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Introduction

Congratulations on your decision to visit Italy — one of the world’s most enchanting destinations! You are in for the trip of a lifetime and I’m almost willing to bet you will love Italy so much that you will return again and again. I did! My first trip to Italy was almost 14 years ago with my mother.

I’ve since returned nearly two dozen times and now make my living helping other travelers get the most out of their Italian travel experiences.

Italy is such an alluring country because it has everything: warm and wonderful people; great historical sites; fine art; natural beauty found in beaches, lakes, mountains and everything in between; incredible shopping; and truly the world’s best food and wine.

One in ten Americans has some Italian blood so chances are that you do. You might be rediscovering your roots by journeying back to the land of your ancestors. Even if you have no official connection to Italy, you may just be drawn to la dolce vita — the sweet life — something you will discover when you first step foot in Italy.

Planning your first trip to Italy can be a daunting task. That’s why I recommend that many first-time travelers consider an escorted tour. All of the details are taken care of for you, you just relax and enjoy the sights. Still some travelers want more freedom and are willing to trade the hassles and for a little more of an adventure. Whichever way you decide to travel, I hope the information in this special report introduces you to the country I love so much and helps you on your journey. Buon viaggio!

Kathy McCabe
Editor and Publisher
Dream of Italy
Travel Newsletter
Italy is made up of 20 regions, each one with its own rich landscape, history, traditions and influences. At the very north of the Italian boot, the small, mountainous region of Valle d’Aosta. Bordering France and Switzerland, it offers a distinctive Alpine culture and cuisine. Down at the toe in the region of Calabria, there are more mountains, but in a totally different environment, causing the region to earn the nickname the “Scotland of the Mediterranean.” With hundreds of miles of coastline, Calabria and its culture is also heavily influenced by the sea. As you can imagine, it would take years to fully explore everything Italy has to offer. Here are some of the places you’re most likely to visit on your first trip:

**Venice:** As there is simply no other place on Earth like Venice, it has been drawing visitors from around the world for centuries. A city built on water with miles of canals and hundreds of bridges, the former Venetian Republic enjoys a rich history filled with foreign trade and intrigue. In this city of Casanova, romance and mystery fill the salty air. Age-old palaces and museums await. Feed the pigeons in St. Mark’s Square. Shop for Murano glass and Carnevale masks. Dine on fresh seafood cooked from family recipes.

**Milan:** Although it has a big city feel, this northern city has much to offer. It is one of the world’s fashion capitals and window shopping here is an experience in and of itself. Visitors are awed by the city’s Gothic Duomo. Those who love opera shouldn’t miss a chance to visit Teatro La Scala or “La Scala” as it is more popularly known. Milan is also home to Leonardo Da Vinci’s Last Supper.

**Florence:** This is where the Renaissance was born and where it still feels alive and well. This small city devotes itself to art. The Accademia housing Michelangelo’s sculpture David and the Uffizi Gallery are two must-sees. Throughout Florence, you will feel like you are stepping in the foot prints of masters like Michelangelo and Borromini. Stroll the Ponte Vecchio with a scoop of gelato and do some people watching. For Florence’s famous leather and paper visit the street markets and adorable shops.
Rome: The Eternal City has it all — ancient ruins, Baroque churches, architectural wonders and the seat of the Catholic church — and they all co-exist with vibrant modern life. It seems every time construction begins on a new building, it is quickly halted because another ancient find has been unearthed. That’s Rome. You’ll never be able to see the whole city in one go so don’t try. Simply take in what you can and don’t forget to daydream as you walk through the Colosseum and Forum about what life might have been like as an ancient Roman.

Tuscany: This is what you imagine Italy to be — a breathtaking landscape of rolling hills criss-crossed by vineyards and dotted with charming medieval villages. While it is hard to pick the most picturesque corner, the Chianti area, with its world-famous wine growers, deserves top billing. The hill towns of Montepulciano, Cortona and Pienza are must-visits. Siena’s cobblestone streets welcome visitors all year-long but especially for the twice-yearly Palio horse races, a tradition dating back hundreds of years. Don’t miss Tuscany’s most famous tower — the leaning tower of Pisa, of course.

