

# SO YOU'RE DRESSING FOR AN INDIAN WEDDING...

Most couples don't mind if you wear western clothing to their wedding - you won't be out of place and the most important thing is to be comfortable!

Here is a crash course in the common events and appropriate outfits, if you choose to take part in the traditions.



## EVENT SCHEDULE



Indian weddings vary widely by region, but there are usually a few main events to dress for. Your event may have more, so always refer to the couple's communications on their events, preferences, and dress code first.

### Haldi

A joyful pre-wedding ritual in the week ahead of the wedding where turmeric paste is applied to the bride and groom for good luck. It's informal and intentionally messy. Turmeric stains everything permanently.

**Vibe:** Casual, festive, outdoorsy

**Colors:** Yellows, oranges, and warm tones. Avoid anything you love. No silks or dry-clean only.

### Mehendi

Henna is applied to the bride in intricate patterns while guests celebrate with music and food. Guests often get small designs too.

**Vibe:** Colorful, relaxed, festive-casual

**Colors:** Greens preferred but no strict rules. Avoid heavy or restrictive outfits, as you'll be sitting and waiting for henna to dry for 1-2 hours. Henna stains semi-permanently in a rust color.

### Sangeet

Sangeet means music in Sanskrit. It's a night of performances, music, and celebration between both families ahead of the wedding.

**Vibe:** Festive, high-energy, cocktail-to-formal.

**Colors:** Bold and rich. Avoid white or red (reserved for the bride) and anything you can't dance in.



Fabricoz USA

### Indian Ceremony

Indian weddings span many cultures and religions — each with their own distinct rites and traditions. Expect the ceremony to last 1–2 hours, with guests seated for most of the rites.

**Vibe:** Formal, traditional, reverent

**Colors:** Follow the couple's guidance if there's a theme. Avoid white (associated with mourning), black, and red (the bride's color).

### Reception / Cocktail Hour

The celebratory finale often paired with or following a western ceremony. This includes dinner, dancing, and the couple's grand entrance and speeches. Sometimes guests change into something more comfortable to dance in if time allows.

**Vibe:** Formal to black-tie but dress ready to dance.

**Colors:** Metallics, jewel tones, embellished fabrics. Avoid white, ivory, or red.



Fahad Puthawala

## WHAT TO EXPECT

All these events can be overwhelming - here are some general tips:

- **Vibrant Colors:** Indian weddings are colorful celebrations, so we encourage guests to wear bright and festive colors.
- **Comfort is Key:** Events can be lengthy, so choose outfits that are comfortable for dancing and mingling when you can.
- **Respect Cultural Norms:** While it's fun to dress up, it's also important to be respectful of the traditions. It's completely reasonable to just ask when in doubt.
- **Purchasing From Online Retailers:** Ensure that you review delivery and shipping times, and how many pieces are included in each outfit (photos may be deceiving). For example, a men's kurta outfit may only include the shirt, or a women's lehenga outfit may not include the dupatta (scarf).

## CLOTHING TYPES FOR EACH EVENT

You saw the vibes in the previous page, and on the next page there's a deep dive into what all of these clothes look like. Here's a cheat sheet on items to look for by event.

### Haldi

*Usually held in the morning or early afternoon. Wear yellow.*

**Women:** Salwar, casual kurta, or a simple cotton sundress

**Men:** Casual kurta and pajama pants, or linen shirt and trousers

**Cold Weather:** Layer with a denim jacket or casual shawl

### Mehendi

*Usually held in the afternoon or evening. Usually for women.*

**Women:** Salwar, anarkali, or a flowy midi dress

**Men:** Kurta and pajama pants, or chinos and a linen shirt

**Cold Weather:** Layer with a wrap or light cardigan

### Sangeet

*Usually held in the evening, and glitzy and fun. Go big!*

**Women:** Lehenga, anarkali, dressy salwar, indo-western, or a long dress

**Men:** Sherwani, indo-western jacket with trousers, or a blazer and trousers

**Cold Weather:** An embellished shawl or dressy wrap keeps the festive feel

### Indian Ceremony

*Usually held in the morning or midday. Avoid black and red.*

**Women:** Saree, lehenga, or a formal gown with modest coverage

**Men:** Sherwani, achkan, or a formal suit

**Cold Weather:** A silk or brocade shawl for women; a wool sherwani or overcoat for men

### Reception/Cocktail Hour

*Usually held in the evening.*

**Women:** Saree, lehenga, indo-western, or cocktail attire

**Men:** Sherwani, bandhgala suit, or a classic tuxedo

**Cold Weather:** A tailored coat or elegant wrap over your outfit

## WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW THAT YOU DON'T KNOW

Buying a new style of clothes in the online fashion era has its own set of challenges. Many items have long lead times and ship from overseas - you don't get to feel the material, test the colors on your complexion, or know that the measurements you gave were what the tailor expected. Some materials are itchy in person, in particular metallic fabrics, and require backup plans, securing with safety pins, and generally are better if you can try them on in advance.

