



## Jumpstart Your Italian Experience

Before you start planning your trip to Italy, make sure that you know enough about the country! That way you get to know where to go, what to do, and what to look forward to.

Here are some things you can do:

- Read through the Italy tour guides on Tour Italy Now or Italy Now**  
You may already have a rough idea of what to visit in Italy—you want to see the Colosseum, for instance. But you should also read the tour guides on our site to see what else you can visit in the area. This is to help you make the most out of your stay in the country.
- Watch an Italian movie**  
Italian cinema is world-renowned—and many of them feature the country’s top tourist attractions. You can start with a classic: Federico Fellini’s evocative, dreamy “Amarcord,” or the atmospheric and haunting “Bicycle Thief.” For something more recent, you can watch “Cinema Paradiso” or a modern Italian film.
- Eat at an authentic Italian restaurant**  
Get a feel for Italian cuisine by dining at an Italian restaurant in your area. Then when you get to Italy, you can start comparing the dishes you’ve eaten to the ones you’re sampling.
- Read the English version of an Italian newspaper**  
By staying updated on what’s happening in Italy, you won’t just get a unique perspective on the country’s current affairs. You can also avoid potential pitfalls during your trip, such as train stoppages or fare hikes on public transportation.

## Designing Your Trip

Now that you’ve gotten a feel of Italy, it’s time to plan your trip!

**What kind of tour?** *Choose from one of the two.*

- Escorted Tour**  
Escorted tours involve a group with a pre-determined itinerary and activities. This itinerary includes scheduled sightseeing and meals, either with the group or on your own. The group can be large or small, depending on the package, so make sure to choose well. Study the packages closely to make sure you get what you want!
- Customized Tour**  
As the name suggests, this kind of tour is pretty much what you make of it! You get to set the itinerary before you leave. Customized tours are also great if you’re traveling with a small group of friends or family. You can do whatever your heart desires and fits your budget.



## When do you want to travel?

- April or May**  
Beat the summer rush by opting to travel earlier.
- Summer season (June to August)**  
Other than the hot weather, another thing to watch out for during the Italian summer season are the crowds. After all, it's the peak season for tourist arrivals in the country.
- September or October**  
Great weather with less of the crowds!
- Winter (November to March)**  
It's cold but when you'll get the very best prices.
- What date works best?** \_\_\_\_\_

## Preparing for Your Trip

Once you've figured out where in Italy you want to go, it's time to make the trip happen. Here's a list of things that you should prepare in order to book a trip.

### Visa & Passport

- I have a valid passport**  
A passport should be valid for at least six months after your return date. For example, if your return flight is on October 15, 2016, your passport must be valid until April 15, 2017.

*No passport? Then choose one of the options below:*

- Get a passport**  
For first-time applicants of a U.S. passport, you must fill out Form DS-11 and submit it at an authorized Passport Application Acceptance Facility of Passport Agency. You should submit it in person along with evidence of U.S. Citizenship, one passport photo, and a photocopy of an identification document. For more information, visit this page:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/first-time.html>
- Renew a passport**  
If you already have a passport but it's going to expire in less than three months after your trip, then you should renew it in advance. More information about renewing your passport here:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/renew.html>
- Get a visa**  
Italy is part of the Schengen zone, which allows travelers from the United States to enter the country for up to 90 days without a visa. However, citizens from other countries in Asia and South America may need to apply for a visa. Please check this page for more information:



[http://www.esteri.it/mae/en/ministero/servizi/stranieri/ingressosoggiornoinitalia/visto\\_ingresso/paesi\\_esenti\\_visto.html](http://www.esteri.it/mae/en/ministero/servizi/stranieri/ingressosoggiornoinitalia/visto_ingresso/paesi_esenti_visto.html)

For more details, please call your local Italian embassy or consulate.

**Insurance**

Keeping safe and sound is a must, especially overseas. So for your peace of mind, you need to get travel insurance.

**Purchase travel and medical insurance**

Before purchasing travel insurance, make sure that you know which plan you're getting. For example, some insurance plans only cover trip cancellation and interruption. This means you'll get reimbursed when you don't get to go on your trip or when you cut it short. Some plans can also include lost luggage.

Then there's also medical evacuation insurance, which can get you to the nearest hospital. However, check if it covers medical repatriation, or a provision for medical personnel to accompany you back to your home city.

**Check your existing health insurance**

Not all health insurance plans cover overseas travel. So make sure to call your insurance provider to check!

**Purchase museum or day-excursion tickets**

If you've already planned out your itinerary, you can start purchasing tickets for the museums and other attractions in advance through Tour Italy Now. That way, you won't waste time falling in line just to purchase tickets on site.

*List the attractions that you want to visit and tick the boxes when you've gotten tickets!*

Buy tickets for:

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**Money Matters**

Of course, we can't avoid the topic of money when traveling. As part of the European Union, Italy uses the euro, so you'll need to swap your local currency when you get there. But that's not the only thing you should do! Here are some other things to keep in mind:

**Buy euros from local bank or currency exchange**

Yes, you can always exchange your local currency into euros upon arrival in Italy. But it's better to already have some pocket money on hand when you arrive. So head to your local bank or currency exchange to swap a hundred dollars or so into euros. Make sure to do this early, especially if you're transacting with a smaller bank, as they may still have to request the currency from overseas partners.



