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FLORENCE
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BUREAU



MAGAZINE

DESTINATION FLORENCE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



DF
Destination
#Florence

Issue 1

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Free issue

**DESTINATION FLORENCE
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

Via del Tiratoio 1, 50124 Florence (Italy)

For 20+ years, Destination Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau has been the official association for promoting Florence as a destination. Our mission is to attract quality leisure tourism, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, events) and destination weddings.

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Rethinking the cradle

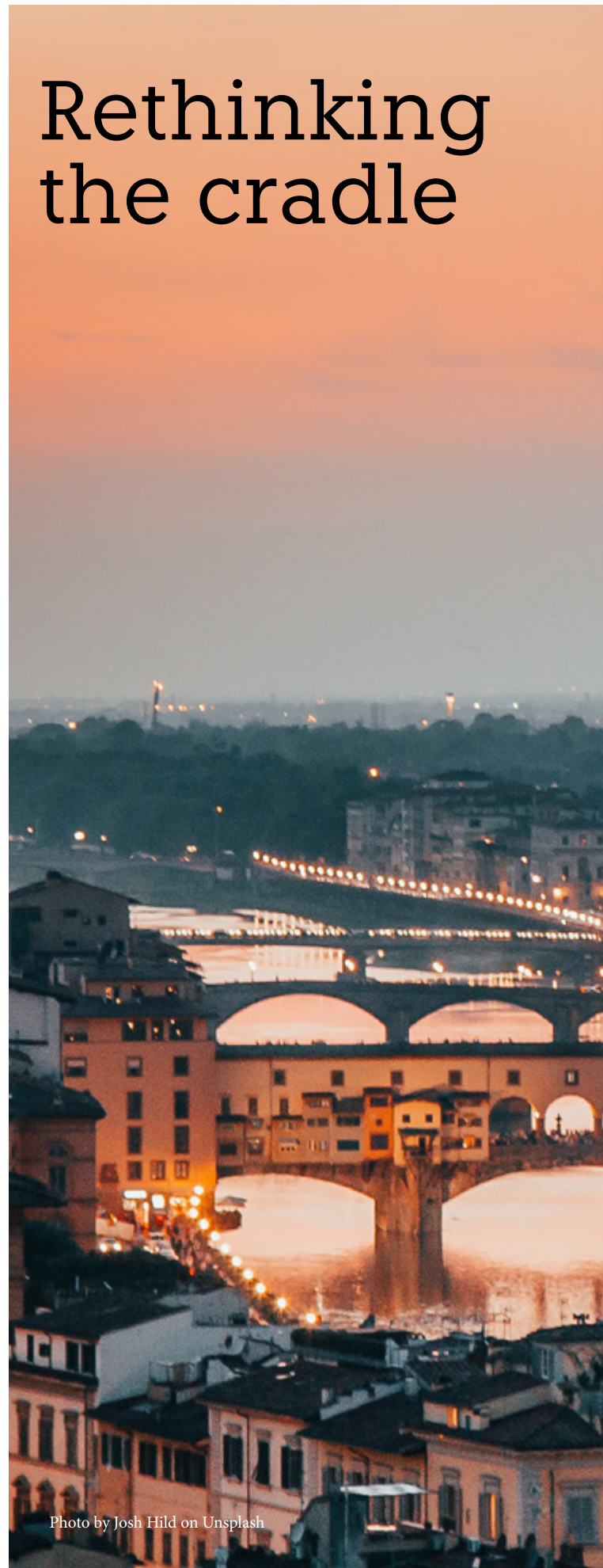


Photo by Josh Hild on Unsplash



It's hard to imagine what the world will be like after the pandemic. Everything seems possible and, at the same time, unimaginable. What's certain is that the restart will only reward those who are capable of working together, bringing together the best forces and promoting the complementary actions of the area's stakeholders.

This is the fundamental value of organizations like Destination Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau: unifying local excellence, gathering resources and harnessing them as a driving force for a sustainable resumption.

We have worked with this goal in mind during these months of the pandemic, consolidating relations with local stakeholders such as the City of Florence, the Chamber of Commerce, Fondazione CR Firenze, Regione Toscana, the University of Florence, Firenze Fiera and our 300-plus members, who believe in our project and with whom we share a vision for the future of tourism in one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

Federico Barraco

President, Destination Florence
 Convention and Visitors Bureau



Florence is one of the strongest brands in the world, a city so beautiful and alluring, whose name inspires and takes us on a journey. The city offers far more than we imagine, however, and often it provides much more than even we locals experience on a day-to-day basis.


The aim of this magazine is to begin talking about Florence in all its aspects, qualities which continue to fuel the mission our bureau has pursued for more than 25 years. We have the honor of seeing the city through a wide lens, in addition to knowing details and specifics about Florence given our direct contact with the local economic fabric. For this reason, we have decided to tell the world what we're doing by spotlighting stories, facts and figures, as well as the top projects and sometimes unexpected schemes that make Florence so special.

Together, we'll discover that Florence is very different to our expectations of this beautiful city. Together, our amazement will heighten our desire to return to this unique place we all love.

Carlotta Ferrari

Director, Destination Florence
 Convention and Visitors Bureau





This time
of pandemic
hasn't been
a time of
postponement.

In Florence, this time of pandemic hasn't been a time of postponement. On the contrary, it has been a time of great ferment and work to lay the foundations for a new vision of Florence, charting new courses of development and establishing new vocations for the city.

In the last few months, many investments have gone ahead, such as the vast Sant'Orsola and Santa Maria Novella complexes. These investments will focus on the best training, innovation and sustainability as we encourage and support young artisans and small business owners.



We are also continuing measures aimed at making our city smarter, as demonstrated by the ICity Rank 2020, which put Florence in first place for all of Italy.

