

ITALIAN LANGUAGE

FOR TRAVELERS, TOURISTS
AND VAGABONDS



LARRY AIELLO

Italian Language
For Travelers, Tourists
And Vagabonds

By Larry Aiello

<http://www.CoolBooksByLarry.com>

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About Me

Benvenuti! Welcome, and thank you for purchasing my book. I grew up outside of New York City and now live in Florida. I have traveled through Italy extensively, spending many summers as a boy, and I now try to get back as often as I can. I love to share my knowledge with others about the language, culture, and beauty of Italy.

I also from time to time enjoy teaching Italian to those who want to learn in person in the Tampa Bay area, and the proceeds benefit a local charity that I am involved with. You can see some of the reviews here:

<http://www.addicted2italy.com/goto.php?link=italian-classes-tampa>

Italian Pronunciation

One of the beautiful things about the Italian language—besides the sound—is the relative ease with which one can pronounce the words. Everything is pronounced exactly as it is written. In other words, it is a phonetic language. Once you know the rules of pronunciation you'll be able to read and speak Italian in no time. For all practical purposes learning to read and speak Italian should take the amount of time it will take you to memorize the next few pages. For most people it should be less than an hour or two.

That's right...you'll be able to speak and read Italian in less than an hour or two. You won't comprehend what the heck you are talking about, but you'll be able to do it. The reason is that there are no exceptions in the Italian language when it comes to phonetics. In English there are many exceptions. And that means you have to memorize those exceptions to take into account every possible phonetic combination or possibility in order to truly pronounce the word properly.

Let's look at an example. I remember this from my linguistics professor back in my younger days at the University of Florida.

How would you pronounce the following word in English?

GHOTI (g-h-o-t-i)

Most people would pronounce it similar to the word goatee, which refers to facial hair around a man's chin and moustache area. Or you can pronounce it the same way as goatee, but with the accent emphasizing the first syllable, as in GO-tee. It wouldn't be farfetched for some people to pronounce it the same way as the infamous New York City mobster John Gotti (aka the Teflon Don).

What if I told you that in the English language you could also pronounce this as *fish*, as in a fish you can eat, like a salmon or a trout?

Here's how you can accomplish that in English.

GH – these first two letters can be pronounced as the *f* sound in fish because gh can have that same pronunciation as in rough.

O – this letter can be pronounced as the *i* in fish, similar to the same pronunciation that an o has in the word women.

TI – these last two letters can mimic the *sh* sound in fish similar to the ti combination that is found in nation.

That's how you can get fish out of ghoti.

As you can see, English has a lot of inconsistencies and irregularities in regards to its

pronunciation. And that's because we've had a lot of different influences on our language that have "bastardized" it, for lack of a better term. Luckily for you, Italian does not have those bastardizations when it comes to pronunciation.

Accent – Emphasis – Stress

The only thing that CAN sometimes change is the placement of the emphasis (stress), or the accent of a multi-syllable Italian word. Most of the time the stress will fall on the second to last syllable, also known as the penultimate syllable. This is similar to Spanish and it gives both languages a very rhythmic sound.

Sometimes the emphasis can fall on the last syllable. Usually that is indicated with an accent on the last letter, such as:

Università – This five-syllable word for university will have a strong emphasis on that final à sound. In this case we are lucky because there is an accent mark on the à that alerts you to place the emphasis on that syllable.

Sometimes the emphasis can fall on another syllable. Usually, there is no accent to guide you along in this case. Native speakers will know where the emphasis should fall based on practice, custom, and experience.

Let's look at the following two names:

Mario

Maria

The masculine Mario has emphasis on the A. Whereas the feminine Maria has the emphasis on the I. The feminine Maria follows the normal pattern of using the penultimate syllable. The masculine Mario does not. Note that there is no accent symbol on Mario.

The Italian Alphabet

- a – pronounced as “ah” as in father (ah)
- b – pronounced the same as bumble bee (bee)
- c – pronounced like tai chi (chee)
- d – pronounced like Billy Dee Williams (dee)
- e – pronounced like the “e” in get (see note below) (eh)
- f – pronounced EFF-eh (effe)
- g – pronounced like g-string (gi)
- h – pronounced AH-cah (acca) (see note below)
- i – pronounced like the double “e” sound in eel (ee)
- l – pronounced EL-eh (elle)
- m – pronounced EM-eh (emme)
- n – pronounced EN-eh (enne)
- o – pronounced like “oh” (see note below)
- p – pronounced like you have to take a pee (pi)
- q – pronounced coo – like a coup d'etat
- r – pronounced EH-reh (r's are rolled in Italian)
- s – pronounced ES-eh
- t – pronounced tee like a tee pee
- u – pronounced oo similar to fool
- v – pronounced voo as in voo doo
- z – pronounced ZEH-tah like the beautiful Catherine Zeta-Jones

What did you notice from this alphabet?

You probably noticed that there are some letters that are missing. The ones that are missing are:

- j – pronounced ee LOON-gah (i lunga – meaning long i)

k – pronounced KAH-pah (cappa) (see note below)

w – pronounced DOH-pya voo (doppia vu – meaning double v)

x – pronounced eeks as in cheeks (ics)

y – pronounced EE-pseh-lohn (ipsilon) (see note below)

These letters do appear in words that are part of the Italian language but the words are derived from foreign origin. Taxi, for example, is technically a word in Italian. You will find it in every Italian dictionary and it is very much understood as a common everyday word. But technically, the letter X is not part of the Italian language.

Note: With regard to the letter “e” there are parts of Italy where it will sound more like the “ay” in the word day.

Note: With regard to the letter “h” it is always silent and never aspirated, as in English. It is also used as a letter that may act as a switch for the pronunciation of the letters “c” and “g” (below). Although, a characteristic of the Florentine dialect is that they will sometimes aspirate the “h” sound.

Note: With regard to the letter “k” it is often used in abbreviations for km (kilometer) or kg (kilogram).

Note: With regard to the letter “o” it’s helpful to try to get your mouth to open wide at the end of pronouncing an “o.” In English the mouth is closing at the end of an “o” sound pronunciation.

Note: With regard to the letter “y” sometimes it’s referred to as “i greca” or a Greek “i.”

Consonants

For the most part, consonants in Italian will sound just like the English equivalent. However, there are a few cases with special circumstances.

La Lettera C / The Letter C

The letter “c” in Italian presents unique pronunciation rules that need to be memorized but will become second nature the more you practice.

ca / co / cu

Whenever you have a “c” followed by an “a,” “o,” or “u” it is pronounced like the “c” in cat or car.

Some example words that you may be familiar with are:

casa – house

compagnia – company

cuore – heart (similar to the word coronary)

ce / ci

Whenever you have a “c” followed by an “e” or an “i” it is pronounced like the “ch” in church.

Some example words that you may be familiar with are:

cento – one hundred

ciao – hello or goodbye

che / chi

As you just learned above, a “ce” or “ci” word will sound like the “ch” in church. However, the use of the letter “h” will switch the sound to make it sound like the “c” in cat. Some examples are *perchè* (why or because) and *chiaro* (clear). Think of the letter “h” like a toggle. It really has no other purpose in Italian since it has no pronunciation in and of itself.

La Lettera G / The Letter G

The letter “g” also has a different pronunciation depending on the letter combination. Luckily they are the same combinations as the letter “c” mentioned above.

ga / go / gu

Whenever you have a “g” followed by an “a,” “o,” or “u” it is pronounced just like the “g” in good.

Some example words you are probably familiar with include:

gatto – cat

gondola – what you might take in Venice

gusto – taste

When “gu” is preceded by another vowel it will sound like the “gw” in the name Gwen. An example of this is the name Guido from the Jersey Shore.

ge / gi

Whenever you have a “g” followed by an “e” or an “i” it is pronounced like a “j” sound, as in New Jersey or like the “g” in gem.

Some example words you are probably familiar with include:

gelato – Italian version of ice cream

gin – as in gin and tonic

ghe / ghi

Here comes the letter “h” again acting as a switch, but this time for the letter “g.” Normally the “ge” sound or the “gi” sound would be similar to the “j” in jail, but this time the “h” makes it sound like the “g” in good. Some examples are *ghetto* and the famous brand of chocolate *Ghirardelli*.

gli

This is a peculiar sound to pronounce, especially as a stand-alone word that in certain circumstances is used as a plural for the word “the.” However, it often sounds like the double “ll” that you will see in the word “million.” Whenever “gli” is followed by a consonant it will be pronounced similar to the sound in *negligence*. The Italian word “*negligenza*” is pronounced in this manner.

gn

This sound is similar to the “ny” that is in “*canyon*” or the “n” sound that we use in “*onion*.”

sc

When it precedes an “a,” “o,” or “u” it is pronounced like the “sc” in score. Some examples include *scatola* (box) or *scuola* (school).

When it precedes an “i” or an “e” it is pronounced like the “sh” in ship. An example word would be *scivolare* (to slip).

qu

There are a lot of words in Italian that have a “qu” combination. And similar to English, you won’t find many other letters in combination with the letter “q.” The “qu” sound in Italian is similar to the “qu” sound in “*quack*” or “*quart*.”

Double Consonants

In Italian there are often words that feature two similar consonants adjacent to each other. Every consonant, with the exception of “h” or “y,” can be doubled. And whenever you do encounter a double consonant, it requires a little bit more emphasis and pronunciation than when you encounter only a single consonant. It is a slight nuance and, at first, to a novice ear it will be tough to make the distinction.

A good example where this is noticeable is the following:

casa – house

cassa – cashier, or a safe

The latter word will have more emphasis on the “s” pronunciation. Some other popular words with double consonants include:

mamma (mom)

fratello (brother)

sorella (sister)

pelle (skin)

bocca (mouth)

notte (night)

Vowels in Italian

The five vowels in Italian are pronounced very precisely and sharp. They are not slurred or drawn out as in English. Open your mouth nice and wide when pronouncing the vowels. The letters “e” and “o” can have two different pronunciations (open or closed) that are only subtly different. It is more of a regional difference depending on which part of Italy you are visiting. Similar to how someone in the United States would pronounce tomato as opposed to someone in the United Kingdom (tom-ay-to versus tom-ah-to). I wouldn’t worry or fret too much over the open or closed distinction.

a – similar to the pronunciation in father

e – (open) similar to the pronunciation in get, met, let

e – (closed) similar to the “a” sound in fate, gate, date

i – similar to the “ee” sound in feet, meet, greet

o – (open) similar to the “aw” sound in cole slaw, thaw

o – (closed) similar to the “o” sound in hotel, motel

u – similar to the “oo” sound in boot, loot

Here’s a tip for pronouncing the “o” sound – it doesn’t matter if it’s the closed or open type above. When we pronounce an “o” in English the mouth tends to close at the end of the pronunciation. In Italian, try to open your mouth nice and wide and try to get the mouth to open at the end of the pronunciation.

Thongs, Diphthongs and Triphthongs

Italians love their thongs, but not the type you see at the beach. These have to do with the number of consecutive vowels in a word.

Diphthongs

These are combinations of two vowels that are combined together to form one single sound in one syllable. Some of the more common ones include:

ai – similar to the “i” sound in might

au – similar to the “ow” sound in down

ia – similar to the “ya” sound in yard

ie – similar to the “ye” sound in yell

oi – similar to the “oy” sound in boy

uo – similar to the “wo” sound in won ton soup

Triphthongs

These are combinations of three vowels that are combined together to form one single sound in one syllable. Some of the more common ones include:

uoi – similar to the sound in “boy” but with a “w” thrown in – “bwoy” would be the pronunciation for *buoi* (oxen).

iei – similar to the slang “yay” to indicate yes.

