



ITALY

INFORMATION SHEET

Italy is one of the most popular vacation destinations in the world. The weather is wonderful, with Spring coming early and Autumn lingering. There is something for every taste – breathtaking art, history, varied scenery from majestic Alps to beautiful seashores, fantastic food, and sports. Italians are warm, welcoming, and friendly!

The following is a general information sheet. It is as accurate as we can make it. However, things sometimes change unexpectedly. Please use this only as a guide.

Expectations

While group tours are one of the most enjoyable ways to travel, they do require a certain degree of flexibility and understanding on every individual's part. We have carefully planned your itinerary and have done our best to provide you with information about what to expect. However, much of what makes travel interesting is the unexpected. Travel with an open mind and you will get the most and best out of your holiday. Please be assured that our mission is to create and provide you with the most enjoyable and memorable travel experience.

Currency

The unit of currency is the Euro. It is available in various denominations. We recommend that you purchase at least 200-400 Euros, depending on your spending habits. Major banks in the U.S. generally have an international division and can make this conversion for you. Most shops and restaurants in the cities and tourist resorts accept major credit cards (MasterCard, Visa, American Express) and offer the best exchange rates, but credit cards are less easy to use in the countryside. **Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services**, which may be available. Cash is often preferred but should not be carried in large quantities. Money can be changed at banks in all of the **main tourist areas or exchange offices (Ufficio di Cambio), as well as most hotels and railroad stations**. Banking hours are usually 8:30a.m. – 1:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. on weekdays and closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. The afternoon one-hour opening may vary. Be sure to have some local coin with you to use in the public bathrooms. ATMs are widely available in major cities and will give you your cash in local currency. **Always check with your bank before you use your ATM card overseas.** **Please Note: Some European banking institutions require 4 digit pin numbers. If you have a longer pin number, please check with your bank.** For many, this is the most convenient way to get money abroad. You should advise your bank and credit card companies that you will be abroad, to avoid problems. There are currency exchange kiosks in most major airports, if you are not able to get it converted prior to departure. Tourists reaching their destination without local currency can obtain local currency through any bank or exchange office at airports.

PLEASE REFER TO THE ENCLOSED CURRENCY CONVERSION CALCULATOR FOR ACCURATE RATES.

Weather & Clothing

The weather in Italy is generally temperate year-round. Listed below are the average 24-hour temperatures for the seasons in various areas of the country. Even though we have noted the usual temperatures, you may experience unusual weather conditions. For that reason, we always suggest that you pack clothes that can be layered. It is also wise to check the newspaper, Weather Channel, or weather.com before you pack to verify the most current weather conditions.

| CITY | SPRING | SUMMER | FALL | WINTER |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| ROME | 60 - 70 | 73 - 82 | 47 - 65 | 49 - 57 |
| FLORENCE(Montecatini) | 60 - 75 | 64 - 77 | 46 - 63 | 45 - 50 |
| SORRENTO | 55 - 71 | 70 - 75 | 55 - 65 | 51 - 52 |
| VENICE | 60 - 72 | 68 - 77 | 44 - 60 | 43 - 53 |
| TAORMINA (Sicily) | 70 - 80 | 80 - 86 | 57 - 73 | 56 - 64 |
| MILAN | 58 - 72 | 67 - 75 | 39 - 56 | 36 - 50 |

While in Europe, you will see temperatures forecast in Celsius. To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply the Celsius number by 9, then divide your answer by 5, and add 32.

It is advisable to bring a mid-weight coat or jacket. Most natives will dress smartly when dining out. You may wish to pack one outfit that is a little dressier for a special evening: for gentlemen, a sport coat and tie and a dress or fancy pantsuit for the ladies.

Be sure to bring comfortable soft-soled shoes or sneakers for the days you are sightseeing.

A small packable umbrella and sweaters are always handy to have with you.

It is important to remember that you may stop at churches. Shorts and short skirts are not acceptable. Please remember to wear long pants or knee-length or longer skirts on those days.

Packing Smart

Be sure to pack any prescriptions that you will need for your vacation in your carry-on-bag.

You may wish to bring any special soaps or accessories from home. Foreign hotels do not always have face cloths in the room. It's a good idea to pack your own.

You may wish to pack a pocket calculator (useful in money conversion) and a small multi-language guide with basic phrases.

Wake-up calls will be available from the front desk, but you also might want to bring your own battery-operated alarm clock.

