

Weddings at Fanshawe Conservation Area – Frequently Asked Questions

Many questions will arise while you're planning your wedding. Here are some of the most common questions we're asked. If you can't find the answer you're looking for, please don't hesitate to ask. Contact us at 519-951-6181 x367 or kytem@thamesriver.on.ca

AVAILABILITY & CAPACITY

When are the pavilions available?

The pavilions are available during the Fanshawe CA operating season, which is generally from May 1st to the middle of October. We accept bookings up to one calendar year ahead of the current year.

How many people can the pavilions hold for a sit down dinner?

Watson Porter Pavilion – Maximum occupancy is 150 people (seating is at tables and chairs). Please note this figure is set by the Fire Marshall and cannot be exceeded at any time. Everyone must be counted including children, caterers, photographer, DJ, etc.

Lakeview Pavilion – Sixty people can be comfortably seated (seating is at picnic tables).

Can we hold our wedding on a Friday or Sunday?

You may book your wedding for any day of the week (upon availability), keeping in mind that we require a 2 day rental (set up on day one, wedding and clean up on day two).

RENTAL PACKAGE

What is included in the rental?

- 2 days access to the pavilion, from 10 am to 1 am each day, with the first day being used for set up and, if you wish, a rehearsal party
- Admission for you, your decorators, guests and caterers
- Tables & chairs (Watson Porter Pavilion) or picnic tables (Lakeview Pavilion)
- If available, the pavilion can also be rented for the day after your wedding for clean up, for an additional fee

Do we need event insurance?

Currently, we do not require insurance. However, we highly recommend that you obtain your own insurance to cover any unforeseen situations that may result in a lawsuit.

FOOD & BEVERAGES

Can I serve alcohol at my wedding?

Yes, as long as you follow the requirements of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario:

- You will need to obtain the correct Special Occasion Permit (SOP) from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission using the iAGCO online portal. For a private event, you must apply a minimum of 10 days in advance http://www.agco.on.ca/en/whatwedo/permit_special.aspx
- You must hire or designate a SmartServe-accredited server who will not be consuming alcohol during the event and who will be present as long as alcohol is available.
- Wine may be distributed to tables; all other alcohol must be served one drink at a time.
- The SOP and the SmartServe certificate must be displayed throughout your event, and copies of both documents must be provided to Conservation Area staff in advance.
- Please note: kegs are not permitted.

Can we serve or consume alcohol in areas other than inside the pavilion?

Please limit alcohol service and consumption to inside the building. Serving or consuming alcohol outside of the pavilion (including on the patio) is prohibited and will void the Special Occasion Permit.

Do you provide catering or require that we use a particular caterer?

We do not have on-site catering; you may use any caterer you wish. We DO require three weeks' notice of all your vendors to ensure that only authorized vendors are permitted access to your wedding.

Can we do our own catering or have a potluck/BBQ-style meal?

Yes, but please be aware that the kitchen areas at the Watson Porter Pavilion and at the Lakeview Pavilion are intended for serving previously prepared food – they are not suitable for cooking. You must provide all of your own serving utensils, dishes, linens, etc. You are permitted to bring in your own BBQ to use at either pavilion.

Can I hold my rehearsal dinner at the pavilion?

Yes! You can hold a rehearsal and/or dinner during your set up time on the day/evening before your wedding.

SET UP

What tables and chairs are provided?

Watson Porter Pavilion: Tables and chairs are available for up to 150 people:

- **Indoors:** 150 chairs for indoor use only; 20 round tables (60" diameter), 6 rectangular tables (6' long x 30" wide), 3 rectangular tables (8' long x 30" wide)
- **Outdoors:** 150 white, stackable, patio-style chairs can be used for an outdoor ceremony; picnic tables are available for additional outdoor seating
- Tables and chairs (except for the picnic tables) are stored in the pavilion storage room for you to set up as desired, and must be returned to the storage room after your wedding.
- **Rental tables and chairs are not permitted.**

Lakeview Pavilion:

- Picnic tables are available inside and out; we do not have other tables and chairs for this venue.
- If you move picnic tables from inside to use outdoors, you are responsible for moving them back inside at the end of the evening as part of your clean up.
- **Rental tables and chairs are not permitted.**

Is there space for a dance floor?

- **Watson Porter Pavilion** - A gathering of 100 or fewer can generally be set up with space left for a dance floor; larger parties may need to move or remove tables to make space for dancing.
- **Lakeview Pavilion** – Space inside is more limited and, depending on your numbers, you may need to move picnic tables after dinner to make room for a dance floor. The outside patio can easily be set up to accommodate a dance floor without moving tables around after dinner.
- Please designate people to move tables and chairs as needed, as staff assistance is not provided to move furniture during a wedding.

