



SIMONELLI STUDIO

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY + PLANNING

10 Things You Need to Know Before Getting Married in Italy

What is more evocative than the idea of getting married in Italy? The country known for romance, great food, and fantastic wine is the ideal setting for the wedding of your dreams. Travel has never been more affordable and within reach than it is now, which means that it's easier than ever to turn your bridal dreams into a reality. Yes, there is the added cost of the travel itself, but on average the total cost for a wedding in Italy gives couples more bang for their buck as well as an amazing variety to choose from on all levels. But before we get ahead of ourselves, let's cover 10 things you need to know before getting married in Italy.

#1 - Wedding Budget

Perhaps you already have an idea in mind of what you are able to spend for the wedding. Or maybe you have no idea because who knows what weddings cost until you start shopping around! What's for sure, assuming you're not eloping where it's just the two of you (more on that later), is that you need to build some certainties into your budget:

- Wedding venue
- Wedding gown & suit
- Catering & beverage
- Wedding planner (or at minimum a month-of coordinator)
- Photographer and/or Videographer
- Florals & decor
- Music (DJ or live band)

How much to spend on all of the above depends on how many guests you plan to have, where and when you want to have the ceremony and reception, and what you value the most. A few things to consider are that catering (including alcohol) is much more affordable in Italy than in other places (certainly in comparison to the US & the UK). Many of the venues in Italy are already stunning, so you won't have to break the bank on decor or florals. Plus, things like tables, chairs, & linens are included in the venue rental cost. At the end of the day, all you'll have left is photos, so don't skimp on photography. There will undoubtedly be other expenses added to that shortlist, but whatever your budget, we can help you select vendors and locations that work for you.

#2 - The Wedding Venue



Italy itself is already an incredible place to celebrate the big day, but what's even more is the endless variety of venues to choose from - at literally any budget. From castles to villas to vineyards to cathedrals, there are SO many options. Italy is very extra. Booking your wedding venue is the first thing you should do as it may require 10-12 months advance notice. What you'll def want to take into consideration is budget, style, number of guests, and transportation.

Places like the Amalfi Coast, Lake Como, and Venice are the perfect setting for a luxurious & over the top wedding. They also come with a hefty price tag, and hey, if you can swing it then hats off and let's do it! However, if those are out of reach or if you want a simpler wedding, that doesn't mean that we won't be able to find an Italian venue that works for you. Consider less traveled regions like Umbria or perhaps the innumerable Venetian Villas just outside the big city. Also, consider the season in which you want to get hitched. May through September is ideal in terms of weather, but getting married in the off season, November-February, can save you big. Then, consider how you and your guests will reach the venue and which airport you'll fly into. It may be easy for some guests to reach the ceremony spot but if there are a lot of stairs involved it could be tough for even impossible for others. Lastly, take into consideration if the venue has enough accommodations for the total number of guests. If not, are there nearby hotels where they can stay and where you'll be able to provide a shuttle?



No matter what you've envisioned, the size of your budget, or who will be attending, we can help you find the perfect spot.



#3 - Do Hire a Wedding Planner

While it is simpler to plan a local wedding on your own, getting married abroad is trickier. The average wedding requires somewhere between 500-800 hours of planning - basically a second job. Add to that mix the time difference, language barriers, cultural variances, and you can expect the number to increase. Working with a wedding planner will help you in several important ways that will save you both time and money. A wedding planner can provide venue recommendations based on your style, vision, and budget. Planners also have trusted/reliable vendors. They can assist with translation, contract negotiation, will know all the required paperwork, and last but certainly not least, will be there on the day-of to manage everything behind the scenes while you relax and enjoy the festivities. The cost of a planner is not a huge expense, and in reality it can save you money and hours of unnecessary stress.



Also, a word to the wise, when speaking to wedding companies or venues in Italy, there might be someone on staff called a "wedding planner," but often there is a difference between how you define that role and how they define it. "Wedding planners" may simply provide you a list of preferred vendors with whom you can speak directly, aka you pay for their list, not planning services. In that case, you will essentially be DIYing your wedding. Maybe that's cool with you, but it's important to ask if what you are paying for will be a service that supports you throughout the entire planning process or if it's a list of vendors and/or a day-of coordinator. Simonelli Studio is 100% transparent about how we operate and will go over these aspects in detail before you decide what suits your needs. Contact us to see what we offer for wedding planning services.

