

Picture Perfect: Pre-wedding Photography Picks Pace

In India, weddings have always been about flamboyance, spectacle, symbolism and storytelling. Over the past years, pre-wedding photography has emerged as a powerful extension of this narrative, transforming from a niche trend into a full-fledged business segment within the country's vast wedding economy.

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As weddings in India, already the most flamboyant in the world, become more about style than substance, favouring moments over memories. Pre-wedding photography has become an almost mandatory prologue to series of ceremonies, which already extend over several days.

As a result, pre-wedding photography has evolved into a thriving business, shaped by social media influence, cinematic storytelling and changing wedding aspirations. With rising budgets, destination shoots and experience-led concepts, reflects how modern Indian weddings are becoming more personalised, visual and professionally produced.

India's wedding industry is estimated to be worth over USD 54.2 billion, according to the reports by KPMG and FICCI, making it one of the largest event-driven markets in the world.

Within this ecosystem, photography and videography account for a substantial share of spending, thanks to the growing importance, couples place on documentation, storytelling and social media presence. Pre-wedding shoots have transitioned from being optional indulgences to near-standard inclusions, particularly in every household of India.

This transformation has been fuelled in large part by digital platforms. Instagram, YouTube and short-

form video content have reshaped how couples visualise their weddings, exposing them to global aesthetics and cinematic styles. It also offers couples a way to present their relationship in a curated, aspirational format. As a result, expectations around scale, creativity and production value have risen sharply. The structure of pre-wedding shoots today reflects this heightened ambition.

For many photographers, shoots are no longer confined to a single session. "Normally, people shoot in two days. The location depends on the client and the photographer and often it is based on mutual suggestions," Abhishek Patwa, Founder, the

Photo: Sanjeet Makkar



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Abhishek Patwa

Wedgellery, a wedding photography studio in Lucknow, tells *India & You*.

Patwa says, this reflects a broader industry trend, with couples opting for multiple locations, outfit changes and varied lighting to build a layered visual narrative rather than a single set of images.

While two-day shoots are common, timelines can stretch further depending on the concept.

Harshit Singh, a freelance photographer, also based in Lucknow, tells *India & You* that shoots can take anywhere between three to five days. "There is planning, location scouting and then the actual execution. Extended schedules are particularly common for destination shoots, where travel, permissions and weather conditions play a critical role in shaping the final output," says Singh.

At the same time, shorter formats continue to have relevance, especially for local shoots. Syeda Sakeena, Kashmir-based wedding photographer tells *India & You* that most city-based pre-wedding sessions are completed within a single day, typically lasting six to eight hours. However, shoots involving multiple locations or cinematic narratives may require additional time.

Charanjeet Dhiman, Founder, Weddography, a wedding photography studio in Delhi, adds that while shooting may take two days, preparations such as costume planning, mood boards, makeup coordination, props and location permissions often add another two to three days of work behind the scenes.

The kinds of equipment used in these shoots map closely to how elaborate the concept is. In the past, basic Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) cameras with standard lenses





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packages start around INR 25,000 - 60,000, mid-range full-day shoots often range between INR 60,000 and INR 150,000, and premium cinematic or destination shoots can go well above INR 200,000 depending on creative vision and travel costs.

Photographers confirm these broad range. “Budget range stretching from INR 30,000 on the lower end to over INR 100,000 for high-end destination work, depending on client demands, locations and the narrative scope of the shoot,” says Singh.

Patwa provides historical perspective on budget evolution, highlighting how prices have shifted in line with demand and competition

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At the same time, rising competition has influenced pricing strategies across the industry. Dhiman observes that some professionals lower rates or bundle additional services to attract volume, sometimes at the cost of long-term sustainability.

would have sufficed, but today’s pre-wedding shoots commonly involve full-frame mirrorless or cinema-line cameras, drones for aerial footage, gimbals for smooth motion capture and a range of lenses selected for specific visual effects.

“We use professional cinema-line cameras, drones for aerial shots, gimbals for stabilised motion and the gear are selected based on the creative brief rather than a fixed setup,” says Sakeena from Srinagar.

Technological sophistication has become a baseline expectation. Drone shots, reel-ready videos and polished post-production are now standard elements of many pre-wedding packages.

This evolution reflects not only client expectations but also how photographers position themselves in an increasingly competitive market. High-quality visuals are essential for attracting new clients, particularly in an environment where most discovery happens online.

A central question for planning a shoot is budget. How much are people spending and how has that changed recently? Pre-wedding photography in India spans a broad spectrum, basic local



Photo: Abhishek Patwa

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Photo: Charanjeet Dhiman

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Charanjeet Dhiman

“Many people are working only for numbers now. There is a clear difference between quantity and quality, and that difference eventually shows in the work,” Dhiman tells *India & You*.

This tension between affordability and artistic integrity remains one of the key challenges facing the industry.

According to the photographers, demand for pre-wedding photography has continued to grow through 2024 and 2025, driven largely by changing consumer behaviour. Social media has played a major role in shaping expectations, with couples exposed daily to high-quality visuals from across the country and beyond.

Singh points out that platforms like Instagram have significantly influenced how couples perceive photography. “People want something that stands out,

something they can share,” he says. This has pushed photographers to innovate constantly, both creatively and technically.

Themes and locations reflect this desire for distinction. Heritage sites, natural landscapes and culturally rich settings are among the most sought-after backdrops.

“Rajasthan’s forts, hill stations and scenic locations remain popular, while couples with larger budgets increasingly opt for international destinations,” says Singh.

“Uttarakhand’s mountains and forests, where natural light and landscapes lend themselves to authentic storytelling,” Patwa from Lucknow says.

“In Kashmir locations such as Gulmarg and Pahalgam attract couples looking for both visual beauty and emotional depth,”

says Sakeena.

Stylistically, pre-wedding photography has moved away from heavily posed images toward more candid, narrative-driven visuals. Couples want their chemistry, routines and personalities to come through naturally.

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This shift has encouraged photographers to experiment with storytelling formats, blending still photography with video, voiceovers and subtle cinematic elements.

New experiences are also shaping client expectations. Sunrise and sunset shoots, travel-based concepts and themed narratives inspired by cinema or personal milestones are increasingly common.

Some couples request reels and short-format videos designed specifically for social media, while others focus on longer cinematic edits meant for private viewing. These evolving preferences reflect a broader cultural move toward experiences that feel meaningful and shareable.

Over the years, the evolution of pre-wedding photography has been marked by longer shoot durations, higher budgets and more sophisticated production values.

Singh points out that while this growth has opened opportunities, it has also introduced challenges. “There is a lot of competition now and many people are working only for numbers,” he says.

Price undercutting and unrealistic client expectations can strain both quality and sustainability. Still, photographers who focus on consistency and storytelling continue to find loyal clients.

Despite these challenges, the outlook remains positive. India’s wedding industry continues to expand and visual documentation has become central to how couples remember and present their celebrations. Pre-wedding photography, in particular, captures a phase that is intimate, anticipatory and emotionally rich, making it unique and valuable.

For couples, the growth of this segment offers more choice than ever before, from simple local shoots to immersive, cinematic experiences. For photographers, it represents a creative space where technical skill, storytelling and personal vision come together.

As Indian weddings continue to become grander and more flamboyant, pre-wedding photography will increasingly take up its position as a key part of the ceremonies, rather than a sideshow that it was in the beginning. ■