



Stuttford Van Lines Country Guide for

Italy



Country Guides: Courtesy of Overseas Moving Network International (OMNI)

Last updated: 9th September 2006





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	1	Contact Addresses
	2	Overview
	3	General Information
	4	Money
	5	Duty Free
	6	Public Holidays
	7	Health
	8	Accommodation
	9	Sport & Activities
	10	Climate
	11	History and Government



1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Western Europe.

Time: GMT + 1 (GMT + 2 from the last Sunday in March to last Sunday in October).

Italian Embassy in the UK

14 Three Kings Yard, London W1K 4EH, UK Tel: (020) 7312 2200. Website: www.embitaly.org.uk Political enquiries only.

Italian Consulate General in the UK

136 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SA, UK Tel: (020) 7235 9371 or 7823 6519 (visa section) or (09001) 600 340 (recorded visa information; calls cost 60p per minute). Website: www.embitaly.org.uk Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1200.

Italian State Tourist Board (ENIT) in the UK

1 Princes Street, London W1B 2AY, UK Tel: (020) 7408 1254 or 7399 3550 (brochure request). Website: www.enit.it

Embassy of the Italian Republic in the USA

3000 Whitehaven Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 612 4400 or 4405/7 (visa section). Website: www.italyemb.org

Consulate General of Italy in the USA

690 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021, USA Tel: (212) 439 8600. Website: www.italconsulnyc.org

Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) in the USA

630 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1565, New York, NY 10111, USA Tel: (212) 245 5618 or 4827. Website: www.italiantourism.com

2 OVERVIEW

'Sunshine, wine and smart design'

What would it be like to wake in the heart of the Roman Empire, lunch in a sumptuous 16th-century Renaissance villa, and go to bed in the capital of 21st-century designer chic? Visit Italy, taking in Rome, Florence and Milan, and the experience is yours. But that's not all. Italy **combines art history and contemporary fashion with stunning natural landscapes:** the turquoise waters of the Costa Smeralda offer one of Europe's most beautiful stretches of sand, sea and sunshine, while the snow-covered slopes of the Dolomite mountains are a haven for winter sports enthusiasts. Besides the renowned cities of Venice, Genoa and Naples (each with its own unique identity Italy was only unified in 1870), there are romantic Medieval hill towns, such as San Gimignano in Tuscany, and unspoilt fishing villages, like the unforgettable Positano on the Amalfi coast. Visit vineyards and cellars to taste the very best regional wines: the Veneto, famed for the sparkling white prosecco, and Tuscany, home of the highly acclaimed robust red, Brunello



di Montalcino. And to really get away from it all, take a boat to the islands of Sicily or Sardinia to experience rural hospitality in the blissful Mediterranean. Italy: still so much more to discover.

Jane Foster

3 GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 301,338 sq km (116,346 sq miles).

Population: 57.2 million (UN, 2005).

Population Density: 189 per sq km.

Capital: Rome. Population: 2.6 million (2005)

GEOGRAPHY: Italy is situated in Europe and attached in the north to the European mainland. To the north, the Alps separate Italy from France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia. Northern Italy: The Alpine regions, the Po Plain and the Ligurian-Etruscan Appennines. Piedmont and Val d'Aosta contain some of the highest mountains in Europe and are good areas for winter sports. Many rivers flow down from the mountains towards the Po Basin, passing through the beautiful Italian Lake District (Maggiore, Como, Garda). The Po Basin, which extends as far south as the bare slopes of the Appennines, is covered with gravel terraces and rich alluvial soil and has long been one of Italy's most prosperous regions. To the east, where the River Po flows into the Adriatic Sea, the plains are a little higher than the river itself; artificial (and occasionally natural) embankments prevent flooding. Central Italy: The northern part of the Italian peninsula. Tuscany (Toscana) has a diverse landscape with snow-capped mountains (the Tuscan Appennines), lush countryside, hills and a long sandy coastline with offshore islands. Le Marche, lying between the Appennines and the Adriatic coast, is a region of mountains, rivers and small fertile plains. The even more mountainous regioni (administrative districts) of Abruzzo and Molise are bordered by Marche to the north and Puglia to the south, and are separated from the Tyrrhenian Sea and to the west by Lazio and Campania. Umbria is known as the 'green heart of Italy'; hilly with broad plains, olive groves and pines. Further south lies Rome, Italy's capital and largest city. Within its precincts is the Vatican City. Southern Italy: Campania consists of flat coastal plains and low mountains, stretching from Baia Domizia to the Bay of Naples and along a rocky coast to the Calabria border. Inland, the Appennines are lower, mellowing into the rolling countryside around Sorrento. The islands of Capri, Ischia and Procida in the Tyrrhenian Sea are also part of Campania. The south is wilder than the north, with mile upon mile of olive trees, cool forests and rolling hills. Puglia, the 'heel of the boot', is a landscape of volcanic hills and isolated marshes. Calabria, the 'toe', is heavily forested and thinly populated. The Calabrian hills are home to bears and wolves. The Islands: Sicily (Sicilia), visible across a 3km- (2 mile-) strait from mainland Italy, is fertile but mountainous with volcanoes (including the famous landmark of Mount Etna) and lava fields, and several offshore islands. Sardinia (Sardegna) has a mountainous landscape, fine sandy beaches and rocky offshore islands. For more information on each region, see the Resorts & Excursions section.

Government: Unification in 1861. Republic since 1946. Head of State: President Giorgio Napolitano since 2006. Head of Government: Prime Minister Romano Prodi since 2006. Recent history: In the April 2006 general elections, Romano Prodi, former Prime Minister and leader of the centre-left coalition, won a narrow victory in both the lower house and the Senate. Berlusconi



disputed the result and initially refused to concede, despite court rulings confirming Prodi's majority in both houses.

Language: Italian is the official language. Dialects are spoken in different regions. German and Ladin are spoken in the South Tyrol region (bordering Austria). French is spoken in all the border areas from the Riviera to the area north of Milan (border with France and Switzerland). German is spoken around the Austrian border. English, French and German are also spoken in the biggest cities and in tourism and business circles.

Religion: 90 per cent Roman Catholic with Protestant minorities.

Electricity: 230 volts AC, 50Hz.

Social Conventions: The social structure is heavily influenced by the Roman Catholic church and, generally speaking, family ties are stronger than in most other countries in Western Europe. Normal social courtesies should be observed. Dress is casual in most places, though beachwear should be confined to the beach. Conservative clothes are expected when visiting religious buildings and smaller, traditional communities. Formal wear is usually indicated on invitations. Smoking is prohibited in public buildings, transport and cinemas. Visitors are warned to take precautions against theft, particularly in the cities.

Passport/Visa

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	1	No	No
Australian	Yes	No	No
Canadian	Yes	No	No
USA	Yes	No	No
OtherEU	1	No	No
Japanese	Yes	No	No

Note: (a) Italy is a signatory to the 1995 Schengen Agreement. For further details about passport/visa regulations within the Schengen area, see the introductory section, How to Use this Guide. (b) The regulations stated below also apply to San Marino and the Vatican City.

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for at least three months beyond length of stay required by all except:(a) 1. EU/EEA nationals (EU + Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) and Swiss nationals holding a valid national ID card. Note: EU and EEA nationals are only required to produce evidence of their EU/EEA nationality and identity in order to be admitted to any EU/EEA Member State. This evidence can take the form of a valid national passport or national identity card. Either is acceptable. Possession of a return ticket, any length of validity on their document, sufficient funds for the length of their proposed visit should not be imposed. (b) nationals of Croatia and San Marino holding a valid national ID card.

VISAS: Required by all except the following for stays of up to 90 days: (a) nationals of countries referred to in the chart above; (b) nationals of Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong (SAR), Iceland, Israel, Korea (Rep), Liechtenstein, Macau (SAR), Malaysia, Mexico, Monaco, New



Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Romania, San Marino, Singapore, Switzerland, Uruguay, Vatican City and Venezuela; (c) airport transit passengers continuing their journey to a third country by the same or connecting aircraft within 48 hours, provided holding tickets with reserved seats and valid documents for onward travel (except certain nationals who always require a visa).

Types of visa and cost: Airport Transit, Transit, Tourism, Business, Study. Schengen short-stay: £24.40. Fees should be paid in the exact money as change is not available. Payment is by cash only. Visas are free of charge to the spouses and dependents of EU nationals.

Note: Spouses and children of EU nationals (providing spouse's passport and the original marriage certificate is produced), and nationals of some other countries, receive their visas free of charge (enquire at Embassy for details).

Validity: Schengen short-stay: up to 90 days. Long term: up to one year.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at nearest Embassy); see Passport/Visa Information. Postal applications are not accepted. Because of the high volume of visa applications an appointment system has been introduced. Appointments must be made via the 24-hour call line 09065 540 707 (UK) (call charged at £1 per minute). Admission without an appointment is not permitted. Travellers visiting just one Schengen country should apply to the Consulate of that country at least six weeks in advance; travellers visiting more than one Schengen country should apply to the Consulate of the country chosen as the main destination or the country they will enter first (if they have no main destination).

Application requirements: Tourism: (a) Valid passport, with one blank page to affix the visa. (b) Completed application form. (c) One passport-size photograph. (d) Health insurance. (e) Proof of sufficient funds to cover duration of stay. (f) Fee. (g) Proof of means of onward/return travel. (h) Proof of accommodation. (i) Proof of occupation, eg letter from employer, solicitor or Chamber of Commerce. Business: (a)-(g) and, (h) Proof of business status. (i) Evidence of business contact(s) in Italy. Student: (a)-(f) and, (g) Letter from Italian university addressed to the Italian Consulate General confirming acceptance of the application, explaining details of the course (duration, programme etc). Airport Transit/Transit: (a)-(g) and, (h) Proof of the need for transit.

Note: (a) Minors under 18 years of age not travelling with their parents require a declaration from both parents or their legal guardian authorising their travel. (b) Visa officers may also ask for additional documents.

Working days required: Usually two. Certain nationals may take up to 21 days.

Temporary residence: Enquire at Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see Passport/Visa Information

Passport/Visa Information: Italian Embassy in the UK14 Three Kings Yard, London W1K 4EH, UK Tel: (020) 7312 2200. Website: www.embitaly.org.uk Political enquiries only. Italian Consulate General in the UK136 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SA, UK Tel: (020) 7235 9371 or 7823 6519 (visa section) or (09001) 600 340 (recorded visa information; calls cost 60p per minute). Website: www.embitaly.org.uk Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1200. Embassy of the Italian Republic in the USA3000 Whitehaven Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 612 4400 or 4405/7 (visa section). Website: www.italyemb.org Consulate General of Italy



in the USA 690 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021, USA Tel: (212) 439 8600. Website: www.italconsulnyc.org

4 MONEY

Single European currency (Euro): The Euro is now the official currency of 12 EU member states (including Italy). The first Euro coins and notes were introduced in January 2002; the Italian Lira was still in circulation until 28 February 2002, when it was completely replaced by the Euro. Euro (€) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Currency exchange: Traveller's cheques, cheques and foreign money can be changed at banks, railway stations and airports, and very often at major hotels (generally at a less convenient rate). Many UK banks offer differing exchange rates depending on the denominations of currency being bought or sold. Check with banks for details and current rates.

Credit & debit cards: Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted, as well as Eurocheque cards. Check with your credit or debit card company for merchant acceptability and other facilities that may be available.

Traveller's cheques: Traveller's cheques are accepted almost everywhere. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Euros, Pounds Sterling or US Dollars.

Currency restrictions: Check with the Embassy before departure. Import and export of both local and foreign currency is limited to €12,500. If it is intended to import or export amounts greater than this, the amount should be declared and validated in Italy on form V2.

Exchange rate indicators

Date At time of publishing £1.00 = €1.46 \$1.00 = €0.82

Banking hours: These vary from city to city but, in general, Mon-Fri 0830-1330 and 1500-1600.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Italy from outside the EU by persons over 17 years of **age without incurring customs duty:** 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 100 cigarillos or 250g of tobacco; 2l of wine and 1l of spirits (over 22 per cent) or 2l of fortified or sparkling wine; 50g of perfume and 250ml of eau de toilette; 500g of coffee or 200g of coffee extract (if over 15 years of age); 100g of tea or 40g of tea extract; gifts not exceeding €89.96 (if entering from an EU country), €175 (if entering from a non-EU country).

Abolition of duty free goods within the EU: On June 30 1999, the sale of duty free alcohol and tobacco at airports and at sea was abolished in all of the original 15 EU member states. Of the 10 new member states that joined the EU on May 1 2004, these rules already apply to Cyprus and Malta. There are transitional rules in place for visitors returning to one of the original 15 EU countries from one of the other new EU countries. But for the original 15, plus Cyprus and Malta, there are now no limits imposed on importing tobacco and alcohol products from one EU country



to another (with the exceptions of Denmark, Finland and Sweden, where limits are imposed). Travellers should note that they may be required to prove at customs that the goods purchased are for personal use only.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period. Jan 1 2006 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Apr 17 Easter Monday. Apr 25 Liberation Day. May 1 Labour Day. Jun 2 Anniversary of the Republic. Aug 15 Assumption. Nov 1 All Saints' Day. Nov 7 World War 1 Victory Anniversary Day. Dec 8 Immaculate Conception. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Dec 26 St Stephen's Day. Jan 1 2007 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Apr 9 Easter Monday. Apr 25 Liberation Day. May 1 Labour Day. Jun 2 Anniversary of the Republic.

Note: In addition, local feast days are held in honour of town patron saints, generally without closure of shops and offices. These include: Turin/Genoa/Florence: Jun 24 (St John the Baptist). Milan: Dec 7 (St Ambrose). Siena: Jul 2 and Aug 16, Palio horserace. Venice: Apr 25 (St Mark). Bologna: Oct 4 (St Petronius). Naples: Sep 19 (St Gennaro). Bari: Dec 6 (St Nicholas). Palermo: Jul 15 (St Rosalia). Rome: Jun 29 (St Peter). Trieste: Nov 3.

7 HEALTH

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
Yellow Fever	No	No
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	No	N/A
Malaria	No	N/A

Food & drink: Tap water is generally safe to drink. Bottled water is available. The inscription 'Acqua Non Potabile' means water is not drinkable. Milk is pasteurised and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are considered safe to eat.

Other risks: Leishmaniasis (cutaneous and visceral), sandfly fever, typhus and West Nile virus, though rare, may occur along the Mediterranean coast. Echinococcosis and brucellosis also occur, although rarely. There have been some outbreaks of Legionnaires disease in tourist resorts. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For further information, see the Health appendix.

