Italy

Overview

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- AIG Travel considers Italy to be a LOW threat location. While Italy is a modern, stable parliamentary republic, there are security concerns associated with petty and organized crime, as well as corruption.

Italy is a modern, well-developed parliamentary republic located in southern Europe. The country extends southward into the Mediterranean Sea and lies south of neighboring France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia and has a population of about 60 million people.

Italian politics are subject to frequent turnover with numerous governments having fallen during its modern history. This regular political turnover, however, rarely has a significant impact on conditions in the country, as new governments come to power under constitutionally permissible terms without major political upheavals that would destabilize overall governing institutions. Italy has struggled to recover from the 2008 global financial crisis and continues to grapple with significant levels of government debt and elevated unemployment levels among working-age individuals as well as the country’s youth. Civil unrest related to these ongoing political challenges, including protests and strikes, are common in Italy and cause notable disruptions on a regular basis.

Crime levels are considered moderate and pose the most notable security concern for those in country. Reports of criminal offenses are significantly higher in major cities when compared to more rural locations; however, most offenses are petty in nature. Domestic organized criminal groups are highly active throughout Italy and pose a considerable challenge to law enforcement agencies attempting to combat their activities. In addition to illicit activity such as extortion, prostitution and trafficking of various illegal goods and people, these groups contribute significantly to Italy’s high levels of corruption affecting both political and business activities.

The threat of international terrorism in Italy is low, but there are several small domestic militant groups present in the country. Any operations carried out by these groups are generally very targeted and low-level in nature; civilians and foreign nationals are rarely targeted in such events.

Political conditions

Political
Concerns stemming from political instability are LOW. While Italy has experienced a significant level of political turmoil in the past several years as a result of the global financial crisis, transitions of power have occurred peacefully and have abided by the constitution.

The Italian government is structured as a parliamentary republic led by a prime minister. The prime minister serves as the head of government while the president, currently Sergio Mattarella, is head of state. Italy’s legislative duties are carried out through a bicameral parliament consisting of the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) and the Senate (upper house). Technically, both houses of the parliament are elected every five years, although early elections can occur under certain circumstances. The succession of a prime minister after the fall of a government will often lead to early elections. In December 2017 President Sergio Mattarella of the center-left Democratic Party dissolved parliament in anticipation of a general election on 4 March 2018.

Following this election, which produced a hung parliament as expected, the influential former prime minister and center-right Forza Italia (FI) political party president Silvio Berlusconi confirmed his support for the leader of the right-wing Lega Nord (LN) party, Matteo Salvini, in attempts to form a government. The four political parties comprising the center-right coalition – including FI and LN – agreed prior to the general election that the leader of the party with the most votes would head any government the political alliance tries to establish. Berlusconi’s FI was widely expected to win the most votes prior to the election; however, the party is estimated to have won just 14 percent of the vote compared with LN’s 17 percent.

Government formation talks are expected to take at least weeks, causing further political and economic uncertainty in the wake of an election dominated by anti-establishment parties. Both the aforementioned four-party alliance as well as Luigi Di Maio’s Five Star Movement – a so-called big-tent, populist party that participated in the election independently and won more than 30 percent of the vote – fell short of the required majority to govern Italy. The new parliament is scheduled to hold its first session on 23 March. Following the body’s nominations of chamber leaders, consultations for the formation of a government will officially begin. President Mattarella will then appoint a prime minister-designate, who in turn will propose cabinet appointments to be confirmed by Parliament. At this time, it is unclear who Mattarella will task with forming a government.

Italy’s stagnant economic growth and high unemployment have undermined the popularity and stability of multiple governments in recent years. Gentiloni, Italy’s third prime minister since 2013, accordingly set job creation and stabilizing the country’s financial sector as his top priorities. His government also grappled with a large influx of seaborne migrants arriving from the northern coast of Africa. Gentiloni signed deals with Libya and Tunisia to stem migration from those countries and called for an integrated European Union response to the crisis.