Naples: Vibrant and chaotic, Naples is a feast for the senses. You will truly feel alive here and might just imagine you are taking part in an urban opera. Cafes abound – duck in for some of the best coffee you will ever have (they say it is the water). Taste pizza in the place where it was born. Churches and museums present the history of this city which was once ruled by everyone from the Spanish to the Brits.

Campania: Head inland from Naples to see the remains of Pompeii, frozen in time by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. After exploring the grim tragedy, enjoy lighter moments on the astounding and beautiful Amalfi Coast, where you will travel a narrow cliff-hugging road surrounded by trees growing lemons the size of grapefruits. Or travel by boat in the gentle blue and turquoise seas where islands like Capri await.

Itinerary for a First Timer
Your first trip to Italy should be at least a week long. Two weeks is actually the perfect amount of time. You can see the major cities at a nice pace and get out to some of the smaller cities, ancient ruins and world-famous countryside.
It is hard to recommend Venice over Florence or Rome over Venice, etc. The big three are all fantastic and each one is unique so be sure to visit all of them, spending at least two if not three nights in each city. That leaves a few nights to get out into other areas.

For those who are interested in visiting vineyards and taking in a more rural experience, Tuscany is a great side trip for first-timers. It is tourist-friendly though if you’re not on a tour, you will need to rent a car. You can taste the famous Chianti wine right at the source, visit weekly markets in small towns and enjoy leisurely lunches overlooking rolling hills.

Another add-on to the big three is a trip down to the vibrant city of Naples and the Amalfi Coast. You can spend a day walking around Naples (you must have pizza in the place where it was born), a day visiting Pompeii and the remaining time on the coast. The Amalfi Coast presents dozens of options for how to spend your time. You can explore the towns up and down the Amalfi Drive or take a hydrofoil out to Capri for a look at the famous Blue Grotto and a swim in the pristine waters.

**When to Go**

Anytime is a great time to go to Italy. There is no right or wrong month to visit the Italian boot. Italy is filled with tourists between June and September. So if you’re traveling during this period, expect to have plenty of company. You want to make sure that you’re either on a tour or that you have booked all of your arrangements ahead of time. Don’t leave anything to chance. Expect warm, even hot weather.

August can be a great time to visit large Italian cities. Most of the natives are at the beach on vacation. Although some stores and restaurants will be closed, you’ll find the cities to be emptier. Consider traveling to Italy in the shoulder months of April, May and October. You’ll still have warm weather but fewer crowds.

“I love Italy in the winter! Some of my best trips to Italy have been in November, February and around the Christmas and New Year’s periods. Each time I had surprisingly good weather (knock on wood). It was so refreshing to feel like I had many of the major attractions to myself without fighting off other tourists. It was easier to get into the restaurants where I wanted to eat. Plus best of all, my air travel and hotels were much cheaper in the off-season, leaving me more money for shopping!”
Getting Around

Rental Car
If it is your first time to Italy and you’re concentrating on the big cities, you’re not going to need to rent a car, in fact, it would be more hassle than anything. Parking (not to mention actually driving in city traffic) is extraordinarily challenging and chances are you will need to park in your hotel garage which would likely charge at least 30€ per night.

If you’re traveling through the Italian countryside or renting a villa, a car is a necessity. For instance in Tuscany, train lines don’t run to most of the small towns and buses are few and far between. Plus without your own wheels, you’ll miss the great scenery along the back roads. A rental car offers the most flexibility since you can come and go without having to adhere to a schedule.

But ask yourself if you are really ready to drive in Italy? If you’re a confident driver at home, you’ll be more prepared to hit the Italian highways. Italians are fast, aggressive drivers and seem to have never learned how to use signals. While the Italian highways system (autostrada) is easy to navigate, you’ll likely be spending at least some time driving on narrow roads where quick reflexes are a must.

