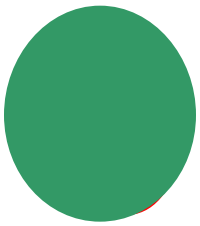

Italy

Country, People and History

2011

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1. THE COUNTRY

1.1 GEOGRAPHY AND TERRITORY

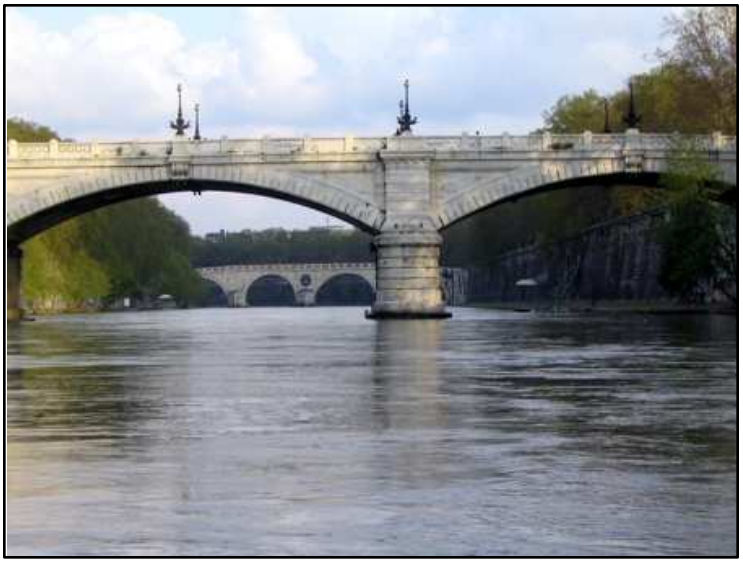
Known as the “boot” for its distinctive shape, the Italian peninsula extends from mainland Europe into the Mediterranean Sea. Italy covers 301,230 square kilometers, making it slightly larger than the state of Arizona. Along its upper arc, Italy borders Switzerland and Austria to the north, Slovenia to the east, and France to the west.

The parts of the Mediterranean Sea surrounding Italy are called the Ligurian Sea, the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Ionian Sea and the Adriatic Sea. Within these seas, Italy has several islands: Sicily and Sardinia, the largest islands in the Mediterranean, and other exotic and beautiful islands like Elba, Capri, and the Aeolian Islands.

Italy’s terrain is mostly mountainous or hilly, with only about 20% plains land. The Alps mountain range forms Italy’s northern boundary. The highest point in the Alps, Monte Bianco (or Mont Blanc), is 4,808 meters high and is located on the border of Italy and France. The Cadibona Pass in Liguria links the Alps to the smaller Apennine mountains, which run for 1,350 kilometers along the east coast of the peninsula. Italy also contains

several volcanoes, like the active Mount Etna in Sicily and the dormant Vesuvius near Naples.

Italy's largest river is the Po, which is 652 kilometers long and flows across northern Italy. The Po keeps the surrounding area so well irrigated that the Padana Plain area nearby was able to develop into the most industrially successful part of the country. Other important rivers in Italy include the Tiber (*right*), which flows through Rome, and the Arno, which flows through Florence.



Italy's climate varies widely among the regions. An Alpine climate in the north makes winters long and severe. Temperatures change with the seasons, and the average rainfall is high. The Padana Plain experiences a sub-continental climate, with cold winters, hot summers, mist, and fog. The center and south of Italy have hot summers and mild winters, while the islands generally enjoy a balmy Mediterranean climate. The *scirocco*, a hot African wind, can produce periods of intense heat for several weeks in the summer in regions south of Rome.

Much of Italy's wildlife has sadly been depleted due to farming and hunting. However, falcons and swallows are still common throughout the country, and the Mediterranean Sea is home to swordfish, sharks, octopi, sardines, sponges, and whales. New conservation efforts are helping species like black bears, chamois (a goatlike antelope), foxes, wolves, and deer

survive. In fact, Italy was one of the first nations in Europe to create national parks to preserve land.

1.2 POPULATION

According to the annual ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica) estimate, by January 2011 Italian population has exceeded the 60.600.000 residents, growing by an increase rate of 4.3 per thousand. This makes it the 25th most populated nation in the world, just behind Great Britain. The Italian statistics institute ISTAT calculated in 2001 that approximately 26% of the nation's population resides in northern Italy, 19% in northeast Italy, 19% in the center, 25% in the south, and 12% on the islands.

The birth rate in Italy is among the lowest in Europe, with just 9.2 births per 1000. In a CIA ranking of 225 nations, Italy ranked 220th in terms of its birth rate. However, although the numbers of its native population are decreasing, Italy has seen an immigration explosion in recent decades, with a large percentage of the immigrants originating from Morocco and Albania and, in more recent years, Romania. The number of foreign residents has increased consistently. In 1991, 356,159 foreigners lived in Italy; in 2001 the number almost tripled to 987,363; in 2011, it more than tripled to 4,563,000 unities. The ISTAT estimated total migration rate for the year 2010 is an outstanding 4.8 per 1000, i.e. a more than doubled rate than 5 years earlier (2.07 migrants per 1000 persons in 2005). The number of foreign residents is highest in the northeast and northwest (61% of the total foreign population), and is much lower in the south.

While foreign population has been consistently increasing and accounting now for a 7.5% of the total, Italian-native population has decreased for the fourth year in a row and now amount to 56,038,000 unities (ISTAT, 2011).

With about 2.5 million inhabitants, Rome is Italy's most populous city. It is followed by Milan, with about 1.3 million; Naples with one million; Turin with 867 thousand; and Palermo with 679 thousand. The town with the smallest population is Morterone in the province of Lecco, home to only 38 residents.

1.3 Flag and Anthem

The modern Italian flag (*below*) consists of three equally-sized vertical stripes in the colors green, white, and red. The reason behind the choice of the colors is not certain. On the one hand, the three colors were common to several symbols and uniforms of Italian troops that merged into Napoleon army in 1796 during his Italian campaign. The flag, thus, would be the result of the combination of these recurring colors to the design of the French flag. On the other hand, it is also believed that the combination of these colors was intended to evoke a famous passage from Dante Alighieri's "Divine Comedy", where the poet describes the appearance of his muse Beatrice, wearing a flaming red dress (allegory of charity) covered by a candid white veil (allegory of faith) and green cloak (allegory of hope).

The flag was first officially adopted on January 7, 1797, though this version had horizontal stripes and an emblem in the center. The design went through various forms, including one with a Napoleonic eagle that lasted until the emperor's abdication in 1814.

As Italy began to move toward unification, people started to identify with the three-colored flag as a symbol of liberty and nationalism. When the country was unified in 1861, it adopted the three-striped flag with the crest of the ruling Savoy family on the white stripe.

The Italian flag in its current form was adopted on January 1, 1948, after Italy changed from a monarchy to a republic. Article 12 of the Italian Constitutional Charter reads: "The flag of the Republic is the Italian Tri-color: green, white and red in vertical bands of equal size."

Italy's national anthem is officially titled "*Il Canto degli Italiani*," or "The Song of the Italians," though it is popularly called "*Fratelli d'Italia*" ("Brothers of Italy") after its first line. The anthem was written by Goffredo Mameli in Genoa in 1847, on the eve of war against Austria, when the poet-soldier was only 20; soon after, the 29 year-old musician Michele Novaro put the words to music. Despite becoming soon after the most widespread and beloved anthem in the following unification process, Mameli never could experience the success of his creation since he died in 1849 while defending the recently-proclaimed republic of Rome. Referring to heroes and episodes of thousands-year Italian history, "Il Canto degli Italiani" is a rallying call to Italy to come together—it says, in one verse, "Let one flag, one hope bring us together; the hour has struck for us to join forces." The song's memorable melody and compelling lyrics made it a favorite during Italy's unification and afterwards. On October 12, 1946, Mameli's anthem became the National Anthem of the Republic of Italy.

2. STATE AND INSTITUTIONS

2.1 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE ITALIAN CONSTITUTION

Italy was proclaimed a republic in 1946 and adopted its Constitution two years later, on January 1, 1948. The Constitution enumerates the political and civil liberties of the citizens and outlines the principles and structure of the Italian government (text available on this link: http://www.governo.it/governo/costituzione/principi.html).

The Constitution consists of three parts: Fundamental Principles, Rights and Duties of Citizens, and the Organization of the Republic. The first section proclaims that Italy is a democratic republic "founded on labor," recognizes the inherent rights of man and requires the state to provide equal opportunities to its citizens, safeguards minority groups and provides for some regional autonomy, separates Church and state, and outlines other basic principles of the nation. The second section lists citizens' rights—such as those of freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech,—recognizes the rights and duties of families, guarantees free education, and protects workers' rights. The third section lays out rules for the structure and function of the republic, including the legal process, the role of the president and civil servants, and the judiciary branch. Italy's legislation fulfills the standards generally set by international law.

Italy's legislative branch is a bicameral parliamentary system, consisting of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Its executive branch consists of a Council of Ministers (a Cabinet) headed by a Prime Minister. Italy's President is the Head of State—elected by Parliament and regional representatives every seven years, he represents the unity of the state and

serves as commander in chief of the armed forces (http://www.quirinale.it/). The current President, Giorgio Napolitano, was sworn in 2006.

2.2 PARLIAMENT

The two chambers of Parliament share equal legislative power. The Chamber of Deputies, the lower house, consists of 630 members; the Senate, the upper house, is made up of 315 members. Within one month of being passed in both chambers, laws are enacted by the President of the Republic *(above: Quirinale, official residency of the President of The Republic)*. Italy's Prime Minister, who in Italy is called the President of the Council of Ministers, is appointed by the President. His government must then be approved by the two legislative chambers.

In emergency situations, the two houses can delegate power to the government to issue non-constitutional decrees. In extraordinary circumstances, the government may issue immediately enforceable decrees. The Chamber of Deputies and Senate must then turn the decrees into laws within 60 days, or they may be annulled. (*above: Palazzo Madama, seat of the Senate.*)

Italy's current Parliament was elected in April of 2008 (http://www.parlamento.it/). Italy's current Prime Minister is Silvio Berlusconi (http://www.governo.it/).

2.3 The President of the Republic

Italy's Head of State, the President, is elected for seven-year terms by Parliament and a number of regional delegates—three per regional council, with the exception of the small region Valle d'Aosta, which has just one delegate. A majority of two-thirds is required, but if this is not achieved after the third count, a simple majority is enough. The President must be a citizen aged 50 or older. If he is unable to perform his duties, these are taken on by the President of the Senate.