Economic conditions

As of 2018 the Italian economy -- fourth largest in the EU -- is diverse, but has struggled to recover from the 2007/2008 global financial crisis. The national economy grew in 2017 by a modest 1.5 percent, a figure likely to be repeated in 2018. The country’s major industries include automotive manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. Throughout Italy’s modern history, there has been significant disparity between economic prosperity in the comparatively affluent north of the country and the south. Various contributing factors include the prevalence of organized crime in the south and greater industrialization in the north. Italy continues to suffer from rising public debt, at a ratio of over 130 percent of public debt to gross domestic product. Unemployment is also extremely high among the working age population and has been over 10 percent since 2012. As part of its policy to lower spending across the continent, the EU has forced Italy to implement significant austerity measures and policy changes. These measures/changes have generated
notable opposition and protests from many in Italy who feel the austerity measures are too extreme and negatively affect the public. In spite of these continuing issues, Italy’s economy is expected to produce moderate though slow growth in the coming years.

**Corruption**

- **Corruption is a MODERATE concern throughout Italy, impacting many aspects of society including business and government sectors.**

Corruption is pervasive and endemic throughout much of Italian society. An Ernst and Young report released in 2017 observed that 71 percent of Italians polled believe that corruption is a widespread problem in the country. In 2016, a leading Italian jurist, who has handled numerous cases relating to high-level corruption, stated publicly that corruption was growing worse. Corruption impacts all levels of government and is present throughout the Italian business landscape. Many cases of corruption in the country are directly linked to its thriving organized criminal networks. Political corruption related to organized crime often occurs in the form of voter fraud and bribing government officials. Organized criminal entities have also been known to exert significant influence over local government in many small towns and cities, although these kinds of offenses occur at all levels of government. Due to prevalence of organized crime in several smaller municipalities, the national government is legally permitted to dissolve local councils with suspected ties to organized crime.

Corruption also serves as a major impediment to business operations in Italy. Low level business corruption, as with political corruption, is frequently linked to organized criminal syndicates. Criminal groups actively extort local businesses by charging business owners protection fees. Business owners who do not cooperate with these groups are often subject to retaliation. There are also instances of wealthy businesspeople bribing government officials in order to gain advantageous business opportunities. A prominent example of such high level bribery was discovered in 2014, linked to the Milan Expo 2015. In that case, a group of businesspeople paid political figures to receive valuable contracts for the event.

Commonly cited reasons for the prevalence of corruption in Italy include cultural factors, economic issues, legal obstacles and law enforcement’s inability to decisively deal with organized crime. The Italian government has taken steps in recent years to root out corruption, including passing legislation in 2014 restricting the ability of organized criminal groups to buy votes in local and other elections. Despite these government and law enforcement efforts to reduce corruption, such practices will be difficult to quash given the deep-rooted nature of the issue.

Transparency International’s 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) rated Italy 50 out of 100, with 0 indicating extremely high levels of perceived corruption. Italy is therefore considered to have higher levels of perceived corruption. CPI rankings are based on several factors such as public surveys and expert evaluations. Italy ranked 54th out of 180 countries surveyed.

**Security issues**

**General crime**

- **Crime, especially petty and organized crime, is a MODERATE concern throughout Italy. While violent crime is uncommon, events that do occur are typically related to organized criminal groups.**

Crime levels in Italy are rated as moderate due to concerns of petty and organized crime. The most common types of crime are petty and opportunistic in nature. Petty thieves are known to be particularly active at public transportation locations, such as Rome’s Termini train station and tourist sites in major cities such as Milan’s
Old Town (Centro Storico) area.

Incidents of pick-pocketing and theft of unattended items have increased in 2017 and are among the most frequently reported crimes by locals and foreign nationals alike. Thieves may operate in groups and attempt to distract the targeted individual in order to carry out the crime. In recent years, rates of these petty offenses, including bag-snatching, bag-slashing and pick-pocketing, have risen significantly in prominent locations. This increase is generally attributed to economic hardship among segments of the population and to government austerity measures, which have cut law enforcement funding in many cities. Rates of other non-violent crimes, such as vehicle theft and residential burglary, have also increased significantly for similar reasons. Many of these crimes are opportunistic in nature and rates of such offenses often increase in the evening and nighttime hours.

