

THE TUSCAN *magazine*

YOUR PRICELESS GUIDE TO TUSCAN LIFE

ISSUE 05

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by launching as an app

18
page

*Wedding
Special*

plus

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THE YOUNG FILM ACADEMY

Wrap party and premiere of the short film *The Curse of San Martino* at Villa San Rocco.

Students from all over Europe came to Tuscany to learn about film making.

The course was run by 'The Young Film Academy' and taught by Ed Boase & James Walker (fresh from releasing their controversial and acclaimed new film 'Blooded')

Villa San Rocco: Benabbio (a picturesque hill village in the Garfagnana National Park) is holding a Cultural Open Day on Saturday 16th July 2011. Visit them and enjoy a day of music, art, history, literature and good company.

Jason@sanroccobenabbio.com +39 3396574526

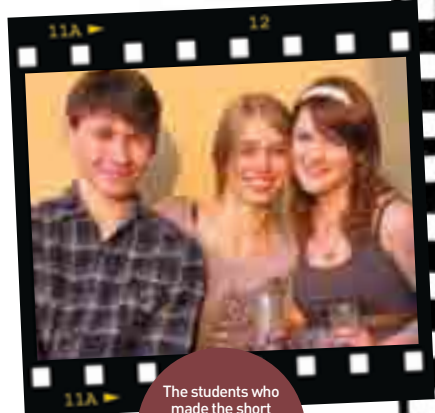
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Although Luigi the dog did not make it to the final audition he certainly enjoyed the canapés at the wrap party



Jason Beacon, owner of Villa San Rocco and a Neighbour: Residents of Benabbio were invited to the Premiere – many of them had starring roles.



The students who made the short film, enjoying a well earned glass of prosecco (ahem – lemonade)



Angus Dewar and Horatio Mortimer discuss how wise it was to portray the locals of Benabbio as murderous cannibals and then invite them all to the premiere...

check out our blog...

The Tuscan Magazine can only hold so much interesting information about Italy – fortunately we also have a website where you can find even more exciting and interesting writing and images:

www.thetuscanmagazine.com/blog



available online now



Editor's Blog:

Where Sarah Fraser gets to say things that probably would not be acceptable in print.



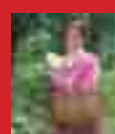
Duetscher/English Blog:

Anneliese Rabl gives the lowdown on life in Tuscany, in English and German languages.



Food & Wine Blog:

Super Tuscan recipes and loads of interesting info about wine by a collection of great writers, including Giulia Scarpalegga (Tuscan food expert) and Tricia Conover (Somelier).



Gardening blog:

Written by our resident Italian garden expert, Sharon Kilby – we help you to keep your garden in shape the Tuscan way.



Weddings & Events Blog:

Helping you plan your wedding or party in Tuscany, every step of the way.

THE TUSCAN magazine

Wedding Special

18 pages

your essential guide to getting married in Tuscany

Heritage Weddings

come home to Italy to tie the knot

plus

Italian marriage traditions

Finding the perfect venue

Do we need a wedding planner?



An introduction to Tuscan Weddings

by Zara Nelson

Italy is guaranteed to be included on any list of top global wedding destinations – and justifiably so. Its geographical beauty and climate, cultural patrimony and unbeatable food and wine are already enough to make it a superb wedding destination, but it also has more ‘amore’, romance and passion than any other country on the planet - Italians have been living and dying for love since the Roman Empire.

Getting married at home requires a good deal of organising, and doing it in Tuscany means you'll have to jump through a few additional bureaucratic hoops before you make it to the altar. If you want to elope and get married the day after tomorrow, Tuscany is not the place to do it, as the documentation needed does require some forward-planning. While you can technically make all the arrangements for the paperwork yourself, the vast majority of foreign couples use a wedding planner in Tuscany to take care of this for them – unless you speak good Italian, have enough time and determination to do all the required research and form-filling, and live near an Italian consulate or embassy in your home country, it's a daunting task, and something that you simply cannot afford to get wrong. Many a Tuscan wedding planner has received the 'emergency call' from foreign couples who have tried to arrange their documents themselves and then realised that they couldn't manage it in time for the wedding, or, ironically, couples who have had certain documents issued too early and those documents have expired. You will also need to have an official interpreter at the ceremony, unless you have an English-speaking celebrant or priest - some couples bring their own. If you have dual nationality that includes an Italian passport, tell your wedding planner!

Lucilla Pippolini has organised over 200 weddings in Tuscany in the last ten years, and has noticed the changes in the market over that time period. "The couples I work with used to be almost exclusively from North America, but the UK and European markets have really opened up in recent years with the expansion of the lowcost airline routes," says Lucilla. "The destinations in Tuscany have changed too. Ten years ago, Florence was the location that everybody wanted, but now Lucca and Siena are very popular. They're like Florence was a decade ago."

