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WEDDINGS & EVENTS

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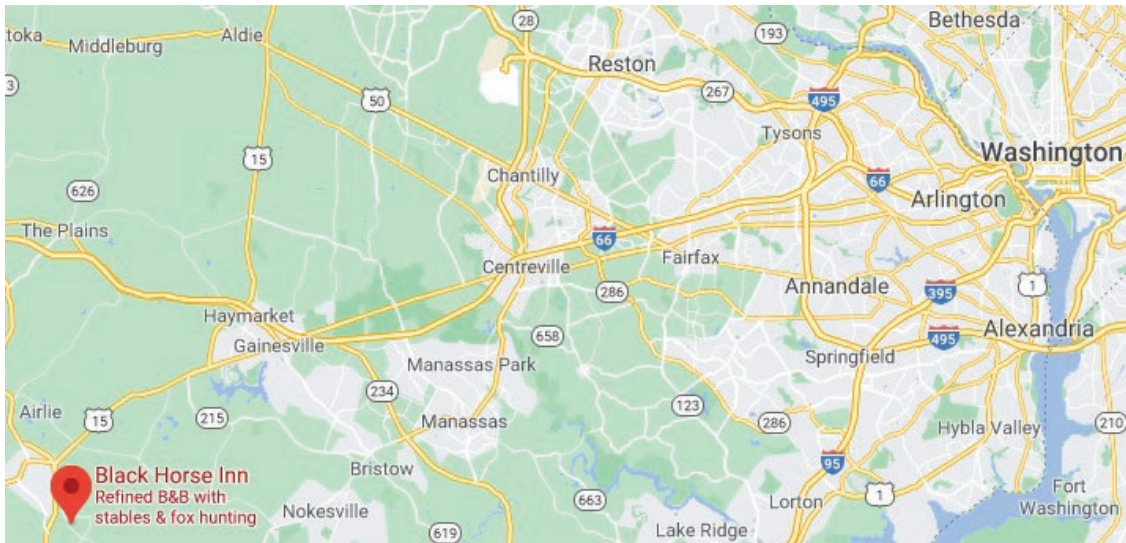
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Black Horse is a to-be-remodeled / built boutique hotel located in the Historic Hunt Country of Warrenton, VA. The updated construction will enable the resort to provide in-house catering, room service, and

top-notch amenities, offering guests a unique and luxurious travel experience that couples modern design with a classic Hunt Country persona.





**Predictions are saying huge demand on boutique hotels and bigger profit margins for weddings and events for later part of 2021 and 2022.**

## The New York Times

Feb. 19, 2021

### The Weddings Boom Is Coming

As vaccinations and hope spread across the United States, the race to schedule weddings is on.

“Everyone is really worried about putting a date on it and sending out a new save-the-date so their friends don’t snatch up the date and they can’t get married until 2023,” said Ms. Blum, the event planner. “Every time I make a call, ‘No, that’s booked.’ They’re trying to get people to do weddings on Tuesdays and Thursdays.”

It’s a relief for a huge industry that has suffered during the pandemic. “From a small-business perspective, it’s devastating,” said Ceci Johnson, the founder of Ceci New York, a design agency that specializes in stationery.

After all, weddings drive income for caterers, decorators, planners, florists, musicians, makeup artists, clothing designers, hair stylists, photographers, videographers, dance instructors, cleaners, limousine drivers and many other professionals.

Many planners expressed relief that the future won’t be filled with Zoom weddings and are hopeful that the vaccine will allow their industry to revive.

“If there’s a word I never want to hear again, it’s ‘pivoting,’” said Ms. Oren, the Los Angeles-based planner. “What I do is so tactile. I have zero aspirations to move what I do to the digital world. I think all people want is to gather and get sweaty on the dance floor.”