Incidents of ATM card skimming have been occasionally reported in several locations. ATM skimming generally occurs when a victim unknowingly swipes a bank card at an unsecure ATM, allowing criminals to steal card information. Criminals typically attach a false card reader to a legitimate machine, allowing access to bank card information. Even cards secured with a Personal Identification Number (PIN) are vulnerable as thieves often place cameras nearby to capture such information. It is important to use only secure ATMs, such as those found at major banks, in order to prevent card skimming.

Violent crime is uncommon throughout Italy and the country has a relatively low homicide rate compared to other Western nations. While occasional low level assaults against foreign nationals have been reported, these incidents do not indicate a discernible criminal trend and are often attributed to personal disputes. Much of the violent crime that does occur, such as shootings and car bombings, is perpetrated by organized criminal groups. These crimes rarely impact the average citizen or foreign national in Italy as organized criminal groups tend to target those with ties to illegal activity, law enforcement or the judicial system. Nonetheless, bystanders may be unintentionally impacted by organized crime attacks.

Italian police are responsive and are often able to adequately assist foreign nationals in need. Police are able to respond relatively quickly in major locations, although response times may be prolonged in rural areas.

Organized Crime
Organized crime groups have long been highly active in Italy despite law enforcement efforts to curb their activities. There are five main criminal organizations operating in Italy: Cosa Nostra (Sicily), ‘Ndrangheta (Calabria), Camorra (Campania), Stidda (Sicily) and Sacra Corona Unita (Puglia). They are involved in a number of illegal activities including extortion, drug smuggling, prostitution, arms trafficking, human trafficking and a variety of other criminal activities. Organized criminal groups are also heavily involved in government and business corruption, as discussed in the Corruption section.

These groups are especially active in the southern and central portions of the country, although they maintain a degree of influence throughout Italy. While organized criminal activity rarely affects foreign nationals visiting Italy for leisure reasons, businesspeople may encounter operational obstacles related to organized crime while doing business in Italy. These difficulties are typically related to crime groups’ manipulation of local officials and illicit influence over industries such as construction and waste management. Furthermore, smaller businesses may be approached by organized crime groups demanding protection payments. On rare occasions, organized crime groups may target buildings or offices with Molotov bombs or other explosions. Both Italian and European authorities have undertaken significant efforts to dismantle criminal syndicates; however, these organizations continue to expand and acquire wealth, suggesting that they are likely to maintain significant influence in Italy for the foreseeable future.

Terrorism
• Terrorism is a LOW concern in Italy although there is an underlying threat posed by both Islamist militant groups and domestic extremist organizations. The country is at a heightened state of alert at this time.

Terrorism is considered a low security concern for Italy, as no major terror attacks have taken place in the country in recent years. Presently, however, two sources pose an underlying threat of attack in Italy: Islamist extremists and domestic anarchist groups. Italy’s past military contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan has increased the likelihood that Islamist extremists could target the country in retaliation, although no known specific threats at this time. Additionally, there is concern that Italian nationals currently fighting alongside Islamist extremists in Syria and Iraq could return to Italy to conduct terror attacks. In recent years, Italian security services have arrested several individuals on charges of providing material support to foreign terrorist organizations.

In addition, large numbers of migrants and refugees from conflict zones have arrived in Italy in recent years. There is concern that militants could use this continuing movement as cover to enter the EU, or that extremist Italian nationals could recruit from the refugee population. While the threat posed by Islamist extremists is likely to persist for some time, there are no indications that an attack in Italy is imminent.

Domestic anarchist groups operate in Italy although they tend to be small in size and impact. These organizations carry out low level attacks that typically target law enforcement, foreign embassies/consulates and businesses. While several of these groups are active in Italy, their attacks tend to cause little physical damage and rarely cause casualties. Attack types range from shootings to minor bombings and property damage. Most foreign nationals in Italy are unlikely to be impacted by anarchist attacks.

Italy, in line with many European countries, elevated its terrorism alert following high profile attacks in France and Belgium in 2015. The country remains at an increased terror alert level although no major attacks have occurred in Italy.