So, a greener, more innovative, more intelligent city lies in our future. But, on their return, tourists will also

find culture at its liveliest. In addition to Florence's infinite beauty, this year will be typified by celebrations marking the 700th anniversary of Dante Alighieri's death with a busy events program, plus some outstanding exhibitions with Henry Moore at Museo Novecento and Ali Banisadr at the Bardini Museum. Last but not least, French artist JR's installation, *The Wound*, on the façade of Palazzo Strozzi makes us reflect on the closure of our cultural spaces.

Dario Nardella
Mayor of Florence

Florence secures ICAS 2024



A flyby over Florence by Italy's acrobatic arrows on May 26, 2020, to raise spirits during the pandemic. Ph. Alexandra Korey for The Florentine

Held at the Palazzo dei Congressi and Palazzo degli Affari, the leading event will welcome approximately 1,000 delegates from all over the world from 9 to 13 September, 2024.

Florence prevailed over strong competition from Sydney due to the outstanding reputation of Italy's entire aeronautical community and the Association of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIDAA); the quality of the technical visits proposed; the steadfast support of the city council, institutions and industry; the financial viability of the project; and a convincing dossier, which included a motivational video presented in the final stages of the bidding process.

"ICAS is the most important aeronautics congress in the world," Professor Erasmo Carrera, president of AIDAA, explains. "Florence 2024 will be a unique opportunity for

**34th ICAS Congress
9 < 13 Sept 2024
Palazzo Congressi +
Palazzo degli Affari
Florence
1,000+ delegates**

the entire Italian aeronautical industry—manufacturing, universities, research centres and districts—to show the products made and the research conducted in our country to the world's top stakeholders. ... We all now have the duty and responsibility to fulfil the proposal by doing our best over the next four years to make sure that ICAS 2024 becomes a successful event for the Italian and global aeronautics sector."

Carlotta Ferrari, director of Destination Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau: "We are delighted to bring this important victory

Florence has scored the 34th ICAS Congress, beating Sydney in an international bidding process. The achievement is the product of a solid nomination promoted by AIM Group International, Firenze Convention Bureau, Firenze Fiera and the Italian Association of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

home, especially in such difficult times. The news is a positive signal for our destination and the entire conference segment in Florence. We won the bid thanks to intense work with AIDAA and our members, AIM Group International and Firenze Fiera Congress & Exhibition Center, showing once more that teamwork is essential in obtaining tangible results."

"Working with AIDAA and other partners in Florence to secure a congress of high scientific value at this time in history with international events primarily postponed was even more invigorating for us," Flaminia Roberti, global sales director of AIM Group International, comments. "We are convinced that new hybrid and digital events will be an essential part of future meetings, with a different definition of the customer journey and experiences that also tap into new technologies to broaden networking and engagement opportunities for all event users."

"While we are preparing to resume the events industry in total safety, which is a key economic driver for the area, securing the 34th ICAS Congress is an important addition to the international events scheduled to be held on our premises," stated

Leonardo Bassilichi, former president of Firenze Fiera. "Securing a global event of this calibre speaks volumes about our central location, the allure and versatility of the premises, innovative amenities and up-to-the-minute technology."

Aiming higher

With an office in Florence, AIM Group International is a leading company specialising in congresses, events and communication with 60 years of experience. Founded in 1960 by an industry pioneer, Enzo Buongiorno, as one of the first PCOs, the company has quickly become the preferred partner for scientific associations and pharmaceutical companies for a wide range of events. Thanks to a successful global expansion strategy, the group now boasts a 350-strong multilingual team, working out of 17 offices around the world, offering an extraordinary breadth of experiences, including virtual and hybrid events and the digital mar-com projects curated by the brand-new communication hub, AIM Communication. Innovation and quality are the main drivers of the group, which maintains the tailor-made approach for every client.

aimgroupinternational.com

How much is a city's intellectual capital worth?

Interview with
Marco Bindi
Vice-President for National and International Research of the University of Florence.



One of the main features of a top-class conference city is the deep-seated intellectual commitment of local leaders. To date, Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau has successfully involved these leaders in international congresses. Now, Florence aims to engage these individuals further, which means seeking out leaders with international reputations, as well as developing programs aimed at expanding the city's scientific base and commercial potential.

What is the Intellectual Capital Index and what does it express?

The index allows us to assess the contribution made by all the activities associated with knowledge, research and technology transfer, which are highlighted less with other indicators, but which have repercussions on the local fabric in material, cultural and social terms. The added value determined by the activities of universities and research centers is represented by Italian and international students who move to Florence to study, who – in addition to the rent they pay and the city's allure for their friends and family – represent an invaluable intercultural value with a significant social impact and long-term relations. On the other hand, the

activities of lecturers and professors must be assessed in terms of the ability to organize scientific events locally, which translates as congresses attracting thousands of people – delegates are often accompanied by family members – and the constant flow of persons involved in meetings. The intellectual capital index strives to express this whole world that moves according to the intellectual capacity of universities and research centers.

How do we turn our attention to the economic worth of intellect?

Our area is famous all over the world for its history, art and literature. It's clear that these aspects are associated with Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance. This drives international tourism with values that result economically clearer than those promoted by university research. The University of Florence is general in its approach as it has interests in all fields, from medicine to engineering, agriculture, the environment and the humanities. The types of people who move around on the basis of these interests represent a certain level of value, or evolved tourism, which the local area recognizes better as it makes use of several aspects. Hence, this allows us to understand how this higher level in Florence – because the situation

is one of university learning and research – can have a greater economic impact compared to a similar city without higher education institutions. The economic impact might prove broader and of higher quality compared with mass tourism.

Where is the room for improvement?

Florence is positioned well in Europe. It could be positioned even better if it were to resolve a few habits that derive from mass tourism. Florence is a tourist destination and its pulling power is unquestionable. When Florence is chosen, very few objections are voiced, but at times organizers find it hard to find rentals at affordable prices. It's the same for students. Florence is a university city, but it could offer more competitive amenities and prices, plus a more structured offering. Before the pandemic, the city's administration had started to solve problems affecting students and researchers, so that they feel at ease on moving to Florence. Destination Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau is developing a student orientation section on their website and is taking a proactive approach on spreading awareness about these issues.

