal aspects ensures your marquee event is enjoyable and compliant with the law.

Organising Event Catering

The success of your marquee event hinges significantly on the quality of food and drink served. A well-chosen caterer can elevate your event, creating an unforgettable guest experience. This section will guide you through selecting the perfect caterer and planning a menu that will delight your guests.

Selecting the Perfect Caterer

Choosing the right caterer for your marquee event is a critical decision. It's not just about the food; it's about finding a caterer who understands your vision and can bring it to life.

Consider Their Specialities and Style of Cooking

Every caterer has their unique style and specialities. Some caterers excel in creating traditional British fare, while others might be experts in exotic cuisines. It's essential to choose a caterer whose culinary style matches the theme and atmosphere of your event.

Check Their Experience with Marquee Events

Catering for a marquee event presents unique challenges, such as limited kitchen facilities and unpredictable weather conditions. Therefore, choosing a caterer with experience in managing these challenges is crucial.

An experienced caterer will be able to adapt and ensure that the food service runs smoothly, regardless of the circumstances.

Review Their Hygiene Ratings and Food Quality Standards

Food safety is paramount. Always check the caterer's hygiene ratings and their commitment to food quality standards. The Food Standards Agency gives businesses a food hygiene rating from 0 to 5 in the UK. A rating of 5 indicates excellent hygiene standards.

Planning the Menu

Once you've chosen your caterer, the next step is to plan the menu. This is your opportunity to get creative and design a culinary experience that your guests will remember.

Choose a Menu That Reflects Your Event's Theme

The menu should complement the theme of your event. For example, if you're hosting a summer garden party, you might opt for a menu featuring fresh salads and grilled seafood. On the other hand, a winter marquee event might call for hearty stews and warm desserts.

Consider the Dietary Requirements of Guests

In today's diverse society, some of your guests will likely have specific dietary requirements. These could include allergies, vegetarian or vegan diets, or religious dietary restrictions. Discuss these requirements with your caterer to ensure all your guests can enjoy the meal.

Opt for Seasonal and Locally-Sourced Ingredients

Using seasonal and locally-sourced ingredients is not only environmentally friendly, but it also ensures that the food is at its freshest and most flavourful.

Discuss with your caterer about incorporating these ingredients into your menu. This approach enhances the taste of your dishes, supports local farmers, and reduces your event's carbon footprint.

Organising event catering for a marquee event involves careful consideration and planning. From selecting a caterer who aligns with your vision and has the necessary experience to crafting a menu that caters to your guests' dietary needs and reflects your event's theme, each step is crucial in ensuring a memorable culinary experience.

By following these guidelines, you can ensure that the catering at your marquee event is a resounding success, leaving your guests with lasting memories of a delightful gastronomic journey.

Arranging Entertainment

When arranging entertainment for your marquee event, it's all about creating an atmosphere that complements the occasion and keeps your guests entertained. The right entertainment can transform your event from ordinary to extraordinary, setting the tone and creating lasting memories.

Choosing the Right Entertainment

The choice of entertainment for your marquee event should reflect the vibe you want to create. Whether it's a live band for a lively atmosphere, a DJ spinning tunes for a dance party, or performers adding a touch of spectacle, your entertainment can set the mood for your event.

Deciding on Live Music, DJ, or Performers Based on Your Event's Vibe

Live music can bring a unique energy and sophistication to your event. A band or a solo artist can create a lively atmosphere, encouraging guests to dance and enjoy themselves. On the other hand, a DJ can offer a wide range of music styles, catering to diverse tastes and keeping the dance floor busy.

Performers like magicians or acrobats can add a touch of spectacle and surprise, making your event memorable.

Considering Noise Restrictions at Your Location

While planning your entertainment, it's crucial to consider any noise restrictions at your event location. Some venues may have strict rules about noise levels, especially in the evening. Make sure to check these restrictions beforehand to avoid any last-minute surprises.

Ensuring There's Sufficient Space for the Entertainers

Another important consideration is the space available for your entertainers. Whether it's a stage for the band, a dance floor for the DJ, or a performance area for your performers, you must ensure enough room for them to perform comfortably and safely.

Creating an Event Schedule

Creating a well-thought-out event schedule ensures your marquee event runs smoothly. This involves planning the timing of performances or activities, allowing for breaks and transitions between different acts, and coordinating with entertainers for smooth execution.

Planning the Timing of Performances or Activities

The timing of performances or activities can greatly influence the flow of your event. You should start with some light entertainment as guests arrive, followed by the main act after everyone has settled in.

Consider each performance's duration and ensure it aligns with the event timeline.

Allowing for Breaks and Transitions Between Different Acts

Breaks and transitions between different acts are essential to keep your event running smoothly. This allows time for setup and teardown of equipment, gives performers a rest, and provides a natural pause for guests to mingle, refresh their drinks, or take a breather.

Coordinating with Entertainers for Smooth Execution

Good communication with your entertainers is crucial for the smooth execution of your event. Ensure they are clear about the schedule, know when and where they are expected to perform, and understand any specific requirements or restrictions of the venue.

This will help ensure a seamless entertainment experience for your guests. Arranging entertainment for your marquee event requires careful planning and consideration. Every detail matters, from choosing the right type of entertainment that aligns with your event's vibe to considering practical aspects like noise restrictions and space requirements. Furthermore, creating a well-structured event schedule and maintaining clear communication with your entertainers can ensure a smooth and successful event.

Remember, the goal is to create an unforgettable experience for your guests, and the right entertainment can make all the difference.

Conclusion

In conclusion, hosting a traditional marquee event involves many layers of planning and organisation. From selecting the right marquee and perfect location to arranging catering and entertainment, every detail plays a pivotal role in the overall experience.

Remember that we're here to help if this process daunts you. Our team of professionals has extensive experience in organising successful marquee events.

[Contact us](#) today, and let's start planning your unforgettable event together.