In all truth, due to its continued popularity, Florence city is not the most intimate place to get married – ceremonies at the town hall have strict time limits, are usually booked up back-to-back, and you're quite likely to bump into other waiting couples and their guests. On the flip side, you step out of your wedding ceremony into the stunning Piazza della Signoria, which may make the lack of intimacy worth it. Tuscan town halls are all beautiful – located in historically

Photo by: corbingurkin.com



Villa Catureglio

and architecturally important buildings, they often have frescoed interior walls and are full of artwork, statues, antique furniture and luxurious fabric and furnishings - certainly not your average registrar's office. Francesca Vinci of 'Efffetti Weddings' particularly loves organising weddings in Volterra for this reason. "With its vaulted ceiling and frescoes in tones of red and sky-blue, the council chamber in the town hall in Volterra is absolutely one of the most beautiful in Tuscany," she says, "It's a great honour to be able to use it for wedding ceremonies."

Everybody agrees that a good wedding planner listens to you, understands what you want, then does the research and comes back with different options for you to choose from - but there is another element that distinguishes a really good planner from someone who just

sources services and suppliers at the best rates. Gina Rodriguez of 'My Tuscan Wedding' sums it up as 'peace of mind'. "That's what a good wedding planner guarantees you, in addition to the tailor-made wedding itself," she says. "Peace of mind and total availability for the couple and their guests." And that really is priceless. Gina recently had to find one hundred white

umbrellas at the drop of a hat, when a sunny wedding day suddenly turned stormy. The image that comes to mind is that of a swan – a wedding planner may be paddling hard under the water, but all that is visible above the surface is elegant, calm and in control of your perfect day.

And what makes a good client? All the wedding planners agreed that they manage the most successful weddings for couples who are clear about what they want and what they can do without, so the planner can distribute the available budget in the best way possible and save money on the superfluous items. A wedding planner also

needs you to be honest about your budget from the start - don't inflate or deflate it.

One element that is essential to the success of your wedding, but is out of the wedding planner's control, is your guest list – and Lucilla has some advice about this. In 2009 she organised the wedding of actor Joseph Fiennes and model Maria Dolores Dieguez at Villa Catureglio in the Garfagnana valley, about 30 minutes north

"The destinations in Tuscany have changed too. Ten years ago, Florence was the location that everybody wanted, but now Lucca and Siena are very popular. They're like Florence was a decade ago."

of Lucca, with catering provided by Il Fattore Party company from Prato. "It was a wonderful wedding," says Lucilla, "there were 130 guests but they really were all family and friends. The best weddings are always the ones where the guests know each other, and the group really bonds and joyously celebrates together. It's the atmosphere that makes the occasion so special,

regardless of the budget."

Hear hear! The planners we spoke to have worked with budgets that range from 6,000 to 300,000 euro, so whatever your Tuscan wedding dream may be, it can be made into reality.

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HERITAGE WEDDINGS

Going back to your Italian roots to be married is becoming increasingly popular

Over the past century hundreds of thousands of Italian people emigrated all over the world. Their children and grand children often yearn for their ancestral homeland. Coming back to Italy for their wedding is a way to share their romantic dream of 'home' with their friends and family.

Enrico Taliani specialises in catering for couples coming back to Italy for their wedding. "I assist the clients in every step of wedding planning, paying particular attention to the clients' roots, needs and local traditions." Says Enrico.

"This is the beautiful wedding experience of Luca and Maria, two young Americans living in Detroit with Italian origins: Their parents came from a small village in the province of Lucca. They always tried to keep their Italian traditions alive and were extremely happy about their sons' decision to get married in Tuscany."

"Luca and Maria contacted me about one year before their wedding date. For them, it had been very simple to choose their ideal location for the ceremony as they knew Tuscany very well, and they were impressed by the beauty of Palazzo Orsetti in Lucca where the civil wedding ceremonies take place" [This happens to be the location for Will & Kate's Italian leg of their honeymoon]

"During this first phase, I passed them all the information they needed about the documents to be prepared at the Italian Consulate in the USA in order to be passed to the local Town hall of Lucca in due time."

"Luca and Maria asked me about proposing them a suitable location for their wedding party after the ceremony, ideally a beautiful renaissance villa in the countryside of Lucca, not far from the town centre.

The party would not have been large, but they wanted also to invite some local guests related to their family who still live in the area."

"In the following weeks we started to follow up some aspects such as flowers, music for the ceremony, guests transfers, hairdresser, bridal car, excursions, paying attention to their requests, taste and budget. Contacts were very frequent and most of these elements were defined before their arrival."

"Luca and Maria arrived in Italy one week before the magic event, while the guests arrived mainly 4 days before the wedding."

"One of our first tasks was to go to the American Consulate in Florence to get the 'nulla osta' certificates, which are legal documents of authorization to get married abroad, released by the American Consul."

