

ITALY

An everyday guide to expatriate life and work.



Together, all the way.™



YOUR ITALY COUNTRY GUIDE

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Quick Facts*

Capital: Rome

Population: 60 million

Major languages: Italian

Major religions: Roman Catholicism

Currency: Euro

Time zone: GMT +1 (GMT +2 from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in September)

Emergency number: 112

Electricity: 230 volts, 50Hz. The two-pin European plug is most common.

Drive on the: Right

*<http://www.expatarrivals.com/italy/essential-info-for-italy>



Overview



Rich in culture and tradition, Italy remains one of the most charming and romantic countries of the Mediterranean. The birthplace of the Renaissance, it's home to some of the most iconic artworks in the world and possesses a fascinating cultural tapestry of ancient and modern history.

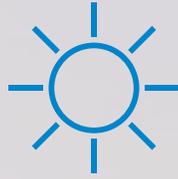
The agreeable climate is one factor contributing to Italy's popularity for working and retiring expats alike. Other attractions include its excellent healthcare system, modern and efficient public transport and a well-respected education sector.

Italy is home to the world's eighth largest economy, and although it is still recovering from a recent recession, it remains an attractive prospect for expats, especially those traveling to the wealthier northern cities of Milan, Florence and Genoa. On the other hand, the south is popular with retirees, its more rustic lifestyle adding a sense of peace and serenity, and nearby islands ideal for memorable getaways.

This guide lays out the basics that expats need to know about Italian culture and society, including brief overviews of visas, schools, healthcare, weather and accommodation options.

Getting Started

Climate and Weather



Many think of Italy as a perennially warm country, basking beneath the glow of an eternal Mediterranean sun. But as one moves across its southern, central and northern regions, the weather varies greatly.

The peninsula and islands to the south enjoy the hottest months, with locations like Naples and Sicily potentially sweltering. Their winters are not as harsh as further north, with mild and manageable temperatures bringing only a slight chill to the air.

Central Italy, including areas such as Milan, Venice and the Po Valley, swings from one extreme to another. Hailstorms punctuate humid summers, whilst wet and foggy winters can drop to near-freezing temperatures.

Among the mountain towns and cities of the Alps, residents brace themselves for long and cold winters. Thick snowfall blankets the higher regions, a change from the humidity and abundant rainfall of summer.*

*<http://www.expatarivals.com/italy/weather-in-italy>



Visas

Italy is a Schengen-member state so nationals of appointed countries can travel there for short stays visa-free. Those not part of the visa-waiver list will need to apply for a Schengen visa before arriving in the country.

While EU citizens can live and work in Italy without a visa, expats not from EU states must apply for a work visa. These can be obtained via an Italian embassy or consulate. In addition, non-EU nationals need to apply for a residence permit during the first eight days of their stay in Italy. Forms can be found either at a local post office or the Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione.

It's important that potential expats contact their respective embassies to clarify which documents are required as this is subject to constant change.*

*<https://www.schengenvisa.info/italy-visa/>

Accommodation

Italy is dominated by lovely apartment blocks built during the post-war boom, often adorned with pastel coloring. While they might not be large, the standards of apartments are generally quite good. Tenants also have the right to demand maintenance and upkeep from their landlords. Outside of countryside villas and farmsteads, detached housing is extremely rare.

The standard duration of a lease is 12 months or longer. While short-term rentals are available, expats planning to stay for the long term should consider the type of lease agreements that can span three or four years. Utilities are normally included in the rental price and a deposit of up to three months' rent may be required.

While most expats choose to rent, those buying property in Italy will discover a long and complicated process. On top of unwilling sellers, foreigners can't purchase houses unless their country has a two-way agreement with Italy. Fees can escalate, from the use of real estate agents to translators, as well as lawyers and advisers needed to deal with the foreign property regulations.*

*<http://www.expattarrivals.com/italy/accommodation-in-italy>

Schools

Education in Italy is compulsory for all children aged six to 16. Their school career is divided into four stages: kindergarten, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary. These years will be spent at either a state school, a private school or an international school.

