Italy

Overview

- AIG Travel rates Italy as a LOW threat location due to some 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. It has a population of about 60 million people, the overwhelming majority of which is ethnically Italian, with the most common language being Italian as well. The predominant religion in Italy is Catholicism, and Italy is widely known as the home of Vatican City – a microstate located entirely within the borders of the Rome that is home to the Pope and many other Catholic institutions. Italy is a major tourist destination for travelers in both Europe and the rest of the world.

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 country, as new governments come to power under constitutionally permissible terms without major political upheavals that would destabilize overall governing institutions. Such normalcy has meant a LOW political risk rating for Italy. In recent years, Italy has continued 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 lead to disruptions to some goods and services on a regular basis, resulting in MODERATE concerns.

Crime levels are 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. Criminal groups contribute significantly to Italy’s MODERATE 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 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 as transitions of power have occurred peacefully.

Italy is a parliamentary republic led by a prime minister, who serves as the head of government while the president is head of state. A bicameral parliament consisting of the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) and the Senate (upper house) makes up the country’s legislature. Technically, both houses of 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 in March 2018.

The current coalition government was formed in June 2018 from the Five Star Movement (M5S), headed by Luigi Di Maio, and the right-wing Matteo Salvini of Lega Nord (LN), months after the March 2018 elections produced a hung parliament. The government was a result of a number of negotiations between party leaders that resulted in the nomination of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. Conte has announced his intention to reduce illegal immigration, fight against political corruption and to pass tax reforms. Since Conte’s investiture he has carried out numerous reforms: refusing migrants, introducing legislation to confront conflicts of interests in politics and pushing for a flat tax system.

Although Conte shares the formal title of Prime Minister, coalition leader partners Di Maio and Salvini play critical roles in influencing policy and interfacing with the public. LN’s Salvini is the head of the Interior Ministry and has gained notoriety in continued battles with EU officials over budgetary disputes. Salvini’s presence in the Italian political scene has not gone unnoticed, and an increasing number of Italians attribute him vast political power, asserting he is the true leader of the Italian government.

Opponents of Conte’s policies insist his tax reforms do not properly fund the government and that his anti-immigration policy is hurting both the economy and inter-European relationships; they further allege that Conte himself is participating in activities that present a conflict of interest. Despite these criticisms, Conte’s government maintains high approval ratings from a public that has strongly supported each of these policy decisions. In the wake of years of austerity measures and a steady flow of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa, anti-immigrant and anti-EU sentiment has been on the rise in Italy. These sentiments have been reflected in the support for Conte and his policies, which are expected to continue in the near term.

In addition to shifts in domestic policy, the Conte government’s foreign policy has seen changes as well. Conte has long been a supporter of the reversal of international sanctions against Russia – a policy he claims would improve both the Italian economy and the ability to combat global terrorist threats. This position has drawn Italy closer with Russia, a move which is controversial with EU neighbors and may worsen tensions between Italy and neighboring states. Hardline migrant policy may be similarly aggravating to neighboring European states that often view the migrant crisis as a regional problem requiring regional solutions. The current government has often adopted an Italy first mentality when it comes to foreign relations, in turn alienating neighbors and EU member states. Conte’s government has even began to rethink its relationship with China and officially signed infrastructure and trade accords with China in March 2019, becoming the first major European power to do so.

Economy
The Italian economy – the fourth-largest in the EU – is diverse, with major industries including 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. In recent years the government has struggled to recover from the global financial crisis. Additionally, Italy continues to suffer from rising public debt. Unemployment is also high among the working age population. 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 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 albeit slow growth in the coming years.

**Corruption**

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

Corruption levels are moderate, impacting lower levels of government and parts of the Italian business landscape. Many cases of corruption in the country are directly linked to its thriving organized criminal networks. For instance, 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. Due to the 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 has also served as a major impediment to business operations in Italy. Low-level business corruption, as with political corruption, is commonly linked to organized criminal syndicates. Criminal groups may 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.

Cultural factors, economic issues, legal obstacles and law enforcement’s inability to decisively deal with organized crime have all contributed to the prevalence of corruption throughout the country. The government has taken steps in recent years to root out corruption, including passing legislation restricting the ability of organized criminal groups to buy votes in local and other elections. The current government has prioritized corruption and taken further steps to introduce anti-corruption legislation, but the impact of this legislation has yet to be seen.

Transparency International, a non-governmental organization that monitors global corruption, gave Italy a score of 52 out of 100 in its 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index Italy’s (CPI). The CPI measures levels of perceived corruption, ranging from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (extremely transparent). Italy’s score suggests moderate levels of corruption, and the country was perceived as the 53rd least corrupt out of 180 surveyed.

