

EUROPE · HISTORY · FOOD · WINE · ARCHITECTURE · CITY BREAKS · BEACHES

 Italy

Italy's draw is the sheer density of it all: the Colosseum and the Vatican in Rome, Renaissance Florence, the canals of Venice, the Amalfi Coast's cliff-hung villages and a different food culture in every region. Fast trains make two or three bases easy, but book the major sights ahead and avoid August's heat and crowds.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Italy and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 21 October 2026.

 CAPITAL Rome	 CURRENCY Euro (EUR) £1 ≈ €1.19	 LANGUAGE Italian	 BEST TIME Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £70–£320 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, F, L 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 2h 30m direct ~£60–£250 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+1 standard time

Italy has more UNESCO World Heritage Sites than any other country, and a first trip rarely strays far from the classic triangle of Rome, Florence and Venice, linked by high-speed trains in a few hours. Add the Amalfi Coast and Pompeii from Naples, the hill towns of Tuscany and Umbria by car, or the lakes and the Dolomites in the north. Repeat visitors head south to Puglia, Sicily and Sardinia, where landscapes, food and pace change again. The country was only unified in 1861, and regional identity still runs deep.

Italy rewards slow travel and punishes over-ambition: two weeks is better spent on three regions than seven. Prices in Venice, Florence and on the Amalfi Coast rival London, while the south and the countryside are noticeably cheaper. July and August bring heat, queues and Ferragosto closures, and many coastal hotels shut from November to Easter. Meals follow firm rhythms, with lunch from about 1pm and dinner rarely before 8pm, and coffee is drunk standing at the bar. First-timers are often surprised by how frequently a lesser-known town turns out to be the highlight.

Top 5 highlights

1 HISTORY Colosseum and Roman Forum The great amphitheatre opened in AD 80, and the same ticket covers the Forum and the Palatine Hill next door, where emperors built their palaces. Book timed entry ahead and go at opening or late afternoon.	2 ARCHITECTURE Florence's Renaissance centre Brunelleschi's dome, the Uffizi's Botticellis, Michelangelo's David at the Accademia and the Ponte Vecchio all lie within a compact, walkable historic centre. Climb the dome or Giotto's bell tower early, before the day-trippers arrive.
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3

CITY

Venice

A car-free city spread over more than a hundred islands, where the vaporetto is the bus and St Mark's Basilica glows with gold mosaics. Stay overnight to see it after the day visitors leave, and explore Cannaregio and Castello.

4

NATURE

Amalfi Coast

Positano, Amalfi and Ravello cling to the cliffs of the Sorrento peninsula above a road of hairpin bends. Use the ferries and SITA buses rather than driving, and walk the Path of the Gods for the finest views.

5

NATURE

The Dolomites

Pale limestone towers rise above alpine meadows in South Tyrol, Trentino and the Veneto, with cable cars, hut-to-hut hiking and via ferrata in summer and superb skiing in winter. Cortina d'Ampezzo and Val Gardena make good bases.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Rome

≈ 4.2 million people

Three thousand years in layers: the Colosseum and Forum, the Vatican Museums and St Peter's, Baroque piazzas and Trastevere's trattorias. Give it at least four days and walk everywhere.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Milan

≈ 3.2 million people

Italy's fashion and finance capital, with a vast Gothic Duomo, Leonardo's Last Supper and an excellent aperitivo culture; also the gateway to Lake Como and the Alps.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Naples

≈ 3 million people

Loud, chaotic and magnificent, the birthplace of pizza, with a superb archaeological museum and an underground city; the base for Pompeii, Herculaneum, Vesuvius and the Amalfi Coast.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

Holiday regions in Italy

These areas have their own season and weather — see their guides for sea temperatures, resorts and flights.