State schools charge no fees, even for expat families who aren't permanent residents. Upholding excellent standards, the only stumbling block for expats is that the language of instruction is Italian. While children are

known for adapting and integrating quickly, those families on short-term stays often choose to send their children to a private or international school instead.

Private schools don't differ greatly in terms of quality and are more often than not the best option for those comfortable with alternative philosophies, such as Montessori. Private schools are also sometimes run by institutions that favor faith-based curricula, values and instruction, particularly the Catholic Church, although non-Catholic students can still enroll at these schools.

International schools are found throughout Italy and, while very expensive, are the most popular choice among expats. Students are often joined by the children of wealthy Italians, who feel the standard of education may exceed state or private institutions. The transition for expats is far smoother as they potentially carry on with the curriculum of their home country. Curricula offered include American, British, French, German, among others.*

*<http://www.expattarrivals.com/italy/education-and-schools-in-italy>



Culture

Italy has a past full of cultural wonders, whether it's the glory of ancient Rome or the ground-breaking achievements of the Renaissance. While there is a sense of national pride, Italians tend to be far more loyal to their various regions, which are each unique in their traditions and customs. Italians place great importance on family, which influences many of the country's social dynamics and habits.

Language

Italian is by far the dominant language in Italy and not many Italians speak English outside of major urban centers or tourist hubs. Italians don't necessarily enjoy speaking anything other than their native tongue, and will appreciate the effort if foreigners try to communicate with them in their language, so learning a few basic phrases is certainly recommended.*

*<http://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/italy-guide>

Social Etiquette & Cultural Faux Pas

Expats moving to Italy will find themselves in a society that values family and tradition. While Italians are used to foreigners, it's always appreciated if one makes an attempt to learn a bit about the local nuances and way of life. Here are a few pointers to keep in mind when socializing.

- Italians are incredibly expressive when they communicate. Don't feel alarmed or intimidated by their oftentimes theatrical gesturing, and don't break eye contact as it suggests that one is hiding something.
- While Italians maintain a generous culture of gift giving, there are a few things one needs to avoid in this regard. Black wrapping with gold ribbons denotes mourning while chrysanthemums are symbols of death, usually placed on graves.
- Family is incredibly important and this value permeates throughout Italian society. Shake hands with everybody present, stand to show respect when an elder enters a room and make sure to pay attention to children, even giving them a small gift.
- There is an Italian philosophy known as la bella figura which on the surface applies to fashion, looks and elegance, it also comes across as a desire to exhibit grace and gentility in different social situations.
- People are fairly relaxed when it comes to punctuality, even within the business environment. Delays should not be interpreted as a lack of respect and most Italians will forgive sincere mistakes.

Eating

Italian cuisine is not all spaghetti and pizza. Prioritizing fresh produce and seasonal ingredients, there's an unwavering commitment to stay true to traditional roots. This authenticity is a source of pride for Italians. There's also a range of regional flavors and styles peppered across the land.

The French-influenced north enjoys rich risottos and polenta, complemented by produce from its abundant meat and dairy farms, while central Italy is influenced by a working-class history, with much of the local cuisine centered on pasta in sauces like carbonara, amatriciana and arrabbiata. It also produces a wide variety of offal dishes and hearty steaks. Lastly, the south is the home of pizza and excellent seafood, dominated by traditional Mediterranean staples like olives, olive oil, fruit, fresh vegetables and pasta.*

*<https://www.eatingitalyfoodtours.com/blog/best-food-in-italy/>

Drinking

Generally Italians tend not to be overindulgent when it comes to drinking, despite producing some of the finest wines in the world. Indeed, drinking to excess is publicly frowned upon. Instead, alcohol is enjoyed socially, often as an appetizer when meeting up with friends for a few bar snacks. Termed aperitivo, these cocktails are normally bitter or sweet and enjoyed before dinner while the similar digestivo is served after. Toasting is done with eye contact, accompanied by an exclamation of either "salute", "cin cin" or "buona fortuna"**.