Some Common Expressions



Good morning (Hello)

Buon giorno

bwohn JOHR-noh

This is the most common greeting you will encounter, as it is used all throughout the morning and through the late afternoon until approximately 4 or 5 PM. Afterwards you would start using *buona sera* instead. *Buon giorno* literally means good day. You can say this to just about everyone and you will get a similar reply, particularly in the smaller towns (*paesi*). This can also be used at the conclusion of a business transaction with a shopkeeper. Or it also serves as a goodbye at the end or conclusion of an encounter. In essence, at the conclusion of an encounter you would be for all practical purposes saying have a nice day or *buon giorno*.

Good evening (Hello)

Buona sera

BWOH-nah SEH-rah

This is similar to the *buon giorno* saying above, but it is used primarily from 4 or 5 PM and

later. This would be after most Italians have had their “siesta” period. Remember, many businesses in Italy are closed from 1 PM until approximately 4 PM. It’s after the start of the second shift at 4 PM when *buona sera* starts to be used. It can also be used at the conclusion of a business transaction that happens during the evening hours.

Good night (Goodbye)

Buona notte

BWOH-nah NAWT-teh

The Italian phrase for “good night” is *buona notte*, but there is an important cultural distinction in how it is used. The greeting to use during the night and evening hours is *buona sera*. It is the same as using *buon giorno* during the day (see above).

Buona notte is used when you are saying good night to signify the conclusion or ending of a time together with friends. It serves as a final goodbye. *Buona notte* should not be used as a greeting. For example, you would use *buona sera* if you are about to meet some friends at 10:30 PM. However, if you just had dinner or spent a nice evening together and you are saying goodbye to your friends at 10:30 PM at the conclusion of the evening or meal, you would say *buona notte*.

Hello or goodbye

Ciao

chow

This is a casual greeting used among people with whom you already have an established relationship, such as close friends and family. Even though it is very commonly used, as a tourist or visitor you will not typically use it during your normal everyday encounters with strangers. If an Italian first greets with the word *ciao* (which would be considered an honor), you may also use it to reciprocate. You can also use it when speaking to a child or a pet. But to be on the safe side you should use *buon giorno* or *buona sera*.

Hello

Salve

SAHL-veh

This is a more formal way to say hello between people who do not know each other. When you enter a store or a place of business, this is the greeting that you will most likely encounter or be greeted with by the shopkeeper, waiter, employee, etc. Unlike the word *ciao* above, this

is only used as a hello. It is not used as a goodbye or a parting word.

Goodbye

Arrivederci / ArrivederLa

ahr-ree-veh-DEHR-chee / ahr-ree-veh-DEHR-lah

This phrase literally means, “Until we see each other again.” It is a bit more proper than using the word ciao. If you are on a familiar basis with someone, you could use the word ciao to indicate goodbye.

Arrivederci – Until we see each other again

ArrivederLa – Until I see you again

ArrivederLa is the more formal of the two. This would be used for people that you do not know. You can use this at the conclusion of a business transaction or at the end of a meal to the wait staff, etc.

Arrivederci is used for people that you know, business acquaintances, etc. It is not as formal as arrivederLa, but not as intimate as using ciao as a goodbye.

If you are in doubt, it is best to start off with arrivederLa until the other speaker indicates it’s OK to use either arrivederci or ciao.

The Spanish equivalent is widely understood in English (thanks to Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator* movie) as “hasta la vista.”

Excuse me

Mi scusi

mee SKOO-zee

With this conversation exchange you are basically saying excuse me. You would use it to try to gain someone’s attention if you have yet to be noticed. For example, this would come in handy if you are asking for directions or if you are in a shop and have not yet been helped. It can also be used the same way in English after a sneeze or a cough.

Permesso

Per MEH-soh

In Italian *permesso* literally means permission. For all practical purposes this means:

Do I have permission to pass through?

Or

May I have permission to squeeze by?

This phrase would be used in instances when you are reaching across someone to grab something or if you want to squeeze by in a tight space. *Mi scusi*, although similar, would not be used in these circumstances other than to try to get someone's attention.

May I help (assist) you?

(mi) dica

(mee) DEEH-kah

This phrase in Italian literally means, "Tell me." This is often a practical way for a waiter or a storeowner to tell you that you now have their complete and undivided attention. And that they are ready to assist you. They are basically saying, Tell me what you want or how I can help you. It's easy to feel ignored when receiving service in Italy, but they generally deal with one person at a time. And when you hear *mi dica* it's basically indicating that it is your turn to be assisted.

What would you like (to drink)?

Cosa desidera (da bere)

KOH-sah deh-SEE-deh-rah (dah BEH-ray)

As is customary in many parts of the world, when you are first seated at a restaurant a waiter will ask you what you would like to drink prior to taking your food order. In Italy the typical drinks are generally mineral water, wine, or soda. The water is often bubbled or tonic. If you would like it without the bubbles you should order it "*senza gas*" or "*naturale*."

OK, so, alright

Allora

ahl-LOR-ah

This word is almost used as a bridge or a warm-up to change or shift the focus of the conversation. It can be used in a wide variety of situations and circumstances.

A waiter may start out saying this word to, in essence, say you now have my attention.

"Alright now...what would you like to drink?"

“Allora...cosa desidera da bere?”

At the conclusion of your shopping, the shopkeeper or storeowner may say this to indicate that it is time to sum up the total.

Thank you

Grazie

GRAH-tzyeh

This is probably one of the first Italian phrases that you should learn. The act of expressing gratitude for a kind act or service is a universal feeling that everyone can relate to in importance. It's often used at the conclusion or end of a business transaction or conversation. It can often be combined with a goodbye such as *grazie...arrivederci*.

You're Welcome

Prego

PREH-goh

If you are in the United States, you may think that this phrase has something to do with spaghetti sauce. I'm not sure why the sauce company used this phrase to name their spaghetti sauce, other than perhaps they wanted an Italian sounding name for their marketing and branding.

Just as in English, this is the response you will hear after the words thank you are expressed. You can hear this after making a purchase in a shop, paying a bill in a restaurant, after ordering coffee, etc. An alternative and also common reply is *grazie a Lei*, or *a Lei*, meaning thank you with an added emphasis on the “you.”

You will also hear *prego* meaning you're welcome in the sense of “you are welcome.” For example, this can be used to indicate that you may go ahead of another person through a doorway. It can also be an invite for you to sit after you are shown to a table in a restaurant. Or when entering a shop you will hear *prego* to mean “you are welcome” to shop or browse around.

Arrival in Italy – Passports and Immigration



VISA requirements to Italy

Italy is one of the nations involved in the Schengen agreement, which states that a VISA is not required to enter the country for stays up to 90 days. If you are staying longer than 90 days you will need to make special arrangements with a VISA.

The following countries are part of this agreement:

Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Passport Requirements – US, Canada, Australia, Ireland, UK, New Zealand

However, you will need a passport to enter Italy and be required to carry it with you at all times in case you are asked for identification or for making a purchase with a credit card. On my most recent trip to Italy, they only asked me for a passport once while I was making a credit card purchase. It used to be more of a common practice. The Italian police will rarely stop tourists to ask for identification but they have the right to do so.

If your passport is lost or stolen, go immediately to your nearest consulate. Since you are allowed to stay up to 90 days, your passport must be valid for at least 90 days after your entry into Italy. If your passport expires in a month and you meet an Italian who sweeps you off your feet and you decide to stay longer, you will have immigration problems. Stranger things have happened, and not only in romance novels.

If you are a British citizen, there are some exceptions to the passport requirement if you have been cleared for EU Travel or if you are carrying specific identification cards available in the UK. Check with your travel department for more information.

NOTE

The information above is subject to change, so it is best to check prior to your trip to make sure it is still valid. Much of this information can be found online.

Most of the airports in Italy have an honor system for going through customs. They will generally not open your bags, though spot checks are a possibility.

Some Useful Vocabulary:

passport

passaporto

Here is my passport.

Ecco il mio passaporto.

visa

vista

suitcase

valigia

I'm here on business.

Sono qui per affair.

I'm here for three days.

Sono qui per tre giorni.

I'm here for two weeks.

Sono qui per due settimane.

I have nothing to declare.

Ho nulla da dichiarare.

Where can I rent a car?

Dove posso noleggiare un'automobile?

Definite Articles - The

One thing about the Italian language that takes some getting used to is the fact that there are gender and number considerations to take into account when matching adjectives with nouns, definite articles with nouns, etc.

In English, gender and number considerations are, for the most part, irrelevant.

For example, the definite article “the” in Italian changes depending on whether you are talking about a feminine noun or a masculine noun. It also changes if you are talking about one item versus many items. Nouns are either masculine or feminine by an agreed upon convention or custom.

Most of the time a word that ends with the letter “o” will, by custom, be considered a masculine noun. Think of the name Mario.

Most of the time a word that ends with the letter “a” will, by custom, be considered a feminine noun. Think of the name Maria.

When a word ends with the letter “e” it can be either masculine or feminine. You will have to memorize these individually.

Here are the definite articles in Italian:

Masculine Singular

il – is used for masculine singular nouns that begin with most consonants.

lo – is used for masculine singular nouns that begin with *y*, *z*, *ps*, *pn*, *gn*, or *s* + consonant (*sb*, *sh*, *sl*, *sp*, *st*).

l' – is used in place of *il* when the following word begins with a vowel.

Feminine Singular

la – is used for feminine singular nouns.

l' – is used in place of *la* when the following word begins with a vowel.

Masculine Plural

i – is used for masculine plural nouns that begin with most consonants. The plural of *il* used above in masculine singular will change to single letter *i*.

gli – is used for pluralizing the nouns that would pertain to *lo* and *l'* above (see masculine

singular).

Feminine Plural

le – to pluralize all feminine nouns use the word *le*.

Here is a summarization of the changes from singular to plural:

Masculine

il --- changes to --- i

lo --- changes to --- gli

l' --- changes to --- gli

Feminine

la --- changes to --- le

l' --- changes to --- le

Here are some examples using masculine nouns:

Where?

Dove?

Where is?

Dov'è

Where are?

Dove sono?

Where is the restaurant?

Dov'è il ristorante?

Where are the Italian restaurants?

Dove sono i ristoranti italiani?

Where is the theater?

Dov'è il teatro?

Where are the theaters?

Dove sono i teatri?

Below is an example where you would use *lo* because the word *stadio* begins with an st.

Where is the stadium?

Dov'è lo stadio?

Where are the stadiums?

Dove sono gli stadi?

Where is the hotel?

Dov'è l'albergo?

Where are the hotels?

Dove sono gli alberghi?

Where is the airport?

Dov'è l'aeroporto?

Where are the airports?

Dove sono gli aeroporti?

Here are some examples using feminine nouns:

Where is the road to Rome?

Dov'è la strada per Roma?

Where are the roads to Rome?

Dove sono le strade per Roma?

Where is the station?

Dov'è la stazione?

Where are the stations?

Dove sono le stazioni?

Where is the teacher?

Dov'è l'insegnante?

Where are the teachers?

Dove sono le insegnanti?

Indefinite Article – A or An

The indefinite article in Italian will also agree to the gender of the noun that it is describing, either masculine or feminine.

Masculine

For words that begin with most consonants

un – is used for words that begin with most consonants

uno – is used for masculine singular nouns that begin with y, z, ps, pn, gn. or s + consonant (sb, sh, sl, sp, st).

un' – is used when the next word is followed by a vowel.

a boy

un ragazzo

uno zoo

a zoo

a sport

uno sport

a watch

un' orologio

Feminine

una – is used for words that begin with a consonant.

un' – is used for words that begin with a vowel.

Here are some examples:

a girl

una ragazza

a car

una macchina

an eagle

un' aquila

Pluralizing Nouns

To form the plural for each noun you should memorize the following:

If a word ends in o (probably masculine)

change the “o” to an “i”

If a word ends in a (probably feminine)

change the “a” to an “e”

If a word ends in an e (can be either feminine or masculine)

change the “e” to an “i”

Regular Verbs in Italian

Congratulations on making it this far in the book! However, this section is the one section that will make most people cringe no matter which language you are trying to learn. Many people would rather visit their dentist or proctologist than try to study verb conjugations.