Civil unrest

• Civil unrest is a MODERATE concern in Italy with protest actions occurring regularly, particularly transportation strikes that lead to service disruption. While related events are mostly peaceful, clashes between police and protesters occasionally occur.

Strikes and demonstrations take place on a regular basis in Italy. Strikes are usually pre-planned, union-organized and often significantly disruptive to public services. Italy’s trade unions -- including the Italian General Confederation of Labor (CGIL), Italian Confederation of Workers’ Trade Unions (CISL) and the Italian Labor Union (UIL) -- exert significant influence over the nation’s labor force and coordinate many of the nation’s strike actions. Transportation strikes tend to be the most disruptive, although many of these actions are limited to specific regions and are relatively brief in duration. Alternative transportation methods often experience increased traffic during transportation strikes. In April 2017, for example, various strikes affected public transportation, air traffic and highway traffic throughout the country. Due to the frequency of labor actions in Italy, it is important to stay abreast of upcoming strike actions in order to minimize impact on travel.

Protests tend to take place near embassies, government facilities and in central locations such as Rome’s Piazza de Popolo. These actions are motivated by a variety of factors including political discontent, perceived social injustice and labor union campaigns. While demonstrations are generally peaceful, pre-planned and supervised by law enforcement, protests do sometimes cause localized disruptions. While, most actions are limited to a few dozen participants, highly contentious issues and major international events -- such as the government’s austerity measures and Group of Seven (G7) forums -- have inspired much larger gatherings. During 2017 police and demonstrators clashed at G7 events in Sicily and Turin.
Unrest associated with sporting events, especially soccer matches, occurs on occasion. Most related unrest is limited to relatively small clashes between supporters of rival soccer clubs. Intoxication is often a factor involved in these incidents. While most unrest linked to sporting events are limited to isolated groups of individuals, larger sports riots occasionally occur. In 2014 violence broke out between opposing fans before a major soccer match in Rome. Several injuries occurred and firecrackers were thrown as police attempted to gain control over the crowd. Similar incidents also took place in Genoa in 2010 and in Catania in 2007. Heightened awareness should be maintained as a precautionary measure near sporting events. In order to avoid unwanted attention at these events, it is advisable to refrain from wearing sports apparel depicting team or regional symbolism. Unaffiliated bystanders are generally not intentionally targeted during sports related unrest, but the risk of accidental injury remains.

Kidnapping

- **Kidnapping is a LOW concern in Italy.**

Kidnapping occurs sporadically in Italy, although foreigners are generally not targeted. Incidents typically involve individuals associated with organized crime.

Travel logistics

Entering the country

**Entry Requirements**

- Citizens of EU countries require only a valid passport or a national ID card to enter Italy.
- Citizens from countries such as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the United States need passports valid for three to six months beyond date of entry for visits of fewer than 90 days.
- Other travelers from outside of the Schengen area are required to have a valid passport and may also require a Schengen area visa.
- Travelers who are not citizens of the EU and whose countries of residence do not have visa-free access to the Schengen nations are required to have a valid passport as well as a valid Schengen visa or a valid EU residency permit to enter Italy.

**Political/Security Risks**

AIG Travel considers Italy to be a LOW threat location; while Italy is a modern, stable parliamentary republic there are security concerns associated with petty and organized crime, as well as corruption.

- Concerns stemming from political instability are LOW; however, Italy has experienced a significant level of political turmoil in the past several years as a result of the global fiscal crisis. Transitions of power, however, have occurred peacefully and have abided by the constitution.
- Corruption is a MODERATE concern throughout Italy; it impacts many aspects of society including business and government sectors.
- Crime, especially petty and organized crimes constitute a MODERATE concern throughout Italy. While violent crime is uncommon, events that do occur are typically related to organized criminal groups.
- Terrorism is a LOW concern in Italy although there is an underlying, general threat posed by both Islamist militant groups and domestic extremist organizations.
- Civil unrest is a MODERATE concern in Italy and while related events are mostly peaceful, clashes between police and protesters can occur on occasion.