Sardinia

Italy Best: Jun, Sep 2h 50m from London

Sea up to 26°C ~£140/day



Sicily

Italy Best: May–Jun, Sep–Oct 3h from London

Sea up to 27°C ~£130/day

When to go to Italy

Best time: **Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

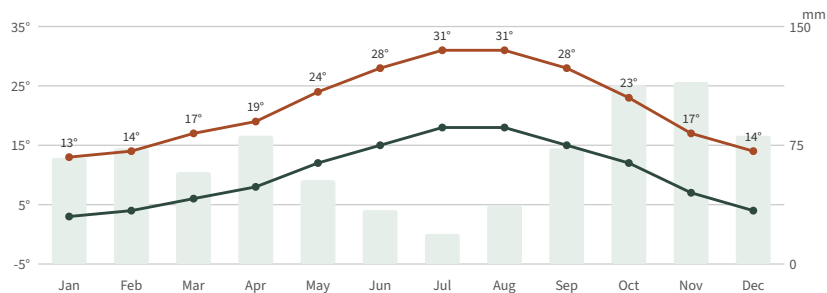
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Rome

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb–Mar

Carnevale di Venezia

Venice's carnival fills the city with elaborate masks and costumes for around two weeks before Lent, with masked balls in palazzi and crowds in St Mark's Square.

Mar–Apr

Scoppio del Carro

On Easter Sunday in Florence, a cart packed with fireworks is set off outside the Duomo by a dove-shaped rocket, an old omen for a good harvest.

Jul–Aug

Palio di Siena

A bareback horse race around the Piazza del Campo between rival city districts, run on 2 July and 16 August after days of pageantry; the race itself lasts about 90 seconds.

How much does Italy cost?

SHOESTRING

£70

per person / day
≈ €83.33

hostels, street food, buses

MID-RANGE

£150

per person / day
≈ €179

3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis

COMFORTABLE

£320

per person / day
≈ €381

4-star+, guided trips, private transfers

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Pizza napoletana

A soft, blistered base baked for around 60–90 seconds in a wood-fired oven and topped simply with tomato, mozzarella and basil; the Neapolitan pizzaiuolo's craft is UNESCO-listed.

Risotto alla milanese

Rice slowly stirred with stock, butter, Parmigiano and saffron until golden and creamy; in Milan it is classically served alongside ossobuco.

Tagliatelle al ragù

Bologna's real 'bolognese': ribbons of fresh egg pasta with a slow-cooked meat sauce, never served with spaghetti in its home city.

Getting around

High-speed Frecciarossa and Italo trains link Turin, Milan, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Rome and Naples, often faster than flying; book ahead for the best fares. Cheaper regional trains serve smaller towns. Hire a car for Tuscany, Puglia, Sicily or the Dolomites, but never drive into historic centres, which are camera-enforced ZTL zones. Ferries serve the islands and lakes, and the FreeNow and itTaxi apps book licensed taxis.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F/L adapter

DIALLING CODE

+39

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

TIPPING

Not expected. Bills often include a coperto (cover charge) and sometimes servizio; leaving a few euros for good service is appreciated but optional.

ETIQUETTE

Cover shoulders and knees in churches, including St Peter's. Greet shopkeepers with buongiorno or buonasera, don't ask for cheese on seafood pasta, and dress neatly for dinner.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Rome Fiumicino Airport (Leonardo da Vinci) (FCO), Rome; Milan Malpensa Airport (MXP), Milan; Venice Marco Polo Airport (VCE), Venice

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **118**

Fire: **115**

Police: **112**

You can also download the **112** Where Are U app

Source: FCDO "Getting help"

TIME ZONE

UTC+1 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

Visas & entry for Italy

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Italy, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Italy are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Bat Lyssavirus

Tick-borne encephalitis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Italy

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day · National Unity Day
Tue 8 Dec 2026	Immaculate Conception
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Saint Stephen's Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Wed 6 Jan 2027	Epiphany
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sun 25 Apr 2027	Liberation Day
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Wed 2 Jun 2027	Republic Day
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Of Mary Day
Mon 4 Oct 2027	Saint Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint of Italy

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Italian

ENGLISH	ITALIAN	SAY IT
Hello	Buongiorno	<i>bwon-JOR-noh</i>
Thank you	Grazie	<i>GRAHT-see-eh</i>
Please	Per favore	<i>pair fah-VOR-eh</i>
Excuse me	Mi scusi	<i>mee SKOO-zee</i>
How much is this?	Quanto costa?	<i>KWAN-toh KOS-tah</i>

Know before you go

- Book timed tickets for the Colosseum, Vatican Museums, Uffizi and Accademia in advance, and Milan's Last Supper several weeks ahead, as slots sell out fast.
- Coffee standing at the bar costs much less than at a table, especially near major sights. In busy bars, pay at the till first and hand your receipt to the barista.

If you hire a car, learn the ZTL signs: entering a historic centre's restricted zone triggers camera fines that can reach you months later via the hire company.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.