Strength in numbers

Florence, Gothenburg, Ljubljana, Lyon, Rotterdam, Salzburg and Valencia are sharing knowledge, experiences and best practices to promote their potential as MICE destinations. The network's first joint event took place in Brussels in March 2020, attracting great interest among Brussels-based association representatives.

SALZBURG



—**Elisabeth Kassanits-Pfoess**, Sales & Marketing Manager, Deputy Director, Salzburg Convention Bureau

“The EU CVB network is way more than a promotion and sales platform, but at the same time even more valuable, it represents a great knowledge hub for all of us. By sharing knowledge, experiences, best practice and even business leads, we strongly benefit from each other and, in the long term, our clients profit too. We have access to a large pool of ideas and inspiration, which helps every single destination to grow. As we all share common characteristics, like a focus on sustainability and innovation, as well as a personal approach within the destination, we complement each other well and you always find colleagues to exchange with on a similar level. Especially in the disruptive times that we are facing now, a network like ours is very supportive and increases your stability in the market. We set ourselves high targets to make sure we can get the best outcome of the network, for us and our future clients.”

VALENCIA

“The EU CVB Network is an excellent collaborative network based on trust between its members and the idea of building support to enable us to efficiently work towards our common goals. We are well aware of the power of partnership marketing and its ability to boost destination awareness, but we believe that



—**Manuel Ferris**, Head of València Convention Bureau

building strong partnerships should be an ongoing activity, rather than just a single event driven strategy (like the one we did in Brussels a year ago and was the starting point of the network). Instead of seeing each other only as competitors, we decided to join forces to bring attention to what we have to offer (our ideas, goals, values, etc.), also introducing ourselves to new audiences and enhancing our brand visibility. Awareness is a key ingredient in success and by working together we will make our destinations more known to potential clients and on the international scene.”

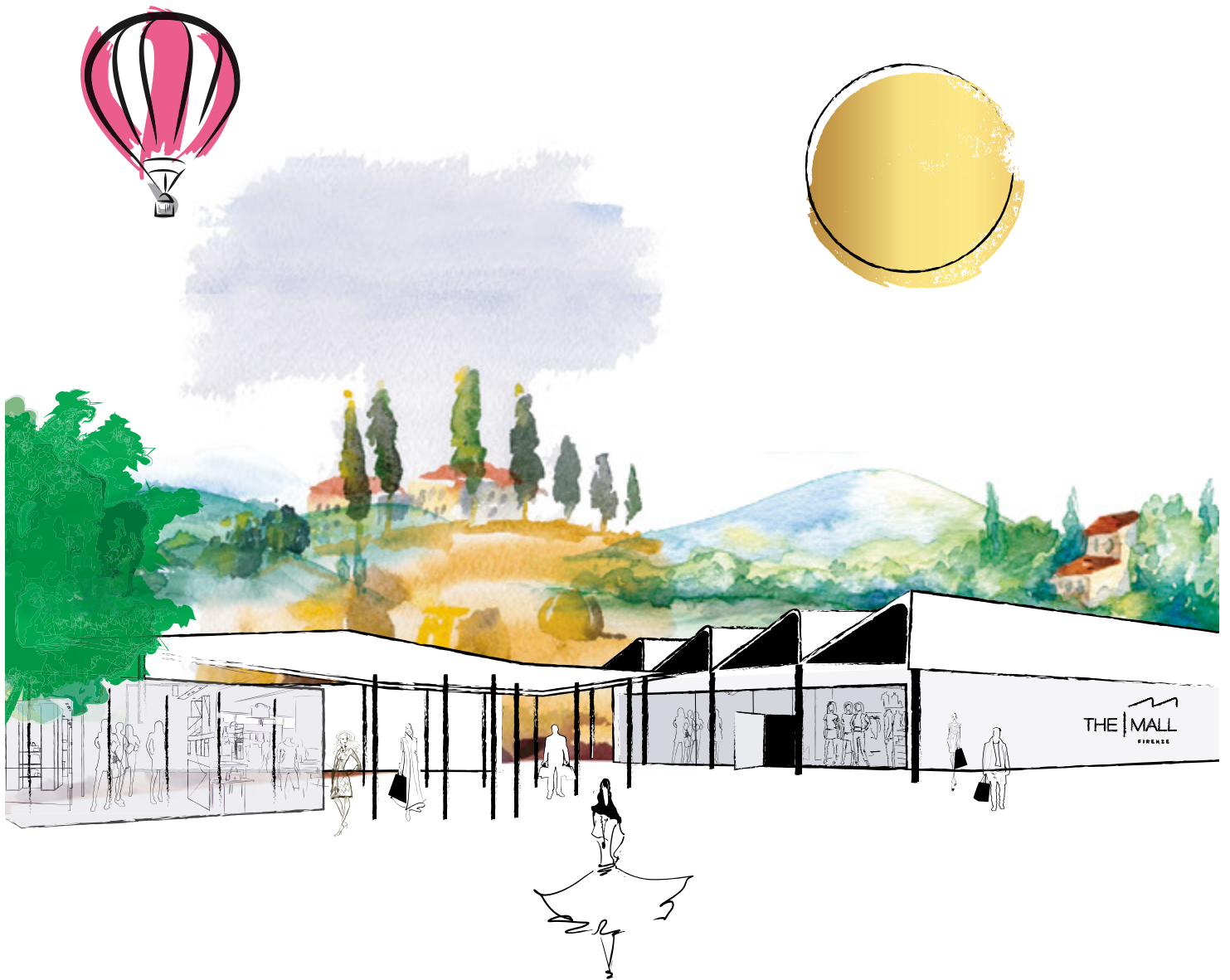
FLORENCE



—**Ilenia Pasi**, Sales Manager, Destination Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau

“Florence is really proud of being part of the EU CVB Network and one of its founding members. Everything started a couple of years ago with a coffee and some chats during the main networking events of the meeting industry, with our respective directors talking about the importance of cooperating to highlight our shared characteristics and values. Then we made this concept bloom! We combined our marketing power to create our network identity and organize dedicated events both in person and virtually (a must in these times) to introduce to our clients all the shared benefits they could profit from rotating among our destinations or creating multi-hub solutions. The EU CVB Network wants to be a bridge to seven destinations, a bridge which allows clients to cross our cities and reach their goals, more easily saving time, costs and energy.”

