



Italy

Ancient ruins, Renaissance art and some of the world's best-loved food, all in one boot-shaped peninsula.

Italy stretches from the snowy Alps in the north deep into the Mediterranean Sea, with the large islands of Sicily and Sardinia off its coast. On a map, the mainland looks like a tall boot kicking a ball, and that ball is Sicily.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Rome

POPULATION

About 59 million

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Italian

CURRENCY

Euro

AREA

About 301,000 km²

GOVERNMENT

Parliamentary republic (since 1946)

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Mont Blanc (Monte Bianco), shared with France

LONGEST RIVER

The Po, about 650 km

NEIGHBOURS

France, Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia, San Marino, Vatican City

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+39

A 45-minute trip to Italy

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Italy together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 753 BC: Legendary founding of Rome; 1512: Michelangelo finishes the Sistine Chapel ceiling; 2002: The euro replaces the lira. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Pizza margherita and Spaghetti alla carbonara. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Buongiorno" (Good morning, hello), "Buonasera" (Good evening), "Arrivederci" (Goodbye). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/italy/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Italy and its cities



- Rome (Lazio): The Colosseum, The Roman Forum, The Trevi Fountain
- Milan (Lombardy): Milan Cathedral, La Scala, Leonardo's The Last Supper
- Naples (Campania): Pizza, Mount Vesuvius, Day trips to Pompeii
- Turin (Piedmont): The Egyptian Museum, Fiat, Chocolate and gianduja
- Florence (Tuscany): The Duomo, The Uffizi Gallery, Michelangelo's David
- Venice (Veneto): Gondolas, St Mark's Square, Carnival masks
- Bologna (Emilia-Romagna): The oldest university in continuous operation, Porticoes, Ragù and tortellini
- Genoa (Liguria): Pesto, Focaccia, Its old harbour
- Palermo (Sicily): Street food, Arab-Norman churches, Markets like Ballarò

- Verona (Veneto): The Arena, Romeo and Juliet, Summer opera
- Pisa (Tuscany): The Leaning Tower, Piazza dei Miracoli, Its university

A short history of Italy

Italy is one of the oldest centres of European civilisation, but one of its youngest nations: the country we know today was only united in the 1800s.

753 BC **Legendary founding of Rome**

According to legend, the twins Romulus and Remus founded Rome on 21 April 753 BC. Romans later counted their years from this date.

509 BC **The Roman Republic begins**

Romans drove out their last king and set up a republic, ruled by elected officials and the Senate.

27 BC **Augustus becomes the first emperor**

After years of civil war, Octavian took the name Augustus and became the first Roman emperor. The empire would last in the west for about 500 years.

AD 79 **Vesuvius buries Pompeii**

The volcano Vesuvius erupted and buried the Roman towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum under ash, preserving them almost frozen in time.

AD 476 **The Western Roman Empire falls**

The last emperor in the west, Romulus Augustulus, was removed from power. Over the following centuries Italy broke up into many kingdoms, duchies and city-states.

1436 **Brunelleschi's dome is completed**

In Florence, Filippo Brunelleschi finished the huge dome of the cathedral, an engineering wonder and a symbol of the Renaissance.

1492 **Columbus reaches the Americas**

Christopher Columbus, a sailor from Genoa, reached the Caribbean while sailing for the Spanish crown.

1512 **Michelangelo finishes the Sistine Chapel ceiling**

After four years of work, Michelangelo completed his famous ceiling frescoes in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

1861

The Kingdom of Italy is proclaimed

After the wars of the Risorgimento, led by figures such as Garibaldi and Cavour, most of the peninsula was united under King Victor Emmanuel II. Turin was the first capital.

1871

Rome becomes the capital

After Florence served as capital for a few years, the capital moved to Rome, which had joined the kingdom in 1870.

1922

Mussolini takes power

Benito Mussolini and his Fascist party took power after the March on Rome. His dictatorship led Italy into the Second World War.

1946

Italy becomes a republic

In a referendum on 2 June 1946, Italians voted to end the monarchy. 2 June is still a national holiday, Republic Day.

1957

The Treaty of Rome is signed

Italy and five other countries signed the Treaty of Rome, creating the European Economic Community, which grew into today's European Union.