"Two days before the wedding ceremony we had the other official appointment at the Town hall offices in Lucca for the so-called 'sworn declaration' regarding the procedure for the wedding publications.

In the meantime, the couple did some checks (a visit to the florist, a test at the hairdresser, etc)."

"As all the guests had arrived, Luca and Maria decided to arrange a sort of rehearsal dinner, a bit informal, with a nice barbecue at the swimming pool of the villa where they

stayed for the entire week, which was a good opportunity to gather all the guests."

"So, very quickly, we arrived to the important day of the wedding!

The ceremony took place in the green room of Palazzo Orsetti followed by a cocktail in the palace garden."

"The atmosphere was fantastic, the parents were so excited and happy to celebrate such an important event in the main town of their childhood!

Not only for them, but also for the rest of the family living in the US, it was a great satisfaction to combine new and old traditions bound to the grandparents' reminiscence, and to the locations where part of the family had lived in the past."

"The wedding party in the villa with a local band, traditional Tuscan food and a lot of chat was a great success."

"The following day, Luca and Maria organised a 'farewell brunch' for all the guests: a pizza party!"

"Later guests started leaving and Luca and Maria left for their honeymoon in the south part of Italy, visiting Rome, Amalfi coast and Capri."

"I hope this short story of an Italian Heritage Wedding in Lucca was enjoyable and has made you a bit curious about having a wedding experience in Tuscany. An event like this is unique and can be an unforgettable experience for you and your closest people!"
Get more details and ask for information at: www.weddingsandweddings.com



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*Wet bride,
lucky bride!*

You might be trying to avoid rain on your wedding day at all costs, but in Italy it's actually considered good luck – *sposa bagnata, sposa fortunata!*



by Zara Nelson

Setting the date when to get married in Tuscany?

The question's been popped, the proposal's been accepted, you've decided to get married in Tuscany and now the big decision to make is WHEN? According to popular tradition, each day of the week and each month of the year has its own particular meaning and influence over the future of the happy couple:

Monday: good health
Tuesday: wealth
Wednesday: good in all respects
Thursday: loss
Friday: trials and tribulations
Saturday: worst day of the lot, brings no luck at all. Ironically this is of course the day that most people get married!

January: brings love, kindness and fidelity.
February: the month of love and fertility, the best month of all to get married.
March: promises both joy and pain.
April: promises only joy.
May: never marry in this month. The Italian saying *la sposa maiulina nun si godi la curtina* means that the May bride won't enjoy a long marriage. The only acceptable dates in May are 2, 4, 13 and 23...as long as they don't fall on a Friday or Saturday of course.
June: lots of love and lots of travel. This is the month of Juno, Roman goddess of marriage.
July: the couple will have to work very hard to earn a living.
August: promises a married life full of variety and changes – interpret this as you wish...
September: showers the couple in riches and happiness.
October: much love, but not much money.
November: happiness and joy.
December: eternal love, a lasting marriage.

So, according to superstition, you should get married on a Wednesday in February, but on a more practical note you also need to consider the Tuscan weather, seasonal fluctuations in prices for location and accommodation in the region, and your guests' availability to travel to your Tuscan wedding.

May, June and September are probably the best months as far as climate is concerned, with comfortable temperatures between 22 and 27 degrees, and reliable sunshine.

July and August are usually the hottest months of the year, with temperatures reaching 30+ degrees, although for the past four years Tuscany has had some heavy summer rain in July and August.

November, December, January and luckiest-month-of-all February will get you the best prices on location, accommodation and probably

flights too (as long as you avoid the Christmas and New Year period), but you're buying a lottery ticket as far as the weather is concerned – although stunningly crisp and sunny winter days are quite common.

May to September is high season for Italians to get married as well, so be sure to book your ceremony and all other arrangements well ahead.

The Tuscan landscape changes a lot through the cycle of the seasons, so if you want that photo of the newly-weds strolling hand-in-hand through a field of sunflowers or plucking ripe grapes from the vine, then you need to make sure your wedding is at the right time of year:

April and May – poppies
June and July – sunflowers
September – grape harvest
October and November – autumn foliage, mushroom and chestnut harvests



photos by Villa Grabau www.villagrabau.it

BORGO COLLEOLI & EFFETTI WEDDINGS

the perfect partners for a perfect day

Provided you allow yourself enough time to deal with the legal bureaucracy, getting married with a civil or religious ceremony in Tuscany is perfectly possible for happy couples from all over the world, although it is true that there are different legal requirements for different nationalities, and at first glance the paperwork part of getting to the Italian altar can seem like a minefield. But is it really so scary, and what can you do to smooth the process?



