

ITALY - COUNTRY DESCRIPTION AND SAFETY TIPS - WWW.TRAVEL.STATE.GOV

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COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: Italy is a developed democracy with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available. Additional information may be obtained from the Italian Government Tourist Board via Internet at <http://www.enit.it> or telephone at: 212-245-5618.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS: A valid passport is required. Italian authorities may deny entry to travelers who attempt to enter without a valid passport. A visa is not required for tourist stays up to three months. However, for all other purposes, such as work, study, etc., a visa is required and must be obtained from the Italian Embassy or Consulates before entering Italy. For

further information concerning visas and entry requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of Italy at 1601 Fuller St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, tel: 202-328-5500 or via the internet: <http://www.italyemb.org>, or Italian Consulates General in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, or San

Francisco, accessible through the above Internet site.

Under Italian law, tourists are required to register with a local police station and obtain a "permesso di soggiorno" (permit to stay) within eight working days of their arrival, regardless of the intended length of stay. Visitors may be required to show police that they have sufficient means of financial support. Credit cards, ATM cards, travelers' checks, prepaid hotel/vacation vouchers, etc. may be evidence of sufficient means.

DUAL NATIONALITY: U.S. Citizens born in Italy and/or who are also Italian citizens may be subject to compulsory military service and other laws imposing special obligations upon them in Italy. Those who might be affected should inquire at an Italian embassy or consulate regarding their status before traveling to Italy. In some instances, dual nationality may hamper U.S. Government efforts to provide protection abroad. For additional information, see the Consular Affairs home page at <http://www.travel.state.gov> for our Dual Nationality flyer .

SAFETY/SECURITY: There have been occasional episodes of politically motivated violence in Italy, most often connected to Italian internal developments or social issues. At various times, Italian authorities have found bombs outside public buildings, have received bomb threats and were subjects of letter bombs. Firebombs or Molotov cocktails have been thrown at buildings or offices in the middle of the night. These incidents have all been attributed to organized crime or anarchist movements.

Americans were not targeted or injured in these instances.

Demonstrations may have an anti-American character. Even those intended to be peaceful have the potential to turn into confrontational situations and possibly escalate into violence. U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Italy should take common sense precautions and follow news reports carefully in order to avoid demonstrations and to be aware of heightened security and potential delays when they occur.

Italy remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Italy's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov> where the current Worldwide Caution Public Announcement , Travel Warnings, and Public Announcements can be found.

Up to date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-317-472-2328. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

CRIME: Italy has a moderate rate of violent crime, some of which is directed towards tourists, principally for motives of theft. Some travelers have been victims of rape and beatings. There have been increasing incidents of drinks laced with drugs being used by criminals to rob, and in some cases, assault tourists. This occurs repeatedly in the vicinity of Rome's Termini train station. Instances have also occurred elsewhere in Rome, as well as in Florence and Naples. Criminals using this tactic "befriend" a traveler, at a bus stop, restaurant, cafe or bar in tourist areas, then eventually offer a drink laced with a sleeping drug. When the tourist falls asleep, criminals steal the traveler's valuables. There have also been instances where the victim was assaulted, either physically or sexually. Other embassies in Rome report this happening to their citizens as well.

Americans are advised to exercise caution when frequenting nightclubs, bars and outdoor cafes, particularly at night, because criminals may make initial contact with potential victims in such settings. Individuals under the effect of alcohol may become victims of crime, including robbery, physical and sexual assault, due to their impaired ability to judge situations and make decisions. This is particularly a problem for younger Americans visiting Italy, where age limits on the sale of alcoholic beverages is lower than in most U.S. states. If you are a victim of such a crime, please file a police report and contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulates. There are also in-country organizations, which provide counseling, medical, and legal assistance to certain crime victims.

Petty crimes such as pick pocketing, theft from parked cars, and purse snatching are serious problems, especially in large cities. Pickpockets sometimes dress like businessmen, so tourists should not be lulled into a false sense of security by believing that well-dressed individuals are not potential pickpockets or thieves. Most reported thefts occur at crowded tourist sites, on public buses or trains, or at the major railway stations, Rome's Termini, Milan's Centrale, Florence's Santa Maria Novella, and Naples' Centrale and Piazza Garibaldi. Travelers should also be alert to theft in Milan's Malpensa airport, particularly at car rental agencies. Clients of Internet cafes in major cities have been targeted. Tourists who have tried to resist petty thieves on motor scooters have suffered broken arms and collarbones.

