

The pink ladies

IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival in Florence



Through trade and defense, daily life and leisure, the Arno has long kept Florence's engines running. Its identity as the city's "lifeblood" will take on an even deeper dimension from July 6 to 8, when it will turn pink for the first European edition of the [IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival](#), organized by Firenze in Rosa

Onlus under the auspices of the International Breast Cancer Paddlers' Commission. Hundreds of rowing teams made up of breast cancer survivors from Every corner of the earth will take to the river. The non-competitive racing event is four years in the making, entirely volunteer-run, and brings together survivors, families and supporters to send a message of triumph. "Labor of love" is an understatement.

Behind all of the fuchsia fanfare is **Firenze in Rosa**, the group responsible for spreading the spirit around the city. We spoke with **Lucia de Ranieri**, its president, to learn more.



3/06/lucia-firenze-in-rosa-1.jpg

The Florentine: Can you tell us more about the central mission of Firenze in Rosa?

Lucia de Ranieri: Firenze in Rosa Onlus is a Florentine association and the organizing committee for this 2018 festival. Our primary goals are to promote and strengthen breast cancer prevention, self-diagnosis and tumor treatment, while also helping popularize the discipline of dragon boating as part of the rehabilitation process.

Our work is mostly educational. We try to offer concrete activities throughout the greater Florence area, such as therapeutic treatments and visits to medical facilities, where the aim is to spread a real culture of breast cancer prevention by showcasing healthy habits and lifestyles, as well as the value of psycho-physical rehabilitation after breast cancer.

The 2018 IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Florence Festival will be the perfect platform for launching our message of prevention and hope. The event is a large-scale, participatory festival for women—and men as well—who have had breast cancer and who take part in dragon boating as a form of rehabilitation.

TF: What about the Festival itself? It's been held around the world for many years: what are the noteworthy new developments for the Florentine edition?

LdR: This is the first edition on European soil. It will definitely be an exciting experience, and having everything take place in our magnificent Florence will make it even more unforgettable. The Festival takes place every four years in different destinations around the world, but the Florence event will have the highest participation in festival history, with more than 4,000 participants composing 120 teams from every single continent—the first time that's happened!



TF: What does an event of this scale mean for the city of Florence?

LdR: It's always been a dream of ours to be able to get so many individuals and institutions from the public and private sectors involved {in our mission}—not just to spread awareness, but to give them the opportunity to take part in a global, unforgettable event, one that will demonstrate Florence's and Italy's commitment to the cause.

TF: How can the public get involved with everything going on? We've heard that a "Pink Parade" around the city will be one of the highlights—can you tell us more about it?

LdR: We hope residents will add pink touches to their windows, shop displays, balconies and so forth, in a chorus of citywide solidarity. The Pink Parade will be a procession of all participating nations. Just imagine a pink river cutting through the heart of Florence, starting in piazza Pitti and weaving its way to piazza della Signoria, snaking over the Ponte Vecchio and, naturally, the Arno, which is the “soul” of the city and will now fill the same role for the event, given that the races will take place right on its waters.

TF: What’s the main message that you hope the festival transmits to the city?

LdR: One of hope. We want to show that cancer can be overcome, and that you’re never alone—we want the event to perhaps be the impetus for many women facing this disease to make the decision to fight.

TF: Just how long has the behind-the-scenes work for this major event been going on?

LdR: We were inspired to propose Florence as the setting for 2018 while in Florida for the last edition, in 2014. Overwhelmed by the enthusiastic energy of it all, we started to visualize what it might look like here. Since then, we’ve worked with tenacity to rise to the challenge. In summer 2015, our proposal was announced as the winner and we immediately got to work.

TF: Visiting Florence will be the “vacation of a lifetime” for many of the rowers in town. What would you like to see them take away from such a hyped-up holiday?

LdR: I hope it’s a joyful experience and that it bears witness to the idea of rebirth after suffering. I hope that it highlights how it’s possible to overcome difficulties

together—something that we see play out in the dragon boat itself. It's only by moving together in unison that we manage to reach the finish line.