The President's duties and powers include calling parliamentary elections, enacting laws, serving as commander of the armed forces, presiding over the supreme defense council, declaring war subject to the deliberations of the Chambers, presiding over the supreme council of magistrates, commuting sentences or granting pardons, and naming both the Prime Minister and Ministers, in accordance with the recommendations of the Prime Minister.

2.4 The Government

Italy is governed by the coalition of parties that receives the majority of seats in parliament. From among these parties, the "Council of Ministers," or Cabinet, consists of members appointed by the President based on the Prime Minister's recommendations. Each Minister is responsible for the actions of an office, like the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Once set up, the government must be voted on by both houses of Parliament. By means of a roll call vote, each chamber gives its confidence to the government or withholds it.

2.5 The Constitutional Court

The Constitutional Court, Italy's high court established after World War II, consists of 15 judges. Five of these are named by the President of the Republic, five are named by Parliament in joint session, and five are named by Italy's supreme council of magistrates. The Constitutional Court passes judgment on issues regarding the constitutionality of laws and of decisions with legal force made by the state or regional councils, on the assignment of state and regional council powers, and on accusations directed toward Italy's President.

2.6 Jurisdiction

Italy's judiciary branch consists of a court system with two divisions: ordinary jurisdiction and special jurisdictions. Administered by career judges, the ordinary jurisdiction deals with civil and criminal matters. The special jurisdictions, meanwhile, involve exceptional matters: the administrative jurisdiction handles controversies against the civil service; the auditing jurisdiction concerns itself with public accounting; the military jurisdiction deals with military offenses; and fiscal jurisdiction involves tax issues.

2.7 Italian Regions

Italy is divided into 20 administrative regions. Five of these regions—Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sicily, and Sardinia—were granted special semi-autonomous privileges in the 1948

constitution for several reasons (such as minority issues, linguistic differences and their geographical position). The remaining 15 were created in 1970 as a way to decentralize the central government. The regions are further divided into 110 provinces and 8094 municipalities.

Italy is often thought of as containing four main sections: Northern Italy (consisting of the regions Piedmont, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardy, Trentino-Alto Adige, the Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria, and Emilia Romagna); Central Italy (Tuscany, Umbria, Lazio, Marche and Abruzzo); Southern Italy (Molise, the islands (Sardinia and Sicily).

The south of the country, comprising the regions of Molise, Campania, Puglia, Calabria, Basilicata, Abruzzo, Sicily, and Sardinia, is often called the *Mezzogiorno*. The word means "midday" or "noon" in Italian, and refers to the strong noontime sun that hits the southern hemisphere. The region has long been beset by economic problems, in contrast with the prosperous north.

Since World War II, a determined effort has been made to resolve this economic imbalance. An investment fund, called the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, was created in 1950 to stimulate investment in the south and to channel government funds to strengthen the region's infrastructure. The effort was mostly unsuccessful, as few private investors were attracted; instead, many state firms and industries were forced to relocate to the south, often leading to impractical and inefficient situations.

In 1986, the *Cassa* was replaced by the *Agenzia per la Promozione dello Sviluppo del Mezzogiorno*, which aimed to attract more private investment. Finally, the ministry dealing with southern development was abolished in 1992, becoming part into the Budget Ministry.

The issue of aid to the *Mezzogiorno* is still a controversial issue in Italy. In recent years, a party called the Northern League has advocated total separation from the South, both financially and politically. The party has been widely criticized, but still forms part of the ruling coalition.

2.8 RELIGIONS

The most widespread religion in Italy is Roman Catholicism, although it is not an official State religion. People of all religious faiths enjoy the same freedom before the law, as the constitution states that "all citizens have equal dignity and are equal before the law without distinction of sex, race, language and religion." According to Article 8 of the constitution, all religions and creeds have the right to be freely practiced.

Relations between religion and state are governed by law, based on agreements between representatives of the religion and the Italian state. The State has reached law agreements with 6 religious denominations, and 8 formal agreements that are yet to be signed by the parliament.

The State and the Roman Catholic Church are sovereign entities independent of each other. Legal relations with the Catholic Church are regulated by a Concordat stipulated in 1929 and amended in 1985, named the Lateran Treaty, which allows, among other things, for the Catholic religion to be taught in state schools to those pupils who so request.

2.8.1 ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The history of Roman Catholicism began with the Church of Rome, which traditionally considered itself the only legitimate heir of the power given to the 12 apostles by Jesus Christ. The Catholic faith is present throughout the world and assigns supreme authority to the Pope, who is the bishop of Rome. Beginning with St. Peter, the Church has passed authority through successive Popes in an unbroken line.

The Pope, elected for life, acts as the spiritual head of Roman Catholicism and as the head of state of Vatican City (*right*), an independent nation within the city of Rome. The current Pope is Benedict XVI, born Joseph Ratzinger, who was elected in 2005. He is one of the few non-Italians who have become Pope.

The Pope nominates the bishops, heads of the local structures of organization called dioceses. The bishops govern these dioceses with authority over priests and the power to administer the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Orders.

The Pope also nominates cardinals, the highest dignitaries of the Church. It is the cardinals who, in turn, will elect the next Pope, in a meeting called a conclave held in the Sistine Chapel. Once the cardinals' ballots are counted, they are burned and smoke can be seen rising from a chimney in the chapel.

Priests, who rank below bishops in the Church hierarchy, are divided into two groups: those who belong to religious orders, the "regular clergy,"

and those who do not, the "secular clergy." The religious orders—such as Franciscans, Jesuits, and Sisters of Charity—include priests, consecrated lay brothers, and nuns. The priests are male and must remain celibate.

Today, 88% of the Italian population considers itself Catholic, but only 25% of these Catholics are actively practicing.

2.8.2 JUDAISM

The first Jews settled in Rome more than 2000 years ago. In the year 100 C.E., the first synagogue was built in Ostia, the Roman port (*left*).

Discovered by excavators in 1961, the synagogue included a relief showing a *menorah* and other symbols of Judaism.

In 212, the Roman emperor extended citizenship to all parts of the Empire; Jewish people were included in this declaration. At this time, Jews were fully integrated into the Roman economy, working as doctors, poets, tailors, and peddlers. But Roman tolerance toward the Jews began to decline under Constantine the Great, who made intermarriage, slave ownership, and the building of new synagogues forbidden for Jews in the first half of the fourth century.

Meanwhile, in the south of Italy, Jewish culture began to develop and flourish up to the end of the first millennium. In the 12th century, about 40,000 Jews lived in Sicily. The south was a center for Jewish intellectual activity, and Palermo was noted for its splendid synagogues.

During this time, many Jews began to make their living as moneylenders, as Christians were forbidden from the practice. Many Jews

were protected by their feudal lords because of the usefulness of their profession. But the tides once again turned against the Jews in the later Middle Ages, as forced mass conversions forced many to abandon their religion or flee.

In 1555, Pope Paul IV issued the bull "*Cum nimis absurdum*," which ordered Jews to live in separate districts (ghettos) and to wear an identifying mark. This segregation lasted for several centuries. In 1781, the Emperor Giuseppe II began to repair the longstanding inequity with his "Decrees of Tolerance," which granted some freedoms to the Jews. But it was the arrival of Napoleon that brought a period of legal equality in which the Jewish people could take part freely in public life, according to the "Declaration of Rights of Man and of Citizens." Unfortunately, the situation reverted with the Restoration.

A leap forward in the situation of the Jews came in 1848, when Carlo Alberto, the king of Piedmont and Sardinia, gave the Jews civil and political equality. In the early 1900s, the Jewish ghetto in Rome was destroyed, and a synagogue was built at the site. During these years, Jews celebrated the newly united Italy as integrated citizens.

In 1938, however, Mussolini launched an offensive with his infamous "race manifesto," which used Nazi ideology to glorify the idea of a pure Italian race, to which the Jews did not belong. The Fascist leader's racial laws barred Jews from attending schools and exercising professions. Many fled or were expelled. But when Italy went to war alongside Germany in 1940, Jews were unable to escape the country and faced persecution by the Fascists. In 1943, Italian Jews began to be deported to camps in both Italy and Germany—in all, almost 10,000 were deported and nearly 7,000 killed. Still, the Jews living in Italy were safer than in other parts of Europe. The

Italian people, by hiding Jews and issuing them false identity papers, helped many to escape. The clergy, in particular, hid hundreds of Jewish children.

In 1987 the Italian state made an agreement with the Jewish community, guaranteeing equal rights and the freedom to practice the Jewish religion—to abstain from work on the Sabbath and observe Jewish holidays, for example.

2.8.3 ISLAM

About 1,200,000 Muslim immigrants currently live in Italy, making up more than 1,9% of the total population (*below: Rome's Mosque*). Most of the Muslims in the country were born in Morocco, Egypt, Albania, Senegal, and Tunisia. About 25,000 Italian citizens have converted to Islam.

Islam is based on the personal relationship between the believer and God (Allah), who is revealed by Muhammad in the Qur'an. There are at least 10 main branches of Islam in practice in Italy.

There are more than 700 Islamic places of worship in Italy and the majority of these are concentrated in the north. For the most part, the mosques are simple structures—many of them have been converted from previous uses. Only three are large mosques. In 1980, Italy's first mosque was officially opened in Catania, Sicily, with Libyan backing, and in 1988, Muslim immigrants and converts opened Al Rahaman Mosque in Segrate, Milan. Europe's largest mosque was opened in Rome in 1995, financed in large part by Saudi Arabia.

In recent years, Muslim organizations have been working on a formal agreement, between Islamic religious authorities and the Italian government, which is yet to be proposed.

2.8.4 Other forms of worship

Although nearly all Italians are Catholics, other forms of worship are also practiced in the country. Among the various religions represented are Jehovah's Witnesses, Protestants, Buddhists, and new or minor groups of various origins; together these have about 1,110,300 followers accounting for less than 2% of the population. This statistic does not include the number of non-Catholic immigrants who reside in Italy, many of whom are of Islamic faith. Still, Catholics and other Christians remain the majority among immigrants, with almost 700,000 followers.

2.9 Educational System

The right to education is sanctioned by the Italian Constitution, and law enacted to fight illiteracy and the child labor makes it compulsory for children to stay in school until age 18. Education in Italy is run by the Ministry of Education, University, and Research located in Rome, and today it is fairly standard all over Italy.