The good news is that there are three (well, really four) types of regular verbs in Italian that need to be memorized. Once you memorize the pattern, you can conjugate verbs all day long, which will go a long way in your language learning. That's why they call these regular verbs. They all follow the same pattern. Later in the book I will show examples of irregular verbs that do NOT follow the pattern below.

The three types are based on the ending stem of the verb. That is, the last three letters of the verb infinitive.

Here are the three endings that we need to be concerned with:

* ARE verbs

* ERE verbs

* IRE verbs

Here is the pattern for regular verbs (present tense):

1 – Verbs that end in are

parlare – to speak

(io) parlo – I speak

(tu) parli – you (singular, informal) speak

(lui / lei / Lei) parla – he / she / you (formal) speak

(noi) parliamo – we speak

(voi) parlate – you (plural) speak

(loro / Loro) parlano – they / you (formal plural) speak

Other common verbs that follow this pattern include:

amare – to love

chiamare – to call

firmare – to sign

studiare – to study

imparare – to learn

pensare – to think

2 – Verbs that end in ere

leggere – to read

(io) leggo – I read

(tu) leggi – you (singular, informal) read

(lui / lei / Lei) legge – he / she / you (formal) read

(noi) leggiamo – we read

(voi) leggete – you (plural) read

(loro / Loro) leggono – they / you (formal plural) read

Other common verbs that follow this pattern include:

apprendere – to learn

chiedere – to ask

eleggere – to elect

mettere – to put, place

perdere – to lose

vendere – to sell

3 – verbs that end in ire

dormire – to sleep

(io) dormo – I sleep

(tu) dormi – you (singular, informal)

(lui / lei / Lei) dorme – he / she / you (formal) sleeps

(noi) dormiamo – we sleep

(voi) dormite – you (plural) sleep

(loro / Loro) dormono – they / you (formal plural) sleep

Other common verbs that follow this pattern include:

aprire – to open

bollire – to boil

partire – to leave

seguire – to follow

vestire – to dress, wear

There is a little quirk with some (not all) Italian verbs that end in “ire.” There is a sub-group of verbs ending in -ire that have a modified or bastardized pattern. These verbs insert “sc” before the endings in the singular and the third-person plural, as in the verb:

capire (to understand):

(io) capisco – I understand

(tu) capisci – you (singular, informal) understand

(lui / lei / Lei) capisce – he / she / you (singular, formal) understands

(noi) capiamo – we understand

(voi) capite – you (plural, informal) understand

(loro / Loro) capiscono – they / you (formal, plural) understand

Other verbs that follow this pattern include:

preferire – to prefer

finire – to finish

pulire – to clean

The verbs avere (to have) and essere (to be)

Here are two examples of irregular verbs that do not follow the pattern set forth in the previous lesson. However, these are the two most important verbs that you should memorize for your trip to Italy. You will need to know these verbs in order to conjugate more complicated tenses. However, that is beyond the scope of this book. In the meantime, here are the conjugations in the present tense:

avere – to have

(io) ho – I have

(tu) hai – you (singular, informal) have

(lui / lei / Lei) parla – he / she / you (formal) has

(noi) abbiamo – we have

(voi) avete – you (plural) have

(loro / Loro) hanno – they / you (formal plural) have

essere – to be

(io) sono – I am

(tu) sei – you (singular, informal) are

(lui / lei / Lei) è – he / she / you (formal) is

(noi) siamo – we are

(voi) siete – you (plural) are

(loro / Loro) sono – they / you (formal plural) are

Cardinal Numbers

I Numeri Cardinali

Knowing the numbers in Italian is not that complicated, but does require a bit of memorization. The pattern is actually very similar to the numbers in English. The numbers from one through sixteen are unique, and then the rest are actually a mix and match combination of the others. You can think of it like putting together a Lego set. Numbers in Italian are always written in one word.

These rules are important to know because it'll help you decipher train schedules, dates, times, etc. It'll also help you when you go shopping or any other time when you need to use currency.

As much as it may pain us to say it, our parents were correct when they told us that math was important!

1 – uno

2 – due

3 – tre

4 – quattro

5 – cinque

6 – sei

7 – sette

8 – otto

9 – nove

10 – dieci

11 – undici

12 – dodici

13 – tredici

14 – quattordici

15 – quindici

16 – sedici

The next three start following a pattern of adding the number from seven through nine to the prefix *dicia*, which means ten. *Dicia* would be pronounced as two syllables (DEE-chah). However, notice in number 18 how the final “a” is dropped. It helps with the flow of pronunciation – it sounds better because “otto” starts with a vowel and it would be choppy to have that vowel combination together.

17 – diciassette

18 – diciotto

19 – diciannove

For the numbers starting from twenty and above, all you do is add one of the first nine numbers to the prefix *venti*, which means twenty.

The final “i” in *venti* is dropped when it comes before 21 or 28, since both one (*uno*) and eight (*otto*) start with a vowel. It is for the same reason as number 18 above, it helps with the flow of pronunciation. The same rule applies going forward every time you encounter a one or an eight.

20 – venti

21 – ventuno

22 – ventidue

23 – ventitre

24 – ventiquattro

25 – venticinque

26 – ventisei

27 – ventisette

28 – ventotto

29 – ventinove

30 – trenta

31 – trentuno

32 – trentadue

33 – trentatre

34 – trentaquattro

35 – trentacinque

36 – trentasei

37 – trentasette

38 – trentotto

39 – trentanove

40 – quaranta

For the numbers fifty and above you just follow the same pattern as for the twenties, thirties, etc.

50 – cinquanta

51 – cinquantuno

52 – cinquantadue

60 – sessanta

61 – sessantuno

67 – sessantasette

68 – sessantotto

70 – settanta

75 – settantacinque

79 - settantanove

80 – ottanta

83 – ottantatre

89 – ottantanove

90 – novanta

96 – novantasei

When you get above the number 100 you simply add the appropriate number from above to the

word *cento*, which means 100.

100 – cento

101 – centuno

102 – centodie

122 – centoventidue

150 – centocinquanta

When you want to say 200 you simply add the number two in front of the hundred, just as you do in English.

200 – duecento

212 – duecentododici

278 – duecentosettantotto

The same thing will apply going forward:

300 – trecento

352 – trecentocinquantadue

400 – quattrocento

500 – cinquecento

600 – seicento

700 – settecento

800 – ottocento

900 – novecento

**It's important to realize that periods and commas, in regards to numbers, are reversed in Italian.

For example, one and a half kilograms of pasta would be written like this:

1,5 kg

The same thing would apply to euros and cents. Three thousand euros and 50 cents would be written like this:

3.000,50

Here are the numbers in Italian that are greater than one thousand. Please note that the plural for mille (thousand) is *mila*. It's an exception to the normal rule of how a noun is pluralized.

1.000 – mille

1.001 – milleuno

1.200 – milleduecento

2.000 – duemila

To say the years in the calendar, you would simply say:

1995 – millenovecentonovantacinque

2013 – duemilatredici

2014 – duemilaquattordici

2015 – duemilaquindici

10.000 – diecimila

15.000 – quindicimila

100.000 – centomila

1.000.000 – un milione

2.000.000 – due milioni

The word for billion in Italian is *milliardo*.

1.000.000.000 – un miliardo

2.000.000.000 – due miliardi

Ordinal Numbers

I Numeri Ordinali

When numbers are placed in an order or are describing the relative position of one item versus another, it is referred to as an ordinal number. Ordinal numbers do not have anything to do with quantity, but only rank or position.

The first ten ordinal numbers in Italian are unique. Starting from number eleven (11), all you have to do is drop off the final vowel and add the following suffix, or stem – *esimo*. However, the numbers three and six do not drop the final vowel.

Here is an example using the number eleven.

undici – drop the *i* and add *esimo* to become undicesimo.

Since ordinal numbers can be used as adjectives, they must agree in number and gender to the object being described. Remember the basic rule in Italian. Each ordinal number can have the following ending:

a – feminine singular

e – feminine plural

o – masculine singular

i – masculine plural

the first cat

il primo gatto

the first car

la prima macchina

the first cats

i primi gatti

the first cars

le prime macchine

Here are the ordinal numbers for describing masculine items.

first – primo
second – secondo
third – terzo
fourth – quarto
fifth – quinto
sixth – sesto
seventh – settimo
eighth – ottavo
ninth – nono
tenth – decimo
eleventh – undicesimo
twelfth – dodicesimo
thirteenth – tredicesimo
fourteenth – quattordicesimo
fifteenth – quindicesimo
sixteenth – sedicesimo
seventeenth – diciassettesimo
eighteenth – diciottesimo
nineteenth – diciannovesimo
twentieth – ventesimo
twenty-first – ventunesimo
twenty-third – ventitreesimo
hundredth – centesimo
thousandth – millesimo
two thousandth – duemillesimo
three thousandth – tremillesimo
one millionth – milionesimo

Similar to the English language, the ordinal number will be placed before the noun. The use of abbreviations is also customary and is indicated with a small ° (masculine) or ^a (feminine).

il 6° piano – the sixth floor

la 2^a macchina – the second car

Telling Time



Inevitably as you are traveling around Italy the ability to tell time and understand it will be very important for catching planes, trains, and automobiles. One thing to keep in mind is that Italians are not very precise and punctual when it comes to being on time. In the land where fashion is king, it's not surprising that they tend to be fashionably late.

However, transportation schedules tend to be pretty precise, especially as you work your way up north on the peninsula. Things are not as precise as you move south of Rome towards the island of Sicily when trains originate from the north. If a train from Milan (north) to Naples (south) encounters a delay in Rome, the Naples arrival will inevitably be delayed.

Being that hour is a feminine noun (*la ora*), time will be expressed with the feminine version of the definite article.

The verb *essere* (to be) is used in both the singular and plural form.

Singular Form

is – *é*

é l'una (this is used only for 1:00)

Plural Form

are – sono

sono le due (this is used for everything else)

When referring to minutes, they are expressed as numbers. They either come before the hour or after the hour.

and = e (after the hour)

meno = minus (before the hour)

At fifteen (15) minutes after or before the top of the hour it is typical to use *quarto* (a quarter) instead of *quindici* (fifteen minutes).

In addition, at 30 minutes after the top of the hour, it is typical to use *mezza* (half) instead of *trenta* (thirty minutes). *Mezza* and *meno* are never used together.

The masculine or feminine version of *mezzo* and *mezza* are interchanged, and it is acceptable to use either one.

Here is how you ask for the time in Italian:

Che ora é? (“What time is it?”) or *Che ore sono?*

Here is how you ask at what time something happens:

A che ora ? (“At what time...?”)

Example: A che ora torni dal mercato?

What time are you returning from the market?

It's five o'clock.

Sono le cinque.

It's a quarter past four (literally four and a quarter).

Sono le quattro ed un quarto.

It's eight thirty (eight and thirty).

Sono le otto e mezza.

It is twenty-three minutes past three.

Sono le tre e ventitre.

It is thirty-eight past eight.

È l'otto e trentotto.

Or it is more common to say:

It is twenty-two minutes to nine.

Sono le nove meno ventidue.

It is a quarter to twelve.

Sono le dodici meno un quarto.

To make the distinction between AM and PM you can use these verbal qualifiers:

del mattino (during the morning)

del pomeriggio (during the afternoon)

della sera (during the evening)

della notte (during the night)

Usually the context of the situation will imply whether you are referring to AM or PM.

For plane, train, and bus schedules, and other official matters, a 24-hour military clock is used.

To figure out a time past 12:00, all you need to do is add or subtract 12.

Sono le sedici e un quarto ($12 + 4 = 16$)

In military time, this is expressed 16:25

In Italy many times the colon (:) is replaced by the comma (,)

In Italy 16:25 can be expressed as 16,25 or even as 16.25

More Vocabulary

before

prima

after

dopo

afterwards

dopo

early

presto

late

tardi

in time

in tempo

What time does the ... close?