Other things to keep in mind:
- It is easy to get lost in Italy. Rent a GPS. It is worth the small added cost.
- You absolutely want to reserve your car before you leave the U.S. because it costs more to rent a car when you’re already in Europe.

- The standard rental car in Italy is manual transmission. You will pay extra for an automatic car.
- When choosing the size car you want, keep in mind two things. First, you want to make sure you have enough room for all the luggage you will be bringing. But on the other hand, when navigating the tiny medieval roads in Italy’s small towns, you are going to wish you had the smallest car possible.
- Unlike in the U.S., your rental car is likely to take diesel gasoline. Be sure to doublecheck before you leave the rental office.

Trains
If you’re traveling between cities, you should consider going by train. Enjoy the ride, look out at the lovely countryside and even take a nap while you’re whisked from one city to another. If you’re traveling between Italian cities, the train is definitely the way to go. For major city routes, hop on the Eurostar train, which will get you where you’re going quickly and in comfort. You
might want to pay a little more for a first-class ticket for a roomier seat and complimentary drink and snack.

One caveat though, if you are traveling with a lot of luggage or have a hard time lifting your bags, train travel is going to be more challenging. In order to get to your departure track, it is likely you will need to carry your luggage down one flight of stairs and then up another. Plus you’ll need to lift it on to the train and storage space on the trains is limited.

Italians themselves depend heavily on the train system so it pays to buy your tickets ahead of time especially if you are traveling on a weekend or holiday. There’s nothing worse than arriving at the train station to find out that your preferred train is sold out!

**SAMPLE TRAVEL TIMES ON EUROSTAR:**

- Milan – Venice: 2 hours 45 minutes
- Rome – Venice: 4 hours 33 minutes
- Florence – Rome: 1 hour 38 minutes
- Rome – Naples: 1 hour 27 minutes

**KEEP IN MIND:**

- Leave yourself enough time to find your track once you get to the train station.
- Be sure to validate your ticket in the yellow machine at the end of the track before boarding the train.

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Where to Stay

**Location, location, location.**
The old saying about real estate holds true even when we’re talking about a temporary place to lay your head. To get the most out of your first Italian trip, you want to stay as close to the action as you can afford. There will be so much to see that you don’t want to waste time getting to and from the sites. That’s why a centrally located hotel (albergo) is a key component to a successful trip.

Accommodations in Italy are given star ratings by regional governments. The higher the number of stars, the more amenities a hotel has and generally, the more expensive the nightly rates will be. The stars don’t necessarily indicate a hotel’s charm, ambiance or lack thereof.

Besides hotels, other accommodation options in Italy include pensioni. These are small, family-run guesthouses that can be charming and convenient but offer far fewer amenities than a full-service hotel. Bed-and-breakfasts are also another option. If you’re staying in more rural areas, you might consider an agriturismo, a working farm that also hosts guests.

**Things to Keep in mind:**
- Most hotel rooms provide a hairdryer. Don’t bring one from home. You would need a converter to use it anyway.
- Many hotels offer free in-room safes. Put your passport, credit cards, jewelry, cameras, etc. inside when you’re out of the room. There isn’t much crime against tourists in Italy but you can never be too safe.

**Villa (and Apartment) Rentals**
Many travelers dream of renting a villa in Italy. (Especially those who have read or seen *Under The Tuscan Sun.*) There’s good reason; staying in your “own place” can bring you closer to everyday Italian life, make you feel like a native.

But there are a few reasons why such a rental is a better idea for your second or third trip to Italy. Most rentals require at least a one-week stay. This is fine if you are planning to really immerse yourself in one place but if you only have a week or two to cover a few cities as well as a countryside destination, this can be limiting. If you’re renting, you need to be sure you’re comfortable with various aspects of the experience. If you’re renting a villa, you will almost certainly need to rent a car. You’ll want to be comfortable with going to the supermarket to buy food and supplies. In general, you should be more of an independent traveler.