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Florence: a magnet for trade shows and conferences

We speak with **Lorenzo Becattini**, president of **Firenze Fiera**, about the way ahead for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions in Florence.



How do you plan and manage events in the midst of all this uncertainty?

We have used technology to accomplish online what we've always done in person. The first digital trade show, Firenze Home TexStyle, was held in January, which allowed exhibitors and buyers to meet on the platform. The timescale is as new as the technology. We decided to extend the running time to 22 June, beyond the usual four days of the fair, allowing new connections every day for everyone wanting to do business. In March, the fourth edition of Didacta was inaugurated by the new Italian education minister, Patrizio Bianchi. The busy line-up will focus on schools, teaching methods and new distance learning techniques.

What can we expect from trade shows in the future?

We're faced with a stimulating time of change. The post-Covid era in particular introduces a change in vision and technology, in which digital is the tool for the new vision. There's no doubt that we will go back to holding in-person events. We must be prepared to accompany traditional trade shows with online preparation, which will prove crucial in growing in-person events. Even when we resume in-person events, there will be a change in attendance with fewer people, but we must deliver the original offering, and technology can play a part in accomplishing this. When somebody walks into a certain type of trade show, such as fashion and textiles, buyers need to have a physical reaction; they need to touch the products. When it comes to crafts, buyers need to be able to evaluate the piece. However, there are possibilities,

in particular for conferences, to work with important testimonials who can connect online.

How has your organization adapted to the current challenge?

The clearest answer is the way in which we have converted the "green room", where we held conferences with combined desks and chairs facing the speaker, into a television set! It's one way that sparks interest in future potential: remodulated physical spaces that define a new scenario.

What events have been confirmed for 2021 and 2022?

The resumption of Pitti Immagine is pivotal. We are all waiting to know if it will be possible to hold the event in June and July, perhaps with a few adjustments, but it's hard to make any predictions.

There's a strong demand to resume bookings with new future conferences and events that already want to set dates in September and October 2021. There's a thirst to savor live events again before going ahead and planning better for 2022 and 2023. We'll talk about this again in the second half of the year, saving what works and readjusting this based on the new Firenze Fiera scenario.

How are the renovations progressing?

We started work on the Palazzo degli Affari exhibition hall in January, with a completion date scheduled for November. It's a new aesthetic that will be worthy of the building designed by Pierluigi Spadolini. The renovation includes new spaces that will be configured in a flexible way with movable walls, which we will be able to modulate based on requests. We're talking about a tailor-made outfit for small, high-quality trade shows and conferences. Beautiful things require complementary situations, which is why Piazza Adua, in agreement with the city council, must go back to being a worthy access point from the station and the tram system. Plans are also in the works to renovate the Fortezza da Basso. Also,

I wanted to bring back some art to Villa Vittoria. The villa was once a museum – the pieces are now at the Uffizi. I've asked some Tuscan artists to loan their art in order to have a decor that is fitting with contemporaneity, such as Giò Ponti's desk designed for Contini Bonaccossi saved from the oblivion of a warehouse. Beautiful things like that will be kept on display. Style is style.

Florence isn't at a standstill then?

Last April, we signed a new agreement between Firenze Fiera and Florence Convention Bureau to substantiate the fact that **Florence has a strong competitive edge as far as conferences are concerned.** We have to be good at winning and managing them, and excel at customer satisfaction. If we ask a hundred people where they would like to go for a conference, it's likely that 90 of them will say Florence. The beauty of our art helps, but we cannot limit ourselves in only saying Florence in our portfolio. We have to pamper visitors with experiences and tours, with stories that can be told alongside culture. In that way, Firenze Fiera must also become a small-scale producer of culture.



Prior to the pandemic, the international trade show sector showed constant growth, hitting record highs in 2019, according to the Country & City Rankings 2019 produced by ICCA – International Congress and Convention Association. Italy was in sixth place for the number of meetings held in 2019, after the US, Germany, France, Spain and the UK. Figures released by OICE – Italian Observatory of Conferences and Events – saw Florence burst ahead with a 3.9% increase in the number of delegates in 2019 compared with the previous year and against +2.6% for the whole of Italy. In economic terms, events and conferences accounted for 10% of overnight stays in Florence's hotels in 2019.

Destination Florence: an ethical choice



DestinationFlorence.com is the official marketplace of the City of Florence. It's the first port of call for tourist amenities, such as hotel reservations, museum tickets, theatre performances, tours and much more.

Travelling has always meant more than a personal gift. More than anything else, it's a tribute to the destination.

From the moment when you book, a deep love develops between the traveller and the journey's end. These adrenaline-fuelled days involve butterflies in the stomach as future visitors decide the why-when-how of their travel plans.

Many of today's tourists are fully independent. They plan and book their vacations using a whole host of tools, from the traditional to the various established digital platforms. Contemporary travellers choose the experiences they crave and tailor them according to their personal tastes.

The purpose of DestinationFlorence.com is to provide travellers with **everything they need to make informed choices**. It's a way of ensuring that Florence ticks all the boxes while focusing on sustainable tourism in the future.



DestinationFlorence.com is all about local, ethical and sustainable travel.

- 1/ We support Florence and local businesses.
- 2/ We care about Florence as a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- 3/ We promote the whole of Florence and its surroundings, treating the main attractions and little-known gems with the same respect.
- 4/ Our official partnership with the city council means that you can rely on the quality of the information and services.
- 5/ Selling everything on a single platform, which is simple, fast and convenient, means that the money goes straight from our official platform to the operators, hence helping Florence and the local economy.

