

WEDDING TOURISM GENERATES EUR 500 MILLION IN ITALY



If there is a market segment that is particularly popular in Italy, it is the wedding tourism, tourism for foreigners' marriages. More than 8,700 events in 2018 in Italy generated an estimated turnover of 500 million euros, according to a survey conducted by the Tourist Centre Bureau in Florence. The study is based on an analysis of more than 1,600 questionnaires and telephone interviews with operators in the sector.

According to the data, in 2018 foreign marriages in Italy led to 436,000 arrivals and over 1.5 million presences. Compared to 2017, this is an increase of 6.8% and 7.4%, respectively. **Particularly, the south of the country and the island regions registered very positive numbers with respect to the wedding tourism in Italy.**

The average number of guests per event was 49.6 and the average cost was 56,890 euros. The phenomenon of more activities and days added up to the marriage itself is spreading, while many marriages were celebrated in luxury hotels, mainly in the summer months, especially in June and September. It is also worth noting that same-sex weddings have also grown in popularity.

In 2018, foreign couples have come to Italy from various countries. Most of them arrived from the United Kingdom (28.1%), followed by the USA (21.9%), Australia (9.4%), Germany (5.5%) and Canada (4.5%). However, there were marriages of other nationalities with less frequency but greater economic impact, such as the Scandinavian countries, Indonesia or the United Arab Emirates.

The preferred region by foreigners was Tuscany (30.9%), followed by Lombardy, Campania, Veneto and Lazio, while Puglia and Sicily registered strong growth. Luxury hotels (31.9%) were the most popular venues, followed by villas, holiday farms, castles and restaurants. Some of the growing destinations are farms, alpine regions and beaches.

Wedding tourism is also becoming an increasingly more online phenomenon, both for operators and for customers. For the structures surveyed, search engines (23%) turn out to be the top channel of acquisition of contacts, while for the wedding planners, these are social networks (24.8%). On the customer front, instead, the growth of the online environment in this matter can be seen with the rising number of hashtags dedicated to weddings abroad as well as the creation of mini wedding sites.

In Italy, more than 60,000 professionals work in the wedding industry, a growing phenomenon in recent years. Among them, there are several wedding planners, for which qualified training programs are increasingly urgent. According to the survey, 29.7% of those interviewed participated in specific training courses for the sector in 2018, while no less than 60.7% would be interested in participating in

the future.

According to the workers interviewed, the expectations for 2019 is a further increase in demand, estimated to be between 5 and 10%. The largest increase is expected in some areas in the south like Puglia, Sicily or Basilicata. There will also be a consolidation of the emerging markets in terms of turnover, especially from Saudi Arabia and the Far East.

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