



## Explore locations: Italy

### Why study abroad in Italy?

What comes to your mind when you think about Italy? Delicious food? Yes! Culture, art and history? Yes! Venice and Florence? Yes, correct. These answers are only part of an idea someone can have about Italy.

Italy is a country of excellence. Thanks to its 'Made in Italy' products, Italy is renowned in the design and fashion industries. Italy is also a top exporter of wines to the U.S. and the number one producer of various products such as artichokes and kiwis.

**When talking about art and architecture in Italy**, we can mention a few names: the Sistine Chapel in Rome, the Leaning Tower in Pisa, the Rialto Bridge in Venice, the Duomo or Cathedral in Milan. Speaking of archeology, we have Pompeii, an entire ancient Roman city preserved thanks to the lava that buried the city with the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D.

**What about Italy's natural heritage?** Many people are familiar with the rugged portion of the Italian Riviera called the Cinque Terre, or the Alps. Fewer people know about the *Sassi di Matera* (the stones of Matera) in Matera, a city in the region of Basilicata, which developed from natural caves carved into the rocks. These sites represent a small number of the 51 cultural and natural sites listed in the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List. Italy is the country with the greatest number of UNESCO sites in the world.

Italy is not a huge country. Its surface is as large as the state of Arizona in the U.S.A, though it has a tremendous number of differences in its landscape. A general distinction would be to split it in three areas: North, Center and South, according to geography, history and economic development. This is a common type of distinction used to localize places in Italy, but Italy actually consists of 20 regions. To understand how diverse they are, you could ask two people (one from the Trentino-Alto Adige region in the north and another from the island of Sicily in the south) to have an informal chat and you would see that they probably would not understand each other. This would be because they speak in different dialects. In fact, Italy currently has a huge number of dialects that is almost impossible to count in each region but everybody knows that Italy is the country of hand gestures, so language is not a barrier, not even for foreigners. Moreover, each of the 20 regions has a specific cultural, social and culinary history, influenced by the different cultures that have passed through them over more



than two millennia. But, Italy as a unified country has only existed since 155 years. Nevertheless, its unification did not mean standardization. Italy also represents many separate realities that can vary according to the definition used to unite or separate neighboring areas, cities, and villages. An example of this are administrative boundaries where villages could be separated by a regional boundary, but they would eat the same food and speak the same dialect. On the other hand, two small towns could have the same culinary tradition because of the territory in which they are set, but their inhabitants could speak different dialects due to the populations' different historical movements.

Italy has a significant role in the world's economy. In fact, it is known to be a European and worldwide leader in the creation of major infrastructures, it has the world's fifth largest trade surplus in manufactured goods, it is Europe's second largest exporter and it is home to leading aerospace technologies.

Creative minds work on exporting the Italian excellence all over the world. Architects such as Massimiliano Fuksas or Renzo Piano have left their artistic mark in many international cities.

Italy is a founding and leading member of some of the most important international organizations committed to peace, democracy, and the rule of law: European Union, the Council of Europe, NATO, and OSCE.

The combination of these elements makes Italy a unique place to visit. One can understand its many facets and nuances only by experiencing it firsthand.

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