

FREE GUIDE

# 15 QUESTIONS

*To ask*

YOUR POTENTIAL

*Elopement* PHOTOGRAPHER

# Welcome

5 STAR RATED  
DESTINATION ELOPEMENT  
PHOTOGRAPHER & EDUCATOR



Hey you two — Rachel here ,  
If you're in the phase of  
"interviewing" your elopement  
photographer, first of all: yay!

You're already doing this right.

But here's the thing — your photographer is more than just a camera holder. Especially when you're eloping, they become your timeline keeper, logistics partner, location scout, legal guide, and memory maker.

So how do you know you're choosing the right person?

Ask the right questions and know what the answers really mean.

Let's break it down

xo, Rachel

# Elopement

## 15 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR POTENTIAL PHOTOGRAPHER

1. Are you legally ordained, or will I also need to hire an officiant?
2. Is planning (vendors, locations, logistics) included in your packages — or available as an add-on?
3. Are you FAA-certified to fly drones for aerial shots?
4. Do you offer adventure or excursion sessions — and are those included or extra?
5. Do you travel anywhere, or are there location limits?
6. How long after the elopement will we receive our gallery?
7. How are photos delivered — and are all images included or only edited ones?
8. Do you help with permits or location scouting?
9. What happens if weather changes or travel delays happen?
10. Can we bring family or friends, or are your packages for couples only?
11. Do you help us design a timeline for the day?
12. Are travel fees, accommodations, or permits already included in your pricing?
13. Do you also offer short highlight films or photo + video packages?
14. How far in advance should we book to secure travel dates?
15. What is your cancellation or refund policy?

### A NOTE FROM RACHEL

*I am legally ordained, include travel and planning with my packages and am also FAA certified. Some elopement photographers are \*not\* which means they are legally not able to fly drones or capture footage in certain areas. Also, some photographers may appear "cheaper" but in reality, they offer less which will mean you will have to outsource. That's why finding an all-in-one photographer is a great way to avoid stress and be able to relax knowing it's handled. I hope these questions are helpful!*

# Why it's important

## 1. ARE YOU LEGALLY ORDAINED OR DO I NEED TO HIRE AN OFFICIANT?

You want to ask your photographer this because it's important to know whether they can legally perform the ceremony or if you'll need to hire someone else (like a friend, local officiant, or courthouse clerk). If your photographer isn't ordained, that's an extra vendor to budget for — and another moving piece to manage. (Psst — I'm legally ordained, so I've got you covered if you want a one-stop experience.)

## 2. IS PLANNING (VENDORS, LOCATIONS, LOGISTICS) INCLUDED IN YOUR PACKAGE OR AVAILABLE AS AN ADD-ON?

This question matters because most photographers stop at the photos. But with elopements, the planning details can make or break your day. Asking this helps you know if your photographer can guide you through timeline design, location access, permit logistics, and vendor recs — or if you're on your own for that. *I include this in every package because I believe an elopement is about the entire experience; not just pretty pictures.*

## 3. ARE YOU FAA CERTIFIED TO FLY DRONES FOR AERIAL SHOTS?

If your photographer is offering drone or aerial photography, this is a must-ask. FAA certification isn't optional — it's required by law to fly drones commercially. Without it, your photographer could be subject to serious fines or even legal trouble (yep, jail time isn't off the table). Some state parks and luxury destinations also require special permits for drone use, and flying without permission can shut down your shoot entirely. You want someone who's certified and well-versed in local regulations — someone who knows how to get the shots you want without risking your experience. I'm FAA-certified, experienced, and always make sure we have the clearances we need before liftoff.

#### 4. DO YOU OFFER ADVENTURE OR EXCURSION SESSIONS (AND ARE THEY INCLUDED OR AVAILABLE AS AN ADD-ON?)

Excursion sessions are perfect for capturing the entire experience of your elopement – not just the vows, but the vibe. Whether it's hiking to a remote waterfall, chasing golden hour in the desert, or cruising the Amalfi Coast on a yacht, these sessions document the magic that surrounds your day. It's important to ask this because some photographers only cover the ceremony itself, with no flexibility for additional adventures.