The first large reform of the education system came under the Fascist regime with "Gentile's Reform," named for its promoter. Gentile's bill made

school compulsory until the age of 14 and imposed general guidelines for teaching programs that have been in effect until recent years. The bill, however, distinguished between junior high school, which was seen as a gateway to higher education, and professional studies, aimed at lower income families that needed their children to be able to work as soon as possible. In 1962, compulsory junior high school for all children until the age of 14 was established.

Law 53, approved in 2003, raises the compulsory education age to 18.

2.9.1 PRIMARY EDUCATION

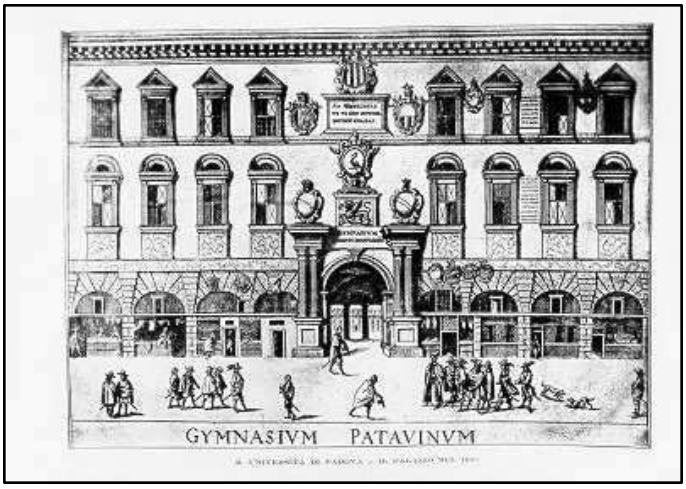
School is divided in two main "cycles," the first consisting of primary and lower secondary school, from the ages of 6 until 14, ending with a state exam that, if successfully passed, allows entrance to the second cycle.

For the second cycle, some students attend *licei*, high schools mostly aimed at preparing students for higher education in universities. Unlike most American high schools, the *licei* specialize in different fields—for example, one could attend a scientific *liceo* or an artistic *liceo*. Other students choose to attend technical and professional schools, whose main aim is to give them the skills and knowledge needed to work in a certain field or industry (like accounting, mechanics, or the travel industry).

With the new educational system, it is possible to move either from *liceo* to other forms of secondary studies or vice versa. This has been done to allow every student who passes the exam at the end of the five-year secondary cycle to access universities and higher education.

2.9.2 UNIVERSITIES

The oldest university in Italy (which is also, in fact, one of the most ancient in the world) is the University of Bologna, founded in the 11th century and still a prestigious cultural center. Other well known universities are those of Padua (*below: the University of Padua in a woodcut by Jacob Tomasini, 1654*) and Pavia in northern Italy, Pisa in Central Italy, and Naples in the South, each specializing in a particular field of studies but offering a wide array of courses. The biggest university in Italy today is the University of Rome *La Sapienza*, one of Rome's three universities.



Recent reforms have radically modified students' relations with the university. The new system, in place of the traditional program of five years of study, is informally called the "3 + 2" system. Three years of courses and exams are necessary for a first-level degree. After those three years, students can enter the workforce or continue their studies for two more years to obtain a "specialized" or "second level" degree. The reform aims to correct the faults of the older system, in which a high percentage of students dropped out of the university without obtaining a degree, and even those who succeeded in getting a degree often were unable to do so in the prescribed time span.

Degree programs are structured in credits (*crediti formativi universitari*, or CFUs). A credit corresponds to 30 hours of work, which can involve lectures, laboratories, tests, home study and other activities, in any combination. The average annual workload of a full-time student is conventionally fixed at 60 credits, which, according to the reforms, can be reached in various ways with an individual study plan tailored to the student's individual interests and needs.

Italian universities offer post-graduate studies (Laurea Magistrale) which can be often recognized as master's degree in other countries. Some Italian universities do offer as well United States-style master's such as MBAs.

A PhD can be obtained directly after the "second-level" degree by successfully passing an exam and being offered a job from a University department. PhDs commonly require three to four years and include a mix of studying, research and teaching activities.

From 1999, the Ministry for Education, University and Research has been in charge of university education, some sectors of non-university education (such as courses for interpreters and translators or PE teachers, that are gradually being adapted to the general structure of university courses), and the awarding of legal recognition to private universities.

3. HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION

3.1 PRE-ROMAN AND ROMAN HISTORY

Two great civilizations settled on the Italian peninsula around the eighth century B.C.E. In central Italy, the Etruscans put into place the

beginnings of a state system, and the ancient Greeks colonized the south. While the Greeks never created a cohesive state in *Magna Grecia,* they left a huge mark on Italy with their rich culture (*above: the Greek philosopher Archimedes lived in Sicily.*)

This culture was soon embraced by the Romans, who created the city of Rome between the late ninth and early seventh centuries B.C.E. Roman mythology says that the city was founded on the *Palatino* hill by Remus and Romulus, two men who had been raised by a wolf. Within the following centuries, the Romans rose to become the dominant civilization, conquering the Etruscans and Greeks (*below: the Roman Empire at its height*).

Rome's most glorious period began around 500 B.C.E., when it became a Republic. Ruled by the Roman Senate, Rome boasted cultural achievements from the poet Catullus and the writer and statesman Cicero. In the third century B.C.E., Rome fought the Punic Wars and captured Carthage, making it the master of the Mediterranean.

But wrought with internal power struggles, the Roman Republic could not last. Julius Caesar, Pompeius Magnus, and Crassus seized power of the state together, forming the First Triumvirate. When they began to fight among each other, Julius Caesar emerged victorious. Caesar continued to expand Rome, but was famously murdered on the Ides of March in 44 B.C.E.

The first Roman Emperor was Caesar Augustus, also known as Octavian, whose rule began in 27 B.C.E. Augustus increased trade,

expanded Rome's territory, and generally experienced a peaceful reign. He was followed by the emperors Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. Nero, the next emperor, showed himself incapable of managing the rebellions that were breaking out across Rome; tradition says that he played the fiddle while Rome burned.

Following a period of civil war, the Roman general Vespasian became emperor in 69 C.E. Vespasian refined Rome's financial policies and commissioned the Coliseum, an amphitheatre that hosted violent and spectacular games. (*left: the Coliseum today.*) One of the next great emperors was Trajan, under whom the Empire reached its greatest size.

But the Empire soon began a long period of decline, plagued by inept and greedy rulers, civil wars, and economic collapse. In 330 C.E., the emperor Constantine moved the empire's capital from Rome to Byzantium, which became known as Constantinople. The Roman Empire would never regain its former glory. In 476 C.E., it was crushed by the Barbarian invasions.

3.2 The Middle Ages

At the beginning of the Middle Ages, Italy was the site of conquests for several Barbarian populations—the Visigoths, Huns, and especially the Ostrogoths, who gained considerable control. When the Ostrogoth kingdom

collapsed, the Lombards took the north and the Byzantines settled in the south.

In the late eighth century, Charlemagne, the leader of the Franks, conquered the Lombards. In the year 800, he was crowned king of the Holy Roman Empire, which soon disintegrated after being divided among Charlemagne's sons. After the fall, the north developed autonomous *comuni*, or city-states, which then coalesced into larger *signorie*, or princedoms. The south experienced the rule of the Normans, Swabians, Angevins, and Aragonese; Sicily for a time existed under Arab rule. During this time, the four Maritime Republics of Pisa, Amalfi, Genoa, and Venice flourished, ruling the seas and trade routes.

The term "Renaissance" refers to the period between the late 14th century and the second half of the 16th century characterized by a re-flowering of cultural and artistic activity. The phenomenon swept across all of Europe, but its beginnings were indisputably in Florence. Classic texts began to be rediscovered and studied objectively, and scholars celebrated the intellectual, cultural, and physical achievements of humanity.

In the field of philosophy, humanism prevailed. Instead of seeing human life simply as a gateway to the afterlife promised by Christianity, philosophers began to focus on the human ability to solve problems here and now. The field of science similarly shifted its focus from

metaphysics to the beginnings of the experimental method. Literature also began to emphasize man, and it was during this time that Nicolò Machiavelli founded modern political science with his *Il Principe* (*The Prince*, 1513).

But the Italian Renaissance is most famous for the incredible works of visual art that it produced. Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (1485), Michelangelo's *David* (1501-1504, *above*), and Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* remain some of the most instantly recognizable works in the history of art.

3.3 The Modern Age

From 1500 to 1800 Italy was on the political sidelines and, in fact, was merely an object of division between foreign powers (France and Spain, and to a lesser degree, Austria). Thus while its great artists were stupefying the world and its explorers—like Columbus, Vespucci, Verrazzano, Cabot, and Pigafetta—were discovering new ones, and while Galileo was founding modern science and focusing his telescope on Jupiter, Italy continued to shrink, battered above all by violent internal conflicts between the small city-states that made it up.

The end of the era of the maritime republics left Italy without political subjects of any importance. The south was for a long time simply the Kingdom of Naples, under the dominion of the King of Spain, and then of the Bourbons; the center of the country continued under the power of the Papacy; in the north the Lombard-Veneto region was continuously contested by France, Spain and Austria, and the ancient *signorie* were having difficulty everywhere.

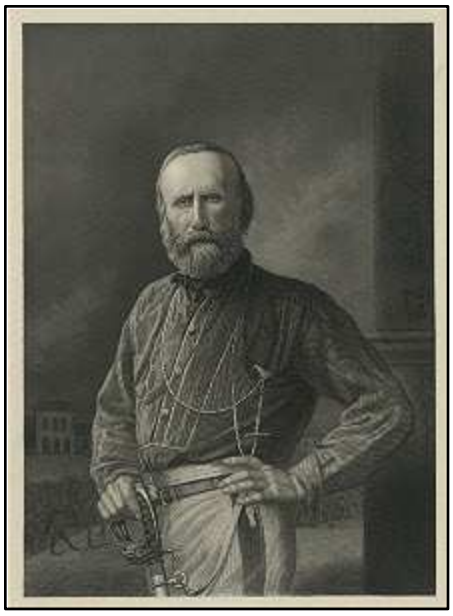
After the brief but intense revolutionary and Napoleonic era that gave Italy a flag and its first prefectorial administration, the country went to the

Vienna Congress still divided into states and city-states (the strongest of these, the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, would soon become the Kingdom of Italy).

A series of attempts at revolution were made until 1848, mainly by secret societies such as that of the Carbonari, against the arrangement of the peninsula by the Vienna Congress. The Italian national movement found its main inspiration in Giuseppe Mazzini, who outlined in his writings and actions the goal of a united, independent and republican Italy.