# INSIDER

## Weddings will be more expensive in 2021 and 2022, according to experts

Jan. 10, 2021

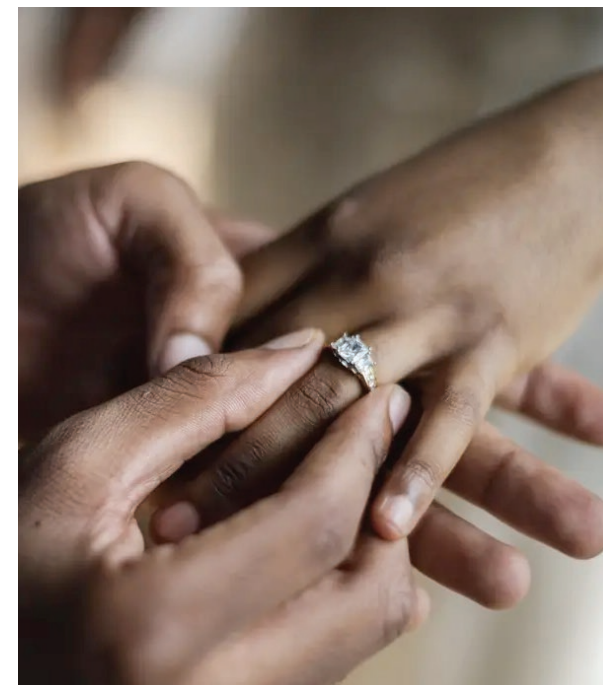
There are multiple reasons wedding costs might increase over the next two years, but the two main reasons are results of the coronavirus’ impact on the wedding industry.

Thousands of couples canceled their weddings amid the pandemic, rescheduling them for 2021 and 2022. Those cancellations left wedding vendors — like wedding planners, venues, florists, and caterers — with no sources of income.

“The difficult circumstances of the last twelve months may leave many business owners having to make the difficult, but necessary, decision to raise their prices,” she added.

At the same time, the high number of couples who rescheduled their weddings means there will be more weddings than ever in 2021 and 2022.

To meet the booming demand, vendors will need more staff to pull off the events, which could also lead them to



increase their fees, according to Juliana Mead, the vice president of B2B Marketing, The Knot Worldwide.

“Given that the 2021 and 2022 wedding seasons will be busier for most wedding professionals, it’s likely that they will raise prices to not only manage their calendars more efficiently but also ensure that they can continue to provide that exceptional experience for all couples,” she said.

And if you’re a couple that already had to pay to reschedule your wedding as a result of that pandemic, the news that weddings are becoming even more expensive might be concerning.

# Why Boutique Hotels Will Be Top of Mind for Event Pros in 2021

Feb. 18, 2021

Want to host your next meeting in a Victorian-era mansion in New Orleans? Or how about a corporate retreat in an art-filled farmhouse in Vermont, or a wedding in a citrus grove outside San Diego? If you answered “um, yes, please” to any of the above, you might be looking for a boutique hotel.

These smaller, personality-filled properties—which typically have 100 or fewer guest rooms—may historically have been overlooked in the event world in favor of amenity-rich chains with large ballrooms and flexible breakout rooms. But with reduced guest counts during the pandemic, boutique hotels are increasingly becoming a go-to option for small, safe and socially distant gatherings of all types.

Here are three reasons to consider a boutique property for your next event.

## 1. Safety during COVID-19

“Gathering in smaller, more controlled and more intimate sizes may provide the opportunity to control safety measures more than larger events,” explains Bobby Mikulas, one of the co-founders of Kinship Landing, a new 40-room hotel in Colorado Springs, Colo. With limited indoor space, for example, many boutique properties focus on offering standout outdoor space, widely considered a safer option during the pandemic. What’s more, smaller hotels are more likely to allow full buyouts; for example, the Washington School House—a rustic, 12-room getaway in Park City, Utah—is offering full property buyouts starting at \$7,000 per night during off-peak months.

Some smaller properties also feature standalone cottages complete with their own entrances, ensuring both a private—and safe—experience for every attendee. Southern California’s Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa, for example, offers 49 standalone “casitas,” each with a private entrance and its own HVAC system. The resort’s director of sales Mark Phillips adds, “With social distancing in the forefront of safety, our function space delivers a fresh, open-air feel with open doors and patios bringing natural lighting and fresh air elements into the space.”

## 2. Eclectic, inspiring meeting spaces and settings

Now more than ever, people need the motivation to leave their homes and attend your event—and boutique hotels may be the key. Many are set in unique, off-the-beaten-path locales, or are open to hosting small gatherings in unconventional spaces like greenhouses, restored barns or even (in the case of the 89-room Robey Hotel in Chicago) inside a historic bell tower.

