

# InsideOutside marquees Marquee Guide

Finding a marquee hire company with the right marquee for your event and to suit your budget can appear a daunting task at first. There are so many alternatives that often the choice of contractor is settled by the slightest recommendation from a friend or colleague. The type of marquee you hire is then most likely decided by your marquee company, who will sell you whatever they have available on the date of your outdoor event.

It doesn't have to be that way and with a little more work you can identify exactly what you want before you go on to find out who stocks it.

## Choosing Your Marquee

Spend some time researching the different types of marquee available for hire. There are a wide range of shapes and sizes, frame tents and pole tents, hybrids, tension tents, canopies, pavilions, awnings and pagodas. Depending on your event you can instantly discount some types of marquee and thus narrow down your search. If you can find a picture depicting the type of event or marquee you like you are halfway to finding it.

## Your Marquee Contractor

Once you have an idea of what you would like you need to find the company to supply it. An internet search or a local telephone directory will list a number of suppliers and you now have to find the right one for your wedding, party or other outdoor event. It is impossible to gauge from advertisements who will be best for you so you need to narrow it down. Location is important: Inside

Outside primarily offer marquee hire in Surrey for example, but there are several other considerations to take into account when considering a marquee contractor:

- Does the prospective marquee hire company stock your chosen marquee style and is it available on your event date?
- Are they local to you or are you paying a premium for their travelling time? If they are travelling from afar, how will they quickly respond to any emergencies during the event?
- Is the marquee contractor a reputable and well established rental firm with testimonials and recommendations and known to your caterer or the venue?
- Does the candidate marquee company specialise in your type of event or is the bulk of their work in a different field?
- Is the company represented by helpful, knowledgeable and efficient staff right from



the first point of contact?

Look out for companies based at residential addresses, mobile telephone numbers only or unstaffed offices. Also check that the company actually has the marquees themselves and doesn't just sub-contract the job out to the cheapest quote they can get or you may end up with a marquee from a company you had already disregarded in the earlier stages.

## Marquee Sizes

There is a rule of thumb which we use regularly to calculate marquee sizes for events. It is not an exact science because there is always the margin of how spacious or cosy different people feel comfortable with and also depending on the type of event. An 18th Birthday party wants to be more compact than a wedding reception or corporate hospitality event.

- Dining - seated at round tables of ten for example, allow a 10 feet square per table of ten or 100 square feet.
- Standing room - minimum of 3 feet square per person or 10 square feet though 15 square feet is better.
- Dancing area - allow 3 feet square per person and usually between one third to one half of your guests to dance at any one time.

So let's say you are thinking of hiring a marquee for a wedding reception with 100 guests and want to have drinks and canapés initially, then the wedding breakfast served at the tables, with dancing later on with a dance floor and stage for a band. Let's assume the stand up reception is on the dance floor, negating the need for an even bigger marquee. The stand up reception will require 1000 square feet then the dining area will take up another 1000 square feet. We therefore need 2000 square feet so a 50 ft x

40ft marquee would be ideal. This is the most usual format, but it is increasingly popular for the dance floor to be kept as a separate hidden area with starcloth for example, so that after the removal of the reveal curtain there is a 'wow' effect to add interest to the itinerary of the day. Given the latter scenario, we would need to add around 500 square feet for the dance floor plus whatever space the band or disco needs. A typical band platform is 20ft x 10ft so the total is now 2700 square feet so a 70ft x 40ft marquee would suffice.

Don't forget to allow space for a bar area, buffet, cake table, hats, presents tables or anything else you might put inside the marquee, particularly in Spring, Autumn or Winter when use of the garden is less likely to be an option.

### **Marquee Hire Prices & Budgeting**

Statistics show that fewer people are getting married; even fewer are hiring marquees for a traditional wedding reception in a marquee in the garden. At the same time, the cost of hiring marquees has rocketed. Why? Because it is getting better.

True, wedding marquees are becoming more expensive to hire, but they are also more adaptable and versatile so for those who have the space and can afford their reception in a marquee, the results can be simply stunning.

Not so long ago, anyone could make or buy a tent and start renting it out for weddings and parties with the help of a couple of students.

Without the overheads of public liability insurance, operators license, permanent staff, keeping up with health and safety legislation etc. it was very profitable. In recent years the trade has become better regulated and these mandatory requirements directly translate into the overall cost passed on to the customer. It is increasingly difficult for a marquee hire business to supply low budget marquees. However, once the base costs are covered, marquee companies can offer a very high level of service and modern equipment is far more versatile, safe and attractive.

Once the marquee contractor has covered his costs and is on site, it does not really matter whether the team are erecting a 50ft long marquee or a 60ft long marquee because it is going to take them all day so the wages will be virtually the same, the transport will cost the same. So you have a situation whereby it costs £x to pay for transport and labour and any budget less than £x cannot be viable. Each marquee company has its own threshold, but the margin of variation is narrowing. In essence, larger companies tend to have a higher threshold figure because they will have more experienced permanent staff, better support, a higher standard equipment and greater conformity to trade regulations which overall all adds up to a superior service for the customer.

Professional marquee hire companies [(there are relatively few compared to the hundreds of small companies operating from a barn on a farm) are now able to offer much more

than just a canvas cover. Improvements in the technology of both the structures and fabrics mean the environment inside can be better controlled and adapted.

For instance, opaque covers can block out daylight in order to create stunning lighting displays inside, or for audio visual theatres. Conversely, clear plastic covers can be used for a clear view of surroundings or a summer sky at night. Suspended flooring systems can level uneven ground such as a field or car park, allowing for rainwater to run underneath. Frame marquees can be erected directly adjacent to buildings and doorways or stood side by side, can have higher side leg extensions up to 3M and can support heavier loads such as lighting rigs from the apex.

Secure solid walling and lockable doors are often standard now, as is ducted warm air heating which is thermostatically controlled. This type of equipment for outdoor events is the modern alternative and is undoubtedly far superior in looks, quality and safety but comes at a price just not viable for smaller parties or wedding receptions.



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