

# Overview of Italy

Italy dips down out of Europe and into the Mediterranean like a sleek stiletto, so it's hardly surprising its citizens are known for impeccable style and fashion. Once containing the great Roman Empire that stretched across the globe, it now boasts some of the most spectacular architecture, frescoes, sculptures and Renaissance paintings in all of Europe.

More than 3,000 years of history are spread across landscapes ranging from quiet, pastoral hillside olive farms and seaside fishing villages to the Armani-wearing, scooter-driving and espresso-drinking buzz of the big cities. Italy is also has more UNESCO World Heritage Sites than any other country on earth, with an incredible 54 places of global historical significance dotted around the country.

The country's cities reveal awe-inspiring architecture, from the curved arches of the Ponte Vecchio in Florence to the crumbling magnificence of the Colosseum in Rome. Home of da Vinci, Michelangelo, Caravaggio and Botticelli, its artworks are a visual feast.

Nestled into the outskirts of Rome is the independent Vatican City, seat of the Pope and the location of the famous St Peter's Basilica and Sistine Chapel. The influence of the Holy Catholic Church on the people of Italy is still evident today, with holy festivals, carnivals, and parades in almost every city, town and village.

From the twisting canals of Venice to the beaches of the Riviera, and the rocky crags of the Alps to the slopes of the Dolomites and Apennines, Italy offers unique experiences to every kind of tourist.

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## Key Facts

### **Language:**

The official language of Italy is Italian. English is understood in the larger cities but not in the more remote parts of the country.

### **Passport/Visa:**

The borderless region known as the Schengen Area includes the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. All these countries issue a standard Schengen visa that has a multiple entry option, and which allows the holder to travel freely within the borders of all the aforementioned countries. All foreign passengers to Italy must also hold visible proof of financial means to support themselves while in the country, return or onward tickets, and the necessary travel documentation for their next destination. Visitors may be refused entry, either for public security, tranquillity, order or health reasons. Extensions of stay in Italy are possible by applying to local authorities. It is highly recommended that travellers' passport have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

### **Currency:**

The euro (EUR) is the official currency, which is divided into 100 cents. Those arriving in Italy with foreign currency can obtain euros through any bank, ATM or bureau de change. ATMs are widespread; credit cards are accepted in upmarket establishments and shops around the cities. Banks are closed on weekends but tend to have better rates than foreign exchange houses.

### **Electricity:**

Electrical current in Italy is 230 volts, 50Hz. A variety of plugs are in use, including the European-style two-pin plug.

# Travel to Italy

## Overview

Littered with more than 3,000 years of history, Italy is a sightseer's paradise. Visitors can spend some time in Rome taking in famous sites such as the Colosseum, the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps, as well as the Pantheon. With artworks on display from the likes of Da Vinci, Caravaggio and Botticelli, it's a visual buffet of the highest order.

Those who head north can indulge in the wonderful shopping in the fashion capital of Milan. A little further south is the magical city of Florence, which teems with culture and Italian flair. Continuing south past Rome, Naples is graced with the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum, both of which were destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The active volcano can be seen standing sentinel over the city.

Italy takes a lifetime to explore properly because there is so much on offer for visitors. From the gondola-lined canals of Venice and the white sandy beaches of San Remo to the iconic Alps, Dolomites and Apennines, Italy has everything from beach holidays to luxury mountain ski resorts and a whole lot more in between.

The most popular time of year to visit Italy is during the summer months when most of the country can be enjoyed slowly like a fine Italian vintage. A trip to the rolling hills of Tuscany is a must to sample some fine wine and olive oil, as well as plenty of old Italian cuisine, while taking in the scenery of cypress trees, lush vines and olive groves. The more adventurous travellers can head to the Italian Alps and visit the resorts of Courmayeur and Brevil Cervinia for some world-class skiing.

