

Italian Information

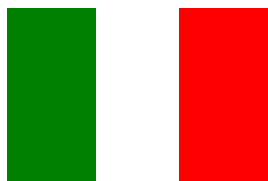


Italy (in Italian, Italia), a republic in southern Europe, which is bordered on the north by Switzerland and Austria; on the east by Slovenia and the Adriatic Sea; on the south by the Ionian Sea and the **Mediterranean Sea**; on the west by the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Ligurian Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea; and on the north-west by France. It comprises, in addition to the Italian mainland, the islands of **Sardinia** and **Sicily**, in the Mediterranean Sea; **Elba** in the Tyrrhenian Sea; and many lesser islands. Enclaves within mainland Italy are the independent countries of **San Marino** and **Vatican City**; the latter is a papal state mostly enclosed by **Rome**, the capital of Italy.

Repubblica Italiana (Italian Republic)

Capital - Rome

Flag



The Italian tricolor was first adopted by French republics in northern Italy during the Napoleonic Wars, who modelled it after the French tricolor. In 1848 the design was adopted by the house of Savoy, which went on to lead the Italian unification.

The present flag was adopted in 1946, when Italy became a republic and the royal arms were removed.

Anthem

Inno di Mameli - (Hymn of Mameli)

Area

301,302 sq km

Highest Point

Near the summit of Mont Blanc, which is 4807 m above sea level

Lowest Point

Sea level



Average Temperatures

Rome
January 8 C
July 25 C

Average Annual Precipitation

Rome
740 mm (29 in)

Population

57,910,000

Largest Cities

Rome 2,775,250
Milan 1,369,231
Naples 1,067,365
Turin 962,507

Official Language

Italian

Other Languages

German, French, Ladin, Albanian, Slovenian, Catalan, Friulian, Sardinian, Croatian, Greek, other minority languages

Religions

84% Roman Catholicism
16% Other
including Judaism, Islam, Protestantism, and other groups

Government

Parliamentary republic

Head of State

President
Elected to a seven-year term by legislators and representatives of regional councils

Head of Government

Prime minister
Appointed by the president
Legislature
Chamber of Deputies
630 deputies
Senate
315 senators

Voting Qualifications

Universal suffrage for all citizens age 18 and older; voters must be at least 25 years old to elect senators

Political Divisions

20 regions

Economy**Agriculture**

Grapes, olives, wheat, tomatoes, maize, sugar beets, apples, peaches, potatoes

Fishing

Mediterranean mussels, sardines, trout, striped venus, hake, shrimp and prawns, squid, anchovies, octopus

Mining

Petroleum, natural gas, lignite, pyrites, fluorspar, barites, sulfur, mercury

Manufacturing

Machinery and transportation equipment, textiles and clothing, chemicals

Major Exports

Machinery, motor vehicles, clothing, textile yarn and fabrics, footwear, iron and steel, fruit and vegetables, wine

Major Imports

Machinery and transportation equipment, petroleum, metals, chemicals, textile yarn and fabrics, meat

Currency

Lira

History

IMPORTANT DATES

476

The Germanic leader Odoacer sacked Rome, ending the Western Roman Empire.

572

The Lombards invaded Italy, ending the last period of Byzantine rule in Italy.

800

Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III.

962

Otto the Great was crowned Emperor, marking the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire.

1300s

The thriving Italian city-states such as Florence and Venice contributed to the beginning of the Renaissance in Italy. Venice controlled European trade with Asia and the Middle East.

1494

The French army defeated the armies of several of the divided city-states. France and the Holy Roman Empire subsequently vied for control of Italy.

1559

Most of Italy had come under the influence of the Spanish Habsburgs. Control passed to the Austrian branch of the family by the early 1700s.

1796

Napoleon Bonaparte conquered much of northern Italy and established Italian republics. Northern Italy was unified as the Kingdom of Italy under French rule in 1804.

1814

Following Napoleon's defeat, Italy was divided into the Papal States, Austrian duchies, the Kingdom of Sardinia, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

1859

Sardinia and France expelled the Austrians from all of northern Italy except Venice.

1861

The Kingdom of Italy was formed, encompassing the entire peninsula except for Rome, Venice, and San Marino. King Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia became King of Italy.

1866

Venice became part of Italy.

1870

Italian forces occupied Rome, which became the capital of Italy the following year.

1912

Italy acquired Libya after a war with the Ottoman Empire.

1915

Although it was allied with Germany and Austria-Hungary, Italy entered World War I on the side of the Allies.

1922

Benito Mussolini became Prime Minister of Italy and rapidly assumed dictatorial powers.

1929

The Lateran Treaty normalized relations between Italy and the Vatican.

1940

Italy entered World War II, having previously formed an alliance with Germany.

1943

Italy surrendered to invading Allied forces, but Germany took control of the country and fought the Allies until the end of the war.

1946

Italians voted to abolish the monarchy, and Italy became a republic.

1952

Italy became a founding member of the European Coal and Steel Community, which would eventually become the European Community.

1984

Reflecting the diminished influence of the Church in Italian life, Roman Catholicism was deinstitutionalized as Italy's State religion.

1986

Italy took its most visible steps towards fighting organized crime, convicting 338 Mafia members of criminal activities.

1990s

A far-reaching scandal of political corruption and influence-peddling led to the fall of the Christian Democratic Party, which had governed Italy since 1948.

1994

A rightist coalition, led by media magnate Silvio Berlusconi and which included neo-Fascist elements, was overwhelmingly elected to power. He was forced to resign in December when his coalition government collapsed.

1995

In January Lamberto Dini formed a non-party government. In March, the Italian lira fell greatly in value as confidence in the Italian government diminished. Prime Minister Dini won a vote of confidence on his emergency

budget, effectively making it law.

1996

Following a general election Romano Prodi formed a new centre-left coalition government with a backbone of former communists.

1997

Coalition government launched 3-year economic plan designed to achieve European Monetary Union (EMU) entry.

1998

The European Commission provisionally backed Italy to join EMU in 1999.

Source: Microsoft Encarta 1999