You'll also want to clarify whether these are included in your package or offered as an add-on so you can plan your budget accordingly. My top-tier experience packages include this kind of session, but you can also add one on à la carte to fully customize your elopement story.

#### 5. DO YOU TRAVEL ANYWHERE, OR ARE THERE LOCATION LIMITS?

Not all elopement photographers travel – some only shoot in their home region and expect you to come to them. Others may offer limited destinations within the U.S., or charge steep add-on fees for anything international. That's why it's so important to ask up front: Do you travel? Where do you go? And what's included in your pricing?

With me, travel is already built into my packages – and yes, that includes international destinations. If your dream elopement includes something like a helicopter ride, remote island hop, or multi-leg bush plane journey, additional expenses may apply, but you'll know every detail before you book.

(Psst – my 90-page Dream Destination Guide can help you explore your options!

Knowing *where* you're going to elope will be helpful!)

*Take a peek*



## 6. HOW LONG AFTER THE ELOPEMENT WILL WE RECEIVE OUR GALLERY?

This is important to establish up front. Some photographers are focused on doing high volumes of elopements (2-4 *per months*) and turnaround time is 6-12 months for delivery. You'll probably also want to ask if your photographer offers a "sneak peek" gallery and if that's included or extra. *My clients receive their full gallery within 45-60 days with a sneak peek available usually within 14 days or upon request.*

## 7. HOW ARE IMAGES DELIVERED AND ARE ALL IMAGES INCLUDED OR ONLY EDITED ONES?

Always clarify what you're getting. Fully edited, high-res, downloadable images should be the standard. Wedding and elopement photographers do not offer access to raw images. You'll also want to confirm how the images will be delivered. Drive folder? Email? Client account? With me, you get a curated, password protected client gallery of all the best moments — beautifully edited, easy to access, and ready to share.

## 8. DO YOU HELP WITH PERMITS OR LOCATION SCOUTING?

This is one of the most overlooked — and most important — questions you can ask. Many elopement photographers don't offer any support when it comes to finding your ceremony location or navigating permit requirements. That means you're either left Googling on your own (hello, stress spiral) or needing to hire a separate planner just to figure out where and how you can legally get married.

Higher-end elopement photographers often act as both photographer and planner — guiding you through permit applications, location logistics, and experience design. But it's crucial to ask whether this service is included or an additional fee.

*With me, it's included in every package. I'll help you choose the perfect location, research any required permits, and walk you through exactly what you'll need to make your day legal, seamless, and unforgettable — no extra vendor, no guesswork, no surprises.*

## 9. WHAT HAPPENS IF WEATHER CHANGES OR TRAVEL DELAY HAPPENS

Elolements are full of beauty and unpredictability.

You want a photographer who stays flexible, calm, and solution-focused. Ask what their backup plans look like and find a good photographer that has flexibility and adaptability. Sometimes the most beautiful moments are the ones that are unexpected. You'll want to confirm their backup timelines, alternate spots, and a go-with-the-flow mindset

## 10. CAN WE BRING FRIENDS & FAMILY (OR FURRY FRIENDS) OR ARE YOUR PACKAGES FOR COUPLES ONLY?

This is an important question to ask early in the planning process — because not all photographers allow for guests, (or pets!) and your guest count may directly impact which locations are even possible. Some locations have strict capacity limits, while others require special permits for group gatherings.

You'll want to either define your guest count before booking a photographer or work with someone who's flexible, experienced, and open to helping you navigate both options. My elopement packages are designed to flex with your vision — whether it's just the two of you or your closest circle.

## 11. DO YOU HELP US DESIGN A TIMELINE FOR THE DAY?

Timeline planning is one of the most critical (and commonly skipped) parts of elopement prep. Many photographers don't offer this at all, or they'll hand you a generic Pinterest-style checklist and call it a day. But your timeline affects everything from lighting and location flow to emotional pacing and the ability to actually be present.

Before you book, ask if timeline support is included (or offered as an add-on) and if the support is custom or if they offer generic timelines and templates.

