

Diary of a bride

Cosmopolitan Bride's deputy editor, Nicole Robinson, has plenty of wedding know-how ... so how did she organise hers? Read on



“My life changed forever one gorgeous day while sitting under a beautiful Jacaranda tree in Sydney’s Botanical Gardens. One minute Daniel and I were admiring the harbour and raving about the delicious lunch we’d just had to celebrate our seven-year anniversary, the next he’s down on bended knee fighting back tears.

Taking inspiration from a scene out of *Love, Actually*, Daniel pulled out a stack of cardboard signs he’d had printed, and held them up for me to read. His beautiful words say how much he loves me and cherishes the life we have together before the final card is presented with those four heart-stopping words, ‘Will you marry me?’

My acceptance is punctuated with giggling – I can’t believe this is happening! Next, a beautiful diamond ring is being slipped on my finger and my tears of joy begin – this feels like a dream.

Far from the seven-year itch – we’re about to do the seven-year hitch, and we can’t wait!

12 months to go

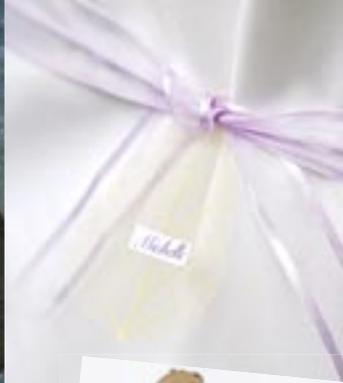
I’m in serious bridal denial. We’ve been engaged for three months and haven’t booked a thing yet. My job as deputy editor of this magazine means I’m constantly surrounded by pictures of gorgeous weddings – and I think I’ve been paralysed by ►



"My bridesmaids were so great, they made planning the wedding a breeze."



Above: Name tags on skeleton leaves were tied to the back of the chairs with ribbon. Right: Our illustrated 'slide' invitations.



Above: Wylie's Baths is so naturally beautiful we had our photos there. Left: We had a Polaroid guest book.



Left: I bought my Vera Wang shoes on eBay for a fraction of the price. Below: The Three Waiters got the party started.



We decide to meet the caterers and visit when the area is set up for a wedding.

10 months to go

We've booked our venue! We loved Wylie's; it's exactly what we want – rustic but naturally beautiful – and we can have the ceremony on the northern deck that overlooks Coogee Beach, where we first met many years ago. We sample the meals and decide on a roving entrée, so our guests can mingle, followed by mains of salmon and roast lamb and then wedding cake for dessert.

9 months to go

After a couple of attempts I finally find a celebrant who's free. I was under the misguided assumption that I wouldn't have to book too far in advance, as our wedding will take place on a Friday night. Our celebrant, Pauline Fawkner, is recommended to me and after meeting her I know everything has turned out for the best – she's such a professional, with a lovely, calm demeanour, and we click instantly. Lesson learnt, I stop procrastinating and start booking things with greater urgency – within a week I've locked in a make-up artist, photographer, videographer and cake maker – all of whom have been used by friends at their weddings – I loved what they did and made a mental note to keep them in mind for our big day.

7 months to go

When it comes to my flowers and decorations I book Sophie Henson of Chic Events. We've featured her in *Cosmopolitan Bride* and I love her work. Armed with pictures of bouquets, I meet with Sophie and we discuss the wedding's look. We decide on phalaenopsis orchids for my bouquet and a mix of lisianthus and roses for my bridesmaids' flowers. I ask for the reception flowers and decorations to be white, as the view of the ocean from the marquee is so beautiful I don't

too much choice. Finally, Daniel and I discuss what we want for the day and agree we'd love a relaxed celebration with few formalities. We decide on an outdoor civil ceremony followed by the reception in the same location. Sorted. We make a list of venues that fit the bill and start our search.

11 months to go

None of the venues we've seen are exactly right for us, so with a hint of mild panic I suggest Wylie's Baths – a beautiful rock pool at Coogee Beach where we swim together during summer. It's a superb spot and I've been told that it looks divine when set up for a function.



want the room to overpower it. Down the long tables, vases of white lisianthus will be alternated with lace-wrapped vases that will each have a tea-light candle inside. I'm getting so excited now that I feel like a child waiting for Santa Claus!