Are there electrical outlets outside the pavilion?

- **Watson Porter Pavilion** - There are no electrical outlets on or near the patio area but there is an outside outlet on the corner of the pavilion closest to the parking lot.
- **Lakeview Pavilion** - There is an outlet on the upper pergola and access to inside outlets.
- We recommend you use outdoor extension cords.

After we book, can we come back for another look to take measurements, etc.?

- If you need to check something out that does not require you to be let inside the pavilion, you can visit the outdoor space at any time during daylight hours.
- If you need to access the pavilion, please contact us to set up an appointment. Please note that staff may not always be available, depending on activities elsewhere in the conservation area. We appreciate your understanding!
- Be prepared to show your licence agreement to front gate staff for proof of a booking or else pay the admission fee to enter the conservation area.
- Vendors, friends and family members need to be accompanied by the bride or groom to view the premises unless prior special permission is arranged.

CANDLES, DECORATING, FIRES & MUSIC

Can I decorate with candles?

Yes, with the following restrictions:

Indoors:

- Candles must be in glass containers taller than the level of the flame (e.g., votive or hurricane holder) and/or placed in the hearth of the fireplace.
- Citronella candles may not be used indoors.

Outdoors:

- Only tealight candles may be used (citronella or regular).
- Candles must be in glass containers at least 3" taller than the level of the flame (e.g., votive holder or mason jar).
- Candles must not be left unattended; in such areas, we suggest using battery-operated "candles."

Are there any other restrictions on decorating?

Please consider the following when planning your decor:

- We do not provide staff assistance with decorating.
- All decorating must be done without damaging the buildings or natural surroundings – for instance, **no holes** may be made in indoor or outdoor structures including walls, posts, railings or trees. We suggest you tie, wire or tape decorations in a non-permanent manner.
- No existing conservation area trees, bushes or other plant matter may be cut down or removed; any property grooming will be conducted by UTRCA staff only.
- **Decorations must not be placed higher than the top of the window frames.**
- Decorations must not block or impede access to emergency lights, fire extinguishers and exits, and must not be hung from light fixtures, screens or other components that may become heated.
- Please provide your own ladders (maximum 10 ft) for decorating.

The following restrictions help to prevent accidentally introducing invasive insects, diseases or plants into our conservation area. If you are uncertain, please call us *before* acquiring the items.

- Fresh plants/flowers/wood may be used for decorating indoors and for bouquets, as long as they are transported directly into and out of the building and not disposed of on the property.

- **Outdoor decorations may NOT include the following:**
 - Fresh or untreated wood that may carry insects (e.g. firewood, cut logs),
 - Seeds, plants, grasses or trees that are not native to the conservation area (e.g., Norway maple branches or keys, purple loosestrife flowers, ornamental grasses, hay or straw bales).

Can we use confetti?

Confetti is not allowed in the conservation area. Alternatively, some varieties of fresh or dried flower petals may be permitted with advance permission. No seeds, grains, paper or other matter may be used.

Can we use the fireplaces in the Watson Porter Pavilion?

No, wood burning fires are not allowed in the fireplaces. Candles may be placed in the fireplaces (see above).

Can we have an outdoor fire in the evening?

No, fires are not allowed in the day use area of the conservation area except for the use of BBQs for the purpose of cooking.

Can we have fireworks?

No, fireworks are not permitted on the property. Similarly, floating paper lanterns and tiki-torches are not permitted as they pose a fire risk.

Can we have music in the pavilion?

The pavilions are not equipped with sound systems but you may provide your own music and equipment, as long as you keep the volume at a reasonable level. Live music is permitted with consideration of noise levels. Music is also permitted outside of the pavilions as long as you're being respectful of other people who may be enjoying the conservation area. At any time, we reserve the right to ask you to turn the music down, move inside the pavilion, or stop the music if we feel it is creating a disturbance for other patrons.

CLEANING

How clean can I expect the facilities to be?

The pavilion will be cleaned prior to your event, including floors, washrooms and kitchen area. The washrooms will be restocked with toilet paper and extra garbage bags will be left in the kitchen. The outdoor area is cleaned on an as-needed basis. Our natural spaces should be considered "as is" – Fanshawe Conservation Area is first and foremost a nature conservation area, so you can anticipate the usual array of bugs, spider webs and dirt of varying kinds. Our staff will cut the grass surrounding the pavilion prior to your wedding; we do not permit you to cut additional areas on your own.