*I create fully personalized timelines based on your location, logistics, and desired experience. I also provide sample timelines inside my Elopement Guides, so you're never starting from scratch. Because I believe every timeline should be as unique as your love story.*

## 12. ARE YOUR TRAVEL FEES, ACCOMMODATIONS AND PERMITS ALREADY INCLUDED IN YOUR PACKAGE OR ARE THEY EXTRA?

No one likes surprise fees. Ask what's included up front so your budget stays clean. Some photographers charge à la carte for every mile, hotel, or permit, which can quickly inflate your budget. You deserve full transparency from the start. Always clarify what's included, what's considered extra, and how those costs are communicated.

*With me, most travel is already seamlessly built into your package.*

*For more complex destinations or custom experiences, any additional costs (like permits, remote access, or multi-leg travel) are discussed clearly before booking. No surprises. Just white-glove clarity, every step of the way.*

## 13. DO YOU ALSO OFFER SHORT HIGHLIGHT FILMS OR PHOTO + VIDEO PACKAGES?

Not all photographers offer video, and many don't have a trusted team in place, which can leave you scrambling to piece together your dream team. Always ask if video is available, who they work with, how it's delivered, and have clear expectations for turnaround time. You'll also want to confirm whether this is offered in-house or if they will be hiring a trusted vendor. And you'll want to confirm pricing, packages, and if you'll want aerial or drone video.

## 14. HOW FAR IN ADVANCE SHOULD WE BOOK TO SECURE TRAVEL DATES?

Important to ask as some photographers book out a year+ in advance and are unavailable to do spontaneous or short notice elopements. You'll also want to confirm package options and how much is required for the deposit to book.

## 15. WHAT IS YOUR CANCELLATION OR REFUND POLICY?

This is important to establish up front. You want to have clear expectations established on what is the time frame you need to cancel within, are there refunds or credits if you need to cancel or change plans? It's industry standard that often within a certain time frame deposits are non-refundable and if it's too close to the date the entire amount is due (no refunds) *Some photographers may offer a credit if you reschedule within a certain time frame but you need to ask about this.*



# *Next Steps* & RESOURCES

thank you for downloading this guide and I hope you found it helpful! It truly is my passion to help educate couples on the experience of elopement.

MORE FREE RESOURCES AT:

[RachelsuePhotography.com/blog](https://RachelsuePhotography.com/blog)

DOWNLOAD MY ULTIMATE ELOPEMENT BUNDLE

[RachelsuePhotography.com/bundle](https://RachelsuePhotography.com/bundle)

BOOK A CONSULTATION:

[RachelsuePhotography.com/inquire](https://RachelsuePhotography.com/inquire)



# *Elopement* CONSULTATION

If you're feeling like I might be the right photographer for your day, I'd love to meet you.

My complimentary consultation is a relaxed space where you can ask questions, share your vision, and see if we're a great fit.

*(no weird vibes or strings attached if we're not)*



I'll also send over my full Pricing + Services Guide so you can explore all the ways we can work together.

Let's dream up something *unforgettable*.

*Scan Me*



RACHELSUEPHOTOGRAPHY.COM/INQUIRE

ULTIMATE ELOPEMENT BUNDLE

*Where should we elope?*

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*What do I need to plan or budget?*

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*Do we need an officiant?*

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*What should I wear?*

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*What permits and things do I need?*

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For the answers to this and *so many more*. . .  
You'll want to be sure to download the  
Ultimate Elopement Guide Bundle!

[RACHELSUEPHOTOGRAPHY.COM/BUNDLE](https://RACHELSUEPHOTOGRAPHY.COM/BUNDLE)

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*Ultimate*

# ELOPEMENT GUIDE BUNDLE

If you're looking to elope and wondering all of the ins and outs and questions you didn't know to ask...

This Bundle is IT.

- Ultimate Elopement Guide (45+ pages)
- Elopement Workbook & Planner
- Dream Destination Guide

All together 150+ pages and the exact toolkit and system like having a \$5K elopement planner in your pocket!

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