

case study

right from the start...

Cat Douglas and fiancé Dan Wade go on a sourcing tour to be sure of getting things right



WORDS : CAT DOUGLAS
IMAGES : MARION HUNTER

ORIGINALLY, we went for a region in Italy that seemed so popular. I was concerned that I was going to be treated like I was on a conveyor belt. As there were so many people wanting to get married there, we were told by a few planners that we wouldn't be able to secure a date until January 2007, which would be leaving it too late for people to get organised as we wanted to get married in May. The other thing that I didn't like very much is that I wouldn't be able to meet my wedding planner until I got over there.

I had another search on the internet for other Italian regions, including Le Marche and when we first saw Gradara we instantly fell in love with the way it looked. Our first thought was: 'How can we ever afford to get married in such a place?' It was like a dream come true when we found that we could afford such a venue after we contacted Marion Hunter at Dream Academy and talked through our budget with her. She did all she could and I'm sure a lot more to accommodate this and most important of all she was able to confirm the time and date of our wedding before we had even left to return home!

LET THE PLANNER TAKE THE STRAIN

Your wedding day is one of the most significant in your life and it needs to be right. With all the stresses and strains in the lead-up to the day, what you don't want to be worrying about is if the venue is going to be everything you've ever dreamt of. It's always a risk if you haven't seen the venue or met your wedding



...when we first saw Gradara we instantly fell in love with the way it looked

planner beforehand, so I think that a sourcing tour is really important. If you were to get married in the country you live in, you would always see the venue before the wedding. Why should it be different just because it's abroad? The flights are cheap enough to go for a long weekend – plus it's a good excuse for a mini-break after the engagement!

I instantly hit it off with Marion via emails and phone calls, so I didn't have any reservations about her as a person but it was good to see her in action with her professional manner whilst showing us around the area. She and her husband Franco seemed to know everyone in the area. We felt like royalty and

they were very kind and hospitable. It was really good to meet the local suppliers and especially the mayor, who would be marrying us. We left with arms full of literature on Gradara – the locals (including Marion and Franco of course) are very proud of the region and we feel honoured to be allowed to celebrate our special day in such an amazing location. It's like a fairytale.

EASIER THAN CHOOSING THE DRESS

I would recommend that other couples looking to get married in Italy do the same and include a trip to their venue in the wedding



Not only does the tour give peace of mind but it's nice discussing things with your planner about the wedding and knowing exactly what you're talking about instead of second guessing

budget. It's as important as getting the dress right and, believe me, the place we chose eventually was a lot easier to find than the perfect dress! Not only does the tour give you peace of mind but it's nice discussing things with your planner about the wedding and knowing exactly what you're talking about instead of second guessing. You also come up with little ideas when you visit the venue that you may not have thought of had you not visited.

I have to say that Marion has been amazing since day one. I have been able to contact her whenever I've needed to and she really appreciates how important the day is for me and Dan and the difficulties that come with

not being in the same country. I am a control freak and a highly organised person and having someone else take care of this special day for us could have been very hard. I have one hundred percent faith and trust in Dream Academy which is obviously what you need with your wedding planner and the truth is that she has become more like a friend and the voice of reason in stressful situations.

I'm so excited about our venue which is an open air ceremony in the cloisters of a historic convent villa set in the shade of Gradara castle. We have castles in the UK but sadly not the climate to go with it and the way that the castle in Gradara is lit up

at night is breathtaking. We just cannot wait for our 100 guests to experience it too. We see the place that we are getting married as being a place that we'll keep visiting after the wedding for anniversaries, to take the children and of course to see Marion and Franco again. I'm sure our families will feel the same after the wedding too! [diw](#)

Don't miss how Cat and Dan's big day turns out in the September issue of Dream Italian Weddings!

Contact: Dream Academy

Tel: (+39) 0541 964765

Email: info@dreamacademy.it

www.dreamacademy.it