

7 Steps for an Unforgettable Summer Event!



The jazz standard “Summertime” has it right: “Summertime, and the livin’ is easy.” There’s a reason we all look forward to summer – the pace is a little slower, the days are a little longer, and the sunshine is calling our names. It’s also the perfect time to plan and host an event: people’s schedules have more flexibility, you’re not competing with major holidays, and the rush to end the year on a high note hasn’t hit yet. However, one of summer’s best assets is also one of its downfalls: the weather.

Summer sunshine is great, but summer sweat? Not so much. Same goes for summer storms. Put simply, outdoor summer events are at the mercy of the weather – but there are ways around it, from hosting your event indoors to choosing select ways to incorporate outdoor activities. Summer events come with a unique set of challenges, but with these 7 steps, you can create an event they’ll remember season after season. Keep reading to see how you can plan the perfect summertime event.

1. Use the local culture to your advantage.

We’re located in New Orleans, where music and food is woven into the cultural fabric of our community. When thinking about a summer event, use local culture as an inspiration. Here, that could mean a crawfish boil for networking or a second line parade to welcome your guests. The floats at Mardi Gras world are reflective of local New Orleans culture while also adding visual interest and bold pops of color.





2. Give your event a theme.

People will be more excited about your event if it has a clear theme. We love the idea of a “Midsummer Mardi Gras,” for example, that incorporates elements of Mardi Gras but with a summer twist: think colorful masks and refreshing snowballs along the banks of the Mississippi River. Or, try a “Casino Royale” poker night complete with posh environs and cocktails (shaken, not stirred).

In New Orleans, snowballs are an integral part of the local culture. And don’t you dare call them snow cones! Snowballs are seasonal, icy treats that are offered roughly from March through October. Everyone pledges allegiance to his or her favorite snowball stand, including famed outposts like Hansen’s, Plum Street Snoballs, and others. The two key components of a snowball are the consistency of the shaved ice – it should be fluffy and light – and the flavor of the house-made syrup, which ranges from fruit flavors like Satsuma to rich flavors like chocolate. We even sell snowballs at River City Venues for special events – including spiked ones (for adults only, of course).



3. Choose a diverse location.

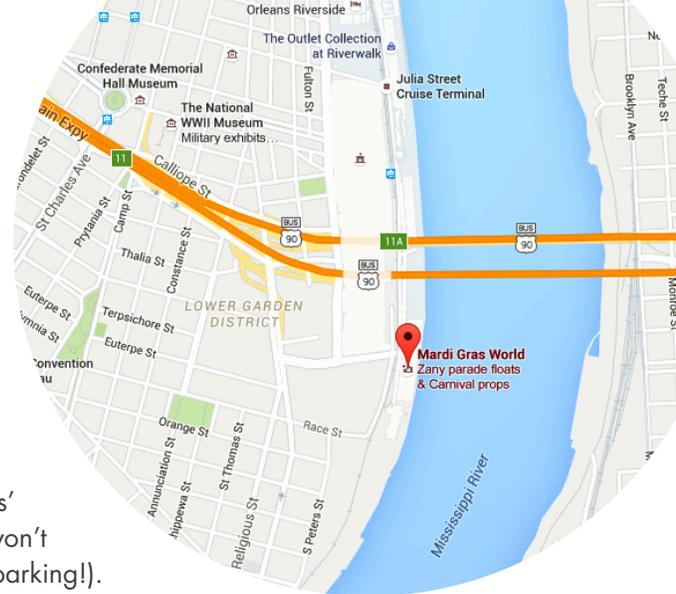
Perhaps the biggest key to success for your summertime event is choosing a venue with diverse spaces. Ideally, you’ll want to select a venue that features both indoor and outdoor opportunities for your guests along with space for entertainers, food, and all the components of a memorable event.

Diversity of location also refers to the amount of people a space can hold. Choose a space that feels as intimate for a group of 10,000 as it does for 10 people – i.e. a venue with rooms for small groups and large crowds alike. That way, as your guest list fluctuates, you can feel confident knowing you’ve chosen a great venue no matter the size of your audience. An added bonus is that starting a relationship with such a venue means that if you have another event in the future – whether or small or large – you’ll already have the perfect place in mind.

4. Make sure your event is centrally located.

If you want people to actually show up for your event, make sure you choose a venue that's easy to get to and provides on-site parking. Moreover, make sure it's a venue that makes it easy for people to have fun before and after your event!

Take River City Venues, for example. Not only are we located close to the New Orleans Convention Center and the slew of hotels along with it, we also offer ample public parking. This means that any guests at one of our events can get to our location easily and then have the city at their fingertips for exploring after the event is over: dinner, drinks, New Orleans' famous live music, and more are all just a short cab ride away, and you won't have to worry about finding a spot on the street (or cumbersome parallel parking!). A central location will entice your guests to RSVP in the first place – and guarantee they'll have a great time before, during, and after your summer event.



5. Be selective about outdoor activities.

We've said it before, we'll say it again: summer weather is amazing – but it is unpredictable. As event planners, we recommend opting for a mostly indoor location with opportunities to head outside at key moments. For example, you could incorporate evening cocktails to cap off your event on a high note. A summer evening is ideal because the temperatures are lower, afternoon rain showers are typically over for the day, and, if you're located near a river like we are, you'll feel that beautiful breeze keeping you cool. There's also no risk of sunburn once the sun goes down! Other ideas for nighttime entertainment include bringing a band outside for dancing or planning fireworks to light up the night sky.



6. If you do choose an outdoor setting, prep it!

If you have your heart set on an outdoor event in summer, go for it! Just plan ahead as best you can, like choosing to incorporate beautiful and smart details like tiki torches with citronella or flowers that deter bugs (lavender, marigold, and chrysanthemums, for example). Tasteful umbrellas and tents add a visual pop to your event space and also provide shelter from sun and rain. One of our best tips is to spray the underside of tables the morning of your event – the strong smell will dissipate, but the bug-banishing properties will stay intact by the time your event starts! You can also provide your guests with savvy party favors like branded hats or fans.





7. Incorporate an activity.

One of the best ways to keep your guests enthralled and intrigued is to make sure your event features an activity. Whether it's providing entertainment – like swing dance lessons with a live band – or a take-home souvenir – like a photo booth or selfie station – activities show your guests how much you care about their overall experience. One of our favorites is mask-making, particularly for a themed event. Masks have an element of mystique and intrigue: have your guests make them at the start of the event, and they'll be ready for wearing by evening.



And there you have it: 7 Steps to ensure the perfect summer event! Sure, summer event planning has its challenges, but as you can see, the benefits far outweigh the issues, especially when you follow these tips. Still feeling overwhelmed? Understandable! Call us any time—we're happy to assist with your planning needs (and even offer a few more ideas).