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Making an Entrance

Today's modes of wedding-day transportation make for a white-carpet arrival

So much of the wedding-planning process is highly anticipated, from trying on gorgeous gowns to tasting all those yummy cakes, that when it comes to transportation only one word comes to mind: boring. But if you think of it as more than just a way to get from Point A to Point B yet another way to express your style it doesn't have to be.

There are all kinds of ways to arrive at the ceremony and then leave the same way with your new hubby. My husband and I rode in a hay wagon, which was fun and kitschy for our farm wedding. Of course, the more traditional route is a limousine. Limos are ubiquitous just open any old phone book and roomy enough. But, warns Bob Gioiosa of AA Allstars, a limousine services provider in Dorchester, there are some drawbacks. With half the door over the wheelwell, getting in can be a tight squeeze, especially in a wedding dress. "The brides have to slide in there, and sometimes their dress is going to hit the door and get dirty," he says.

Be sure to ask for the exact limo you want to rent. If you don't, you could end up riding in an older model of what you thought you were getting, says Gioiosa. AA Allstars uses only new white limousines no more than a couple years old, he says.

Another classic option is the Rolls-Royce elegant, streamlined and screaming "Just Married." But what most brides don't realize, until it's too late, is that these sleek autos can be a tight fit, which can wreak havoc on a puffy gown and long train. A better option is a Rolls-Royce limousine, says Gioiosa, since the extra seat provides ample space for your dress. Plus, he says, it has a bigger door and double air-conditioning set-ups so if one breaks down, you won't be sweating it out. (Bonus: Gioiosa says he'll set up a bar in the backseat for those who want to do a little pre-party celebrating.)

If you're going for romance, think about hiring a hansom cab, a horse-drawn carriage for passengers and a driver that was commonly seen on the streets about 100 years ago. Elegant Touch Carriage Company in Boston uses white carriages with convertible tops that can be decorated with white bows and flowers they even have nonalcoholic "champagne" soda for a mobile toast. The carriages can go many places in Boston, save for the highways, and can be transported anywhere in the state for a fee. The only drawback is that they move so slowly, traveling about three miles per hour.

"In Boston, usually the brides take the horse and carriage from the hotel to the ceremony and then to the reception," says Kathy Foster, co-owner of Elegant Touch. "But outside Boston, the receptions are usually a lot further away, so they usually just go from the house to the church and then maybe from the church to a certain spot for pictures."

But maybe you don't want to be chauffeured around. "A lot of my clients like to rent very high-end automobiles, and they drive them themselves," says Pamela Chase, owner of Sophisticated Brides in West Roxbury. Fantasy Auto rents such stylish rides as Porsches, Corvettes and Hummer H2s. And if you're more the leather-and-lace type, why not go hog-wild and rent a motorcycle? It would certainly make a statement, though the logistics of getting on one in a formal gown may take some practice. Otherwise, though, "It's just like any other rental," says Shezhad Khan, administrator at American Road Collection in Everett and Oak Bluffs, which rents every stripe of Harley.

If you want to take pictures along the way or have them done immediately before the reception, consider renting a limo coach for the whole wedding party. "Limo coaches are so plush, you walk in, there's wraparound black leather seating, walls and ceiling marble floors, walk-up

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runway lights, fiber-optic ceiling lights and three bars set up," says Gioiosa, whose company also supplies 18- to 32-passenger coaches. "We stock it with champagne, water, beer, it's all in a cooler and it's all on me," he says as are the red roses and red carpet for when you walk out.

Of course, your moving issues may not stop with just you two. "A lot of brides are concerned that Boston's just not a friendly driving town, especially with the Big Dig," says Chase. And even outside of Boston, brides are planning their guests' transportation. "They're almost feeling obligated to do something for the majority of their guests, because they don't really have any alternatives to renting a car," says Alexis Eliopoulos O'Mara, owner of Unique Weddings by Alexis in Boston.

Chartering a bus is one time-tested route, and while you can rent a big honking diesel, a sparkling white, 50-passenger coach from AA Allstars is a classy way to go.


Another festive alternative is the trolley. "We do a lot of trolleys for weddings," says Leslie Nagy, director of group sales of Old Town Trolley Tours in Boston even in the winter, thanks to enclosed windows and heating. Although Old Town's 31-passenger vehicles are green and orange, the company has a decorator who, for about \$75, can gussy up the rig with ribbons, bows and balloons in your color scheme.

A truly Boston-flavored option is to rent one of the duck boats from Boston Duck Tours to shuttle your guests about. The ducks can go anywhere within the vicinity of Boston including, of course, the water. Local couples even get married in them.

While arranging transportation for your guests is a thoughtful gesture, be forewarned that it can be a logistical nightmare. One of the challenges is making your guests aware of the option. "You put it in the invitation, but invariably my phone's ringing off the hook the day before or the day of from guests who say, Oh, I lost the paperwork," says Chase. Getting everyone on the bus is another nightmare someone's inevitably in the bathroom. "I would recommend to anybody who is adding that layer of complexity to get a planner," Chase says.

Running transportation in shifts when the party is almost over is a good idea, says Chase. "We usually have the band or DJ announce 15 minutes before the buses are leaving, and we usually have them go every hour on the hour," she says.

You'll have to have a solid timeline with the caterer, too. "You don't want to make the first announcement before coffee is served, because no one's going to leave," Chase says. "You want to make your first announcement when everything is sort of done and everyone's just hanging out and partying." Because missing the party is not an option. EW

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