## Climate in Italy

Italy has a largely temperate climate with regional variations. In summer, the northern parts of Italy are warm with occasional rainfall, the central region is somewhat stifled by humidity and the south scorches under the dry heat. In winter, conditions in Milan, Turin and Venice are dominated by cold, damp and fog and Tuscany's winter temperatures approach freezing, while temperatures in the south of the country are more favourable, averaging 50 to 60F (10 to 20C). Most people visit Italy in the summer months between June and August; but the best and cheapest time to visit is in spring (April to May) and autumn (September to October) when the weather is good and there are fewer tourists. The sea is warm enough for swimming between June and September. Visitors should note that most Italians take their vacation in August and many shops and restaurants are closed during this period. It also means that during August the coastal resorts are crowded with locals. The ski season runs between December and April and the best time to walk in the Alps is between June and September. The best time to visit Italy will vary depending on region and desired activities.

## Health Notes when travelling to Italy

There are no specific health risks associated with travel to Italy and visitors should be able to travel without special vaccinations and medications. Medical facilities in Italy are good but travel insurance is still recommended for non-EU citizens, as medical attention can be expensive. EU citizens can make use of Italy's health services provided they have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), with UK citizens using their Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC). The GHIC replaced the EHIC for UK citizens and allows UK citizens access to state healthcare during visits to the EU. The GHIC is not valid in Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland, nor is it an alternative to travel insurance. Although it should be possible to get most medication in Italy, travel authorities always suggest taking any prescribed medication in its original packaging with a signed and dated letter from a doctor.

## Safety Notes when travelling to Italy

Tourists are vulnerable to pickpocketing in the bigger cities, particularly on public transport, in crowded areas and around tourist sites. It's advisable to be careful when carrying large amounts of cash and valuables. Travellers should be particularly careful around Termini, which is the main train station in Rome. Visitors should be wary of groups of children, some of whom will distract attention while the others try to steal what they can. Strikes by transport workers take place regularly throughout Italy and delays are possible.

## Customs in Italy

In Italy, it's an offence to sit on steps and in courtyards near public buildings, including the main churches in Florence; eating and drinking in the vicinity should also be avoided. Shorts, vests or any other immodest clothing should not be worn inside churches.

## Duty Free in Italy

Travellers over 17 years from non-EU countries do not have to pay duty on 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco. Nor do they have to pay duty on 4 litres of wine, 16 litres of beer or 1 litre of spirits over 22 percent volume, or 2 litres of alcoholic beverages less than 22 percent volume. Other goods up to the value of €430 are also permitted (reduced to €175 for children under 15).

Travellers from EU countries travelling within the EU are limited to 110 litres of beer, 90 litres of wine, 10 litres of fortified wine, 10 litres of spirits and 1kg of tobacco, 800 cigarettes, 200 cigars or 400 cigarettos. Prohibited items include narcotic drugs, medicinal products, arms and weapons, explosives and protected animal and plant species.

## Doing Business in Italy

Italians can be very formal and old fashioned, but are also warm and welcoming. Face to face communication is best and often a third party introduction can speed initial negotiations. Business attire is formal and stylish, and handshakes are the norm, with first impressions counting a lot in Italy. Business cards are used. Visiting business people should also expect plenty of gesticulating, interruptions or people talking over each other. Unfortunately the bureaucracy in Italy can slow down deal-making. Business hours are usually 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, but can vary according to season and region.

## Communication in Italy

The international access code for Italy is +39. Hotels, cafes and restaurants offering free WiFi are widely available; as international roaming costs can be high, purchasing a local prepaid SIM card can be a cheaper option.

## Tipping in Italy

Tipping is customary in Italy and 10 to 15 percent of the bill is acceptable in restaurants, unless a 15 percent service charge has already been added to the bill. Hotels add a service charge of 15 to 18 percent, but it is customary to tip the service staff extra. Italians rarely tip taxi drivers but a 5 to 10 percent tip is always appreciated.

## Passport/Visa Note

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## Entry Requirements

### Entry requirements for Americans:

US citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least three months beyond their intended stay in Italy. No visa is required for stays of up to 90 days within a 180 day period.

### Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least three months beyond their intended stay in Italy. No visa is required for stays of up to 90 days within a 180 day period.

### Entry requirements for UK nationals:

UK citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least three months beyond their intended stay in Italy. No visa is required for stays of up to 90 days within a 180 day period.