Health care: European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland: If you or any of your dependants are suddenly taken ill or have an accident during a visit to an EEA country or Switzerland, free or reduced-cost necessary treatment is available in most cases on production of a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Each country has different rules about state medical provision. In some, treatment is free. In many countries you will have to pay part or all of the cost, and then claim a full or partial refund. The EHIC gives access to state-provided medical treatment only and the scheme gives no entitlement to medical repatriation costs, nor does it cover ongoing illnesses of a non-urgent nature, so comprehensive travel insurance is advised. Note that the EHIC replaces the Form E111, which will no longer be valid after 31 December 2005. Some restrictions



apply, depending on your nationality. Make sure the doctor you go to is a national health service (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale or SSN) doctor. Their services are normally free. Surgeries are open from Monday to Friday but times vary. At weekends and on weekdays between 8pm and 8am, emergency services are available through the Guardia Medica. If you pay any charges, keep the original receipts and apply at the local health authority (Azienda Unità Sanitaria Locale or ASL) for a refund. Most dentists are private. To get state treatment you will need to go to a national health service hospital or a dentist who is working in an ASL-managed centre. If an SSN doctor issues you with a prescription, take it and your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) to the pharmacy. Some medicines are free; for others you will be charged a standard fee, which is non-refundable. The cost of medicines bought over the counter is not refundable. The ASL can supply a list of SSN hospitals or private hospitals that are affiliated to the state scheme. Depending on the region you are in, you may or may not have to pay for medicines prescribed in a hospital or for your ambulance travel. If you can't contact the ASL beforehand, show the hospital authorities your EHIC and ask them to contact the local office at once about your right to treatment under the state healthcare scheme. You can obtain the ASL number from a telephone directory or, in an emergency, by dialling 118.

Travel - International

AIR: The national airline is Alitalia (AZ) (website: www.alitalia.it). A great number of major international airlines operate direct flights to various destinations in Italy from Australia, Canada, Europe and the USA. Owing to the number of flights available, ticket prices vary greatly and there is a wide range of discount fares and special tickets available. Further information can be obtained from the airline or a travel agent.

Approximate flight times: From Rome to London is two hours 50 minutes, to Los Angeles is 15 hours 55 minutes, to New York is nine hours 45 minutes, to Singapore is 13 hours 55 minutes and to Sydney is 23 hours 35 minutes.

Main airports: Rome (FCO) (Fiumicino) (website: www.adr.it), 26km (16 miles) southwest of the city (travel time 30 to 55 minutes). To/from the airport: There is a direct rail link to Termini Station in central Rome and a bus service every 15 minutes. Taxis are also available to the city. Facilities: Outgoing duty free shop, car hire, bank and bureau de change and bar/restaurant. Rome (CIA) (Ciampino) (website: www.adr.it), 32km (15 miles) from the city (travel time 60 minutes). To/from the airport: Buses are available to the underground station Anagnina. Taxis are also available. Facilities: A bank/bureau de change, duty free shop and souvenir shop and cafe. Florence (FLR) (Amerigo Vespucci) (website: www.aeroporto.firenze.it), 4km (2.4 miles) north of the city (travel time 20 minutes). To/from the airport: Buses and taxis are available to the city. Facilities: Banks, bureaux de change, left luggage, bars and restaurants and duty free facilities. Milan (MXP) (Malpensa) (website: www.sea-aeroportoimilano.it) is 45km (29 miles) northwest of the city (travel time 30 minutes). To/from the airport: The Malpensa Express connects terminal one with the centre of Milan, the journey takes 40 minutes. A free shuttle bus connects the airport terminals. Taxis are available into Milan, the journey will cost approximately €70. Facilities: Duty free. Venice (VCE) (Marco Polo) (website: www.veniceairport.it) is 10km (6 miles) northwest of the city (travel time 20 minutes). To/from the airport: Buses and taxi services run to Piazzale Roma and the railway station. Water taxis operate to San Marco. Facilities: Bank, duty free shops, bars and restaurants.

Note: People travelling to Florence can fly to Pisa and then take the train service directly from Pisa Airport to Florence (travel time 60 minutes). The railway station in Pisa is practically inside the airport. Rail services connect with arrivals and departures of all international flights and major domestic services.



Departure tax: None.

SEA: Main ports: Ancona (website: www.autoritaportuale.ancona.it/), Brindisi (website: <http://www.porto.br.it/>), Naples (website: www.porto.napoli.it/) and Venice (website: www.port.venice.it/). International sailings to Italy run from Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, the Far East, France, Greece, Libya, Malta, Portugal, South America, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and West Africa.

RAIL: Italian State Railways run regular services covering national and international routes (website: www.trenitalia.com/en). The Artesia Service, in conjunction with SNCF and Trenitalia, is the fastest overnight and daytime railway link between France and Italy. It operates from Paris and Dijon to most Italian destinations. The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express operates services from London and Paris to Venice and Rome, as well as Istanbul, Budapest and Vienna. Travelling by train from the UK, the quickest way is by Eurostar (see France section).

Rail passes: The Inter-Rail pass offers unlimited second-class train travel in up to 29 European countries (includes Morocco and Turkey) split into eight zones (A-H). Three different tickets are available: a ticket covering one zone (two to six countries, 16 days' validity), a ticket covering two zones (six to ten countries, 22 days' validity) and an All Zone Pass (29 countries, one month's validity). Ferry services between Italy and Greece are included. Passengers must be resident in Europe for at least six months before the pass is used. Travel is not allowed in the passenger's country of residence. Travellers under 26 years receive a reduction of about 30 per cent. Children's tickets are reduced by about 50 percent. Supplements are required for some high-speed services, seat reservations and couchettes. Discounts are offered on Eurostar and some ferry routes. Available from Inter Rail (website: www.interrailnet.com). The Eurailpass offers unlimited first-class train travel in 17 European countries. Tickets are valid for 15 days, 21 days, one month, two months or three months. The Eurailpass Saver ticket offers discounts for two or more people travelling together. The Eurailpass Youth ticket is available to those aged under 26 and offers unlimited second-class train travel. The Eurailpass Flexi allows either 10 or 15 travel days within a two-month period. The Eurail Selectpass is valid in three, four or five bordering countries and allows five, six, eight or 10 travel days (or 15 for five countries) in a two-month period. The Eurail Regional Pass allows four to 10 travel days in a two-month period in one of nine regions (usually two or more countries). Children receive a 50 per cent reduction. The passes cannot be sold to residents of Europe, Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia or the Russian Federation. Available from the Eurail Group (website: www.eurail.com). The Greece 'n Italy Pass offers four to 10 days rail travel over a two-month period on all Trenitalia trains within Italy, on Greek railway trains (OSE) and a return sea journey with Superfast Ferries or Blue Star Ferries operating between Italy and Greece.

ROAD: Routes to Italy run through Austria, France, Slovenia and Switzerland and most routes use the tunnels under the Alps and Apennines. From the UK, the quickest way to travel by car is via Eurotunnel to France (see France section). Italian State Railways run regular daily services called auto el seguito (trains carrying cars), especially during the summer holiday season covering national and international routes. These services operate from special railway stations and are generally bookable at the departure station. Owners must travel on the same train. The documents required are the log-book, valid driving licence with Italian translation, Green Card insurance and national identity plate fixed to the rear of the vehicle. For more information on routes, contact the Italian State Tourist Board (see Top Things To Do). For more information on required documentation and traffic regulations in Italy, see Travel Internal section. Coach: There are numerous and excellent road links with all neighbouring countries. Eurolines (52 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0AU; tel: (08705) 143 219; website:www.eurolines.com) and National



Express (Ensign Court, 4 Vicarage Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3ES; tel: 08705 808 080; website: www.nationalexpress.com) run regular coach services from the UK to Italy. Travellers can either choose Mini-Pass breaks or book a 15-, 30- or 60-day pass. The six Mini-Passes give travellers the freedom to visit three cities, with prices starting from £55. Travellers can stay as long as they like in each city.

Travel - Internal

AIR: Alitalia (AZ) and other airlines run services to all the major cities. There are over 30 airports. For details, contact the airlines direct or ENIT, the Italian State Tourist Office (see Top Things To Do).

SEA: Main ports: Cagliari (website: www.porto.cagliari.it), Civitavecchia (website: www.port-of-rome.org), Genoa (website: www.porto.genova.it), Livorno (website: www.portauthority.li.it) and Naples (website: www.porto.napoli.it). A number of car and passenger ferries operate throughout the year linking Italian ports. Ferries: Regular boat and hydrofoil services run to the islands of Capri, Elba, Giglio, Sardinia, Sicily and the Aeolian Islands. There are also some links along the coast.

Note: Travellers on public transport should be aware that tickets for public transport need to be endorsed in a ticket machine before the journey. Machines are located in entrances to platforms in railway and metro stations and on-board buses and trams. Failure to do so could lead to an on-the-spot fine of up to €364;60.

RAIL: The Italian State Railways (FS) (website: www.fs-on-line.com) run a nationwide network at very reasonable fares, calculated on the distance travelled, and there are a number of excellent reductions. The Trenitalia Pass is the only pass available to people resident outside of Italy. This allows from three to 10 days of unlimited travel within a two-month period. Any train in Italy can be used, although a small supplement is payable on Eurostar Italia services. The pass also entitles the holder to discounts on some Italy-Greece ferry routes, hotels and other special offers. Basic, Youth and Saver passes are available. For further information, contact Trenitalia (website: www.trenitalia.com) or Railchoice (tel: (020) 8659 7300; website: www.railchoice.co.uk); or Freedom Rail (tel: (0870) 757 9898; website: www.freedomrail.com).

ROAD: There are more than 300,000km (185,500 miles) of roads in Italy, including over 6000km (3700 miles) of motorway (autostrada) which link all parts of the country. Tolls are charged at varying distances and scales, except for the SalernoReggio Calabria, PalermoCatania and PalermoMazara Del Vallo stretches, which are toll-free. Secondary roads are also excellent and require no tolls. Road signs are international. Many petrol stations are closed 1200-1500. Visitors are advised to check locally about exact opening times. More information on the Italian motorway network is available from the Società Autostrade (website: www.autostrade.it).

Traffic regulations: Traffic drives on the right. Speed limits are 50kph (30mph) in urban areas, 90/110kph (55/65mph) on country roads, 130kph (80mph) on motorways. Undipped headlights are prohibited in towns and cities, but are compulsory when passing through tunnels. All vehicles must carry a red warning triangle, available at border posts. Note: Fines for speeding and other driving offences are on-the-spot and particularly heavy. Breakdown service: In case of breakdown on any Italian road, dial 116 at the nearest telephone box. Tell the operator where you are, your plate number and type of car and the nearest Automobile Club of Italy (ACI) (website: www.aci.it) office will be informed for immediate assistance.



Customs regulations: Driving licences, log books and other motoring documents are only accepted if they are accompanied by a translation into Italian or an international driving licence. Visitors must carry their log-book, which must either be in their name as owner, or have the owner's written permission to drive the vehicle. Customs documents for the temporary importation of motor vehicles (also aircraft and pleasure-boats) have been abolished. Bus: Good coach services run between towns and cities and there are also extensive local buses, including good services on Sicily and Sardinia. In more remote areas, buses will usually connect with rail services. Taxi: Services are available in and between all cities. Car hire: Self-drive hire is available in most cities and resorts. Many international and Italian firms operate this service with different rates and conditions. With the larger firms, it is possible to book from other countries through the car hire companies, their agents or through the air companies. Generally, small local firms offer cheaper rates, but cars can only be booked locally. Many car hire agencies have booths at the airport or information in hotels. Many special-rate fly/drive deals are available for Italy.

Documentation: A UK driving licence and EU pink format licences are valid in Italy but green-coloured licences must be accompanied by an International Driving Permit. Visitors must carry their log-book, which must either be in their name as owner, or have the owner's written permission to drive the vehicle. A driving licence or a motorcycle driving licence is required for motorcycles over 49cc. Passengers are required by law to wear seat belts. Customs documents for the temporary importation of motor vehicles (also aircraft and pleasure-boats) have been abolished.

URBAN: All the big towns and cities (Genoa, Milan, Naples, Rome, Turin and Venice) have good public transport networks. Underground: In Rome there are two underground lines Metropolitana A from Via Ottaviano via Termini station to Via Anagnina and also connecting with the new Ottaviano-San Pietro link; and Metropolitana B, which runs between Termini Station, via Exhibition City (EUR) (Via Laurentina) and then onwards to Rebibbia. The underground is open from 0530 to 2330 every day. Both day and monthly passes are available. Line B was expanded considerably at the beginning of the 1990s, when 10 new stations were added to its network. Line A has been expanded much more recently to include five new stations via the Ottaviano-San Pietro connection. Milan also has a three-line underground system, with tickets useable on both underground and bus. Tram: There is a 28km- (17-mile) network consisting of eight routes in Rome; Milan, Messina and Turin also have tram services. Bus: Services operate in all main cities and towns. In Rome, the network is extensive and complements the underground and tram systems, the bus 590 follows the same route as the Metropolitana A and has disabled access. The fare structure is integrated between the various modes. Flat-fare tickets and weekly passes can be bought in advance from roadside or station machines or from tobacconists (tabacchi). A 'hop-on, hop-off' bus service is available for €13 per day. Information is available from the ATAC booth in front of the Termini station. Trolleybuses also run in a number of other towns. In larger cities, fares are generally pre-purchased from machines or tobacconists (tabacchi). Bus fares generally at a standard rate per run can be bought in packets of five or multiples and are fed into a stamping machine on boarding the bus. Taxi: Available in all towns and cities. Government-regulated taxis are either white or yellow. Visitors should avoid taxis that are not metered. In Rome, they are relatively expensive, with extra charges for night service, luggage and taxis called by telephone. All charges are listed on a rate card displayed in the cab with an English translation. Taxis can only be hailed at strategically located stands or booked by telephone. A 10 per cent tip is expected by taxi drivers and this is sometimes added to the fare for foreigners.

City tours: Rome: Run by many travel agencies, these tours allow first-time visitors to get a general impression of the main sights and enable them to plan further sightseeing. Information is available from the local tourist office. Horse-drawn carriages are available in Rome. Boating trips



on the River Tiber are available. A day ticket costs €2.30, a cruise tour costs €10 and an evening dinner cruises costs €43. Panoramic flights and hot air balloon flights are available. Charges are high. Venice: Privately hired boats and gondolas are available, as well as a public ferry service.

TRAVEL TIMES: The following chart gives approximate travel times (in hours and minutes) from Rome to other major cities/towns in Italy. Air Road Rail Florence 0.45 2.30 2.30 Milan 0.65 6.00 6.00 Naples 0.45 2.00 2.30 Cagliari 0.55—

8 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: There are more than 30,000 hotels throughout the country. Every hotel has its fixed charges agreed with the provincial tourist board. Charges vary according to class, season, services available and locality. The Italian State Tourist Board publishes the official list of all Italian hotels and pensions (Annuario Alberghi) every year, which can be consulted through a travel agent or ENIT, the Italian State Tourist Board (see Top Things To Do). In all hotels and pensions, service charges are included in the rates. VAT (IVA in Italy) operates in all hotels at 10 per cent (19 per cent in deluxe hotels) on room charges only. Visitors are now required by law to obtain an official receipt when staying at hotels. Rome is well provided with hotels, but it is advisable to book in advance. Rates are high with added extras. To obtain complete prices, ask for quotations of inclusive rates. Many luxury hotels are available. Cheap hotels, which usually provide basic board (room plus shower), offer an economical form of accommodation throughout Italy, and there is a wide choice in the cities. Again, especially in the main cities, it is wise to book in advance (bookings should always be made through travel agents or hotel representatives). Grading: Hotels are graded on a scale of 1 to 5 stars.

MOTELS: Located on motorways and main roads.

SELF-CATERING: Villas, flats and chalets are available for rent at most Italian resorts. Information is available through daily newspapers and agencies in the UK and from the Italian State Tourist Office or the Tourist Office (Azienda Autonoma di Soggiorno) of the locality concerned. The latter are also able to advise about boarding with Italian families.