1960

Rome hosts the Olympic Games

The Summer Olympics came to Rome, with some events held among ancient ruins.

2002

The euro replaces the lira

Euro notes and coins replaced the Italian lira, which had been used since the country was united.

What people eat in Italy

Italian food is really many regional kitchens. The north cooks more with butter, rice and polenta, the south with olive oil, tomatoes and dried pasta. A traditional meal goes antipasto (starter), primo (pasta, rice or soup), secondo (meat or fish) with a contorno (side dish), and finally dolce (dessert).

Pizza margherita

Naples, Campania

A soft, thin Neapolitan pizza with tomato, mozzarella and fresh basil, baked for about a minute in a very hot wood-fired oven.

Spaghetti alla carbonara

Rome, Lazio

Spaghetti tossed with crispy guanciale (cured pork cheek), eggs, Pecorino Romano cheese and plenty of black pepper. The creamy sauce comes from the eggs and cheese, not from cream.

Risotto alla milanese

Milan, Lombardy

Creamy rice cooked slowly in broth with butter, onion, Parmigiano and saffron, which gives it a bright golden colour.

Lasagne alla bolognese

Bologna, Emilia-Romagna

Layers of fresh egg pasta (often green, made with spinach), slow-cooked meat ragù, béchamel sauce and Parmigiano Reggiano, baked until bubbling.

Trofie al pesto (Trofie al pesto genovese)

Genoa, Liguria

Short twisted pasta with pesto alla genovese, a raw sauce of basil, pine nuts, garlic, cheese and olive oil, traditionally made in a marble mortar.

Tiramisù

Northeast Italy (Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia both claim it)

Ladyfinger biscuits soaked in espresso, layered with a light cream of mascarpone, eggs and sugar, and dusted with cocoa.

Arancini (Arancini or arancine)

Sicily

Golden fried balls of rice, usually filled with meat ragù and peas or with ham and mozzarella.

Ossobuco

Milan, Lombardy

Cross-cut veal shanks braised slowly with wine and broth, often topped with gremolata (lemon zest, garlic and parsley) and served with risotto alla milanese.

Cannoli

Sicily

Crisp fried pastry tubes filled with sweet sheep's milk ricotta, sometimes with chocolate chips or candied orange.

Focaccia genovese

Genoa, Liguria

A flat, soft bread baked in trays with lots of olive oil and salt, with little dimples pressed in by the baker's fingers. In Genoa people even eat it for breakfast.

Bruschetta al pomodoro

Central Italy

Toasted slices of rustic bread rubbed with garlic and topped with chopped tomato, basil, salt and olive oil.

Gelato

All of Italy

Italian ice cream. It usually has less fat than many ice creams and is churned more slowly, so it is dense and full of flavour. Pistachio, hazelnut and stracciatella are classics.

Panettone

Milan, Lombardy

A tall, domed sweet bread with raisins and candied citrus peel, eaten all over Italy at Christmas.

Parmigiano Reggiano

Parma, Reggio Emilia and Modena, and parts of Bologna and Mantua

A hard cheese made from cow's milk and aged for at least 12 months. Only cheese from its protected area of origin may use the name.

Espresso (Un caffè)

All of Italy

A small, strong coffee. In Italy, asking for 'un caffè' gets you an espresso, often drunk standing at the bar in a minute or two.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Pasta is usually a first course, not a main dish with meat on the same plate.
- Many Italians think cheese does not belong on seafood pasta.
- Wiping your plate with bread is called 'fare la scarpetta'. It is common at home, less so at formal dinners.
- Cappuccino is mostly a breakfast drink. After a meal, Italians usually order an espresso.
- Many restaurants add a small 'coperto' (cover charge) per person for bread and table service.

Spaghetti alla carbonara

Spaghetti tossed with crispy guanciale (cured pork cheek), eggs, Pecorino Romano cheese and plenty of black pepper. The creamy sauce comes from the eggs and cheese, not from cream.