DestinationFlorence.com puts Florence first

DestinationFlorence.com was created in 2017 in partnership with Florence City Council. It is the only official e-commerce that encompasses the entirety of what Florence has to offer: hotels, restaurants, exhibitions, museums, tours and experiences. It has a unique shopping cart, which allows travellers

to create their own packages independently and purchase them in a single transaction. Plus, the prices you find on Destination Florence are market prices, which means visitors to the city never spend more than they should. The products and services sold on DestinationFlorence.com are all certified and supplied by a network of 300-plus local, specialized and qualified operators.

We choose our partners according to a code of ethics that reflects the vision of Florence that we want to offer: absolute respect for the law; local suppliers only; quality standards met; and in-depth knowledge of the local area. This means that quality is always guaranteed whenever travellers book a hotel or purchase a tour on DestinationFlorence.com.



“In the last few years, we have worked hard to promote tourism that is more sustainable and respectful. Florence is a place of extraordinary beauty, which is precisely why the number of tourists has increased, including mass tourism in which inattentive visitors have taken advantage of the city without fully experiencing or respecting it.

Sustainable tourism, which we encourage with strategic partners like Destination Florence, is attentive to our community and the city’s heritage. This is a more curious form of tourism that does not stop with the better-known attractions, but pushes beyond the boundaries of the historic center. These travelers buy from the *botteghe* of our craftspeople and explore established stores as well as everything that the Made in Florence culture has to offer. This tourism stays longer in the city and ventures out to the metropolitan area, for the leafy suburbs in search of lesser-known sights.

For this reason, as the city councillor for tourism, last year we launched a publicity campaign aimed at creating an alliance between the City of Florence, tour guides and tour operators to “relaunch sustainable tourism in the city” through awarding the “**Feel Florence!**” mark of quality to everyone who works according to certain standards. In addition to helping us combat unregulated activity, a phenomenon that “damages” citizens, visitors and, more generally, the image of our city, the Feel Florence recognition allows us to develop a stronger bond between public and private sectors, sharing a vision focused on the diversification of tourism experiences, decentralizing visitor flows, informed tourism that respects the city and its residents, and protects jobs.

The tour guides and tour operators who obtain this stamp, as well as being promoted on the Feel Florence website (www.feelflorence.it), can make the

most of a set of services and take part in the annual Quality Tourism Awards, promoted by our partner Destination Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau. All these actions are being implemented so that we can welcome back everyone who chooses Florence for their next journey in the best and most sustainable ways.”

Cecilia del Re
city councillor
for tourism

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Off to a flying (re)start

Florence Amerigo Vespucci Airport reopens on April 2 with a newly paved, high-performance runway.

Heavy-duty lorries are driving one in, one out through the border police barriers at Peretola. A hive of activity for a port of call that is currently grounded, the city's international hub has embarked on what Roberto Naldi, CEO of Toscana Aeroporti, remarked as being "probably the largest construction site at the moment in Tuscany". Tar permeates the air as journalists ride the airport bus, in a flashback to journeys past, to the edge of the 1,700-meter-long runway. Having closed for maintenance on February 1, the

runway is being resurfaced with an enhanced asphalt that will vastly improve landing and takeoff at Florence Airport. The operation also extends to the safety area and horizontal markings, in compliance with the standards set by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency. Advanced light-emitting diode lighting replaces the former halogen system, in addition to a monitoring system that will inform the control tower immediately even if just one light were to malfunction. The decision was made to

carry out the maintenance to make good use of the winter downtime in air traffic. "We have taken advantage of this timeframe caused by the pandemic, so that we won't have to close the airport in the years to come," remarked Marco Carrai, president of Toscana Aeroporti. "We are making a huge effort, so that we will be ready for the hoped-for resumption of air traffic in the spring and summer."

"This work is a signal of a city that never stops," Dario Nardella, Mayor of Florence, commented in a photo call in front of the resurfacing campaign. "During the Covid emergency while international borders are closed and airports are experiencing minimal traffic, I

want to congratulate Toscana Aeroporti on its decision to press ahead with the resurfacing of the runway, which will make Florence Airport more efficient."

The newly paved runway has not been extended or repositioned, but the masterplan for the longer 2,400-metre strip is expected to be presented in May. It will take at least five more years for these plans to become reality. In the meantime, the current 40-day maintenance plan continues apace, working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing employment to more than 100 people. An Air France flight from Paris is scheduled to be the first flight to touch down on the fresh tarmac when the airport reopens on April 2.



Check before you fly.
For updated information about traveling to Italy from abroad, see the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs website.
www.esteri.it/mae/en/

Florence, the birthplace of Dante Alighieri, pays tribute to its illustrious son in 2021 during the 700th anniversary of his death.

#700Dante: events + experiences

Travelling further (and slower)

“This epic 245-mile network of trails is the ultimate slow journey with a literary twist. Inspired by Dante’s journey, this trail can only be accessed by foot or bike and is broken up into 20 stages from Ravenna to Florence and back. Guests can rest their heads in local lodges and embrace the wilderness of the Apennines along the way.”

-Lonely Planet

The Roads of Dante trail was **the only Italian attraction to score a place in Lonely Planet’s Best in Travel 2021 Sustainability awards** in the “Best Walks” section. The hike offers an opportunity to retrace Dante’s steps between Florence and Ravenna, his birthplace and the city where he died. This slow travel experience through Emilia Romagna and Tuscany, crossing the Apennine mountains, allows nature lovers to immerse themselves in culture where time comes to a standstill following in the footsteps of Dante Alighieri, from his birth, career as a poet and politician in Florence, his subsequent downfall and ultimate exile before dying in Ravenna, where his remains and tomb still remain today. The main route, Dante’s Way (Cammino di Dante), covers a distance of 395 kilometres, but there are more manageable options. Cyclists might like to tackle the historic Via Faentina, while another highlight is the Dante Train, which connects Faenza and Florence via Marradi, travelling through the Mugello and Sieve valleys.