Don't forget your camera and extra film (film tends to be more expensive overseas).

The availability and quality of hairdryers and irons at hotels vary greatly. For that reason, we strongly recommend that you bring your own with you, if you have a need for them.

Due to heightened security at the airports, remember to pack questionable items in your checked luggage, not your carry-on. Such items include knives, scissors, any cutting implements, as well as some sports items (golf clubs, ski poles, bats, etc.). If in doubt, put it in your checked bag. It will save you time going through the security checkpoint.

Enjoying the trip

Your trip will probably include an intermediate destination, where you will change planes, but your luggage will be checked all the way to your final destination. Since the airplane is dry, and you will have a long international flight, it helps to drink a lot of non-alcoholic liquids while flying. Alcohol contributes to jetlag, as does eating heavy meals on board. Feet swell at high altitudes, so it is a good idea to remove your shoes while in flight. You will probably want to bring a small book or magazine in your carry-on luggage.

A valid U.S. passport is required. It must be **valid for at least 6 months beyond the time your tour ends**. If you are not a U.S. citizen, you may need further identification. Contact National Passport Information at 1-888-362-8668 (toll call) or the Italian Consulate for further information. No visa is necessary for this tour for U.S. citizens. No vaccinations are necessary for U.S. citizens. Remember that you are responsible for having all valid documentation needed for this tour.

CITY TAXES-PLEASE NOTE:

Many cities in Italy have begun instituting a tourist tax to be paid by each person at hotels in that city. These taxes are minimal- ranging from one to six euros per night- but they must be paid by each traveler at the hotel upon check out. Some cities require cash and some allow cash or credit card. If it applies in the case of your trip, the hotel will advise all details.

Electrical Current The standard current is 220 volts A.C. A transformer may also be necessary and can be purchased in many stores. Sockets generally have two or three round pins. Adapters are needed for U.S. plugs (for hairdryers and travel irons). Please use only hairdryers with 1250 watt setting. The hairdryer may not work when it is set on 1500 and may damage dryer even with an adapter.

Food, Drink & Entertainment

Since water away from home can often be upsetting to the digestive tract, we recommend that you drink bottled water, which is not usually complimentary.

PLEASE NOTE: Restaurants in Italy (in hotels and elsewhere) can now refuse to provide tap water when requested by diners. This is a new Italian law under the Authority of Health which actually forbids them to serve non-packaged water.

Water supplies marked “non-potable” should not be used for drinking or brushing your teeth. If you have special dietary requests, either let your tour escort or the dining room staff know and they will try to accommodate your needs. If you have a very limited diet, we suggest that you bring what you might need.

Since the coffee may be stronger than American coffee, you may wish to bring tea bags or instant coffee. Breakfast at most hotels is a continental buffet, though cereal is not always provided, so you may wish to bring your own.

Dining is generally later than is customary in the United States. At bars in Italy you can purchase espresso and sandwiches, and generally you stand. They are open from early in the morning until quite late at night. Trattorias are less formal than restaurants and offer more limited menus. Restaurants offer full meals served at a very leisurely pace.

Optional Side Trips

At most destinations, optional side trips to nearby attractions are available. The tour host at your destination can help you arrange these trips during your free time. **Many operators on these side trips will not take credit cards. You may want to carry more in local currency if you think that you may be interested in taking these trips.** The prices on the excursions vary greatly depending on the length of the tour and the places visited.

Safety and Health Services

We recommend that you leave a copy of your itinerary with friends or family, in case of emergencies. In order to have a trouble-free holiday as a traveler, you should avoid flaunting jewelry, and wear your handbag securely strapped across your chest. Many stores sell security wallets that are worn inside your clothing. They are large enough to hold your passport, money, etc., and offer a secure option if you prefer to carry them with you. You should keep a record of your credit card and Traveler’s check numbers separate from your purse or wallet. It is also a good idea to carry a photocopy of the picture page of your passport and leave your passport (remember that you may need to have your passport with you to cash traveler’s checks), and any valuables locked in the hotel safe, unless you have a security wallet. Losing your passport can be very expensive and inconvenient. Avoid going off on your own, unless you are familiar with the area. Be alert for suspicious people or circumstances.