Thieves in Italy often work in groups or pairs. Pairs of accomplices or groups of street urchins are known to divert tourists' attention so that another can pickpocket them. In one particular routine, one thief throws trash, waste or ketchup at the victim; a second thief assists the victim in cleaning up the mess; and the third discreetly takes the victim's belongings.

Criminals on crowded public transportation slit the bottoms of purses or bags with a razor blade or sharp knife, then remove the contents. Theft of small items such as radios, luggage, cameras, briefcases, and even cigarettes from parked cars are a major problem.

Robbers take items from cars at gas stations often by smashing car windows. Thefts have also been reported from occupied vehicles waiting in traffic or stopped at traffic

lights. Vehicles parked near beaches during the summer have been broken into and items stolen.

In a scam practiced on the highways, one thief signals a flat tire to the driver of another car and encourages the driver to pull over. Often, the tire has been punctured by an accomplice, while in other instances, there may, in fact, be nothing wrong with the vehicle. When the driver stops, one thief helps change the tire, while the other takes the driver's belongings. Use particular caution driving at night on highways, when there may be a greater incidence of robbery attempts. There have been occasional reports of break-ins of rental cars driven by Americans when the precautions mentioned above were not followed during stops at highway service areas.

On trains, a commonly reported trick involves one or more persons who pretend to befriend a traveler and offer drugged food or drink. Also, thieves have been known to impersonate police officers to gain the confidence of tourists. The thief shows the prospective victim a circular plastic sign with the words "police" or "international police." If this happens, the tourist

should insist on seeing the officer's identification card (documento), as impersonators tend not to carry forged documents. Tourists should immediately report thefts or other crimes to the local police.

Organized criminal groups operate throughout Italy, but are more prevalent in the south. They have occasionally resorted to violence to intimidate or to settle disputes. Though the activities of such groups are not generally targeted at tourists, visitors should be aware that innocent by-standers could be injured.

The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you understand the local criminal justice process and help you locate an attorney if needed.

U.S. citizens can refer to the Department of State's pamphlet, A Safe Trip Abroad, for ways to promote a trouble-free journey. The pamphlet is available by mail from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, via the Internet at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov>, or via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home

page at <http://travel.state.gov>.

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND INSURANCE: Medical facilities are available, but may be limited outside urban areas. Public hospitals sometimes do not maintain the same standards as hospitals in the United States, so travelers are encouraged to obtain insurance that would cover a stay in a private Italian hospital or clinic. It is almost impossible to obtain an itemized

hospital bill from public hospitals, as required by many U.S. insurance companies, because the Italian National Health Service charges one inclusive rate (care services, bed and board). The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult their medical insurance company prior to traveling to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do

not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. Many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans to cover overseas health care expenses including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the U.S. may cost well in excess of \$50,000.

Uninsured travelers requiring medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties unlike travelers who have

purchased overseas medical insurance. Prior to your trip, ask your insurance company if payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for incurred expenses. Some insurance companies include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

Information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad , available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page.

OTHER HEALTH INFORMATION: Travelers should always carry a prescription for any drugs they are taking and should know the generic name of the drug. Most prescription drugs available in the U.S. can also be found in Italy. If you are taking an unusual medicine that is difficult to find even in the United States, we suggest that you bring an ample supply with

you when you travel. Mailing prescription drugs to Italy is time-consuming and complicated. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions , such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's website at <http://www.who.int/en>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith>.

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the U.S. The information below concerning Italy is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate for all locations or circumstances.

Safety of Public Transportation: Good

Urban Road Condition/Maintenance: Good

Rural Road Condition/Maintenance: Good

Availability of Roadside Assistance: Excellent on toll roads, good elsewhere

Streets in historical city centers are often narrow, winding and congested. Traffic lights are limited, often disobeyed and a different convention of right-of-way is observed. Italy has over 5,600 kilometers (3,480 mi.) of "Autostrada," or superhighways. Commercial and individual vehicles travel and pass on these well-maintained roads at very high speeds. Accidents do

occur in which contributing factors include excessive speed, alcohol/drug use and/or sleepiness of long-distance drivers. Italy has one of the highest rates of car accident deaths in the European Union.

In rural areas, a wide range of speed on highways makes for hazardous driving. Roads are generally narrow and often have no guardrails. Travelers in northern Italy, especially

in winter, should be aware of fog and poor visibility, responsible for multiple-car accidents each year. Most Italian automobiles are equipped with special fog lights.