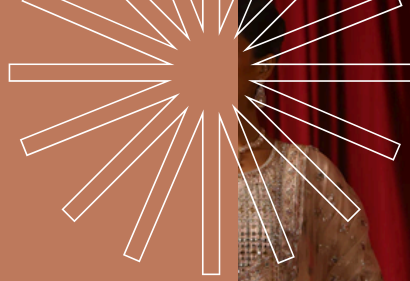
Get yourself a stock of safety pins, and order your outfits to your home so you can get your local tailor to fix it up if needed. They're bulky to pack, but it's worth it!

Look for sites that take your measurements and will let you do a fitting after it's ready. We recommend shopping 3-4 months in advance. There are also many local Indian clothing stores to shop at! Ask the couple for recommendations, but leave time for tailoring.



Bailey Ann Original

# WOMEN'S OUTFIT TYPES



## Lehenga

A sweeping skirt paired with a crop top (choli) and scarf (dupatta). Often embellished, always striking. The dupatta is key and can be draped multiple ways for different looks and coverage.

*Styling note: A lehenga works beautifully across all wedding events.*



Lashkaraa

## Salwar Kameez

A tunic (kameez) paired with relaxed pants (salwar) and a dupatta. More understated than a lehenga but no less elegant. pants come in styles from wide-leg palazzo to dramatic sharara flares.

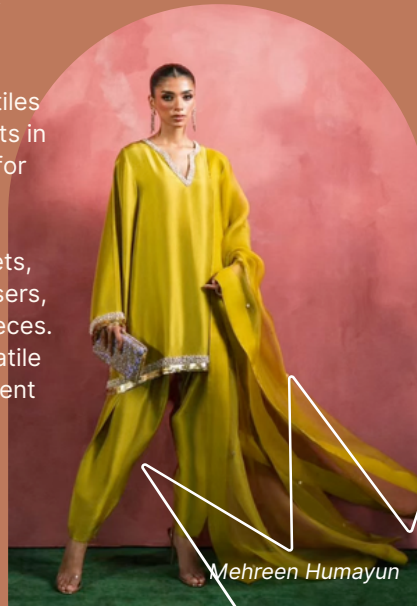
*Styling note: An ideal choice for daytime and casual-festive events.*



## Indo Western

The best of both worlds: Indian textiles and embellishments in silhouettes made for modern dressing. Think draped jumpsuits, cape sets, embroidered trousers, and fusion two-pieces.

*Styling note: Versatile enough for any event on the itinerary.*



Mehreen Humayun

## Saree

One of the most iconic garments in the world, the saree is a single length of fabric, typically 5 to 9 yards, elegantly draped and endlessly expressive. Worn with a fitted blouse and a petticoat underneath, the petticoat is a long fitted skirt that provides structure, keeps the saree in place, secures the pleats, and prevents transparency. The petticoat is completely hidden once the saree is draped. Common fabrics include silk (formal and lustrous), chiffon (light and flowy), georgette (slightly heavier than chiffon, great for draping), and cotton (breathable, ideal for daytime events).

*Styling note: First-timers may want to opt for a pre-draped saree (also called pre-stitched or readymade) as the pleats are already set, making it significantly easier to wear. If you plan to drape one traditionally, YouTube has excellent tutorials. Safety pins are your best friend, use them to keep everything secure, especially if you're dancing. And if you're not sure you got it right, don't hesitate to ask an auntie at the event for help. It's completely normal and they'll be happy to assist.*



## Anarkali

A long, flowing dress with a fitted bodice and flared skirt, typically paired with tapered churidar pants. Effortlessly graceful with a vintage sensibility. *Styling note: A strong choice for the ceremony or sangeet.*

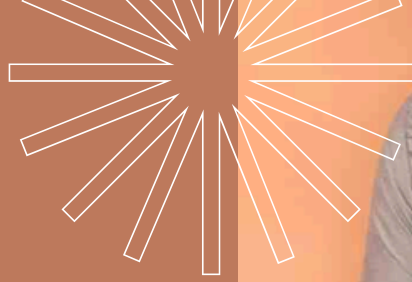


Dani Creations



Tilfi

# MEN'S OUTFIT TYPES



## Kurta Pajama

A long tunic worn over relaxed pants. Kurtas are comfortable, classic, and easy to elevate with embroidery or a statement stole.  
*Styling note: A reliable choice for any festive event.*



Kisah

The Hub

## Indo-Western

A modern fusion of Indian and Western styles. Think kurtas paired with tailored trousers, structured jackets with Indian embroidery, or bandhgala-inspired blazers with contemporary cuts.  
*Styling note: A great option for those who want a festive look with a modern edge, suitable for any wedding event.*



Manyavar

## Nehru Vest

A sleeveless structured jacket worn over a kurta, instantly adding polish and formality. Pairs well with churidar or tailored trousers. Can add a stole for extra flair.  
*Styling note: A great way to dress up a simple kurta. Match kurta color for a layered look.*