#4 - Passport Expiration

I know, it sounds off subject. It may not seem like such an essential point for a wedding in Italy, but for many visitors, there must be at least 6 months validity which remain *after the planned departure date* from Italy. Some guests may be taking long vacations that will last beyond the duration of your wedding festivities, but others may only have time for a few days. If they show up to the airport with a passport that expires in less than 6 months, it could mean a costly replacement as well as a lost day or more of travel. So be sure to remind everyone to check their passport expiration date well in advance of the wedding.

#5 - Legality

There is that tricky part - how do you make it official? The bureaucratic mess that is endless required documentation in Italy is real. Affidavits, certificates, notaries, etc. can be a headache, but it's pretty straight forward. You'll need to give yourself 6 months to get all the appropriate documents and will need to provide:

- Affidavits or the "Nulla Osta," a certificate of non-impediment (legal obstacles) standing in the way of getting married.
- An "Atto Notorio", a document signed by two individuals which confirms publicly that again, you have no legal impediments.
- A declaration of intent with the civil registrar of the city where you are getting married.
- Divorce papers or a death certificate if you have been previously married.
- An original birth certificate from both parties.
- A valid passport or national ID card.

Then depending on the type of ceremony you want to have, there could be other documentation as well. This depends on religion and age. However, another option to consider is to have a civil ceremony in your home country before the wedding and then to have a symbolic ceremony when you arrive here.

#6 - Include Your Country's Traditions In the Plan

This one may seem obvious, but don't be fooled - it's not. If you have not previously discussed the wedding timeline with the planner, the photographer, the caterer, all the vendors, etc. it could turn out to be very confusing for all. One of the most common examples is toasting. Italians don't do wedding speeches, while many other countries have entire traditions around them which can last for an hour or more. If no one is eating that fresh hot pasta while the father of the bride is waxing poetic, it's going to be awkward for the caterer's timing. Perhaps there's a special dish that is essential to your wedding reception, for instance, Lamingtons for Australians. In a case such as this, we can suggest caterers or bakers who can provide exactly what it is you're looking for. Another example is the wedding entourage. Americans and British couples often have large wedding parties. French & Italians do not. If you are in the former category & want your crew to be in the getting ready room, we can make sure you've got the right space to do so.



It's common for British & American couples to have a large wedding party with multiple bridesmaids & groomsmen. You'll want to have plenty of room for everyone to get ready before the ceremony begins. Let's make sure there's ample space for all, including the mimosas.

#7 - Wait - How Long is Dinner?!?



Wedding receptions in Italy are focused on what Italy does best; food, and lots of it. Before the dinner even starts, there is “aperitivi” or cocktail hour. At this time, guests are served “antipasti” from multiple stations set up around the room or outdoor area. There will be various delicacies like handmade mozzarella, fresh sliced meats and cheeses, salads, stews, breads, cooked eggs with freshly grated truffle, tempura, and of course lots of wine. Sounds like a lot, right? It is, and often foreign guests get confused and think THIS is dinner. Little do they know, we’re just getting started. Now it’s time to head to the table. Dinner begins with “primi piatti,” aka pasta or risotto. Then comes the “secondi piatti” or the main dish. This is often a meat dish along with various sides called “cortoni”. Think grilled veggies or roasted potatoes. The cake, usually millefoglie, is made with layers of puff pastry, cream, and powdered sugar. Lastly, there is a banquet table covered in desserts or “dolci”. The whole meal lasts from 3-4 hours. If that sounds like too much for you, the menu can absolutely be reigned in or made shorter, but that is the standard around here. It’s important to discuss this with your wedding planner or caterer, especially if your priority is the dance floor. Whatever you choose, your guests will walk away with delicious memories of that dinner for years to come.



