

The Ultimate Venue Finding Guide 2026

Your Complete Resource for Finding the Perfect
Conference Venue, Meeting Room, or Event Space

JIGSAW CONFERENCES LTD

Trading as [InternationalVenues.com](https://www.internationalvenues.com)

Established 2003 | 24,000+ UK Venues

www.jigsawconferences.co.uk | 0800 121 4470

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1. Introduction to Venue Finding

Finding the right venue is one of the most critical decisions in event planning. The venue sets the tone for your entire event, impacts attendee experience, and can significantly affect your budget. This guide draws on Jigsaw Conferences' 20+ years of experience helping organisations find their perfect venue from our database of 24,000+ UK venues.

Whether you're planning a small board meeting for 10 people or a large conference for 1,000+ delegates, the principles of effective venue finding remain the same: understand your requirements, research your options, and make informed decisions.

Why Venue Selection Matters

The venue you choose will influence:

- Attendee satisfaction and engagement
- The professional image of your organisation
- Logistical ease for speakers and delegates
- Overall event costs and budget management
- The success of networking opportunities
- Accessibility for all participants

2. Understanding Your Event Requirements

Key Questions to Answer

Before beginning your venue search, clearly define:

- Event Type: Conference, meeting, training, awards dinner, team building?
- Attendee Numbers: Confirmed count plus potential growth allowance
- Date Flexibility: Fixed date or range of possible dates?
- Duration: Half-day, full-day, multi-day with accommodation?
- Budget: Total budget and breakdown for venue, catering, AV
- Location: Specific city, transport links, parking requirements
- Room Setup: Theatre, classroom, boardroom, cabaret, banquet?
- Catering Needs: Breakfast, lunch, dinner, dietary requirements
- Technology: WiFi capacity, AV equipment, video conferencing
- Accommodation: On-site rooms or nearby hotel options

3. Types of Venues Available

Conference Centres

Purpose-built facilities designed specifically for meetings and conferences. Typically offer multiple rooms of various sizes, professional AV equipment, dedicated event staff, and comprehensive catering services.

Best for: Large conferences, multi-track events, exhibitions

Hotels

Hotels offer convenience with meeting facilities and accommodation in one location. Range from boutique hotels with intimate meeting rooms to large chains with extensive conference facilities.

Best for: Residential conferences, client entertainment, events requiring overnight stays

Unique Venues

Museums, galleries, historic houses, sports stadiums, and other distinctive spaces that create memorable experiences. Often require more planning but deliver exceptional impact.

Best for: Awards ceremonies, product launches, special celebrations

Academic Venues

Universities and colleges offer large lecture theatres, modern facilities, and often competitive pricing, especially during vacation periods.

Best for: Training events, academic conferences, budget-conscious events

4. Location Considerations

Location is often the primary filter in venue selection. Consider:

Transport Links

- Proximity to major train stations
- Access to motorway networks
- Distance from airports for international delegates
- Local public transport options
- Taxi availability

- On-site parking capacity
- Nearby public car parks
- Costs and whether included in venue hire
- Electric vehicle charging points

- Hotels nearby if accommodation not on-site
- Restaurants for evening dining options
- Safety and accessibility of surrounding area

Park

Loca

5. Capacity and Layout Options

Common Room Setups

Theatre Style: Rows of chairs facing the front. Maximises capacity but limits interaction.

Classroom Style: Tables and chairs in rows. Good for note-taking but uses more space.

Boardroom Style: Single large table with chairs around. Ideal for meetings up to 30 people.

U-Shape/Horseshoe: Tables arranged in U-shape. Good for presentations with discussion.

Cabaret Style: Round tables with chairs on one side. Excellent for workshops and group activities.

Banquet Style: Round tables fully seated. Standard for dinners and awards ceremonies.

Capacity Guidelines

As a rough guide, the same room will hold:

- 100 people theatre style
- 50 people classroom style
- 30 people boardroom style
- 60 people cabaret style
- 80 people banquet style

Always confirm exact capacities with the venue as room shapes vary.

6. Essential Facilities and Amenities

Standard Requirements

- High-speed WiFi with sufficient bandwidth for all delegates
- Climate control (heating and air conditioning)
- Natural daylight where possible
- Blackout facilities for presentations
- Accessible toilets and facilities
- Breakout spaces for networking
- Registration/reception area

- Built-in projector and screen
- Audio system with microphones
- Video conferencing capability
- Hybrid event support
- Technical support staff

Tech

7. Budget Planning and Cost Management

Understanding Venue Pricing

Venues typically price in one of three ways:

Day Delegate Rate (DDR): All-inclusive package including room hire, standard AV, catering (tea/coffee, lunch), and WiFi. Usually quoted per person.