Book your Dante experiences on [destinationflorence.com: bit.ly/700danteexperiences](https://destinationflorence.com/bit.ly/700danteexperiences)

Find out more about the events being held in Florence: <https://www.700dantefirenze.it>



Events in Florence

Florence hopes to reconcile with its exiled son with **an array of cultural events this year.**

Exhibitions are planned at the Bargello Museum: *Honorable and Historic Citizen of Florence* (April-July 2021) and *The Admirable Vision - Dante and Comedy in the Symbolist Imagination* (September 2021-January 2022); the Uffizi, with *Trees In-Verses*, a show dedicated to Giuseppe Penone with a tree-shaped installation in piazza della Signoria; the State Archives

of Florence with a documentary exhibition on Dante’s human and political story (October 2021-January 2022); in the cloisters of Santa Maria Novella, a Dante exhibition as a preview of the upcoming Museum of the Italian Language by the Accademia della Crusca; and at the Central National, Riccardiana and Laurentian Libraries for a three-venue exhibition in partnership with Società Dantesca Italiana on Dante and his time in Florence’s libraries (September 2021-January 2022).

The Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino Foundation is working on three projects: a reading of the ‘Divine Comedy’ at Teatro Goldoni, a concert tour conducted by Riccardo Muti held in Ravenna, Verona and Florence (September

13 for the Florence performance), and the commission of a piece by Luca Francesconi, conducted by Zubin Mehta on the occasion of the inauguration of the New Auditorium.

The Casa di Dante Museum has embraced the anniversary to modernize the medieval space with displays in Italian and English (reopening in June). On May 14, the date used in 1865 to mark the 600th anniversary of the poet’s birthday, when flagbearers paraded to piazza Santa Croce, the City of Florence is hoping to organize a similar historical reconstruction of the solemn procession.



BE.LONG

*Florence
for students,
startupper,
home workers
+ temporary
citizens.*

Florence now boasts a new service for the city's temporary citizens. Be.Long, a project developed by Destination Florence in partnership with the City of Florence, aims to repopulate the historic centre with the next generation of residents and medium-to long-term rentals. Be.Long is equally primed to become the **touchstone for help and support aimed at students and startupper as well as an useful tool for universities and study-abroad programs.**

The endgoal is to offer the city's higher education institutions with a one-stop portal for all the additional amenities that they have managed independently to date, which is no easy task given the many addenda to their core business. With Be.Long, powered by Destination Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau, all universities and international schools will be able to access the information needed to help their students when it comes to **housing, transfers, family vacations and obtaining visas,** plus much more.

Developed on DestinationFlorence.com in partnership with the City of Florence and championed by tourism councillor Cecilia del Re in particular, the project aims to make life easier for visitors as they put their roots down in Florence, integrate, belong and thrive. The initiative will also act as a

data gathering exercise to monitor the rental market in the city centre.

As its name suggests, Be.Long is designed to help users integrate into the city and settle in for a medium to long-term stay. Although overseas students form a considerable segment of the target audience, the platform has also been conceived as a tool applicable to start-uppers, medical tourists and temporary citizens, workers who come to the city for a finite length of time. It is also aimed at smart workers and digital nomads. Surveys suggest that the possibilities afforded by remote working have prompted 37% of the world's workforce to consider moving location. Destination Florence is keen to promote Florence as a destination for these new mobile breeds of employee. **It is in the city's interests to attract new talent and start-up enterprises.**

Every year, Florence welcomes around **36,500 people** into study abroad programs. Each person stays in the city for **an average of 80 to 90 days.**

In a normal year, Florence welcomes tens of thousands of medium- to long-term residents, and though it is unlikely that this summer will see them return in their typical numbers, the city hopes for a certain percentage of its usual arrivals before the end of 2021, whether for study abroad programs or for remote working opportunities. Newcomers to Florence have traditionally been left to fend for themselves when it comes to finding accommodation and navigating their way through bureaucratic requirements.

Be.Long will make this a thing of the past.

The website will contain a wealth of practical information for temporary citizens looking to move to Florence. These future citizens can find out details about healthcare and all matters pertaining to bureaucracy and administration, in addition to a gold mine of invaluable information about everyday life in the Tuscan capital. A number of services pertaining to Florence will be promoted and sold through the platform, such as **tours, visits and various other experiences.**

Whether reaching out to businesses or private individuals, the aim of Destination Florence remains the same: to promote Florence as an innovative destination through the strength of an ever-developing network.



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INTESA SANPAOLO

Love in the time of Covid-19

*We look at the
wedding trends for
2021 and 2022 and how
Tuscany is perfectly
placed to deliver the
destination wedding
of people's dreams.*



Tuscany has been outdoing itself repeatedly on the destination wedding scene in recent years. It's not only the allure of Florence and the picturesque Tuscan towns that are attracting lovers to this varied region; it's the nature itself in all its manifold glory.

In 2018, the destination wedding segment in Tuscany brought 546,000 visitors and a turnover of more than 160 million euro, according to a report by Centro Studi Turistici. **Tuscany is the market leader for destination weddings** with 30.9% of all nuptials in Italy and 32.3% of the total turnover. The UK and the USA are by far the main markets, followed by Germany, Australia and the Netherlands.

The pandemic has hit the sector hard with 70% of businesses declaring a loss in revenue and 45% ceasing their activities altogether. But for Francesco Palumbo, director of Tuscany's tourism board, Toscana Promozione Turistica, **destination weddings will continue to be a vital part of the region's tourism scene.** "Weddings are a strategic product that we've pin-pointed for years to come. After two years of investing in this segment, international promotion will be accelerated further operationally and financially."

