

# GENERAL INFORMATION – ITALY

## **Pilgrimage**

Please remember this is a pilgrimage and though we will try to make you as comfortable as possible at all times, a pilgrimage also may have some hardships such as early mornings, new foods, restrooms not up to American standards, etc. So please keep this in mind and offer any small difficulties up to God with a prayer.

## **Passport**

A valid U.S. Passport is required of all passengers. Make sure to have it in your possession at all times while on tour. It must be valid for 6 months following the return date of the trip. Also, it is suggested that you make a copy of the information page to keep in your carry-on luggage the entire trip and leave a copy at home with a relative or friend. Your Passport must be signed.

## **U.S. Customs**

All luggage is subject to inspection by U.S. Customs officials. You are allowed a duty-free exemption of \$800 (U.S.) per person which does not include books or religious items. It is recommended that you keep your sales receipts handy for declaring your purchases upon returning to the U.S. Visit [www.customs.ustras.gov](http://www.customs.ustras.gov) website for specific questions.

## **Baggage**

Checked baggage is limited to one bag per person. There can be no exceptions. Your one checked bag is limited to 50 pounds and 62 inches (length + width + height) or excess charges will be collected by the airline at the airport. You may also bring a small carry-on bag that will fit under an airline seat and on the small parcel racks of the motor coach, which average about 8 inches high by 18 inches deep. It is best if your carry-on bag is soft sided as the parcel racks on the motorcoaches are small. Do not lock baggage you intend to check in at the airport unless it is a TSA supported lock.

Note: Carriers have begun charging a fee to check your bag. These fees are your responsibility and will vary by carrier. Such fees will be collected at the airports.

## **New Restrictions for Carry-on Bags (subject to change)**

- Travelers are allowed to transport only small amounts of liquids, gels, lotions, aerosols, or similar items on their person or in their carry-on luggage. This includes items such as hairspray, toothpaste, and shampoo.
- Bottles are to be travel sizes of 3 ounces or less. These bottles must be carried in a one quart zip-lock bag.
- Beverages may be purchased once inside the secured area of the airport and carried on the aircraft.
- Prescription medicine with a name that matches the name on the passenger's ticket and essential non-prescription medicines, NOT TO EXCEED 4 ounces per container, are allowed. Additionally, liquids or gels (including juice) for diabetic passengers to address their medical condition, NOT TO EXCEED 5 ounces per container, will be allowed. These items must be presented for inspection at the security checkpoint.
- Essential non-prescription medicines allowed now include contact eye saline solutions and eye care products such as eye drops and contact lens solution.
- Duty Free items may be transported in the cabin of the aircraft if they are delivered to the passenger immediately before boarding or onboard the aircraft.

**Medical Coverage:** *Optional "Travel Guard" insurance is available. We highly recommend that you purchase this insurance.*

This is to help protect your travel investment in the event of unforeseeable circumstances. One very important coverage is International Medical Insurance. Check with your insurance company to see if you are covered while out of the country. For further information, please contact us at (313) 565-8888 X151 or 152.

## **Restrooms**

Restrooms can usually be found in large department stores, museums, and other places of interest to visitors. Leave a small tip (.50 euro) for the attendant. It is wise to bring a small package of tissues because often restrooms do not have paper.

## **Calling Home**

If you think you may want to call home while on the trip, check with your local long-distance company before you leave the U.S. to find out how to make the call. Also, calling cards are available from many retailers. Please verify the rate for international calls before purchasing. Remember that Italy is six hours ahead of Eastern time in the USA.

## **Dress**

Dress is mainly casual, although you will want to dress respectfully for all church visits (no sleeveless shirts and no skirts above the knee). Light or medium weight clothing with a jacket is recommended and comfortable (worn in) walking shoes or sneakers. Bring an umbrella and raincoat.

## **Climate**

The average high temperature is around 75 at this time of year, with lows in the 50s. The Trip Planner <http://www.wunderground.com/tripplanner/index.asp> helps you plan for your upcoming trip. Simply choose the start date and end date of your event or trip. The Trip Planner will search the historical database for the weather conditions during those dates in past years.

The results will help you determine how hot, cold, wet, or windy it will be!

## **Best Buys**

Leather goods, Venetian glass, jewelry, prints, silk, silver, straw products, porcelain.

## **Language**

The language of Italy is Italian. English is spoken at hotels and in some shops and restaurants. If you have an Italian phrase translation book, bring it along. Local people enjoy it if you try to speak their language.

## **Electricity**

Italy's voltage is 240/250 volts, therefore, you will need a converter and an adapter plug if you plan to use any electrical appliance. Most luggage stores carry them.

## **Hair Dryers**

It is best to bring your own hairdryers because some hotel rooms have them and some do not. If you need a hair dryer, dual-powered (that accommodate both 110 and 220 current) travel hair dryers are recommended.

## **Money**

The Italian currency is the Euro. Due to currency fluctuations, the exchange rate is subject to frequent change. As of March 18, 2010 it costs \$1.39 U.S. to buy (1) euro.

Banks and ATM machines are the best currency exchange. Banks are open from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. There are ATMs located at banks available 24 hours per day. There is no need to bring cash if your ATM card works abroad. Most do work; check with your bank before leaving home and make sure you know your passwords and PIN numbers.

## **Notify Card Companies**

All banks and most restaurants and shops accept a wide range of international credit cards and traveler's checks. Your credit card is the most convenient means of payment to avoid carrying cash. However, note that most credit card companies add a 2% currency exchange transaction fee. Check with your credit card company for their policy.

It is smart to notify your credit card company that you will be traveling abroad so they do not panic and put a hold on your card when new purchases are made.

## **Euro**

There are 7-euro notes. In different colors and sizes they are denominated in 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10, and 5 euros. The notes are uniform throughout the euro area; unlike coins, they have no national side. The designs are symbolic for Europe's architectural heritage. They do not represent any existing monuments.

There are 8-euro coins denominated in 2 and 1 euros, then 50, 20, 10, 5, 2, and 1 cent. Every euro coin carries a common European face. On the reverse, each Member State has their own motif.

For further information visit <http://www.europeforvisitors.com/>

## **Dining**

Pasta, the national staple, comes in a variety of sizes and shapes, and risotto, or rice dishes, are also popular. The classic Margharita pizza is made with tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese. Prosciutto, a dark, spicy ham is a favorite appetizer, while, antipasto (the Italian hors d'oeuvre) is often a meal in itself. Tempting desserts range from fresh fruit to gelati (ice cream). Regional wines can be excellent and a good value, and the meal's end is properly celebrated by drinking one or more cups of aromatic espresso coffee.

## **Time**

Italy is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Time.

## **Important Custom**

It is important to understand the local custom regarding time. The day starts later in Italy, and ends later. Dinner is usually served late, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Often, there is an afternoon siesta (nap) to rest-up for the late evening hours. Many stores close at siesta time from about 1 to 4 p.m.

## **Hotel Porters**

Baggage handling to your room has been prepaid. No need to tip the porters.

## **Tips**

For all meals that are included for the group, the tip has already been paid. For meals on your own, restaurants include a service fee up to 15 percent in their bills, but waiters look for an additional small tip. Taxi drivers expect 10 percent of the fare.

Tips are an important part of the income of guides and bus drivers. However there is no need for you to give tips to them as you have prepaid these as a part of the pilgrimage package price. Appropriate tips will be paid on your behalf by the group leader at the end of the pilgrimage.

## **Washcloths, Soap, Shampoo**

In Europe items we take for granted are often in short supply. Among these items are washcloths, soap, and shampoo. It is recommended to bring these items from home.