With the intervention of Carlo Alberto di Savoia, King of Sardinia, who declared war on Austria, started the First War of Independence in 1848. After his defeat and his abdication in favor of the son Vittorio Emanuele II, Republics of Tuscany, Venice and Rome were proclaimed.

The concrete accomplishment of Italian unification was the work of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. Under the exceptional political guidance of its greatest statesman, Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, the small Piedmont kingdom allied with France and Napoleon III and managed to defeat Austria during the Second War of Independence in 1859. This allowed it to unify central-northern Italy, except for the Veneto region and part of the Vatican State.



Immediately following Cavour's success an initiative, called the Italian Risorgimento, came by another great protagonist of this period, Giuseppe Garibaldi (*right*). Garibaldi had already taken part in independence struggles in Latin America and earned himself the nickname "Hero of the Two Worlds."

Heading up a band of patriots, he landed in Sicily in June of 1860 with the intention of bringing down the Bourbon regime, while the Savoy troops entered the Vatican State to join the forces of Garibaldi. The victorious campaign was crowned by an historic encounter at Teano near Caserta between Garibaldi and King Vittorio Emanuele II. A large part of the Italian nation was thus unified under the Savoy scepter and on March 17, 1861, the new Turin Parliament, then composed of Deputies elected in all the regions linked to the old Savoy state, decreed the birth of the Kingdom of Italy.

3.4 From the Italian Unification to the Republic

The rapid unification process forced the young Italian kingdom to deal immediately with serious difficulties at both an international level, created by those who could not accept the birth of a unified state in Italy, as well as internally, due to economic and social inequalities and traditional disparities among the various parts of the peninsula. The two large parliamentary blocs—the Right, consisting of moderate liberals and conservatives, and the Left, which included progressive and democratic liberals— although, divided over the actions of government, shared a single aspiration: achievement of national unity with Rome, still under the Pope's rule, and the Veneto region, controlled by Austria. The latter would become part of the Kingdom of Italy after the Third War of Independence, fought alongside Bismarck's Prussia in 1866 against the Habsburg Empire.

Four years later, during the Franco-Prussian war, Rome would also join the Italian state. The breach of Porta Pia (September 20, 1870), which allowed Italian troops into the Eternal City, marked the end of the Church's

ancient hold. Despite the guarantees immediately provided by the Italian state to the Pope for the free exercise of his functions as leader of the Catholic Church, set forth in the law of 1871, Pius IX refused to recognize the new political and territorial arrangement. Thus, “Rome’s issue” remained unresolved, preventing both a normal relationship between the Holy See and the Italian government, as well as the Catholic world’s active participation in the political life of the country.

With the change of the parliamentary majority and the Left's entry into government in 1876, pressure mounted regarding the Italian territories still under Habsburg rule, symbolized by the cities of Trento and Trieste. At the same time, as a result of internal migration and the unresolved southern Italy issue, a colonial policy went into effect aimed at expansion into the Horn of Africa (Eritrea and Somalia). Having clearly established its international position in 1882, by joining in a Triple Alliance with Bismarck’s Germany and Austria-Hungary, Italy moved into a period of strong economic growth and rapid social change.

This rapid socio-economical improvement, however, left behind a large part of the nation, that which was vital to the old social and productive system: the peasants. Beginning in the 1870s, poverty, population pressure, poor nutrition and the resulting diseases, taxation, and severe military drafts led peasants to leave the homeland in search of land and opportunities.

Different waves of emigration brought millions of Italians overseas, and while in the earlier departures peasants from the north of the country reached preeminently South America, at the turn of the century southern emigrants came mostly to United States. It has been estimated that during the Great Migration (between 1880 and 1922) out of a population of 14 million Southern Italians, nearly five million left the homeland. By 1923,

when the United States restricted the immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, more than three million Italians had become permanent U.S. residents. This represents the largest recorded exodus of a single ethnic group in history.

The outbreak of the First World War between the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey) and the Allied forces (France, Britain, and Russia) in 1914, which came right after a war fought by Italy against the Ottoman Empire for Libya, was an opportunity to complete the national unification process. Having confirmed the impossibility of peacefully reuniting the unredeemed lands via negotiation with Austria-Hungary, Italy was forced to denounce the Triple Alliance and, in 1915, join the Allies against the Central Powers.

The war, which lasted more than three years and cost more than 600,000 lives, led the country to victory and to the achievement of unity, but also to a serious crisis that affected all aspects of national life. The period between 1919 and 1922 was one of severe political, economic and social instability. This environment facilitated the rise to power of the Fascist party of Benito Mussolini (*left*), who became head of government after his March on Rome in October 1922. From that moment on, the democratic life of the State progressively diminished as the dictatorial fascist regime of Mussolini settled in.

In 1929, the Lateran Treaty was signed, with the Italian State granting the Holy See a small piece of land on which to establish Vatican City and, at the same time, definitively regulating the relationship between the Pope and the Italian government.

In the second half of the 1930s, the fascist regime resumed a colonial expansion policy, which led to the conquest of Ethiopia. During the same period Mussolini opened relations with Nazi Germany, which, from the Rome-Berlin Axis in 1936, would lead to a military alliance, the Pact of Steel, in 1939, followed by participation in the Second World War alongside Hitler the next year.

The military defeats sustained at the hands of the Allies led to Mussolini's removal from government. After failing to reach a majority during a session of the Fascist Council, on July 24 to 25, 1943, he was arrested by order of King Vittorio Emanuele III. The government was then entrusted to General Pietro Badoglio, who signed an unconditional surrender to the Allies the following September.

This was the beginning of a tormented period for Italy, marked by the double occupation by the Allies south of Rome and the Germans in the north, by the installation of a puppet government—the Italian Social Republic—by Mussolini after his rescue by German paratroopers, the formation of a resistance movement against the Germans, and the events of the civil war between partisans and the combatants of the Social Republic.
The Allied troops entered Rome in June 1944 and continued their march northward, achieving, together with the partisan forces, the Liberation of Italy on April 25, 1945. In the constitutional referendum of June 2, 1946, the Italian people voted for abolition of the monarchy and the introduction of the Republic. These two dates are celebrated every year as National Days.

The work of the constituent assembly, elected at the same time, led to the formulation of the current Constitution, which came into force on January 1, 1948. Elections for the first republican legislature of the new Italy took place on April 18, 1948, with the majority of seats going to the

Christian Democrats, the Catholic party that would dominate Italian politics until the end of the Cold War.

3.5 From the post-war era to the present day

Hand in hand with the restoration of democracy, after putting the past behind it by signing the Paris Peace Treaty on February 10, 1947, Italy re-entered the international scene, overshadowed by the confrontation between the two superpowers of the time, the United States and the Soviet Union.
Under the skillful guidance of Christian Democrat leader Alcide De Gasperi, the country made a firm choice for the Western camp, with a series of important steps, such as adhering to the Marshall Plan in 1947, to the Council of Europe, and, above all, to NATO in 1949. Italy was also one of the founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951.
Becoming part of the United Nations in 1955, Italy was again among the most advanced countries on the way to European integration, which saw Italy at the center of some of its major steps forward: from the Messina Conference in 1955 to the Venice Conference in 1956 and the historic signing of the Treaties of Rome on 25 March 1957, which instituted the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. At the end of the 1950s significant economic growth led to the so-called economic boom. Internal migration largely replaced the emigration that had characterized the first half of the 20th century.

On the political front, 1948 to 1960 marked the years of "centrism," or rather of governments run by the Christian Democrats with minor parties (such as the PSDI, the Italian Social-Democrat Party; the PRI, the Italian Republican Party; and the PLI, the Italian Liberal Party) as allies. The entry

of the Socialists into government occurred in the early 1960s, and more specifically in 1963, with the center-left phase of government lasting until 1976. The Italian Communist Party then formulated its policy of "historical compromise," for a government alliance containing all the democratic forces of the country. This situation pushed the two main parties into closer dialogue, which resulted in the national solidarity governments (1978-1979), all the more crucial in the so-called Anni di Piombo ("lead years"), a decade marked by shooting and political murders led by radical-communist terrorist formations such as the Red Brigades and new-fascists terrorists such as the NAR. The crisis peaked with the Red Brigades kidnapping and assassination of former Prime Minister and Christian Democrat Chairman Aldo Moro in 1978, and with the right-wing extremists bombing of Bologna Central Station in 1980.

In the mid-1970s Italy joined the most industrialized nations of the world in the G7 group, whose members included the United States, Japan, Britain, France, Germany and Canada. The 1980s were characterized by five-party coalition governments and by the arrival of non-Christian Democrats as heads of government.

During those years a new call for a European constitution came from Rome, with the launch of the Conference on Political and Monetary Union in 1990. This culminated with the signing of a new treaty, the Treaty for European Union, at Maastricht in December 1991. New parties and new coalitions had entered the political scene.

During the elections of 1994, carried out with the new majority system, the old parties, although renewed in their symbols and names, were drastically downsized. The Polo delle Libertà coalition (Forza Italia, Alleanza Nazionale and Lega Nord) was established, and Forza Italia leader

Silvio Berlusconi became Prime Minister. After an interval of two "technical" governments and the 1996-2001 legislature, which saw the center-left Olive Tree coalition in power, Berlusconi reclaimed the premiership in June 2001. At the beginning of 2002, the national currency, the Lira, was replaced by the single European currency, the Euro.

3.6 THE ROLE OF ITALY

Italy was a founding member of the European Community, now the European Union (EU). Italy was admitted to the United Nations in 1955 and is a member and strong supporter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade–World Trade Organization (GATT–WTO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe. Italy, as one of the eight most industrialized countries, is member of the G8, which it chaired in 2001. It also chaired the CSCE (the forerunner of the OCSE) in 1994 and the EU in 1996, and it served as EU President from July to December 2003. Italy firmly supports the United Nations and its international security activities and deployed troops in support of UN peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Mozambique, and East Timor. It provides critical support for NATO and UN operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania.

On the international stage, Italy has played an important role to foster the peace process in the crisis of the 1990s, in the Balkans as in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Italy's actions are closely coordinated with those of its European partners, its Atlantic allies and the United Nations, and it contributes to the peace-keeping process with a significant military presence in many areas, including Kosovo, Afghanistan, Israel,

Palestine, Lebanon, Western Sahara, Egypt and Iraq. The latter is where Italy has deployed the largest number of soldiers in a mission, called Antica Babilonia, aimed at satisfying the essential needs of its population—urgent medical assistance as well as intervention in typically non-military sectors such as justice, education, healthcare, public services and public administration. In fact, through its national contingent, Italy wants to give its contribution to stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq, ensuring the conditions of security necessary to allow the influx and distribution of humanitarian aid, and responding to the most urgent needs for the restoration of the Iraqi infrastructure and essential services.

