The Ultimate Marquee Hire Guide
Why Choose a Marquee in the First Place?

There are many advantages to holding your event in a marquee. They vary massively in size, ranging from canopies that are ideal for small intimate gatherings, to giant structures that can accommodate 1000’s of people.

Marquees are perfect for a huge variety of events and can help you accommodate the unpredictability of the weather in the UK. There is a range of shapes, designs and styles to suit all budgets, and this guide will help you work out the best choice for you.

Selecting the Perfect Venue

If you or your family and friends have a garden, a field or any other piece of easily accessible land – you can probably have a marquee on it!

If you don’t, there are numerous venues around the UK that let out their grounds for marquees, these can be easily found by searching on the internet and can be anything from Castles to Caravan Parks.

Most Marquee Companies will be able to recommend something in your area.
The ground does not need to be like a putting green, or even be grass! Most marquee flooring systems will flatten out pot holes and bumps and create a good flat surface. The important thing is that the site is relatively flat as flooring will follow the general slope of a site, although some levelling is possible.

If you have a specific site in mind that is very sloped, a suspended flooring system or scaffold set up can be used, but this tends to increase costs.

Check that your chosen site is free from low overhead cables, power lines and underground pipes or power cables – many marquee companies will have equipment to check this for you.

Penetrable ground is much simpler for securing the marquee, but if the site is concrete or tarmac, water weights and other fixing systems can be provided. It is also important that the site itself has good access allowing vehicles as close to the marquee location as possible.

Difficult access or a long carry of gear onto a site may result in increased costs. If in doubt, a site visit or a telephone discussion will resolve any doubt – most marquee companies do a free site visit (more details later in this guide).
Running a marquee business in the UK means having a large amount of adaptability within your equipment to accommodate everything the weather can throw at you – normally in the space of one day!

The flexibility of the modern frame or traditional style marquees ensures that regardless of the weather, your event will go ahead as planned.

For beautiful sunny days, most frame systems have easily opened side panels to allow a cool breeze and make your event seamlessly take place ‘outside’. For colder dates, efficient heating systems work in such a way that your guests will never notice if it’s windy or rainy outside.

Awnings and walkways will generally be available to ensure the best possible access from driveways and access points without getting wet or having to walk on unsuitable ground.

High heels need never get muddy and there should be no need to keep jackets close by!
There are three main categories of marquee for hire:

**Frame/Clearspan**

Normally an aluminium framework with PVC covering, they can be all sorts of shapes and sizes, but you may not see any centre poles or guy ropes.

**Traditional Pole**

Consists of canvas, or more recently PVC, under tension by means of centre poles, side poles and guy ropes, which are attached to ground stakes, which can be hammered into soft surfaces only. Traditional Pole marquees are quite distinctive to look at, but much less practical and versatile than Frame marquees.

**Alternative Frames**

Include Chinese Hats (or pagoda style – fixed size squares with a pointed peak), Pavilion (a frame tent with peaks along the roof) Kata (pronounced korta – looks like a cross between a tent and a tepee, may also be described as ‘lavvu’ or ‘goathi’) Tepees and Bedouin.
Choosing a Date

If you have a very specific date in mind, it's best to get booked as early as possible, especially if you are after a popular weekend date in the high season from May to August. However, if you do want something at short notice, it's worth phoning to ask about last minute availability.

Once you have the all important date confirmed with your chosen company, you can look at refining the details and make any adjustments to layout, size, colours, etc. as the date for your event draws nearer.

Most Marquee Companies will accommodate a degree of variation after booking as long as the size of the marquee does not change drastically.

Making an Enquiry

Get in touch with your preferred Marquee Company and ask for:

- availability on your chosen date
- advice on specific equipment or a site visit
- a quote

This can be done using online enquiry forms, email enquiry or by picking up the telephone.
What should your Quote Include?

It is important to get any quotes itemised so that you can compare like for like. Marquee Companies can vary in what they include.

Basic quote prices can be worked out from the number of guests you are expecting and the location of the event. This allows for a marquee size to be calculated and any transportation costs to be added.

Quotes are normally given subject to a site visit. Further costs may be incurred if there are access issues or the site is very uneven.

Items that are normally part of the quote include:
- The Marquee
- Flooring
- Lining Walls
- Lighting
- Doors and Awnings
- Furniture
- Heating
- Catering Tent
- Loos
- Generators and Power distribution
- Transport
- Insurance/damage waiver
Most Marquee Companies will offer choices when it comes to colours of carpets, types of dance floors, lighting options, chair frames and seat pads, table sizes, colour of lining walls – however you imagine your event, the Marquee Company will do their best to make it a reality!

Quotations will be tailored to your specific requirements – if you already have access to toilets, power, or the catering is being done in another building, for example, prices will be adjusted accordingly.

Something to consider when comparing prices is that you will often get what you pay for. If a price seems particularly cheap or expensive, there is normally a good reason for it – Marquee Companies cover a wide range of events and often their equipment is best suited for the bulk of their business, which might be Farmers Markets or it might be Luxury Weddings.

Most Marquee Companies will be happy for you to come out and see their equipment set up for another event – this is a great way to see what you are getting and will allow you to picture the scale and quality of the equipment.

It is often the little details that make an event run smoothly and many Marquee Companies will have a range of accessories that you may need such as:

- Board & Easel for table plans
- Coat Rails and Hangars
- Stages for bands
- Hoses (for water supply to kitchens)
- PA Systems for speeches
- Outdoor Furniture
- Guest Umbrellas
- Buckets and sand for cigarette butts

A good Marquee Company will take care of the details so you can enjoy planning your event.
Once you have considered the quote, you may want to organise a site visit.

