

ITALY

Traveler's Handbook





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About Italy

Located in south-central Europe with a long Mediterranean coastline, Italy is famous for its vast contributions to the world of art, architecture, fashion, opera, literature, design, and film. Italy has International borders with Austria, France, Vatican City, San Marino, Slovenia, and Switzerland. Two of the largest Mediterranean islands belong to Italy, Sardinia in the west and Sicily in the south. The capital city of Italy is Rome, home to the Vatican and landmark art and ancient ruins. Other major cities are Florence, Milan, Naples, and Venice.



Time Zone

Italy standard time is UTC +2.

Language

Italian is the official language, taught in schools and spoken all around the country. The different regions have different dialects. In the South Tyrol area (bordering Austria), people speak German. In all the border areas from Riviera to the north of Milan (border with France and Switzerland), people speak French. English, French, and German are also spoken in larger cities like Rome, Florence, and Milan.

Weather/Temperature

Italy has a Mediterranean climate with hot and dry summers and cool and wet winters. July is the hottest month with temperatures up to 30°C, and January is the coldest. It is a great destination to visit year-round, particularly if taking a city break. However, April to June is the prime tourist season for the warmest and most reliable weather.



Spring

A lovely time to visit Italy, but the weather can be a bit fickle with frequent rain showers. Average temperatures vary between 16°C and 24°C.



Summer

Hot and humid, although the mountains in the North can be enjoyable. The average temperatures vary between 25°C and 30°C.



Autumn/Fall

It is the favorite time to visit Italy and the easiest to pack for. Warm sunny days and cool evenings vary between 16°C and 24°C.



Winter

Central Italy has cool days and nights in the winter. In the North, there is some beautiful skiing in the Alpine regions. Rain is expected during this season, and temperatures range between 10°C and 13°C.



Culture

Italian culture is generally associated with art, music, and food, and Italy was also a center of ancient Greco-Roman culture. The Roman Catholic Church heavily influences the social structure, and generally speaking, family ties are more substantial than in most other countries in Western Europe. Religion in Italy 80% Roman Catholic with Muslim and Protestant minorities.

It is common for Italian friends and families to kiss on the cheek when they meet, irrespective of their gender. First impressions guide Italians, so you must demonstrate decency and respect when greeting people, especially when meeting them for the first time.

Part of the cultural food practices in Italy are :

- The Italian menu is skilfully structured with: antipasto (Starter), Primo (first course that involves pasta or rice), secondi (meat or fish) with a contorno (a side dish: salad, roasted potatoes, sauteed vegetables), dolce (dessert) and then coffee and digestives. You don't need to order one of each – usually, a starter and a primo or secondo will do but don't mismatch them.
- It is improper to put one's hands on one's lap or stretch one's arms while at the table.
- Resting one's elbows on the table is also considered poor manners.
- If you do not want more wine, leave your wine glass nearly complete.



Public Transportation

The public transport network in Italy is quite good, and major cities all have sound transport systems, including bus, tram, and metro networks. In Venice, the main public transport option is the vaporetti (small passenger ferries) which ply the city's waterways.

Metro lines are pretty easy to understand and are the fastest way to go from A to B, relatively near the city center. The prices are low, and you may not always get a seat during rush hour services, but remember to ensure that you validate your ticket before you get on the train, using one of the self-service machines on the platform. You can also purchase tickets that allow you unlimited rail travel in a particular region, which can be a very affordable way to get around if you stay in one specific area.

Bus lines and stops may feel more complicated. However, there are helpful maps that will help at every bus stop. Buses usually run very frequently, even during the night. Taxis can be costly in Italian towns and may not be as fast as one hopes due to traffic jams (a daily occurrence in Rome). However, they may be the only option in certain circumstances, like going to and from the airport late at night.

Public Transportation

You can also rent a car and travel more independently. In that case, remember that although many European countries accept a full driver's license in English, you may be asked to provide an International permit in Italy, together with your passport or another relevant travel permit for Europe.