TOURIST VILLAGES: These consist of bungalows and apartments, usually built in or near popular resorts. The bungalows vary in size but usually accommodate four people and have restaurant facilities.

CAMPING/CARAVANNING: Camping is very popular in Italy. The local tourist office in the nearest town will give information and particulars of the most suitable sites. On the larger campsites, it is possible to rent tents/caravans. There are over 2300 campsites and full details of the sites can be obtained in the publication *Campeggi e Villaggi Turistici in Italia*, published by the Touring Club Italiano (TCI) and Federcampeggio. A campsite review, *Guida Camping d'Italia*, is published bi-monthly. The tariffs at Italian campsites vary according to the area and the type of campsite. There are discounts for members of the AIT, FICC and FIA. Usually there is no charge for children under three years of age. The Touring Club Italiano offers campsites already equipped with fixed tents, restaurants, etc.

YOUTH HOSTELS: There are over 100 youth hostels run by the Italian Youth Hostels Association (see Accommodation Information). During the summer season in the major cities, reservations are essential and must be applied for directly from the hostel at least 15 days in advance, specifying dates and numbers. There are also student hostels in several towns.



Accommodation Information: Federalberghi (National Hotel Association) Via Toscana 1, 00187 Rome, Italy Tel: (06) 4274 1151. Website: www.italyhotels.it Italian Confederation of Campers via Vittorio Emanuele 11, 50041 Calenzano (Firenze), Italy Tel: (055) 882 391. Website: www.federcampeggio.it Touring Club Italiano Corso Italia 10, 20122 Milano, Italy Tel: (02) 85261. Website: www.touringclub.it Centro Internazionale Prenotazioni Campeggio Casella Postale 23, 50041 Calenzano (Firenze), Italy To book places in advance on campsites belonging to the 'International Campsite Booking Centre'. Ask for a list of the campsites and a booking form. Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù (Italian Youth Hostels Association) Via Cavour 44, 00184 Rome, Italy Tel: (06) 487 1152. Website: www.ostellionline.org

Introduction

For ease and speed of reference, the country has been divided into the following areas: Rome; Northern Italy (including the regions of Valle d'Aosta, Piedmont, Lombardy, Liguria, Trentino & Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Emilia-Romagna and the cities of Turin, Milan, Genoa, Venice, Trieste and Bologna); Central Italy (including the regions of Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, Abruzzo, Molise and Lazio and the cities of Florence, Siena, Pisa, Perugia and Ancona); Southern Italy (including the regions of Campania, Puglia, Basilicata and Calabria and the city of Naples and the Amalfi Coast); and The Islands (Sicily and Sardinia). Main holiday resorts are included in each section, as well as important religious sites, business centres and a brief mention of the region's art history.

Rome

Capital of Italy and the country's largest city, Rome, littered with relics of over 2000 years of history, exerts an enduring fascination over its countless visitors. The monuments of ancient times and the splendours of the Baroque are the backdrop to the hectic buzz of swarming scooters, bellowing motorists and animated street cafes. The streets contain reminders of all the eras in Rome's rich history the Colosseum and the Forum are the most famous from the classical period and ancient basilicas bear witness to the early Christian era. The influence of the 17th century can be seen through the work of architects such as Bernini, Borromini and Maderno. Magnificent squares and flamboyant façades mask a wealth of painting and sculpture by some of the greatest High Renaissance and Baroque artists Caracci, Caravaggio, Michelangelo and Raphael, to name but a few. Via del Corso, Rome's main thoroughfare, cuts through the length of the city centre from Piazza Venezia in the south, with the vast marble Vittorio Emanuele Monument (erected to commemorate the unification of Italy and honour her first king), to emerge in Piazza del Popolo in the north, beyond which lies the cool green refuge of the Villa Borghese. East of Via del Corso lie the elegant shopping streets including Via Borgognona and Via Condotti which lead up to Piazza di Spagna (the famous Spanish Steps). At the nearby Trevi Fountain, visitors guarantee their return to Rome by throwing a coin into the waters. West of Via del Corso, a maze of narrow streets winds its way down to the River Tiber. It is here, in the historic centre of Rome, that the most complete ancient Roman **structure is found:** the Pantheon, on Piazza della Rotonda, built by Emperor Hadrian and completed in AD 125. Monumental in scale, the diameter of the dome and its height are precisely equal, while the interior is illuminated by sunlight entering through a 9m (30ft) hole in the dome's roof. Just beyond the Pantheon lies Piazza Navona, a long thin square, on a classical site, rebuilt in the 17th century in High Baroque style. Across the River Tiber is the Vatican City (see below). Close by stands the circular hulk of Castel Sant'Angelo, burial place of Emperor Hadrian and the papal city's main fortified defence in later times. Moving south, the district of Trastevere is the city's alternative focus and is home to numerous bars, restaurants and nightclubs. There is a useful



tourist information line providing general information on the city of Rome from multilingual personnel (tel: (06) 3600 4399).

VATICAN CITY: On the west bank of the Tiber, the Vatican City is an independent sovereign state, best known for the magnificent St Peter's Basilica. The Basilica is approached through the 17th-century St Peter's Square, a superb creation by Bernini, enclosed by two semi-circular colonnades, with an Egyptian obelisk in the centre. To the right of St Peter's stands the Vatican Palace, the Pope's residence. Among the principal features of the Palace are the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Museum. The Vatican Gardens can be visited only by those on guided tours. For further information, see the separate Vatican City country section.

Valle d'Aosta

A ruggedly scenic region, sitting at the foot of Europe's highest mountains Cervino (Matterhorn), Gran Paradiso, Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa bordering France and Switzerland, Valle d'Aosta is politically autonomous and to some extent culturally distinct from the rest of Italy; French is spoken as a first language by most of the inhabitants. The picturesque ruins of countless castles (some of which are open to the public, eg Fenis and Issogne) testify to the region's immense strategic significance before the era of air travel, it being the gateway to two of the most important routes through the Alps, the Little and Great St Bernard Passes. However, the Mont Blanc Tunnel has largely superseded the St Bernard Passes as a major overland freight route. The Gran Paradiso National Park, home to wildlife including the chamois and ibex, is a popular destination for hillwalkers and climbers. There are several fine ski resorts in the area, most notably Breuil-Cervinia and Courmayeur. One of Italy's few casinos is found at St Vincent.

AOSTA: The principal city of Valle d'Aosta has many well-preserved Roman and Medieval buildings. The massive Roman city walls remain mostly intact and, within them, the old town retains the grid-iron street plan characteristic of all such military townships. An impressive gateway, the Porta Pretoria, formed the main entrance into the old Roman town. During the Middle Ages a noble family lived in the gatehouse tower, which now houses temporary exhibitions. Further ancient Roman sites include the Teatro Romano, where theatrical performances are still staged throughout summer, and the Arco di Augusto, erected in 25 BC to honour Emperor Augustus, after whom the city is named (Aosta being a corruption of Augustus).

Piedmont

The densely populated Upper Po Basin, a vast plain dotted with gargantuan factories and crisscrossed by motorways, is the site of Italy's most important heavy industries. By contrast, the mountains to the west, on the border with France, are sparsely populated and have an economy based on agriculture and winter tourism (the main ski resorts being Bardonecchia, Sansicario and Sestriere). The wine region of Le Langhe offers a landscape of terraced vineyards, old hilltop towns and, owing to the small number of visitors, is a quiet and peaceful region to stay. The region produces several noted wines, the best known being the sweet, sparkling white, Asti Spumante, from Asti, and the bold red, Barolo, from Alba.

TURIN: Turin (Torino) is the largest city in the region and the fourth-largest in the country. Through the early years of the 20th century, it was the automobile capital of the world. It was here that the Futurists became so excited with the potential of mechanised transport that they declared Time dead henceforth, they naively declared, everything would be measured in terms of speed alone. The city still remains the focus of Italy's automobile industry. Fiat offer guided tours of their headquarters, where a full-scale test track may be found on the roof, while the Museo dell'Automobile (Automobile Museum), traces the history of the car on an international



level. Turin does, of course, add up to far more than an infatuation with motor cars. The inhabitants boast that, with its broad, tree-lined avenues flanked by tall, handsome townhouses, it is La Parigi d'Italia (the Italian Paris). Uptown Turin is centred on the main shopping street, Via Roma, which links the city's favourite square, the Piazza San Carlo, with its most dramatic building, the Baroque Palazzo Madama, which houses the Museum of Ancient Art, one of several nationally important museums in the city, and the Egyptian Museum, the second-largest in the world after Cairo. The famous Turin Shroud may be viewed in the 15th-century white marble Cathedral.

Lombardy

A prosperous region with fertile soil, a temperate climate and, for the tourist, the spectacular lakes of Como, Garda, Maggiore (shared with Piedmont) and Lugano. As in Piedmont, the Po Valley is the site of much heavy industry. High mountains in the north, marking Italy's frontier with Switzerland, provide excellent skiing and climbing. Lombardy's most famous culinary inventions are minestrone soup and osso buco literally, ox knuckles.

MILAN: Italy's most sophisticated city, Milan (Milano) is a financial and commercial centre of world importance and a rival to Paris in the spheres of modern art and fashion. Its international character is marked by a concentration of skyscrapers found nowhere else in Italy, contrasting and competing with the landmarks of historic Milan, but built in the same boastful spirit of civic pride that, 500 years ago, gave the city its splendid Gothic Duomo (Cathedral). Even today, this is one of the world's largest churches, yet despite its size, it creates an impression of delicate and ethereal beauty due to its pale colour and the fine intricate carving that covers its exterior. The whole fabric of the city its many palaces, piazzas and churches speaks of centuries of continuous prosperity. The Castello Sforzesco, in the west of the city, is a massive fortified castle, which now houses a number of museums. The Pinacoteca di Brera displays some of the city's most valuable artistic treasures, while the Museo Poldi-Pezzoli houses a private collection of paintings, ancient jewellery and Persian carpets. Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece, The Last Supper, may be viewed at the convent of Santa Maria della Grazie. The Teatro della Scala (Scala Theatre) remains the undisputed world capital of opera and is well worth viewing for its magnificent opulence.

PAVIA: Just south of Milan, the town of Pavia is home to several interesting churches and the 14th-century Castello, housing an art gallery, archaeology museum and sculpture museum. The Certosa di Pavia, 10km (6 miles) outside of town, is a monastery famous for its lavish design. Originating as the family mausoleum of the Visconti family, it later became the dwelling of a Carthusian order of monks sworn to deep contemplation and silence. However, a chosen few are allowed to give visitors a guided tour and tell the story behind their palatial surroundings.

CREMONA: The birthplace of the Stradivarius violin is a charming haven of historic architecture. A walk around the Medieval Piazza del Comune offers various architectural treats: the Torrazzo, one of Italy's tallest Medieval towers; the Cathedral, with its magnificent astronomical clock; and the Loggia dei Militia, the former headquarters of the town's Medieval army. There are also two interesting museums: the Museo Stradivariano, housing a wealth of Stradivarius musical instruments, and the Museo Civico, displaying mosaics and relics from the Romanesque period.

MANTUA: Mantua (Mantova) is the birthplace of a number of renowned Italians, ranging from Virgil (a statue of whom overlooks the square facing the Broletto, the Medieval town hall) to Tazio Nuvolari, one of Italy's most famous racing drivers (a small museum pays tribute to his accomplishments). Its churches, Sant'Andrea (designed by Alberti and the burial place of Mantua's famous court painter, Mantegna) and the Baroque Cathedral in the Piazza Sordello are



both important works of architecture. However, the most famous sites of Mantua are its two palaces: the Palazzo Ducale and the Palazzo del Te. The Palazzo Ducale, once the largest in Europe, was the home of the Gonzaga family, and has a number of impressive paintings by artists such as Mantegna and Rubens. The Palazzo del Te was built as a Renaissance pleasure palace for Frederico Gonzaga (known as a playboy) and his mistress, Isabella. The decorations by Giulio Romano are outstanding and well worth viewing.

BERGAMO: Nestled at the foot of the Bergamese Alps, Bergamo is made up of two cities the old and once Venetian-ruled Upper Bergamo (Bergamo Alta) and the modern Lower Bergamo (Bergamo Bassa). The old city is well appreciated for its ancient Venetian fortifications, palaces, towers and churches, including the 12th-century Palazzo della Ragione, the Torre del Comune, the Cathedral, the Colleoni Chapel and the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore. The modern city's main attraction is the Accademia Carrara, one of Italy's largest art collections, with paintings by Bellini, Botticelli, Canaletto, Carpaccio, Lotto and Mantegna, amongst others. The two cities are connected by a funicular railway.

THE LAKES: The great northern lakes lie in a series of long, deep valleys running down onto the plains from the Alps. Lake Como is perhaps the most attractive, Lake Maggiore the most elegant (and populous) and Lake Garda the wildest and most spectacular. On the south shore of Lake Garda lies the peninsula of Sirmione, renowned for its mild, Mediterranean climate, its beautiful countryside and the Caves of Catullo, an archaeological site of a former Roman villa situated on the tip of the peninsula. The Sirmione Spa, the largest privately owned thermal treatment centre in Italy, whose sulphurous waters originate from the depths of Lake Garda, has long been one of Sirmione's main attractions. There is plenty of accommodation available as well as frequent boat services to other lakeside towns and villages.

Liguria

This is a region of 320km (200 miles) of rocky, wooded coastline running from France to Tuscany, where the Italian 'boot' begins. This is the Riviera, Italy's answer to the Côte d'Azur, and there are ample facilities for tourists even in the smallest of ports. The coastal hills are less developed.

GENOA: Genoa (Genova), capital of Liguria, has long been an important commercial and military port. Ferries depart daily from the port for Sardinia. The Medieval district of the city holds many treasures, such as the Church of Sant'Agostino (next to the Museo dell'Architettura e Scultura Ligure), the beautiful Church of San Donato, the 12th-century Church of Santa Maria di Castello, the Gothic Cathedral of San Lorenzo and the Porta Soprana (the old stone entrance gate to the city). Outside the Medieval district, Via Garibaldi, where many of the city's richest inhabitants built their palaces, is a beautiful walk, with Palazzo Bianco (now an art gallery with paintings by Rubens and Van Dyck), Palazzo Podesta and the magnificently decorated Palazzo Rosso (adjacent to Palazzo Bianco and housing paintings by Caravaggio, Dürer and Titian). The Acquario (Aquarium) presents underwater ocean life, with 1000 species housed in 50 vast tanks, making it the largest centre of its kind in Europe.

THE RIVIERA: This narrow strip of coastline is divided into two sections: the Riviera di Ponente (to the west), from Ventimiglia to Genoa, and the Riviera di Levante (to the east), from Genoa to La Spezia. The former includes wide sandy beaches and the rather commercial seaside resorts of San Remo and Bordighera, while the latter boasts small bays backed by rocky cliffs and more exclusive retreats such as Portofino and Cinque Terre. Portofino is the best known, with its small picturesque harbour full of sleek yachts, its luxury clothes shops, its romantic villas owned by the rich and famous perched on the hillside and the Castello di San Giorgio, sitting high up on a



promontory with magnificent views of the Portofino harbour and bay. The beach at Santa Margherita Ligure, just 5km (3 miles) south of Portofino, is an excellent place to swim, with a magical view of the surrounding cliffs and villas from the warm and crystal-clear aquamarine water. Nearby Rapallo, 8km (5 miles) south of Portofino, is less fashionable and subsequently less expensive. At the southern tip of the Riviera di Levante lie Cinque Terre, a series of five picturesque fishing villages linked by scenic mountainside paths and surrounded by vineyards and olive groves. Here one finds the region's least exploited beaches.