*<https://www.walksofitaly.com/blog/food-and-wine/drink-like-an-italian>

Holidays

The holiday calendar in Italy reflects its identity as a predominately Christian nation, specifically Roman Catholic. For this reason, time off is given around the periods of Easter and Christmas. Towns or regions often have days commemorating local patron saints while there are also various religious festivals and observances that take place.*

New Year's Day - 1 Day

Epiphany - 6 January

Easter Monday - March/April

Liberation Day - 25 April

Labor Day - 1 May

Anniversary of the Republic - 2 June

Assumption of Mary - 15 August

All Saints' Day - 1 November

Day of Immaculate Conception - 8 December

Christmas Day - 25 December

Santo Stefano - 26 December





Getting in Touch

Italy is generally quite developed when it comes to its communications sector. It offers solid services and reasonable infrastructure, with landline and mobile industries operating in competitive markets. While internet connectivity is strong in cities, it is often poor in the more rural areas.

Telephone

Telecommunications in Italy is much like the rest of Europe, with various tariffs and call times applying. For international calls, it's better to use an online service such as Skype. BT Italia, Tiscali and Infostrada are some of the main providers of landlines, but Telecom Italia is considered the strongest and most reliable. It's also the oldest and owns much of the hardware in the country, so repairs and maintenance may happen faster if expats have installed a line with them.

The most popular mobile service providers are Telecom Italia, Vodafone, Wind and Tre. One can choose to pay on a 12- or 24-month contract or use a prepaid SIM card.

Internet

Italy has some of the slowest internet speeds in the Eurozone. However, it has grown in recent years and competition among service providers is strong. Different packages are available, from pay-as-you-go to unlimited access. The most popular service provider is Telecom Italia, with other choices including BT Italia, Tiscali, FastWeb and Wind.

Postal Services

The main Italian postal service is Poste Italiane, which manages various companies charged with specific post-related duties. These include express delivery options, internet management, financial services and electronic document processing. However, as this service is considered unreliable and inefficient, many people opt to send mail via private companies like DHL and FedEx.*

*<http://www.expatarivals.com/italy/keeping-in-touch-in-italy>

Transport

Traveling around Italy is pretty straightforward due to its advanced and efficient railway system. Intercity travel is a smooth process, with lines snaking their ways from the south up to the major northern cities like Milan, Turin and Bologna. There are also networks that reach European neighbors like France, Switzerland and Austria.

When in the urban centers, regular trains operate reliably and make owning a vehicle an unnecessary expense. But if keen to get behind the wheel, Italy makes for a great place to traverse and explore. Driving can be stressful, though, and gas can be expensive.

With urban and suburban routes, buses are cheaper options but are far slower. Alternatively, expats can easily get around beneath the ground using the metro lines, operating in the seven major cities across Italy. Taking to the waves, ferries are a great way to visit the islands in the south, while taxis are good options for short trips through urban areas.*

<http://www.expatarivals.com/italy/transport-and-driving-in-italy>

Employment

The Job Market

Finding a job as an expat in Italy can be challenging, despite it being highly developed and having one of the strongest economies in the Eurozone. Non-EU nationals need a work permit to be employed. One of the most important qualities employers look for is the ability to speak Italian, so a level of proficiency should be indicated in one's CV along with qualifications, which Italian employers value highly.

The opportunities in the northern regions lie mainly in the service sector, growing out of necessity due to the lack of natural resources. This wealthier half of Italy also focuses on the manufacturing industry, with its strength lying in sectors such as food, fashion, chemicals and energy. However, job openings are currently hard to come by in associated professions. The rural south lacks as many economic opportunities and is mainly focused on agriculture and viticulture, neither of which contribute largely to the national economy.

