



## 8 Tips for a Seamless Outdoor Event



There is no greater venue than the great outdoors. As we approach summer and regular forecasts of sunshine and blue skies, event planners can look forward to working outside of the box – literally – to design an unforgettable event for their clients and guests. Regardless of how ideal the setting is in theory, outdoor events can be challenging for even veteran planners due to the number of unpredictable factors involved. Elaine Macy, Senior Vice President of Group Sales for Preferred Hotels & Resorts, shares her top eight tips to help planners better navigate the obstacles and opportunities that come when planning outdoor events any time of year:

**1 Avoid the Last Minute Rush:** Be sure you are able to access the venue as early as possible to allow for extra time to complete A/V checks and set up. Every outdoor space comes with its own set of unexpected issues!

**2. Where's the restroom?** Sounds obvious, but this key point can often be overlooked. Make sure there are enough restrooms for your event size and ones in close proximity.

**3. Trust Mother Nature:** Set a late weather call time. Weather is the number one factor in outdoor events that planners cannot guarantee to their clients, but I have seen so many events where the weather cleared up right AFTER we moved everything indoors. Wait as long as possible to make that call.

**4. It's All in the Details:** Just because the event is outdoors does not mean attention to fine details should be forgotten. Items such as dining utensils and glasses should be carefully considered, as many outdoor venues will only offer plastic.



**5. Power House:** Power has become a major expense for planners to take into consideration. Additional costs can range from a generator rental to full lighting and power installation. Beach destinations especially are known for blackouts and wattage issues. I have had events where we had to wire and cover a generator from a long distance due to the noise level. When planning tropical destination events, be prepared for food and lighting generators to be large and cumbersome, so you have plenty of time to figure out a space layout that minimizes its appearance and sound.

**6. Chef Knows Best:** Always ask the catering team what dishes and serving styles have worked the best in the past and take their advice! When it comes to prepping and serving food outdoors, trust their expertise and go with what they are the most comfortable with. Be sure to communicate your main goal and vision with the catering team and get their advice on how that can be best achieved.

**7. Center of Attention:** Outdoor spaces do not need as much décor, so take the time to get creative with your table centerpieces to add a memorable touch! For example, at a beach party, I have done a box topped with a big bow at the center of each table, then at the end of the dinner as the band started to play, guests opened the box to find fun accessories like glasses, feather boas, wigs, and silly string!

**8. Set the Mood:** If your event is in the evening, be sure to do a site check during those same hours to get a better idea of creative lighting, table coverings, and other elements you can add to the event to create the most memorable atmosphere. This is especially important if your attendees were in the same space, or in a nearby indoor space, during the day. Having the venue transform with the different phases of the event keeps guests engaged. Some fun examples I have seen done include glow-in-the-dark ice cubes or lighted glasses or digital imagery and artwork.



*Elaine Macy is Senior Vice President of Group Sales for Preferred Hotels & Resorts, responsible for overseeing the company's Group Sales division, handling various events around the world and managing a global team of group sales professionals. She joined the company in 2004. [Read more about Elaine.](#)*