Most 2020 weddings have been rescheduled for 2021 with some postponed to 2022, which means that the organizational timescale has been extended from the usual 12 months to 18 or 24. As the world emerges from lockdowns and downtime, we can expect to see some wedding trends in the months ahead. **Intimate ceremonies** with just the bride and groom and their immediate families, something that we saw last summer, for a more personal occasion imbued with sentiment. Receptions with less than 50 guests are classed as **micro weddings**, which will prove a midway solution for weddings in 2021 and 2022. The long Tuscan summer provides the perfect setting for **eco-friendly nuptials** with its constant warm weather and gorgeous outdoor venues to avoid close contact with too many people in a closed environment. **Elopements** may make a comeback in the months ahead as couples organize getaway weddings to escape the potential headache and expense of downsizing caused by sudden Covid-19 restrictions. Nothing says Tuscany like the dust rising along a gravel track and the relative isolation of the region's venues will be a saving grace for destination weddings. With safety in mind, **remote**

locations can protect your loved ones in the most private and secluded way possible. Tuscany has a wealth of **villas** where events have always been held, which can be rented out for your entire wedding party: it's a natural continuum of what could make your special day become an extra-special week or two. Indeed, **extended celebrations** are being predicted as one of the hot wedding trends for the year ahead as couples look for extra ways to wow their guests. A longer occasion is one means of making up for the fewer numbers. Multiple days with friends and family beside a sun-kissed pool, enjoying a leisurely barbecue and grazing on Tuscan cheeses while sipping glasses of the region's reds, whites and rosés are definitely on the cards. Alternatively, newlyweds could differentiate, renting a delightful piece of Tuscan real estate and inviting different friends at different times, interspersed with small group tours and authentic experiences, such as truffle hunting, geocaching and even skydiving for thrill seekers!

Safety measures are part and parcel of the weddings of the future as venues and wedding planners adapt to the new normal and local legislation.

2018

546,000

visitors

2,713

events

€160mln

turnover (€59K average
expense per event)

30.9%

slice of the Italian
market cake

UK+USA

main markets (followed by Germany,
Australia and The Netherlands)

Summer

is the preferred
season for

Destination

Weddings and

the most requested

months are

September

and June.

Tuscany boasts one of the most efficient healthcare systems anywhere in the world, guaranteeing universal, public and free healthcare to all. Hygiene and containment measures already play a major role across all venues and businesses with strict implementation of physical distancing applied to planning and seating arrangements. Hand sanitizers and masks reassure guests as they are welcomed to the occasion, making them feel safe and cared for. Plus, testing is now easily accessible across the region as Covid-free weddings join Covid-free flights in the months ahead.

Couples might decide to tighten their belts in 2022 and 2023, but this thriftiness creates opportunities to promote off-season weddings and promote quality products at accessible prices. Encouraging bookings for the years ahead at lower prices will allow operators to regain more cash flow. What will prove vital for those working in the destination wedding segment will be the creation of packages that address the needs of potential customers and developing a marketing strategy aimed at the right target to win market shares.

Wedding planner Wayne Gurnick shares the everlasting romance of Tuscany

Tuscany is undoubtedly one of Italy's most romantic regions. With myriad memorable villages, towns and cities, all while surrounded by bucolic nature, the options of where to marry are endless. Helping couples create the ideal wedding for them is the enthusiastic and joyful wedding planner, **Wayne Gurnick of Moments by Wayne**. His role as **ambassador for Tuscany for Weddings** sees him share his passion with couples in the United States for the fairytale-like wedding locations and charming gems to be found all over the region.

From his base in Los Angeles, Wayne promotes Tuscany as a destination wedding venue, guiding couples in their planning from start to finish. But beyond his own key role in crafting the perfect day, Wayne is keen to share his admiration for the team he finds in Tuscany.

"Tuscany is such an incredible region. My wife and I have travelled extensively throughout Tuscany. Then I had the opportunity to experience Florence and Tuscany professionally and I found that everything I loved on a personal level was available there on a professional level also. You have the beauty of the region along with the wealth of so many different opportunities for ways to make a wedding – or any type of celebration – so personal. People are drawn to everything that the region has to offer, from the incredible food to the amazing people, who are just like most of us in the wedding industry: we're pleasers. I've made so many friends over the years and the team has constantly impressed me by how caring and talented they are. I've also had opportunities to talk to others about what it is that makes Tuscany so special and I've only heard people tell me the incredible, wonderful experiences that they've had while being in Tuscany."

Wayne was selected as a guest speaker for the Destination Wedding Planner Congress in 2016, an occasion that brings together top professionals from all over the world to share their expertise. "On a business level, I'm very particular about where I put my name, not for any other reason than that I set really high standards for myself. I want to make sure that the people I work with are able to produce both the products and services that the client wants and I know that most people in our industry are looking for people to be very pleased with the



“People are drawn to everything that the region has to offer, from the incredible food to the amazing people, who are just like most of us in the wedding industry: we’re pleasers.”



work that we do. When I was contacted about the congress, I was very impressed with the work that they do to promote not only their organization that brings members of the wedding organization together, but also by how they do it. They’ve done amazing things for all sectors, both public and within the industry, to promote the region and to bring together the best resources that are available, whether it’s an incredible location such as a Relais & Châteaux, a historic private property, a large city hotel or a small boutique hotel; they really have everything that a couple could imagine.”

Another intriguing venture by Wayne is his **wedding radio section** on his website: “Wedding Words of Wisdom is an online radio programme, something that I started a number of years ago. I find out what people in the industry are interested in and what they do within the wedding world, and I always finish off with their wedding words of wisdom. This industry is a joy and a pleasure, it’s a lot of hard work, but it’s so inspirational to provide a couple with their most special day. I had the opportunity to interview quite

a number of different business owners and property owners when I toured 27 different locations within a five-six day excursion in Tuscany, interviewing as many different places that are members of Tuscany for Weddings as I could – it was an amazing experience. I’ve conducted many property tours and site visits in the past and this was really world-class. We were travelling all over the region and the driver knew every backroad and shortcut to ensure we tacked in as many different locations as possible. I don’t speak Italian, and often times I hear people say, ‘But how can I do this if I don’t speak Italian.’ I’ve never found it to be a problem as people always try their best and there was always a way to facilitate communication.”