We spoke to Francesca Vinci from Effetti Weddings, winners of a WeddingWire Bride's Choice award 2011, who specialises in weddings for foreigners in Italy. "Without a doubt, the paperwork is the part that our couples find the most intimidating," she says, "but we advise them on all the procedures that they need to follow in their home country, what they must do when they get to Italy, and how to do it all. We even take care of the paperwork that can be done for them, like going to the Consulates here in Italy on their behalf, where that is possible. Basically, they don't need to worry about anything." You will need to be in Italy some days before your wedding to complete the final documents – but as Francesca says, you can look on that as an advance honeymoon!

You could always decide to legally tie the knot in your home country and have a symbolic

wedding in Tuscany - this completely removes the paperwork requirement, and if you have friends and family who are not able to travel to Italy with you, at least they can be involved in the legal ceremony at home.

"There are some amazingly beautiful locations in Tuscany that unfortunately are not licensed for a legally-binding civil ceremony," says Francesca. "In these cases we organise a symbolic ceremony for the couple at the venue, and they have the legal ceremony in private in the nearest town hall, or at home."

One such spectacular venue is the Borgo di Colleoli, a historic villa and estate about 30 minutes from Pisa International airport. The original medieval castle on this site was developed over the years to become an elegant country retreat, and in 2003 the whole Borgo was painstakingly restored under the guidance of the Italian Fine Arts Commission. It is an entire typical Tuscan hamlet, perched on



a hill amidst ancient olive groves, providing 50 individually furnished apartments which all reflect the style and flair of Tuscany, a restaurant, wine cellar, and two swimming pools. A majestic tree-lined driveway leads to this truly unique and charming property where time seems to stand still. The elegance of the architecture and the authenticity of the surroundings make it a stunning location for weddings, where your guests can all be accommodated together and enjoy the Borgo's strategic location which has Pisa, Florence, Siena, San Gimignano and Volterra within easy reach. It also lends itself as an ideal venue for all kinds of special events, conventions and meetings. The Borgo di Colleoli has recently been featured in the documentary 'Tuscany Luxury Wine Tours' which will soon be shown on the Discovery Channel. Borgo Colleoli also has a wonderful restaurant, I Secoli.

The prestigious Music Room at the Borgo di Colleoli is a beautiful place for a symbolic ceremony, but you are also spoilt for choice within the grounds of the estate – woodland, poolside, olive grove or medieval courtyard are some of the options. As for the symbolic ceremony itself, you can personalise it in any way you like, to reflect your personal values and beliefs. Two popular modern options are the Unity Candle and the Unity Sand ceremonies. In the candle ceremony, the bride and groom use two small taper candles that have previously been lit by members of their families, to light a larger pillar candle together, symbolising their passage from their former family lives to their new life together. In the sand ceremony, the bride and groom together pour sand of different colours into one glass vase, symbolising the joining of the flow of their separate lives into one single stream.

Either way, whether it's a civil, religious or symbolic ceremony, one thing is sure – Francesca will be teary-eyed. "When the couple says 'I do' – that moment always brings tears to my eyes, it gets me every time!"



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Married in Italy

A GUIDE TO WEDDING TRADITIONS

Italian wedding traditions have many regional variations – just like the cuisine, dialects and climate of this fascinating country. Some of these traditions will already be familiar to you, as they have been absorbed into or adopted from other cultures, while others will be new, but all of them are steeped in history with valid and sometimes surprising reasons for existing.

Marry in blue, lover be true - in ancient Roman popular culture, blue was the colour of love and fidelity, and until the late 19th century blue was a popular colour for wedding dresses, after which white took over as symbol of purity. An Italian bride may also wear red underwear – this is carried over from the Italian New Year tradition in which the wearing of red underwear ensures good luck for the year to come.

Serenade – a lovely Italian tradition that had fallen into disuse, but is now back in fashion. The groom serenades his bride-to-be, singing under her window a couple of nights before the wedding. He is accompanied by a band of musicians, and of course a large crowd of delighted spectators. The serenade is a surprise for the bride, secretly organised by the groom with the help of the bride's family. When he has finished singing, she throws a red rose for him, which is his invitation to climb athletically up to her balcony and kiss her (while the musicians continue playing a musical

accompaniment) - of course nowadays he's more likely to have to run up a few flights of stairs or take the elevator.

Sword – why does the bride always stand on the groom's left side? This is an interesting tradition that has its origins in the Medieval European custom of marriage by capture. The groom needed his right hand free for his sword, should he need to defend his bride from attacking rival kidnappers. This is also why the bride's family sit on the left and the groom's family on the right of the aisle during the ceremony.

Rings – the Romans exchanged iron ones. Don't drop the ring – it's very bad luck!

Veil – another Roman tradition, this time with a real surprise ending! The veil was not worn out of modesty, but because weddings were combined for financial interests and political reasons, and the future couple didn't

even meet each other before the wedding. The bride's face was covered until the end of the ceremony to avoid any possible second thoughts on the part of the groom. At the end of the ceremony the veil was raised and... surprise! You may now kiss the bride...

