

The Colorado Elopement Planning Kit

Timeline, marriage license steps, permits by place and the questions to ask every vendor.

How to use this kit

Print it, tick the boxes, and keep it with your permit and license on the day (cell service is spotty in the mountains). Every fact here comes from the official sources cited on our guides and was checked in October 2026. Fees and rules change, so confirm with the office named before you book travel.

Your free planner keeps saved vendors, quotes, a budget and this checklist in one place:

coloradoelopementguide.com/account

THE TIMELINE

Twelve months to the week after

TWELVE MONTHS OUT

- ☐ Choose your region and season. Read the region guide for when to go: coloradoelopementguide.com/guides/
- ☐ Rocky Mountain National Park: email your permit application on the first day your month opens (one year ahead).
- ☐ Maroon Bells Amphitheatre: reservations open one year ahead on a rolling basis at 8 a.m. Mountain on Recreation.gov.

NINE TO SIX MONTHS OUT

- ☐ Book your photographer. Elopement specialists often know the permit process and help choose the spot.
- ☐ Decide: officiant, judge, or self solemnization (both of you sign; no officiant needed).
- ☐ Book lodging near the ceremony site.

THREE MONTHS OUT

- ☐ Book hair and makeup and give them your start time.
- ☐ Settle the guest count against the site cap. In RMNP the photographer and officiant count.
- ☐ Pick a weather backup site below treeline.

ONE MONTH OUT

- ☐ Confirm the clerk's hours and appointment rules (Boulder County issues licenses remotely only).
- ☐ Plan park entry. The RMNP permit doubles as your timed entry reservation; entrance fees still apply.

WITHIN 35 DAYS OF THE DATE

- ☐ Get the marriage license. It is valid the day it is issued and must be used within 35 days.

THE WEEK OF

- ☐ Send every vendor one shared schedule with addresses, parking and a weather call time.
- ☐ Watch the forecast for the site's elevation. Afternoon storms are routine in summer.
- ☐ Print your permit, license and vendor phone numbers.

THE WEEK AFTER

- ☐ Return the signed certificate to the issuing clerk within 63 days of the ceremony.
- ☐ Order certified copies once it is recorded. For a name change, start with Social Security.

The marriage license, step by step

Colorado is one of the easiest places in the country to marry: no waiting period, no blood test, no residency requirement, and you do not need an officiant or witnesses.

- ☐ Pick any Colorado county clerk and recorder. The license works anywhere in Colorado, and only in Colorado.
- ☐ Complete the clerk's online application first and bring the confirmation number.
- ☐ Both of you appear with valid photo ID, usually a driver's license or passport. If one of you cannot appear, bring a notarized absentee affidavit and a copy of that partner's ID.
- ☐ Have ready: both sets of parents' names and birthplaces, your Social Security number (or an affidavit if you have none), and details of any prior marriage.
- ☐ Pay the fee: \$30 in most counties. Summit County charges \$39 at the counter because three certified copies are included. Some counties add a card fee.
- ☐ Use the license within 35 days of issue. An unused license is void.
- ☐ Hold the ceremony: an officiant, a judge, or the two of you (self solemnization under C.R.S. 14-2-109).
- ☐ Return the signed certificate to the clerk that issued it within 63 days of the ceremony. A late return costs at least \$20, plus \$5 a day up to \$50. It does not undo your marriage.
- ☐ Order certified copies once the certificate is recorded (most counties charge \$1.25 to \$3 a copy).

If you solemnize it yourselves

- ☐ Fill in the date, time, county and the physical place of the ceremony (not a mailing address).
- ☐ Both of you sign as the parties to the marriage.
- ☐ Sign the officiant block as well. Do not invent a title. Boulder County's sample wording is "The Parties to the Marriage".
- ☐ Witnesses are optional. If you have them, any age may sign. Denver and El Paso do not accept paw prints.
- ☐ A friend can sign as officiant only if a religious body has ordained or recognized them.

County notes

Boulder County does not issue licenses over the counter: apply online, then a video ID check, and the license is mailed within Colorado only. Both of you must be in the same room and in Colorado. **El Paso County** (Colorado Springs) issues at 1675 W. Garden of the Gods Rd on weekdays and at the North office (8830 N. Union Blvd) on Saturday mornings.

Denver does not allow proxy marriages to be self solemnized.

More detail: coloradoelopementguide.com/resources/colorado-marriage-license/ and coloradoelopementguide.com/resources/self-solemnization-colorado/

Permits by place

Private venues handle their own permits. Public land is where the rules live. Leave No Trace applies everywhere: no confetti, no released petals or balloons, nothing moved or picked.

