



# FAQ

**As in any country**, in Italy it is helpful to keep in mind a few basic precautions so that travel is as smooth as possible.

**Use our checklist and rest easy when visiting the Bel Paese.**

**1** – Buy all tickets for travel and transport from authorized vendors only. Alternatively, purchasing tickets online sometimes guarantees extra promotions and/or discounts.

**2** – Ride in authorized taxis only, marked by official signs and identification. Ask for the driver's cost estimate for your route in advance, read rules and regulations posted inside taxi, and maintain an eye on the cab's meter from beginning to end of your journey. Remember that any transport of baggage usually guarantees first bag free of charge. Always ask for an official receipt for the price you pay.

**3** – Check and double-check map locations for your lodging and general area of touristic interest. Measure distances from airports/stations and chosen lodging. Stay informed about lodging prices and finer details when booking and checking out.

**4** – When possible, always pay with traceable instruments (debit, credit card, travelers' checks and even Smartphone), but be sure to have cash on hand for places that do not accept cards or electronic payments of any kind, (50 Euros per day is advisable).

**5** – Always exercise your right to ask for receipts upon payment, and pay attention to charges and look for official government signs on the receipt (vendors often attempt to pass off unofficial pieces of printed paper as receipts so as to avoid paying taxes).

**(SAVE RECEIPTS FOR VAT REFUNDS)**

**6** – Seek out information points that offer maps, advice and other help in any city you visit.

**7** – Know opening hours and terms of entry in the museums, galleries, churches and archaeological sites you want to see (e.g. many monuments and institutions are closed on certain holidays, while many allow free entry to those European citizens under 18 or over 65).

**8** – Do not purchase tickets of entry to museums or archaeological sites from unauthorized sellers or persons without official tour guide accreditation, and do not trust promises to advance your place in line. Remember that access to public spaces is always free.

**9** – Don't flash valuables on the street, and get away as quickly as possible from groups or individuals trying to distract you by asking for information or money.

**10** – Keep all personal effects in a safe place (documents, telephones, computers and other devices), and do not entrust them to strangers.

**11** – In restaurants, pizzerias, fast food and take-away establishments, always look at the menu with prices, remembering that table service usually costs more than counter service or take-away. Restaurateurs are obligated to exhibit all costs for both service and menu items.

**12** – Excepting some cases, bathroom use is free in bars and restaurants. Some establishments ask for payment or a tip. Railway and bus stations often require coins for payment.

**13** – The water in public fountains is potable, unless otherwise indicated, and a glass of tap water at the bar is always free.

**14** – Anytime you have a bad sense of your surroundings or are confronted with danger – or your rights as a client/tourist/traveler are not respected, advise local authorities immediately.

### **What currency is used in Italy?**

Since 2001, the currency used in Italy is the euro. One euro is divided up into 100 euro-cents. There are eight different coins (1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 euro-cents) and seven notes (5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 Euros).

### **Credit cards**

As well as in cash, purchases can be paid for using the most common credit cards. This payment system is common in Italian shops, which generally display the symbols of the credit cards they accept on the outside door. If you pay by credit card you will be asked to show an identity document. Traveler's Cheques (in USD or Euros) can also be cashed in Italian banks.

### **Tips**

Tips are not compulsory and in Italy there are no generally established rules, although it is common practice to leave a sum amounting to around 10% of the bill if you are satisfied with the service you have received.

### **Currency**

In Italy you'll have 8 metallic coins (1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents and 1 and 2 Euros) as well as 7 paper currency (5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 Euros)

### **Language**

Italian is the official language of the country, although accents and dialects may vary widely from one region to another. A large number of local dialects are spoken in Italy.

There are two regions, however, which have a second official language: the Aosta Valley, where French is also spoken, and Trentino Alto Adige, where German is also spoken. In these regions, road signs, as well as place names, for example, appear in both languages. There are also a number of small areas in which languages other than Italian are used, although these languages do not have official status: in Friuli-Venezia Giulia there is a Slovenian-speaking area, and in Calabria (in the Bovesia area) and in Apulia (in the Grecia Salentina zone), Greek is spoken in some areas. In Sicily, in Piana degli Albanesi, you will find the largest Albanian community in Italy, where the Albanian language is widely used, even in official documents and on road signs.

## **Religions**

The Italian Constitution guarantees freedom of worship. Most of the population is Catholic; there are also, however, a large number of minority religious communities, some of them of Christian or Catholic inspiration, such as the Apostolic Church, the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Waldensian Evangelical Church and the Holy Orthodox Archdiocese, as well as Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist communities.

## **Making calls to Italy**

To call an Italian telephone number from outside Italy, either from a landline or a mobile phone, you will need to add the international dialing code for Italy, which is 0039 (+39), followed by the telephone number you require.