Infrastructure
Italy’s infrastructure is modern and well maintained and so poses a LOW threat to those in country. Rail and road networks are extensive and reliable, although public transportation is sometimes disrupted by labor strikes.

- Infrastructure such as roads and rail lines may be somewhat limited in more rural areas.
- Water, fuel and electricity are easily accessible throughout the country.
- Telecommunications, including internet access and mobile phone reception, is widely available, although isolated areas may have more limited service.
- Tap water is generally fit for consumption, but quality may vary in remote areas and the consumption of bottled water is recommended.

**Air travel**

The most heavily trafficked airport in the country is Rome’s Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport (LIRF/FCO). The facility is located approximately 13 mi (21 km) west of central Rome and has four passenger terminals. The airport offers an array of services including banks, currency exchanges, shops, restaurants and vehicle rental. Travelers may access the facility via taxi, bus and rail (Leonardo Express train). Other major airports are located throughout the country and include Milan’s Malpensa Airport (LIMC/MXP) and Venice’s Marco Polo Airport (LIPZ/VCE). Most major airports in Italy have clear safety records and practice industry standard security protocols in accordance with EU guidelines. Nonetheless, petty theft, primarily pick-pocketing and bag theft, is a serious concern at all Italian airports.

**Getting around**

Italy has an extensive road network and good intra- and inter-city public transport facilities. Travelers should note that all public transport networks are regularly affected by strikes, which can cause extensive delays and service disruptions. Furthermore, petty crime is common on Italy's public transport, most notably on trains and buses in major cities. Caution is advised at all times.

- **Road** - Italy has a well-maintained road network, which is one of the most extensive in Europe. Traffic drives on the right hand side of the road. Driving conditions in Italy can be difficult as many urban roads are narrow and congested, and Italian drivers can be aggressive.
  - **Self-Driving** - Car rental agencies are found in most major towns. Travelers wishing to rent a car must be at least 21 years old (age may vary by car category) and have held their driver's license for at least one year. Drivers under the age of 25 may incur a young driver surcharge. An international driving permit (IDP) is required for rentals in Italy. Private cars, including rental cars, are not permitted to enter the historic center (centro storico) of many cities without an official pass. The boundaries of historic centers are usually marked with the letters 'ZTL' in black on a yellow background; if the zone is entered without a pass, travelers risk a fine. Despite the wide availability of car rental services, arranging transport through a trusted source will help mitigate any safety or security concerns and may be more reliable.
- **Bus** - Bus services are available across the country. Schedules are often reduced or nonexistent at weekends and during school holidays, which differ from region to region. Bus tickets can be purchased at airports, bus and train stations. For inner-city travel, tickets can also be obtained from the bus driver or at local tabacchi (tobacco) shops. Travelers should note that pick-pocketing is regularly reported on buses across Italy.
- **Taxi** - Metered taxi cabs are available in all major cities. Taxis are available at airports, train and bus terminals as well as at dedicated taxi ranks in major cities.
- **Rail** – National rail operator Trenitalia runs regular train service throughout Italy. High speed rail connects most major cities and regional trains connect smaller locations with regional hubs. Italy’s rail system is well-integrated into the greater network of international rail that exists in Europe. As with other forms of public transportation in Italy, pick-pocketing is regularly reported on trains. Additionally, rail strikes are relatively common and can disrupt travel plans when they occur.
• **Water** – Italy offers various ferry connections to its many islands. The main landing ports for ferries departing to Italy's two largest islands of Sicily and Sardinia include Genoa, Livorno, Civitavecchia, Fiumicino, Naples and Villa San Giovanni. The primary companies operating on these routes are Ferrovie dello Stato, Tirrenia Navigazioni, Grandi Traghetti, Trans Tirreno Express, Moby Lines and Sardinia Ferries. Connections are more frequent during the summer and on holidays. Venice is well known for its water transport network. Water taxis are generally a reliable form of transport; however, travelers are advised to use only official water taxis, which have a black registration number on a yellow background.