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Local Currency

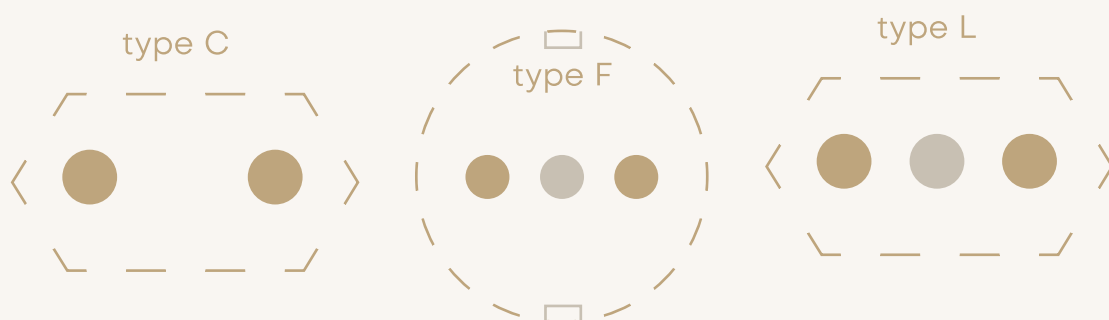
The local currency is Euro. The current exchange rate is approximately EUR 1 = USD 1,16, and the country is still somewhat a cash-based economy. The fastest, most accessible method of exchanging money is with your debit card at an ATM (called Bancomat) when in Italy. Currency exchanges, called Cambio, are available all over Italy, but the fees and rates can vary dramatically. While currency exchange counters at airports and hotels will probably give you poor exchange rates, it's better to wait until you can compare options in town.

Most international credit card networks are acceptable in major cities in Italy. The most widely accepted cards in Italy are MasterCard and Visa, followed by Diners Club, and American Express (Amex) is far less commonly accepted. Holders of other cards need to clarify whether their card is acceptable in Italy with a commercial bank. There will be instances where stores may not display the symbols of the cards they accept, be sure to check with the salesperson in the store before using your card if your card is acceptable or not.

You can exchange traveler's Checks (T/C) in Italy's authorized banks and money changers. Still, many banks charge heavy commissions, so always try to cash your traveler's checks at American Express offices in the respective cities you visit.

Electricity

For Italy, there are three associated plug types: C, F, and L. Plug C is the plug that has two round pins, plug type F is the plug that has two round pins with two earth clips on the side, and plug type L has three round pins. Italy operates on a 230 V supply voltage and 50hz. We recommend you bring along a travel adapter.



Value Added Tax (VAT)

VAT refund eligible if you have a permanent residence in a non-EU country and applicable in any shop (retailer) with a sign of “Tax-free.”. You can identify these qualified outlets with posters displayed on their storefront and visible to visitors. The sum of tax from several receipts should comply with a minimum of EUR 154.95 (one hundred fifty-four point ninety-five Euro) with VAT included.

To get your VAT Refund receipt at the store :

- Show your passport.
- Mention to the cashier that you’d like to obtain a VAT refund.
- Goods must take out of Italy with the traveler within 90 Days from the date of purchase.

If you shop at a boutique, your sales associate will have it prepared for you when you pay. If you are shopping at a large shopping center, it is usually obtained from a special VAT service counter within the building. You should not wear or consume the product before leaving the EU.

You can only claim the tax refund depending on your situation. Choose the refund method that works best for you :

1. Fast refund in city downtown
2. You can get cash or, in some cases, an electronic refund in supporting stores or downtown refund points. It is the fastest way to get your refund. However, you need to give the refund processor your credit card information. You are obliged to make sure it receives your stamped tax form within a specific time limit, typically 15 – 25 days, starting from the day you get the refund. Otherwise, your card will be debited with an additional fee.
3. Cash refund at the airport

Value Added Tax (VAT)

4. After stamping your forms, you can choose to get cash at the refund kiosk at the airport. It is subject to a cash fee, usually around EUR 3 per receipt. Make sure you arrive at the airport early, as there may be a line. You will be refunded in the local currency, with no loss due to foreign exchange rates. This option is recommended if you have large-value receipts.

5. Electronic refund by credit card or bank account.

You don't need to wait in line for a cash refund, and you can avoid the cash fee. You will be refunded in the currency of your card or account. If it's in the same money as the refund, this option can maximize your refund. However, if it's in a different currency, the foreign exchange rate may be suboptimal, and you are subject to an additional 3% – 5% fee. This option is recommended if you have many small-value receipts.

Regardless of how you choose to receive the refund, you must obtain a custom stamp on your VAT refund forms when you exit the EU. Refund forms for Global Blue, Premier Tax-Free, and other processors should be mailed back to their respective locations. You may use a refund app to submit documents electronically if you have generic tax forms.

Take photos of your refund forms after stamping. If things go wrong, you will need this evidence when contacting the refund company.