A Marquee Company representative will come out to the venue and look over the site free of charge. This allows them to build a clearer picture of what you are looking for, to advise on any issues and discuss the options available in more detail.

Alternatively, you may like a site visit prior to quotation if you are not sure of the capacity of your site, or if you would like to talk through the various options face to face.

Site visits also allow for a more detailed quote and may mean adjustments to any previously issued prices.

If you are using a venue which is already familiar to the Marquee Company then it might be the case that a site visit is not necessary.

However, you may still request one if you think it would prove useful to help you get a clearer understanding of things.
Once you are happy and have decided you would like to go ahead and book, it is normal for a deposit of between 10-25% to be requested, along with your signature on a form agreeing to terms and conditions to confirm the booking.

It is important to read over the terms and conditions of hire as they vary. They should be available on the Marquee Company website or with the quotation. If in doubt, ask for a copy to be sent.

Once you have confirmed the booking and your deposit has been received, consider the date secured. Now you can begin to discuss and finalise the detail. Typically, your Marquee Company will keep in contact via telephone or email regarding updates to numbers, colour schemes, etc.

Depending on the scale of the event, further meetings on site or at a mutually convenient location may be needed, normally free of charge.

Frequently the Marquee Company and your event Caterers will need to be in contact behind the scenes making sure everything is organised and nothing gets missed. It is important that everyone knows who is responsible for what!
When your marquee will need to be set up will ultimately depend on what suits you. However, the Marquee Company will need to take into account the size of your marquee, the weather forecast, site location and their other bookings.

It is best to allow for some spare time to avoid last minute panics. Ideally, if the event is on a Saturday, the bulk of the marquee and set up should be complete by the Thursday evening to allow access on the Friday for caterers, florists, party planners, etc.

The marquee team may well still be on site finishing off, but they won’t hold anyone else up. Most Marquee Companies will, however, work to your timetable should access to the venue be limited or difficult.

It is now that choosing an experienced Marquee provider proves its value as the correct number of tables and chairs turn up on time, along with the right size linen, etc., and your perfect Marquee venue starts to take shape...
Its finally here, everything is set up, the guests are due and your special day is ready to begin.

Normally at this stage all the advance planning means that the scene is set and things will run smoothly. Generally everything will have been tested well before the event, but if required, most Marquee Companies can have a representative on site during your event to keep an eye on things, adjust heating or lighting, operate the PA System, re-arrange furniture and make sure there are no hitches.

Depending on the size and complexity of your event, this may incur an additional charge.

However, there will always be someone on the end of the telephone and it is important to get the number of the duty representative for the Marquee Company on your big day.

Give this number to someone responsible at the event, such as the caterer, toastmaster, groundsman, etc., so that in the event of an issue, they can contact the Marquee Company on your behalf, leaving you free to enjoy the time with your guests.

Issues very seldom happen, but when they do the majority of them are sorted by a quick phone call.
Dismantling your marquee is a much faster process than assembly and takes about half the time or less.

It is normal to agree beforehand the best time for the Marquee Company to return to site, but this is most often within one to three days after the event.

Most companies will have details in their terms and conditions regarding having the marquee cleared and ready to be dismantled and uplifted.

The Marquee crew is normally the last to leave the site and will therefore endeavour to leave it as they found it. Removal of bags of rubbish, boxes, empty bottles, etc., is normally the responsibility of the hirer.

A frequently asked question relates to damage to lawns – grass is very resilient and, if the marquee has not been on the site for too long and the weather not too inclement, it will normally spring back into shape and return to its normal colour within a few days.
Payment

When to make payments is normally stated in the Terms and Conditions. It would be usual to see the total split into three stages:

- Deposit – payable on booking.
- Part Payment – payable around 30 days prior to the event.
- Final Payment – payable during the week of the event.

Security

The responsibility of the security of the marquees and equipment falls to the hirer. If the venue is one where the marquee may be at risk, it is important to discuss the options with the Marquee Company.

They may be able to provide security for you at an additional cost, or you may wish to organise your own (but be aware of any legislation that may apply to this in your local area).
If you are holding your event in private grounds, there is no need for any permission unless you are having a pay bar or a civil wedding ceremony.

In both these cases, permission will need to be obtained from your local authority.

Generally if you are employing a Bar Company to provide a “pay bar”, they will obtain the correct licence.

The Bar provider and the Marquee Company will need to liaise regarding layout plans and various certificates that will need to be submitted for approval.

If you are applying to have a civil ceremony, you will be asked for similar documentation.

This is normally all part of the comprehensive service provided by a Marquee Company and should be fairly straightforward to organise when planning your event.
Hopefully this guide sheds some light on what Marquee Companies can offer and the huge variety of options that are available to you.

The aim for all good Marquee Companies is to leave nothing behind other than happy memories of an event that was an outstanding success and to allow you, the hirer, to enjoy the whole process as much as possible.

Whilst most Marquee Companies provide everything outlined above on a very regular basis for hundreds of different clients – every event is unique and we know how important your big day or special event is to you.

This guide was produced by Finesse Marquees, a leading provider of Marquee Hire in Scotland.

If you are planning a Marquee Wedding, Civil Partnership, private party or corporate event, then we’d love to hear from you.

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