



Italian Wedding Photographers by Alfonso Longobardi Photography Studio

A Romantic Wedding in Rome for Sarah & Des at Villa Grazioli

Sarah & Des were married in August this year, near Rome. Their wedding was a beautiful and elegant event which fulfilled their every expectation and that they will never forget, and it all began just one year ago, in Venice, when Des took Sarah on a surprise trip to Venice. After a romantic evening meal, the couple walked through the magnificent Saint Mark's Square and against a beautiful sunset, Des got down on one knee and proposed. For Sarah, it was a completely magical and unexpected moment.

When they returned home the couple decided they would get married the following year. Inspired by their trip to Italy and their plans for a summer holiday in Rome, the couple decided to combine their wedding and holiday plans and give their families and friends a fabulous holiday experience.



While researching wedding venues in Rome, the couple came upon Villa Grazioli and it was love at first sight! The villa, a perfect example of 16th Century art, history and culture, was built in 1580 by Cardinal Antonio Carafa. Villa Grazioli sits on a hill overlooking the eternal city of Rome, the sea and Tivoli and is filled with works of art by Italian masters like Ciampelli, Carracci and Pannini.

As a member of a chain of small luxury villas and hotels, Villa Grazioli offers style, quality and a warm welcoming atmosphere. Sarah and Des felt this would provide the ideal balance of romance and fun that they were looking for in their dream wedding venue. In fact, the couple were so certain that the villa was THE venue for their wedding day that they booked their date without even visiting! Sarah and Des know this may seem like a reckless decision to some couples, however they were both very sure about what they wanted, and for Sarah, as a Personal Assistant and Events Coordinator, arranging events remotely and based purely on internet research, is an everyday occurrence.



The couple visited Villa Grazioli in April to finalise the details of their wedding day and to, finally, see their venue. As soon as they saw the villa, stepped into its luxurious interiors and visited its lush gardens with their amazing views, it felt like home and Sarah and Des instantly knew they had made the right decision! There they met the lovely Emanuela, the villa's Events Coordinator, who helped Sarah and Des to create their wonderful wedding day.

Sarah and Des chose to celebrate their wedding with 30 of their closest family members and friends. This was the perfect group size to make their wedding a truly intimate and special experience. It is not every day you get married and it is not every day you can have the people closest to you together in one place, relaxing and enjoying each other's company. The couple felt it was important to give their friends and family an experience they may otherwise not have had. In fact, the couple's families and friends had an amazing visit which combined a holiday in Rome, staying in a 16th Century Villa, visiting the Madonna Del Tufo church in Roca Di Papa and being part of one of the most significant events in Sarah and Des' lives!



The ceremony was particularly important to the couple. Des is Catholic and so they decided to marry in church a Catholic wedding ceremony, in the Sanctuary of the Madonna Del Tufo in nearby Roca di Papa. The Sanctuary of Madonna del Tufo (Our Lady of the Sandstone) can be found on the slopes of Mount Cavo. The sanctuary's origins date back to 1490, when, according to legend, a chunk of rock, weighing 150 tons, rolled down Mount Cavo and was about to flatten a traveller. However, the traveller's prayers to the madonna were answered, the rock stopped rolling and his life was saved. The traveller gave thanks by building a small church, where the rock was placed.



Sarah & Des' religious ceremony was celebrated by an English speaking priest, Father John. The couple's ceremony was especially significant and Father John made his sermon very personal to Sarah and Des, so much so that they were allowed to keep a copy, which is unheard of in the UK. The couple felt truly honoured to have been married in the sanctuary and by Father John.

Following the ceremony, the couple and their wedding party returned to Villa Grazioli where aperitifs were held on the front lawn while Sarah and Des took advantage of the villa's stately elegance and its beautiful works of art as a backdrop to photos of the two of them. Dinner was served on the terrace garden behind the villa with its breathtaking views over Rome followed by wedding cake, a champagne toast and dancing in the villas wonderful halls.



Sarah and Des have so many wonderful memories of their wedding day that it's almost impossible to pick favourites, but Sarah's particularly remembers walking down the aisle and seeing Des for the first time that day. Sarah was accompanied down the aisle by her grandma, who looked almost as amazing as the

bride herself. Other fond memories include putting on her dress 'for real'. Sarah knew she had found the dress she would wear for her wedding as soon as she saw it, in a little shop in the UK. Everytime she tried the dress on, Sarah hated taking it off, but putting on her dress on the day of her wedding was such a wonderful and emotional experience, knowing that long awaited moment had finally arrived. Sarah also remembers worrying she would become very emotional and break down during the wedding vows, instead she was so composed and happy that she breezed through them! Later that evening, during the particularly emotional and memorable speeches, was the only time Sarah cried all day!



Getting ready with her bridesmaids, is another favourite moment and Sarah believes every girl needs 'her girls' with her on her wedding day. Sarah's sister in-law also did her hair and was so nervous about the results but Sarah loved her hair-do saying 'I looked like me! Which is what I wanted'. Walking out of the villa to the garden terrace and seeing their families and friends clapping and smiling and ready for a great night, against the fabulous backdrop of the Roman hills, is one of Sarah and Des' unforgettable memories. As is seeing their flowers and their wedding cake which were perfectly and faithfully recreated by Emanuela from pictures sent by the couple. One of the funniest memories Sarah and Des' have of their wedding day came during the dancing after dinner. They still laugh even now as they think of their DJ, who kept trying to mix records together and getting it wrong.

In Sarah's words... 'I will always look back on our wedding day with immense love and happiness, it was the theme of the day. I smile whenever I think about the day, from getting married to having everyone you love most around you and for them to be happy and laughing (there was lots of laughter) is a truly wonderful thing'.



Words & photography by Alfonso Longobardi Photography Studio www.alfonsolongobardi.com taken from the Italian Wedding Photographers Blog at www.italianweddingphotographers.com/blog