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**TIP:**

The most important thing you can do when deciding which villa or apartment to rent is to make sure that there is someone (who speaks English) who is available seven days a week to assist you on the ground in case there is a problem in the rental, i.e. you are locked out, a toilet breaks, etc.
Dining Out

Let’s face it, one of the reasons you’re going to Italy is to eat well — really well! Italy has some of the best cuisine in the world — fresh, simple and delicious. Be prepared to eat more than usual, but all the walking you will be doing should counteract any weight gain. Don’t miss the homemade pasta, pizza unlike any you’ve ever had, fresh seafood, Bistecca Fiorentina (Florentine steak), risotto (rice) and gelato (Italian ice cream). You can wash it all down with some of the world’s finest wines, many of which cost less per glass than a Diet Coke!

Breakfast (Colazione)
Breakfast for the typical Italian is not a big meal. The traditional breakfast usually consists of cappuccino and a pastry (brioche), which may be eaten at home or at the local bar/café. Nearly every hotel includes breakfast in their nightly room rate and you can expect a self-service buffet. Items usually include various breads, pastries, ham, cheese, yogurt, cereals, Nutella and fruit. Occasionally freshly made eggs and omelets will be offered.

TIP:

Chances are you will find yourself in a café/bar looking for a shot of espresso or a quick snack. Always pay at the cashier ( cassa ) first and then bring your receipt ( ricevuto ) with you to the bar to get your drink. Stand at the bar to have your drink and snack. You’ll pay more to sit down.

Lunch (Pranzo)
For the typical Italian, lunch is the main meal of the day, particularly on Sundays. (See the dinner entry for what a full Italian meal entails.) It can last several hours. Since you will be touring, you probably won’t want to devote that amount of time and energy each day to a big meal. (But definitely do partake in the long Italian lunch when you can.) Alternatively, you can stop at a pizzeria where you can choose exactly the size of pizza slice you would like. If you’re looking for sandwiches ( panini ), stop in at a paninoteca.

Dinner (Cena)
It is a good idea to make reservations for dinner. Using reservations is much more common in Italy than in the U.S. While it is fine to walk into a restaurant without a reservation, you may have a hard time getting a table if it is crowded. Italians generally eat later than Americans
with most restaurants opening at 7:30 p.m. and not really filling up for an hour or so.

The full traditional Italian meal consists of antipasti (appetizers such as sliced meats and grilled vegetables), *primo piatto* (first dish — pasta or rice), *secondo piatto* (second dish — meat or fish) with *contorno* (side dish — vegetables or potatoes), followed by a dessert (*dolce*), fruit or cheese. While dining at an Italian restaurant, you are by no means required to partake in all of these courses. For instance, you can order pasta as your main meal and skip the meat course.

You will notice a small charge on your bill for “Pane e coperto.” That literally means “bread and cover,” and it is basically a service charge for dining. So you’re not expected to tip what you normally would in an American restaurant. If the service was very good, leave a few extra euros on the table when you leave.

### Money

Like other member countries of the European Union, Italy uses the euro, symbolized by “€”. For the current conversion rate between the dollar and the euro you can check a currency exchange Web site such as www.xe.com. Even if you are traveling on a fully inclusive tour, you’ll want to have euros for extras such as a cup of coffee or souvenirs. The best way to get cash in Italy is to use your ATM card.

Cash machines (*bancomats*) are everywhere in Italy as they are in the United States. The Cirrus and Plus systems are the most widely available. Be aware that many Italian cash machines will not accept card with PIN codes, five numbers or longer so be sure to reset your PIN to a four numbers before you go. You may also have a problem accessing a savings account so be sure the ATM card(s) you are bringing are linked to checking accounts. You may also be able to use your credit card for a cash advance if it has a PIN code (fees will apply).

Many travelers wonder about bringing travelers checks with them and it simply isn’t a good idea anymore. You’ll pay a fee for the checks at home, will need to find a bank (banks are usually open for a few hours in the morning and a few hours in the afternoon on week days) when it is open, wait in line and pay another service fee when receiving euros.
Credit cards are widely accepted throughout Italy. Visa and MasterCard are more commonly accepted so if you're bringing an American Express card, be sure to bring a Visa/MasterCard as well. Many credit card companies (Capitol One is an exception) are now charging a transaction fees for international purchases. Be sure to check with your credit card company before leaving home.

