



Italy Handbook



Introduction

Thank you again for joining a language immersion program with Xperitas. This handbook contains helpful, specific information for all our student travelers to Italy. If your program has a guide, you will find they are a wonderful support and source of information for the program. We encourage you to work as a team with your guide!

CLIMATE

The climate in Italy varies greatly depending on the region. In general, the country enjoys typical Mediterranean weather patterns with hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters. Dress in layers to accommodate variance in weather, particularly in spring. Make sure you pack a raincoat or umbrella. Even if the weather doesn't look that cool, remember you will be outside walking much more than in the United States!

CLOTHING

Reference the Xperitas Italy packing list for advice on what to bring.

Italians pride themselves on being well put-together. You don't have to pack dress clothes, but avoid wearing ripped jeans, short shorts, old worn-out tennis shoes or anything else overly casual. Be sure to dress modestly when visiting any churches or other sites of religious significance. The most valuable item you will pack will be decent walking shoes.

ELECTRICITY

- The electricity in Italy is 230v (compared to 110v in the USA).
- Most modern electronics (laptops, Apple products, phone and camera chargers, etc...) only need to be used with a travel adapter.
- You will need a travel converter for other electronics, such as hair dryers, straighteners, curlers or razors. It is best to just leave these items (and the clunky converter) at home.

CULTURAL TIP

Air conditioning is not widespread in Italy.

MONEY

- Contact your bank to alert them of your travel plans and inquire about what they advise and offer.
- Keep exchange rates and international processing fees in mind.
- Get a debit card with a smart chip, if possible.
- Use ATMs once in country (make sure you know your 4-digit PIN number).
- Have 50-100€ in cash before you travel. Your local bank may be able to order currency for you.
- In country, use small bills in small shops and restaurants, if possible.
- A backup, emergency card is a good idea in case one card is lost or stolen.

TIPPING

- Tipping in restaurants, hotels or taxis is not customary in Italy. Because of this, restaurants will charge a coperto of one to five (in more touristy restaurants) euros as a service fee.
- We suggest tipping your bus driver or guide 1-2€ per student per day if the driver is with you all day for multiple days. You do not have to tip for direct bus transfers unless your driver helps a lot with luggage. Then, the above guideline is a nice gesture.

FOOD

- While staying at your hotels, breakfast is included daily, so make sure to take full advantage of the spread!
- Travelers can find food for every budget. Most restaurants are comparable in price to the U.S. (keeping in mind that the tip is already included). If you are looking for something quick to eat without spending a fortune, try a sandwich stand, bakery, or a small café with a set menu deal.
- Stay hydrated. Remember, the tap water is safe to drink.
- Typical Italian mealtimes are later than in the U.S. Lunch is usually around 1:00 PM and dinner around 8:00 PM.
- Meals often last much longer than we are used to, so be patient and try to enjoy the leisurely service. If you are ready to leave, ask for *il conto per favore*, otherwise you might be waiting for the bill for a long time!
- Don't forget to say *buon appetito* before digging in and be sure to try new foods even if they look intimidating.

Transportation & Lodging

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- Within cities, Italy has a robust public transport system, which is the best way to get around. You may take a combination of subways, buses, and trams.
- Make sure to validate each ticket at the validation machine.
- Keep your unused tickets on hand in an easily accessible pocket so you don't have to rummage through your things.
- Do not throw your ticket away until you exit the transportation system.

TRAIN

- Arrive at least 60 minutes before the departure of your train.
- If you have seat reservations, refer to the coach locator signs on each platform. These list coach numbers and where each car will be when the train pulls into the station. Helpful!
- Get ready to disembark (with your suitcases) at least 20 minutes before your stop and use several exits as a group. Your train might stop at your destination for only a few short minutes!

Lodging

Student hotel sleeping arrangements may involve sharing beds, as some hotels utilize a single large bed for their double rooms or two large beds for their triple/quadruple rooms.

CULTURAL TIPS

Be patient – Italians pride themselves on living a slower lifestyle.

Timing is different in Italy. Don't be surprised if activities or trains are a little delayed. A few minutes late is still considered on time!

Always say "Buongiorno Signora/Signore..." when entering a shop/restaurant or approaching a vendor (you'll get better service!) and "Grazie" when appropriate.

Communication

- Ask your teacher about their policy around technology use while on the program.
- We advise that only group leaders use cell phones for calling (see the Disconnecting from your Home Culture activity).
- Check with your provider regarding any international fees.
- For students, we advise use of WiFi;
 - There is often WiFi (or a computer for public use) available in your hotel, but the connection may be weak.
 - You can download messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, to communicate with people at home for free while connected to WiFi.
- A great way for the entire group to stay in communication with parents back home is via a group text or email, a student-run Instagram account, etc.

Code of Conduct

- Ask your teacher about your school group's specific discipline plan.
- Review the [Xperitas Code of Conduct](#) with your child before leaving. It should be signed by parents and students and returned to the group leader.

CULTURAL TIP

Italians are socially engaged people and are open to political discussions. Don't feel offended if they start a conversation about a topic that you may otherwise avoid in the U.S. They are just curious!

Health & Safety

- Be sure to keep your passport, most of your money, and your credit cards in your money belt or neck pouch.
- If there is a safe in your hotel room, lock your valuables in there while you are out. **Don't forget to check the hotel safe before checking out!**
- While traveling, pay attention to your belongings and be sure to keep your valuables close at all times. Be especially careful of pickpockets in touristy areas in Paris.
- If you carry a purse, we suggest a cross-body purse that zips shut. All valuables should be kept in front of you, never in a back pocket or a backpack worn behind you.
- Establish a buddy system and always travel in groups of three or more.
- Do not travel with valuable items.
- Remember that the Xperitas emergency line is available 24/7, but please only call it when you are experiencing a true emergency.
- Review the recommendations for travelers provided by the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC). See Current Health and Safety Updates for information about current world events and illnesses.
- Keep printed insurance card on you at all times.

CULTURAL TIPS

Keep your Country Exploration Packet close to jot down thoughts and reflections during your program.

Overall, just keep an open mind and try not to refer to stereotypes!