With the same intention of restoring peace and improving living conditions, Italy is working to achieve the full, concrete, and immediate implementation of the peace efforts known as the road map, which will lead to the resumption of negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel in order to build the confidence needed for the process to continue and to put an end to the spiral of violence.

Thanks to this constant effort, to the spirit that backs it and to the professionalism with which national contingents operate on the ground, Italy has earned the credibility and esteem of the parties in conflict, of the countries in the area and of its international partners.

In October 2006 Italy was chosen to become non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the years 2007-2008.

4. ITALIAN ECONOMY

4.1 POST WAR TO THE PRESENT

Since the end of World War II, the economy of Italy has been among the most dynamic in Europe. The country has transformed itself from a largely agricultural economy to a world-class industrial one. The transformation is especially significant in light of the fact that Italy has few raw materials and must import more than 75% of its energy.

Italy owes its overall economic success largely to the liberalization of international trade that it introduced following World War II. In 1950, Italy's per capita GDP was about 1/3 that of the United States; today the figure is slightly more than to 2/3. The dramatic economic expansion has mostly benefited the northern regions.

The 1960s and 70s were years of economic boom for Italy. According to one estimate, between 1970 and 1998, real per capita GDP grew by 80 percent in Italy, compared to 62 percent in the United States and 37 percent in Germany. Although the global energy crisis of the 1970s had an impact on Italian industry, the country continued to grow during that period due to the expansion of the services sector.

Toward the end of the 1980s, economists began to favor a reduction of the state's role in the economy. That notion laid the foundation for the large-scale privatization that took place in the 1990s. State entities were transformed into private corporations, which made capital available to private investors through massive public sales.

Privatization also took place in the banking sector. (Italy's largest banks are Unicredit, Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena and Intesa San Paolo) Privatization brought many former Italian "savers" into the stock market. Stock market capitalization exploded from EUR 171.6 billion, or 19 percent of GDP in 1995, to nearly EUR 448 billion, or nearly 37 percent of GDP in 2002. The Milan Stock Exchange Piazza Affari is the fifth largest financial market in Europe, after London, Frankfurt, Euronext (which combines the Paris, Amsterdam and Brussels exchanges), and Zurich.

Italy's former currency was called the Lira. Italy joined the European Monetary System and it changed its currency to the Euro (*above*) which became the sole currency in 2002.

4.2 PRODUCTION

The service sector, primarily trade and tourism, accounts for about two-thirds of Italy's GDP. Thirty percent of national income comes from industry and just two percent from agriculture. In 2007, with 66 firms every 1000 inhabitants, Italy was the fourth in the EU for number of firms per capita: machinery, clothing and textiles are Italy's major industrial exports.

The Italian system of production is characterized by industrial districts, which are contained in specified areas and are made up of numerous small and mid-sized enterprises, each specializing in a particular sector of the production chain. For the sake of comparison, there are 10 percent more small-sized companies in Italy than in Germany, almost 20 percent more than in France, and 25 percent more than in England. This model has allowed Italian entrepreneurship to flourish. Entrepreneurial autonomy has

increased creativity and resulted in the production of beautiful and tasteful goods that make the “Made in Italy” label famous and respected throughout the world.

This production model is rooted in local manufacturing traditions dating back to the late Middle Ages. This flexible structure has allowed Italian industry to respond to various global economic crises over the years. The challenge it faces will be to confront modern global markets and to open up to direct investment in foreign markets, rather than to limit itself to exporting finished products.

The Italian economy does not consist of small companies alone. Large corporations, both private and public, have helped shape Italy’s industrial history. ENI, an energy company owned partly by the state, deals largely with foreign countries. ENEL, also in the energy sector, is one of the continent’s largest providers of electricity. Telecom Italia is the country’s largest completely privatized companies; tire manufacturer Pirelli and auto producer Fiat are among the world’s largest companies.

Fiat recently went expanding its scope all over the world and is now deeply intertwined with American car industry: thanks to a solid cooperation between CEO Sergio Marchionne the American government, Fiat contributed helping Chrysler to get out of the economic crisis and later built a mutually beneficial alliance. Fiat’s control over Chrysler gave both companies the competitive advantage of access to new technologies and advanced engineering solutions that gave birth to a new wave of cars and vehicles.

(*above: a new Fiat 500 that will soon land to USA* *http://fiat500usa.blogspot.com/*)

4.3 MADE IN ITALY

The "Made in Italy" label carries considerable cache, promising elegant apparel and sophisticated design. From couture to cuisine to cars, Italy produces top-of-the-line products.

The largest and most important sectors in Italy are food and agriculture, machinery, and textiles and apparel. The food and agriculture industry is one of the nation's most economically dynamic. Wine production is a strong point for this sector, with Germany, France, the United States, and Canada topping the list of importers. Some important food companies are Ferrero, which produces products like the popular chocolate spread Nutella, and Barilla, the global producer of pasta.

Italy's transportation sector is also important. The nation is fifth in world production of automobiles and parts, following the United States, Japan, France and Germany. It is also a leader in boat production, and is first in Europe in the production of motorcycles. Italian designers of transportation vehicles are famous throughout the world for their sleek and sophisticated work—the names Ferrari, Maserati, Lamborghini, Fiat, and Alfa Romeo are legendary.

Italy also produces various machinery for the textile, appliance, chemical, and food-processing industries—for example, coffee machines

and machines for producing pasta, pastries, and preserves. The machinery industry represents approximately 40% of Italian manufacturing industry.

The high-tech sector is also important in Italy. Finmeccanica, a high-tech aerospace and defense company, operates in some of the most advanced and competitive markets. Its parts are used in Boeing and Airbus jets, and its subsidiaries manufacture helicopters used by the U.S. Coast Guard. The U.S. Navy chose its helicopter US101 for a new fleet of Marine One helicopters for the President of the United States.

Permasteelisa, a global leader in the design, management, production and installation of architectural structures, operates globally through more than 60 companies in Europe, America, Asia and Australia. The company has been involved in such major projects as the Times Square Tower and Hearst headquarters in New York, the Walt Disney Concert Hall in California, the IMC Tower in Malaysia, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, and the Sydney Opera House.

Italy is one of the world leaders in export, accounting for a 3.3% of the total world exportations in 2009 (source: ISTAT). The data is even higher in specific sectors such as furniture, where Italy is the second largest producer in the world after the United States accounting for 17% of the whole market.

Perhaps the most famous Italian companies are in the textile and fashion industries. Highly coveted brands include Versace, Armani, D&G, Prada, Valentino, and Roberto Cavalli.

5. LIFE AND CULTURE

5.1 DISCOVERING THE COUNTRY

In his poem "De Gustibus," Robert Browning penned the famous lines, "Italy, my Italy…/ Open my heart and you will see Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'" Writers and poets throughout the ages have found inspiration in the unsurpassed beauty of Italy's natural panoramas and artistic treasures.

Italian landscapes are no less varied than they are beautiful. From the snowy Alps and the densely wooded Apennines to the active volcanoes and exotic beaches of the islands, Italy offers stunning views for every kind of nature lover. And of course, the nation is home to immeasurable artistic and archeological treasures.

It's easy to enjoy all that Italy has to offer in the country's comfortable and luxurious hotels. Another great way to experience the country is through its agrotourism program, in which visitors can stay in farmhouses to get an authentic feel for the Italian way of life.

Italy offers so much to do and see that it's impossible to experience the country in only one trip. But Italy's natural and cultural wealth makes even a brief stay an unforgettable experience. (http://www.italiantourism.com/; http://www.italia.it/en/home.html).

5.2 ITALIAN FOLK TRADITIONS

The fact that Italy was not a unified country until 1861 explains the huge diversity found in the traditions of its different regions. Festivals, tournaments, parades, and religious processions, often dating to medieval

and Renaissance times, add color to the daily life of cities and villages across the country.

The Roman Catholic calendar guides many of the local festivals across Italy. In the days leading up to the season of Lent, Venice is known for its *Carnevale*, a time of masked balls, theatrical productions, and food and entertainment in the streets. Holy Week Easter processions are especially flamboyant in Chieti, Taranto, and Sicily, and Florence sets off a chariot full of fireworks on Easter Sunday.

Numerous festivals honoring the patron saints of various towns also display Italy's religious heritage. These are often large and elaborate affairs. For example, in Catania, the feast honoring Sant'Agata lasts for three days in February. A procession moves through the town, passing by all of the places associated with its martyred patron saint. On the last night, a huge statue of Agata is carried back to the cathedral that bears her name. Fireworks displays, shouts of "Long live Sant' Agata!" and traditional foods are also part of the festival.

Other events with historical bases are the Sardinian Cavalcade, a horse run whose roots, according to tradition, go back to 1543; the Regatta of the Four Ancient Maritime Republics, which rotates between Pisa, Venice, Amalfi, and Genoa; and Venice's Historic Regatta in September. Perhaps the most well-known tradition is the centuries-old *Palio* (*right*), a horse race held twice a year in the city of Siena. The city was once divided into well-defined neighborhoods, or *contrade*, whose members were very close and often did not marry outside of their group. Today, the *contrade* compete against each

other twice a year—on July 2 and August 16, two religious holidays—in a fierce horse race. The jockeys ride bareback on a challenging course, and they are allowed to beat other horses and jockeys with whips!

Italy also holds a number of cultural festivals in the summer. The most famous of these include the Venice *Biennale*, a huge show of contemporary art; the *Maggio Musicale* ("Musical May") in Florence, a prestigious festival of musical performances, opera, and ballet; and the Spoleto Festival, which highlights music but also presents dance, drama, and art.

5.3 ITALIAN CUISINE

Cuisine is a central aspect of Italian culture, with meals often lasting for hours. Traditional dishes vary widely across the country, relying on the fresh produce particular to each region. Many traditional dishes derive from peasant cooking; for example, the Tuscan *ribollita* soup is made from leftover bread and vegetables. Dishes like pizza and pasta have been incorporated into American culture, but these foods represent only a tiny part of Italy's huge variety of tasty and nutritious cuisine.

Breakfast is normally a small meal—an Italian might have a cup of coffee or cappuccino and a pastry. Lunch has traditionally been the largest meal, eaten around 1 p.m. Dinner is generally eaten later than in the United States—around 8 or 9 p.m.