**Security issues**

**General crime**

- **Crime is a MODERATE concern throughout Italy due to incidents of petty and organized crime; violent crime is uncommon and typically related to organized criminal groups.**

Crime levels in Italy are moderate due to concerns of petty and organized crime. The most common types of crime are petty and opportunistic in nature, and rates of these types of crimes such as bag-snatching, bag-slashings and pick-pocketing have risen significantly in recent years. 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 nonviolent crimes, such as vehicle theft and residential burglary, have also increased significantly for similar reasons.

Incidents of pick-pocketing and theft of unattended items target locals and foreign nationals alike. Thieves often operate in groups and attempt to distract the targeted individual in order to carry out the crime. These
crimes often occur 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. Risks are particularly elevated during hours of darkness.

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 unsecured 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 PIN code 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 European 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 and often takes place in the southern and central regions of the country. 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 the country despite law enforcement efforts to curb their activities. The five main criminal organizations operating in Italy are Cosa Nostra (Sicily), ‘Ndrangheta (Calabria), Camorra (Campania), Stidda (Sicily) and Sacra Corona Unita (Puglia). These groups are involved in a number of illegal activities including extortion, drug smuggling, prostitution, arms trafficking, human trafficking and a variety of other criminal activities. They are also heavily involved in government and business corruption.

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, 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 cocktails 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 militant groups and domestic extremist organizations.**

Terrorism is a low security concern in Italy, as no major terror attacks have taken place in country in recent years. However, an underlying threat of attack exists in the country stemming from extremists and domestic anarchist groups. Although no specific threats exist at this time, Italy’s past military contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan has increased the likelihood that extremists could target the country in retaliation. Additionally, there is concern that Italian nationals currently fighting alongside 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 also pose a threat in Italy although they tend to be small in size and impact. These organizations carry out low-level attacks from shootings to minor bombings and property damage that typically target law enforcement, foreign embassies/consulates and businesses. While several of these groups are active in Italy, their attacks tend to result in little physical damage and rarely cause casualties. Foreign nationals in Italy are unlikely to be impacted by anarchist attacks.

Civil unrest

- Protest actions and labor strikes occur regularly in Italy, resulting in MODERATE concerns of civil unrest; however, these events are mostly peaceful, though disruptions to goods and services can 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. Transportation strikes tend to be the most disruptive, although many of these actions are limited to specific regions and are relatively brief in duration. Strike actions generally have few impacts outside of transportation and public services, and associated protests are often monitored by security forces and remain peaceful.

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. Previous protests around G7 events have occurred in Sicily and Turin.

Unrest associated with sporting events, especially soccer matches, occurs in Italy. 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 the majority of such unrest is limited to isolated groups of individuals, larger sports riots occasionally occur and can involve violence and clashes with security forces. 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 risk in Italy and rarely targets foreign nationals.

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

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 nationality do not have visa-free access to the Schengen Area are required to have a valid passport as well as a valid Schengen visa or EU residency permit to enter Italy.
- As entry requirements are subject to change, individuals are advised to contact their nearest Italian Embassy prior to travel.

Political/Security Risks

AIG Travel rates Italy as a LOW threat location due to some concerns associated with petty and organized crime as well as corruption.

- Concerns stemming from political instability are LOW as transitions of power have occurred peacefully.
- Corruption is a MODERATE concern throughout Italy, impacting many aspects of society including the business and government sectors.
- Crime is a MODERATE concern throughout Italy due to incidents of petty and organized crime; violent crime is uncommon and typically related to organized criminal groups.
- Terrorism is a LOW concern in Italy although there is an underlying threat posed by militant groups and domestic extremist organizations.
- Protest actions and labor strikes occur regularly in Italy, resulting in MODERATE concerns of civil unrest; however, these events are mostly peaceful, though disruptions to goods and services can occur.
- Kidnapping is a LOW risk in Italy and rarely target foreign nationals.

Infrastructure

Italy’s infrastructure is modern and generally well-maintained, posing a LOW threat to those in country. Rail and road networks are extensive, although public transportation is sometimes disrupted by labor strikes. Much of Italy’s infrastructure is being inspected following an August 2018 earthquake that prompted a bridge collapse in Genoa. Further infrastructure inspections continue across the country and may be encountered when traveling by through Italy by car or bus.

- 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, are 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 or sterilized 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 two passenger terminals. The airport offers an array of services including banks, currency exchanges, shops, restaurants and vehicle rental. Travelers can 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. Pre-arranged secure transportation through a vetted provider is advised for all travel throughout the country.