#8 - Wedding Traditions in Italy

They do things differently around here, and whether or not you decide to adopt these cultural traditions is up to you. But you should at least consider them when creating your wedding timeline and budget. After all, when in Rome...

- Confetti & Bomboniere: No, we aren't talking about little pieces of paper thrown into the air. In Italy, confetti are sugar-coated almonds that come in different colors and (these days) a wide variety of flavors. They are usually set on top of a display table, in bowls with spoons, where guests can fill up little cloth baggies with any variety they choose. That little bag is called a bomboniera and is considered a thank you gift to your guests and it signifies good luck.



- The Satin Pouch: you know that scene in Godfather Part I at Connie's wedding where everyone is giving her money in envelopes and she drops it in a bag? That's the satin pouch. In Italy, cash is king. Men who give money to the bride also get to dance with her. The purpose is to receive seed money for your start as newlyweds!



- The Groom's Tie: The bride isn't the only spouse getting cold hard cash. The groom's tie is often ceremoniously cut into pieces and sold for cash. It's a gift that is meant to go towards the honeymoon.

- The Bridal Bouquet: This is delivered to the bride by her soon to be husband before she walks down the the isle. It's the final gift a boyfriend gives to his girlfriend before she becomes his wife. The bride can still choose the design & florals but it's the groom who pays the check and delivers the goods.

- La Serenata - aka, a serenade from the groom and his friends from outside the window or balcony of the bride the night before the wedding. It's a festive moment! Often family & friends are invited to watch the spectacle

#9 - A Wedding Website Is a Must

If you are planning a destination wedding, you're going to have guests coming from all over the place. Let's say there are 100 guests. Do you want to answer the same questions 100 times? Trust us, without a website that will happen. Guests will need to know about accommodation, shuttle services, and what to do in the area. There are endless options out there for building a simple, free wedding website. Additionally, it's easy to create and incorporate a custom Google map with suggestions for nearby wineries, outdoor activities, or tours. This will go a long way in making sure that you do not end up being a tour guide or get bombarded with questions. Let's get you online!

#10 - Style Tips

Every destination has its unique terrain. When shopping for your wedding gown, shoes, and accessories, you'll want to consider where you'll be walking down the aisle. Wineries tend to have quite rocky soil. If you want high heels, perhaps you could adapt by opting for a wedge. Maybe you want a cathedral veil, but it turns out there's no way for you to enter the ceremony without passing some thorny rose bushes and/or the location you chose is windier than previously thought. What about the material of your gown? It's going to get wrinkled in the suitcase. Does your venue have a steamer? Should you go for a material which is more forgiving in terms of being smooshed into a rolley bag? Perhaps these all seem obvious, but they are real life examples from lessons learned.

This beautiful dinner was set in a vineyard, amongst the rolling hills of Tuscany. It was absolutely beautiful but the bride was tossing rocks out of her way until she finally changed into her Birkenstocks. These are the kind of wardrobe & terrain heads-up tips that our couples find indispensable.



Bonus on Elopement!

In #1 of this list we went over some basics that need to be included in your wedding budget with the assumption that you want a medium to large sized wedding. That list will look much different if you are planning to elope, which in the last several years has become more and more prevalent. Many couples are opting to pass on the big fat wedding and to buck tradition. In this case, you won't need to hire a caterer to feed a ton of guests. The DJ can be replaced with a quality speaker set up (we have that) and a Spotify playlist. You're still going to need a photographer, a planner, & an officiant. You'll still want a bouquet & a boutonniere, a gown & a suit, and of course accommodations. But overall, if you choose to elope you'll

be spending much less on everyone else and more on you two. Perhaps you're looking for an adventure elopement in the Italian Alps, the Aeolian Islands, or maybe of the wild western coast or Sardinia. Whatever type of elopement setting suits your fancy, Italy's got it and we're here to help you make it happen.

This list is not meant to be all inclusive, but as you can see, there are many things which need to be taken into account and planned for in advance. Simonelli Studio has been working with couples from all over the world since 2001 and we'd love to be a part of your big day. Drop us a line and let us know how we can help.



Arrivederci!!!