Roadside assistance in

Italy is excellent on the well-maintained toll roads, but limited on secondary roads.

For specific information concerning Italian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) offices via the Internet at: <http://www.enit.it>, tel: 212-245-4822 or the A.C.I. (Automobile Club Italiano) at Via Magenta 5, 00185 Rome, tel: 39-06-4477. For information on obtaining international

drivers licenses, contact AAA or the American Automobile Touring Alliance.

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Italy's Civil Aviation Authority as Category 1 'in compliance with international aviation safety standards for oversight of Italy's air carrier operations. For further information, travelers may contact the Department of Transportation within the U.S. at 1-800-322-7873, or visit the FAA Internet website at <http://www.faa.gov/avr/iasa/index.cfm>.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS: Italian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Italy of items such as professional equipment, commercial samples, advertising materials and/or goods for exhibition and fair purposes. Tax-free shopping rules are strictly enforced. Be sure you have read and understood all the

procedures and conditions regarding refunds before purchasing any item. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Italy in Washington or one of Italy's Consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. The U.S. Customs Service may impose corresponding import restrictions in accordance with the Convention on Cultural Property

Implementation Act. Contact the Customs Service at (202) 927-2336 or Internet at: <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/culprop> for further information.

Italy's customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet. ATA Carnet Headquarters, located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information, call (212) 354-4480, send an e-mail to atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit <http://www.uscib.org>.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. A current list of those countries with serious problems in this regard can be found at <http://www.ustr.gov/reports/2003/special301.htm>.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations. They may differ significantly from those of the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating

Italian law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Italy are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

Under the PROTECT Act of April 2003, it is a crime, prosecutable in the United States, for a U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien, to engage in illicit sexual conduct in a foreign country with a person under the age of 18, whether or not the U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident alien intended to engage in such illicit sexual conduct prior to going abroad.

Under the Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act of 1998, it is a crime to use the mail or any facility of interstate or foreign commerce, including the Internet, to transmit information about a minor under the age of 16 for criminal sexual purposes that include, among other things, the production of child pornography. This same law makes it a crime to use

any facility of interstate or foreign commerce, including the Internet, to transport obscene materials to minors under the age of 16.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Strikes and other work stoppages occur frequently in the transportation sector (national airlines, airports, trains, and bus lines). Most are announced in advance and are of short duration. Information on strikes may be found at <http://www.infrastrutturertrasporti.it>. Reconfirmation of domestic and international flight reservations is highly recommended.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: Several major earthquake fault lines cross Italy. Principal Italian cities do not lie near these faults, but smaller tourist towns, like Assisi, do and have suffered earthquakes. General information about disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Management Agency (FEMA) at <http://www.fema.gov>. Detailed information on Italy's earthquake fault lines is available from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at <http://www.usgs.gov>.

Italy also has several active volcanoes generating geothermal events. Mt. Etna, on the eastern tip of the island of Sicily, has been erupting intermittently since 2000. Mt. Vesuvius, located near to Naples, is currently capped and not active. Activity at Mt. Vesuvius is monitored by an active seismic network and sensor system, and no recent seismic activity has

been recorded. Two of Italy's smaller islands, Stromboli and Vulcano in the Aeolian Island chain north of Sicily, also have active volcanoes with lava flows. Detailed information on volcano activity in Italy is available from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at <http://www.usgs.gov>.

REGISTRATION/EMBASSY AND CONSULATE LOCATIONS: Americans residing, studying or working in Italy, and longer term tourists, are encouraged to register at the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Rome or at one of the three U.S. Consulates General and obtain updated information on travel and security.

The U.S. Embassy in Rome is located at Via V. Veneto 119/A, tel: 39-06-46741 and fax: 39-06-4674-2217; Internet address: <http://www.usembassy.it>.

The U.S. Consulates are located in:

Florence: Lungarno Amerigo Vespucci 38, tel: 39-055-266-951, consular fax: 399-055-215-550;

Milan: Via Principe Amedeo 2/10, tel: 39-02-290-351, and fax: 39-02-290-35-273;

Naples: at Piazza della Repubblica, tel: 39-081-583-8111, and consular fax: 39-081-583-8275.