Italian meals are generally structured in courses, beginning with an antipasto, or appetizer; followed by a *primo piatto*, usually pasta, soup, or rice; then the *secondo piatto*, generally meat and vegetables. The meal may conclude with fruit and coffee.

A huge variety of pasta shapes exist, from the standard ridged tubes of penne to bow-shaped *farfalle* to ear-shaped *orechiette*. Pasta varies according to region and according to the sauce used in the dish—for example, thin angel hair pasta is usually made with a light sauce. Pasta should be prepared "al dente" (an Italian phrase meaning "to the tooth")—it should not be cooked so long that it becomes too soft or mushy.

Pizza, probably Italy's most popular culinary export, was born in Naples. The first pizzeria opened there in 1830, and now pizza is such an important part of Naples that an association called *Verace Pizza Napoletana* has been created and recognized by the Italian government to protect it. Prepared traditionally, the pizza has a thin, soft crust and is served with tomato sauce, mozzarella made from the milk of water buffaloes, fresh basil, and olive oil.

In Italy, you might take a walk after dinner to buy a gelato, the Italian version of ice cream (*right*). Gelato contains less air than ice cream, making it denser and more flavorful, and less than half the fat of ice cream. Some delicious flavors of gelato include *nocciola*, or hazelnut; *straciatella*, a creamy flavor with streaks of chocolate; and *frutti di bosco*, a blend of berries.

The traditional beverage to accompany Italian cuisine is, of course, wine. Wine has always been a part of Italy's agricultural production, from ancient times when it figured in the Dionysian rituals of Greece and Bacchanalian rites of Rome, to modern times, as Italy continues to be one of

the world's top wine producers. A report released in 2004 indicated that the average person in Italy drank 49 liters a year.

A variety of red and white wines are cultivated across the regions of Italy. Among the most well known are Chianti from Tuscany, Pinot Grigio from all over northern Italy, and *prosecco*, a sparkling dessert wine, from the Veneto region.

Wines are classified in terms of their quality, based on an Italian law passed in 1992. At the bottom of the scale are table wines, which have no regulations on grape variety, vintage, or place of origin; next are wines with Typical Geographic Indications (IGT), which use approved types of grapes grown in specific regions; still higher are the DOC (Controlled Origin) wines, which are produced in specific regions with rules of color, flavor, alcohol content, and more; and finally DOCG wines (Controlled and Guaranteed Denomination of Origin), which must also pass a tasting test before they are bottled.

5.4 ART AND MUSEUMS

Italian art ranks foremost in the world in terms of both quality and quantity. As of 2011, UNESCO had listed 45 of the 911 sites on its World Heritage list, a summary of the culturally important places in the world, in Italy—more than any other country. The site of the Dolomites is the world biggest, comprising a mountain range in the northern Italian Alps, numbering 18 peaks which rise to above 3,000 metres and covering 141,903 ha. Italian artistic and cultural items span the centuries, from Ancient Rome to contemporary times. They are preserved and displayed in the numerous museums located throughout the country.

The art of ancient Rome, notable for its realism, combined the influences of the Etruscans and the Greeks. The era produced fine sculptures of rich and powerful public figures, like Julius Caesar and Marcus Aurelius. Architecture, too, took important steps forward during Roman times, leading to structures like the Coliseum and the Pantheon in Rome.

Byzantine art, which evolved gradually after the capital of the Roman Empire was moved from Byzantium (Istanbul) in 330 C.E., was marked by its rich colors and extravagant ornamentation. *(left: Basilica di San Vitale, one of the 8 UNESCO sites of Ravenna)*

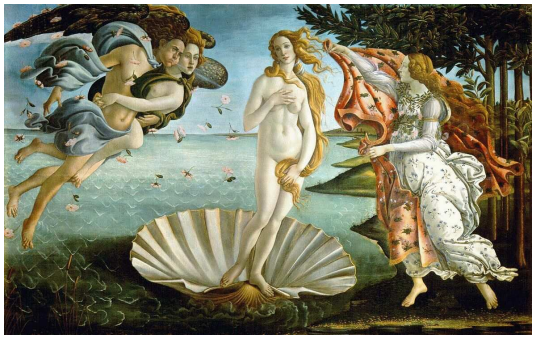
The specialty of Byzantine artists was the creation of mosaics, which used gold, precious stone, and stone and glass tiles pressed into cement to create intricate pictures. The Byzantine era also left behind churches decorated with mosaics and built with more architecturally evolved domes, such as those in Basilica di San Vitale in Ravenna (*see picture on the left*).

The last great Byzantine painter was Cimabue, who lived at the end of the 13th century. Legend says that Cimabue once saw a young boy drawing a perfectly-formed sheep on a rock with chalk, and was so impressed that he took the boy with him to study art. The boy, Giotto, grew up to be the most important artist of the 14th century. His works, which depart from the flat Byzantine style to depict a sense of three dimensions and more realistic facial expressions, include the

frescoes in the Upper Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi and the Peruzzi and Bardi chapels in Florence. (*above: Giotto's* Madonna in Glory*, 1305-1310, located at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence*)

The Renaissance began in 14th-century Italy. Artists took inspiration from the Greeks and Romans, while the use of perspective, proportions, and lighting became increasingly sophisticated. Paintings were generally commissioned by the wealthy, particularly the Medici family of Florence. An astonishing flowering of genius occurred during this time, with Leonardo, Michelangelo, Titian, Botticelli, Raphael, Brunelleschi, and Donatello all living in the 1400s and 1500s.

Religious themes were prominent in the art of the era. Among the most well-known religious paintings are Leonardo's *Last Supper* (1495-1497) and the intricate ceiling of the Sistene Chapel (1508-1512) by Michelangelo. These paintings, however, differed from earlier religious works as they portrayed their subjects in a more natural manner. Renaissance painting also took its themes from classical mythology. For example, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (*below:* c. 1485, The Uffizi Gallery, Florence) shows the Roman goddess rising from the sea. Finally, the Renaissance celebrated humanity and its accomplishments. The prime example of this tendency is Raphael's *School of Athens*, which represents the great thinkers of Greece and Rome.



The style that developed during the late Renaissance, known as Mannerism, emphasized technical accomplishment but did not show the characteristic peace and harmony of Renaissance painting. Instead, artists

used strong colors and violently emotional subjects, as in Tintoretto's *Crucifixion* (1565).

The 17th century saw the development of the dramatic, elaborate Baroque style. One of its most important artists was Gian Lorenzo Bernini, an architect, painter, and designer who stands out above all for his sculptures. The most famous of these include *Apollo and Daphne* (1622-24), housed in the Gallery of the Villa Borghese in Rome, and *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa* (1644-51) in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. Bernini also enlarged and decorated St. Peter's Basilica and created stunning fountains throughout Rome. Another important Baroque painter is Caravaggio, who was controversial during his time for painting religious figures as ordinary people. Caravaggio was a major pioneer of the chiaroscuro style, which featured a dramatic contrast between light and dark. The Rococo style followed the Baroque period, and although it was strongest in France, the movement had several Italian representatives. Canaletto is known for his naturally-lit scenes of Venetian life, while Tiepolo, also from Venice, painted elaborately-staged scenes filled with hundreds of figures. Neoclassicism, a backlash against the elaborate Baroque and Rococo, aimed for a return to the pure, harmonious classical style. Its greatest Italian interpreter was probably Antonio Canova, a sculptor known for his refined representations of the human body.

While the Impressionist movement is often thought of as originating in Paris in the late 19th century, it had a direct precedent in the paintings of the mid-19th century Italian Macchiaioli artists. Often overlooked, these painters aimed to capture the moment in paint with emotional strokes of color, rather than precise lines. In fact, their name comes from the Italian word *macchie*, meaning "blotches" or "spots."

Twentieth-century Italian art produced a number of highly original and diverse talents. Amedeo Modigliani, a sculptor and painter who is sometimes categorized as an Expressionist, created elongated female figures whose elongated faces reflect the influence of African masks. The Futurist school, meanwhile, emphasized the rejection of past ideas and the total embrace of technology and speed. Among the Futurist artists were Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, and Carlo Carrà. Later notable 20th-century Italian artists include Renato Guttuso, Alberto Burri, and Giorgio De Chirico. The latter founded a movement called the *scuola metafisica* in Italy. He painted haunting, dreamlike images of mannequins, statues, and architecture. (*above: De Chirico's* Love Song, *1914*)

Although it is present in museums across the globe, Italian art is of course visible in the country's prestigious museums. The Pinacoteca of Brera, the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, and the Vatican Museums in Rome are some of Italy's most important museums, but local galleries and collections also hold artistic gems. Art museums act not only as display places for art but also as centers of education and society, with special exhibitions, talks, tours, and meetings constantly taking place.

5.5 LITERATURE

The "*Cantico delle Creature*" ("Canticle of the Creatures") written by St. Francis of Assisi in 1225 is the earliest known literary work written in the Italian language. But the father of Italian literature is considered, without a

doubt, Dante Alighieri. Together with his fellow Florentines, Dante was among the first Italians to write in the vernacular or spoken tongue of the people, as opposed to Latin, which had been used by ancient Roman writers like Virgil and Cicero. Dante is best known for his *Divine Comedy*, an epic poem that describes the poet's travels through hell, purgatory, and heaven.

Dante lived in the 14th century along with two other great figures of Italian literature: Petrarch and Boccaccio. Petrarch perfected the sonnet form in his poems to his beloved Laura, and the Petrarchan sonnet form still bears his name. Boccaccio is best known for his *Decameron*, in which ten young people, hiding from the Bubonic Plague, tell a series of 100 stories. The stories are ribald and entertaining but also illustrate the effects of the Plague and the state of social institutions of the time.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, chivalric poems told tales of heroic deeds: Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (*Jerusalem Freed*) of 1575 is a prime example. Treatises, systematic analyses of subjects, also abounded during this time. Perhaps the most famous of these is Niccolò Machiavelli's *Principe* (*The Prince*) of 1513, in which the author describes the qualities of an ideal prince: he must demonstrate prudence and emulate great rulers, but must also be willing to use cruelty and cunning when necessary to preserve power.

Italian literature in the 18th century reflected outside influences on the nation, particularly those of the French Enlightenment. In reaction, writers like Giuseppe Parini and Vittorio Alfieri strove to express national pride in their poems and plays.

A shift in style occurred in the 19th century, as writers began to employ everyday language, familiar to the people, instead of a lofty literary style. Alessandro Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi* (*The Betrothed*) a novel of

historical fiction published in 1840, reflects these changes in a tale of peasant lovers who overcome obstacles to be together. In part due to its increased use by writers, the form of Italian spoken in Florence and central Tuscany became the accepted form of written Italian, which became used across the country.