A che ora chiude la (il) ...?

or

What time does the ... open?

A che ora apre la (il) ...?

...bar

...il bar

...restaurant

...il ristorante

...store

...il negozio

...campground

... il campeggio

...zoo

...lo zoo

Notice above we use *lo* instead of *il* because zoo is a word that falls into one of the special cases (begins with a z).

...ticket office

...*la biglietteria*

...ice cream parlor

...*la gelateria*

Days of the Week

I Giorni Della Settimana

The days of the week in Italian are all masculine by convention except for Sunday, which is feminine. In Italian they are not capitalized as they are in English. Notice how the word week in Italian is settimana. The first part of the word is “sett,” which comes from the number seven, or sette, to indicate the number of days in the week.

Monday

lunedì

Tuesday

martedì

Wednesday

mercoledì

Thursday

giovedì

Friday

venerdì

Saturday

sabato

Sunday

domenica

It's also interesting to note that if you were to look at a physical Italian calendar, the first day of the week that appears on the far left of the row is Monday as opposed to Sunday.

I find it's easier to memorize these days of the week when you realize that each day has a particular significance or meaning associated with it.

lunedì

lun = Moon di = day (day of the Moon)

martedì

mar = Mars di = day (day of Mars)

mercoledì

mer = Mercury di = day (day of Mercury)

giovedì

giove = Jupiter di = day (day of Jupiter)

venerdì

ven = Venus di = day (day of Venus)

sabato

sab = Sabbath in Hebrew

It may be helpful to think of this day as Saturn's day, to be consistent with the others.

domenica

From the Latin word Dominus, which means the Lord. This is the day of the Lord.

Useful Vocabulary

yesterday

ieri

today

oggi

tomorrow

domani

sometime

prima o poi

after

dopo di

before

prima di

Whenever the days of the week are preceded by the definite article, it can mean that the occurrence happens regularly.

Il lunedì vado alla palestra.

Every Monday I go to the gym.

Alternatively you could also use the following sentence:

Ogni lunedì vado alla palestra.

Some other useful phrases:

Is there a train for Rome this Tuesday?

C'è un treno per Roma questo martedì?

Does the boat leave for Venice on Thursday?

Il traghetto parte per Venezia giovedì?

Months of the Year

I Mesi dell'Anno

Just as in the previous lesson regarding the days of the week, the months in Italian are not capitalized. They are all masculine and do not require the use of an article, which in this case would be “il.”

January

gennaio

February

febbraio

March

marzo

April

aprile

May

maggio

June

giugno

July

luglio

August

agosto

September

settembre

October

ottobre

November

novembre

December

dicembre

A way that can help you remember them is to think of a time when the ancients used to have ten months in a year. Then the final months of the year are associated with an Italian number.

settembre – sette (7)

ottobre – otto (8)

novembre – nove (9)

dicembre – dieci (10)

When expressing a particular day of the month in Italian the cardinal numbers are used for every day EXCEPT for the first day of the month (when the ordinal number is used). And the article *il* is used before the corresponding number.

This becomes clearer when you see the examples below:

On May first (1) is expressed as:

il primo maggio

On May second (2) is expressed as:

il due maggio

On June third (3) is expressed as:

il tre giugno

On July fourth (4) is expressed as:

il quattro luglio

It's also important to note that Italians write dates differently than we do in English. They will start with the smallest date unit (day) and then use the month and then the year (longest date unit).

For example, in English we would use the following to express October 1, 2014:

10/1/14

In Italian, October 1, 2014, would be expressed as:

1/10/14

This is actually not just an Italian convention, but used all throughout Europe.

It actually takes some time to get used to it. You wouldn't be the first one to confuse January 10th with October 1st. But it's an important distinction for train schedules, flights, etc.

To express the word "in" with a particular month, you can use either the Italian preposition "a" or "in."

I was born in May. (A man could say)

Sono nato in maggio.

Or

Sono nato a maggio.

I was born in April. (A woman could say)

Sono nata in maggio.

Or

Sono nata a maggio.

Some more useful phrases:

I'm going to Italy this September.

Vado in Italia questo settembre.

I like to travel in October.

Mi piace viaggiare in ottobre.

Can I go to the beach in Rome in May?

Posso andare a mare a Roma in maggio?

Colors in Italian

I Colori in Italiano



Unfortunately, when it comes to learning the colors in Italian there are some rules you need to memorize. Only a couple of them can be inferred or figured out from what we use in English.

You just have to remember that Italian colors can fall into one of three different categories:

1 – Normal Colors

This will encompass most of the colors of the Italian language. For these colors they must match in gender and number to the object that they are describing.

Gender becomes important = Masculine or Feminine

Number becomes important = Singular or Plural

2 – Neuter Colors

For these cases, gender does not matter. The only thing that matters is the number of items being described.

Gender Does Not Matter

Number Becomes Important = Singular or Plural

3 – Unique or Invariable Colors

For these cases nothing matters! This is a “one color fits all” approach in the Italian language. You don’t have to worry about gender or number. This is similar to the approach we use in English.

Gender Does Not Matter

Number Does Not Matter

The above is confusing until you see it in action with some practical examples. However, don’t fret about it too much. Italians are very forgiving of errors when it comes to using their language. They will appreciate your eagerness in trying to learn.

1 – Normal Colors

Here are some examples that follow the normal pattern:

azzurro – sky blue

bianco – white

giallo – yellow

grigio – gray

nero – black

rosso – red

a white house

una casa bianca

two white houses

due case bianche

In the example above, the object being described (house) is feminine. To make the plural of house, the last letter “a” changes to an “e.” This occurs not only in the noun, but notice how the word for white changes to a plural form (*bianca* becomes *bianche*). The letter “a” in *bianca* is changed to an “e.” As we learned earlier in the pronunciation section, the letter “h” is used in between the “c” and the “e” so it keeps the “c” sound, as in cat. Otherwise, without the “h,” the “c” sound would revert to the “ch” sound we have in church.

Some more normal examples:

a yellow house

una casa gialla

tre case gialle

three yellow houses

Notice how the word for yellow in Italian ends in an “a” to indicate a feminine noun.

If it were a masculine noun, it would end in an “o” like the example below:

a yellow bridge

un ponte giallo

five yellow bridges

cinque ponti gialli

More examples:

a black cat

un gatto nero

four black cats

quattro gatti neri

ten black cats

dieci gatti neri

2 – Neuter Colors

The main neuter colors in Italian are:

marrone – brown

verde – green

a brown house

una casa marrone

a brown cat

un gatto marrone

In the example above, notice how the word “*marrone*” stays the same, even though the objects being characterized are feminine and masculine (house and cat, respectively). Thus, that’s why it is called a neuter color.

Let’s review what would be the scenario with a normal color:

a white house

una casa bianca

a white cat

un gatto bianco

However, with neuter colors, the number (singular or plural) is important in coming up with the correct usage of the color.

Let’s review the earlier example in the singular form:

a brown house

una casa marrone

a brown cat

un gatto marrone

Here are the plural variations:

three brown houses

tre case marroni

three brown cats

tre gatti marroni

In this case, the “e” in marrone will change to an “i” to indicate that it is plural.

a green telephone

un telefono verde

five green telephones

cinque telefoni verdi

3 – Unique or Invariable Colors

For these particular colors in Italian, gender does not matter and the number of items being described does not matter.

Here are examples of common unique or invariable colors in Italian:

arancione – orange

blu – blue

rosa – pink

viola – purple

a blue car

una macchina blu

seven blue cars

sette macchine blu

In the above example, *macchina* changes to *macchine* to become plural, but *blu* remains the same.

an orange cat

un gatto arancione

two orange cats

due gatti arancione

In the above example, *gatto* changes to *gatti* to become plural, but *arancione* remains the same.

I've only touched upon the most common colors that you will encounter. Just as in English, Italian has many different variations of colors like teal, aqua, etc. I've chosen to ignore them for this lesson since they tend not to be used in everyday conversation.

Accommodations in Italy



The difficulty in finding a place and the price of your accommodation options in Italy will depend on a number of different factors. It'll be greatly influenced by the type of accommodation (hotel, hostel, bed and breakfast, farmhouse, monastery, etc.) as well as the time of year (high season versus low season) and the location.

It's best to try to book as far ahead as possible.

In Rome, there are usually rooms available unless there is a major sporting event, convention, or concert going on.

During August everyone in Italy for all practical purposes will be on vacation. Many businesses will shut down and the country pretty much comes to a standstill. Italians will leave the cities and head to the beaches. Places like Rome and Florence will become relatively empty. You can find good deals in these cities during this time period. Conversely, places like Amalfi and Rimini become overrun with tourists. Thus, you will pay substantially more to visit these and other beach locations during the peak vacation periods.

rooms

camere

single room

camera singola

double room

camera doppia

a room with two beds

una camera con due letti

a room with a view

una camera con vista

a room facing the sea

una camera sul mare

available

disponibile (singular) / *disponibili* (plural)

Are there any rooms available?

Ci sono camere disponibili?

I'd like a room with two beds.

Vorrei una camera con due letti.

I'd like a room with a double bed.

Vorrei una camera matrimoniale.

How much does a room cost...

Quanto costa una camera...

...for one person?

...*per una persona?*

...for two people?

...*per due persone?*

...and one child?

... *e un bambino (masc) / bambina (fem)?*

hotel / hotels

albergo (sing.) / alberghi (pl.)

Can you recommend a hotel nearby?

Può raccomandare un albergo vicino?

Is there...

C'è...

...a shower in the room?

...*una doccia dentro la camera?*

...a television?

...*un televisore?*

...internet access?

...*accesso internet?*

...a safe?

...*una cassaforte?*

I will stay for...

Rimango per...

...one night

...*una notte*

...two nights

...*due notti*

porter

facchino

waitress or maid

cameriera

waiter

cameriere

Accommodations – Youth Hostel

For some people, staying at a youth hostel is a great way to visit Italy while stretching your travel dollar. You can typically find rooms starting at approximately \$25 USD per night (approximately £16 British pounds). Often times there is an abundance of rooms in places like Rome and Florence. Even in the smaller and less popular towns, you are bound to find a good selection of youth hostels.

Because of the price, it is very popular with high school and college students, backpackers, bikers, vagabonds, etc.

Many will offer discounts if you are a member of the Official Italian Youth Hostel Association. In Italy look for the abbreviation AIG, which stands for *Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù*.

Keep in mind you don't need to be young to stay in a youth hostel. In fact, many are dropping the word "youth" from name to gear to an older clientele, including seniors.

The downside is that you usually share the bathroom and kitchen areas with other guests. It is basically a dormitory-type accommodation, usually with bunk beds in a shared but segregated sleeping area. If you are looking for privacy, a youth hostel is not a good place to find it. Some of them do offer private rooms and lockers for you to store your belongings, but it is not as private as a traditional hotel.

You also have to abide by a curfew and a lockout period throughout the day, usually between 9 AM to 2:30 PM. Many will not allow check-in prior to 5 PM.

A couple of sites that offer hostel accommodations in Italy are:

<http://www.hostelbookers.com/hostels/italy/>

<http://www.hostelworld.com/hostels/Italy>

hostel

ostello

youth hostel

ostello della gioventù

bed / beds

letto / letti

bunk beds

letti a castello

shower

doccia

Is there a youth hostel nearby?

C'è un ostello della gioventù qui vicino?

How many beds are there per room?

Quanti letti ci sono per stanza?

What time do you close this evening?

A che ora si chiude stasera?

Is there a shower?

C'è una doccia?

How does this shower work?

Come funziona questa doccia?

Is there a private bathroom?

C'è un bagno privato?

The rooms have two beds.

Le stanze sono a due letti.

The rooms have four beds.

Le stanze sono a quattro letti.

How much are the sheets?

Quanto costano le lenzuola?