### Entry requirements for Australians:

Australian citizens must have a passport that is valid for three months beyond their intended stay in Italy. No visa is required for stays of up to 90 days within a 180 day period.

### Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish citizens must have a passport that is valid upon their arrival in Italy. No visa is required.

### Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

New Zealand citizens must have a passport valid for three months beyond period of intended stay in Italy. No visa is required for stays of up to 90 days within a 180 day period.

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**Entry requirements for South Africans:**

South African citizens must have a passport that is valid for three months beyond their intended stay, and a valid Schengen visa, to enter Italy.

## **Tourist Offices**

<http://www.enit.it>

## Italy Embassies

### **In the United States:**

Italian Embassy, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 612 4400.

### **In Canada:**

Italian Embassy, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 232 2401.

### **In the United Kingdom:**

Italian Embassy, London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7312 2200.

### **In Australia:**

Italian Embassy, Canberra, Australia: +61 (0)2 6273 3333.

### **In Ireland:**

Italian Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 660 1744.

### **In New Zealand:**

Italian Embassy, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 (0)4 473 5339.

### **In South Africa:**

Italian Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 423 000.

## Foreign Embassies in Italy

### **American Embassy**

United States Embassy, Rome: +39 06 46741.

### **Canadian Embassy**

Canadian Embassy, Rome: +39 06 85444 2911.

### **British Embassy**

British Embassy, Rome: +39 06 4220 0001/ 4220.

### **Australian Embassy**

Australian Embassy, Rome: +39 06 852 721.

### **Irish Embassy**

Irish Embassy, Rome: +39 06 585 2381.

### **New Zealand Embassy**

New Zealand Embassy, Rome: +39 06 853 7501.

### **South African Embassy**

South African Embassy, Rome: +39 06 852 541.

# Currency

The euro (EUR) is the official currency, which is divided into 100 cents. Those arriving in Italy with foreign currency can obtain euros through any bank, ATM or bureau de change. ATMs are widespread; credit cards are accepted in upmarket establishments and shops around the cities. Banks are closed on weekends but tend to have better rates than foreign exchange houses.