24-Hour Delegate Rate: DDR plus accommodation and dinner. Common for residential conferences.

Room Hire Only: Just the space, with everything else charged separately. Can be economical for simple meetings but costs can escalate.

Hidden Costs to Watch

- AV equipment beyond standard package
 - Additional breakout rooms
 - Extended hours (before 8am or after 6pm)
 - Parking charges
 - Corkage if bringing own wine
 - Service charges and VAT
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- Book early for better rates
 - Consider off-peak days (Monday-Thursday)
 - Academic venues during holidays
 - Package deals for regular bookings
 - Use a free venue finding service like Jigsaw Conferences

Cost

8. The Venue Selection Process

Step-by-Step Approach

1. Define Requirements: Complete a detailed brief of all your needs.
2. Initial Search: Use a venue finding service or search venue databases.
3. Shortlist: Narrow down to 3-5 venues that meet your criteria.
4. Request Proposals: Get detailed quotes and availability.
5. Site Visits: Visit top 2-3 venues in person.
6. Compare Options: Use a scoring matrix to evaluate objectively.
7. Negotiate: Discuss terms, inclusions, and price.
8. Confirm: Sign contract and pay deposit.

9. Site Visits: What to Look For

Site Visit Checklist

- Check actual room dimensions match quoted capacity
- Test WiFi speed and coverage
- Assess natural light and ability to darken room
- Check acoustics - can you hear neighbouring events?
- Review catering sample if possible
- Meet the event coordinator
- Check accessibility throughout the venue
- Assess parking and arrival experience
- Review breakout and networking spaces
- Ask about backup plans (equipment failure, etc.)

10. Contract Negotiation Tips

Key Contract Points

- Cancellation terms and timescales
- Payment schedule and deposit requirements
- What happens if numbers change
- Minimum guarantees for catering
- Liability and insurance requirements
- Force majeure clauses
- Exclusive supplier requirements

11. Catering and Dietary Requirements

Modern events must cater for diverse dietary needs:

- Vegetarian and vegan options as standard
- Gluten-free alternatives
- Halal and kosher requirements
- Allergy awareness (nuts, dairy, etc.)
- Collect requirements in advance via registration
- Label all food clearly

12. Technology and AV Requirements

Standard AV Package

Most venues include:

- Projector and screen
- Flipchart and pens
- WiFi access
- Basic audio (lectern microphone)

You may need to add:

- Radio/lapel microphones
- Confidence monitors
- Video recording
- Live streaming
- Hybrid meeting technology
- Additional screens

13. Accessibility Considerations

Ensure your venue is accessible to all:

- Step-free access throughout
- Accessible parking spaces
- Hearing loops available
- Accessible toilets on same level as event
- Clear signage
- Space for wheelchair users
- Assistance dogs welcome

14. Sustainability and Green Venues

Many organisations now prioritise sustainability. Look for:

- Environmental certifications (ISO 14001, Green Tourism)
- Renewable energy usage
- Waste reduction and recycling programmes
- Locally sourced catering
- Digital alternatives to printed materials
- Carbon offset programmes
- Public transport accessibility

15. Working with a Venue Finding Service

Benefits of Using Jigsaw Conferences

A professional venue finding service like Jigsaw Conferences offers:

- Access to 24,000+ UK venues in one place
- Completely FREE service - venues pay our commission
- Dedicated account manager who knows your requirements
- Negotiating power for better rates
- Time savings - we do the searching for you
- Expert advice from 20+ years experience
- Single point of contact for multiple venues
- Support through the entire booking process

1. Submit your requirements via our website or call 0800 121 4470
2. We search our database and contact suitable venues
3. You receive a shortlist of options with availability and pricing
4. We arrange site visits if required
5. We help negotiate the best deal
6. You book directly with your chosen venue

There are no fees, no catches, and no obligation.

How

16. Appendix: Venue Checklist

Use this checklist when evaluating venues:

- Capacity matches requirements
- Location accessible for attendees
- Within budget
- Required AV available
- WiFi sufficient
- Catering meets needs
- Accessibility adequate
- Parking available
- Accommodation nearby/on-site
- Breakout spaces available
- Contract terms acceptable
- Cancellation policy understood
- References checked
- Site visit completed
- Event coordinator assigned

Need Help Finding Your Perfect Venue?

Jigsaw Conferences has been helping organisations find their perfect venues since 2003. Our service is completely FREE - we're paid by venue partners when you book.

Contact us today:

Phone: 0800 121 4470 (free from UK landlines and mobiles)

Email: enquiries@jigsawconferences.co.uk

Website: www.jigsawconferences.co.uk

We look forward to helping you find your perfect venue!