The refrigerator doesn't work.

Il frigorifero non funziona.

Who is it?

Chi è?

Wait a minute please.

Aspetta un' attimo per favore.

come in

avanti

Camping in Italy



If you want to really stretch your travel budget, camping in Italy can be a good way to do it. Camping sites are considerably less expensive than hotels. And with over 1,700 officially sanctioned campgrounds in Italy, you are bound to find something that you will like. They range from the very rustic and basic with no frills all the way up to luxurious ones with swimming pools, tennis courts, and horseback riding.

And if you are a camping aficionado, you already know that campers tend to share a deep camaraderie between one another. You will probably meet some very interesting people. Most of the people that like to go camping in Italy tend to be other Italians and Europeans, and for some reason particularly Germans.

Where are they located?

You can find a campground in every region within Italy. There are some that are way off the beaten path if you really want to get back in touch with nature. However, most tend to be located about 30 minutes to within an hour of a major city.

When to go?

It's important to keep in mind that some of the campgrounds in Italy are seasonal. The main season runs from Easter through September and sometimes into October for southern Italy. The peak season will be in July and August.

Costs

The prices charged by the campgrounds will depend on a number of factors:

- * number of people
- * price for the site (daily charge)
- * price for a tent (if applicable)
- * price for the car (if applicable)

How to Find Campgrounds in Italy?

There are a number of sites you can peruse. These sites have an English version available. You just need to click on the British flag on the top right.

<http://www.camping.it/>

<http://italy.campeggio.it/>

These sites are databases of Italian campsites that are in Italian only:

<http://www.campeggio.com/>

<http://www.campeggievillaggi.it/>

The campgrounds can vary greatly, so if possible try to read the reviews prior to booking your reservation.

Some Vocabulary:

camp / campsite

campeggio

to camp

campeggiare

tent

tenda

car

macchina

caravan

roulotte

electricity

elettricità

Can we camp here?

Possiamo campeggiare qui?

Can we camp here tonight?

Possiamo campeggiare qui questa notte?

Is there a campsite nearby?

C'è un campeggio qui vicino?

Can you recommend a good campground?

Può raccomandare un campeggio buono?

Are there...

Ci sono...

...bathrooms?

...i bagni?

...showers?

...le doccie?

Is there potable water?

C'è acqua potabile?

How much does it cost...

Quanto costa...

...for one person?

...per una persona?

...for two people?

...per due persone?

...per day?

...al giorno?

Some signs you may encounter:

No Camping

Vietato Campeggiare

No Smoking

Vietato Fumare

Transportation Options

Getting Around by Plane



If you are flying from the United States or Canada, more than likely you will land in Rome's Leonardo da Vinci–Fiumicino Airport (FCO), or simply known as Fiumicino (fyoo-meh-CHE-noh). You may also fly into Milan's international airport, known as Malpensa (MXP). Each of those cities can serve as a hub to your preferred destination or can be your starting point from where you can begin your journey.

If you are flying from the United Kingdom, you will have more options to fly into other cities, as well as Rome or Milan, directly from either London's Heathrow (LHR) or Gatwick (LGW) airport. Rome and Milan each also have another airport that can serve European passengers, namely Ciampino and Linate, respectively.

Here are a few phrases that can come in handy, even though you'll find a good number of people able to speak English at the airports.

arrival

arrivo

departures

partenze

airport

aeoroporto

flight

volo

flights

voli

direct flight

volo diretto

Is it a direct flight?

È un volo diretto?

What is the flight number?

Qual è il numero del volo?

I have one suitcase.

Ho una valigia.

to change

cambiare

airplane

aeroplano

Do I have to change planes?

Devo cambiare aereo?

I've lost my luggage.

Ho perso la mia valigia.

Where is?

Dov'è

Where is terminal two?

Dov'è il terminale due?

When is the next flight to Rome?

A che ora parte il prossimo volo per Roma?

Getting Around by Bus



Getting around by bus can offer some advantages over other forms of transport in Italy. It is typically less expensive than taking a plane or a boat. And they can go into smaller towns where train stations do not exist. First it's important to realize there are basically three types of bus transportation

Local City Buses

These are your basic buses that you will encounter in just about any Italian town of any size and can take you within a particular city or to a neighboring city. I'm not sure why, but most of the time they are an ugly orange color. You will need to purchase your ticket prior to boarding at a local *tabaccaio* or tobacco shop. These are indicated with a black "T" outside their storefront. You are supposed to enter from the front or rear of the bus (*entrata*) and exit in the middle (*uscita*). There is a validation machine aboard the bus where you are supposed to stamp your bus ticket. Random checks are possible by bus personnel. The driver will not ask you for money or for your ticket as you are boarding the bus.

Regional Buses

These are buses that can take you between major cities such as Florence and Rome. They are run by private companies. Unfortunately, Italy does not have a national bus carrier such as Greyhound in the United States or National Express if you're from the United Kingdom. If you do want to make a long-distance trip from one part of Italy to another, more than likely you

will have to change buses a few times. In that case, you would be better off taking a train. Most of the time you will not need to change trains. These buses tend to be colored blue, green, red, or other colors consistent with the company's brand. They typically have air conditioning (*aria condizionata*). In this case, you will need to show your ticket (*biglietto*) prior to boarding the bus. Tickets can be purchased at the bus company's ticket window, usually in their bus station or ticket office.

Chartered Buses

These are buses that are also run by private companies, but they are typically done as a group tour to take you from one part of Italy to another. And it is typically a long-distance trip such as Naples to Turin and then back.

arrivo

arrival

departures

partenze

I have two suitcases.

Ho due valigie.

to change

cambiare

bus

autobus

Do I have to change buses?

Devo cambiare autobus?

bus stop

fermata

Where is?

Dov'è?

Where is the bus stop?

Dov'è la fermata dell'autobus?

I've lost my luggage.

Ho perso la mia valigia.

Where is the bus for Rome?

Dov'è l'autobus per Roma?

Where is the bus station?

Dov'è la stazione dell'autobus?

When is the next bus to Naples?

A che ora parte il prossimo autobus per Napoli?

Where can I get a bus to the center?

Dove posso prendere l'autobus per il centro?

Where can I buy tickets?

Dove posso comprare biglietti?

Is this the stop for the museum?

È questa la fermata per il museo?

Getting Around by Taxi



A taxi can be a viable way to get around some of the major Italian cities for short jaunts or if you are in a small town with limited public transportation and need to get back to the train station or bus station.

It can be frustrating for many travelers who are accustomed to hailing a cab right from the curb – this won't work in Italy. The cabs operate on a radio-dispatch system. Therefore, when you see them, most cabs are either occupied with passengers or en route to picking up a passenger.

You will either have to call the cab company to arrange pickup or you will have to send a text message (SMS) to the messaging center along with the address where you are located. They will text back the approximate pickup time.

**** Remember – the fare starts from zero as soon as the cab is dispatched – and not when they pick you up.**

Only use authorized taxis – they will have a taxi sign on the top of the cab. And they usually have a small placard inside the cab that shows their license along with their identification number. They will also have a meter inside the cab. If they do not have a meter, then they are an unlicensed operator.

In Rome, the taxis are white and have a license number on the side. In most Italian cities they are either white or yellow.

In Rome the taxi stands (or ranks) are indicated with an orange sign and are located at all the major tourist attractions. They are also indicated with the sign that says *fermata di taxi*. You can find them around both airports, the train station (Termini), Piazza Barberini, Piazza Venezia, Largo Argentina, Piazza della Repubblica, etc.

Beware of private operators that offer to give you a “private” ride. Some of them are legitimate, but some have been known to rip off tourists. It’s best if you avoid these operators.

where?

dove?

Where can I find a taxi?

Dove posso trovare un taxi?

Are you free (available)?

È libero (disponibile)?

How much does it cost to go...

Quanto costa per andare...

...to the museum?

...al museo?

...to the airport?

...all'aeroporto?

...to the station?

...alla stazione?

...to the hotel?

...all'albergo?

Turn to the right please.

Giri a destra per favore.

Turn to the left please.

Giri a sinistra per favore.

Go straight ahead please.

Vada sempre diritto per favore.

Stop here, please.

Fermi qui, per favore.

Can you take me...

Mi può portarmi...

...to this address?

...a questo indirizzo?

...to the center (of town)?

...al centro?

...to the airport?

...all'aeroporto?

Getting Around by Train



Hands down the best way of getting around Italy between towns is by train. The high-speed trains are getting faster, more convenient, and more comfortable to use. There are even overnight trains that you can use if you are planning on traversing large distances in Italy. You do not have to worry about the weight of the luggage, like you do on an airplane. You do not need to worry about going through security screening, taking off your shoes, etc., like you do at an airport. You do not need to worry about parking and driving through maddening traffic. Most trains are now air-conditioned and all are smoke-free. There are even electrical sockets on the high-speed and intercity trains that you can use to plug in your computer, electronic devices, etc. You can just sit back, relax, and enjoy your journey.

For the most part, the trains are run by a governmental agency called *Ferrovie dello Stato*, or sometimes simply known as FS. They use the brand name TrenItalia. You can access their website below:

<http://www.trenitalia.com>

There are some private companies that run train service between a few select cities and tourist attractions.

If you plan on doing a lot of train travel it may be advantageous to purchase a [Eurail pass](#).

Types of Trains in Italy

* Freccia Series (formerly known as Eurostar or ES)

These are the high-speed (185 miles per hour / 300 kilometers per hour) trains that provide service to major Italian cities. They come equipped with air conditioning and offer food, drink, or refreshments. They have different classes of service (first class, second class, business class, etc.) and reservations are required. In theory they can sell out, but that happens on rare occasion. Many times you can purchase tickets at the self-service counter right before departure. There are, however, discounts if you purchase in advance.

The three types for this series include:

Frecciarossa (FR or red arrows) – these trains connect Turin-Milan-Bologna-Rome-Naples-Salerno and can reach speeds up to 225 mph (360 km per hour).

Frecciargento (FA or silver arrows) – these trains connect Rome, Venice, Verona, Bari/Lecce, Lamezia Terme/Reggio Calabria and can reach speeds up to 155 mph (225 km per hour).

Freccia Bianca (FB or white arrows) – these trains connect Milan, Venice, Udine, and Trieste. They also connect Genoa and Rome along with Bari and Lecce. These trains can reach speeds up to 125 mph (200 km per hour).

* Inter-City Trains (IC)

The next type of trains is the Inter-City variety (IC). These can also reach speeds up to 125 miles per hour (200 km per hour). These are not as fast as the Freccia trains above and they do not have as many food and refreshment options. A reservation is also required for these trains. Just like the Freccia trains, you can often purchase the same day as departure.

* Espresso, Regionale & Locale Trains

These are the slowest of all Italian trains and will stop in the smallest of towns. A reservation is not required and you can just purchase a ticket and hop on the next train available. If you are traveling from a major city to another major city, like Rome to Naples, you would want to avoid these trains.

train

treno

Alternatively, another word for train, which has an American-Indian type connotation, is *ferrovia*. *Ferro* is the word for steel and *via* means a way or a path.

How much?

Quanto?

train station

stazione ferroviaria

How much does it cost to go...

Quanto costa per andare...

...to Rome?

...a Roma?

...to Florence?

...a Firenze?

...to Venice?

...a Venezia?

I would like one ticket to Rome please.

Vorrei un biglietto per Roma per favore.

one-way

andata

round-trip

andata e ritorno

I would like a one-way ticket to Rome please.

Vorrei un biglietto andata per Roma per favore.

I would like a round-trip ticket to Rome please.

Vorrei un biglietto andata e ritorno per Roma per favore.

When does the train depart to Rome?

Quando parte il treno per Roma?

When does the first train depart to Rome?

Quando parte il primo treno per Roma?

When does the last train depart to Rome?

Quando parte l'ultimo treno per Roma?

What time does the train arrive at Naples?

A che ora arriverà il treno a Napoli?