6 months to go

I've fallen in love with a wedding dress by English designer Jenny Packham, but I book appointments with about four other designers to try on a variety of styles before making my decision. A day of wedding dress shopping with my mum and bridesmaids is a hoot. In between lots of laughs and coffee breaks I try on some divine gowns and there's a couple I could choose, but when I finally slip on my Jenny Packham dress at the end of the day I know it's the one for me. I look in the mirror and instantly feel like a bride. My mum beams and tells me, 'I think we've found it' and my bridesmaid Janaya bursts into tears. There's no contest – this is 'The One'.

“It's been the most joyous day and the best start to 'happily ever after' that we ever could have hoped for”

5 months to go

I have an idea of the kind of bridesmaids dresses I'd love for my three best friends – Janaya, Susan and Julie – and, luckily, they agree. I have my heart set on something knee-length, floaty and in a soft colour, such as lilac. We spend a whole Saturday shopping (with plenty of coffee and cake breaks) and the girls try on some beautiful dresses, but nothing exactly fits the brief. Then, just days later, I walk into a dress shop during my lunch hour and hanging on the rack is almost an exact replica of what I had in mind! I call the girls and we meet up to try on the dress – they all love it. Too easy. We order them and tick another 'to do' off the list. Phew!

4 months to go

It's time to concentrate on the invitations and I know exactly what I want. Taking inspiration from one shown to me by a work colleague – I commission an illustration of Daniel, me and our little dog, Teddy. It turns out even better than I could have hoped for. Then the invitation is designed so that the picture of me slides towards the picture of Daniel to make us kiss. I absolutely love the finished product and once they're sent out the feedback is amazing – nearly every guest phones or emails within a few days of receiving them to say how much they love it. This wedding business is so much fun!

3 months to go

It's all about accessories this month – I order my veil online for a bargain and score my Vera Wang shoes on eBay. I order the bridesmaids' earrings and choose the groomsmen's ties – they're champagne coloured with lilac embroidered flowers, which will complement the girls' dresses perfectly. Everything's coming together without a hitch.

2 months to go

All the major jobs are out of the way and now most of my lunch hours are spent running around and taking care of the little things – picking up rings, suits and organising the gift registry. A highlight is meeting up with our cake maker, Bill, for taste-testing. Bill makes the most delicious cakes and as it will double as our dessert we want it to be good. We decide on two tiers of four layers –

chocolate fudge with flourless orange and almond cake on the top layer and coconut cake with lime cheesecake on the bottom.

1 month to go

I'm lost in a haze of waxing, spray tanning, manicures, pedicures and massages. I release the guilt and enjoy myself, as I know there will never be another time when I'll be so pampered. There's also lots of last-minute work to do, so I need all the relaxation I can get.

The day

After a week of beautiful sunshine I wake up to ... rain. I text a friend and tell her I'm worried and she texts straight back saying, 'Today you're marrying

the love of your life, it doesn't matter what the weather's like!' How true! The day flies, the rain stops (thank goodness!) and it's show time.

As *Love Me Tender* by Norah Jones starts up my bridesmaids begin to walk down the aisle and I feel amazingly calm and serene. Next, it's Dad's and my turn, and as I walk towards my husband-to-be, I look up at his smiling face and the most overwhelming wave of emotion engulfs me; suddenly I can't hold back the tears. Everything else is a blur and I just can't wait to reach him.

The ceremony is so sweet and meaningful to us and the night flies by in a whirlwind of good friends, food, wine and Daniel's present to me – a surprise performance by The Three Waiters that brings the house down. Finally it's time for our first dance as husband and wife – we do the cha-cha to Michael Buble's *Sway* before everyone joins us to dance the night away under the stars. Our big day is coming to an end and it's been the most joyous evening and the best start to 'happily ever after' that we ever could have hoped for.” **COSMO**

NICOLE'S DREAM TEAM

PHOTOGRAPHY Stuart Leal at Dekker Studio (www.stuartleal.com.au). **VENUE** Wylie's Baths (02 9310 4735). **CELEBRANT** Pauline Fawkner (www.paulinefawkner.com.au). **CAKE** Sweet Connoisseur (www.sweetconnoisseur.com.au). **FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS** Chic Events (0411 679 399). **INVITATIONS** Seraphim (0411 069 917). **BRIDE'S DRESS** Jenny Packham, from Helen Rodrigues (www.helenrodrigues.com.au). **VEIL** (www.weddingveils.com.au). **SHOES** Vera Wang (www.ebay.com). **BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES** Chic Collections (02 9232 2082). **GROOM'S SUIT** Skin Deep (www.skindeep.com.au). **HAIR** Roz Khoury (9361 3615). **MAKE-UP** Simone (0402 095 118).

"I was so busy on the night, I only ate the cake. Luckily it was delicious!"

