



"Your Italian Design and Travel Guru"

Top Ten "Know Before You Go" List

1. **Il Cambio:** best to not purchase Euros at the Airport as the exchange rate isn't as favorable; do this at your bank in the US, or at a bank in the city center.
2. **Using an ATM:** Know the numeric equivalent of your password, i.e., the telephone alpha-numeric correlation. The alphabet will not display, only the numbers.
3. **Surrender your passport** when you check in at the hotel. It is Italian law that everyone must do this. All the details of your reservation length of stay must be recorded. Do not fret. Do not attempt to rush the concierge. Your passport will be courteously returned to you in due time.
As emergency backups, bring with you:
 - a color copy/PDF of your main passport page
 - a passport card (plastic – like a credit card)
4. **Bursaioli – pick pockets:** they will be found in and near train stations. They also may be on crowded trains or metro (subways) or buses. They can get into your purse in your backpack, especially if you are looking away from it. Make eye contact with people close to you. Hold your purse on the side away from the street. Keep your passport &/or cash on the inside of your shirt. If you see someone attempting to pick a pocket, yell at them, even if you only say, "NO!"
5. **Polite and Non-Linear** Generally, this is not an Italian custom. Yes, there are some places where there will be lines, such as airport security, train ticket lines, banks. Service at a Bar, Pharmacy, and many places will happen organically; not by waiting in line. Since standing in lines is not customary, "cutting" in front of you doesn't exist. Taking offense is to overlay your cultural norms and only upset yourself unnecessarily. Italians aren't being rude; they are community-oriented and take care of their local regulars. Be pleasant, make eye contact with the staff, know what you want to ask for/order and be patient: your turn will come. In addition, extend the customary friendly and respectful politeness. Start with "Buongiorno" (Good day) or "Per favore" (Please). Then ask your question/s to help you decide. You may hear, "Signor/a, dicami" *Sir/Madame, tell me). Finish with "Grazie" (Thank you) and you'll be on a winning path.
6. **Do. Not. Rush.** Yes, some drivers may be in a rush, but do not expect things to happen instantly. You'll only be disappointed. At a restaurant, it is considered rude to bring you il conto (the bill) unless you request it. In Italy, meals are a time to relax, enjoy your food and drink, socialize, and take plenty of time for good digestion and health.
7. **Dress Code...** Dress well. Italians consider dressing well more than a matter of being fashionable: it is a sign of respect and good character. Ladies are expected to have their shoulders covered when entering a church, as well as to have any short skirts or shorts covered with a long scarf or preferably longer skirt or dress or even pants, especially when visiting St. Peter's in Rome. Wear very comfortable, supportive shoes that offer plenty of cushioning in the sole. Think of my "cobblestone scale": Flats with 1/8th inch thin sole are insufficient.
8. **Passeggiata/Walk About:** Italians are health conscious. They walk TO places, and they enjoy a passeggiata (stroll) through the park during the day and a giro (circle or turn) around the piazza after dinner to socialize, digest and calm before sleep.
9. **No/ little AC** – not an Italian custom. The climate typically doesn't demand it. Yes, it can get very hot in August particularly, which is when Italians generally go on vacation... to the beach, of course! Your hotel may have AC. Just understand this is a concession to tourists.
10. **No Ice** – not (for your water). Not an Italian concept. Ice cold water, as in refrigerated water is acceptable in a ristorante. Actually, not having ice in your water is less of a shock to your system so consider it as a healthy alternative.