Place	What you need	Fee	Group size	When and key rules
Rocky Mountain National Park	NPS Special Use Permit for any ceremony of 2 or more, at one of 13 designated sites, 2 hour window	\$300 admin fee, non refundable; entrance fees extra	10 to 30 by site, including photographer and officiant	Email one year ahead of your month. 60 ceremonies a month May to Oct, 40 Nov to Apr. No arches, decor, amplified sound or drones.
Maroon Bells Amphitheatre	Recreation.gov reservation (White River National Forest)	\$200 a day plus Recreation.gov fees	50 max	Opens one year ahead, rolling, 8 a.m. Mountain. Weekend blackouts in summer and September. No arches, nothing thrown.
Sapphire Point Overlook	Recreation.gov reservation (Dillon Ranger District)	\$120 to \$142 per three hour block	30 max; groups without a reservation 10	Not exclusive. Two parking spaces. No chairs, food, drink, flames or tents.
Garden of the Gods	Nothing for the six designated areas; Special Event Permit over 50 people or with chairs or arches	None	20 to 40 depending on the area	First come, no reservations. No alcohol or decorations. No noise permits for weddings.
Denver Mountain Parks (Red Rocks Park, Lookout Mountain)	Special occasion permit for a private gathering. Two people and a photographer are visitors, not an event	\$260 a day, \$440 with alcohol (2026)	1 to 350	Apply at least 30 days ahead. The Red Rocks venue itself books separately.
Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks	Ceremonies only at designated facilities such as Sunrise Amphitheater	Sunrise Amphitheater \$100 resident, \$150 nonresident per dawn hour	100 per block at Sunrise Amphitheater	Book up to two years ahead. No reservations Oct 31 to Apr 30. No freestanding arches, flames or amplified music.
Colorado State Parks	Special Activity Agreement approved by the park manager	No statewide wedding fee; vehicle pass \$10 to \$17	Set by each site	Some parks ask for 45 to 90 days. Every vehicle needs a pass.
National Forest land	Special use permit only at 75 or more people, for commercial use, with props, or in Wilderness	\$0 for a small ceremony with no props	Under 75 without a permit	Call the ranger district for your spot. Allow time if you need a permit.
Loveland Pass	Nothing for a small noncommercial group with no props	None	Under 75	US 6 closes for storms and avalanche work. Check COtrip.org the morning of.

Full guides: [RMNP permit](#), [Maroon Bells](#), [Sapphire Point](#), [Garden of the Gods](#), [Boulder](#), [national forest and BLM](#). Official RMNP page: nps.gov/romo

Booking order and the questions to ask

What to lock first

- ☐ Photographer. Many elopement photographers help choose the spot and know the permit rules for it.
- ☐ Location and permit, or a venue.
- ☐ Officiant, or decide to self solemnize.
- ☐ Planner, if you want the logistics handled, especially for winter or remote sites.
- ☐ Florals and hair and makeup. Many artists travel to trailheads and hotels.

Ask every vendor before you sign

- ☐ What exactly is included, hour by hour, and what costs extra?
- ☐ Who will actually be there on the day, and can we see their own work?
- ☐ Are permit, reservation and license fees included or separate?
- ☐ Is there a travel fee for our location, and an early start fee for sunrise?
- ☐ What happens if weather, a fire closure or a road closure stops us?
- ☐ What is the deposit, and what is the cancellation and rescheduling policy?
- ☐ Venues: what are the minimums for our date and group size, and can we bring our own vendors?

By vendor type

- ☐ Photographers: have you worked at our site, which roads will you drive in our month, how do you plan around afternoon storms, and do you hold the commercial permit our site requires (forest land, Boulder OSMP, Jeffco parks)?
- ☐ Officiants: are you comfortable at altitude and outdoors, and how far will you hike?
- ☐ Florists: can you deliver to our hotel the evening before?
- ☐ Hair and makeup: what is your early start fee, and do you do trials?

What it costs (estimates, not quotes)

Photographer	\$2,500 to \$7,000
Officiant	\$0 to \$800
Florals	\$250 to \$900
Hair and makeup	\$250 to \$700 per person
Planner	\$1,500 to \$6,000
Venue	\$0 to \$8,000
All in, two of you	about \$4,000 to \$9,000
All in, with 20 guests	about \$9,000 to \$20,000

Ranges from [our cost guide](#). Government fees are exact; everything else is a typical range.

KEEP TRACK

Vendor tracker

Compare a few in each category, then book. Or keep it all in the free planner, where you can save vendors, log quotes and send an availability question from any vendor page: coloradoelopementguide.com/account

Category	Vendor	Contacted	Quote	Booked
Photographer				
Venue or site				
Officiant				
Planner				
Florist				
Hair and makeup				
Lodging				

Key dates

Ceremony date and time	
Permit or reservation number	
License issued on (use within 35 days)	
Certificate returned on (within 63 days)	
Weather call time	

Find vendors by region and category, every one with a direct inquiry form: coloradoelopementguide.com/vendors/

Colorado Elopement Guide, 1905 Sherman Street, Ste 200 1074, Denver, CO 80203. This kit is general planning information, not legal advice. Facts checked October 2026.