**Culture**

• Sensitivity to the Catholic religion is advisable as Catholicism is the predominant religion in Italy.
• Many Italians will not hesitate to embrace someone they have just met. Handshakes, as both greeting and farewell, are necessary. Italians often maintain constant eye contact to show personal interest.
• Hierarchy and status are integral parts of Italian life including family, business and other social aspects.
• Formal dress is common for business purposes; generally a suit and tie is acceptable for men. Formal titles should be used when appropriate.
• Many Italians do not speak English; therefore, a translator may be required for business purposes.

**Important Dates 2018**

• 1 January – New Year’s Day
• 6 January – Epiphany
• 30 March – Good Friday
• 1 April – Easter
• 2 April – Easter Monday
• 25 April – Liberation Day
• 1 May – Labor Day
• 2 June – Republic Day
• 24 June – Saint John’s Day
• 29 June – Saints Peter and Paul’s Day
• 15 August – Assumption of Mary
• 19 September – Saint Januarius’ Day
• 1 November – All Saints Day
• 7 December – Saint Ambrose’s Day
• 8 December – Immaculate Conception
• 25 December – Christmas Day
• 26 December – Saint Stephen’s Day

**Health concerns**

Hospitals and clinics, both state-run and private, offer a good standard of care countrywide, although medical facilities are quite scarce outside urban areas and levels of care are generally much higher in private facilities. Not all medical personnel have a good knowledge of English, so the ability to communicate in Italian may be advantageous. Pharmacies are available in all cities and towns and basic medical supplies are readily available. Citizens of European nations holding a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) are entitled to free emergency medical assistance in European countries, including Italy. It should be noted that the EHIC only provides entitlement to emergency treatments in state-run medical facilities. Fully comprehensive medical insurance is recommended.

**Natural hazards**
Several major seismic fault lines cross Italy. Although most of the larger Italian cities do not lie near major faults, many areas popular with travelers, such as Tuscany, Umbria, Naples and much of southern Italy, do. Minor tremors take place almost daily, with major earthquakes occurring less frequently.

Italy also has several active volcanoes. Mount Etna, on the eastern side of the island of Sicily, has erupted intermittently over the last several years as has Mount Stromboli, which is located on the island of Stromboli north of Sicily. Mount Vesuvius, near the city of Naples, is has not erupted in decades, but is continuously monitored by geologists.

Parts of Venice are prone to severe flooding, especially in late autumn and early spring. Summer temperatures can be very high in many areas. It is important to avoid direct sunlight at the hottest times of day and consume plenty of liquids.

Money

- **Currency** - The euro is the official currency of Italy. The euro is divided into 100 cents. Banknotes are issued in 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 euro denominations. Coins are issued in 1 and 2 euros and 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents.
- **Foreign exchange** - Foreign currency can be exchanged at most banks in Italy. Traveler's checks may also be exchanged at some locations.
- **ATMs / Credit Cards** - ATMs are widely available across the country. Only machines at reputable locations should be used to avoid card skimming. Many major credit cards, including MasterCard and Visa, are widely accepted.
- **Tipping** - Tipping is not mandatory, although it is considered to be customary. About 10 percent of the bill should be tipped. Restaurants often include gratuities and a cover charge in the bill.
- **Business hours** - Business office hours vary significantly depending on the industry and sector. Generally, most businesses operate between 08:30 and 18:30 local time, Mondays to Fridays, although many businesses close for lunch at some point during the day.
- **Banking hours** - Banks are open on weekdays from 08:30 or 09:00 to 12:30 or 13:00 and from 14:00 or 15:00 to 16:00.

Contact Information

International dialing code: +39
International dialing prefix: 00
Police: 113
Ambulance: 118
Fire: 115
General European emergency number: 112

Cultural factors

Etiquette and norms

- Sensitivity to the Catholic religion is advisable as Catholicism is the predominant religion in Italy.
- Many Italian will not hesitate to embrace someone they have just met. Handshakes, as both greeting and farewell, are necessary. Italians often maintain constant eye contact to show personal interest.
- Hierarchy and status are integral parts of Italian life including family, business and other social aspects.
- Formal dress is common for business purposes; generally a suit and tie is acceptable for men. Formal titles should be used when appropriate.
- Many Italians do not speak English; therefore, a translator may be required for business purposes.
Useful information

Useful information

- Public holidays
- Weather forecast
- Maps
- Italian Government Tourist Board
- Electricity: 230 volts, 50 Hz; for the most commonly used plug types, please click here.