“Opportunity to connect in inspiring environments provides subtle nudges toward openness, creativity and innovation,” points out Mikulas. “This is great for groups intending to discover fresh solutions and unique ideas, and foster authentic connections. When the corporate facade is taken away, people feel the freedom to be fully present, attentive and engaged.”

The locations can also lend themselves to some memorable and unique team-building options, like hiking paths through the grounds or personalized culinary experiences from on-site farms. “The in-between moments



become infused with dignity and passion when the built environment is attentive and curated for smaller groups, and boutiques at their best are designed with these types of groups in mind,” says Mikulas.

## 3. A more personalized experience

With fewer guests and groups to manage at once, smaller properties like Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa can often offer a more tailored experience than a large resort, notes Phillips. “This exclusivity on property gives the attendees the feel of privacy and personalization, versus being part of the masses with a larger property,” he says. “[For example,] we have the flexibility to customize menus or personalize each attendee’s ‘workspace’ during the entire program. ... All setups can be customized based upon the program’s needs, keeping the attention on the safety and welfare of all guests.”

Keep scrolling for a look at 18 standout boutique hotels across the United States and Canada to consider for your next small gathering.

## After a year of the pandemic, the wedding boom is coming

Feb. 20, 2021

An industry market report — which vividly showed the suffering finances of the wedding industry in 2020 — predicts that all will change, and there will be a significant increase in weddings revenue this year. That comes even as Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, suggested in December that weddings be pushed to June or July of 2021 at the earliest.

Couples are already booking their venues with frenzy. The Pavilion at Vida Bela, on a 74-acre farm in Conroe, Texas, generally hosts about 50 events a year. Already there are 42 weddings planned for 2021; about a dozen are set for 2022. "We're already booking into 2023," said Michele Amini, an owner.

Weddings have always been emotional, but adding personal boundaries around safety and health, confusing government guidelines and the finer points of air filtration systems to the mix has pushed families and wedding planners to the edge.

"Starting in April, we had a call every Monday with 20 of us," said Marcy Blum, who runs an event planning business in New York. "It was a lifesaver. It was like group therapy for party planners."

But it's been a few weeks since they've talked. Everyone's schedules are filling up again.

## Expected wave of I do's means wedding bliss for industry

With many couples forced to postpone or scale down their nuptial celebrations in 2020, some within the travel industry are predicting that pent-up demand will fuel a wedding boom in the latter part of 2021 and into 2022.



"After the vaccine news came out, we started to receive a lot of inquiries about events," said Chrissy Denihan, managing director of Denihan Hospitality. "People are still being extremely cautious, but they really want to plan social events and weddings. We think and hope we'll see a surge in that type of business in 2021."

Prospective brides and grooms contacting Denihan Hospitality's Benjamin hotel in New York have been somewhat evenly split between couples wanting a large wedding, who are willing to wait until prospective guests might feel more comfortable traveling, and "couples who are ready to

pivot and have a more intimate wedding," despite their desire for a big bash, Denihan said.

At the JW Marriott Anaheim Resort in California, wedding-related queries are also on the rise.

"Weddings are probably the one segment right now that keeps moving for me," said Maribel Denner, director of sales and marketing for the JW Marriott Anaheim Resort. "We've been doing tours for couples since May, with interest picking up through October and November."

"Demand for weddings for June to December 2021 and in 2022 is robust," confirmed Irene Robles, the Belmond El Encanto's catering sales manager. "[Couples] are okay with having to lower guest counts or move dates should they need to."

"People want to know what the future is going to look like, but

all we can do is take it day by day and come up with different plans based on what may or may not be allowed at that time," said Brittani Libring, senior sales manager for the Hilton San Diego Commercial Services Complex.

Meanwhile, for travel advisors specializing in destination weddings, business is also starting to bounce back.

After being forced to cancel seven destination weddings for 2020, each of which took over a year to plan, Jesse Cisneros, an advisor with Virtuoso-affiliated agency Ovation Travel Group, is slowly getting some weddings back on the roster for 2021, albeit with smaller guest counts.

"I've booked two [wedding] groups and one honeymoon for 2021," said Cisneros. "The light at the end of the tunnel is looking brighter."



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