Trentino & Alto Adige

These wholly mountainous regions on the Swiss border straddle the valley of the River Isarco, which flows from the Brenner Pass, into the River Adige and thence into the Mediterranean. Germanic and Italian cultures blend here to the extent that, towards the north, German is increasingly found as the first language. The Dolomites to the east are a range of distinctively craggy mountains, isolated to such an extent from both Italy and Switzerland that, in the more remote valleys, the inhabitants speak Ladin, an ancient Romance language not much different from Latin. The area is traversed by clearly marked mountain paths and served by numerous hostels, making it ideal for hiking and climbing.

TRENTINO: The principal town of Trentino is Trento, worth visiting for its wealth of art works, gathered by the dynasty of princes who ruled the area between the 10th and 18th centuries. Many of these artistic acquisitions are viewable in the town's museums, which include the Castello di Buonconsiglio, Museo Diocesano Trentino and the Museo Provinciale d'Arte.

ALTO ADIGE: Bolzano is the principal town of Alto Adige, further north. A somewhat austere commercial town, it appears as an unlikely portal to one of the most extraordinary panoramic drives in Italy the mountain route through the Dolomites to Cortina d'Ampezzo called La Grande Strada delle Dolomiti. Upon entering the Val d'Ega, at the beginning of the route, the scenery is suddenly lush with foliage and rocks as the light seeps through the forest trees. About 20km (12 miles) from the beginning of the route is Lake Carezza, a beautiful limpid pool of bright green water reflecting the trees and mountains around it. This is just the beginning of an awe-inspiring passage through the Dolomites and its small alpine towns, ski resorts and endless panoramas of craggy peaks and tree-clad mountainsides. One of the most famous mountain resorts and the second-largest town in this region is Merano, 28km (17 miles) north of Bolzano. Popular for its spas, thermal waters and moderate climate (the temperature tends to remain above freezing all winter, despite its close proximity to a range of snow-laden ski slopes), it is also visually rewarding, with extensive landscaped gardens and a charming mixture of architectural styles from Gothic to Art Nouveau. The Merano Valley is dotted with historic castles, several of which have been transformed into charming castle hotels.

Veneto

Veneto comprises the Lower Po Valley, the eastern bank of Lake Garda and the eastern Dolomites, occupying what was once the Republic of Venice. On the Adriatic coast lie several rather commercial seaside resorts, such as Jesolo, while high in the Dolomites, the chic town of Cortina d'Ampezzo is probably Italy's best-known (but not most challenging) ski resort. The Winter Olympics were held here in 1956. It makes a fine base for exploring the Dolomites in summer.

VENICE: Venice (Venezia) stands upon a series of islands in a lagoon at the northern end of the Adriatic Sea, a position which gave it unique economic and defensive advantages over its trading rivals. Much of the wealth generated was, of course, invested in the construction of monuments



to the glory of both God and the merchants, and Venice must be counted as one of the highlights of any tour of Italy. The city's main monuments – St Mark's Basilica and the Doge's Palace overlooking St Mark's Square – have gained fame through innumerable paintings by such artists as Canaletto, but the whole city is in many ways a work of art. The city's most important thoroughfare is the Grand Canal, lined with fine Gothic and Renaissance palazzi (buildings) and crossed by the bustling Ponte di Rialto (Rialto Bridge) and the wooden Ponte dell'Accademia (Academy Bridge). Nearby, the Galleria dell'Accademia displays hundreds of Venetian paintings dating from between the 14th and 18th centuries, while the Collezione Peggy Guggenheim exhibits international 20th-century art including works by Picasso, Giacometti and Ernst. Away from the main thoroughfares, Venice is characterised by narrow canals, small squares (often containing remarkable Gothic churches) and above all, since it contains no motor traffic, by serenity – the city's ancient name was 'La Serenissima'. The Venetian islands of Burano (famous for lacemaking), Murano (famous for glassmaking) and Torcello (noted for the magnificent Byzantine Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta) can be visited by boat. Note: The city is linked to Mestre, on the mainland, by a causeway which can be crossed by road or rail. Although there is a large car park in Venice, at the end of the causeway, it is easier and cheaper to park in Mestre and continue by train.

PADUA: The city of Padua (Padova) is famous for the great, seven-domed 13th-century Basilica of St Anthony; St Anthony was buried here and it is an important pilgrimage site. Inside, the bronzes on the main altar are by Donatello, as is the equestrian statue in front of the entrance. Padua's other main attraction is the tiny Scrovegni Chapel, decorated with a stunning cycle of 14th-century biblical frescoes by Giotto. Padua's other delights include Prato della Valle, a vast square with a central green space, and the Orto Botanico, botanical gardens dating back to 1545, making it the oldest place of its kind in Europe.

VICENZA: Dating back to Roman times, Vicenza is best known for the 16th-century works of Andrea Palladio, whose published analyses of ancient architecture did much to spread the Renaissance throughout Europe. His buildings here include the monumental Basilica Palladiana, the Teatro Olimpico with its brilliantly painted stage-set, and the Palazzo Chiericati, home to the Museo Civico. A short distance out of town stands one of Palladio's finest villas, La Rotonda, a model of Renaissance architecture, based on a square plan with four identical façades.

VERONA: A graceful city built upon the banks of the River Adige, Verona was the setting of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The Casa di Giulietta (Juliet's House), a small Medieval home with a balcony and courtyard, attracts thousands of visitors each year. The other big attraction is the well-preserved Roman Arena, built in AD 290 and able to accommodate over 20,000 spectators. An opera festival, with open-air night-time performances, is staged here throughout summer. The 14th-century red-brick Castelvecchio, next to the river, houses an extensive art museum, with important Renaissance paintings and sculpture from northern Italy. The city's most noted church is the lovely Romanesque San Zeno.

RIVIERA DEL BRENTA: During the 16th century, the banks of this waterway linking Venice and Padua became a popular place for aristocrats and wealthy merchants to build their 'country' villas. From March to October, daily boat trips run from Venice to Padua, with stops en route to admire several of the villas, such as Villa Foscari at Malcontenta, designed by Palladio, and the 18th-century Villa Pisani at Stra.

Friuli-Venezia Giulia



This region in the northeastern corner of Italy bordering Austria and Slovenia has changed hands many times over the centuries and Friulian society is a complex mix of cultures. Half of the population speak Friulian, a language closely allied to Latin.

TRIESTE: In the 18th century, Austro-Hungary commissioned the construction of a deep-water port at Trieste and so ended Venice's long domination of the Adriatic Sea. Following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I, Trieste was ceded to Italy. The city's most prominent buildings date from the Hapsburg era, the most beautiful being Miramare Castle which is set amid beautifully landscaped gardens overlooking the sea, and is open to the public.

ELSEWHERE: The coast west of Trieste has several popular beach resorts, such as Grado. The area inland from Trieste is known for its Karst landscape and caves. The Grotta Gigante (Giant Grotto) is listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the largest accessible cave in the world. Inland are Pordenone and Udine, agricultural centres on the fertile Friuli plain. Further north are the foothills of the eastern Dolomites and the Julian Alps (part of Slovenia), where ski resorts are now being developed. The road from Udine to Villach in Austria is an important overland freight route; it winds up the dramatic valley of the Isonzo, a river rendered an astonishing shade of blue by minerals leached from the Julian Alps.

Emilia-Romagna

A region of gentle hills between the River Po and the Appennines. As elsewhere in the Po Basin, intensive agriculture is pursued alongside heavy industry. The region is famed for culinary delights such as bolognese sauce and mortadella (a specially prepared type of sausage) from Bologna, and Parmesan cheese and Parma ham from Parma.

BOLOGNA: One of the oldest cities in Italy and the site of Europe's oldest university. Often overlooked as a tourist destination, it nevertheless possesses a distinctive charm, due largely to the imaginative use of brickwork. A total 45km (28 miles) of arcades flank many of the streets, and a 3.6km- (2.3 mile-) stretch leads all the way out of town to the hilltop Basilica di San Luca. The main square, Piazza Maggiore, is dominated by the huge Gothic Church of San Petronio, while on Piazza di Porta Ravegnana, the Torre degli Asinelli and the leaning Torre Garisenda are the only survivors of numerous towers that were built across the city in Medieval times.

RAVENNA: Sometimes referred to as the 'Capital of Mosaics', between the sixth and eighth centuries Ravenna was the principal centre of Byzantine civilisation in Italy. The city's former importance is recorded by a profusion of early Byzantine and Christian monuments decorated with stunning mosaics, notably the splendid Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the octagonal Basilica di San Vitale, and the churches of San Apollinare Nuovo and Sant'Apollinare in Classe, all of which are UNESCO-listed World Heritage Sites.

ELSEWHERE: Parma boasts a fine Romanesque cathedral and baptistry, and an opera house with strong connections with Verdi, who lived at nearby Sant'Agata. Faenza (known to the French as 'Faience') is famed for its majolica pottery. Other cities in Emilia-Romagna include Modena and Ferrara, both with many fine palaces associated with the Este family; and Reggio, the old provincial capital. The seaside resort of Rimini is renowned for its lively party scene, with numerous nightclubs on the beach throughout summer.

Tuscany

This fertile region lies between the northern Appennines and the Mediterranean Sea. The landscape of Tuscany is, typically, one of vine-covered hills, cypress woods, fields of sunflowers



and remote hilltop villages. Chianti, the best-known Italian wine, is made in the area north of Siena, and several wine cellars are open to the public. There are a number of volcanic spas, most notably Monsummano Terme and Montecatini Terme. Regarding the coast, the Versalia, to the north, offers a 30km- (18-mile) stretch of organised bathing establishments, while the beaches to the south are less exploited.

FLORENCE: The principal Tuscan city, Florence (Firenze) is the world's most celebrated storehouse of Renaissance art and architecture. Set on the banks of the Arno below the wooded foothills of the Appennines, this beautiful city has long been the focus of Italian arts and letters. Alberti, Boccaccio, Botticelli, Brunelleschi, Dante, Donatello, Fra Angelico, Giotto, Leonardo da Vinci, Masaccio, Michelangelo, Petrarch and Vasari are among the many associated with establishing the pre-eminence of the city. Brunelleschi's revolutionary design for the dome of the Duomo (Cathedral) is generally accepted as the first expression of Renaissance ideas in architecture. This dome still dominates the city's roofscape, just as the great Piazza del Duomo at its feet dominates life at street level. The square is ringed with cafés and is a popular meeting point. Between there and the river are many of the best-loved palazzi (palaces), whilst close by to the north are the churches of San Lorenzo and Santa Maria Novella. The shop-lined Ponte Vecchio bridge scans the river to arrive at Palazzo Pitti and the Boboli Gardens. Just along from the bridge, at via Maggio, is the St Marks English Church, built in 1881. Here, visitors can find a portion of wall stencilling by G.F. Bodley (1827-1907), the famous Victorian Neo-Gothic architect and designer, pupil of Sir Gilbert Scott. The Uffizi Gallery houses one of the world's most celebrated art collections including masterpieces such as Botticelli's Birth Of Venus, Caravaggio's Young Bacchus, Leonardo da Vinci's Annunciation, Michelangelo's Holy Family and Titian's Urbino Venus. Some of the country's most important sculptures are found within the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, notably works by Michelangelo and Donatello. Michelangelo's famous statue of David may be viewed at the Accademia di Belle Arti near the University.

SIENA: Siena's most prosperous era pre-dated the Renaissance and consequently much of the fabric of the city is in the older Gothic and Romanesque styles. While most buildings are of reddish-brown brick (hence the colour 'burnt sienna'), the stunning Cathedral is constructed of alternating stripes of black and white marble, and is said to be one of the best examples of Italian Gothic architecture. The labyrinth of narrow cobbled streets that make up the historic centre converge at Piazza del Campo. Overlooked by the giant campanile of the Palazzo Pubblico, this is possibly the most complete Medieval piazza in Italy. Twice a year, on July 2 and August 16, a notorious bareback horserace known as the Palio is held here. It has been a special event since the 13th century and attracts crowds from all over the world. The 700-year-old university holds a summer school in Italian.

PISA: Located north of Siena, Pisa is famous for its Leaning Tower, a free-standing campanile or bell tower. Closed to the public since 1990, the tower has now reopened following a lengthy restoration project to reduce its tilt. Next to the tower, on Campo dei Miracoli, stand the elegant 11th-century Gothic Cathedral and the Baptistery. Nearby, the 13th-century Camposanto is a cemetery contained within a unique colonnaded courtyard, said to have been built to enclose earth brought from Jerusalem by the Crusaders.

AREZZO: Arezzo is made up of an old upper town and a modern lower town, and is an important centre for the production of gold jewellery. Within the old town lie the Duomo, decorated with 16th-century stained glass windows, and the Basilica di San Francesco, containing a highly esteemed cycle of frescoes by Piero della Francesca depicting the Legend of the True Cross. The Piazza Grande is a wonderful Medieval square, famous for its regular antiques market, overlooked by several impressive historic buildings, notably the church of Santa Maria della Pieve and the Loggiato del Vasari, the home Vasari built for himself in 1540.



LUCCA: The peaceful walled town of Lucca is famed for its elaborate churches, which include the Cathedral of San Martino with its asymmetric façade and campanile, the striking San Frediano decorated with colourful mosaics, and San Michele in Foro, built on the site of the Roman forum. The main shopping street, Fillungo, is noted for a number of early-20th-century, Liberty-style façades.

SAN GIMIGNANO: Known as the 'city of beautiful towers', San Gimignano is one of the best-preserved Medieval towns in Italy. During the Middle Ages, when the height of one's tower was a symbol of prestige, families vied to build the tallest structure. Today, 14 of the original 76 towers remain, creating a truly unforgettable skyline.

THE TUSCAN ARCHIPELAGO: The Tuscan Archipelago is a group of scattered islands lying between Tuscany and Corsica. The best known is Elba, which is linked to Piombino on the mainland by regular hydrofoil and ferry services. Famous as the place where Napoleon was briefly exiled before his final defeat at Waterloo, it has lovely beaches and campsites shaded by pines. Napoleon's two homes, Palazzina Napoleonica dei Mulini (created out of two windmills) and Villa Napoleonica di San Martino are both open to the public.

ELSEWHERE: Other places of note in Tuscany are Volterra, a beautifully preserved Medieval hilltown; Livorno, the principal commercial port; and Carrara, where high-grade white marble has been quarried since Etruscan times.

Umbria

Sometimes referred to as 'the green heart of Italy', Umbria is a small, hilly and fairly untouched region between Tuscany and Marche, with little industry and few towns of any great size. The landscape is similar to that of Tuscany and combines austere Medieval architecture and stone farmhouses with gently rolling hills and rivers. Lake Trasimeno is contained within the Trasimeno Regional Park, and serves as a seasonal home to many species of migrating birds, while the River Nera Regional Park contains the Marmore Waterfalls, the highest **falls in Italy. Umbria's rich history is still very much in evidence:** traces of Umbri, Etruscan and Roman cultures exist alongside Medieval and Renaissance architecture in towns such as Assisi, Orvieto, Perugia and Spoleto.