## Exchange rate for 1 EUR - Euro

<b>0.00 BMD</b> Bermudan Dollar	<b>1.00 USD</b> U.S. Dollar	<b>0.87 GBP</b> U.K. Pound Sterling	<b>143.38 JPY</b> Japanese Yen	<b>1.32 CAD</b> Canadian Dollar	<b>0.96 CHF</b> Swiss Franc
<b>1.49 AUD</b> Australian Dollar	<b>36.65 UAH</b> Ukrainian Hryvnia	<b>475.34 KZT</b> Kazakhstani Tenge	<b>1,507.02 LBP</b> Lebanese Pound	<b>4.93 LYD</b> Libyan Dinar	<b>6.88 BOB</b> Bolivian Boliviano
<b>126.98 NPR</b> Nepalese Rupee	<b>0.38 OMR</b> Omani Rial	<b>3.67 QAR</b> Qatari Rial	<b>1.41 SGD</b> Singapore Dollar	<b>10.70 SEK</b> Swedish Krona	<b>6.78 TTD</b> Trinidad Tobago Dollar
<b>0.00 VEF</b> Venezuelan Bolivar	<b>52.90 DOP</b> Dominican Peso	<b>7.53 HRK</b> Croatian Kuna	<b>20.03 MXN</b> Mexican Peso	<b>655.66 XOF</b> West African CFA Franc	<b>3.52 PGK</b> Papua New Guinean kina
<b>1.00 BSD</b> Bahamian Dollar	<b>2.24 FJD</b> Fiji Dollar	<b>24.62 HNL</b> Honduran Lempira	<b>140.42 DZD</b> Algerian Dinar	<b>2,096.32 MMK</b> Myanma Kyat	<b>13.00 BWP</b> Botswana Pula
<b>3.87 PEN</b> Peruvian Nuevo Sol	<b>921.20 CLP</b> Chilean Peso	<b>404.44 AMD</b> Armenia Dram	<b>24.53 CZK</b> Czech Koruna	<b>19.31 MDL</b> Moldova Lei	<b>138.73 ISK</b> Icelandic Krona
<b>10,921.62 UZS</b> Uzbekistan Sum	<b>3.44 ILS</b> Israeli New Sheqel	<b>0.71 JOD</b> Jordanian Dinar	<b>0.31 KWD</b> Kuwaiti Dinar	<b>40.69 UYU</b> Uruguayan Peso	<b>45.09 MUR</b> Mauritian Rupee
<b>35.87 NIO</b> Nicaraguan Córdoba	<b>10.13 NOK</b> Norwegian Krone	<b>4.73 PLN</b> Polish Zloty	<b>3.75 SAR</b> Saudi Riyal	<b>363.92 LKR</b> Sri Lanka Rupee	<b>36.71 THB</b> Thai Baht
<b>3.67 AED</b> U.A.E Dirham	<b>5.21 BRL</b> Brazilian Real	<b>4.93 RON</b> Romanian New Leu	<b>7.84 HKD</b> Hong Kong Dollar	<b>656.83 XAF</b> Central African CFA Franc	<b>23,518.80 VND</b> Vietnamese Dong
<b>142.79 ARS</b> Argentine Peso	<b>2.71 XCD</b> East Caribbean Dollar	<b>7.78 GTQ</b> Guatemalan Quetzal	<b>10.62 MAD</b> Moroccan Dirham	<b>0.38 BHD</b> Bahrain Dinar	<b>1.00 PAB</b> Panamanian Balboa
<b>1.69 AZN</b> Azerbaijan Manat	<b>4,413.27 COP</b> Colombian Peso	<b>80.74 KGS</b> Kyrgyzstan Som	<b>407.16 HUF</b> Hungarian Forint	<b>10.23 TJS</b> Tajikistan Ruble	<b>14,847.81 IDR</b> Indonesian Rupiah
<b>19.40 EGP</b> Egyptian Pound	<b>1,396.62 KRW</b> South Korean Won	<b>6,965.59 PYG</b> Paraguayan Guaraní	<b>4.52 MYR</b> Malaysian Ringgit	<b>632.07 CRC</b> Costa Rican Colón	<b>1.67 NZD</b> New Zealand Dollar
<b>223.34 PKR</b> Pakistani Rupee	<b>60.17 RUB</b> Russian Rouble	<b>17.52 ZAR</b> South African Rand	<b>3.21 TND</b> Tunisian Dinar	<b>2.02 BBD</b> Barbadian Dollar	<b>1.96 BGN</b> Bulgarian Lev
<b>18.25 TRY</b> Turkish Lira	<b>57.24 PHP</b> Philippine Peso	<b>31.13 TWD</b> New Taiwan Dollar	<b>427.92 NGN</b> Nigerian Naira	<b>119.27 XPF</b> CFP Franc	<b>10.03 GHS</b> Ghanaian Cedi
<b>152.15 JMD</b> Jamaican Dollar	<b>1.79 ANG</b> Neth. Antillean Guilder	<b>1.40 BND</b> Brunei Dollar	<b>117.26 RSD</b> Serbian Dinar	<b>6.98 CNY</b> Chinese Yuan	<b>7.44 DKK</b> Danish Krone
<b>3.50 TMT</b> New Turkmenistan Manat	<b>79.71 INR</b> Indian Rupee				

## Port of Call - Naples

Visiting Naples, the birthplace of pizza, is a must for any Italian cruise passenger. Naples, Italy's third largest city, is an enticing mix of chaos and culture with state of the art museums situated beside crumbling tenement blocks. Naples is the real face of Italy, where glitz and glamour share the stage with grit and grime. Most visitors include Naples on their itinerary because of its proximity to Herculaneum, Pompeii and the gorgeous Amalfi Coast. The port, known as Stazione Marittima, is a short walk from the centre of town and quite central to the city. The official tourist information centres can be found at Piazza dei Martiri, Via San Carlo, and Piazza dei Gesu Nova, as well as at the Central Station and Mergellina.

