

WEDDING TOURISM GAINING MOMENTUM IN ITALY



While Italians think less and less about the altar, thousands of foreign couples dream about saying their vows in Italy. There are Americans who get married in Salento inspired by *The Bold and Beautiful* TV series. Hundreds of Chinese couples want to get married in Rome, as well as many more in Vicenza in the summer residences of Montecchi and Capuleti. Wedding tourism in Italy is simply booming.

Wedding tourism is a phenomenon that has enriched the Italian market of about 385 million euros in 2017. And it is expected to get even better, with the inflow of foreign couples increasing by 7% in 2018. In the last seven years the market has become ambitious and profitable. **Generally, wedding tourism costs 55 thousand euros per event.**

The main source markets for wedding tourism in Italy are the UK (26.4%), United States (20.7%), Australia (8.4%), Ireland (5.4%) and Germany (4.9%). A lot of foreigners tend to request non-traditional marriages. To satisfy their needs, specialized wedding planners are required.

It is a professional figure of reference, especially in large cities, for the organization of weddings. There are a lot of details and positions to sort out, from the choice of restaurant to that of the florist, photographer, often even those who decorate the wedding cake.

There are a large variety of requirements from spouses. Some want fast and merely symbolic weddings and do not spend more than 1,200 euros. Swiss, Austrians and Germans, more than anyone else, love this formula. There are also many “returning Italians”, a generation which grew up abroad.

Wedding planners and tour operators are the two reference professions. But there is another figure of conjunction: the wedding planner coordinator, the tourist guide who assists the spouses and their loved ones. The operators of wedding tourism need to have a lot of practical experience. They need to know the destinations, hotels, where to iron wedding dresses and much more.

The most popular regions are Tuscany (31.9% of events), Lombardy (15%), Campania (14%), Veneto (8%) and Lazio (7%). Puglia has also experienced the recent boom, while the remaining shares are scattered throughout the country.

Every year, in Italy, wedding tourism generates over one million foreign presences and more than 7 thousand events. The favorite contexts? Luxury hotels, above all, then renowned villas, restaurants, farms and finally castles.

A different chapter is a new trend coming from the East. There are many Indian couples spending millions for a wedding in Italy in full Bollywood style. And then there is a wave from China.

Out of more than a billion Chinese inhabitants, 60% of couples want to get married abroad, according to experts. The Chinese who choose Italy are millennials and generally children of government representatives.

Unlike most foreigners getting married in Italy for a second wedding, Chinese couples are young and do it with a spirit of emulation. They love Italian history, art and romance. They also love the landscape and prefer the North and almost never choose the Amalfi Coast. They tend to be sensitive to the theme of safety and afraid of stereotypes. There are still many issues and shortcomings regarding preparations of Chinese wedding in Italy, considering the wide cultural differences, but with time this shall improve.

On the other hand, Italian traditions are very different. Italians choose destinations almost always one step away from their house. **However, wedding tourism is beginning to affect even the inhabitants of Italian metropolises.** It is still a small percentage but could grow towards the future. In second or third weddings, Italians like to get married on the Iberian Peninsula, but also in South Africa, Thailand and of course Las Vegas.

Those who stay in Italy do not move from their city and locations tend to be traditional. Wedding villas form account to 68% of the requests. But there are some curious new trends: greenhouses, lofts, warehouses and facilities like former cinemas, factories etc.

This trend could break the pattern of hotels (still 18% of demand), luxury restaurants (11%), farmhouses and country residences (7%) and castles (4%) in the future of wedding tourism.

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