Do I need to clean the venue after my event?

The venue should be left in as-received condition; however, you are not required to sweep or mop. If the kitchen is used it should be wiped down/tidied and garbage/recycling bagged and placed near the door. Tables and chairs must be returned to their designated storage or as they were found. All decorations, personal belongings and rental items must be removed from the indoor and outdoor spaces by the end of the clean-up time. The clean-up time begins immediately after the wedding unless you have rented the pavilion the next day for clean-up. If necessary, costs to clean heavy soil, remove any of your decorations/belongings or repair damage caused during your wedding will be retained from your security/cleaning deposit.

TEMPERATURE & LIGHTING

Is the pavilion equipped with heating /air conditioning and dimmer switches?

The pavilions are not heated or air conditioned. The Watson Porter Pavilion is equipped with ceiling fans, and doors on both sides may be opened for cross-ventilation. The pavilion has overhead fluorescent lighting and is not on dimmers. The Lakeview Pavilion has large screened windows on one side of the building and doors on the other that may allow for some cross ventilation. Fans or space heaters are permitted at both pavilions.

SMOKING

Is smoking permitted at the pavilions?

The entire conservation area is “smoke free” except in designated areas located around the park. Please advise your guests on the appropriate locations to butt out!

TRANSPORTATION & ACCOMMODATIONS

Do I have to pay for parking fees for my guests?

Admission fees to the conservation area for the duration of your wedding are included with your venue rental.

Do taxis service the area?

Yes, several local taxi companies service the area, as well as Designated Driving Services. We recommend that you provide your guests with information for these services in advance of your wedding day and encourage them to use them.

Can my guests leave their vehicles overnight?

We prefer that vehicles are not left overnight on the property; however, if necessary we permit it at the risk of the vehicle owner. The UTRCA will not be held responsible for any theft or damage done to a vehicle while parked on the property. Vehicles remaining overnight must be left outside of the pavilion parking lot. Vehicle owners wishing to do this must provide their contact information and licence plate number to UTRCA staff before departing the property, as unauthorized overnight parking is not permitted and tickets may be issued.

Are there hotels in the area?

There are a number of hotels within a 10-20 minute drive.

Is camping at Fanshawe Conservation Area an option?

Yes, the campground is conveniently located on the property. Camping reservations can be made up to 6 months in advance of the wedding, starting in February each year. Reservations are not always required but are recommended especially on long weekends and for electric sites on any weekend during the busy summer months. Quiet hours apply to all campers in the campground. Camping is not permitted in the day use area at any time.

PHOTOS

Are there restrictions on where we can take photos on the day of our wedding?

Only the booked areas are reserved for your exclusive use; however, you may take photos in any part of the day use area that is not booked by another group. Please be aware of natural hazards and take precautions, especially around water. A separate booking with staff at the Fanshawe Pioneer Village is required to take photos inside the village.

Can we use the conservation area for our engagement photos?

Fanshawe Conservation Area is open to the public from dawn to dusk every day of the week in our operating season. You are welcome to visit the conservation area with your photographer at any time, and simply pay the per vehicle day rate at the gatehouse. Please keep in mind that the campground is off limits for photos and other areas of the park may be restricted at our discretion, based on current use. A separate booking with staff at the Fanshawe Pioneer Village is required to take photos inside the village.

Can we use your canoes for photos?

You may rent a canoe from the campground registration office upon availability on a first come, first served basis, keeping in mind that all rules and regulations will apply. You may also bring your own non- motorized watercraft for photos. Use is at your own risk. PFDs must be present in the boat.

PETS & OTHER ANIMALS

Can we bring our pets?

Pets are permitted at Fanshawe CA, providing they are on leash at all times and cleaned up after. You must be in control of your pet at all times.

Can we use horses to arrive/depart?

No, horses are not permitted in the Conservation Area.

OTHER PARK USERS

Will the conservation area be open to the public or other renters during our wedding?

The pavilions are not open to the public but the conservation area property is open to the public for recreational use from dawn to dusk. The day use area is quite large and people generally respect the wedding groups and keep away from the pavilion areas. You can certainly contact the staff at the front gate if you encounter any problems and a staff member will come by and take care of the situation.

Areas of the property not adjacent to those which you have booked may be booked by other groups for concurrent times.

MORE QUESTIONS?

Please don't hesitate to ask! Contact us at 519-951-6181 x367 or kyltem@thamesriver.on.ca