Finally, cash is king in Italy. Italian merchants hate paying service fees on credit card transactions and will often give you a discount (sconto) for paying cash. Of course, they also like to hide their earning from the tax authorities too, but that's a whole other story.

**TIP:**

“ If you're really a savvy traveler, you can do as this author’s father always does. Get a small amount of euros at your home bank – say $100 worth. Any commercial bank in the U.S. should be able to give you euros. – Check this. Then you’re really prepared to hit the ground running.”

Shopkeepers are also open to giving discounts if you are buying multiple items. Don't be afraid to ask for a *sconto*!

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Pompeii
According to UNESCO (the United Nations agency devoted to culture and heritage), sixty percent of the world’s art resides in Italy. That’s an astounding number. Couple that with the fact that many of the world’s greatest ancient ruins and churches are here too and you have your work cut out for you as a tourist!

The key is to pace yourself. Remember that you can always come back to Italy to see more. Accept that you can’t see everything and try to at least see the following highlights of Italy’s major cities:

**Venice:** St. Marks’ Square, Doge’s Palace, Accademia

**Rome:** Castel Sant’Angelo, Roman Forum, Largo Argentina, the Jewish Ghetto, Circus Maximus, Colosseum, Vatican Museum (and Sistine Chapel)*, St. Peter’s Basilica, Trevi Fountain, Pantheon

**Florence:** Duomo, Church of Santa Croce, Accademia*, Uffizi Gallery*

**Naples:** Castel dell’ Ovo, Teatro San Carlo, the National Archeological Museum

*Also: Pompeii, outside of Naples

**Milan:** Castello Sforzesco, Duomo, Church of Santa Maria Della Grazie (home to Da Vinci’s *The Last Supper)*, Galleria Vittorio Emanuele

*TIP: When entering churches in Italy, particularly St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican, it is important to be properly dressed. Your shoulders and knees should be covered. So don’t wear sleeveless shirts and shorts for these visits.

* These are museums where you might end up waiting hours in line if you are not in a tour group or with a private guide. For some of these museums you can reserve tickets ahead of time online, but you still might wait to get in. To see *The Last Supper* in Milan, you are required to book ahead.

Keep in mind that many major museums are closed on Mondays.
Keeping in Touch

Phone Use
Chances are that you own a cell phone. So your question might be, will it work in Italy? First you need to find out if your phone is GSM (Global System for Mobile - some 50% of cell phones sold in the U.S. are), which means it will work in Europe. If it is you’re in luck and can use it in Italy. Call your service provider and find out what the per-minute charge will be abroad. It will likely be about $1 per minute if you pay a small monthly fee for an international plan. This will get your cell phone working abroad, but is not really an affordable option for much talk time.

A better option is to purchase an Italian SIM card to use in your GSM phone. This will allow you free incoming calls from anywhere in the world and outgoing calls at about .35€ per minute. In order to use an Italian SIM card, you need to make sure your phone is “unlocked.” You can go online to find out how to do this.

"TIP: If you’re bringing your laptop computer with you to Italy, you can sign up for a free account at www.skype.com. Skype allows you to make free international phone calls through your computer to anyone else in the world who also has the free software on his/her computer. For a small fee, you can set it up to make calls from your computer to any phone — cell or landline — in the world."

CellularAbroad.com offers Italian SIM cards for sale online so you can get one before you hit the ground in Italy. This company, among many others, also offers cell phone rentals in case you don’t have a GSM phone.

Whether or not you bring a cell phone to Italy, you’ll probably want to buy a prepaid international telephone card once you’re in the country. You can buy them at any local tobacco shops (tabacchi) — out front you’ll see a dark brown sign with a white capital T. The card costs 5€ and entitles you to hundreds of minutes of international calling time from any landline. You simply dial a toll-free number (numero verde) and the code provided on the card.