- **Road** – Italy has a well-maintained road network, which is one of the most extensive in Europe. Driving conditions in Italy can be difficult as many urban roads are narrow and congested, and Italian drivers can be aggressive. Traffic drives on the right hand side of the road.
  - **Self-Driving** - Car rental agencies are found in most major towns. Travelers wishing to rent a car must be at least 21 years old and possess an international driving permit. 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. Drivers are required by law to use headlights at all times on highways and outside of urban areas.
  - **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. Pick-pocketing is regularly reported on buses across Italy.
  - **Taxi** - Metered taxis 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.
  - **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. Connections are more frequent during the summer and on holidays. Ferries are generally well-regulated.
  - 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 polite. 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.
• Fines may be issued for littering, sitting, eating or drinking on steps and courtyards around main churches and public buildings in cities including Florence and Rome.

**Important Dates in 2019**

- 1 January – New Year’s Day
- 6 January – Epiphany
- 19 April – Good Friday
- 21 April – Easter
- 22 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; however, medical facilities are 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; 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. 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 lie near major faults. 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, 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 properly hydrate.

**Money**
• **Currency** - The euro (EUR) 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 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 Monday to Friday from 08:30 – 18:30, although many businesses close for lunch at some point during the day. Banks are open on weekdays from 08:30 or 09:00 – 12:30 or 13:00 and from 14:00 or 15:00 – 16:00.

**Contact Information**

- International dialing code: +39
- International dialing prefix: 00
- Police: 113, 112
- Ambulance: 118, 112
- Fire: 115, 112

**Cultural factors**

**Etiquette and norms**

- 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 polite. 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. As such, formal titles should be used where appropriate.

**Useful information**

**Useful information**

- Public holidays
- Weather forecast
- Maps
- 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, 112
- Ambulance: 118, 112
- Fire: 115, 112

**Embassies**

**Australian Embassy**
Via Antonio Bosio 5  
00161 Rome  
Tel: +39 06 852 721  
Fax: +39 06 852 72300  
Email: info-rome@dfat.gov.au

**British Embassy**
Via Venti Settembre 80/a  
00187 Rome  
Tel: +39 06 4220 0001  
Fax: +39 06 4220 2334

**Chinese Embassy**
No. 56 Via Bruxelles  
00198 Rome  
Tel: +39 06 841 3458  
Fax: +39 06 853 52891  
E-mail: chinaemb_it@mfa.gov.cn

**French Embassy**
Piazza Farnese 67  
00186 Rome  
Tel: +39 06 686 011  
Fax: +39 06 686 01360

**German Embassy**
Via San Martino della Battaglia 4  
00185 Rome  
Tel: +39 06 4921 3208

**Japanese Embassy**
Via Quintino Sella, 60  
00187 Rome  
Tel: +39 06 487 991  
Fax: +39 06 487 3316

**Mexican Embassy**
Via Lazzaro Spallanzani 16  
00161 Rome  
Tel: +39 06 441 6061  
Fax: +39 06 442 92703

**Saudi Arabian Embassy**
Via GB Pergolesi 9  
00198 Rome  
Tel: +39 06 844 851
Health advisory

Health infrastructure

Hospitals and clinics, both state-run and private, offer a reasonable standard of care nationwide. 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, although the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) is accepted throughout the country. 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 traveling to Italy:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Measles (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended)

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

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 to Italy:
• 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.
• 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 cities of Florence, Trento and Belluno and the Friuli Venezia Giulia region.

Recent outbreaks

• Measles: In 2018 more than 2,500 cases of measles were reported throughout Italy. The epidemic resulted from low vaccination rates among Italian children, although the government has since made the measles vaccine mandatory. The spread of measles has continued into 2019. Measles is a highly contagious airborne disease and can cause serious health complications in young children.
• Chikungunya: In September 2017 14 cases of Chikungunya, a viral disease whose symptoms include fever and joint pain, were reported in central Italy, concentrated around the cities of Rome and Anzio. Chikungunya is transmitted exclusively through mosquito bites.

Food and water safety

Although water sanitation standards in country are high, travelers are advised to only consume purified or bottled water as a precaution. 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 heatstroke and exhaustion. It is advisable to take appropriate clothing, to limit sun exposure at the hottest times of day, to use ample sunscreen and to drink plenty of liquids.

Emergency response

The emergency number for an ambulance in Italy is 118. The general European emergency number 112 can also be used. The service provides good coverage and response times countrywide.