Ingredients

- 400 g spaghetti
- 150 g guanciale (or pancetta), cut into strips
- 4 egg yolks and 1 whole egg (the eggs are only gently cooked: use pasteurised eggs for pregnant women, young children, older people or anyone with a weak immune system)
- 60 g Pecorino Romano, finely grated, plus extra to serve
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Salt for the pasta water

Method

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil and cook the spaghetti until al dente.
2. Meanwhile, fry the guanciale in a dry pan over medium heat until golden and crispy. Turn off the heat.
3. In a bowl, whisk the yolks, the whole egg, the Pecorino and a generous amount of black pepper into a thick paste.
4. Drain the pasta, keeping a cup of the cooking water. Add the pasta to the pan with the guanciale and toss.
5. Away from the heat, pour in the egg mixture and a splash of pasta water. Stir quickly until the sauce is creamy. The pan must not be too hot, or the eggs will scramble.
6. Serve at once with extra Pecorino and pepper.

Trofie al pesto

Short twisted pasta with pesto alla genovese, a raw sauce of basil, pine nuts, garlic, cheese and olive oil, traditionally made in a marble mortar.

Ingredients

- 50 g fresh basil leaves
- 1 small garlic clove
- 30 g pine nuts
- 50 g Parmigiano Reggiano, grated
- 25 g Pecorino (Fiore Sardo or Romano), grated
- 100 ml extra virgin olive oil
- A pinch of coarse salt
- 400 g trofie or other short pasta

Method

1. Crush the garlic with the salt in a mortar (or use a food processor on short pulses).
2. Add the pine nuts and grind to a paste.
3. Add the basil a handful at a time, grinding with a circular motion so the leaves stay bright green.
4. Stir in both cheeses, then slowly add the olive oil until the pesto is smooth.
5. Cook the pasta in salted water, drain it, and toss with the pesto and a spoonful of the cooking water. Do not heat the pesto.

Tiramisù

Ladyfinger biscuits soaked in espresso, layered with a light cream of mascarpone, eggs and sugar, and dusted with cocoa.

Ingredients

- 4 very fresh eggs (the eggs are raw: use pasteurised eggs for pregnant women, young children, older people or anyone with a weak immune system)
- 100 g sugar
- 500 g mascarpone
- About 300 g ladyfingers (savoardi)
- 300 ml strong espresso, cooled
- Unsweetened cocoa powder

Method

1. Separate the eggs. Whisk the yolks with the sugar until pale and thick.
2. Beat in the mascarpone until smooth.
3. Whisk the egg whites until stiff, then gently fold them into the mascarpone cream.
4. Dip each ladyfinger quickly in the coffee and lay them side by side in a dish.
5. Spread half the cream over the biscuits, add another layer of dipped ladyfingers, then the rest of the cream.
6. Dust with cocoa and chill for at least 4 hours before serving.

Bruschetta al pomodoro

Toasted slices of rustic bread rubbed with garlic and topped with chopped tomato, basil, salt and olive oil.

Ingredients

- 4 thick slices of rustic bread
- 4 ripe tomatoes
- 1 garlic clove, peeled
- A few basil leaves
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Salt

Method

1. Dice the tomatoes, season with salt, a little olive oil and torn basil, and leave for 10 minutes.
2. Toast or grill the bread until crisp on both sides.
3. Rub one side of each hot slice with the garlic clove.
4. Spoon the tomatoes on top, drizzle with olive oil and serve straight away.

Useful phrases

Buongiorno

bwohn-JOR-noh · Good morning, hello

Buonasera

bwoh-nah-SEH-rah · Good evening

Arrivederci

ah-ree-veh-DEHR-chee · Goodbye

Per favore

pehr fah-VOH-reh · Please

Mi scusi

mee SKOO-zee · Excuse me

Piacere

pee-ah-CHEH-reh · Nice to meet you

Come sta?

KOH-meh STAH · How are you? (polite)

Molto bene, grazie

MOHL-toh BEH-neh GRAHT-see-eh · Very well, thank you

Parla inglese?

PAHR-lah een-GLEH-zeh · Do you speak English?

Non capisco

nohn kah-PEES-koh · I don't understand

Quanto costa?

KWAHN-toh KOH-stah · How much is it?

Dov'è il bagno?

doh-VEH eel BAHN-yoh · Where is the bathroom?

