

REAL WEDDINGS

Totally chilled ceremony in

Quebec



Katherine and Austin's Ice Chapel wedding
at Hotel de Glace

When staff nurse Katherine Tilbrook logged on to a specialist dating website for singles employed in the uniformed services, she found true love at the touch of a button. She linked up with army captain Austin Hind, and the couple, who met in England now live in Medicine Hat, Alberta in Canada. They sealed their love in the snows of Quebec in a stunning ICE ceremony at Hotel de Glace.

Finding 'the one'

We met through dating site, www.uniforms.com. It wasn't quite love at first sight – more fear we think! I met Austin at his house in Winchester, UK after emailing and talking on the phone for ages before we met. We were planning a walk together, but I think we were both very nervous (and excited) at the door being opened!

The proposal

He proposed in Medicine Hat, in Canada, at the World's Biggest Tee Pee (a huge tee pee that was initially in the Calgary Olympics and got transferred to Medicine Hat), on a very cold (-18 degrees) snowy December day. He wanted to propose in the snow, as our first date involved snow! Austin still managed to get down on one knee though, in the middle of the tee pee. It was totally unexpected as we had been due to drive to Calgary and pick up Austin's sister, who was flying in that day – instead we went off in the totally opposite direction, so I was quite confused when we arrived at the teepee.

Location, location

We are from the UK and now and now live in Canada, where Austin has been posted, so we decided that we would like to get married in Canada rather than the UK. As we totally love Canada, it seemed the perfect location. The Hotel de Glace is a truly beautiful location and one that is in keeping with our lifestyle. Snow was very predominant throughout our courtship, so it seemed fitting that it would be a big feature on our wedding day – first date resulted in us getting snowed in, without power in Winchester, UK! Before Austin went to Afghanistan we went to the Ice Bar in London as one of our last dates for six months before we were apart, then Austin proposed in the snow at the tee pee – so getting married in an Ice Chapel (or igloo as my family called it) seemed totally in keeping and perfect. Also, years ago, I had seen an article about the Ice Hotel in a travel magazine and I fell in love with the idea, but never imagined that getting married in Quebec would be possible – how perfect that the man I was lucky enough to marry was with me in Canada and suggested it as a venue! It was just exactly where and what we both wanted!

The planning

We were very lucky to have Elisabeth, the wedding planner at the Hotel de Glace to help us organize our wedding. Although we were in the same country we were still hundreds of miles away, so having an expert on hand to help with everything was perfect. We arranged our own flights, Austin was already in Montreal with work, so I flew over on my own from Alberta and he met me in Montreal. We booked all our own accommodation. Elisabeth was very helpful with recommendations and suggestions and everything was 'in place' before we arrived.



The guests

In total there were seven of us. Austin and myself, my parents flew over from the UK and we had two friends from Medicine Hat and my cousin from Florida. They stayed at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel in Quebec for the wedding. We wanted to keep our wedding small and intimate and only invited family. Unfortunately our siblings and Austin's parents couldn't make it due to the distance.

Getting the look

I bought my dress from a local bridal shop in Medicine Hat called Magic Moments. It was an Alfred Angelo Disney dress based on Ariel. The concept of the dress is that when Ariel finds the man of her dreams she will cross the Seven Seas to be with him – it seemed so appropriate as I had followed Austin to Canada to be with him! I based my theme on ice/snow – so the belt on my dress had snowflakes on it, as did my bracelet and tiara. I also wore a long coat with a fur collar and cuffs. The Ice Hotel's chapel is about -5 degrees, so warm clothing was essential. Under my dress I wore a pair of white moonboots with added bling! Elisabeth, the wedding co-ordinator at the hotel recommended a hair stylist and make up artist, I met them the morning of the wedding and they were amazing. They spoke French and very little English and performed miracles on both my mother and myself, then stayed and helped me into my dress – they were like honorary bridesmaids!

Something old, something new

My Something Old was a sixpence from my dad; New – my dress; Borrowed – a necklace that was an incredibly old family heirloom from my cousin; Something Blue – detail on my snowflake garter and in my tiara!

Groomed to perfection!

Austin wore two outfits! He initially got married in a tuxedo, with Sorrell Mutluck boots. To keep warm he also wore a 1964 original Guardsman's coat and a Russian-style fur hat. After the wedding ceremony he then put on his military uniform (still with warm boots), and looked very dashing and smart!

The details

My theme throughout was snowflakes on my accessories and, as a wedding present to Austin, snowflake cufflinks. I had a bouquet made out of broaches and buttons in the colours of the Union Jack to keep a little piece of home with me whilst abroad. The colours looked striking against the ice chapel and were unique. The groom, father of the bride and guests had red rose buttonholes. At the wedding we only had a small cake for the seven of us then, when we went back to the UK, we had another reception for friends and family when we had a tiered cake made of cheese.





The ceremony

The ceremony was held at the Ice Chapel at the Hotel de Glace. We were married by a minister called Louis Lefrance, and my dad gave me away. The service actually lasted longer than it was supposed to – probably about two and a half hours with photos – because there was a mix-up with our rings and they were forgotten! We got married with our friend's rings, and after a quick run to the hotel by my cousin, we then got re-married with our own rings being blessed! During the service we also performed a traditional rose exchanging ceremony – this means recognising the first gift of a rose being exchanged as husband and wife. It also recognises the importance of giving and receiving roses throughout the marriage, during times of both difficulty and happiness. We also had a native American blessing read in the ceremony.

The reception

We had a lovely a la carte meal back at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel, then a reception was planned back in the UK at Whitmoor Farm in Devon for all our family and friends – for that we chose a very British High Tea with sandwiches, scones and clotted cream and cakes galore, followed by a Hog Roast in the evening

and the tiered cake made of cheese. Everything was sourced locally in Devon. We had a mixture of traditionally British bone china etc., and our little bit of Canada – Maple leaf boxes as Favours with Hersheys Kisses containing maple leaf candies, plus bunting and flags that were half Canadian and half British flags. My First Dance was Yellow by Cold Play – I had walked down the aisle to the Royal Philharmonic version in Quebec!

Photographic memories

The photographer from the Hotel de Glace, Xavier, and his colleague were amazing. They set up our video cameras and took many beautiful and fun photos. They really took the time to capture some beautiful memories. There is one particular favourite, where it looks like we are trapped in a cave, Austin is in his military uniform and we are looking into each other's eyes. I can't believe that it really is our wedding photo, it's truly beautiful, and it's just me, and my husband – the man that I love and admire.

Magic moments

The best thing in the world was having a truly magical day with Austin. It was an amazingly beautiful day, including the weather; location; kindness of everyone involved; being made to feel so special; the extra time spent with the minister and photographers (because they were having fun); having hotel guests asking me if I had just got married and, of course, becoming Mrs Hind!

The honeymoon

We kind of had three separate honeymoons! We stayed the night of our wedding in the Hotel de Glace where, following a spa and Jacuzzi, it was into our North Face sleeping bags before getting onto our bed of ice! We then left my parents in Quebec city in a really quirky B&B and spent two nights at a beautiful bed and breakfast in the Quebec mountains, where we went snowmobile and snow shoeing – we called this our mini-moon! Our real honeymoon was three weeks in the summer, when we drove to Alaska from Alberta and camped along the way – we drove over 8,000 km in three weeks. It was just Austin, myself and a few grizzly bears!

On budget?

We don't honestly know how much it all cost. If we include the honeymoon to Alaska and the trip back to the UK for the reception – it cost a lot! We kept within our means though, we decided on what we wanted, sourced the best options, and worked with it to ensure we didn't go overboard.

Further information:

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Venue:

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