Whatever you do, don’t make direct international calls from your hotel room phone. Your telephone bill might exceed the nightly cost of your room!
Getting Online
While Internet use in Italy isn’t as prevalent as in the United States, Italians who work in tourism understand how important Internet access is to Americans. Nearly every large hotel offers (and even many of the smallest ones) a computer or business center for guest use, generally free-of-charge. More and more hotels, especially those catering to business travelers, are offering guestroom Internet connections or Wi-Fi, though there’s usually a charge for this convenience.

Italy’s major cities are filled with Internet cafes so you will have no trouble finding a computer to get online. Internet Train (www.internettrain.it) offers around 150 Internet points in stores and cafes all over Italy.

Shopping

While seeing the relics of ancient history and indulging in mouth-watering food are certainly a few of the highlight of a visit to Italy, for many visitors shopping is one of the activities they most look forward to. After all, here’s the chance to get those wonderful Italian products we all love, right from the source and in unique designs and offerings we can’t find at home. There are a few things to keep in mind — opening hours, sale periods, taxes — before you shop ‘til you drop — Italian-style.

When to Shop
Stores generally open between 9 and 10 a.m. and remain open until 1 p.m. or when shop keepers close for lunch before reopening for the afternoon at 3 p.m. and closing for the day by 8 p.m. The lunch break is an Italian tradition and you will find more shops closed than open during the early afternoon. Though many stores in tourist-heavy areas and the big cities now offer continuous hours. Generally stores are closed on Sunday but again some of the heavily touristed shops in cities like Rome and Venice remain open, as well as the large supermarkets. Keep in mind that fashion stores are closed on Monday mornings.

Italy has two official sales (saldi) periods each year – one in January and one in July. This is when you will find the best prices on items that stores are trying to move out in order to bring in new inventory.

TIP: Like most European countries, Italy imposes a Valued Added Tax (VAT) — of up to 20% — on most goods and services. Under the Tax Free Shopping Program, visitors residing outside of the European Union are entitled to claim back the tax, if they spend 154,94€ or more in one shop in one day. Look for the Tax Free Shopping logo where you shop or consult www.globalrefund.com for more information.
Where to Buy the Best Italian Products

**Fashion:** Although you'll find great fashion stores in all of Italy's cities, Milan remains Italy's fashion capital. If you are looking for designer duds or just want to window shop, head to the Quadrilatero alla Moda. Be sure to check out the Armani Superstore offering everything from clothing to chocolates.

**Ceramics:** Two of Italy’s ceramics centers are Deruta in the region of Umbria and Vietri sul Mare on the Amalfi Coast. Walk down the streets of either of these towns to watch artisans at work and compare designs and prices. Definitely plan on shipping your purchases home. But if you don’t make it to one of these places, don’t worry, there are also ceramics towns in Tuscany, Puglia and Sicily and ceramics from all of these places are brought to bigger cities to sell in shops.

**Glass:** Venice is the place! There’s been glass-making here since the ninth century. Visit the Venetian island of Murano where all of the city’s glass factories are located and it is possible to watch the glassblowers in action. There’s also a glass museum and many places to buy everything from glass trinkets to chandeliers.

**Leather:** Florence is world famous for leather goods — shoes, jackets, belts, purses. The best places to buy these items are in the street markets or at Scuola del Cuoio, where a consortium of leather artisans sell their creations.

**Masks:** You'll see paper mache carnival masks all over Venice and many are true works of art, worth hanging on your living room wall when you return home. Prices range from the equivalent of $15 to hundreds of dollars for the most opulent and intricate masks. Seek out some of the artisans’ stores — there’s nothing like buying straight from the source.

**Paper:** The tradition of marbleized paper began in Venice and was brought to Florence by master craftsmen. Florence still offers the best stationery and paper products and you'll find them sold everywhere from the local markets to the stores of high-end stationers. These colorful, elegant items make great gifts for the folks back home.

**Silk:** The town of Como on Lake Como in northern Italy produces a majority of the silk manufactured in Europe. This is where the major Italian fashion houses get their silk and you can snag some great deals at the factory outlets around town.