Does the train stop at Salerno?

Il treno si fermerà a Salerno?

Which track (platform) do I take for Rome?

Quale binario devo prendere per Roma?

What track (platform) does the train from Naples arrive?

A che binario arriva il treno da Napoli?

sleeping car

vagone letto

dining car

carrozza ristorante

Getting Around by Boat



Many people are surprised to learn that many places in Italy can be easily reached via water transportation. In other words, you can hop on a boat in one part of the country and take a trip to the opposite side of the country. In fact, you can even enter and leave Italy by boat. It shouldn't come as a surprise if you think about it...the city of Venice was built on the water and boats are a normal part of their everyday life. And it's been that way for centuries. And cities like Genoa, Amalfi, and Pisa were once powerful maritime republics.

The three main types of boat transport are:

* Ship / *Nave* (plural – *Navi*)

These are the largest of the three options and are only capable of going to large port towns such as Naples, Palermo, Genoa, Venice, etc. Some of them are able to carry cars (ferry) and even trains. Some will also have overnight accommodations available. Since these are the largest of the three options, they tend to also be the slowest.

* Boat / *Traghetto* (plural – *Traghetti*)

These are smaller boats or ferries and are used for the ports listed above and some of the smaller islands.

* Hydrofoil / *Aliscafo* (plural – *Aliscafi*)

This is basically a boat with a couple of foils underneath the hull that lift it off the surface of the water to reduce the friction, thus increasing the speed. These are the fastest way to traverse on water, typically requiring half the time as a ship. Thus, the price is usually twice as expensive as a ship.

where?

dove?

How much?

Quanto?

port

porto

How much does it cost to go...

Quanto costa per andare...

...to Rome?

...a Roma?

...to Naples?

...a Napoli?

...to Venice?

...a Venezia?

I would like one ticket to Rome please.

Vorrei un biglietto per Roma per favore.

one-way

andata

round-trip

andata e ritorno

I would like a one-way ticket to Naples please.

Vorrei un biglietto andata per Napoli per favore.

I would like a round-trip ticket to Naples please.

Vorrei un biglietto andata e ritorno per Napoli per favore.

When is the hydrofoil to Palermo?

Quando parte l'aliscafo per Palermo?

When is the first ship to Genoa?

Quando parte la prima nave per Genova?

When is the last boat to Naples?

Quando parte l'ultimo traghetto per Napoli?

What time does the ship arrive at Naples?

A che ora arriverà la nave a Napoli?

Does the hydrofoil stop at Salerno?

L'aliscafo si fermerà a Salerno?

Driving in Italy



For all practical purposes, driving should be your last-choice method of transport in Italy unless you absolutely can't avoid it. If you plan on seeing Rome and Florence, which is the itinerary for many first-time travelers, there is no reason to rent a car if you are staying within those cities. The traffic will drive you bonkers and parking can be a major hassle. And the gasoline prices and auto rental will be more than what you are accustomed to at home. Most rental companies require that you be 25 years of age to rent a car in Italy. Of course, if you are planning on visiting Venice, you will have to leave your car outside the city limits.

In most cities that have any type of historical center or *centro storico*, cars are not allowed anyway. Some cities will have a ZTL zone or a zone of limited traffic (*zona di traffico limitato*) usually reserved for public officials, public transportation, etc. They are usually monitored with camera and you must have the appropriate sticker with transponder on your car. If you don't, you can expect to receive a ticket in the mail from your friendly anal-retentive Italian bureaucrat. Yes, they will send it to your address back home in the United States if necessary. And of course they will expect payment.

What happens if you don't pay? I can't say with 100% certainty, but you probably won't be able to enter Italy or any country within the European Union without clearing up the fine. As computers and data sharing becomes more prevalent, I predict one day they may attach some type of lien against your passport that would have to be cleared up before any type of international travel.

If you plan on traveling outside the major cities, through Tuscany or Umbria, for example, then

it probably makes sense to rent a car if you are traveling with a group. Other places that are conducive to a car would include Sardinia, Sicily, Calabria, and the Amalfi Coast. Of course, if you are traveling with kids or a large group of people, it would also be advantageous in those circumstances.

Italian drivers are aggressive but skillful. They act decisively and quickly. The left lane is only for passing – get in and get out of the lane as soon as you're done with your pass. If you don't, someone will sure enough come up behind you and flash their high beams to indicate that they want you out of the way.

In addition, most of the gasoline stations are not self-serve, though they are becoming more and more common. The word for self-service is *fai da te*, or do it yourself.

You must have an International Driver's License (IDL) along with the proper insurance if you want to drive in Italy. You can obtain an IDL at your local Automobile Association of America (AAA) or the equivalent Canadian association.

gasoline

benzina

Note – benzina refers to unleaded gasoline. It is available in 95 or 98 octane. Leaded gasoline is no longer available in Italy.

diesel fuel

gasolio

gas station

benzinaio

Note – sometimes referred to as a gas station attendant.

Where is the nearest gas station?

Dove si trova il benzinaio più vicino?

Fill her up, please.

Il pieno, per favore.

I would like 10 liters of gas (petrol).

Vorrei 10 litri di benzina.

Give me 20 euros of gasoline.

Mi dia 20 euro di benzina.

road

strada

Can you tell me?

Può dirmi?

Can you tell me the road to Naples?

Può dirmi qual è la strada per Napoli?

Are we on the right road to Florence?

Siamo sulla strada giusta per Firenze?

How do I get to the airport?

Come si va al' aeroporto?

park

posteggiare

Can I park here?

Si può posteggiare qui?

left

sinistra

right

destra

straight ahead

sempre diritto

north

nord

south

sud

east

est

west

ovest

Dining in Italy

There is so much about dining and eating in Italy that it could take a lifetime to savor and explain, but I'll try to give you the highlights in this chapter. To say that food is an integral and important part of the Italian culture would be an understatement. Food is Italy and Italy is all about food. And one of the good things about Italy is that the cuisine is very regionalized and diverse depending on which part of the country you are visiting. That's because a big emphasis is placed on the ingredients that are grown in the local and nearby area.

Despite the differences, which can be many, you should keep the following generalizations in mind:

Northern Italian Cuisine - Characterized by meats, veal, beef, polenta, risotto, butter, cream, stews, soups, prosciutto, and cheese.

Southern Italian Cuisine - Characterized by pasta, fish, pizza, red sauces, olive oil, garlic, salad greens, and peppers.

Some Cultural Differences

Soda Refills

One of the odd things to remember is that there are no soda refills in Italy like you have at some places in the United States and Canada. Partly because whenever you order a Coke they will bring you the can and a glass. It is also commonplace to bring you a lemon to add flavor to the drink.

Many places will not serve ice with your drink unless you specifically ask for it. It used to be considered very odd to serve a drink with ice, especially water with ice. However, Italians are getting more used to the idea and you will see it done more often. You won't get the "you must have three heads" stare if you ask for it.

To-Go Boxes

Another cultural difference is that you won't see any "to-go" boxes if you can't finish your meal. I'm not sure if it's considered an insult to the restaurateur or not, but it would definitely be considered gauche. There are not too many meals that go unfinished anyway in Italy. They usually have a few courses but the portion sizes tend to be smaller. Although as more and more Americans travel to Italy every year, it is becoming more common to ask for a "to-go" box if you can't finish your meal. It is a trend I'm starting to see that's becoming more evident in the larger cities like Rome and Milan.

Meals in Italy

* Breakfast (Colazione)

Most Italians will start off with a breakfast (*colazione*) around 7:30 AM. It is typically a croissant (*cornetto*) that can be plain or filled with cream or jelly. And they will typically drink some type of coffee, usually an espresso or a cappuccino. Some Italians will have a different pastry or possibly cereal or yogurt. However, it tends to be a light meal. If you are expecting a nice American- or Canadian-style breakfast with eggs, pancakes, hash browns, and grits, you'll be very much disappointed.

* Lunch (Pranzo)

The biggest meal of the day for most Italians is their lunch (*pranzo*). It typically starts around 1:30 or 2 PM. The custom of taking a nap afterwards is still very common, similar to the siesta taken in Spain, although the Italians will call it a "*pausa*." And then the shops will typically open back up again at 4 PM for their second shift of the day.

Most restaurants are closed after lunch and then will reopen for dinner, usually around 7 or 8 PM.

* Dinner (Cena)

The final meal of the day (dinner) for most Italians is a light one that typically is one course consisting of pasta, fish, or meat and a salad. It is typically eaten around 8 or 9 PM. In the southern regions where it is hotter and the sun is out longer, it'll tend to be closer to 9 PM.

Italian Meal Courses

When you go to an Italian restaurant the menu will usually be divided into sections depending on the course. Do not feel obligated to order every course. You can mix and match to your choosing – they are usually very accommodating. Here are the basic courses of an Italian meal:

* Antipasto – Appetizers (typically a few Euros each).

* Primo Piatto – First Dish – Is usually pasta, pizza, polenta, risotto – these tend to be lower-cost items.

* Secondo Piatto – Second Dish – Is usually meat and fish, and tends to be more expensive.

* Contorno – Side dishes, hot or cold, vegetables or salad. These typically run a few Euros each.

* Dolce – Desserts.

* Frutta / Formaggio – Fruit and Cheese – the fruit can be of the dried variety. This is when they often serve nuts, almonds, etc.

* Caffè – Coffee – After a meal it is typically an espresso. Cappuccino or other milky coffees are usually not served after a meal. These will typically run about one or two Euros.

Where to Eat in Italy?

There are many different types of eating establishments in Italy, but here are the main ones:

Bar – This is the neighborhood staple of Italian establishments. The locals will come here in the morning for their coffee, or at lunch for a sandwich (*panino*) or a small pizza (*pizzetta*). It's not what you would typically expect of a “bar” as the term is used in the United States, which is a place that serves alcohol.

Trattoria – Next up on the totem pole of places to dine in Italy is the *trattoria*. These tend to be more family-run and focus on local cuisine. This is where many of the budget-conscious Italian locals like to dine. The food will be medium-priced and the atmosphere is more casual.

Ristorante (Restaurant) – This is the most upscale of dining experiences in Italy. Consequently, it'll be the most expensive. There is usually a host or a hostess that will seat you. They will often have a sommelier that has extensive knowledge of the wines that are served. This is the place where you would take a client or a potential client to impress them.

There are other eating options available in Italy. To see them all, you can view this post on my blog:

<http://www.addicted2italy.com/goto.php?link=where-to-eat-in-italy>

Shopping at the Grocery Store (Supermarket)

Another option that is highly worth considering is buying your food at a local supermarket or grocery store. If you are staying someplace that has a stove, you can easily save some money by cooking up your own meals. It doesn't take much to concoct something delicious in Italy. Pasta is very easy to make. You can also buy some bread, along with some olive oil or prosciutto with some olives and you can have yourself a nice picnic. Good local wines can be bought in the Italian supermarkets starting at two euros per bottle.

Water in Italy

For the most part, the water, including the tap water, in Italy is safe to drink. If you visit Rome you will see many fountains spewing water and many of the locals reaching in to grab a drink or refilling their water bottle. It must be safe if they've been doing it for thousands of years. However, you may prefer the taste of bottled water, which is sold all over the place under many different brands. You just need to specify whether you prefer it with bubbles (tonic

water) or without.

natural water without bubbles

acqua naturale senza gas

natural water with bubbles

acqua naturale con gas

Coffee in Italy

Italians like their coffee very strong and like to have it at the end of the meal to give you a jolt. They prefer a little cup of espresso coffee as opposed to a cup the size you would be accustomed to using to drink some tea.

Here are some basics on Italian coffee:

Caffè – a shot of strong, black coffee

Caffè macchiato – same as above, with a drop of milk

Caffè lungo – a long coffee, as in watered-down

Caffè americano – typical cup of American joe

Caffè freddo – iced espresso

Caffè corretto – espresso “corrected” with grappa or sambuca

Granita di caffè – coffee-flavored shaved ice

Cappuccino – coffee served with frothy milk, usually warm

Cappuccino senza schiuma – same as above, no foam

Cappuccino freddo – served ice-cold, usually in summer

I would like an espresso please.