There is no reciprocal health agreement with the U.S. and treatment is very expensive. At every drugstore (Farmacia) there is a list of those open at night and on Sundays. First Aid Service (Pronto Soccorso) with a doctor on hand is found at airports, railway stations, and in all hospitals. If you have health issues, be sure to check with your healthcare provider before leaving home to verify what procedures they want you to follow, should the need arise. Should an injury or accident occur, you will be responsible for any costs involved, medical and/or travel related. For this reason, we **strongly urge** you to take out some form of traveler’s insurance before your departure.

Accommodations

Hotel rooms abroad are most always smaller than those in the United States, and it is not unusual for one room to differ from the next. Hotel rooms in major cities tend to be smaller than hotel rooms throughout the rest of the country – but what you don’t get in spacious accommodations is more than compensated by the wealth of attractions surrounding you.

It is the custom for a twin room to be two single beds made up separately and placed side by side. A double room will usually have one double bed. A single room will have one twin-size bed. A triple is generally a twin room with a cot or small bed added. Also, please be aware that single rooms are almost always smaller than twin rooms.

Unfortunately, we can only request room types and locations. Room assignments are made at the discretion of the hotel.

Telephones

To call ITALY from the U.S. dial 011 and the country code (39) followed by the city code and then the phone number. It is very expensive to call the United States from your hotel room. We suggest that you use a phone card from a public phone booth (still common in Europe). Coins are often not accepted in public phones, but phone cards can be purchased at many newspaper stands and pharmacies. To call the U.S. from abroad, once you get a local line, dial your access code, followed by the area code and number. No need to dial 1. Emergency numbers in Italy are 113 for the Police and 118 for medical emergencies. Local calls cost about 8 Euros.

Transportation & Shopping

Taxis are available from the hotel. Ask the front desk for help in summoning a taxi. Secure a fixed price from the driver before you depart. Public transportation is available in many cities.

Most shops open from 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Monday - Saturday. With the exception of tourist areas, most shops are closed on Sundays. Food shops are closed on Wednesday afternoons. In larger cities, other shops are closed on Monday mornings. Bars and restaurants are legally obliged to close 1 day a week; a notice will indicate which day.

The best buys in Italy are clothing, leather goods, and jewelry. A value-added tax (VAT) is added to most purchases in Italy. If the purchase (other than food or drink) is more than 175 Euros, you can get it refunded. Ask for a form where you purchase the item or at the airport. You must submit the form at the airport before you depart. Your refund will be mailed to you. For more information call (800) 566-9828.

Time

Italy is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and practices Daylight Savings Time from late March to late October.

Gratuities

Tipping is a way of life in Europe and generally expected; we hope the following information will be of assistance. **Gratuities to your tour director, driver, local guides, and chambermaids are not included in the tour price.** Within the hotel dining room or at restaurants for lunches or dinners, a small basic gratuity is included in the price, but it is customary to leave a 1 euro per night gratuity for the wait staff as a show of appreciation. While the amount of these gratuities will depend upon your degree of satisfaction for services received, many of our clients have asked us for general tipping guidelines. **For a good job, we suggest 4 Euros per person per day for your full time tour director for a full day tour, 1.00 Euro per person for your step on guide for a half day tour, and 2.00 Euros per person per day for your driver. In restaurants a 15% service charge is already included in the check but it is customary to leave a tip to show appreciation. Guidelines: in a café, 5 Euro cents for a drink, 20 Euro cents for a snack; in a restaurant, 1-2 Euro per person; in a taxi, round up the fare by 1 Euro for a city ride.**

Custom Regulations

Luggage may be examined upon entering and leaving countries. U.S. citizens can bring home up to \$800 worth of foreign goods. Each member of the family is entitled to the same exemption and the exemption can be pooled. Included for travelers 21 and older are one liter of alcohol, 100 cigars (non-Cuban) and 200 cigarettes. You cannot bring back fresh fruit, meat, cheeses or plants.

Language & Customs

The official language is Italian. English is spoken at many hotels and shops and aboard most planes, trains, and tour buses. However, Italians are pleased when a foreigner attempts to speak their language. Even if only a few words are exchanged, an instant feeling of friendship is created when two strangers can converse in the same language. For this reason, you might consider bringing a multi-language pocket phrase book.

Common Phrases

| | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Good morning/day | Buon giorno | What is price | Quanto costa | Bottled Water | acqua minerale |
| Good evening | Buon sera | Do you speak English | Parla Inglese | Yes | si |
| Please | Per favore | Thank you | Grazie | Bathroom | bagno |