PERUGIA: Umbria's capital has been continuously inhabited for more than 25 centuries and contains many Etruscan and Roman remains. Particularly notable are the ancient Etruscan city walls, the Piazza IV Novembre with the Cathedral, and the Fontana Maggiore (Great Fountain). On the top floor of the 14th-century Palazzo dei Priori, the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria contains one of the world's finest collections of Renaissance paintings, with works by Piero della Francesca, Perugino, Beato Angelico and others. The state-funded Università per Stranieri (University for Foreigners) offers courses for foreigners wishing to study Italian language and civilisation. Perugia is less than two hours by car from Florence and Rome, and one hour from Siena.

ASSISI: A picturesque Medieval hilltown to the east of Perugia, Assisi is famous as the birthplace of St Francis, founder of the Franciscan order of monks. The life of St Francis is commemorated in frescoes by Giotto in the 13th-century Basilica di San Francesco, one of Italy's best-loved and most-visited churches. Other interesting sites include the Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli and the Roman Temple of Minerva.



ORVIETO: Orvieto is a Medieval city perched on a volcanic outcrop. The well-preserved city centre has a number of sites and buildings dating from the Etruscan period. Orvieto's most memorable monument is the Duomo (Cathedral), which cleverly mixes Romanesque and Gothic styles.

SPOLETO: The peaceful streets of the romantic hilltown of Spoleto come alive each year for the world-renowned Summer Festival, featuring music, theatre and a range of other cultural events. The town has several interesting Roman monuments, including the classical Arch of Druso and the Roman Theatre, plus the Medieval Ponte delle Torri bridge and a number of delightful Romanesque churches.

GUBBIO & TODI: Other important Umbrian towns include Gubbio, a well-preserved Medieval town situated at the foot of Mount Ingino and home to the famous Gubbio Tablets the oldest surviving record of the Umbrian people; and Todi, overlooking the Tiber valley, whose beautiful Medieval square is surrounded by a wealth of historic buildings, including the 13th-century Palazzo del Popolo, the Palazzo del Capitano and the Cathedral.

Marche, Abruzzo & Molise

MARCHE: A mountainous agricultural region on the central Adriatic coast, south of San Marino. The regional capital is Ancona, an important naval and commercial port, with daily ferry services to Albania, Croatia, Greece and Montenegro. The city is also home to several well-preserved Roman remains such as the Arco di Traiano and the Anfiteatro Romano. The majestic hilltop Basilica di San Ciriaco, built in the 11th century, combines Romanesque style with Byzantine elements. Out of town, along the coast, lie several highly organised beach resorts, with sunbeds and umbrellas laid out in neat lines. A more informal beach is found below the spectacular Costa Conero cliffs, a few miles south of Ancona. Urbino was once Italy's greatest seat of learning and is now a pleasant Renaissance hilltown, its skyline a soaring vista of domes and towers. Also the birthplace of Raphael, several of his works may be viewed in the art gallery at the Ducal Palace, along with works by Piero della Francesca and Titian. Raphael's childhood home is also open for viewing. Loreto, said to be the site of the house of the Virgin Mary, attracts many pilgrims from around the world. According to legend, the house was carried here from Nazareth by angels, and is now enclosed in the elaborate Gothic Santuario della Santa Casa. The Madonna of Loreto was elected patron saint of airmen in 1920.

ABRUZZO: This region encompasses the highest parts of the great Apennine chain. The northern mountains are generally too desolate for agriculture and much of the land is sparsely populated. The southern uplands are covered with a great forest of beech, which has been designated the National Park of Abruzzo. Marsican brown bears (unique to Italy), wolves, chamois and eagles may be seen here. L'Aquila, the principal city, contains an imposing castle; other noteworthy monuments include the Fontana delle 99 Cannelle, a fountain with 99 spouts (one for each of the villages that founded the city) and the pink and white marble Basilica di Santa Maria di Collemaggio. Pescara is, as its name implies, primarily a fishing port.

MOLISE: One of the poorest parts of mainland Italy, this area is mountainous with poor soil and a scattered population. It does, however, possess its own rugged beauty. The Matese mountain range is still the haven of wolves and various birds of prey. It also offers some excellent skiing resorts and tends not to be too crowded. The region's capital, Campobasso, is home to Castello Monforte and the Romanesque churches of San Bartolomeo and San Giorgino.

Lazio



On the western side of the Italian 'boot', this is a region of volcanic hills, lakes and fine beaches that are easily reached from Rome.

HILL TOWNS: Inland from Rome are the hill towns known as the Castelli Romani, which are popular for excursions. Tivoli, just 40km (25 miles) east of Rome, was once the haven of the rich, first in Roman times and later during the Renaissance. It is well known for its magnificent villas and gardens, such as Villa d'Este and Villa Adriana. The pleasant town of Frascati, only 20km (12.5 miles) south of Rome, is famous for its Frascati wine, a light, delicate, dry white which has an international reputation. Castelgandolfo overlooks the spectacular Lake Albano, and is dominated by the Palazzo Pontificio, the Pope's summer retreat.

THE COAST: Ostia Lido, close to Ostia Antica, the ancient port of Rome, is a well-organised but not particularly attractive beach resort. Terracina, further south, is noted for its soft, white-sand beaches. The old town, up on a hill above the sea, is home to a Cathedral and the Roman Temple of Jupiter Anxurus, believed to have been built in the first century BC. Further south, the most exclusive seaside resort is Sperlonga. The town itself is reminiscent of a Greek island village; seemingly endless steps wind up and around through white arches, offering unexpected but spectacular views of the sea and cliffs. Down below lies a beautiful small beach; 30km (20 miles) offshore is the unspoilt island of Ponza. Still further south, the resorts of San Felice, Circeo and Sabaudia are known for clean seawater and wide, sandy beaches. Northwest of Rome, Civitavecchia is an important naval and merchant port, with regular ferries to Sardinia.

Campania

Called Campania Felix ('blessed country') by the Romans because of its fertile soil, mild climate and (by southern Italian standards) plentiful water. Citrus fruits, tobacco, wheat and vegetables are grown, and the region is known for excellent wines, notably the white Greco di Tufo. The Amalfi Coast, running along a peninsula just south of Naples, is one of the most popular regions in Italy for holidaymakers, especially those in search of sun and sand. But the **added bonus for many is the extraordinary beauty of the region:** sheer craggy cliffs rise over the shimmering blue-green Mediterranean waters, and everywhere there are views of hills and sea. History and culture are also present in abundance and it is easy to understand the persistent attraction of the area for visitors.

NAPLES: The third-largest Italian city, Naples is famous as the place where pizza was invented. Set on the Bay of Naples and overshadowed by Mount Vesuvius, the city occupies one of the most beautiful natural settings of any city in Europe. Frequently criticised for urban decay and delinquency, it is a city where splendid churches and palaces stand aside squalid tenement blocks, and where street markets sell high-quality food produce, plus counterfeit designer goods. Notable monuments include the 17th-century Palazzo Reale, built by the Bourbons, the massive stone Castel Nuovo, overlooking the sea, and the San Carlo Opera House. The impressive Museo Archeologico Nazionale houses an excellent collection of Greco-Roman artefacts, including mosaics from Pompeii and Herculaneum. The Museo di Capodimonte displays porcelain and majolica pieces, plus paintings by Dutch, Italian and Spanish masters.

MOUNT VESUVIUS: Above Naples is the bare cone of Mount Vesuvius, an active volcano, and beside it the broad sweep of the Bay of Naples and the Tyrrhennian Sea. A toll-road leads most of the way up to the summit of Vesuvius (it is the local Lover's Lane; people also gather mushrooms here when the conditions are right); the final few hundred yards involve an easy hike up a well-maintained bare pumice track. The viewing platform is right on the rim of the caldera and provides a good view of both the steam-filled abyss and the whole of the Bay of Naples and Pompeii below. Nearby, the remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum, engulfed in the great eruption



of AD 79, are a unique record of how ordinary first-century Romans lived their daily lives. Moulds of people and animals found well-preserved, buried under the burning ash, can be seen at Pompeii, and the decoration in some of the excavated villas is amazingly intact, including numerous wall paintings of gods and humans in scenes ranging from the heroic to the erotic.

SORRENTO: Sorrento, now a rather commercial resort, has attracted artists for centuries. Gorky, Nietzsche and Wagner spent time here and Ibsen wrote *The Ghosts* while in Sorrento. The Museo Correale is an attractive 18th-century villa with a collection of decorative arts and paintings belonging to the Correale family. Outside, a walk through the gardens and vineyards brings one to a promontory overlooking the bay, offering a spectacular view of the harbour and the surrounding towns and cliffs.

CAPRI: Capri, one of Italy's most lovely and most visited islands, can be reached by ferry or hydrofoil from Amalfi, Naples, Positano and Sorrento. Upon arrival at the Marina Grande, it is possible to take a boat trip to the island's main tourist attraction, the Blue Grotto. A strenuous 45-minute uphill trek brings one to the ruins of Villa Tiberio, built as the Roman Emperor Tiberius's luxurious retirement home. The Garden of Augustus, south of the town of Capri, is pretty but often very crowded. From here, a winding road brings one down to the sea, where it is possible to swim off the rocks.

THE AMALFI COAST: The Amalfi Coast, running from Sorrento to Salerno, is one of Europe's most beautiful coastlines. Departing from Sorrento, the first port of call is Positano, a small exclusive resort of great beauty. Heaped high above the coast, its brightly painted houses and bougainvillea have inspired a thousand picture postcards and draw crowds of visitors every summer. There is an excellent beach and clean seawater for bathing. Amalfi is perhaps the most well known of the region's resort towns. However, the town still has an authentic air about it, despite its popularity with tourists. The Romanesque Cathedral with its 13th-century bell tower, located in the main square, looks entirely untouched by the contemporary hustle and bustle around it. The Cloister of Paradise, just to the right of the cathedral, also makes good viewing. There are some excellent restaurants and the local wine, Sammarco, bottled in Amalfi, is superb and inexpensive. Perched high above Amalfi, 'closer to the sky than the seashore', as André Gide wrote, is the former independent republic of Ravello. From here, the most spectacular views of the Amalfi Coast can be had, above all from the Villa Cimbrone where marble statues line a belvedere that is perched on the very edge of the cliff, 335m (1100ft) up.

ELSEWHERE: The city of Caserta to the north of Naples was the country seat of the Kings of Naples. The Baroque Royal Palace owes much to Versailles, and the surrounding gardens are magnificent. South along the coast, past Salerno, the imposing Greek temples at Paestum are among the country's best-preserved ancient relics. Ischia, an island on the west side of the Bay of Naples, is easily accessible from Sorrento or from Naples. Although larger than Capri, it is not quite so popular with tourists, but well visited by the locals who appreciate it more for its calm and scenic beauty.

Puglia, Basilicata & Calabria

PUGLIA: The southeastern region of Puglia (Apulia) encompasses the forested crags of the Gargano Peninsular (home to Gargano National Park), the mostly flat Salentine peninsula (the 'heel' of Italy) and, between them, the Murgia, a limestone plateau riddled with caves. With the exception of Bari and Taranto, both large industrial ports, the Apulian economy is wholly agricultural. The main products are almonds, grapes, olives, tobacco and vegetables. There are fine beaches on the Adriatic coast between Barletta and Bari. Puglia was important in Roman times as the gateway to the eastern Mediterranean. The port of Brindisi, now eclipsed by Bari in



commercial terms, was the terminus of the Via Appia, along which Eastern produce was conveyed to Rome and beyond. The Museo Archeologico Provinciale houses many relics from this prosperous era. Virgil died in Brindisi in 19 BC. On the Murgia plateau, in Alberobello, one can visit a number of extraordinary stone dwellings known as trulli. Circular with conical roofs (also of stone), they are similar to the nuraghi of Sardinia. Also in this area stands a unique octagonal castle, the Castel del Monte, built as a hunting lodge in the 13th century by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (the self-styled Stupor Mundi, 'Wonder of the World'). Both are now UNESCO-listed World Heritage Sites.

BASILICATA: A remote and mainly mountainous region between Puglia and Calabria, Basilicata is heavily forested in the north around Monte Vulture, a large extinct volcano; elsewhere, the hills are flinty and barren. Many rivers flow down from the southern Appennines into the Gulf of Taranto, irrigating the fertile coastal plain behind Metaponto (birthplace of Pythagoras). The population is small. The principal town, Potenza, was almost entirely rebuilt after a severe earthquake in 1857, only to suffer a similar scale of destruction in World War II. In Matera, one can visit the extraordinary Sassi, a vast troglodyte settlement of houses and churches carved into tufa rock. Home to 15,000 residents until the 1950s, this is now a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site.

CALABRIA: The toe of the 'boot', a spectacularly beautiful region of high mountains, dense forests and relatively empty beaches. Beech, chestnut, oak and pine cover almost half of Calabria and are a rich hunting ground for mushroom enthusiasts. Porcini (*boletus edulis*), fresh, dried and pickled, naturally adorn the shelves of all the speciality shops of the region. Higher up in the mountains the land only sustains light grazing, but the meadows bloom with a multitude of wild flowers each spring. It is only on isolated patches of reclaimed land on the marshy coast that agriculture is possible and consequently the inhabitants are among the poorest in Italy. They are further tormented by frequent earthquakes. Some wolves still survive in the mountains, particularly in the central Sila Massifs. Catanzaro, Cosenza and Reggio Calabria, on the straits of Messina, are the major towns. Calabria's best beaches are on the west coast, where one finds long stretches of sand, punctuated by rocky outcrops and secluded coves. The beaches on the east coast are rockier, more rugged and less explored.

Sicily

Strategically situated between Italy and North Africa and with fertile soil and rich coastal fishing grounds, Sicily has suffered an almost continuous round of invasion for as long as history has been recorded. The Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Angevins, Aragonese, Bourbons and, most recently, the Germans (and the Allies) during World War II all have left their mark on this unique island, the most populous in the Mediterranean. The economy is based on the production of citrus fruit, almonds, olives, vegetables, wine (including Marsala), wheat and beans, together with mining, fishing (anchovies, tuna, cuttlefish and swordfish) and the raising of sheep and goats.

PALERMO: The capital, Palermo, is a splendid city in a grand style, opulent, vital and full of remarkable architecture, particularly Norman and Baroque. Notable buildings include the Cathedral, the Martorana, the Palazzo dei Normanni, San Cataldo, San Giuseppe dei Teatini and Santa Maria di Gesù churches. The catacombs at the Capuchin Monastery contain thousands of mummified bodies.

THE EAST COAST: Catania is a spacious city dating mostly from the 18th century, having been rebuilt following a succession of earthquakes. Europe's largest and most active volcano, Mount Etna, stands nearby and with its fine beaches the city attracts many tourists. Taormina, further



up the coast, is a picturesque and immensely popular resort town. Perched on a cliff within sight of Mount Etna, it has fine beaches, a well-preserved Greek Theatre, a Castle and a Cathedral, as well as a plethora of chic bars and restaurants.

HISTORIC SITES: Sicily is littered with the remains of successive invading cultures and a full listing of important sites is beyond the scope of this entry. The most important ancient Greek sites are: the temples of the Valle dei Templi at Agrigento, said to be better preserved than any in Greece itself; the Greek Theatre at Syracuse (where there is also a Roman Amphitheatre); and the vast Temple of Apollo at Selinunte. Other notable monuments include the Norman Cathedral at Monreale, containing 1.5 acres of dazzling mosaics, and the Byzantine cliff dwellings at Cava d'Ispica near Modica.