Rice – age-old symbol of fertility and prosperity, Italians throw this over the newlyweds after the ceremony. Plain white rice is fine, but you can also buy multicoloured wedding rice prepacked in paper cones or bags specially for this purpose. To add a touch of class, try rose petals instead. Or be smack bang up to date with the latest trend by distributing soapbubbles to all the guests, and exit your wedding ceremony into a cloud of soft, sparkly multicoloured bubbles. They are so pretty in the photos, require no cleaning-up afterwards, and kids and adults alike adore them.

Olive branch – at the beginning of the reception, the bride may present her new mother-in-law with an olive branch, as a peace offering.

Confetti – in Italy 'confetti' are small white sugar-coated almonds, given as favours to the guests. The Italian word for paper confetti is 'coriandoli'. Don't get the two confused, or you may find yourself being pelted (painfully) with sugar almonds as you leave the church. Italian confetti almonds are always given in an uneven number, and for weddings this is usually 5 – to symbolise health, fertility, long life, happiness and weath.

Bomboniera – this very Italian tradition is recorded as early as the end of the 16th century. The bomboniera is traditionally a small glass, ceramic, silver or porcelain box which contains the 5 confetti almonds, and each guest receives one as a favour and keepsake. It is more common now to use a small tulle bag or cardboard box as the container, decorated with dried flowers. Put a small piece of card bearing the names of the happy couple and the date/location of the wedding along with the confetti almonds inside whichever type of container you decide to use.



All photos by: Corbin Gurkin www.corbingurkin.com



Toasts – at Italian receptions, the toasts are not limited to the speeches. You will hear the following being yelled frequently throughout the reception meal:

'Per cent'anni!' (for a hundred years)
'Evviva gli sposi!' (hurray for the newlyweds)
'Bacio, bacio!' (a kiss, a kiss)

Dancing – there is a long and complicated traditional rotation system whereby, after the newlyweds' first dance, the four inlaws

and then the best man and maid of honour all take turns in dancing with the bride, the groom, and each other. Only then can the other guests hit the dancefloor. Interesting to note is that every man should dance with the bride – holding his jacket open to show that he is not armed! Whether you have a D.J. or a live band at your reception, ask for a selection of traditional Italian wedding songs as well as your own playlist.

Carrying the bride over the threshold – this has its roots in an ancient Roman custom which ensured that the bride, in her elaborate wedding robe and her nervousness, did not trip and fall. This would be a very bad omen, meaning the gods of her new house did not welcome her.

Honeymoon – in Italian, 'luna di miele'. In ancient Rome, the newly married couple ate honey every day for one moon cycle after the wedding – presumably to keep their strength up... Today in some parts of Italy the groom may cut his tie into pieces after the ceremony, and sell the pieces to the guests in order to raise the cash to pay for the honeymoon.

"Why does the bride always stand on the groom's left side? This is an interesting tradition that has its origins in the Medieval European custom of marriage by capture."

Brooms and looms - there are also some traditions you might not wish to integrate into your wedding! In the Salento region, eight days after tying the knot, the bride receives a broom and a loom from her mother-in-law, as a 'gentle' reminder of her new role in the house. In some parts of Italy it is traditional to throw challenges in the bride's path as she makes her way to the ceremony. These challenges range from a broom (she must pick it up to show she will be a good housewife) to a crying child (again, she must pick it up and comfort it to show she will be a good mother). How the child is persuaded to cry and sit in the road, we neither know nor wish to find out...

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TUSCAN WEDDING TRUE STORY

Alex Mactavish and Sam Brock from London were married in Tuscany in September 2010. We asked Alex to tell us their story, from the proposal to the big day itself.

"Italy is our favourite place in the whole world. Sam actually proposed to me in Lucca when we were there on holiday a few years ago. One day he disappeared from the hotel leaving me the most gorgeous rose and a postcard of the Piazza dell'Anfiteatro, a beautiful oval-shaped piazza that used to be a Roman amphitheatre. On the back of the postcard it said 'Meet me here when you're ready'. Unfortunately I'm not known for my navigational skills. I went wandering round Lucca clutching the postcard until eventually a kind Italian lady walked me all the way to the piazza, where Sam was sitting at an outside cafe table with a bottle of chilled prosecco. It had taken me hours to find him, but that really didn't matter when he pulled the ring out of his pocket and asked me to marry him.

We wanted to get married somewhere that meant something to us, so Lucca was the obvious choice. We are both very good organisers and we speak a little Italian, so we were convinced we could arrange everything on our own. We started by finding the villa which was to be the venue for the civil ceremony and the reception. Villa Bernardini was perfect for us – it's conveniently near Lucca and we knew it would be a stunning backdrop for the wedding and the photos. We also liked the fact that it had both outdoor and indoor options for the reception – in the end the weather on our wedding day was gloriously sunny, but we



Photos by Abelson Images: www.abelsonimages.co.uk



wanted an indoor option 'just in case'.