**TIP:**

"Especially if you are in a small shop where the products are breakable, be sure to ask the shopkeeper for assistance before handling the items. While Americans are used to touching everything in a store, this is not the way it is done in Italy."

"
A Quick Italian Language Lesson

Don’t let the fact that you don’t speak Italian intimidate you. Most of the Italians you will meet, especially in the cities, will speak at least a few words of English and many speak the language fairly fluently. Those working in tourism depend on English-speaking visitors for their livelihoods and thus try to speak English.

It’s a good idea to try to learn a few words of Italian before your trip because Italians are absolutely thrilled when foreigners make an effort to speak their language. Here are a few basic words to get you started:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Ciao</td>
<td>(chow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>Per favore</td>
<td>(pear fa-vo ray)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>Grazie</td>
<td>(grah-tsee-ay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You're welcome</td>
<td>Prego</td>
<td>(pray-go)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse me</td>
<td>Scusì</td>
<td>(skoo-zee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry</td>
<td>Mi dispiace</td>
<td>(mee dis-spee-oh-chay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good day</td>
<td>Buon giorno</td>
<td>(bwohn-jor-no)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good bye</td>
<td>Arrividerci</td>
<td>(a-ree-vah-dore-chee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice to meet you</td>
<td>Piacere</td>
<td>(pee-ah-chair-ray)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you?</td>
<td>Come sta?</td>
<td>(ko-may stah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Bene</td>
<td>(ben-ay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you speak English?</td>
<td>Parla Inglese?</td>
<td>(par-la een-glay-zay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t speak Italian</td>
<td>Non parlo Italiano</td>
<td>(non par-lo ee-tal-yah-no)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t understand</td>
<td>Non capisco</td>
<td>(non ka-peess-ko)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name is…</td>
<td>Mi chiamo…</td>
<td>(mee kee-ah-mo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much is it?</td>
<td>Quanto costa?</td>
<td>(kwahn-toe coast-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is…?</td>
<td>Dov’e</td>
<td>(doe-veh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is the bathroom?</td>
<td>Dov’e il bagno?</td>
<td>(doe-veh eel bahn-yo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember that as a rule, every letter in an Italian word is pronounced. Though in some dialects of the language, you’ll hear words shortened.
Some Things You Will Notice in Italy

No matter whether you’ve just purchased a cup of coffee or a set of ceramic plates, you will always be (or should be) given a receipt. The reason for this is that the Italian tax police (Guardia di Finanza) are serious about stopping tax fraud and can stop customers within 100 meters of a store and ask for a receipt. Author’s note: It is a good idea to hold on to your receipt though no one I know has ever been stopped.

The bread in Florence and Tuscany doesn’t have any salt in it. This leads back to the Middle Ages when Tuscans refused to pay the tax imposed on salt and thus have been making their bread without it ever since.

Lines or queues in Italy are anything but orderly; it is every man for his or herself. It must be genetic; Italians hate to stand in line. They will cut the line at every opportunity. If you think that those sweet Italian grandmothers wouldn’t do such a thing? Watch out. They are the worst offenders!

There’s an alarm in every hotel bathroom. You’ll see a cord in the bathtub/shower; don’t pull it unless it is an emergency or you’ve fallen.

Italy, like the rest of Europe is on the metric system. Here are the guidelines for converting:

Meters: 1 meter = 3.3 feet
Kilometers: 1 kilometer = 6/10 of a mile.
Speed: 100 kilometers / hour = 60 miles per hour.
Liter: One liter = 1.75 pints
Weight: 500 grams = 1 pound
Degrees: 0 °C (Celsius) = 32 °F (Fahrenheit); 20 °C = 68 °F

The voltage in Italy is 220 volts. If you are bringing any electrical items from the U.S., they work on 110 volts. Many laptops and camera chargers have automatic converters in the them and you will just need an adapter for the plug. Be sure to check the manufacturer first. In some cases, you may need a converter.