AEOLIAN ISLANDS: This group of attractive small islands is popular for its crystal clear waters ideal for diving and underwater fishing, and stunning beaches of hot black sand and rocky outcrops. Lipari is the largest and most 'touristy' island. Panarea is smart but unspoilt. Vulcano, the closest island, and Stromboli, the most distant, are both active volcanoes. Accommodation is generally simple, although there are some excellent hotels.

Sardinia

This is the second-largest island in the Mediterranean. Much of Sardinia away from the coasts is an almost lunar landscape of crags and chasms and is largely uninhabited. The coastline is jagged and rocky, interspersed with marvellous beaches of very fine sand. In recent years there has been much investment in tourist infrastructure, particularly in the northern area known as the Costa Smeralda (Emerald Coast), which has become a favourite retreat of Italian celebrities, and on the west coast near Alghero. This is the only region in Italy without motorways. The Sardinian language is closer to Latin than modern Italian is.

CAGLIARI: The capital stands in a marshy valley at the south of the island. It was founded by the Phoenicians and subsequently expanded by the Romans, who knew it as Carales. It is today a busy commercial port and site of most of the island's heavy industry

ELSEWHERE: The only other towns of any size are Sassari, in the northwest near the resort area of Alghero; Nuoro, an agricultural town on the edge of the central massif, a good base from which to explore the interior; and Olbia, a fishing port and car-ferry terminus on the edge of the Costa Smeralda. There are numerous Bronze Age remains throughout the islands, the best known being the nuraghi circular (sometimes conical) stone dwellings. The largest collection of these may be found at Su Nuraxi, about 80km (50 miles) north of Cagliari.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Watersports: Italy has some 8500km (5345 miles) of coastline and remains one of Europe's favourite destinations for beach holidays. Facilities such as sun loungers and deckchairs (which are common on Italian beaches) usually attract a small charge. All types of watersports are available at major resorts. The enduring appeal of the Italian Riviera in Liguria (a 350km-/219 mile-stretch from France to Tuscany), or of the Adriatic and Amalfi coasts, the latter known for its steeply terraced villages clinging to a rocky coastline, is witnessed by the ever-growing number of visitors. Less busy are the beaches on the islands, in Sicily, which has large sandy stretches on the southern coast, and in Sardinia, much of which is still relatively untouched. Many of Italy's best dive sites are located in Sardinia, and Italy's first surfing school is based in Mauro. Diving



courses and equipment hire are also available on the Tremiti Islands (Puglia) in the Adriatic and along the coasts of Tuscany and Liguria. Fishing is excellent throughout Sardinian and Sicilian waters (also renowned for their healthy lobster population), while the rivers in northern Italy, Umbria and Tuscany can offer particularly scenic fishing holidays. For sea fishing, private or chartered boats can be rented. Genoa has frequent yachting regattas, as does Santa Margherita Ligure, where a canoe and small boat regatta is held in July. Sailing is popular on Italy's five major lakes near the Alps in the north - Como, Garda, Iseo, Lugano and Maggiore.

Wintersports: The skiing infrastructure has been greatly improved in recent years, and the facilities at resorts in the Italian Alps now rival those in neighbouring Austria, France and Switzerland. Ski resorts can be broadly split into four geographical areas. To the west of Turin, in the Piedmont region, major resorts include Bardonechia, Sauze d'Oulx and Sestriere. Further north, the Aosta Valley and its main resorts, such as Cervinia, Courmayeur and La Thuile, are easily reached from France (via the Mont Blanc tunnel from Chamonix) or from Switzerland (via the St Bernard tunnel). To the east, the region across the Swiss border is fairly isolated and accessible via long, winding roads which can be treacherous in bad weather. Driving can be equally difficult in the Dolomites, still further east, but the beautiful scenery more than makes up for it, helping to make this one of Italy's prime skiing destinations; major resorts include Cortina D'Ampezzo (Italy's most upmarket resort), Madonna di Campiglio and Selva/Sella Ronda. Skiing is also possible in Central Italy, in resorts such as Abetone (Tuscany), Campo Imperatore (Abruzzo), and in several other places in Abruzzo, down to Mount Etna in Sicily.

Horserying: The biennial Palio bareback horse race in Siena, held on July 2 and August 16, draws thousands of spectators and has been a special event since the 14th century. One of Rome's most prestigious events is its international horse show held in May. There is also flat racing in February at the Capanelle track. Each of the three seasons lasts two months, the second starting in May and the third in September. Trotting races take place at the Villa Gloria track in February, June to November.

Cultural holidays: Italian language and art courses are available throughout Italy. Language courses are often complemented by subjects such as cooking or architecture. Well known institutions offering a range of art courses include the Palazzo Spinelli and Università Internazionale dell'Arte in Florence; the Accademia Italia in Rome; the Centro Internazionale degli Studi per l'Insegnamento del Mosaico in Ravenna for mosaic making; and, for music courses, the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. Further information can be obtained from the Italian Cultural Institute in London (tel: (020) 7235 1461; fax: (020) 7235 4618; e-mail: ici@italcultur.org.uk; website: www.italcultur.org.uk) or the Italian State Tourist Board (see Contact Addresses section).

Other: There are first-class golf courses all over Italy, from Lombardy and Trentino in the north, through Tuscany and Lazio, down to Calabria and Sardinia where the golf season is very long, owing to the mild climate. Italy's most popular spectator sport is football (the national team won the World Cup in 1934, 1938 and 1982, and hosted the 1990 event, in which they finished third). The Giro d'Italia is an internationally renowned cycling race through Italy, attracting the world's top cyclists. Motor-racing is held at the Monza autodrome near Milan (Lombardy). Bocce bowling is as traditional in Italy as it is in France, especially in small villages where it is played on Sunday after High Mass.

Entertainment

Food & Drink: Table service is most common in restaurants and bars. There are no licensing laws. Pasta and pizza plays a substantial part in Italian recipes, but nearly all regions have



developed their own special dishes. Examples of regional dishes are listed below. Italy has over 20 major wine regions, from Valle d'Aosta on the French border to Sardinia and Sicily in the south. National specialities: Rome: Abbacchio (suckling lamb in white wine flavoured with rosemary). Gnocchi alla romana (semolina dumplings). Cheeses the best include mozzarella, caciotta romana (semi-hard, sweet sheep cheese), pecorino (hard, sharp sheep's milk cheese) and gorgonzola. Piemonte: Bagna caoda (a traditional anchovy soup, served with vegetables). Bonet (a chocolate cake made with coffee and local biscuits). Valle d'Aosta: Fonduta (a hot dip with Fontina cheese, milk and egg yolks sprinkled with truffles and white pepper). Lepre piemontese (hare cooked in Barbera wine and sprinkled with herbs and bitter chocolate). Lombardy: Risotto alla milanese (rice with saffron and white wine). Panettone (Christmas cake with sultanas and candied fruit). Trentino and Alto Adige: Some excellent sausages and hams come from these regions. Veneto: Fegato alla veneziana (calves' liver thinly sliced and cooked in butter with onions). Radicchio rosso di treviso (wild red chicory with a bitter taste). Friuli-Venezia Giulia: Prosciutto di San Daniele (raw ham). Liguria: Pesto (sauce made of basil, garlic, pine nuts and pecorino cheese with pasta). Pandolce (sweet cake with orange flavour). Emilia-Romagna: Parmigiano (parmesan cheese). Prosciutto di Parma (Parma ham). Tuscany: Bistecca alla fiorentina (thick T-bone steak grilled over charcoal, sprinkled with freshly ground black pepper and olive oil). Marche: Brodetto (a thick soup made from many varieties of fish, similar to chowder). Abruzzo-Molise: Lamb is a favourite ingredient in many dishes. Umbria: Fish from Lake Trasimeno and the River Nera Porchetta alla perugina (suckling pig). Campania: Sfogliatelle (sweet ricotta cheese turnovers) Puglia: Ostriche (fresh oysters baked with bread crumbs). Calabria and Basilicata: Sarde (fresh sardines with olive oil and oregano). Alici al limone (fresh anchovies baked with lemon juice). Sicily: Pesce spada (swordfish stuffed with brandy, mozzarella and herbs, grilled on charcoal). Pasta con le sarde (pasta with fresh sardines). Sardinia: Burridda (fish stew with dogfish and skate). Calamaretti alla sarda (stuffed baby squid). National drinks: Wines are named after grape varieties or after their village or area of origin. The most widespread is the Chianti group of vineyards, governed by the Chianti Classico quality controls (denoted by a black cockerel on the neck of each bottle). The Chianti area is the only area in Italy with such quality controls. Denominazione di origine controllata wines come from officially recognised wine-growing areas (similar to Appellation Contrôlée in France), while wines designated Denominazione controllata e garantita are wines of fine quality. Roman wines include Albano, Frascati, and Velletri (whites); Cesanese, Marino and Piglio (reds). Grumello in Lombardy. Barolo and Barbera in Valle d'Aosta. Valpolicella in Veneto. Pinot Bianco, Pinot Grigio and Tokai (whites); Cabernet, Merlot and Pinot Nero (reds) in Friuli-Venezia. Chianti and Vernaccia in Tuscany. The Abruzzo-Molise district is home to Montepulciano d'Abruzzo (red) and Trebbiano d'Abruzzo (dry white). The district is also home of a strong liqueur known as Centerbe. Vermouths from Piemonte vary from dry and light pink to dark-coloured and sweet. Aperitifs such as Campari and Punt e Mes are excellent appetisers. Italian liqueurs include Amaretto, Galliano, Sambuca and Strega. Tipping: Service charges and state taxes are included in all hotel bills. It is customary to give up to 10 per cent in addition if service has been particularly good.

Nightlife: Nightclubs, discos, restaurants and bars with dancing can be found in most major towns and tourist resorts. In the capital, English-language films can be found at the Pasquine Cinema, Vicolo della Paglia, just off Santa Maria in Trastevere. Restaurants and cafes throughout Italy will invariably have tables outside. Open-air concerts in summer are organised by the Academy of St Cecilia and the Opera House, while there is open-air theatre at the Baths of Caracalla. Jazz, rock, folk and country music can all be heard at various venues.

Shopping: Many Italian products are world-famous for their style and quality. Care should be taken when buying antiques since Italy is renowned for skilled imitators. Prices are generally fixed and bargaining is not general practice, although a discount may be given on a large



purchase. Florence, Milan and Rome are famous as important fashion centres, but smaller towns also offer good scope for shopping. It is advisable to avoid hawkers or sellers on the beaches. Some places are known for particular products, eg Carrara (Tuscany) for marble, Como (Lombardy) for silk, Deruta (Umbria) and Faenza (Emilia-Romagna) for pottery, Empoli (Tuscany) for the production of bottles and glasses in green glass and Prato (Tuscany) for textiles. Alghero (Sardinia) and Torre Annunziata (Campania) are centres for handicraft products in coral, and in several parts of Sardinia business cards and writing paper made of cork are produced. Cremona (Lombardy) is famous for its handmade violins. Castelfidardo (Marche) is famous for its accordion factories, and for its production of guitars and organs. Two small towns concentrate on producing their speciality: Valenza (Piedmont), which has a large number of goldsmith artisans, and Sulmona (Abruzzo), which produces 'confetti', sugar-coated almonds used all over Italy for wedding celebrations. Vietri sul Mare (Campania) is one of the most important centres of ceramic paving-tiles, and Ravenna (Emilia-Romagna) is famous for mosaics. Main shopping areas are listed below.

Rome: Offers a wide choice of shops and markets. Every shop in the fashionable Via Condotti/Via Sistina area offers a choice of styles, colours and designs rarely matched, but at very high prices. Equally expensive are shops along Via Vittorio Veneto, a street famous for its outdoor cafes. Old books and prints can be bought from bookstalls of Piazza Borghese. Rome's flea market is at Porta Portese in Trastevere on Sunday mornings, selling everything from second-hand shoes to 'genuine antiques'.

Milan: The city's industrial wealth is reflected in the chic, elegant shops of Via Montenapoleone. Prices tend to be higher than in other major cities.

Venice: Is still famous for its glassware and there is a great deal of both good and bad glass; that made on the island of Murano, where there are also art dealers and skilful goldsmiths, has a reputation for quality. Venetian lace is also exquisite and expensive; however, most of the lace sold is no longer made locally (only lace made on the island of Burano may properly be called Venetian lace).

Florence: Boasts some of the finest goldsmiths, selling from shops largely concentrated along both sides of the Ponte Vecchio bridge. Florentine jewellery has a particular quality of satin finish called satinato. Much filigree jewellery can also be found. Cameos are another speciality of Florence, carved from exotic shells.

Southern Italy: In the south, there are still families handmaking the same local products as their ancestors: pottery and carpets in each region; filigree jewellery and products of wrought iron and brass in Abruzzo; products in wood in Calabria; corals and cameos in Campania; a variety of textiles, including tablecloths, in Sicily and Sardinia. In Cagliari, it is possible to find artistic copies of bronze statuettes from the Nuraghe period of the Sardinian Bronze Age. In the larger towns, such as Bari, Cagliari, Calabria, Naples, Palermo and Reggio, there are elegant shops with a whole range of Italian products. Many smaller towns have outdoor markets, but souvenirs sold there are sometimes of very low quality, probably mass-produced elsewhere.

Shopping hours: Mon-Sat 0830-1230 and 1530-1930, with some variations in northern Italy where the lunch break is shorter and the shops close earlier. Food shops are often closed on Wednesday afternoons.

Business

GDP: US\$1.3 trillion (2004). Main imports: Engineering products, chemicals, transport equipment, energy products, minerals and nonferrous metals, textiles and clothing, food, beverages and tobacco. Main exports: Engineering products, textiles and clothing, production machinery, motor vehicles, transport equipment, chemicals, food, beverages, tobacco, minerals and nonferrous metals. Main trade partners: Belgium, China, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK and USA.

Economy: Traditionally agricultural, Italy industrialised rapidly after 1945, particularly in manufacturing and engineering, to the point where less than five per cent of the population is now engaged in agriculture. The majority of these live in the south of Italy, which is substantially poorer than the centre and north of the country. The principal crops are sugar beet, wheat,



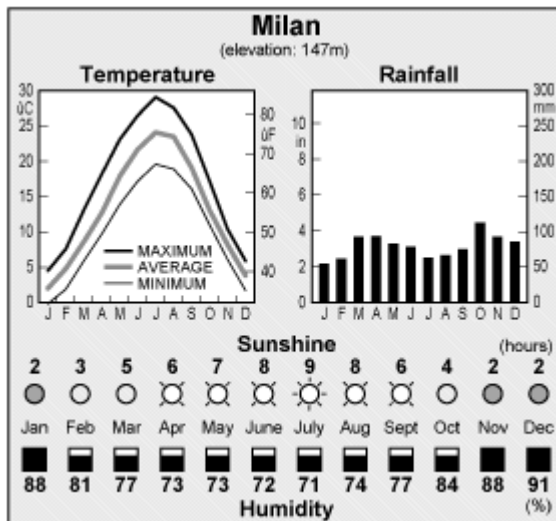
maize, tomatoes and grapes (many are used for wine, of which Italy is a leading producer). As with most Western European economies, the tourism industry now enjoys a major position in the economy alongside other service industries such as financial services and communications media. Italy continues to rely heavily on the export of manufactured goods, particularly of industrial machinery, vehicles, aircraft, chemicals, electronics, textiles and clothing. Its particular strengths are in advanced manufacturing techniques and systems, high-quality design and precision engineering. Italy's historic trade performance has been all the more impressive given the dearth of raw materials, in particular the fact that all of the country's oil and many of its raw materials must be imported. The economy has been sluggish since the turn of the millennium with growth in 2004 less than one per cent. Inflation is just under three per cent; unemployment has fallen slightly to just under nine per cent. In Europe, despite some doubts about the size of its budget deficit, Italy was among the founding members of the Euro-zone in 1999. The current Berlusconi government is trying to implement a programme of tax cuts and labour reform which are intended to boost economic performance but it has been hamstrung by political difficulties.

