



Italy

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Best Places to Eat

- » Al Gran Sasso (p635)
- » Piccolo Napoli (p693)
- » Osteria de' Poeti (p663)
- » Cucina Casareccia (p691)
- » Il Cantuccio (p690)

Best Places to Stay

- » Arco del Lauro (p633)
- » Pensione Guerrato (p658)
- » Academy Hostel (p671)
- » Hostel of the Sun (p681)
- » Hotel Cairoli (p644)

Why Go?

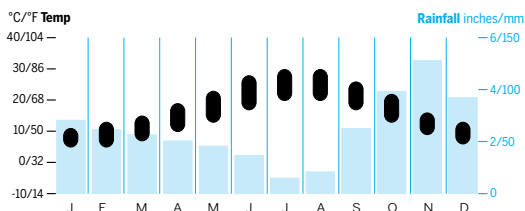
Italians really do know how to live well. Ever since the Etruscans came, liked what they saw and decided to stay and party, the locals have embraced the finer things in life. Here, family, faith, friendship, food and wine reign supreme, contributing to the famous Italian *dolce vita* (sweet life).

Travellers have been falling under Italy's spell ever since the days of the 18th-century Grand Tour, enticed by its sun-kissed landscape, delectable cuisine and extraordinary art. This is the home of gently rolling Tuscan hills and postcard-perfect coastlines, and the place where simple dishes such as pizza and pasta regularly attain culinary perfection. It's where Michelangelo shocked the establishment with his assertively humanist sculptures and Caravaggio shocked everyone else with his criminal high-jinks and darkly atmospheric paintings.

So make like Julius Caesar. Come and see – you're bound to be conquered.

When to Go

Rome



Apr & May

Perfect spring temperatures and blooming wildflowers make hikers happy.

Jun & Jul

Summer means beach weather and a packed festival calendar.

Oct

Enjoy mild temperatures, autumn cuisine and the *vendemmia* (grape harvest).

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Euro (€)
- » **Language** Italian
- » **Money** ATMs widespread; credit cards widely accepted
- » **Visas** Schengen rules apply

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 301,230 sq km
- » **Population** 60.62 million
- » **Capital** Rome
- » **Country code** ☎39
- » **Emergency** ☎112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.82
Canada	C\$1	€0.77
Japan	¥100	€0.83
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.65
UK	UK£1	€1.18
USA	US\$1	€0.78

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel double** €50–110
- » **Two-course dinner** €20 plus (pizza €10–15)
- » **Museum entrance** €6.50–15
- » **Beer** €2.50–5
- » **Intercity train ticket** €12–80

Resources

- » **Delicious Italy**
(www.deliciousitaly.com)
- » **Italia** (www.italia.it)
- » **Lonely Planet**
(www.lonelyplanet.com/italy)

Connections

Milan and Venice are northern Italy's two main transport hubs. From Milan, trains run to cities across western Europe, including Paris, Geneva and Zürich. Venice is better placed for eastern Europe, with rail connections to Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade, as well as destinations in France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. You can also pick up summer ferries in Venice for Croatia. Down the east coast, there are ferries from Bari to various Greek ports, as well as to Bar and Dubrovnik. Ferries to Barcelona leave from Genoa, and ferries to Tunis from Genoa and Palermo.

ITINERARIES

One Week

A one-week whistle-stop tour of Italy is enough to take in the country's three most famous cities. After a couple of days exploring Venice's unique canal-scape, head south to Florence, Italy's great Renaissance city. Two days will whet your appetite for the artistic and architectural treasures waiting to be discovered on your final days in Rome.

Two Weeks

After the first week, continue south for some sea and southern passion. Spend a day dodging traffic in Naples, a day investigating the ruins at Pompeii and a day or two admiring the Amalfi Coast. Then backtrack to Naples for a ferry to Palermo and the gastronomic delights of Sicily or to Cagliari and Sardinia's magical beaches.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Pizza** Two varieties: Roman, with a thin crispy base; and Neapolitan, with a higher, more doughy base. The best are always prepared in a *forno a legna* (wood-fired oven).
- » **Pasta** Comes in hundreds of shapes and sizes; *pasta all'uovo* (egg pasta) is a favourite in the north.
- » **Gelato** Popular ice-cream flavours include *fragola* (strawberry), *nocciola* (hazelnut) and *stracciatella* (milk with chocolate shavings).
- » **Wine** Ranges from big-name reds such as Piedmont's Barolo to light whites from Sardinia and sparkling *prosecco* from the Veneto.
- » **Caffè** Join the locals for a morning cappuccino or post-lunch espresso, both taken standing at a bar.