When we decided on the villa, it transpired it had its own wedding planner. Initially we never would have considered using a planner, and we were concerned it would take us over budget. Then we met Michela – she was wonderful, and very good at understanding what we wanted. It really did make everything much simpler.

We chose a date in early September because the weather then in Tuscany is lovely, and not too hot. It also meant that the schools at home hadn't yet reopened, so our friends with children were able to come, yet the costs of flights was considerably lower than July or August.

We arranged a dinner the night before the wedding in Piazza dell'Anfiteatro, the same piazza that Sam proposed in. We had all the boys at one restaurant and the girls at another restaurant, on opposite sides of the square. It was a great ice breaker for those who didn't know each other, and it was really magical to have everyone there in one place!

One of my best friends did my makeup, and another friend is a wonderful photographer so he did our photos. It's things like that which

help keep costs down. Michela organised a hair stylist, who was lovely, although there were lots of hand signals going on as the stylist spoke very little English and my Italian vocabulary doesn't stretch to hair!

There are simply no words to describe the choice of menu and the quality of the food at the reception. We would have paid double or possibly triple for anything similar at home. It was genuine Italian cuisine that we selected ourselves, and they provided a fabulous menu for the children as well. It was the perfect way to end the pre-wedding diet!

Looking back, we wouldn't do anything differently – it was perfect! When we finally saw the results of all our planning and designing laid out in front of us, it was as though someone had taken a snapshot from our dreams. And to top it off, we had everyone we love in the same snapshot, enjoying it all with us. Do your research, negotiate on prices for everything, combine your own efforts with those of a good wedding planner and you'll be amazed by the dream wedding you can create, that still falls within budget."

Looking back,
we wouldn't
do anything
differently - it
was perfect!



Michela Caturegli has many years experience as a wedding and event planner and currently works with the Tesori Italiani company, operating throughout Tuscany. The company prides itself on being 'Not Ordinary' – we spoke to Michela to find out what this means, and how her approach to wedding and event planning differentiates Tesori Italiani from other planners in the region.

Q: Michela, how did you come to be a wedding and event planner?

A: 'All my working life I've been organising events, coordinating every phase and every aspect from initial project through to the ground-management of the successful event itself. Straight after I graduated with a degree in foreign languages, I began organising events in both the private and public sectors – concerts, musical events, and themed parties.'

Q: What do you find particularly satisfying about organising weddings?

A: "Seeing and sharing the happiness of the bride and groom and their guests, without a doubt. I always tell the couple that on the 'big day' they will be wrapped up in their own cloud of joy, and so it will be us, the Tesori Italiani team, who will take care of them and their guests in every way. That's why the choice of location is so important – the bride and groom should feel that it is 'theirs', that they are at home, secure in the knowledge that the Tesori Italiani team will make sure everything runs smoothly, seamlessly, and to perfection."

Q: 'Tesori Italiani' means Italian treasures – are there particular cities in Tuscany that you feel are real treasures as wedding destinations?

A: One city that is very beautiful, with a wealth of history and culture, is Arezzo. The old town centre is fascinating and evocative, with its narrow winding streets, stone tabernacles and wrought-iron balustrades, conserving all the flavour of the city's traditions. Next September we are organising a wedding during the Saracino festival in Arezzo, which is a historic recreation of the Crusade era. The reception will be in an ancient 11th century fortress, a stunning and unusual location. This is the real 'Tesori Italiani' style – always in tune with the tone of the surroundings.

Q: That certainly sounds like a 'not ordinary' wedding! Can you tell us a little more about what these words mean to you?

A: Everything that we can create based on the couple's wishes, and more. Tesori Italiani creates events that are truly tailor-made – always different, in line with the clients' needs, whether it's a wedding, corporate event or private party. Our advice and suggestions do not arrive from on high, they are born individually and uniquely from the personality and tastes of the individual client. That's why we have to get to know the people who come to us – because what might be 'not ordinary' for me could be the most ordinary thing in the world for you.

Q: What is the most 'not ordinary' request you've worked with?

A: Probably the couple who had a civil ceremony in a villa, and the reception on a deserted beach. They also parascended over the beach, flying above their guests in their 'wedding' bathing costumes, wearing parachutes and towed by speedboats.

Q: In What way does Villa Bernardini differ from other villas in Lucca?

A: All the villas are beautiful and unique in their own way, but Villa Bernardini in Lucca is the villa I am most fond of, and that undoubtedly has all the characteristics necessary for the creation of the perfect event. It was built in 1615 on behalf of the Bernardini family, who still inhabit it, and it has a great sense of history, romance and charm. My brides and grooms particularly appreciate the layout of the villa, with gardens on three sides.

Q: In fact, Villa Bernardini is well-known for the beauty of its gardens – what role do they play in your weddings?