<http://www.expatarivals.com/italy/working-in-italy>

Income Tax

Tax is a complicated process in nearly every country, with Italy being no different. For this reason, expats are advised to hire a professional to guide them through the country's progressive taxation system. Collected by the Italian Agency of Revenue, tax contributions by expats will depend on the amount they earn.

Italy has some of the highest income tax rates in the EU, although these have lessened in recent years. Expats will need a tax code number, also used in the opening of a bank account, beginning a new job or signing official documents. They will also be required to pay social security contributions.

Foreigners living in the country for more than 183 days each year are considered residents for tax purposes and are taxed on both local and international income.*

<http://www.expatarivals.com/italy/banking-money-and-taxes-in-italy>

Business Etiquette

Italians place particular importance on hierarchy in the workplace, with age and seniority being the major considerations. Decisions filter through from the top down, reflecting the societal values of familial structures.

While good friends or family are greeted with an air kiss on each cheek, formal business introductions are done with handshakes. Unless asked to do otherwise, always use formal titles, such as “signore” (Mr) or “signora” (Mrs).

Communication in the business environment is very similar to the way Italians converse in general.

Expressive and emotional, they prefer talking face-to-face and often use gestures that foreigners may not have experience of.

Additionally, keeping up one’s appearance and style is highly valued, with even a mere hint of casual attire frowned upon in any business circumstance. This philosophy also applies to how one carries oneself and the manner in which one acts.

Tying in with Italian society’s appreciation for family is the importance of building good personal relationships, so it’s important that expats spend time networking and getting to know colleagues and business partners.*

*http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_it.htm

Retirement

Expats often retire to Italy for the lower cost of living, warm weather and, of course, the delicious food and drink. Those who want to experience Italy’s rural charm may wish to consider settling in the more affordable southern countryside, such as Abruzzo or Puglia. The north can still be quite pricey. An Italian Retirement Visa, applied for via one’s Italian consulate, requires proof of financial security as well as a rental agreement or property deed, among other official documents.*

*<https://internationalliving.com/countries/italy/retire/>

Financial

Currency

The official currency is the Euro (EUR), which is divided into 100 cents.

Money is available in the following denominations:

- Notes: 5 EUR, 10 EUR, 20 EUR, 50 EUR and 100 EUR
- Coins: 1c, 2c, 5c, 10c, 20c and 50c, and 1 EUR and 2 EUR

Cost of Living

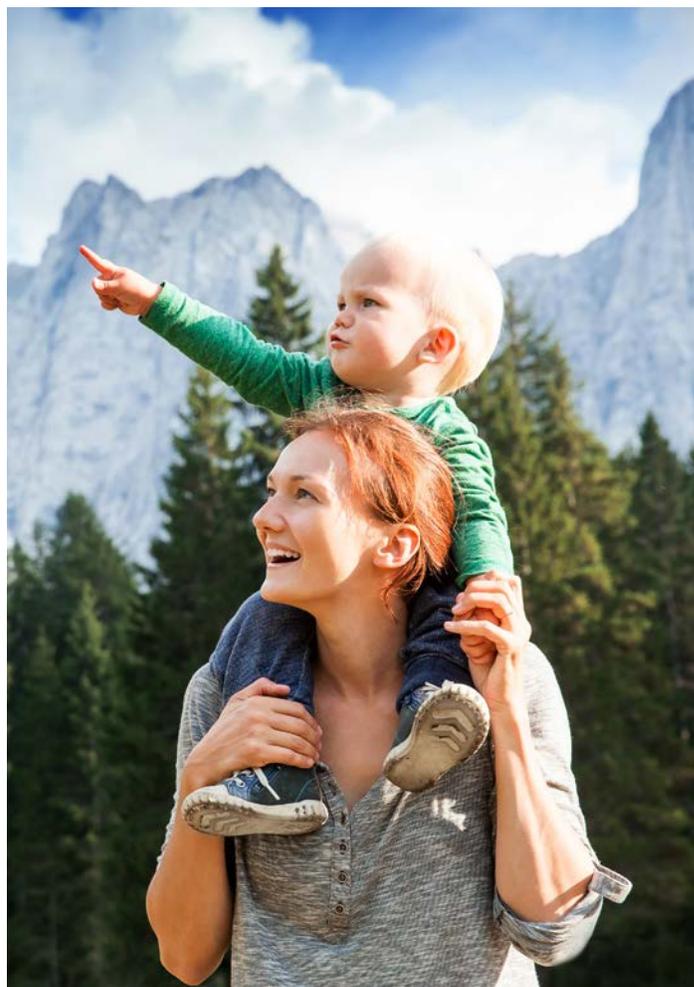
As is the case with any country, the cost of living significantly increases when moving further into the major cities. Giants such as Rome and Milan fall into this category, with cheaper rates and prices found in the south, away from the wealthier and more prosperous northern regions.