To call another country from Italy, you will need to add the international dialing code for the country you are calling, followed by the telephone number you require.

To make calls within Italy, dial the number you require without adding the international country dialing code.

To make calls from public telephones (which you can find on the street, in some bars, restaurants, etc and in shopping centers), you may use coins or phone cards, which can be purchased from tobacconists, news kiosks and telephone shops. Mobile phone reception in Italy is based on GSM technology, which is not compatible with that of a number of countries (including the USA and Japan), unless you have a three-band mobile phone.

Before travelling to Italy you should contact your telephone services provider to activate the international roaming service (if it is not already activated automatically).

Making international calls from a mobile phone may be very expensive, and it is often advisable to purchase a phone card to call home from a public telephone.

## **Internet and e-mail usage**

There are numerous internet points and cafés offering internet access. In many hotels (especially higher-category ones) a direct internet connection is provided in the rooms. In addition, in Italy you will find Wi-Fi access available in many airports, hotels, train stations and other public places where travelers pass through or stop off.

### **What time is it in Italy?**

Italy is in the Central European Time (CET) Zone, 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), and observes Daylight Saving Time: at the beginning of spring the clocks go forward an hour in order to take advantage of an extra hour of sunlight in the late afternoon/evening. At the beginning of autumn the clocks are shifted back an order to standard Central European Time.

### **What are the typical mealtimes in Italy?**

Italians usually have breakfast from 7.00 a.m. onwards. Hotels generally set a time (around 10.00 a.m.) after which breakfast may no longer be ordered. In restaurants, lunch is served from 12.30 to 2.30 PM and dinner between 19.30 and 23.00. These times are merely indicative, and may vary significantly, depending on the area of the country you are visiting: in the north they tend to be earlier, becoming later the further south you travel..

### **What are the shop opening hours?**

Shops are generally open from Monday to Saturday, from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 and from 3.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m., although shopping centers and department stores often stay open all day, from 10.00 a.m. to 9.00 or 10.00 p.m. Shopping centers and stores are also open on several Sundays throughout the year.

**Pharmacies** have the same opening hours as shops, from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 and from 3.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.; in the larger cities, some pharmacies are open 24 hours. For emergencies during the night, or when the pharmacies are normally closed, a number of them remain open, on a rotational basis. A calendar listing the nearest one open can be found on the doors of all local pharmacies.

### **National public holidays**

There are 12 national holidays on the Italian calendar:

1 January - New Year's Day

6 January - Epiphany,

Easter Sunday (date varies from year to year)

Easter Monday (the day after Easter Sunday)

25 April - Anniversary of the Liberation

1 May - Labor Day

2 June - Republic Day

15 August - Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Ferragosto)

1 November - All Saints Day

8 December - Immaculate Conception

25 December - Christmas Day

26 December - Boxing Day

### **Local festivities**

The local patron saint's day is generally a local public holiday: offices are closed and a range of events and markets are held. Below is a list of the patron saints of the capital cities of the Italian regions:

29 January - San Costanzo, Perugia (Umbria)

23 April - San Giorgio, Campobasso (Molise)

25 April - San Marco, Venice (Veneto)

4 May - San Ciriaco of Jerusalem, Ancona (Marche)

9 May and 6 December - San Nicola, Bari (Apulia)

30 May - San Gerardo, Potenza (Basilicata)

10 June - San Massimo d'Aveia, L'Aquila (Abruzzo)

24 June - San Giovanni, Genoa (Liguria)

24 June - San Giovanni, Florence (Tuscany)

24 June - San Giovanni, Turin (Piedmont)

26 June - San Vigilio, Trent (Trentino)

29 June - San Pietro, Rome (Lazio)

15 July - Santa Rosalia, Palermo (Sicily)

16 July - San Vitaliano, Catanzaro (Calabria)

7 September - San Grato, Aosta (Aosta Valley)

19 September - San Gennaro, Naples (Campania)

11 July - Santa Rosalia, Palermo (Sicilia)

4 October - San Petronio, Bologna (Emilia Romagna)

30 October - San Saturnino, Cagliari (Sardinia)

3 November - San Giusto, Trieste (Friuli Venezia Giulia)

7 December- Sant'Ambrogio, Milan (Lombardy)

### **What metric system is used in Italy?**

In Italy, the basic unit of measurement is the meter. The International System of Units (SI), the standard metric system in use in the European Union, defines the seven fundamental units used (meter, kilograms, second, ampere, Kelvin, mole, candela)

### **What sizes are used in Italy?**

Italian sizes are in centimeters, unlike US sizes, for example, which are in inches. Women's clothing sizes generally range from about 38 to 56, men's sizes from about 42 to 60. Adult shoe sizes generally go from about 35 to 46.

Sizes and measures can be converted by visiting one of the various internet sites that offer conversion tables.



**BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY**