

## Rome, Italy

“You may have the universe, if I may have Italy” –Giuseppe Verdi

The enchanting country of Italy has been conquering the hearts of artists, composers, authors, poets, and the curious travelers who continue to seek its beauty throughout the centuries. The old country rich in history, located in the southern peninsula of Western Europe, has undergone much transformation. From the ways of the Etruscans to the rise of the Roman Empire and the birth of the Italian Renaissance to Italy's late unification in 1861, Italian culture has had many faces. The so-called boot country is famous for a variety of elements including its breathtaking landscapes, the delightful Italian cuisine, and a thirst for high fashion that has captured the modern world.

Italy today is a democratic republic and highly developed country. In fact, Italy has the fourth largest population and economy within the European Union, closely tailing France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The country is made up of twenty regions, similar to the American notion of a state. Two independent countries, Vatican City and San Marino, reside within the Italian borders. Italy is a member of the European Union and operates on the Euro form of currency. Italian is spoken throughout the country with although a variety of different dialects can be heard throughout the land. Italians are passionate about *il calcio*, or soccer, and eager fans continue to celebrate the Italian victory of 2006 in the FIFA World Cup tournament.

All roads lead to Rome...

Rome is the capital of Italy, the center of the Holy Roman Catholic Church and arguably the birthplace of Western culture. The ‘Eternal City’ is Italy's largest and most populated city with over 2.7 million residents. Rome's charm lies amidst the ancient ruins and the fast-paced metropolitan, the Baroque and the Renaissance peacefully cohabiting side by side. Located on the Tiber river, the historical center of Rome is positioned on the famous seven hills (the Capitoline, Palatine, Viminal, Quirinal, Esquiline, Caelian, and Aventine hills). Millions of tourists are drawn to the beauty of the *caput mundi*, (‘the capital of the world’ as it was called by the ancients) every year, making it one of the most visited places in the world. Rome has something to offer to all who cross its path: the great energy of a metropolitan, tranquil strolls in the many escapes of city life, the arts, the opera, shopping, incredible dining, spirituality, and an unforgettable night life.

Links:

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4033.htm>

<http://www.letsgo.com/destinations/europe/rome/>

<http://www.corriere.it/>

<http://www.thingstodoinroma.com/>