Basic 'Good to Know' Words

Hello | Ciao

Use this when you want to greet or say bye to a person.

Good morning / afternoon / evening

Buon giorno / Buona sera / Buona notte

Use this when you want to greet a person.

Thank you | Grazie

Use this to thank someone.

Sorry | Mi dispiace

Use this to apologize.

Excuse me | Scusi

Use this to say excuse me for attention.

Excuse me | Permesso

Use this to say excuse me to pass by.

Yes/No | Si / No

Use this when you agree and disagree.



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Travel Requirements

VISA Information

Your responsibility is to ensure that you own the correct documentation for your holiday and onward travel. mytripology cannot accept responsibility for anyone who is refused entry to the country because of the lack the proper documentation. We encourage you to check the latest information with the nearest Italian embassy in your country.

Vaccine

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) highly recommend the COVID-19, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Rabies vaccine and encourage all travelers to be current on routine immunizations. Don't hesitate to get in touch with your physician for detailed information.

Insurance

Travel insurance for Italy is mandatory if you require a Schengen visa to travel to Italy. If you come from a country that allows you to travel to Italy without a permit, travel insurance isn't mandatory. However, we recommend getting travel insurance to prevent any inconvenience during your trip. Travel insurance costs depend mainly on the type of plan and coverages offered. The COVID-19 insurance may be provided by an international insurance provider or by Italian-based insurance providers.

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Travel Tips



Travel SIM Cards

There are several SIM cards to choose from **Vodafone**, **TIM**, **WIND**, and **3 (Three)** are among those you can buy once you arrive at the airport or shops in any big city such as Rome, Milan, Venice, Florence, etc. Prepaid SIM Card is commonly available with a data package based on your needs. Please note that you must show your passport to buy SIM Card in Italy.

What to wear

Dress is casual but smart in most places, and beachwear should be confined to the beach. Conservative clothes are expected when visiting religious buildings and smaller traditional communities. Lightweight garments are worn during the summer, except in the mountains. Winter demands light to medium weights in the south but warmer clothes elsewhere. Alpine wear is advised for winter mountain resorts.

What to bring

- **Universal charger / Travel adapter**
- **Water bottle**
- **Sun protection** (during summer)
- **Insect repellent** (during summer)
- **First-aid kit**
- **International driver's** (only if you're driving)
- **Zip-lock bags/reusable bags**
- **A Key/combination lock**





What to Eat and Drink

Italian cuisine is very famous and admired around the world. For Italian, food is an art and means for maintaining ties between family and friends, and there is a special meal for every occasion.

Here is a list of our top 10 best Italian dishes that you have to try:



Pasta

Made from an unleavened dough of wheat flour mixed with water or eggs, formed into sheets or other shapes, then cooked by boiling or baking. Many seasoning choices to choose from Carbonara, Pesto, Bolognese, etc.



Pizza

Authentic Italian dish consisting of a usually round, flattened bread dough spread with a savory mixture usually including tomatoes and cheese and often various other ingredients, then bakes at a high temperature, traditionally in a wood-fired oven.



Bottarga

The Italian word for salted, cured fish roe. Most commonly, mullet roe is salted, massaged to expel air pockets, then pressed and dried. The unique flavor is often savory, rich, umami and fishy with a smooth texture.



Lasagna

A baked Italian dish consisting of wide and flat pasta, prepared with stacked layers of pasta modified with sauces and ingredients such as vegetables, meats, tomato sauce, and cheese and topped with melted grated cheese.



Risotto

Originally from northern Italy, a creamy rice dish made from short-grain arborio rice and chicken, beef, or vegetable broth. The rice and broth are slowly stirred over low heat until thick, creamy, and topped with Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, saffron, mushrooms, seafood, or herbs, depending on whatever the dish is incorporating.



Ribollita

A traditional centuries-old Tuscan soup made with vegetables and beans thickened with stale bread.



Fiori di Zucca Ripieni

Zucchini blossoms are a seasonal delight. Usually found from late spring to early autumn, stuffed with ricotta, lightly battered, and pan-fried.



Polenta

A typical dish in Northern Italy, a boiled cornmeal porridge made from other grains and served as a hot porridge, or it may be allowed to cool and solidify into a loaf that can be baked, fried, or grilled.



Prosciutto

This dry-cured ham is made from high-quality pork legs with a sweet and delicate flavor. The most famously produced in Parma, the meat is covered in salt and left to rest for a few weeks. After the salting process, the pork legs are washed and seasoned by hand then went to dry-age at a controlled temperature for 14 to 36 months.