There are U.S. Consular Agents located in:

Genoa: at Via Dante 2, tel: 39-010-584-492, and fax: 39-010-553-3033;

Palermo: at Via Vaccarini 1, tel: 39-091-305-857, and fax: 39-091-625-6026;

Trieste: at Via Roma 15, tel: 39-040-660-177, and fax: 39-040-631-240.

Tips for Students- Department of State Information

- * Students should read the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for the country in which they plan to study or visit, and check any Public Announcements or Travel Warnings that may pertain to that particular country. A Consular Information Sheet is available for every country in the world and provides an overview of conditions pertaining to travel in each country.
- * Encourage students to learn about the history, culture, politics and customs of the country/countries in which they travel and study, and to respect the country's customs, manners, rules and laws. For instance, various countries and cultures respect certain manners and dress codes. American students should also abide by these manners and dress codes as much as possible.
- * It is a good idea for students to learn as much as they can of the language of the country in which they plan to travel or study. Learning basic phrases of the language can be helpful, and it indicates a willingness on the part of students to make an effort to communicate in the language of the country.
- * The Department of State publishes Background Notes on countries worldwide. These are brief, factual pamphlets with information on each country's culture, history, geography, economy, government and current political situation.
- * It is important that students learn about the local laws abroad and obey them. Remember, while in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws!
- * Students must have a signed, valid passport and visas, if required. Students studying abroad must be sure that they have the proper visa to study there. A visitors visa or entry without a visa may not allow one to study. Refer to our Foreign Entry Requirements brochure for information on foreign visas and to Your Trip Abroad for U.S. passport information.
- * Students should remember to fill in the emergency information page of their passport.
- * It is a good idea for relatives of students abroad to obtain and maintain a valid passport as well, in case of an emergency requiring them to travel.
- * Students should make copies of their passport's data page and any visas. They should keep a copy separately from the originals while traveling and leave one at home with their family and with their student advisor. This will help to obtain a replacement passport in the event that a passport is lost or stolen. Refer to our brochure Your Trip Abroad for more information on U.S. passports.
- * Students are encouraged to travel with extra photos, in case they need to get a new passport quickly. Refer to our brochures Passports-Applying for Them the Easy Way and Your Trip Abroad for more information.

STUDENTS SHOULD LEARN ABOUT MEDICAL INSURANCE AND EVACUATION INSURANCE IN CASE OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY ABROAD

Every year, hundreds of students become ill or suffer injuries overseas. It is essential that students have medical insurance and medical evacuation insurance that would cover a medical emergency abroad. For further information, see our flyer on Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad, Your Trip Abroad and visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's web site at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO KNOW THE LOCATION OF THE NEAREST U.S. EMBASSY OR CONSULATE AND TO REGISTER

If students are going to be in a country for more than a couple of weeks, they should to register at the American Embassy or Consulate. This is helpful to students and their families, if there is need to locate family members in the event of an emergency. See our links to U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide.

WHAT U.S. CONSULAR OFFICERS CAN AND CAN NOT DO TO HELP U.S. CITIZENS ABROAD

- * If students find themselves in trouble overseas, the Consular Officer at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can provide certain assistance and advice. Consular Officers can also help in the event of illness, injury, natural catastrophe, evacuations, destitution, or death. See our brochures Crisis Abroad, U.S. Consuls Help Americans Abroad and Overseas Citizens Services for more information.
- * In the United States, the Office of Overseas Citizens Services can also assist American students abroad and their families in the USA in emergency cases. There is a 24 hour number to call (202) 647-5225.
- * There are certain things that consular officers at American embassies CAN NOT for American citizens abroad. For example, they can not cash checks, lend money or serve as your attorney. See our brochure U.S. Consuls Help Americans Abroad

PRECAUTIONS THAT STUDENTS SHOULD TAKE WHILE TRAVELING OR STUDYING ABROAD

- * Remember not to leave luggage unattended and not to carry packages for anyone. The packages could contain drugs or other illegal items. Refer to our brochure Travel Warning on Drugs Abroad.
- * Do not become a target for thieves by wearing conspicuous clothing and expensive looking jewelry.-- There are restrictions on photography in certain countries. Students should check the Consular Information Sheet for the countries where they plan to visit or travel. -- Students should avoid demonstrations or civil disturbances, which could turn violent. Demonstrations could also turn anti-American.
- * The Department of State is engaged in outreach efforts to education-related organizations to publicize road safety risks in other countries. Students, who may chose less expensive, often less reliable methods of local travel while in foreign countries, should be aware of the potential danger.