Living in the same period was Giacomo Leopardi, one of Italy's greatest poets. Plagued by illness and his unattractiveness to women, Leopardi devoted his youth to study and mastered at least seven languages. His poems, the most famous of which are "*L'infinito*" ("The Infinite," 1819) and "*A Silvia*" ("To Silvia," 1828), express themes of pessimism and the inevitability of death.

The late 19th century saw the rise of European Decadence, a literary movement that generally stressed the importance of instinct and the senses over rationality. Gabriele D'Annunzio, a writer also known for Fascist associations, was the greatest Italian interpreter of this style. His works, such as *Il Trionfo della morte* (The Triumph of Death, written in 1894), include scenes of sensuality, violence, and scandal.

In modern times, Italy continues to produce great writers. Alberto Moravia examined contemporary social issues in works such as The Conformist (1951), which was later made into a film by Bernardo Bertolucci. Leonardo Sciascia set his novels in his native Sicily; he is best known for using the traditional form of the detective novel to criticize Italian government and society. Primo Levi, sent to Auschwitz during the Holocaust, turned his experiences into the harrowing novel *If This Is a Man* (1947). Finally, Umberto Eco is perhaps the most well known Italian author today. His novel *The Name of the Rose* (1980), a complex murder mystery

set in a 14th-century monastery, has been made into a major film and translated into numerous languages.

5.6 THEATER AND CINEMA

The production of plays was a part of Italian life as far back as the Greeks and Romans, as the remains of spectacular theaters in Rome and Taormina attest.

Later, in the 16th and 17th centuries, a particular type of theater called *Commedia dell'Arte* flourished in Italy. Traveling actors moved from town to town, presenting plays that showed masked stock characters, like cowardly soldiers, delicate women, and cunning court jesters, in situations filled with intrigue and slapstick comedy. Even today, Italian theater is based on the idea of tours with no fixed theater company in any one town.

(*right: the harlequin was one stock character of the* Commedia dell'Arte.)

The playwright Carlo Goldoni led the progression from the masks of the *Commedia dell'Arte* to more three-dimensional, dynamic characters in the 18th century. In the second half of the 19th century, bourgeois drama appeared in the works of authors like Giuseppe Giacosa, who wrote in realistic tones about relationships within families and society, including adultery and financial problems.

Luigi Pirandello made a huge mark on Italian theater and is seen as a forerunner of the theater of the absurd. Using humor and irony, Pirandello explored the themes of identity and the self. His play *Sei personaggi in*

cerca d'autore (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*, 1921) revolutionized traditional dramatic form. The play begins with "real" actors trying to put on a Pirandello play, which is interrupted by "fictional" characters who demand that their story be told. Pirandello won the 1934 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Another important theatrical form included plays written in the different dialects native to the different regions of Italy. One of the most prominent authors of the genre was Eduardo De Filippo, who wrote in the Neapolitan dialect during the mid-20th century. His plays show poor and lower-middle-class characters caught up in the hypocrisy of society.

Contemporary Italian theater's best-known playwright is Dario Fo, who received the 1997 Nobel Prize in Literature. His plays, like *Mistero Buffo* (Comic Mystery, 1969) use satire to give a critical look to modern issues like the abortion debate, organized crime, and the crisis in the Middle East. They often involve improvisation and can be adapted to treat issues of local interest where they are performed.

Italian cinema has followed a vibrant path alongside theater, producing a lasting influence worldwide. In 1896, Vittorio Calcina made the first Italian film. Titled *Umberto e Margherita di Savoia a passeggio per il parco*, the short documentary showed the king and queen of Savoy on a walk through the park.

Italian theater truly came into its own after World War II, with the advent of the Neo-realist movement. Neorealism used a naturalistic style, often employing documentary-type filmmaking and nonprofessional actors, to describe the difficult physical and moral climate of postwar Italy. One of the greatest Neorealist films is Vittorio De Sica's

Ladri di Biciclette (*The Bicycle Thief, 1948, pictured below*), which tells the story of a man struggling to work in a depressed economy. Later, De Sica's film *La Ciociara* (*Two Women*, 1960) helped catapult its star, Sofia Loren, to international fame. Another notable Neorealist director was Roberto Rossellini, whose masterpiece was *Roma, città aperta* (*Rome, the Open City*, 1945).

The director Federico Fellini, whose works remain touchstones of cinema history, departed from Neorealism by using bizarre, surreal, and colorful scenes in his often intensely autobiographical films. *La dolce vita* (1960), the story of a young journalist living a decadent lifestyle, marked the beginning of the director's work with the actor Marcello Mastroianni. Many of the film's images, such as that of the actress Anita Ekberg stepping into the Fountain of Trevi, remain icons of film history. Fellini's film *8½* (1963), in which Mastroianni plays a film director suffering from creative block, received two Academy Awards. Fellini's contemporary Pier Paolo Pasoilini, meanwhile, shocked audiences with his explicit films often adapted from classic literature, such as *The Decameron* (1971).

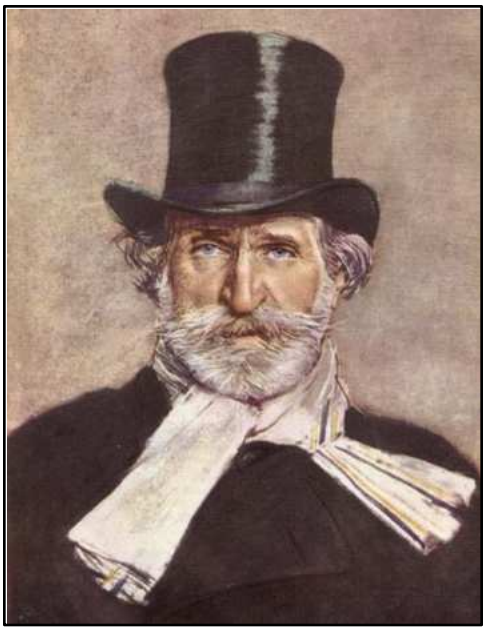
During the 1960s, experimental film flourished in Italy with directors such as Michelangelo Antonioni, whose dreamlike, slow-moving films illustrate the alienation of his characters. In the same years, Bernardo Bertolucci began his career; in 1972 he directed Marlon Brando in *Last Tango in Paris*, and he still works today.

Intelligent and innovative films continue to be produced in Italy. In recent years, some popular films have been *Cinema Paradiso* (1989), directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, and *La Vita è bella* (Life is Beautiful, 1997), directed by and starring Roberto Benigni.

5.7 MUSIC

Music has always been a central part of Italian culture. Etruscan, Greek, and Roman art shows musicians playing flutes, and some of the most ancient examples of chanting date to fourth-century Italy. Modern musical notation was created by the Italian Guido of Arezzo, and even today the Italian language is used to refer to musical terms.

In the Middle Ages, the Church sought to standardize the Mass, and Gregorian Chant was developed in Rome. But secular music, too, was developing in Italy. The primary style was called *cantalina*, which featured an elaborate top voice accompanied by one or two slower voices. This style continued to be important through the 16th century.



The late Renaissance and early Baroque periods produced two important schools of music in Italy. The Roman school, represented by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, used a polyphonic style consisting of several independent melodies and were closely connected with the Vatican. The Venetian school employed grand choirs signing in succession. One of Italy's greatest composers was Antonio Vivaldi, a priest from Venice who wrote joyful, innovative music in the Baroque style.

The 18th and 19th centuries saw the rise of the classical style, with clear melodies and textures. Giovanni Battista Sammartini wrote

symphonies that prefigured those of Haydn and Mozart. The Romantic period, with its emphasis on pure emotion, produced such great composers as Gioacchino Rossini. But perhaps the most notable Romantic composer was Giuseppe Verdi (*above, in an 1886 portrait by Giovanni Boldini*), whose operas reflected the patriotic spirit of his time.

In contemporary times, Italy continues to produce forward-looking music. One example is Luciano Berio, a 20th century composer, who created electronic and experimental music that incorporated the writings of James Joyce, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Samuel Beckett.

5.7.2. OPERA

The first known opera, from the late 1500s, was *Dafne* by Jacopo Peri. While that opera is now lost, Peri's 1600 opera *Euridice* survives today. Opera truly began to flourish in the early 16th century with the creation of an opera season in Venice. One important opera composer at that time was Claudio Monteverdi, who combined comedy and tragedy in the Baroque style. Most operas took their material from classical mythology. The librettos were written in Italian, which became the norm throughout Europe even through the classical period.

In the early 19th century an operatic movement called *bel canto* arose. The term literally means "beautiful singing" and refers to a florid style that required precise control by the singer. The style is most visible in the operas of Donizetti, Bellini, and Rossini (best known for *The Barber of Seville*, 1775).

Giuseppe Verdi was Italy's next great composer of operas. Verdi's style was direct and forceful, and his themes resonated with the nationalist

movement. His most famous operas are *Nabucco* (1842), *Rigoletto* (1851), *Don Carlo* (1867), and *Aida* (1871). Verdi was followed by Giacomo Puccini, who wrote operas into the early 20th century. He is best known for *La bohème* (1896), *Tosca* (1900), *Madama Butterfly* (1904), and *Turandot* (1926). Many of Puccini's premieres were conducted by Arturo Toscanini, the greatest conductor of his time.

Given its great operatic heritage, it is no surprise that Italy is home to some of the most splendid opera houses in the world. Dating mostly from the 18th and 19th centuries, these include the legendary La Scala in Milan, the Petruzzelli of Bari, and the Fenice Theatre of Venice.

Opera continues to flourish in contemporary Italy. Directors like Riccardo Muti of La Scala have explored new interpretations of familiar works and revived lesser-known operas. Many world-famous opera singers, like Luciano Pavarotti and Mirella Freni, continue to come from Italy.

5.7.1 ITALIAN POPULAR MUSIC

Many Italian young people today enjoy listening to American music, but Italian popular music continues to attract listeners. Pop music is widely varied, with rock bands and singer-songwriters, light-hearted lyrics and political themes, folk styles and hip-hop all enjoying success.

Melodic music

Italian music has seen many changes over the past 40 years. This was the period when wild young stars like Mina, Rita Pavone, Adriano Celentano, and Gianni Morandi first appeared. With more than 70 million

records sold, Adriano Celentano in a 40-year career tried out many styles of music, from melodic to rock & roll to rap. Italian music continued in the 1970s along several tracks. On one track was more melodic music, sung by Gino Paoli, Luigi Tenco, Bruno Lauzi, and Sergio Endrigo.