Business Etiquette: A knowledge of Italian is a distinct advantage. Prior appointments are essential. Visitors should remember that ministries and most public offices close at 1345 and, except by special appointment, it is not possible to see officials in the afternoon. Genoa, Milan and Turin form the industrial triangle of Italy; Bologna, Florence, Padua, Rome, Verona and Vicenza also have important business centres. In all the above cities, major trade fairs take place throughout the year. Office hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1700.

Conferences/Conventions: There are many hotels with facilities.

Commercial Information: Unione Italiana delle Camere di Commercio, Industria, Artigianato e Agricoltura (Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture) Piazza Sallustio 21, 00187 Rome, Italy Tel: (06) 47041. Website: www.unioncamere.it

10 CLIMATE





Summer is hot, especially in the south. Spring and autumn are mild with fine, sunny weather. Winter in the south is much drier and warmer than in northern and central areas. Mountain regions are colder with heavy winter snowfalls.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens are worn during the summer, except in the mountains. Light- to mediumweights are worn in the south during winter, while warmer clothes are worn elsewhere. Alpine wear is advised for winter mountain resorts.

11 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: Although Italy has only been unified since 1861, the rich and complex history of the peninsula has, perhaps more than that of any other country, influenced the course of European development, particularly in the fields of culture and political thought. The most important early settlers in the area were the Etruscans, who had established settlements in northern Italy by the sixth century BC. By the third century BC, the city state of Rome, having subdued most of the peninsula, was intent on extending its influence elsewhere. At its greatest extent, the Empire (so called after 30 BC) made the Mediterranean a Roman lake and for several centuries conferred on its inhabitants the benefits of the Pax Romana: culture (mainly Hellenic in origin), law, relative peace and comparative prosperity. By the fifth century, however, internal discord and external pressures resulted in the disintegration of the empires, although the Germanic people who assumed the rule of Italy (at first as representatives of the Eastern Emperor in Constantinople) were more concerned with the continuity of the Roman way of life than has often been supposed. From AD 493, the Ostrogothic Kingdom of Theodoric maintained the unity of Italy, but the region was reconquered by Justinian (AD 535-3). By the late sixth century, however, settlers from northern Europe had established a kingdom in Lombardy and before long, Italy had fragmented into a dozen or so states. For the next 1000 years, the exceedingly complex history of Italy can be seen in terms of a northern region (dominated by the Holy Roman Empire, the Papacy and the growing power of the city states) and a southern region (dominated first by the vestiges of Byzantine power, later by the Muslims and then by the Normans and their successors, such as the Angevins, the Aragonese and the Bourbons). Charlemagne gained control of northern Italy in the late eighth century, and, for the rest of the Medieval period, his successors made repeated and largely unsuccessful attempts to recreate imperial power in the region. The 11th century saw the rise of the independent city states of Florence, Genoa, Milan and particularly Venice, all of which pursued an independent policy and soon began to wield a commercial and political influence out of all proportion to their size. In the south, Sicily was taken by the Muslims in the ninth century, but then fell to the Normans in 1059 who soon established control over most of the southern part of the peninsula. In the 12th century the kingdom was one of the greatest centres of culture in Europe, particularly under Roger II. Briefly reunited by marriage to the Hohenstaufen empire of Henry VI and Frederick II between 1189 and 1268, Naples and Sicily were then ruled respectively by the houses of Anjou and Aragon until the latter reunited the region in 1442. The popes played a leading role in the tortuous diplomacy of 15th-century Italy. The period arguably witnessed the greatest ever flowering of art and culture (the Italian Renaissance), associated with writers such as Machiavelli, Aristio and Guicciardini and notable patrons such as the Medici family and several popes supporting a wealth of artists including Fra Angelico, Raphael, Botticelli, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Politically, the 16th century represented a victory for Spanish over French influence in Italy, and the Hapsburgs established themselves particularly strongly in Milan, Naples and Sicily. Many of the smaller states changed hands on numerous occasions during the following two centuries, and although the large city states maintained their independence, their power was, in general, on the wane. The Enlightenment of the 18th century found particularly strong expression in the Kingdom of Naples



and Sicily (by now ruled by the Bourbons) but centralised power was largely absent elsewhere. Opposition to Hapsburg rule was led by Garibaldi and the house of Savoy (also Kings of Sardinia since 1720), and by 1861 the ruling princes of northern and central Italy had been deposed and Victor Emmanuel II became the first King of Italy, with Florence as the capital. The full annexation of Venice and Rome was not completed for another 10 years. Italy's colonial conquests were limited (largely due to the failure of the Ethiopian campaigns) and the rulers enjoyed more success in their efforts to consolidate their own position at home, despite the considerable distractions of the various complex struggles in the Balkans. Despite being neutral in 1914, Italy joined the Allies in the following year and made some territorial gains in the peace which followed World War I. The inter-war years were dominated by economic problems, further attempts at expansion and the rise of the Fascists under Mussolini. Italy supported Hitler's Germany in 1939, but after the surrender of Italian forces and the arrest of Mussolini in 1943, the new Government backed the Allies for the remainder of World War II. King Victor Emmanuel III abdicated in 1946 and a republic was proclaimed. Elections rarely produce dramatic changes in Italy. The Christian Democrat Party (DC) has been the dominant power in each of the 51 governments since the war, although during the 1980s the premiership was held by politicians from other smaller parties. However, the almost traditional instability of the Italian government seems to have little impact on the Italians as a nation. The Communist Party (PCI), the largest in Western Europe with just under 30 per cent of the Italian vote, has dominated the opposition. In 1992, the PCI underwent a major revision of its political strategy, renouncing Marxism before reconstituting itself as the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (PDS). Hard-liners split off to form Rifondazione Comunista (Reconstructed Communists, although 'unreconstructed' might be a better description). At the following general election, held in April 1992, Giuliano D'Amato of the centre-right Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) emerged as the country's 51st post-war premier. D'Amato was one of the few senior PSI figures untainted by the latest corruption scandal to break over Italy, involving the payment of large bribes to politicians by construction companies in exchange for public works contracts. This scandal, substantial even by Italian standards, and the upsurge during the summer of 1992 of Mafia violence, brought Italy to something of a social and moral crisis. A breaking point had been reached: instead of the usual world-weary, cynical reaction, Italians reacted angrily. The D'Amato government lasted just 12 months, its immediate successor even less. By January 1994, the centre-right was in deep crisis, with both the Christian Democrats and the Socialists terminally damaged by scandal. Yet the left seemed unable to capitalise on their opponents' disarray. At this point, a right-wing saviour appeared in the form of one of the country's principal commercial magnates, Silvio Berlusconi. Making extensive use of his vast assets, especially his monopoly of Italy's commercial broadcasting network, Berlusconi self-styled as 'Il Cavaliere' ran a highly effective, if vacuous, campaign, which overwhelmed the lacklustre efforts of the left. Joining with two other right-wing parties, Lega Nord (Northern League) and the Aleanza Nazionale, Forza Italia formed a new government in March 1994. The Aleanza Nazionale was the offspring of the Movimento Sociale Italiano, which, in turn, was the inheritor of the fascist tradition in Italian politics. The regionalist Lega Nord was a new phenomenon, exploiting the resentment of northerners who felt that the poorer and less productive southern part of Italy was a drain on the country. It also drew on the pre-republic history of Italy (see above) and the distinct histories of the northern and southern parts of the country. (Lega Nord militants propose the division of Italy and the creation of a new sovereign state, Padania, in the north.) Berlusconi's victory was, in a way, even more extraordinary than what had transpired previously. Italy was now run by a tycoon for whom the distinction between the interests of the nation and those of his commercial empire were, to say the least, blurred. Berlusconi promised to act to deal with this blatant conflict of interest, but before he could do so, his coalition disintegrated and he was forced out of office. Finally, the left took its chance. From April 1996, Italy experienced its first left-wing government, operating under the banner of the Ulivo (Olive tree) alliance. It was dominated by the PDS and also supported by a number of smaller parties, including Rifondazione Comunista. The period until the fall of the left-wing



coalition in 2000 was notable mostly for Italy's key role in the Kosovo crisis. A number of domestic setbacks and a faltering economy meant, however, that the left was on the defensive when the next elections fell due in April 2001. Facing them was a newly resurgent Berlusconi, who once again relied on his unique media control and the old 1994 alliance (now termed Casa delle Libertà) with the Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale to secure a second term of office. The coalition has proved more stable than its 1994 predecessor and may, unusually for Italian governments, serve its full term. The result caused widespread amazement, especially outside Italy where Berlusconi is widely considered unfit to hold office. As if to prove the point, he forced legislation through parliament allowing him to keep control of his business and media empire (despite obvious conflicts of interest). He has been convicted of at least one of a number of outstanding corruption and bribery charges, but has exploited Italy's slow and complex legal system to avoid any consequences. To cap these dubious achievements is a newly-passed law preventing the laying of any charges against any of Italy's senior politicians.

Government: Since changes to the 1948 constitution, agreed by referendum in 1993, both houses of the bicameral Parlamento are elected under a mixed system three-quarters by majority vote in constituencies and one-quarter by direct proportional representation. The lower house, the Camera dei Deputati (Chamber of Deputies), has 630 members, elected for a five-year term, 475 members in single-seat constituencies and 155 members by proportional representation. The Senato della Repubblica (Senate of the Republic) has 326 members, elected for a five-year term, 232 members in single-seat constituencies, 83 members by proportional representation and 11 senators for life. The two chambers, plus a group of 58 regional representatives, comprise an electoral college which elects a President as head of state for a seven-year term. The President appoints a Prime Minister (usually, but not always, the leader of the largest party in parliament) who leads a Council of Ministers with executive responsibilities. In June 1997, a parliamentary commission on constitutional reform announced its recommendations (including a directly elected President) but as yet it has proved impossible to transmute these ideas into any kind of political reality.

Travel Advice

Most visits to Italy are trouble-free but you should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate international terrorist attacks, which could be against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners. There continues to be isolated cases of domestic terrorism in Italy by extreme left wing and secessionist groups which are aimed primarily at official Italian targets. Visitors should be alert to the dangers of car and street crimes in cities. There continues to be non-violent volcanic activity on the island of Stromboli. Italy is in an earthquake zone. Visitors to ski resorts should take advice on weather and avalanche conditions before they travel and should make **themselves aware of local skiing laws and regulations throughout their visit (see: <http://www.goski.com/italy.htm> and <http://www.avalanches.org>)**. This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change rapidly, visitors are advised to contact the following organisations for the latest travel advice. British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: (0845) 850 2829. Website: www.fco.gov.uk US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

Top Things To See

Be fascinated by Rome's numerous relics and monuments, the hectic buzz of swarming scooters, bellowing motorists and animated street cafes. Roman streets contain reminders of all the eras in Rome's rich history the Colosseum and the Forum are the most famous from the classical period and ancient basilicas bear witness to the early Christian era. Via del Corso, Rome's main thoroughfare, cuts through the length of the city centre from Piazza Venezia in the south, with



the vast marble Vittorio Emanuele Monument (erected to commemorate the unification of Italy and honour her first king), to emerge in Piazza del Popolo in the north, beyond which lies the cool green refuge of the Villa Borghese. East of Via del Corso lie the elegant shopping streets including Via Borgognona and Via Condotti which lead up to Piazza di Spagna (the famous Spanish Steps). At the nearby Trevi Fountain, visitors guarantee their return to Rome by throwing a coin into the waters. West of Via del Corso, a maze of narrow streets winds its way down to the River Tiber. It is here, in the historic centre of Rome, that the **most complete ancient Roman structure is found**: the Pantheon, on Piazza della Rotonda, built by Emperor Hadrian and completed in AD 125. Monumental in scale, the diameter of the dome and its height are precisely equal, while the interior is illuminated by sunlight entering through a 9m (30ft) hole in the dome's roof. Just beyond the Pantheon lies Piazza Navona, a long thin square, on a classical site, rebuilt in the 17th century in High Baroque style. Close by stands the circular hulk of Castel Sant'Angelo, burial place of Emperor Hadrian and the papal city's main fortified defence in later times. On the west bank of the Tiber, the Vatican City is an independent sovereign state, best known for the magnificent St Peter's Basilica. The Basilica is approached through the 17th-century St Peter's Square, a superb creation by Bernini, enclosed by two semi-circular colonnades, with an Egyptian obelisk in the centre. To the right of St Peter's stands the Vatican Palace, the Pope's residence. Among the principal features of the Palace are the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Museum. The Vatican Gardens can be visited only by those on guided tours. For further information, see the separate Vatican City country section. Probably the highlight of any tour of Italy, Venice (Venezia) is a must. The city's main monuments St Mark's Basilica and the Doge's Palace overlooking St Mark's Square have gained fame through innumerable paintings by such artists as Canaletto, but the whole city is in many ways a work of art. The city's most important thoroughfare is the Grand Canal, lined with fine Gothic and Renaissance palazzi (buildings) and crossed by the bustling Ponte di Rialto (Rialto Bridge) and the wooden Ponte dell'Accademia (Academy Bridge). Nearby, the Galleria dell'Accademia displays hundreds of Venetian paintings dating from between the 14th and 18th centuries. The Venetian islands of Burano (famous for lacemaking), Murano (famous for glassmaking) and Torcello (noted for the magnificent Byzantine Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta) can be visited by boat. Note: The city is linked to Mestre, on the mainland, by a causeway which can be crossed by road or rail. Although there is a large car park in Venice, at the end of the causeway, it is easier and cheaper to park in Mestre and continue by train. Visit Turin, also known as La Parigi d'Italia (the Italian Paris). Uptown Turin is centred on the main shopping street, Via Roma, which links the city's favourite square, the Piazza Castello, with its most dramatic building, the Baroque Palazzo Madama, which houses the Museum of Ancient Art, and the Egyptian Museum, the second-largest in the world after Cairo. The famous Turin Shroud may be viewed in the 15th-century white marble Cathedral. In Milan (Milano), appreciate the delicate and ethereal beauty of the splendid Gothic Duomo (Cathedral), one of the world's largest churches. The Castello Sforzesco, in the west of the city, is a massive fortified castle, which now houses a number of museums. Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece, The Last Supper, may be viewed at the convent of Santa Maria della Grazie. The Teatro della Scala (Scala Theatre) remains the undisputed world capital of opera and is well worth viewing for its magnificent opulence. In Lombardy, discover Cremona, the birthplace of the Stradivarius violin. A walk around the Medieval Piazza del Comune offers various architectural treats. There are also two interesting museums: the Museo Stradivariano, housing a wealth of Stradivarius musical instruments, and the Museo Civico, displaying mosaics and relics from the Romanesque period. Discover the beauty of the great northern lakes which lie in a series of long, deep valleys running down onto the plains from the Alps. Lake Como is perhaps the most attractive, Lake Maggiore the most elegant (and populous) and Lake Garda the wildest and most spectacular. Visit Genoa (Genova), capital of Liguria, and the birthplace of Christopher Columbus. The Medieval district of the city holds many treasures, such as the Church of Sant'Agostino (next to the Museo dell'Architettura e Scultura Ligure), the beautiful Church of San Donato, the 12th-century Church of Santa Maria di Castello, the Gothic Cathedral of San Lorenzo