Considering both gas and cars are very expensive, getting around can be costly if one is committed to driving. Instead, the reliable and modern public transport system serves as a decently priced alternative. Buses, taxis and subways are great options, but high-speed trains remain expensive.

School fees change depending on what type of schooling children attend. State schools are free while private schools cost a fair amount. Tuition for international schools is the most expensive.

The cost of groceries in Italy is fairly similar to the rest of Europe. In comparison with the United States, however, it is expensive. Restaurants in tourist centers will naturally charge more on their menus so one should scout the area to get a feel for prices.*

*<http://www.expattarrivals.com/italy/cost-of-living-in-italy>





Banking

Italy is the home of modern banking, tracing its origins to institutions like the Medici Bank in the 14th century and Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena, still operating since it opened its doors in 1472. Nowadays, most banks can be found in any major cities, chief among these being Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, Cassa di Risparmio, Banca Intesa, Unicredit, and Banco di Napoli.

Expats don't need citizenship to have a local bank account, and many choose to open non-resident accounts. To do this, one needs a tax code along with other personal documents. Note that forms may be in Italian, so it's best to bring along a fluent associate.

Research should be done before making a decision and options should be scrutinized. This is because some establishments may be more used to dealing with foreign customers, and interest rates vary across the country.

*<http://www.expatarrivals.com/italy/banking-money-and-taxes-in-italy>

Health

Italy's healthcare is rated by the World Health Organization as having some of the best health services on the planet. The Servizio Sanitario Nazionale (SSN) is the public healthcare system, providing care either for free or at a very low cost. Services provided include GP visits, state hospital treatment, ambulance services and potentially some forms of specialist care.*

*<https://www.expatsforexpats.com/expat-news-and-opinion/latest-expert-opinion/healthcare-in-italy-for-expats/>

Health Insurance

EU nationals can use their European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), while non-EU expats will need to register with the Azienda Sanità Locale, their local health authority. Expats usually choose to invest in private health insurance in order to utilize private healthcare facilities, providing comfort, ease of access and choice of treatment centers. It's best to arrange this before arriving in the country.*

*<http://www.expatarivals.com/italy/healthcare-in-italy>

Emergencies

Expats can dial 118 for emergency medical services, but an English-speaking operator is not always available. 113 will connect to the police and 115 will connect to the fire brigade. 112 is the emergency number serving all of Europe, and has English-speaking operators.*

*<http://www.expatarivals.com/italy/essential-info-for-italy>

Pharmacies

Pharmacies, or farmacia, are ubiquitous in the major cities, easily identified by a large green cross. Some are open 24 hours a day. Pharmacists provide free or subsidized medication for those with prescriptions from GPs, while over-the-counter drugs do require payment. Alternatively, those pharmacies with a red cross provide homeopathic remedies.*

*<http://www.expatarivals.com/italy/healthcare-in-italy>

Health Risks

There are no major health risks associated with travel to Italy.*

*https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/italy?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001

Vaccinations

There are no specific vaccinations required. However, routine vaccinations such as measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, polio, diphtheria and chickenpox should be completed.*

*https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/italy?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001