## Shopping in Naples

The best place for shopping in Naples is the area around Via Toledo, one of the city's longest shopping streets, which goes all the way down to Piazza del Plebiscito. Sunglasses, jewellery, hats and purses can be bought along this street or cheaply from the vendors along the Bay of Naples. Via San Gregorio Armeno is a great place to buy souvenirs, such as the elaborate nativity scenes built in the city.

**Best Buy:** With a whole industry centred around the creation of nativity scenes, visitors to Naples should not leave the city without investing in an authentic, and often elaborate, nativity scene.

## Dining in Naples

Pizzeria La Notizia- a popular restaurant serving some of the best pizza in Naples. It is located between Via Donato Bramante and Via Torre Cervati. All seafood enthusiasts should visit Dora which is just off Riviera di Chiaia. The seafood antipasti will have you coming back for more. Gran Caffè Gambrinus, near the Palazzo Reale, is a great place for a snack and some people watching.

**Best Dish:** Being the birthplace of pizza, it is not surprising that the dish every visitor to Naples should try is Pizza. Every pizzeria has its own special recipe as well as tips and tricks to make the best pizza, in the end the proof is in the pizza.



## Port of Call - Rome (Civitavecchia)

Italy's capital is a living museum and a popular destination for cruises in the Mediterranean region. It is also one of Europe's top cruise destinations. Rome is a city filled with awe-inspiring architecture, gorgeous artwork and ancient sites; as well as trendy cafes, modern buildings and picturesque family residences. Popular attractions include the Sistine Chapel and St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City. Other popular destinations in and around the city include The Colosseum, The Pantheon and the Roman Forum as well as many others. Civitavecchia is Rome's commercial port and gives passengers access to the Eternal City. The port is located about two hours from central Rome. Trains are available to take passengers between the port and Rome's city centre.

## Shopping in Rome (Civitavecchia)

Rome is a great shopping destination whether you're after couture goods or simple crafts. The markets in Central Rome operate from Monday to Saturday and are great for souvenirs, crafts and keepsakes. Piazza San Silvestro has a selection of exquisite jewellery, while Piazza di Spagna is home to the majority of the city's boutique stores such as Fendi, Gucci and Prada.

**Best Buy:** Leather handbags, shoes and couture wear as well as religious icons from the Vatican City.

## Dining in Rome (Civitavecchia)

Ai Tre Scalini is popular for gourmands and tourists alike. It's also convenient for those visiting the Colosseum. Alberto Ciarla is a great café to relax in and watch the world go by as you take in the beautiful neighbourhood.

**Best Dish:** Rome's specialties generally involve artichokes in one form or another, whether simmered in olive oil with herbs and spices or deep-fried. Pasta is quintessentially Italian and whichever you choose you'll be in for a treat.

## Port of Call - Venice

The romantic and picturesque city of Venice is a favourite port for most cruise passengers on a Mediterranean cruise itinerary. With its gondola-lined canals, fine cuisine, pokey cobblestone streets and ancient history, Venice attracts more than 700,000 cruise passengers every year. Key attractions include the Piazza San Marco, the Chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, the 17th-century Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute, and the Gallerie dell' Accademia. Cruise ships dock at Venice's main port, the Terminal Venezia Passeggeri's Marittima basin, which handles the largest ships and is located near the causeway linking the historic city with the mainland. The San Basilio terminal in the Giudecca Canal handles smaller ships.

## Shopping in Venice

The best shopping areas are located just off San Marco Square, while most of the designer boutiques can be found in Accademia. Tourist shops and other boutiques can be found in the Rialto, which is the commercial core of Venice. Visit Venetia Studium on San Marco for fine velvets and silks. Many of the fashionable shops are located on or off the main drag between the train station and St Mark's Square.

**Best Buy:** Glass jewellery, chandeliers or tableware

## Dining in Venice

Ristorante Quadri - popular eatery serving international cuisine overlooking San Marco Square. Trattoria alla Rivetta - seafood restaurant popular with locals Al Covo - trendy tourist-friendly restaurant serving Venetian cuisine

**Best Dish:** Venetian-style seafood pasta

## Overview of the Attractions in Italy

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