Un tavolo per due

oon TAH-voh-loh pehr DOO-eh · A table for two

Vorrei un caffè

vohr-RAY oon kahf-FEH · I would like a coffee

Il conto, per favore

eel KOHN-toh pehr fah-VOH-reh · The bill, please

Buon appetito

bwohn ahp-peh-TEE-toh · Enjoy your meal

Salute!

sah-LOO-teh · Cheers!

Aiuto!

ah-YOO-toh · Help!

FUN FACTS

Things you might not know

1. As of 2026, Italy has more UNESCO World Heritage Sites than any other country.
2. Two independent countries lie completely inside Italy: San Marino and Vatican City.
3. Italy's 1 euro coin shows Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of the Vitruvian Man.
4. The University of Bologna, founded in 1088, is considered the oldest university in continuous operation in the world.
5. The piano was invented in Italy by Bartolomeo Cristofori, around the year 1700.
6. The greeting 'ciao' comes from the Venetian 's-ciào vostro', meaning 'I am your servant'.
7. Venice is built on more than 100 small islands, connected by more than 400 bridges.
8. Mount Etna in Sicily is one of the most active volcanoes in the world.
9. Angelo Moriondo of Turin patented an early steam coffee machine in 1884, an ancestor of today's espresso machines.
10. Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452 near the small Tuscan town of Vinci, which gave him his name.
11. Italy has had three official capitals since unification: Turin, then Florence, then Rome.
12. The toppings of pizza margherita, tomato, mozzarella and basil, have the colours of the Italian flag.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Italy, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Pizza margherita or Spaghetti alla carbonara? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- The Treaty of Rome is signed (1957). Do you remember hearing about it? Where

were you then?

- Rome hosts the Olympic Games (1960). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen The Colosseum, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Italy, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Italy?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. What does 'Non capisco' mean?

- A) I'm not ready
- B) I can't find it
- C) I'm not hungry
- D) I don't understand

2. Venice is built on a single large island.

- A) True
- B) False

3. Which two independent countries lie completely inside Italy?

- A) Malta and San Marino
- B) Monaco and Andorra
- C) San Marino and Vatican City
- D) Liechtenstein and Vatican City

4. Traditional spaghetti carbonara is made with cream.

- A) True
- B) False

5. Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper is painted on a wall in Milan.

- A) True
- B) False

6. Many Italian churches ask visitors to cover their shoulders and knees.

- A) True
- B) False

- 7. Which volcano buried the Roman town of Pompeii in AD 79?**
- A) Vesuvius
 - B) Vulcano
 - C) Stromboli
 - D) Etna
- 8. Tiramisù is made with mascarpone and ladyfingers soaked in coffee.**
- A) True
 - B) False
- 9. Italians usually eat dinner at around 5 pm.**
- A) True
 - B) False
- 10. What gives risotto alla milanese its golden colour?**
- A) Egg yolk
 - B) Turmeric
 - C) Carrot
 - D) Saffron
- 11. You want to pay at the end of a meal. What do you say?**
- A) Buon appetito
 - B) Il conto, per favore
 - C) Salute!
 - D) Piacere
- 12. According to legend, which city was founded by Romulus and Remus in 753 BC?**
- A) Venice
 - B) Turin
 - C) Florence
 - D) Rome

Quiz answers

1. D) I don't understand

Non capisco means I don't understand.

2. False

False. Venice is built on more than 100 small islands connected by bridges.

3. C) San Marino and Vatican City

San Marino and Vatican City are both surrounded entirely by Italy.

4. False

False. The creamy sauce comes from eggs and Pecorino, mixed with a little pasta water.

5. True

True. It is on the wall of the dining hall of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan.

6. True

True. Carry a light scarf when you go sightseeing.

7. A) Vesuvius

Vesuvius, near Naples, erupted in AD 79 and buried Pompeii and Herculaneum.

8. True

True. Ladyfingers dipped in espresso are layered with a mascarpone cream and dusted with cocoa.

9. False

False. Dinner is usually around 8 pm or later.

10. D) Saffron

Saffron gives risotto alla milanese its golden colour.

11. B) Il conto, per favore

Il conto, per favore means the bill, please.

12. D) Rome

Legend says the twins Romulus and Remus founded Rome on 21 April 753 BC.

Italy visa page

Name: _____ Date: _____



Next stops

Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____
Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____

Play the interactive version, collect a stamp in your passport:

<https://worldstroll.com/countries/italy>