

A week in Italy with 30 friends

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for thelondonpaper

NOT willing to take a chance on the weather, Zoe Petersen and Jon Gillian made their special day one to remember by opting for a week-long party in the sunny Tuscan hills.

"We wanted something a little bit different than the usual wedding," says Zoe. "And as we both love Italy, it just seemed to make sense."

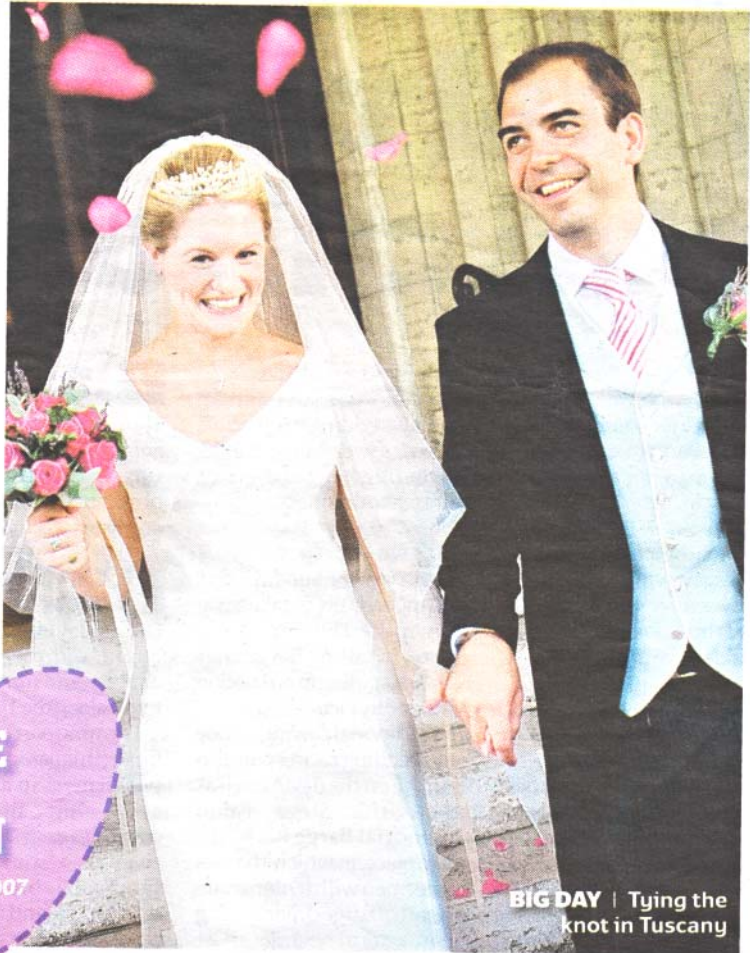
The couple met at a mutual friend's dinner party three years ago. Jon, 29, a lawyer for the Royal Bank of Scotland, says he "did a double take" when he first saw Zoe, 29, a property fund manager. And after a whirlwind romance they moved in together five months later and now share a home in Fulham.

But despite making a serious commitment by living together, Zoe was taken by surprise when Jon asked her to marry him 18 months ago on the Alexandre III Bridge in Paris.

"I knew we were going to end up together," she says. "But I had absolutely no idea Jon would propose so quickly."

They found a wedding venue at the Castello di Tavolese in Certaldo, 45 minutes from Florence. They were keen to have a wedding that reflected their laidback personalities, so a week before the day they took 30 close friends to party with them and relax by the pool.

On the big day 110 guests gathered to see the couple exchange vows at 4pm in St James's Church in Florence, before re-



BIG DAY | Tying the knot in Tuscany



RECEPTION | Castello di Tavolese

turning to the castle for the reception.

At sunset everyone drank prosecco and shimmed to live jazz before having an outdoor feast. They dined on carpaccio of swordfish, duck and porcini risotto, Tuscan steak and a millefeuille—the traditional Italian wedding cake.

"It was amazing," says Jon. "You don't know exactly how it will all come together but it was so much more than we had hoped for. Being away for a week beforehand on a holiday with 30 of your best

friends also made a huge difference."

Zoe agrees: "There was just a fantastic party atmosphere, all our guests bonded and the day itself was the perfect finale. We were in a beautiful setting and it was magical and romantic."

After a few winks of sleep, everyone met for a hangover breakfast before the guests headed back to the UK.

Zoe and Jon started married life by continuing their Italian adventure with a two-week trip to Sardinia, Venice and Lake Como.

WEDDING ESSENTIALS

MET

At a mutual friend's dinner party

FIRST DATE

They went to Gilly's in Fulham for a meal

GET THE LOOK

Zoe wore a classic white v-neck dress from Sharon Cunningham and Jon wore a traditional morning suit

WEDDING PLANNER

Love and Lord
FLOWERS

Cream and pink roses with local lavender

SWEET TREAT

Traditional Italian wedding cake

FIRST DANCE

Chasing Cars by Snow Patrol

HONEYMOON

The couple went to Sardinia, Venice and Lake Como