



Italy



Welcome

Italians have a reputation for a charming openness, warmth and welcome. They will expect you to shake their hand, looking directly into their eyes, which is seen as an expression of sincerity.

You may find that they stand much closer to you than you expect and may touch you on the arm or shoulder when speaking. Try not to step away as it could be interpreted as being rude or uninterested.

It is usual for them to use their hands to help them express their words and add emphasis and emotion.

Italians have been visiting the British Isles since Roman times and are currently the sixth most frequent visitors to London.

Did you know?

The piano, thermometer, eye glasses, typewriter and the ice cream cone were all invented in Italy.

'Welcome!'
Ben-veh-noo-tee
Benvenuti!

The Language

Hello

Bwon-jor-no
Buongiorno

Goodbye

Ah-ree-veh-dair-chee
Arrivederci

Please

Pur fah-vor-reh
Per favore

Thank you

Gra-tsee-yeh
Grazie

Italian is widely used and understood by Italians but around half of all Italians speak a regional dialect at home.

The most popular second language at school is now English but older people may not speak it and will always appreciate it if you can say a few words in Italian.



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The Culture

Italians have a long and rich history. The Roman Empire was one of the most influential empires of all time. The Italian Renaissance gave the world much of the fine art we appreciate to this day, including some of its most famous works by artists such as Michelangelo. Italy is also proud of its opera and its architecture, which includes some of the world's most spectacular churches.

Italians retain their passion for life to this day and love to socialise and laugh with their friends and family. The family is very important, especially its reputation and honour. Italians are also passionate about their food: their pasta, pizza and ice cream are well known around the world.

There is great pride taken in one's particular region. Asking which part of Italy they come from and showing an interest in their country and region is greatly appreciated: regions often have quite distinct food, history, customs and characteristics. Their allegiance to the local region is sometimes called '*campanilismo*', which comes from the word '*campanile*' meaning bell-tower, a distinctive feature of many Italian towns.

Did you know?

The number 17 is considered unlucky in Italy.

Customer Service Advice

The style, look and feel of a place and the way people dress and speak are considered by Italians to be every bit as important as formalities in shops or restaurants. Appearance is important, and they will look for good presentation among other things to attract them to your product or service.

- **DO** be flexible when scheduling reservations or museum visits as attitudes to timekeeping are relaxed.
- **DO** try to relax, laugh and enjoy yourself, it will be appreciated.
- **DO** feel free to talk about yourself and your family to build up a relationship with your Italian customers.
- **DO** be confident in what you say and do.
- **DO** maintain eye contact when speaking to Italians as this is a sign of honesty and sincerity.
- **DO** remember to pay particular attention to the design and colours of printed literature and the presentation of your service.



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Relationships are important in any context, so try to make an effort even if your contact with them is brief. You can usually discuss things like holiday plans, personal preferences or ask questions about their family and what they do.

Viva Italia

Italy as we know it today was only united in 1861. Before then, it was a collection of kingdoms and small independent city-states. In fact, San Marino and the Vatican, both wholly within Italy's borders, remain independent to this day.

Although Italy has opened its doors to immigrants, about 95% of the population was born in the country. Many Italians have moved from Italy to other countries in Europe, North and South America. Almost 10 million people left Italy before the beginning of World War I and are now spread throughout the world.

Family ties between emigrants and their families back in Italy are often strong.

Key Facts

- **Population** – approx 60,000,000
- **Capital City** – Rome
- **Language** – Italian
- **Religions** – Catholics 88%, Other Christians 3%, Muslims 1.4%, others <1%
- **Currency** – Euro
- **Exchange Rate** – €1.34 = £1.00
- **Dialling Code** – +39
- **Time Difference** – GMT+1



Where to go next

For more information about welcoming international visitors to London, visit www.rln-london.com/welcoming

RLN London's *Service Finder* can help you find language and cultural services – including translation, detailed cultural briefing and language training. www.rln-london.com/servicefinder

'Welcoming the World' is an initiative which aims to help people in frontline roles to give great customer service to international visitors. RLN London has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this country profile, which is one of a wider series. However, views or opinions presented by the contributing author do not necessarily represent those of RLN London.

Remember!

These are general guidelines on how people from different cultures *might* act and the customer service they *might* expect. They can't predict every individual's behaviour in every situation.