Contact details

Important contact details

- International dialing code: +39
- International dialing prefix: 00

Emergency numbers

- Police: 113
- Ambulance: 118
- Fire: 115
- General European emergency number: 112

Embassies

Australian Embassy
Via Antonio Bosio 5
00161 Roma
Tel: +39 06 8527 21
Fax: +39 06 8527 2300
Email: info-rome@dfat.gov.au

British Embassy
Via Venti Settembre 80/a
00187 Roma
Tel: +39 06 4220 0001
Fax: +39 06 4220 2333
Email: Italy.consulate@fco.gov.uk

French Embassy
Piazza Farnese 67
00186 Roma
Tel: +39 06 6860 11
Fax: +39 06 6860 1360

German Embassy
Via San Martino della Battaglia 4
00185 Roma
Tel: +39 06 4921 31
Fax: +39 06 445 2672
Email: info@rom.diplo.de
Health advisory

Health infrastructure

Hospitals and clinics, both state-run and private, offer a reasonable standard of care countrywide. However, medical facilities are somewhat scarce outside of urban areas and levels of care are generally much higher in private rather than state-run facilities. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate payment for medical services. Not all medical personnel have a good knowledge of English, so the ability to communicate in Italian may be advantageous. Pharmacies are available in most cities and towns and basic medical supplies are readily available.

Pre-travel recommendations

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if travelling to Italy:

- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Rabies

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are current prior to travel. These vaccinations include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio and an annual flu shot.

Travelers are advised to visit a doctor or clinic that specializes in travel-related medicine at least four to six weeks prior to their intended departure. This should allow the necessary time for most prescribed vaccinations to take effect. Even if travel is to be undertaken in less than four weeks, a visit to a medical professional is still recommended.

Comprehensive medical insurance is strongly recommended. Travelers are also advised to take an appropriate supply of any prescription medication; this should be accompanied by a written doctor’s note, explaining the need for the medication and justifying the quantities required.

Significant diseases

The following are some of the more significant diseases that might affect travelers in the country:
• Rabies: A viral infection that can affect animals and humans is sometimes reported sporadically in animals in Italy.

• Tick-borne encephalitis: A viral infection of the central nervous system that is spread by Exudes ticks is a low risk between March and November each year. Sporadic cases have been reported in forested, rural areas around the cites of Florence, Trento and Belluno and the Friuli Venezia Giulia region.

• Brucellosis: A highly contagious zoonotic infection that is usually acquired by consuming unpasteurized dairy products from infected sheep and goats. It occurs mostly in southern Italy, in areas including Sicily, Calabria, Puglia and Campania.

Recent outbreaks

• Chikungunya: In September 2017, fourteen cases of Chikungunya, a viral disease whose symptoms include fever and joint pain, were reported in central Italy, locally concentrated around the cities of Rome and Anzio. Chukungunya is transmitted exclusively through mosquito bites.

• Measles: In 2017, over 2,500 cases of measles have been reported throughout Italy. The epidemic resulted from low vaccination rates among Italian children, although the government has since made the measles vaccine mandatory. Measles is a highly contagious airborne disease and can cause serious health complications in young children.

Food and water safety

While tap water is generally safe in Italy, it is recommended that sealed bottled water be used for consumption and hygiene purposes such as teeth brushing. Unpasteurized dairy products should be avoided if possible; unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.

Other health risks

The weather in Italy can be very hot and humid in the summer, especially between June and September, leading to the possibility of heat stroke and exhaustion. It is advisable to take appropriate clothing, to limit sun exposure at the hottest times of day, to use ample sun block and to drink plenty of liquids.

Emergency response

The emergency number for an ambulance in Italy is 118; for police it is 113 and for fire and rescue assistance 115. The general European emergency number, 112, can also be used. The service provides good coverage and response times countrywide.
For further information or security support, please contact AIG Global Security – AIG Global Security at HoustonGSOC@aig.com