Vorrei un espresso per favore.

I would like an American coffee please.

Vorrei un caffè Americano per favore.

Kitchen Utensils / At the Table

fork

forchetta

spoon

cucchiaino

knife

coltello

plate

piatto

cup

tazza

glass

bicchiere

napkin

servietta

bottle

bottiglia

salt

sale

pepper

pepe

table

tavolo

At the Restaurant

I'm hungry.

Ho fame.

waiter

cameriere

waitress

cameriera

I am vegetarian (male).

Sono vegetariano.

I am vegetarian (female).

Sona vegetariana.

Can you recommend a good restaurant close by?

Può consigliarmi un buon ristorante qui vicino?

Do you know any vegetarian restaurants?

Conosce ristoranti vegetariani?

Do you have a table for four?

Avete un tavolo per quattro?

Do I have to make a reservation?

Devo fare una prenotazione?

I'd like to make a reservation for two at eight o'clock.

Vorrei prenotare per due persone alle venti. [military time]

I'm sorry, but we're full.

Mi dispiace, siamo al completo.

Where are the bathrooms?

Dove sono i gabinetti?

The menu, please.

Il menù, per favore.

Can we have a table...

Potremmo avere un tavolo...

...in the corner?

...d'angolo?

...near the window?

...vicino alla finestra?

...outside?

...all'aperto?

The check, please.

Il conto, per favore.

Breakfast Foods

biscuits

biscotti

butter

burro

cereal

cereali

omelette

frittata

milk

latte

jelly

marmellata

bread

pane

sausage

salsiccia

tea

tè

egg

uovo

sugar

zucchero

First Courses

Primi Piatti

broth

brodo

pasta

pasta

pasta with tomato sauce

pasta al pomodoro

pasta with meat sauce

pasta al ragù

rice

riso

soup

zuppa

Second Courses

Secondi Piatti

lamb

agnello

roast

arrosto

steak

bistecca

Note – Florence is renowned for its steak.

cutlet

cotoletta

brains

cervello

liver

fegato

tongue

lingua

hen

gallina

pork

maiale

snails (escargot)

lumache

Note – Sicily is renowned for its escargot.

chicken

pollo

Note – this is the same word in Spanish but pronounced differently.

turkey

tacchino

tripe

trippa

Note – this is a popular Roman specialty. It is the stomach lining of the cow.

veal

vitello

Various Fish Dishes



anchovies

acciughe

eel

anguilla

lobster

aragosta

squid

calamari

mussels

cozze

shrimp

gamberi

cod

baccala

oysters

ostriche

bluefish

pesce azzurro

salmon

salmone

tuna

tonno

Note – Sicily is famous for its tuna, much of which gets exported to Japan for sushi.

clams

vongole

trout

trota

sea urchins

ricci

Vegetables / Verdure



artichokes

carciofi

carrots

carote

cabbage

cavolo

cucumber

cetriolo

onions

cipolle

beans

fagioli

fennel

finocchio

Note – this word is often used in a derogatory manner against male homosexuals.

mushrooms

funghi

green salad

insalata

lettuce

lattuga

lentils

lenticchie

eggplants

melanzane

peppers

pepperoni

Note – this is easy to get confused with the topping that comes on top of a New York style pizza in the United States.

celery

sedano

spinach

spinaci

pumpkin

zucca

Fruits / Frutta



apricot

albicocca

pineapple

ananas

orange

arancia

banana

banana

cherries

ciliege

fig

fico

cactus fig (pictured above)

fico d'india

raspberries

lamponi

lemon

limone

apple

mela

blueberries

more

peach

pesca

grape

uva

Desserts / Dolci



Italy is known for their desserts, especially their gelato, which is similar to American ice cream. Rome and Florence are cities particularly known for their gelato. Some of the makers really take it to an artistic level, using only natural ingredients.

pancakes

fritelle

cream

crema

ice cream

gelato

cake / pie

torta

torta di...

...fruit

...frutta

...apple

...mele

...chocolate

...cioccolato

pudding

budino

Cassata Siciliana

This is a Sicilian specialty – a sponge cake filled with sweet ricotta-like cream cheese usually sprinkled with candied fruits on top.



Shopping in Italy

One of the great reasons people like to visit Italy is for the shopping. All of the great fashion brands such as Gucci, Fendi, Dolce e Gabbana, Ferragamo, etc. are all abundant in the fashion capital of the world. Each of the main shopping meccas in Italy has a famous street where you will pay the best of the fashion industry.

Florence – Via de' Tornabuoni

Rome – Via dei Condotti

Milan – Quadrilatero d'Oro

If money is no object, you'll find la crème de la crème of Italian fashion on these streets. However, walking just a few blocks off these streets will enable you to find some better-priced fashion items and perhaps even a sale (*saldi*) or bargain (*sconto*).

Can I haggle or bargain with the vendors?

The art of bargaining or haggling over the price of an item is often customary in the street markets and smaller boutiques, especially as you head down south. These outdoor stalls and markets in Sicily and Naples are actually derived from Arab traditions when they ruled southern Italy back in the 800s. If you are in a position of buying multiple items, you will usually have more bargaining power. For example, if you buy two items, the third one will be at half-price.

For items such as food or electronics, haggling is usually not an option.

What are the best things to buy in Italy?

Italy is known for its fashion. Unfortunately, the days of “Made in Italy” are being replaced by “Made in China” at a cheaper price. They'll use Italian materials but the labor will be Asian. You can thank the capitalist market mechanism for that. It doesn't mean the Fendi handbag is not a good buy. And it doesn't necessarily mean you'll find a better price in Italy as opposed to Toronto or Los Angeles. Some Italian exporters will get subsidies from the Italian government so the price you pay may actually be less in New York. However, it sounds better to say you bought your Fendi handbag in Rome near the Colosseum as opposed to a shop off Broadway.

Other items that Italy is known for producing are leather goods, ceramics, pottery, glass (Murano), gold (18 karat), and jewelry.

Business Hours

Shops

Mon – Sat 9 AM to 1 PM then 4 PM to 7:30 PM

Business hours for many shops will of course vary, but they typically will shut down in the middle of the day for lunch. And depending on the business, some will be open later during the summer. Some will close one afternoon or morning during the week, and it'll vary from town to town. Grocery stores may close Wednesday afternoon. Clothing stores may close on Monday morning.

Office hours

Mon – Fri 8:30 AM to 1 PM then 2:30 PM to 5:30 PM

Banks

Mon – Fri 8:30 AM to 1 PM then 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM

Some banks are open during the morning on Saturdays.

cost

costa

How much?

Quanto?

How much does it cost?

Quanto costa?

Where?

Dove?

Where is the nearest...?

Dove si trova...più vicino (vicina)?

Or

I'm looking for a (an)...

Sto cercando per...

...antique shop

...*l'antiquario*

...bakery

...*il panificio*

...barber

...*il barbiere*

...bookshop

...*la libreria*

...delicatessen

...*la salumeria*

...drug store (pharmacy)

...*la farmacia*

...dry cleaner

...*la tintoria*

...fish market

...*la pescheria*

...jeweler

...*la gioielleria*

...newsstand

...*l'edicola*

...post office

...*l'ufficio postale*

...shoe shop

...*il negozio di scarpe*

...supermarket

...*il supermercato*

...wine shop

...*il vinaio*

More Vocabulary

Can I use a credit card?

Posso usare una carta di credito?

Do you have this...

Tiene questo...

...in my size?

...*nella taglia mia?*

...bigger?

...*più grande?*

...smaller?

...*più piccolo?*

It's too expensive.

È molto caro.

Yes, I'll take it.

Sì, lo prendo.

No, I don't want it.

No, non lo voglio.

Some things that hopefully you did not forget:

moisturizer

crema idratante

razor

rasoio

shampoo

shampoo

soap

sapone

toothbrush

spazzolino da denti

toothpaste

pasta di dente

Medical Issues

Hopefully you are like most individuals and will not experience any medical issues during your visit to Italy. The most likely scenario is that you will experience a little bit of jet lag in adjusting to your new time zone. Experts say it takes one day for each hour of time difference for your body to adjust. Therefore if you are traveling from New York to Rome it'll take you six days to adjust to the six-hour time difference. If you are flying from Los Angeles you can expect nine days.

There are ways to shortcut the amount of time necessary so you are not feeling like a zombie during your vacation. To read more about overcoming jet lag specifically to Italy, you can read my blog post:

<http://www.addicted2italy.com/goto.php?link=overcome-jet-lag-italy>

If you should succumb to a non-serious illness in Italy your best bet is usually to try to remedy yourself via the pharmacy.

Obviously, for major ailments and injuries you should head to the hospital or emergency room, where you are usually seen right away without filling out a ton of paperwork.

Emergency Phone Numbers

112 – Similar to 911 in the United States or 999 in the United Kingdom

118 – Emergency number for the hospital / ambulance

Most of the time, the operator will not speak any English. However, they may be able to transfer you to someone that does.

Pharmacies in Italy

Pharmacies in Italy have been around for hundreds of years. In fact, the Santa Maria Novella pharmacy in Florence is the oldest one in Italy and has been around since 1221.

They are usually on a rotating system of operating hours to ensure that one is always available to the general population. The hours are regulated by Italian law.

In just about every city there is one that is open 24 hours. They are typically located in the center of town near the train station or bus station.

They are indicated with the internationally known symbol of a cross. The cross is usually colored green. Red crosses usually indicate an emergency room (*pronto soccorso*).

Unlike the pharmacies in the United States or Canada such as CVS or Walgreen's, an Italian pharmacy pretty much is just that – a pharmacy. They will not carry food and beverage items, birthday cards, office supplies, photographic equipment and services, etc.

However, the Italian pharmacist has a lot more leeway than your local pharmacist in the United States. The Italian pharmacist has the ability and authority to prescribe medicine for some of your typical ailments. Or they can recommend an over-the-counter item as well. That's right, if you have the flu or something minor, you should first go to the Italian pharmacist to see if they can help you.

Some useful vocabulary:

I'm not feeling well.

Non mi sento bene.

I have a pain here.

Ho un dolore qui.

headache

mal di testa

backache

mal di schiena

I need a doctor quickly.

Ho bisogno di un medico presto.

Can you call a doctor for me?

Può chiamarmi un medico?

Does the doctor speak English?

Il medico parla inglese?

My ... hurts.

Mi fa male

...ankle

...la caviglia.

...arm

...il braccio.

...chest

...il petto.

...eyes

...gli occhi.

...finger

...il ditto.

...foot

...il piede.

...heart

...*il cuore.*

...kidney

...*il rene.*

...lung

...*il polmone.*

...neck

...*il collo.*

...nose

...*il naso.*

...skin

...*la pelle.*

...stomach

...*lo stomaco.*

...throat

...*la gola.*

Using Money in Italy



The euro became the official currency of Italy, along with most other European countries, back in 2002 after an implementation period that lasted a few years. The United Kingdom still uses the pound, a notable exception.

The symbol to signify the currency is €.

The Euro can be divided into one hundred units called Euro Cents.

100 Euro Cents = 1 Euro Dollar

Although the exchange can vary and fluctuate, the general range of valuation during the last few years has been:

1 Euro = Approximately \$1.20 to \$1.45 US Dollars

1 Euro = Approximately £0.80 to £0.90 Pounds

There are seven bank notes:

5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500 Euro (dollars)

There are eight coins:

1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 Euro cents / 1 Euro (dollar) and 2 Euro (dollars)

Unlike American currency, the bank notes come in different shapes and sizes. The coins also come in different sizes, just like American currency. The different shapes are used to assist

those who are visually impaired, blind, etc.

