

VOGUE

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Under the Tuscan sun

Aish Pandit-Chaudry and Sahil Chaudry gave their friends and family the dolce vita experience at their destination wedding in Italy. By NUPUR SARVAIYA

In April last year, screenwriter and director Jeff Goldberg reached out to Aish Pandit-Chaudry with a script for a play about a 20-something woman experiencing a quarterlife crisis. Pandit-Chaudry dabbled in acting as a hobby, and had recently co-founded an organic skincare label, after acquiring a degree in interior design from Parsons, New York. She knew a thing or two about that particular kind of anxiety. “I instantly said yes with the hope to make someone feel less alone in their journey when pursuing different paths,” she recalls.

That decision was about to manifest a meet-cute that would alter her life’s trajectory. In the audience at The Jeff Goldberg Studio in Mumbai sat a rapt spectator—a Los Angeles-based fashion entrepreneur called Sahil Chaudry. “Post-show, Sahil walked up to compliment me. In the same breath, he asked me out for a meal. ‘I have plans tonight’, I blurted out. But Sahil was persistent and asked me if the subsequent day would work. I was struck by his earnestness and directness. I said yes.”

On their first date, they managed to ascertain right away that they had people, places, passion and purpose in common. “We talked about the meaning of life. And we connected over a mutual love for art, theatre and films, especially [the Woody Allen comedy] *Midnight In Paris*,” says Pandit-Chaudry. Chaudry returned to LA the next day, and they began to nurture their relationship virtually. Eight months later, he proposed—in rare style—over a trip to Paris with their families, at the café Le Grand Colbert after reading through a script of hers, titled “Table for One”, that he had rewritten.

They decided to get married on the one-year anniversary of the April night on which they first met. When they began brainstorming their wedding vision, they knew they wanted to turn their destination wedding into a languid Italian holiday for 100 of their closest friends and family. Pandit-Chaudry was certain about one thing: She wanted to get married in a heritage-steeped castle with breathtaking backdrops and good food.

When she landed in Tuscany for a *rece* trip with her sister, she instantly fell in love with COMO Castello Del Nero: A 12th-century estate, flanked by rolling hills draped in feathery cypress trees and olive groves. “Everywhere you looked, it was a postcard waiting to be sent. We wanted to give our guests an experience of the old world and spend some nights in this beautiful castle to celebrate our union.”

Events to experiences, the entire itinerary for the Tuscan affair was designed to maximise revelry and relaxation. That meant yoga classes in the morning or pilates in the afternoon for the wedding party; unlimited access to the property’s spa

ROYAL TREATMENT

The bride wanted to get married in a heritage-steeped castle with breathtaking backdrops and good food, and found her dream venue in the 12th-century COMO Castello Del Nero





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PARTY TRICKS

Entertainment was a major theme in each of the events, with games and interactive sessions curated by emcee Junaid Arif Currimbhoy





The entire itinerary for the Tuscan wedding was designed to maximise revelry and relaxation with “yoga and pilates classes, unlimited spa access and guided walks around the 600-acre estate”, says SAHIL CHAUDRY



FOREVER AFTERS

Before the main wedding ceremony commenced the next morning, the couple exchanged their vows in private at a nearby manor

with thermal suites, jacuzzis and saunas; and guided walks around the 600-acre estate, says Chaudry.

Mumbai-based wedding planner Purvi Modgil of F5 Weddings was enlisted to bring their “straight-out-of-a-Renaissance-painting” wedding to life. The couple also identified a local Indian planning company, Anand Vivaah, to lead the charge for logistics and on-site coordination. “With me in Mumbai, Sahil in California and our venue in Tuscany, our wedding was planned across three continents in three different time zones.”

Celebrations kicked off with a poolside haldi and mehendi. The couple rode into the venue on a flower-covered Vespa. The bride chose a custom pink-and-orange Seema Gujral lehenga, adorned with Tuscan garden-inspired motifs, to complement the vibrant mood of the occasion. “Entertainment was a major focus for us for all the events,” she says. “Junaid Arif Currimbhoy played master of ceremonies, organising games and interactive sessions for ice-breakers.”

Next up was the sangeet. “We wanted a palace soirée, and what is more royal than the colour purple?” The space was decked in tones of purple and lavender, and the couple decided to twin in lavender outfits. The groom-to-be chose a custom bandhgala, and the bride-to-be opted for a feather-light bespoke Falguni Shane Peacock piece, accentuated by a glam beauty look by bridal makeup artist Shradha Luthra.

Before the main wedding ceremony commenced the next morning, the pair exchanged their vows in private at a manor close to the venue. They returned to the palace for the pheras

which took place in a mandap set against the backdrop of COMO Castello Del Nero’s chapel. The bride wore a rani pink Sabyasachi lehenga, which also defined the palette of the wedding. The groom accessorised his beige beaded sherwani with a fuchsia dupatta and safa. And the guests wore all white, with the men wearing pink safa.

After a lavish lunch—a custom vegetarian menu featuring everything from Tuscan delights to rajma-chawal, prepared by chef Giovanni Luca Di Pirro, who helms the on-site Michelin-starred restaurant La Torre—celebrations continued with a sit-down reception in the evening. Going for an “if Audrey Hepburn had an Indian wedding” vibe, the groom wore a black tuxedo with a white boutonniere, and the bride wore a Shantnu & Nikhil white beaded gown for the occasion which she paired with monogrammed net gloves she designed herself to commemorate the date.

Following the Italy event, they headed to India for a star-studded celebration, which included a concert by Vishal and Sheykhara, a surprise appearance by Sonu Nigam and selfies with Shah Rukh Khan. Their final reception was held in Los Angeles. “Our celebrations felt larger-than-life,” says Chaudry.

But it was the small, unexpected moments that became their most profound memories. Such as the “Gujju-Punjabi dance-off” at the sangeet. Or when the poem written and recited by Pandit-Chaudry’s father, film producer Anand Pandit, brought the room to tears. Or when, as the couple tied the knot under a clear blue sky, a rainbow appeared out of nowhere. “We believe that was a nod from the heavens,” smiles Pandit-Chaudry.