Dragon lady doings: Highlights during the 2018 IBCPC Participatory Dragon Boat Festival

FRIDAY, JULY 6

International Breast Cancer Paddlers' Commission Congress

Welcome coffee: 8-9am at Palazzo Vecchio - Sala d'Arme

Registration: 8-9am, Palazzo Vecchio - Salone dei Cinquecento

Congress: 9-11am, Palazzo Vecchio – Salone dei Cinquecento

Pink Parade of Nations

Meeting point: Piazza Pitti, 5pm

Starting time from Piazza Pitti: 5.30pm

Arrival at piazza della Signoria: around 6.30pm

Opening Ceremony

When: 6.45-8pm

Where: Piazza della Signoria

Note: the athletes' village in the Cascine Park is closed to the general public, but all are encouraged to watch the races along the Arno.



SATURDAY, JULY 7

RACES: 9am-5.30pm

Where: Cascine Park

1st round of heats start marshaling by 8am - 2nd round of heats start marshaling by 2.30pm

Supporters' races will close the morning.

SUNDAY, JULY 8

RACES: 9am-5.30pm

Where: Cascine Park

3rd round of heats start marshaling by 8am - Final round start marshaling by 3.15pm

SPECIAL EVENTS

JULY 1-9

Art Meets Humanity

Robert Farber, world-renowned photographer, and Firenze in Rosa Onlus promote breast cancer awareness in this exhibition curated by Melissa F. Burke of the Summit Organization celebrating the female form.

Where: Palazzo San Niccolò, via di s. Niccolò n.79

When: 10am-7pm by appointment

Vernissage: Sunday, July 1 from 6-9pm.

Free entrance reserved to festival participants to visit the exhibition; aperitif at 10 euro per person.



JULY 6, 9AM

Palazzo Vecchio, Salone dei Cinquecento

Special philatelic authentication mark dedicated to women's health and to 2018 IBCPC Dragon Boat Festival.

By POSTE ITALIANE and FIRENZE IN ROSA Onlus

JULY 4 AND 5

The Ponte Vecchio Experience

Where: Società Canottieri Firenze

When: by appointment exclusively for registered participants who have booked accommodation through festival partners ENIC.

Schedule subject to change; verify on www.florencebcs2018.org

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT

An event of this scale doesn't happen without hundreds of stagehands. Members of the Florence community—many of them breast cancer survivors—are volunteering as festival ambassadors, a “welcome wagon” crew coordinated by the **American International League of Florence** ([Facebook page](#)). Each with a team or two under their care, the ambassadors span a range of ages, generations and nationalities, and are assisting with everything from trip arrangements and translations to race cheering and restaurant reservations. Here's a closer look at why some of them wanted to help roll out the red carpet—and then paint it pink.

There was no way I could not get involved.

Sally Carrocino

No cancer is the "easy kind"; all cancer is life-changing. As part of my breast cancer treatment, I had a lumpectomy that removed tissue close to my armpit. In the weeks following, it was torture to raise my left arm. Blow-drying my hair was impossible. I can understand how courageous our Dragon Boat rowers are. Any athlete who competes is putting herself out there. Her successes and failures will

be seen by everyone. The kind of courage shown by our Dragon Boat rowers takes that to an even higher level. I want to make the rowers' visits as exciting and positive as possible, sharing the glorious city of Florence with them and minimizing the bumpy spots.

Emily Collins

For me this is about women supporting women. There is nothing more powerful. It is about women coming out and celebrating the courage and strength of other women.

Elizabeth Connolly

I'm an ambassador for the "Paddles and Pearls" team from South Carolina. I decided to be an ambassador as a fun way to support these amazing women from all over the world, who pour their hearts and muscles into this sport, sending a powerful message to all of us. Go team go!

Liz Wicks

I am deeply touched by anyone who takes what's unfair, unpleasant or frightening and transforms it into an opportunity for something positive, a way to deepen connections with others, and for growth.

Lori Hetherington

I am from Naples but lived in the United States for years. My family and I moved to Florence because my husband is on a diplomatic mission. In 2010 I was diagnosed with breast cancer and after a mastectomy and my therapy, I feel so blessed to call myself a "survivor." After my experience, I wanted to support the noble cause of cancer research and I feel honored to be part of this event. I hope that my smiles and my positivity will reach people who today are in the midst of their own battles.

Lisa Cimmino

In recent years this disease has touched me closely through the experiences of very good friends of mine. The admiration for these strong women moved me to become an ambassador in this beautiful event. It fills me with joy to be the "Friend in Florence" of 54 Aussies (35 survivors in my team)! Hats off, girls!

Camila Cepeda

I've had breast cancer and was a member of the Florence Dragon Boat Ladies. The team stood tall for me during my recuperation. This event allows me the opportunity to give back.

Libby Cataldi