A: The total grounds of the villa extend over 8 hectares, with 350 different plant species, including century-old trees, lush shrubs and brightly coloured flowers. Around the villa itself, there are three separate gardens, so the wedding can unfold in time through the three locations. Guests discover these locations little by little, and are enchanted. The event becomes dynamic, with the villa as the central pivot around which everything rotates.

Tesori Italiani can organise any type of wedding anywhere in Tuscany – they even arrange ceremonies in private residences and vacation rental properties. Contact Michaela to discuss your wedding, event or party in Tuscany.



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Let Us Eat Cake!

A wedding cake should be majestic. It should be a statement; a reflection of your personality.

Traditionally Italian cakes are flat affairs with a lot of cream and are not designed to last longer than the day. In Italy, if you want a traditional tiered cake you normally have to go to an Anglo cake specialist.

The best wedding cake designer (after extensive cake munching research) in Tuscany is Melanie Secciani of Florence. Not only are her cakes considered works of art – this is actually what they are sold as – but the texture and flavour is perfect.



Melanie Secciani
(English and Italian spoken)
+39 33454087209
spicelab@live.it



Say it with flowers

by Zara Nelson

Roses are the most popular choice of flowers for brides, and no other flower has so many different meanings. A white rose means innocence, fidelity and spiritual love. Pink is for tenderness, understanding and perfect happiness. Orange is for desire, peach is for a hidden love, and red of course means passionate, courageous true love. You might want to avoid yellow – which traditionally stands for jealousy and infidelity – unless you team yellow and red roses, in which case the message is solidarity.

Posy – Rounded in shape and easy to hold in one hand. Natural stems are bound in satin or velvet ribbon, and the posy may be embellished with pearl pins and trims. The most versatile bouquet, it complements most styles of dresses including shorter lengths, and is also good for petite brides who would be swamped by a bigger bouquet.

Cascade – Round at the top but pointed at the bottom, cascading downwards as its name implies. It complements full length and full skirted A-line, ball gown and mermaid style dresses. Good for tall and curvier brides, but not good with short dresses as the look is unbalanced. Avoid if your dress has decoration on the front, as the cascade will hide the design.

Hand-tied – This is a casual arrangement tied with ribbon, leaving the stems exposed. The look is suitable for a more informal wedding or a garden setting. The hand-tied bouquet is very versatile and complements virtually any style of dress and body shape.

Sheaf – Composed of long stemmed flowers that the bride carries cradled in her arm, the sheaf is stunning, chic, and best suited to



photo by Villa Catureglio

modern style weddings with empire, mermaid or contemporary sheath wedding dresses. It does tend to be heavier than other bouquets. The sheaf can be single-ended, with stems at one end, or double-ended, with flowers at both ends.

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My Tuscan Wedding



Off the beaten path: A wedding in Lucca

Lucca seems to be quickly becoming quite popular with brides and grooms as a destination wedding location. We spoke with Gina Rodriguez, owner of My Tuscan Wedding. Established in 2004 and based in downtown Lucca, My Tuscan Wedding is the only native English speaking wedding planning agency in the region. Who better to ask about this new trend?

Gina, why are so many brides and grooms now choosing Lucca as the backdrop for their Tuscan dream wedding?

"Lucca just ticks all of their boxes. It's 20 minutes from Pisa airport, and 20 minutes from the beach, so super convenient for their guests. Its picturesque hills are dotted with a huge variety of romantic villas that make the ideal setting for a wedding reception. But what I hear most often from my brides and grooms is how much they appreciate the authenticity that Lucca has to offer. They don't feel like another tourist in the crowd when they

celebrate their wedding here.

When I walk down the streets with them just after the wedding, the Lucchesi clap and cheer them on. You just don't find that kind of welcome in other parts of Tuscany that are perhaps more saturated with tourism."

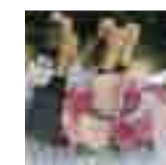
What qualities do you recommend people look for in a destination wedding planner?

"Successful wedding planning centers around smooth communication between the engaged couple, the planner and the local support vendors, so it's important to find someone who has a mastery of both languages, and is a good listener. A good planner should be able to understand your vision and then pair you with the vendors that can help you achieve that vision.

A guest attending a well planned wedding should be able to easily recognize the character of the couple infused throughout the event, not that of the planner. Finding a planner who is based in the town you wish to marry is also an advantage, as they will have a better knowledge of local venues and vendors as well as offer a wider selection for you to choose from.



Gina Rodriguez



One more important and often overlooked aspect to consider, when you're dealing with a destination wedding is that you need someone who understands local business practices and can act as your advocate, ensuring you transparency in every transaction. There needs to be a middle ground between the way Italians do business and the way you do business in your home country. Your destination wedding planner is the person who creates this ground, assuring you a unique Italian wedding without sacrificing the peace of mind that comes from planning a wedding at home."

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Under the Tuscan Moon...

One of the most important things about a wedding reception is the music. Ironically, many people don't appreciate the significance of this.

A good band or DJ will ensure that all your guests musical tastes are catered for in a smooth and fluid way. This can be tricky, especially at a wedding where there can be a huge age range as well as a great diversity of musical tastes. The important thing is that everyone hears something that they enjoy and those who want to dance have the opportunity.

Richard Turnbull, a professional wedding DJ in Tuscany says "The bride and groom are the main event at a wedding; everything else should compliment the occasion. As much as the Dress, the Flowers and the Food have been chosen with utmost care, so too should the musical entertainment be researched and given importance."

Mary Loscerbo is a Canadian Italian who's family moved from Calabria to Winnipeg after WWII.

She came to Italy to study the language and music, her two great passions.

In Italy she found a place where the arts are considered 'proper jobs' and where she might be able to make a living with her chosen instrument – her voice.

Mary has travelled all over Italy as a classical singer. Her only gripe about Italy is that it does not have so many venues for singers to show off their voices to the public.

"I have sung all over the world. One of the most interesting venues I have performed at was The Globe Theatre in London. It was a wedding gig and the reception was at the historical theatre."

Mary soon became 'Mary and the BIT Band' because she was being asked all the time to perform at weddings and needed professional musicians to work with. They are based in Florence but the band itself is composed of Italo-Americans, British, Irish and Dutch.

"We play everything from Jazz to Dance with a liberal helping of Anglo/Italian songs thrown in."



Richard Turnbull

You can view Mary and the BIT Band and hear their demo at: <http://www.myspace.com/559546941>

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Doing it on a Budget



A destination wedding abroad used to be something reserved for royalty, the rich and the famous, but nowadays a quick comparison of the average wedding costs in various countries soon makes it apparent that tying the knot overseas can actually be cheaper than doing it at home.

The current average wedding cost in the UK is £18,000, while in the USA it's \$24,000 and rising. Tuscany has long been a top wedding destination and because of this it has a very well-developed wedding industry - with a bit of resourcefulness and know-how you can use this to your advantage and work out some really good deals. A Tuscan wedding really is within reach of everyone, but you do need to do your research, plan well ahead and be flexible. These tips are some starters to help turn your Tuscan wedding dream into reality, and still come in under budget.

The first thing to do is prioritise! Eliminate the superfluous elements, and then be creative about how you can reduce the costs of the things you really cannot do without. Top priority for streamlining is the guest list, as the number of guests can sink or swim your budget for accommodation and catering. You don't have to reunite the whole family tree, nor invite people you've never actually met just because they are friends' partners. It's your day - celebrate it with those who really are nearest and dearest to you.

The bottom line of budget planning would be to get a quote from a wedding planner for a basic service that covers all documentation and the obligatory interpreter at the ceremony. Then, with good research and forward planning you could do the rest yourself. Make the most

of seasonal price variations - in Tuscany in April, May and October you can get some good deals on locations and accommodation, but nobody is going to give you a price break in the peak months of July, August or September. Get married on a weekday morning - you'll get the best price for a civil ceremony in a Tuscan town hall, paying as little as half the cost of a weekend or afternoon ceremony. If you have a group of guests staying at the same hotel, ask for a group discount.

Start your own wedding website - which is easier than you may think - with a free online wedding website provider. You can create your own personalised site, send invitations and allow your guests to RSVP online, upload directions, itineraries and maps, and create online photo albums. It's a great way to provide all the information your guests need about your overseas wedding, and keep that information up to date. This could save you a small fortune on the cost of all that stationery, printing and postage stamps, and certainly saves a few trees along the way.

Most people have a friend who is a passionate, talented amateur photographer, who would be happy to take on the job of photographer for your wedding, or you can arrange a minimal service from a professional just for the ceremony and then have that

amateur friend take over for the rest of the day. Have the professional photos put on a CD instead of an expensive album - you can print and mount them yourself later at a fraction of the cost. Most guests will bring a camera anyway, so ask them to upload their own digital shots onto your wedding site or to a file sharing site. You'll get loads of fun and candid shots of all the stuff that you missed on the day while you were otherwise occupied.

It is possible to save on the catering costs without losing face. If you're getting married in a private venue then find an available date that has a booking either the day before or the day after it. Get the name of the company that is catering the other event and ask what deal they can do for your wedding. Working the two consecutive dates in the same venue saves the caterer considerably on time and transport, and some of this saving can be passed on to you. Then consider having a buffet reception instead of more costly table service. Have an Italian wedding cake and have it as dessert, so you save the cost of one course on the menu. Order a small decorated cake for the display, and have a larger tray cake to be cut and served from the kitchen. Nobody will notice.

The honeymoon...will of course be in Italy. You're already here - so you just saved the cost of flights to another destination.



Photos by Corbin Gurkin. www.corbingurkin.com