It's important to note that the comma and period are reversed to express the unit of measurement.

Thus the following would represent two thousand euro dollars and 50 euro cents.

€ 2.000,50

It's also important to note that in Italian the singular and plural for the euro are spelled and pronounced exactly the same.

one euro

un euro

two euros

due euro

one hundred euros

cento euro

There are a few options available for you to have access to money while you are visiting the country of Italy.

ATM / Bancomat



There are now ATM machines (*bancomat*) on virtually every corner in Italy just like you are probably accustomed to at home. You just insert your card and you will have the option of choosing English as your language of choice, along with Italian, German, and French.

More than likely your bank will charge a fee to access the network. It will still work out better than using a traveler's check, where you often pay a fee to have one issued to you.

Make sure your PIN (personal identification number) is a four-digit number, as anything else will probably not work in Italy. Also be sure to call your bank to let them know you will be using the card overseas so it does not spark a suspicious alert on your account. The last thing you want to happen is to have your card swallowed at an Italian ATM machine.

Other Options

If you have family or friends in the country, if worse comes to worse, you could have someone send them funds via PayPal or Western Union. These options, of course, have some heavy fees associated with them as well, so you should only use in emergency. PayPal allows you to transfer money to family and friends, but if it is against the sender's credit card, the fee is a lot higher than if you use PayPal funds or direct debit from the sender's bank account.

On my most recent trip to Italy, I used an ATM card to withdraw 200 euros and about a week later I sent 200 euros to my relatives via PayPal. The net amount received in euros were almost identical, the only difference is my bank charged me five dollars to use the ATM network. Winner: PayPal.

You should also make sure your credit card has a cash advance feature in case your ATM card is swallowed up by the machine or lost.

Credit Cards

The use of credit cards has also gained acceptance in Italy. VISA and MasterCard are widely accepted. American Express is not as readily available so do not rely on that card as a primary means of credit. Discover Card has not been able to gain any type of acceptance in Italy and I doubt it ever will. You can leave that one at home.

It may be a good idea to carry two credit cards but keep them separate from one another in case one gets lost or stolen.

Some of your mom and pop (smaller) establishments, trattorias, pensioni, etc. may not accept credit cards, so it is best to ask. And if they do, they may assess a surcharge of 3 to 4 percent for the convenience.

bank

banca

You may see this word as masculine (banco) or feminine (banca). There is a distinction that started many years ago but it is not important for tourists. Sometimes a financial institution will use banco for the name and others will use banca. The masculine word technically refers to a bench, or the counter where the bankers used to conduct their business.

Some Useful Phrases:

Where is the nearest bank?

Dov'e' la banca piu' vicina?

Where is the nearest ATM?

Dov'e' il bancomat piu' vicino?

I would like to change some dollars.

Vorrei cambiare dei dollari.

I would like to change some pounds.

Vorrei cambiare delle sterline.

letter of credit

lettera di credito

check

assegno

transfer

trasferrimento

credit card

carta di credito

What is the commission rate?

Quanto trattiene di commissione?

Where can I cash a traveler's check?

Dove posso cambiare un traveler's cheque?

What time does the bank open?

A che ora apre la banca?

Do you take credit cards?

Accetate carte di credito?

Can I use a credit card?

Si puo' usare la carta di credito?

What time do you (plural) close?

A che ora chiudete?

Telephones in Italy

Prior to the advent of cellular phones, using a phone in Italy meant using one of the public phone booths that you will still see available throughout the country. Many of the older ones are no longer functioning. They used to accept a token or a *gettone*, which had a monetary value of approximately twenty cents. They also had phones available for use at the post office for a fee.

The *gettone* are long gone but you will need to use a prepaid calling card that is inserted into the phone for making a call from a public payphone.

telephone

telefono

cell phone

cellulare

telefonino (which means “little telephone”)

Nowadays with cellular service being so popular, many Italians have ditched their landlines in favor of using their cell phone.

You basically have three options if you want to use a cell phone in Italy:

1 – Use your existing phone

If your phone is capable of supporting GSM 900 and GSM 1800 frequencies, it will work in Italy. Call your cell phone provider to find out if you are not sure. And then find out what type of international calling plans they have to offer.

The disadvantage is that your phone calls will be considered international long-distance even if you are calling your cousin in Rome who happens to be on the same block. And when your cousin calls you, they will be charged an international rate. The advantage, of course, is you are using your own phone and your own phone number.

2 – You can purchase a phone

You must make sure you purchase a GSM compatible phone that is unlocked. Or in other words, you are not bound by a contract with a specific service provider. You can find them on Amazon or eBay by doing a search. It must be compatible with the frequencies above or just simply look for a quad band phone. These can be purchased prior to your trip or after you

arrive in Italy.

You then need to purchase a SIM card, which will be your own Italian cell phone number. The advantage is that you will then be charged local rates as opposed to long-distance international rates when calling within Italy.

3 – You can rent a cell phone

There are companies that will allow you to rent a cell phone. Often if you rent an automobile, they will allow you to rent a cell phone for free. I personally like the second option above if you plan on returning to Italy in the future. Or even if you plan on traveling throughout Europe, Africa, or other countries, as you'll have a cell phone at your disposal ready and available.

To Make an International Call from Italy

To Call the United States or Canada

Dialing internationally from Italy means you must use the double zero (00) to indicate that you want to place a call outside the country. Then you will need to dial an international country code.

United States – 1

Canada – 1

Then you will dial the area code and the appropriate phone number. If you are calling a toll-free number within the United States, which usually has a prefix of 800 / 888 / 877 / 866, the call will not be toll-free. You'll be charged normal international rates. Many times, the call will simply not go through using those prefixes.

To Call the United Kingdom

To dial the United Kingdom from Italy you must use the double zero (00) to indicate that you want to place a call outside the country. Then you will need to dial the international country code.

Country Code – 44

You then must dial the appropriate city code (which is 20 for London, etc.) and then the phone number.

To Place Calls Within Italy

If you are making calls within Italy you will not need to dial the 39 country code.

Calling a Landline

These numbers will begin with a zero indicating the city code, which can be two digits, three digits, or four digits. For example, the city code for Rome is 06 and the code for Palermo is 091. You simply dial the city code along with the phone number to place a call. The regular phone number can also be six or seven digits.

Calling a Cell Phone

Depending on your cell phone company, these rates will typically be higher for the recipient than the one placing the call. The country code is not needed and cellular numbers are all 10-digit numbers. They usually begin with the number three (3). There is a three-digit prefix which indicates the cell phone provider. This would be useful, as some providers charge less if you are calling someone on the same network. For example, a TIM subscriber calls another TIM subscriber.

Toll-Free Numbers Within Italy

Toll-free numbers are generally indicated with a green color, sometimes known as a *numero verde* or a green number. They usually begin with 800, 900, or 199. You typically won't be able to reach those numbers from abroad.

Answering the Phone

For most people all over the world the standard greeting when answering the phone will be the standard "hello" or some variation thereof. However, in Italy the standard greeting is the word "pronto," which means ready. In essence, you are using a protocol telling the other person that you are "ready" to talk. That one word basically means:

"I'm ready to talk, are you ready to talk?"

Useful Vocabulary for the Telephone

telephone number

numero di telefono

area code

prefisso

ringer

la suoneria

phone card

la scheda telefonica

to make a call

chiamare per telefono

dial the number

marcare il numero

The line is open.

La linea sta aperta.

The line is busy.

La linea sta occupata.

Where is the telephone?

Dov'è il telefono?

May I use your phone?

Posso usare il suo telefono?

Hello, who's talking?

Pronto, chi parla?

Where is the nearest phone booth?

Dov'è la cabina telefonica più vicina?

I would like to speak to...

Vorrei parlare con...

When will he / she return?

Quando sarà di ritorno?

Will you tell him / her that I called?

Vuol dirgli / dirle che ho chiamato?

Meeting People in Italy

Italians are a very warm and fun-loving people. If you make a little bit of an effort with your Italian language, it will go a long way in meeting Italians during your trip. Although, once they find out you speak English, many of them will want to practice their English skills with you as opposed to speaking in their native Italian.

Another thing to keep in mind is that Italy is one of the most visited countries on earth with regards to tourism. That means it is visited by people from Germany, England, France, Spain, Austria, Poland, Sweden, etc. I generally have an easier time meeting tourists from other countries as opposed to Italians. I'm not sure the reason why, but I have my own theory. People from other countries will tend to be in a vacation mode wanting to meet other people. Italians will be busy with their normal routines. The old saying "go with the flow" definitely applies. If you keep your mind open, you're bound to meet interesting people from many different parts of the world.

hello

ciao

What is your name?

Come si chiama?

If you are trying to be more flirtatious with someone of the opposite sex, you would want to use the familiar version for you.

What is your name?

Come ti chiami?

My name is ...

Mi chiamo ...

pleasure (to meet you)

piacere

How are you? (Formal)

Come sta?

How are you? (Familiar)

Come stai?

How is it going?

Come va?

I'm fine, thank you.

Sto bene, grazie.

Where are you from? (Formal)

Da dove viene?

Where are you from? (Familiar)

Da dove vieni?

I'm from the United States.

Sono degli Stati Uniti.

work

lavoro

Note – similar to the word labor

What type of work do you do? (Formal)

Che tipo di lavoro fa?

Can I buy you a drink?

Ti posso offrire una bevanda?

Can I buy you dinner?

Ti posso offrire una cena?

Would you like to dance?

Ti piacerebbe ballare?

You are very pretty.

Sei molto bella.

You are very handsome.

Sei molto bello.

I like your smile.

Mi piace il tuo sorriso.

I like your eyes.

Mi piaciono i tuoi occhi.

I'm with...

Sono con...

...my wife.

...mia moglie.

...my husband.

...mio marito.

...my girlfriend.

...mia ragazza.

...my boyfriend.

...mio ragazzo.

Do you have a boyfriend / girlfriend?

Tieni un ragazzo / una ragazza?

We're here on holiday / vacation.

Siamo qui in vacanza.

We're here for two weeks.

Siamo qui per due settimane.

See you later.

A più tardi.

Weather Pleasantries

What a beautiful day.

Che bella giornata.

What a lousy (ugly) day.

Che brutta giornata.

It looks like rain.

Sembra che deve piovere.

Is it usually this warm?

Fa sempre caldo così?

Is it usually this cold?

Fa sempre freddo così?

Thank you...Grazie!



I want to thank you for purchasing my guide on Italian language. There are countless other books that you could have chosen, but instead you chose my guide and I truly appreciate it.

If you found this book useful I would be ever so grateful if you could leave a review. The more feedback I get, the more I can help others in the future. And it will help me become a better writer.

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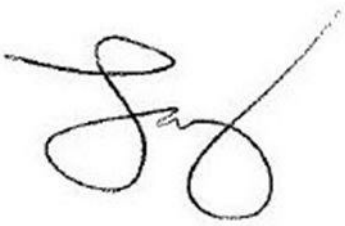
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If you found this book useful, would you please take a few seconds to let your friends know about it? If it turns out that it helps them learn Italian they'll be forever grateful to you. And I will be forever grateful as well.

I wish you the best of luck in your journey to speaking Italian.

In bocca al lupo!
Good luck!

Larry

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Larry', with a stylized, cursive script.

Amazon Store

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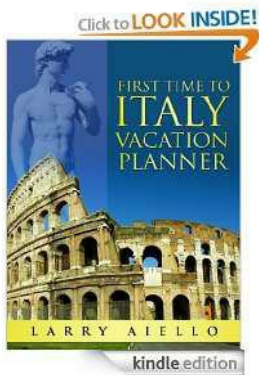
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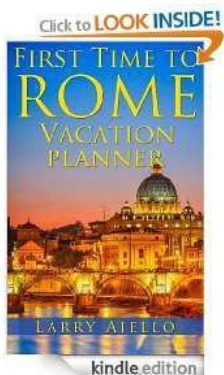
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