 The Roman Forum

Trip Notes: Italy

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

A valid US passport with at least **three months beyond your planned date of departure from the Schengen Area** is required. (We recommend six months for flexibility.) A visa is **not required** for US citizens visiting Italy or other Schengen countries for stays **up to 90 days within a 180-day period**.

Entry/Exit System (EES):

EES will start operations on **12 October 2025**, with gradual introduction at EU external borders. Full implementation expected by **10 April 2026**. Until then, passports will continue to be manually stamped.

ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorization System):

Expected to launch in **late 2026** for visa-free travelers (ages 18–70). Required for entry into **30 European countries**, including France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. Cost: about **€20**, valid for 3 years or until your passport expires. Application completed online prior to travel.

Schengen Area countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

UK (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland): Requires a separate ETA for visits up to 6 months. Cost: £16 [Apply here](#).

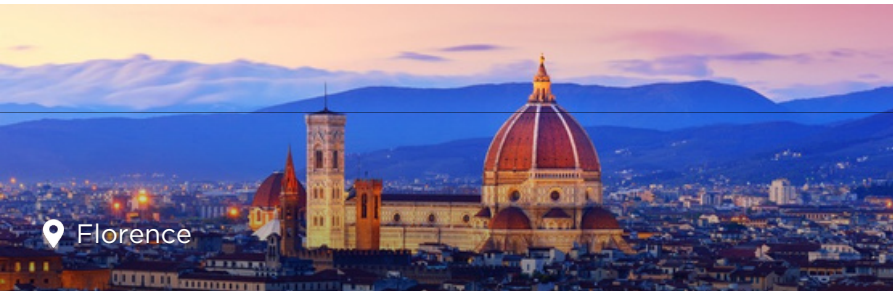
CURRENCY & CREDIT CARDS

The official currency is the **Euro (€)**.

- Major credit cards are widely accepted in hotels, shops, and restaurants, though smaller establishments may prefer cash.
- Inform your bank of your travel dates to avoid fraud blocks.
- ATMs are common but may have withdrawal limits or foreign transaction fees.
- A credit card is typically required for hotel check-in and car rentals.



Venice



Florence



Burano

INTERNATIONAL LUGGAGE ALLOWANCE

Varies between airlines on both international and intra-European flights. Always check with your airline for current baggage limits and fees.

Reference: FAA Pack Safe: Dangerous Goods.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Dial 112 for police, ambulance, or fire.

PHONES & INTERNET

- To dial Italy from the US: 11 + 39 + local number.
- To dial the US from Italy: 00 + 1 + area code + number.
- SIM cards and eSIMs available from **TIM, Vodafone, and WindTre.**
- Wi-Fi widely available in hotels, cafés, and public areas.

HOTELS

- Standard check-in: **3-4PM**
- Check-out: **11AM-12PM**
- Early check-in/late check-out may be available on request.

TIPPING

Tipping is not obligatory in Italy.

- **Restaurants:** A “coperto” (cover charge) is often included. Rounding up or leaving 5-10% for excellent service is appreciated.
- **Taxis:** Round up to the nearest euro.
- **Hotels:** €1-2 per bag for porters, a few euros per night for housekeeping.

FOOD & WINE

Italy is world-renowned for its regional cuisine and wines. Meals often follow a multi-course tradition (antipasto, primo, secondo, dolce).

- Legal drinking age: 18.
- Espresso is common after meals (milk-based coffee is typically only for breakfast).
- Regional specialties vary — pizza in Naples, pasta in Rome, risotto in Milan, seafood in Sicily, wines from Tuscany and Piedmont.

SHOPPING & VAT

- Shops generally open 9AM-1PM and 3:30PM-7:30PM; closed Sundays outside tourist areas.
- Italy’s VAT is 22%. Non-EU residents may claim a refund on purchases over €154.94 from a single retailer. Refund desks are at airports.



📍 Murano



📍 Chianti



📍 Milan

Popular Souvenirs

- **Leather goods** (Florence)
- **Murano glass & Burano lace** (Venice)
- **Ceramics** (Deruta, Amalfi Coast, Sicily)
- **Food & wine** (olive oil, balsamic vinegar, Parmigiano Reggiano, Chianti, Barolo)
- **Fashion** (Milan, Rome boutiques)

TIME

Italy is on **Central European Time (CET)**: GMT +1 (GMT +2 during Daylight Saving, late March–late October).

LANGUAGE

The official language is **Italian**. English is widely spoken in tourist areas.

Common Phrases

- Hello – *Ciao / Buongiorno* (formal, daytime)
- Goodbye – *Arrivederci*
- Thank you – *Grazie*
- Please – *Per favore*
- Excuse me – *Mi scusi*
- Do you speak English? – *Parla inglese?*

ETIQUETTE

- **Greetings:** A handshake is common; friends may exchange kisses on both cheeks.
- **Dress:** Churches (like St. Peter's Basilica) require modest attire — no bare shoulders or short shorts.
- **Dining:** Wait for the host to say *buon appetito* before eating. Bread is not usually served with olive oil or butter.
- **Punctuality:** Being a few minutes late for social events is common, but punctuality is expected for tours/appointments.

CLIMATE

- **North (Milan, Venice):** Cold winters, hot humid summers.
- **Central (Rome, Florence):** Mild winters, hot dry summers.
- **South & Islands (Naples, Sicily):** Warmer year-round, very hot summers. Always pack a light jacket and comfortable walking shoes.

POWER

Electricity is **230V, 50Hz**. Italy uses **Type C, F, and L plugs**. Bring a universal adapter with voltage converter if needed.



📍 The Colosseum



📍 St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City



📍 Ponte Vecchio

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

- 1 January – **New Year's Day**
- 6 January – **Epiphany**
- Easter Sunday & Monday (date varies)**
- 25 April – **Liberation Day**
- 1 May – **Labor Day**
- 2 June – **Republic Day**
- 15 August – **Assumption Day (Ferragosto)**
- 1 November – **All Saints' Day**
- 8 December – **Immaculate Conception**
- 25 December – **Christmas Day**
- 26 December – **St. Stephen's Day**

DRIVING

- Drive on the **right-hand side**.
- **Speed limits:** generally 50 km/h (31 mph) in towns, 90 km/h (56 mph) on secondary roads, 130 km/h (81 mph) on autostrade.
- Seat belts are mandatory.
- Handheld phone use is prohibited.
- US driver's license + **International Driving Permit (IDP)** required for rentals.
- Many cities (Rome, Florence, Milan) have **ZTL zones** (limited traffic areas) — fines are issued if you enter without authorization.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

US State Department Travel Advisories

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Italy

<https://it.usembassy.gov>

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

<https://step.state.gov>

US Passports

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>

International Travel Guidance

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>