and the Porta Soprana (the old stone entrance gate to the city). The Doge's Palace was built in the 17th-century. It holds the Doge's Chapel, the Grimaldi Tower, the Hall of the Minor Consiglio and the Hall of the Maggior Consiglio. The Acquario (Aquarium) presents underwater ocean life, with 1000 species housed in 71 vast tanks, making it the largest centre of its kind in Europe. Immerse yourself in the Shakespearian world by going to Verona, the setting of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. The Casa di Giulietta (Juliet's House), a small Medieval home with a balcony and courtyard, attracts thousands of visitors each year. The other big attraction is the well-preserved Roman Arena, built in AD 290 and able to accommodate over 20,000 spectators. An opera festival, with open-air night-time performances, is staged here throughout summer. Discover a profusion of early Byzantine and Christian monuments decorated with stunning mosaics in Ravenna, notably the splendid Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the octagonal Basilica di San Vitale, and the churches of San Apollinare Nuovo and Sant'Apollinare in Classe, all of which are UNESCO-listed World Heritage Sites. Visit the principal Tuscan city, Florence (Firenze), the world's most celebrated storehouse of Renaissance art and architecture. Brunelleschi's revolutionary design for the dome of the Duomo (Cathedral) is generally accepted as the first expression of Renaissance ideas in architecture. Between the Piazza del Duomo at its feet and the river are many of the best-loved palazzi (palaces), whilst close by to the north are the churches of San Lorenzo and Santa Maria Novella. The shop-lined Ponte Vecchio bridge scans the river to arrive at Palazzo Pitti and the Boboli Gardens. The Uffizi Gallery houses one of the world's most celebrated art collections including masterpieces such as Botticelli's Birth Of Venus, Leonardo da Vinci's Annunciation, Michelangelo's Holy Family and Titian's Urbino Venus. Michelangelo's famous statue of David may be viewed at the Accademia di Belle Arti near the University. Take a picture of the famous Leaning Tower, a free-standing campanile or bell tower in Pisa, north of Siena. Next to the tower, on Campo dei Miracoli, stand the elegant 11th-century Gothic Cathedral and the Baptistery. Visit the place where pizza was invented, Naples. Frequently criticised for urban decay and delinquency, it is a city where splendid churches and palaces stand aside squalid tenement blocks. Notable monuments include the 17th-century Palazzo Reale, built by the Bourbons, the massive stone Castel Nuovo, overlooking the sea, and the San Carlo Opera House. The impressive Museo Archeologico Nazionale houses an excellent collection of Greco-Roman artefacts, including mosaics from Pompeii and Herculaneum. Enjoy fantastic views of the Bay of Naples, Pompeii and the Tyrrhennian Sea from Mount Vesuvius, still an active volcano. Understand how the ordinary first-century Romans lived their daily lives at the remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum, engulfed in the great eruption of AD 79. Moulds of people and animals found well-preserved, buried under the burning ash, can be seen at Pompeii, and the decoration in some of the excavated villas is amazingly intact, including numerous wall paintings of gods and humans in scenes ranging from the heroic to the erotic. Visit the 13th-century Basilica di San Francesco, one of Italy's best-loved and most-visited churches, located in the picturesque Medieval hilltown of Assisi, famous as the birthplace of St Francis, founder of the Franciscan order of monks. The life of St Francis is commemorated in frescoes by Giotto in the basilica. Pay a visit to Castelgandolfo, on the western side of the Italian 'boot'. The city overlooks the spectacular Lake Albano, and is dominated by the Palazzo Pontificio, the Pope's summer retreat. In Matera, visit the extraordinary Sassi, a vast troglodyte settlement of houses and churches carved into tufa rock. Home to 15,000 residents until the 1950s, this is now a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site. Sicily is littered with the remains of successive invading cultures. The most important ancient Greek sites are: the temples of the Valle dei Templi at Agrigento, said to be better preserved than any in Greece itself; the Greek Theatre at Syracuse (where there is also a Roman Amphitheatre); and the vast Temple of Apollo at Selinunte. In the capital, Palermo, notable buildings include the Cathedral, the Martorana, the Palazzo dei Normanni, San Cataldo, San Giuseppe dei Teatini and Santa Maria di Gesu churches. The catacombs at the Capuchin Monastery contain thousands of mummified bodies. There are many Bronze Age remains, the best known being the nuraghi - circular (sometimes conical) stone dwellings throughout Sardinia.



The largest collection may be found at Su Nuraxi, about 80km (50 miles) north of Cagliari, the island's capital.

Tourist Information: Italian State Tourist Board (ENIT) in the UK1 Princes Street, London W1B 2AY, UK Tel: (020) 7408 1254 or 7399 3550 (brochure request). Website: www.enit.it Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) in the USA630 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1565, New York, NY 10111, USA Tel: (212) 245 5618 or 4827. Website: www.italiantourism.com

Top Things To Do

In Rome, wander around the district of Trastevere, the city's alternative focus which is home to numerous bars, restaurants and nightclubs. In Turin (Torino), the focus of the Italy's automobile industry, go on a guided tour of the Fiat headquarters, where a full-scale test track may be found on the roof, while the Museo dell'Automobile (Automobile Museum), traces the history of the car on an international level. Gamble at one of Italy's few casinos at St Vincent. Go shopping in Milan (Milano), Italy's most sophisticated city. Practice your Italian or develop your art skills. Italian language and art courses are available throughout Italy. Language courses are often complemented by subjects such as cooking or architecture. Well known institutions offering a range of art courses include the Palazzo Spinelli and Università Internazionale dell'Arte in Florence; the Accademia Italia in Rome; the Centro Internazionale degli Studi per l'Insegnamento del Mosaico in Ravenna for mosaic making; and, for music courses, the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. **Further information can be obtained from the Italian Cultural Institute in London (tel: (020) 7235 1461; website: www.italcultur.org.uk) or the Italian State Tourist Board (see Tourist Information).** Rejuvenate at one of Italy's thermal spas, some famous since the Roman era. The most important and best-equipped health resorts in Italy are Abano Terme and Montegrotto Terme (Veneto), Acqui Terme (Piedmont), Chianciano Terme and Montecatini Terme (Tuscany), Fiuggi (Lazio), Porretta Terme and Salsomaggiore Terme (Emilia-Romagna), Sciacca Terme (Sicily) and Sirmione (Lombardy). At Merano (Alto Adige), it is possible to have a special grape-diet treatment. More information on health spas in Italy is available from La Federterme (Italian Federation of Thermal Industries and Curative Mineral Waters; website: www.federterme.it). Do not miss the chance to wear an elaborate costume and mask at the Venice Carnival (end of January). Italy has some 8500km (5345 miles) of coastline and remains one of Europe's favourite destinations for beach holidays. All types of watersports are available at major resorts. The enduring appeal of the Italian Riviera in Liguria (a 350km-/219 mile-stretch from France to Tuscany), or of the Adriatic and Amalfi coasts, the latter known for its steeply terraced villages clinging to a rocky coastline (Positano), is witnessed by the ever-growing number of visitors. Less busy are the beaches on the islands, in Sicily, which has large sandy stretches on the southern coast, and in Sardinia, much of which is still relatively untouched. Many of Italy's best dive sites are located in Sardinia, and underwater Italy's first surfing school is based in Mauro. Diving courses and equipment hire are also available on the Tremiti Islands (Puglia) in the Adriatic and along the coasts of Tuscany and Liguria. In Capri, one of Italy's most visited islands, take a boat trip from the Marina Grande to the main tourist attraction, the Blue Grotto. Ischia, an island on the west side of Naples, is well visited by the locals who appreciate its calm and scenic beauty. Fishing is excellent throughout Sardinian and Sicilian waters (also renowned for their healthy lobster population), while the rivers in northern Italy, Umbria and Tuscany can offer particularly scenic fishing holidays. For sea fishing, private or chartered boats can be rented. Genoa has frequent yachting regattas, as does Santa Margherita Ligure, where a canoe and small boat regatta is held in July. Sailing is popular on Italy's five major lakes near the Alps in the north Como, Garda, Iseo, Lugano and Maggiore. Go skiing in the Italian Alps. To the west of Turin, in the Piedmont region, major resorts include Bardonechia, Sauze d'Oulx and Sestriere. Further north, the Aosta Valley has 28 resorts, such as Cervinia, Courmayeur and La Thuile, which can be easily reached from France (via the Mont Blanc tunnel from Chamonix) or



from Switzerland (via the St Bernard tunnel). Driving can be difficult in the Dolomites, further east, but the beautiful scenery more than makes up for it, helping to make this one of Italy's prime skiing destinations; major resorts include Cortina D'Ampezzo (Italy's most upmarket resort), Madonna di Campiglio, Merano and Selva/Sella Ronda. Skiing is also possible in Central Italy, in resorts such as Abetone (Tuscany), Campo Imperatore (Abruzzo), and in several other places in Abruzzo, down to Mount Etna in Sicily. In the Valle d'Aosta region, go hillwalking or climbing in the Gran Paradiso National Park and Mont Avic Regional Park, home to wildlife including the chamois and ibex. The Dolomites on the Swiss border is also ideal for hiking and climbing. See Marsican brown bears (unique to Italy), wolves, chamois and eagles in the National Park of Abruzzo. In the Molise region, the Matese mountain range is still the haven of wolves and various birds of prey. Make sure to see a bareback horserace on Piazza del Campo in Siena. A special event since the 13th century, the race, known as Palio, is held here twice a year, in July and August, and attracts crowds from all over the world. Go mushroom picking in Calabria, the toe of the 'boot', a spectacularly beautiful region of high mountains and dense forests. Porcini (*boletus edulis*), fresh, dried and pickled, naturally adorn the shelves of all the speciality shops of the region. Visit wine cellars in Tuscany. The landscape of Tuscany is, typically, one of vine-covered hills, cypress woods, fields of sunflowers and remote hilltop villages. Chianti, the best-known Italian wine, is made in the area north of Siena, and several wine cellars are open to the public. TOURIST INFORMATION Italian State Tourist Board (ENIT) in the UK 1 Princes Street, London W1B 2AY, UK Tel: (020) 7408 1254 or 7399 3550 (brochure request). Website: www.enit.it Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) in the USA 630 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1565, New York, NY 10111, USA Tel: (212) 245 5618 or 4827. Website: www.italiantourism.com

Tourist Information: Italian State Tourist Board (ENIT) in the UK 1 Princes Street, London W1B 2AY, UK Tel: (020) 7408 1254 or 7399 3550 (brochure request). Website: www.enit.it Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) in the USA 630 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1565, New York, NY 10111, USA Tel: (212) 245 5618 or 4827. Website: www.italiantourism.com

Overview II

Although Italy has only been unified since 1861, the rich and complex history of the peninsula has, perhaps more than that of any other country, influenced the course of European development, particularly in the fields of culture and political thought. The most important early settlers in the area were the Etruscans, who had established settlements in northern Italy by the sixth century BC. By the third century BC, the city state of Rome, having subdued most of the peninsula, was intent on extending its influence elsewhere. At its greatest extent, the Empire (so called after 30 BC) made the Mediterranean a Roman lake and for several centuries conferred on **its inhabitants the benefits of the Pax Romana:** culture (mainly Hellenic in origin), law, relative peace and comparative prosperity. In the 12th century, the kingdom was one of the greatest centres of culture in Europe, particularly under Roger II. The popes played a leading role in the tortuous diplomacy of 15th-century Italy. The period arguably witnessed the greatest ever flowering of art and culture (the Italian Renaissance), associated with writers such as Machiavelli, Aristio and Guicciardini and notable patrons such as the Medici family and several popes supporting a wealth of artists including Fra Angelico, Raphael, Botticelli, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Today, besides the renowned cities of Venice, Genoa and Naples, each with its own unique identity and architecture, Italy features romantic Medieval hill towns, such as San Gimignano in Tuscany, and unspoilt fishing villages, like the unforgettable Positano on the Amalfi coast. Indeed Italy combines art, history and contemporary fashion with stunning natural landscapes: the turquoise waters of the Costa Smeralda offer one of Europe's most beautiful stretches of sand, sea and sunshine, while the snow-covered slopes of the Dolomite mountains are a haven for winter sports enthusiasts. Visit vineyards and cellars to taste the very best



regional wines: the Veneto, famed for the sparkling white prosecco, and Tuscany, home of the highly acclaimed robust red, Brunello di Montalcino. And to really get away from it all, take a boat to the islands of Sicily or Sardinia to experience rural hospitality in the blissful Mediterranean. Italy: still so much more to discover.

Communications

Telephone: Full IDD service available. Country code: 390 (followed by 6 for Rome, 2 for Milan, 11 for Turin, 81 for Naples, 41 for Venice and 55 for Florence). Outgoing international code: 00. Telephone kiosks now only accept phonecards, which can be purchased at post offices, tobacconists and certain newsagents.

Mobile telephone: Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good.

Internet: Public access is available in Internet Corner Kiosks operated by Telecom Italia. Kiosks have been installed at airports, major hotels and in other public places. There are also Internet cafes in all main towns.

Post: The Italian postal system tends to be subject to delays. Letters between Italy and other European countries usually take seven to 10 days to arrive. Stamps are sold in post offices and tobacconists. Post office hours: Mon-Fri 0830-1400, central offices are open until 1700.

MEDIA: Between them, Rai and Mediaset effectively control Italy's TV market. The Italian press is highly regionalised. Press: Among the most important Italian dailies are Corriere della Sera (Milan) (website: www.corriere.it), Il Messaggero (Rome) (website: <http://ilmessaggero.caltanet.it>), La Repubblica (Rome) (website: www.repubblica.it) and La Stampa (Turin) (website: www.lastampa.it). Il Sole 24 Ore is the daily financial publication (website: www.ilsole24ore.com). The Informer (website: www.informer.it) is a useful English-language online guide for expatriates living in Italy. The main towns publish a weekly booklet with entertainment programmes, sports events, restaurants, nightclubs, etc. There are several English-language publications: monthly magazines Enigma Roma (Rome), Grapevine (on the Luca area) (website: www.lucagrapevine.com) and Hello Milano (Milan), as well as Wanted In Rome (website: www.wantedinrome.com), published twice-monthly. TV: Rai is the public broadcaster. Its channels include Rai Uno, Rai Sue, Rai Tre and Rai News 24. Mediaset is Italy's largest private television broadcaster whose channels include Italia 1, Rete 4 and Canale 5. Radio: Rai is the public broadcaster. Its stations include Radio 1, Radio 2, Radio 3 and GR Parlamento. Commercial stations include Radio 24, Radio 101 and Radio Italia.