**Call credit card and debit card company to notify them of travel plans**

Due to the many cases of credit card fraud around the world, banks strictly monitor overseas transactions. So make sure to call your bank or credit card company and tell them that you'll be abroad on specific dates. That way, your card won't be accidentally rejected or frozen if you try to use it to order a meal.

**Check if your credit or debit cards are widely accepted in Italy**

Visa and MasterCard credit cards are widely accepted throughout Italy. However, if you're using a Discover or American Express card, you're out of luck—only few stores honor these cards. On the debit side, most Italian ATMs accept Cirrus and Plus cards, which are widely accepted.

**Make sure debit card PIN number is 4 numbers or less**

Some Italian ATMs, or "bancomats," can only accept PIN numbers of four or fewer digits. So if you have a longer PIN number, check with your bank if they can waive that requirement.

**Get some traveler's checks as a backup**

While traveler's checks are not as widely accepted as in the past, having one or two as a backup is good, just in case you end up losing your wallet or run out of euros.

**Learn the basics of Italian taxes: VAT, hotel tax, and tips**

Once you're in Italy, be reminded that they deal with taxes there a bit differently. For starters, they have a sales tax called VAT, short for "value added tax." This is already included in all prices. Meanwhile, there's a hotel tax for guests in Rome, Florence, and Venice. This is pegged to the hotel's star rating, so expect to pay more tax when staying in a more luxurious hotel.

Finally, tipping is not required in Italy. Most Italians only leave a tip when the meal or service is sensational. Some restaurants already include it in the bill as the "coperto." However, there's a school of thought that Italians expect Americans to tip. So just leave anything between 5 to 10% tip at restaurants (including coperto). For staff such as hotel porters, a euro or two would suffice.

## **Make Photocopies & Scans of Essential Documents**

These photocopies will be of great help in the unfortunate chance that you lose your passport or other documents. Bring one set with you and leave one set of these documents to someone you can trust. Here is an initial list of documents that you should make photocopies of:

- Passport
- Driver's license
- Birth certificate of child (for those traveling with children 16 and below)
- Prescriptions for essential medicines

### **Create list of important numbers**

Having a list of contacts is handy throughout your trip, just in case you need to make some last-minute changes to your itinerary or there's an emergency. Here are some numbers you should know:



- Credit card international customer service telephone numbers
- Travelers' check numbers
- Flight numbers
- Hotel numbers and reservation details
- Airline international customer service number
- Tour operator telephone number

### Packing Tips

Now that all the necessary documents are in place, it's time to pack your bags!

- Check-in luggage**  
Most escorted tours only allow one medium suitcase (size 21' to 26'). So it's important to pack light, especially if you're planning to move around.
  - Three pairs of shoes (maximum), with at least one for walking**  
Make sure they're all comfortable so that you don't end up with blisters after sightseeing!
  - Knee-length shorts and/or skirts (or longer)**  
Travelers need to be dressed appropriately when entering Italy's many churches or going to the Vatican.
  - Clothing appropriate for the weather**  
Evenings can be cold in the fall and spring, while summertime can be hot
- Carry-on luggage**  
Your carry-on luggage can also double as the bag you're going to use when touring the city. In this case, make sure it has a cross-body strap so that it's easier to carry. Otherwise, use a backpack.
  - Prescription medication and vitamins**
  - Photocopies of essential documents**
  - List of important numbers**
  - Voltage adaptors or converters**  
Needed only if your appliances are designed for 110v—Italy uses a 240v voltage.
- Extra bag if you're planning to shop in Italy**



## Staying Connected

Of course, if you're going to be out of your home country for quite some time, you'll need a way to stay connected. Here are some things you should check:

**Check if your hotel has free Wi-Fi access**

Internet access is readily available in major cities such as Rome, Florence, and Milan. However, if you're going out to the countryside, service may be unreliable. Hence, if you need to always have internet access, make sure it's available at your hotel—your home base for your trip.

**Check if your phone is unlocked**

**If yes, buy an Italian SIM card**

Instead of going on roaming and racking up a huge phone bill, just purchase a local SIM card at stores like TIM, Wind, or Vodafone. While customer service can be tricky if you don't speak Italian, it's still the best way to save on costs.

**Otherwise, check roaming fees**

If your phone is locked to your carrier, you may want to switch on roaming to ensure that you stay connected. However, roaming fees may be expensive, so check with your carrier first before you turn it on.

**Every US carrier is different**

Certain USA phone carriers like T-Mobile offer free wifi and text while in Italy and many other countries. In those cases, you can use apps like Facetime, WhatsApp and Skype for calling home. So call your service provider and see if international wifi for a set rate is possible. That may be your best option.

We hope you enjoyed the Insider Italy Vacation Checklist and that it will help you plan your dream trip to Italy. If you need any assistance with trip planning don't hesitate to email us at [info@touritalynow.com](mailto:info@touritalynow.com) or call us 800.955.4418!

Thanks and have a great trip!