ADRIANO WEDDING MEMORIES

Planning a wedding in Southern Italy from abroad

What to sort out, and when.



A practical guide by a documentary wedding photographer based in Calabria.
Written for couples who plan from far away.

BEFORE YOU START

A short list of decisions, in the right order

Planning a wedding in another country feels huge at first. In practice it comes down to a handful of decisions made in the right order. This guide puts them in order, based on the weddings I've photographed for couples who planned from far away.

It's written by a photographer, not a wedding planner. Where something depends on your nationality or on local rules, I'll tell you who to ask.

12+ MONTHS Before anything else

- **Pick the area first, then the venue.** Calabria, Puglia, Basilicata and the Amalfi Coast feel very different, and so do travel times. Decide which part of the South you want before you fall for a specific venue.
- **Decide whether you want a wedding planner.** Almost half of foreign couples marrying in Italy use one. If you don't speak Italian and can't visit often, a local planner saves you a lot of stress.
- **Legal or symbolic ceremony?** You can marry legally in Italy, but foreign citizens need paperwork from their own country, usually a *nulla osta*. Many couples do the legal part at home and have a symbolic ceremony here. See page 6, and check the rules for your nationality with your consulate before you set the date.
- **Book the venue and the date.** Use the questions on page 5 before you sign anything.

9 MONTHS The people who shape the day

- **Book your key vendors:** photographer, planner if you have one, catering if the venue doesn't include it.
- **Think about your guests' travel.** Which airport? Will they need a car? Where will they sleep? They'll ask you, so it helps to have an answer early.
- **Consider a wedding weekend.** A welcome dinner and a relaxed brunch the morning after give everyone more time together, and often make the wedding day itself calmer.

6 MONTHS — Put the day on paper

- **Send save-the-dates with travel tips:** the nearest airport, when to book flights, and whether guests will need a car.
- **Start building the timeline.** Begin with the ceremony time and work outwards: getting ready, travel between places, the reception. Real driving times matter more than distances on a map.
- **Have a video call with each key vendor.** Hearing a voice and seeing a face builds more trust than twenty emails.

3 MONTHS — Get specific

- **Finalise the timeline** with your planner and photographer, minute by minute where it matters.
- **Agree on the family photos:** a short list of groups, a place and a time. Done well, they take minutes, not an hour.
- **Visit if you can,** even briefly. If not, ask your vendors for photos or videos of the venue at the same time of day as your ceremony.

LAST MONTH — Share the plan

- **Send your guests a simple schedule:** where to be, and when.
- **Send the final timeline to every vendor,** so everyone works from the same plan.
- **Leave margins.** Ten or fifteen spare minutes between key moments will absorb the delay you can't predict, like a sudden summer wind or a slow road.

> **A real example.** At one of my weddings in Calabria, a strong summer wind hit just as the couple left for church. We arrived about ten minutes late, and nobody noticed: the margins in the timeline had already made room for it.

A REAL DAY

What a wedding with a 4 pm ceremony looks like

Adapted from a real timeline in Calabria. These times are only a guide: every wedding is different, and the real schedule depends on your venue, the season, the light and things nobody controls, like traffic or the weather. We build yours together.

12:00	Getting ready. If you're getting ready in different places, two photographers can cover both.
15:15	Leave for the ceremony, timed on real driving times, with a margin.
16:00	Ceremony, usually about an hour. The few posed photos are agreed in advance: which ones, when and where.
17:00	Hugs and congratulations outside. Then either a few couple photos nearby, or straight to the reception to welcome your guests. You decide this beforehand.
17:45	Reception. The venue team leads, and nobody stands around waiting.
Sunset	A short moment for the two of you, agreed in advance, close to the venue.
Evening	Dinner, first dance, cake. In the South, the cake often arrives close to midnight.

> **Good to know.** Southern Italian weddings are long, warm and loud. Dinner alone can run to four or five courses, and the moments that matter are spread across twelve hours, not just around the ceremony. Plan your photography with that in mind.

BEFORE YOU SIGN

Eight questions to ask your venue

1. How many guests can you host, indoors and outdoors?
2. Is there a minimum number of rooms we have to book?
3. Are there months or days when you don't host weddings?
4. Can we hold the ceremony here? Legal, symbolic, or both?
5. What's the plan B if it rains or the wind picks up?
6. Is there a time limit for music and the party?
7. How do guests get here from the nearest airport, and is there parking?
8. Which vendors do you require, and which can we choose ourselves?

GETTING THERE

Three airports in Calabria

Lamezia Terme (SUF) is the main hub, about an hour from Tropea and the Costa degli Dei. **Reggio Calabria (REG)** is close to Scilla and the Costa Viola. **Crotone (CRV)** serves the Ionian side.

Direct flights change from season to season, so check current routes before you book. Year-round, you can connect through Rome or Milan. Renting a car is usually the easiest way to reach the most beautiful venues, which are often exactly where trains don't go.



The legal side, in plain words

This is an overview to help you ask the right questions, not legal advice. The rules depend on your nationality and can change, so always check with your consulate and with the town hall where you'll marry, or let your planner handle it.

1 Three ways to get married here

- **Civil ceremony** at a town hall, or at a venue the town has approved for weddings. Legally valid.
- **Religious ceremony with legal effect**, usually Catholic, arranged through the parishes. Legally valid once it's registered.
- **Symbolic ceremony**, anywhere you like, with no legal value. Many couples do the legal part at home, before or after, and keep the day in Italy free of paperwork.

2 The document everything depends on

Each of you will usually need a ***nulla osta***: a declaration that you're free to marry, issued by your own country's embassy or consulate. Some countries use a certificate of no impediment instead, and some citizens also need a sworn statement called an *atto notorio*. These documents are only valid for a limited time, often six months, so timing matters.

3 Foreign documents

Documents issued abroad usually need to be legalised or carry an apostille, and translated into Italian. Ask the town hall exactly which ones they want before you request anything.

4 At the town hall

A few days before the wedding, you both go to the marriage office to make a formal declaration in front of the registrar. If you don't speak Italian, you'll need an interpreter, and the same goes for the ceremony itself. You don't need to live in Italy to get married here.

5 A Catholic wedding

Start with your home parish and the parish where you'll marry. There are church documents to gather and usually a marriage preparation course, so allow several months.

6 After the wedding

Your marriage must be registered in your home country. Ask your consulate how, and whether the Italian certificate needs an apostille.

ABOUT ME

I'm Adriano.

I'm a documentary wedding photographer based in Calabria. I've spent more than 15 years photographing real life in the South: festivals, traditions, everyday moments.

I plan the day with you, then step back and photograph it as it happens, without staged poses. You'll always know what's happening and when, and so will your planner.

I take on a maximum of 20 weddings a year and I reply in English within 24 hours. We'll find a time for a video call that works where you live.

Planning your wedding in Southern Italy?

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