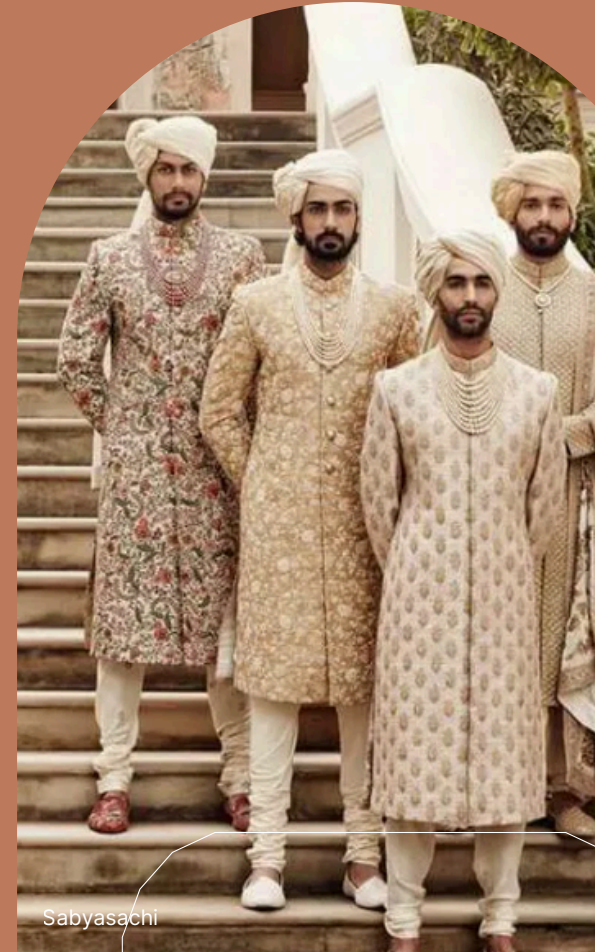
Lagan Wedding

## Jodhpuri / Bandhgala

A high-collared, fitted jacket in rich fabrics like silk, velvet, or brocade. The more expensive pieces often come with intricate embroidery or decorative buttons. Paired with tailored trousers for a sharp, sophisticated look.  
*Styling note: One of the more formal options in Indian menswear, and benefits from tailoring.*

## Sherwani

A long coat-like garment worn over a kurta and churidar. Traditionally associated with grooms, but increasingly worn by close family and wedding party members.  
*Styling note: Reserve for the most formal occasions.*



Sabyasachi



Hugh Sitton

## TAILORING

Best practices are to get your lehenga blouse or saree blouse tailored. You'll have to give a few key measurements depending on the vendor, but the most important is the length around your chest under the bust, the arm hole size, and the bust or largest part of your chest.

Common questions will include sleeve style, how low you want the blouse to go (it can be scary to show midriff skin, but people find they don't feel exposed the day of. Still, you can always opt for a longer blouse). If you have a remote tailor, we recommend sending a photo of yourself to them to help them make sure the measurement work out nicely. Many blouses have seams that can be ripped to expand by 1/4" in a pinch!

## WHERE DO I BUY?

If you have Indian friends..

Ask if you can borrow some of their outfits! Many have a closet full of Indian clothes that have only been worn a handful of times, and we'd love to share the joy!

### Online Retailers

There are many high quality and affordable websites which have Indian clothing for sale.

The quality of items priced over \$100 is generally quite good, while those under that price point can be hit or miss. Many designer pieces are of excellent quality but can be pricey. However, if you take the time to explore, you might discover some hidden gems! Order early and try the outfit out to avoid any last-minute scrambling.

### In-Person Shopping

If you prefer to shop in physical stores, there are major chains all over the US. In New Jersey, Nazraana, Manyavar, Aishwarya, Fashion Queen, and Damani are popular brands but they will mark up their prices compared to online retailers. Look for your own local brick-and-mortar. The best locations for Indian clothing stores are in the Bay Area, LA, NYC, Chicago, etc.

### General Outfit Care Tips

- For an outfit with beading or heavy embroidery, if you need to iron or steam, please do so only on the inside of the outfit. Turn it inside out and iron/steam.
- Do not pull on loose threads, just snip them carefully with scissors.
- Most Indian outfits can only be dry cleaned. If you want to have yours cleaned before/after wearing, find a place that is experienced with Indian clothing.

## A NOTE ON ACCESSORIES

### Women

- **Jewelry** Popular choices include jhumkas, statement necklaces, bangles, and forehead maang tikka. Floral hair accessories and pins are lovely; maang tikka are better suited for the ceremony and reception.
- **Footwear** Note that some ceremonies involve removing shoes, so slip-on styles are practical for those events but heels, jutti, etc. are all acceptable.
- **Handbags** A potli bag is a easy, common style.
- **Bindis** A bindi is warmly welcomed on guests of all backgrounds and suits any Indian outfit.
- **Dupatta** Scarves that often come with your outfit but can be purchased alone. Look for pretty embroidery.

### Men

- **Footwear** Dress shoes and loafers work for any event. Jutti (traditional embroidered Indian shoes) are great but test them out for comfort.
- **Stoles & Scarves** A decorative stole or dupatta draped over one shoulder instantly elevates a kurta or Nehru vest. Choose a rich fabric in a complementary or contrasting color for added flair.



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