One melodic singer has a track all of his own: Lucio Battisti alone among Italian singers could be compared in popularity to the Beatles or Simon and Garfunkel. Most Italians between the age of 15 and 50 will know and be able to sing many of his songs. The lyrics were often romantic and non-political, and in fact, were considered perfect "date" music. After the middle of the 1970s, when young Italians began to expect music to be related with politics, he lost some of his audience only to re-acquire many fans again in the 1980s and 90s through today. Young Italians still play Battisti songs and his albums are considered as masterpieces of Italian popular music.

The melodic style gave way in the 70s to a new style of music. Italian rock singers and singer-songwriters of the 70s and 80s include PFM (Premiata Forneria Marconi), Area, I Nomadi, New Trolls. These were followed more recently by Vasco Rossi, Litfiba, Ligabue and Zucchero. Italian rock gives US-style rock a run for its money in terms of popularity in Italy. At the end of 2004, Vasco Rossi gave a free concert with an unheard-of audience—for an Italian singer—of 300,000 spectators that happily stood under the rain. His crowd was surpassed only by the free concert that Simon and Garfunkel gave in front of the Colosseum in Rome in the summer of 2004 where crowds reached more than 500,000. (The number could not go any higher simply because Rome ran out of space.)

The most well-known and loved among Italian singer-songwriters was poet-singer Fabrizio De André, who could be called an Italian Bob Dylan.

De André' wrote wonderful songs like “La canzone di Marinella,” “Bocca di Rosa” and “La Guerra di Piero” (an anti-war song often compared to Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind”).

There are also crossover artists – Eduardo Bennato writes and sings rock songs, but with a clear political meaning even if he claims that they are “solo canzonette” (“just silly little songs”) as he does in one of his songs.

Other contemporary Italian songwriters are:

- Poet and ballad singer-songwriter Francesco De Gregori. “Rimmel” is probably his best album, but he is still recording excellent songs.
- Political singer-songwriter Francesco Guccini started his carrer with Due Anni Dopo (1970) and L’Isola Non Trovata (1970) and reached fame with Radici (1972) and Via Paolo Fabbri 43 (1976)
- Lucio Dalla from Bologna began his career as a player in a jazz band and proceeded to develop his own style, which now includes even theater musical scores.

Italian light music includes excellent singers and players whose style models are French-cabaret/light jazz-oriented, such as the piano player Paolo Conte, or inspired by the blues, as in the Neapolitan music of Pino Daniele, or even based on ancient medieval-style music and folk songs, best seen in the violin music of Angelo Branduardi (La pulce d’acqua).

Singer-songwriting has today embarked into new musical territory with Italian Rap singer Jovanotti, and the sophisticated composer-musician Franco Battiato, whose lyrics are written in part by a philosopher.

There has also been a revival of vocal romantic singing, which reached its height with stars such as Pavarotti and Bocelli, following the outstanding worldwide success of the song “Caruso,” by Lucio Dalla.

5.8 RADIO, TELEVISION AND PRESS

Newspapers have long played an important role in keeping the public informed. The first "newspaper" may have been the ancient Roman *Acta Diurna*, a list of important news that Julius Caesar ordered to be posted in public places in major cities. Closer to the modern notion of newspapers were the newssheets produced by Venice's government in the mid-1500s. Citizens could purchase these for the price of one *gazzetta*—the name of a coin from which we derive the modern word "gazette."

Journalism during this period was not always accurate and objective—or even true. After newspapers came to be controlled by private citizens, journalists sought to win the attention of the public by writing about real and invented scandals. This got so out of control that Pope Gregory XIII excommunicated gossip-spreading Roman journalists in 1578.

In the 18th century, newspapers truly began to catch on. Along with these, journals and political pamphlets flourished. One of the most important journals was *La Frusta*, a literary journal written by Giuseppe Baretti that railed against modern literature. Another was *Il Caffè*, written by Cesare Beccaria and the brothers Alessandro and Pietro Verri, which helped introduce Enlightenment thinking to Italy. In pamphlets, a form borrowed from the French, writers took a stand on usually political issues. All of these media helped to inform the public and foster intellectual debate.

Newspapers continued to exist through the 19th century, though many were forced to circulate in secret or close down altogether when Napoleon instituted censorship of the press. But the newspapers survived and expanded in the 19th century as new technology allowed large numbers of papers to be printed.

Today, daily newspapers still play a major role in the spread of information. The largest Italian papers are *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*. Newspapers dealing only with sports are also extremely popular, the largest of these being *La Gazzetta dello Sport*.

The early 1900s saw the beginning of another form of mass communication—radio. The "father of radio," Guglielmo Marconi, was born in Bologna in 1874. Although other scientists had been experimenting with radio, Marconi's system was the first to achieve widespread use. In 1897, Marconi obtained a patent for "improvements in transmitting electrical impulses and signals and in apparatus there-for" and opened the world's first radio company the same year. In 1909, Marconi received the Nobel Prize in Physics.

Today, many people stay informed and entertained with television. *Radio Televisione Italiana*, or RAI, the Italian state broadcasting system, began transmissions in January 1954. Television remained under government control until 1976, when a ruling by the Italian Constitutional Court allowed private entrepreneurs access to the airwaves. The number of private stations shot up—reaching 1300 at its peak—to more stations per person than any other nation in the world. The state still owns the popular stations *Rai Uno*, *Rai Due*, and *Rai Tre*. Italian channels show a variety of programming; broadcasts of soccer games are popular, as are American movies, tv series and programs.

The privatization of television networks has allowed more and more channels to come alive. Most famous among these are *Canale 5*, *Rete 4* and *Italia 1* (owned by Silvio Berlusconi's group *Mediaset*), La7 and cable platform Sky (owned by Rupert Murdock).

5.9 SPORTS

Sports are extremely popular in Italy, in terms of both participation and spectatorship. There are three daily national newspapers entirely devoted to sports, *La Gazzetta dello Sport* (*right: the cover page following 2006 World Cup victory*) , *Il Corriere dello Sport*, and *Tuttosport*, and almost every TV channel devotes a huge part of its programming to sports. Aside from sporting events themselves, they broadcast sport-related talk shows that sometimes have an even wider audience than the events themselves. Soccer is, beyond any doubt, Italy's national pastime. Soccer players enjoy wide celebrity in the country, making them a regular fixture in gossip columns. The top three Italian soccer teams after World War II have been Juventus, based in Turin, A.C. Milan, and Internazionale (commonly called "Inter"), also based in Milan. Italy has won the World Cup four times, surpassed only by Brazil's five.

Still, other sports such as cycling, Formula 1, basketball, skiing, swimming, tennis, and racing are widely popular. Italy also succeeds in "new" sports like volleyball, with a row of medals at both Olympic Games and World Championship, or basketball, where Italy's national team got a silver medal at the 2004 Olympic Games, finishing one spot above the famed U.S. "Dream Team".

Individual sports such as tennis, swimming, and track and field are all widely practiced and enjoy their moments of glory in international

competitions. Thanks to a talented generation of players, Italy is now longer ranked among the "world powers" of women-tennis (2006, 2009, 2010 FedCup champions), and it is gaining strength in swimming and diving. It also has a fair share of good athletes in various disciplines of track and field, which is also the non-team sport with the widest number of participants in Italy.

Cycling is also a staple of Italy's sporting life, with the legendary "*Giro d'Italia*," paired in fame only by the "Tour de France," taking place every spring. Athletes like Gianni Bugno, Marco Pantani and Marco Cipollini are all in cycling's hall of fame, along with old time legends such as Fausto Coppi and Gino Bartali.

Italy has also a distinctive tradition in winter sports, with great names in the past and present such as Gustavo Thoeni, Alberto Tomba, Deborah Compagnoni, Stefania Belmondo, Manuela Di Centa, Armin Zöggeler and so on.

Italy has been the proud host of the 2006 winter Olympic Games that has taken place in the mountains around the northern city of Torino. This edition of the Olympics has been a huge success and has also contributed to renew the and refresh the look of one of Italy's most relevant cities.

An overview of Italian sports wouldn't be complete without a mention of motorsports, a huge passion in Italy with both cars and bikes. The most

obvious name that comes to mind is that of Ferrari: this legendary firm, based in Maranello, not only manufactures the world's most sought-after performance sports cars, but also runs an incredibly successful

Formula 1 Racing Team, the only one left who produces both the engine and the car itself. With 16 titles, Ferrari is the all time leader of Formula One's teams. (*above: "Ferrari 150th Italia" the 2011 Formula One vehicle celebrating the 150th anniversary of unification of Italy*).

Motorbiking is also popular, with Valentino Rossi, a rider who now runs for the Italian team of Ducati, trying to break the record for the most World Championship victories held by Agostini, another legendary Italian rider from the '70s. Motorbike makers such as Ducati and Aprilia compete in different categories of the World Championship, with great success and accomplishments.

5.10 ITALIAN FASHION

Today, Milan is the world's fashion design capital. Major Italian designers have their shops on the main street of the city's fashion district, Via Montenapoleone (*see picture below*).

Celebrities and fashion lovers come from around the world for Fashion Week, a series of runway shows put on by the top designers. Italy's reputation for fine clothing reaches as far back as ancient times.

The Romans, for example, colored ceremonial robes with an expensive dye called Tyrian purple, produced from the secretions of snails, that Aristotle valued at 10 to 20 times its weight in gold. In the Middle Ages, silk-weaving guilds in Florence honed their luxurious craft, while the delicate jewelry of Venetian glassmakers helped gained them such notoriety that they were allowed to marry into noble families. But the explosion in the popularity of

Italian fashion occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries, as luxury clothing became available to the mass public.

Among the first Italian fashion houses established were the Cerruti company in 1881, with woolen fabrics; Trussardi with leather gloves in 1910; Fendi with fur products in 1918; and Ferragamo with shoes in 1923.
A huge number of influential fashion designers in the last century have been Italian. Elsa Schiaparelli, a top designer of the 1920s and 30s, was the first to use shoulder pads and the color hot pink; she also collaborated with artists like Salvador Dalì to create innovative fabric patterns.


Gucci, Spring Summer 2011

Giorgio Armani, who got his start as a window-dresser at a department store, achieved celebrity with the clean lines of his meanswear collection. Gianni Versace, known for his bright colors and leather designs, dressed celebrities like Elton John and Courtney Love. Other famous Italian designers are Dolce & Gabbana, Prada, and Gucci. Alongside its designer clothing, Italy produces affordable, elegant lines like United Colors of Benetton.

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