Arancini

Favourite Italian snack, rice balls that are stuffed, coated with bread crumbs, and deep-fried. It usually contains gluten, milk, soy, sesame, and egg.



Shopping Guidelines

Italy is a shopper's paradise, from affordable souvenirs to jewelry, specialty foods, art, and luxury fashion. Major cities like Rome, Milan, Florence, Perugia, and Naples are best for luxurious styles and most popular among tourists for International brands. Or for the label without the price tag, try one of the outlet malls that is becoming increasingly popular amongst locals and tourists alike in the surrounding city areas.

A few reminders about shopping in Italy; even in the significant cities, tradition and siestas reign, so be prepared for boutiques and smaller shopping streets to close for a few hours over lunch (but to be open until at least 19.00) and for markets to start before breakfast and end by lunch. Check-in, your visited city for local details as, for example in Naples shops, is often closed on a Monday but have late night shopping on Thursday. Opening hours for major cities, shopping centers, or outlet malls are expected.

Safety Tips

Italy is a relatively safe country to visit, and there is a high risk of pickpocketing and low-level scams. Also, be wary of people offering to take a picture of you with your camera or phone (particularly in front of famous landmarks), as they may plan to run off with your device as soon as you hand it over. However, we recommend a few precautions to keep you safe on your travels :

- Be aware of your safety and security at all times.
- Keep your valuables out of sight, close to you, and zipped up.
- Never accept any item from a stranger.
- Never leave any personal belongings unattended in public places.
- If you are wearing a backpack, take it off and hold it in front of you to avoid bumping other passengers and stay aware if someone attempts to open your bag.
- Phones, wallets, and cameras are particularly at risk of being stolen.



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F.A.Q

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How much standard Baggage Allowance/Excess Baggage policy?

Standard baggage allowance for classic economy class for Air Italy is one piece of 23 Kg, premium economy class is two pieces of 23 Kg each, and business class is two pieces of 32 Kg each for International flights. On Domestic flights, passengers may check 23 Kg for classic economy class and two pieces of 23 Kg each for premium economy class. No checked bag should measure more than 158 cm in total dimensions. If your journey involves multiple airline partners, please know that baggage rules vary. Please get in touch with your airline for further details. You may purchase at the airport ticket desk and charge based on airline regulations for any excess baggage.

Are there temporary baggage storage services?

There are public luggage storage services in which the staff will look after your bags at many Italian rail stations. It doesn't cost much and is easy to arrange.

Drugs Policy

Italy has penalties for using or carrying drugs, as the punishment could be a lengthy jail sentence. We advise contacting the Italian Embassy in your country for the latest information.

F.A.Q

Tipping/Gratuities

Tipping in Italy is neither mandatory nor expected, but if you decide to do so, it is a nice gesture that you appreciate the service provided. At full-service hotels, the standard tipping for a porter is at EUR 1 per bag, for valet and concierge is at EUR 1 – EUR 2. At restaurants/cafes, read the check before deciding whether to tip at all. Many restaurants usually include “servizio incluso” on the bill, especially in touristy areas. It means a service charge has already been factored into the total, and you can pay the amount on the check, with no need to leave more. It is polite to tip 10% of your total bill. If the service has been exceptional when dining in the finest restaurants, you can tip around 10% – 15% or often simply the change leftover from the bill. Usually, at bars, round the tab up to the nearest EUR. However, if you received table service or ordered food at the bar, leaving EUR 2 – EUR 3.

Cab drivers in Italy never expect a tip, so they may be surprised if you give them. For spas/salons, if you feel the service is extraordinary, then leave a cash tip in 10% of the total cost. The standard tipping for a tour guide will depend on the size of the tour and its length. If you spent half a day or less on time, you might consider tipping your guide between EUR 5 – EUR 10. If your experience were close to a day in length, you would gratefully receive a tip of EUR 10 or so. A helpful tip, if you want to tip but plan to pay with a credit card, carry a little cash. Italian credit card slips don't have a line to add a tip, so bring some EUR in your wallet.

F.A.Q

Can I bring my e-cigarettes and vape liquid?

E-cigarette or vaping (only for nicotine-containing cartridges) is legal in Italy. It is prohibited for people under 18 years old. Most bars and restaurants are still really tolerant of vaping indoors in Rome. Please make sure you ask the staff before smoking or vaping.