

Italy

Facts and Statistics

Location: Southern Europe, bordering Austria 430 km, France 488 km, Holy See (Vatican City) 3.2 km, San Marino 39 km, Slovenia 232 km, Switzerland 740 km

Capital: Rome

Climate: predominantly Mediterranean; Alpine in far north; hot, dry in south

Population: 58,057,477 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Italian (includes small clusters of German-, French-, and Slovene-Italians in the north and Albanian-Italians and Greek-Italians in the south)

Religions: predominately Roman Catholic with mature Protestant and Jewish communities and a growing Muslim immigrant community

Government: republic

The Italian Language

Italian is the official language of Italy, and 93% of population are native Italian speakers. Around 50% of population speak a regional dialect as mother tongue. Many dialects are mutually unintelligible and thus considered by linguists as separate languages, but are not officially recognized. Friulian, one of these dialects, is spoken by 600,000 people in the north east of Italy, which is 1% of the entire population. Other northern minority languages include Ladin, Slovene, German, which enjoys equal recognition with Italian in the province of Alto-Adige, and French, which is legally recognized in the Alpine region of the Val d'Aosta.

Albanian is spoken by 0.2% of the population, mainly in the southern part of Italy, as too are Croatian and Greek.

Catalan is spoken in one city, Alghero, on the island of Sardinia, by around 0.07% of the population. On the rest of the island, Sardinian is spoken by over 1m, which comes to 1.7% of the Italian population.

Why not learn some useful Italian phrases?

Italian Society & Culture

Italian Family Values

- . The family is the centre of the social structure and provides a stabilizing influence for its members.
- . In the north, generally only the nuclear family lives together; while in the south, the extended family often resides together in one house.
- . The family provides both emotional and financial support to its members.

Italian Style

- . Appearances matter in Italy.
- . The way you dress can indicate your social status, your family's background, and your education level.
- . First impressions are lasting impressions in Italy.
- . The concept of 'bella figura' or good image is important to Italians.
- . They unconsciously assess another person's age and social standing in the first few seconds of meeting them, often before any words are exchanged.
- . Clothes are important to Italians.
- . They are extremely fashion conscious and judge people on their appearance.

- . You will be judged on your clothes, shoes, accessories and the way you carry yourself.
- . Bella figura is more than dressing well. It extends to the aura your project too - i.e. confidence, style, demeanour, etc.

Catholicism

- . The primary religion in Italy is Roman Catholic.
- . There are more Catholic churches per capita in Italy than in any other country.
- . Although church attendance is relatively low, the influence of the church is still high.
- . Many office buildings will have a cross or a religious statue in the lobby.
- . Each day of the year has at least one patron saint associated with it.
- . Children are named for a particular saint and celebrate their saint's day as if it were their own birthday.
- . Each trade and profession has a patron saint.
- . The church promulgates hierarchy, which can be seen in all Italian relationships.
- . They respect and defer to those who are older, those who have achieved a level of business success, and those who come from well-connected families