“Weddings are going to be more important than ever once the pandemic has been taken care of. I think that people will travel more and that they will not necessarily have larger celebrations, but I think that celebrations will happen differently. It’s going to be more important to select those people that they want to celebrate with. When things are scarce,

people make decisions to choose things that are more important to them. You can find a wonderful corner of the world in Tuscany where everything is so beautiful; whether it’s rustic or refined, there’s an amazing beauty. I beam when I talk about it because it’s such a special place. I’ve travelled all over, I’ve been to many places in the world, and my wife and I have talked quite frequently over the last year about how much we miss Italy and we miss Tuscany.”

Given that your wedding day is one of the most remarkable and memorable days of your life, knowing that professionals like Wayne conduct their work with endless passion and dedication assures couples that all the pieces will come together to create an incredible day.

*Find out more about
Wayne Gurnick at
www.momentsbywayne.com*



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in Tuscany:
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wedding venues
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MAGAZINE

DESTINATION FLORENCE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

With rolling hills dotted with vineyards, cypress trees and centuries-old villas, Tuscany draws couples from all over the world, given its wealth of cultural and natural heritage set in a landscape that has inspired some of the greatest artists in the world. With full circle wedding planning services at your disposal, a picture-perfect wedding day is ensured. Here we take you through some of the most breathtaking venues in Florence and Tuscany for your destination wedding.

Make yourself at home in the 15th-century hand-restored villa of **Il Salviatino** (www.salviatino.com), offering spectacular views of the surrounding nature and beauty. Located just 15 minutes outside the city center, it vaunts original frescoes, lush gardens and a vast yet cozy terrace with vistas of the Duomo. From truffle hunting on the property grounds to private winery tours and family-style Tuscan dinners, you can tailor-make your Tuscan wedding package, choosing from different locations in the villa or the private parkland to cater to your every desire.

Set in the hills above Florence with swoonworthy views over the city, Belmond **Villa San Michele** (www.belmond.com) rivals any museum or gallery with its historic frescoes, cutting-edge art and façade attributed to Michelangelo. Formerly a 15th-century monastery, the Italian gardens are luxuriant with the alluring scent of lemon trees and roses, ideal for a romantic stroll with your spouse. Only 15 minutes from the centre of Florence, the unique location with its picturesque views is a sensational site for weddings.

Nestled in the green hills between Fiesole and Florence, **Villa and Fattoria di Maiano** (www.villadimaiano.it) is a stunning setting for a remarkable event. Originally built in 1400, the estate is only five kilometers from Florence, yet it feels



like you're deep in the countryside. With a swimming pool and even an olive oil mill, there's plenty to explore and enjoy. The private sitting room of Elisabetta Corsini is home to a collection of antique dolls and valuable tomes collected by Sir John Temple Leader reside in the library, making this venue endlessly desirable.

One of the last Medici residences, **Villa Corsini in Mezzomonte** (www.villacorsini.com) is a grand and elegant setting for your special occasion. Dating back to medieval times, the villa features frescoes from the 1630s and was inherited by the Corsini family in 1644. Located in the municipality of Impruneta a mere seven kilometres from Florence, the venue offers guests mesmerizing views of the Chianti hills and centuries of history that will enthrall all.

Another noted venue is **Villa Cora** (www.villacora.it), an exquisite and exclusive aristocratic premises set within a centuries-old park and overlooking the much-admired Boboli Gardens. The lavishly decorated Moresque Room is particularly charming, with its eclectic taste typical of the villa, also evidenced in the Mirror Room, which was once considered the most beautiful ballroom in Florence, drawing illustrious guests such as Princess Eugenia, wife of Napoleon III, and the renowned Russian composer Tchaikovsky.

And in Tuscany...

Seek solace in the tranquil countryside, declaring your love in a simply magical venue where time seems to stand still.

Castello di Casole (www.belmond.com) is a 10th-century estate where you can enjoy the best of rural Tuscany, 30 minutes from Siena. Spread across 4,200 acres, spot wildlife, hunt for truffles and then retire for a fine dining experience. The on-site San Tommaso Church is picture perfect for an intimate ceremony of up to 30 guests, or for a larger gathering, declare your vows in the gorgeous vineyards.

The world-renowned wine region of Chianti Classico is home to **Villa Mangiacane** (www.mangiacane.com), a 15th-century property built by the Machiavelli family with works by Michelangelo, who redesigned the villa for an important wedding. 750 acres of vineyards, olive groves and forest fill the estate, meaning there are plenty of fantastic backdrops for capturing your occasion on camera. The terrace offers a view of Brunelleschi's Dome and you're just 12 kilometres south of Florence yet have all the charm and beauty of the famous rolling hills.

Owned by the Baracchi family, the 17th-century villa of **Il Falconiere & Spa** (www.ilfalconiere.it) provides 34

rooms in typically Tuscan style as well as cottages on the grounds. A chapel, swimming pool and spa mean your every need is catered to for both your ceremony and pre- and post-party. The on-site restaurant is the only Michelin-star restaurant in the Arezzo area, ensuring only the highest quality food and estate wine is served to your guests.

Returning to the land of Chianti wines, cornfields, chestnut groves and cypress trees synonymous with Tuscany, the 11th-century **Castel Monastero** (www.castelmonastero.com) is nestled in these paradise-like surroundings, a beautifully restored medieval village and monastery, 23 kilometers from Siena. Two restaurants, rustic chic guestrooms and a villa, this is a luxurious and typically Tuscan retreat with spa facilities, a charming church, and medieval and renaissance buildings for a sophisticated celebration.

The 5-star **Hermitage Hotel** (www.hotelhermitage.it) overlooks Biodola Beach and is composed of several villas scattered among the hills on the island of Elba. Say your vows in front of the crystal-clear waters in the beautiful bay before relaxing with the vast array of facilities that means your guests will have plenty to entertain themselves. Tennis courts, seawater pools and even a golf course and diving center: the facilities are truly top class.



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