

We take a look at the spectacular wedding of Cat and Dan Wade in Emilia Romagna earlier this summer

OUR *dream* WEDDING

WORDS : CAT DOUGLAS

WE ARRIVED IN CATTOLICA one week before our wedding. We flew from Liverpool to Ancona with my parents, step-parents, sister (chief bridesmaid) and a couple of very good friends. I must admit I was a little nervous about getting my dress there. It wasn't the smallest of dresses – maybe I should have thought about that when I chose it! I decided to put it in an old locking case and not draw any attention to it. When we arrived in Ancona everybody got their luggage and as luck would have it my dress was the last case to materialise. I did have a slight panic but all was good.

When we arrived, we knew we had a couple of days before half of the guests arrived so we took this time to relax a little. We didn't do any sightseeing and we asked our family not to go and visit Gradara as we wanted it to be a surprise. On the Sunday Marion and Franco, our



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wedding planners, invited us to their house for afternoon tea. I had a feeling that Marion lived in a nice area but I wasn't prepared for the view as I walked through her house out into the back garden! We were greeted by a beautiful valley with Gradara castle perched up on the hill in front of us. We spent that afternoon eating delicious food, drinking red wine and sitting in Marion's spa in her garden. Could this actually get any better?

A NIGHT ON THE TOWNS

We decided to have our hen and stag night out there with half of the wedding party. I didn't have a clue what to expect as my sister and other bridesmaids organised this for me. The boys went to Rimini for a night out and so we decided to stay in Cattolica. As I walked down the stairs in the hotel, I was greeted by 25 women all clapping and looking ready for a night out. I was handed a halo and the most beautiful angel wings and as I was wearing all white it looked really pretty and I confess I was glad I wasn't made to wear L plates! The next minute my sister Fi said, 'Right, our lift is here... let's go!'

Little did I know that they had hired a little road train to take us to our destination! It was such good fun driving through the streets with the driver ringing the bell. The rest of the night was spent in the Gat du Port restaurant surrounded by luxury yachts



followed by drinks at the Porto Santo cocktail bar. I can't tell you what happened next... girls have got to have some secrets! I think we had a better time than the boys who ended their evening with a skinny dip in the hotel pool just as the local *carabinieri* decided to cruise by. What they were doing there at 3.30 a.m. I don't know. Thankfully next morning Franco worked his charm and got them all off the hook.

METEOROLOGICAL MISHAP

After a totally relaxing week with our family and friends it was suddenly our wedding day. I woke up at 4am to howling winds and torrential rains. The weather had been amazing all week - I couldn't believe this was happening. I couldn't do anything about it so I decided to just go back to sleep. When I woke at 9am to a knock at the door, the rain and wind had gone and

Fi was there with my breakfast. I was so excited. We had an appointment at the hairdressers with Paolo, who was amazing. He really knew what style would suit me and my dress. He did the bridesmaids' hair in the salon, set mine and then came to my hotel room to put the finishing touches in place. One of my bridesmaids, Clare, is a make-up artist, so she made us all look beautiful and it was really nice to have one of my best friends do the make-up.

I had requested that the photographer come to the hotel and take a few pictures of all of us getting ready. We did have a few moments during that time and I'm so glad they captured this on camera. Four pm was





here before we knew it so I asked the girls to leave the room as my mum helped me get into my dress. When they walked back into the room with my dad, they were filled with emotion and I felt like a princess. They left for Gradara with my mum before me. I was left alone in my room with my dad. They say you are supposed to have a special moment with your dad at this time. We didn't have time for any of that as it took us three attempts to leave the room – what with dad needing just one more toilet stop, me forgetting to put deodorant on and then finally my dad treading on my dress and hearing a tearing sound!. Nothing that a hairgrip and some sellotape couldn't mend and finally 10 minutes later we were on our way!

FAIRYTALE SETTING

As we pulled up my mum and the three bridesmaids were waiting for me. I heard the start of the music and that's when I got my first flush of excitement. I really did think I would be a wreck on the day but I managed to keep it together. I cannot explain in words how it felt to walk into the cloisters of the convent villa. I couldn't take everyone in, all I remember is seeing my sister crying as I walked towards her – she was waiting for me at the top of the aisle. I tried



to take a minute to have a look around. All those people (104 guests) had taken the time and expense to be there for me and Dan. It really was unbelievable. As I walked towards Dan, I could see birds flying and singing round the cloisters and the beautiful blue sky above. It was a true fairytale.


Our guests were equally blown away with the place, set in the shade of Gradara castle and overlooking the sea. It was all spectacular, from the ceremony, to walking into the castle grounds to having the reception in the courtyard of the most wonderful restaurant, the cake with bright green apples supporting the tiers, and there were incredible fireworks (a surprise gift from our parents). It really was all so special.

The locals were so welcoming, too, and cheered us as we walked through the cobbled streets of the medieval village. They even had

signs up in some of the small bars with our names and best wishes on.

THANKS TO DREAM ACADEMY

It went so smoothly thanks to Marion and Franco. She was the perfect wedding planner from the start to the end and we still chat now, weeks after. I have never had such an amazing day in my life. The professionalism and thought that Marion demonstrated on the lead-up to the wedding and on the wedding week was outstanding. Not only was she a massive support to us both, I would now class her as a true friend and I love her to bits. Looking back, I think you appreciate it so much more. It was nice to get home and hear how everybody loved our wedding day. I was so proud of everyone and we both felt so privileged to have all the people we love out there to share our day.

We will definitely go back to Cattolica and Gradara. We are already talking about having a reunion next May! It's a place where we will take our family and a place to be proud of. Dan and I have definitely found our special place in the big wide world. 
Details: www.dreamacademy.it



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