



# Italy

## SMOOTH SAILING FOR THE MOST PART IN ROMANTIC VENICE, BUT THEN IT IS TIME TO FACE THE MUSIC

### About Italy

Italy, a predominantly Roman Catholic country of 58 million people, occupies a long boot shaped peninsula in south Europe. It has France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia for neighbours.



### When To Visit

Italy enjoys a temperate climate. It is at its best in spring (April-May) and autumn (October-November).

### Visa Requirements

EU citizens require only a passport or ID card to enter Italy. Citizens of many other countries, including the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand do not need a visa if entering as tourists for up to three months.

### Getting There

Flights to Italy are numerous and fares competitive. Train or ferry is also a great way to enter Italy from within Europe.



### Bahrain Connection

If Bahrain is one of the newest members of the F1 family, Italy is one of its oldest, with a history stretching back nearly a century. Another Italian 'export' to win favour in Bahrain is its cuisine – Italian restaurants flourish on the island.



Flowers beautify a balcony outside a Venice home.

**F**ROM THE BEACHES OF GREECE, IT'S TIME TO get into the water - quite literally - in Italy, as we head for romantic Venice.

Venice, of course, is a city that is more famous for its water than its land; losing yourself in the maze of canals and lanes is one of Venice's principal pleasures. The cluster of sights around the Piazza San Marco are heart-clutchingly beautiful, but the more secret pleasures of the hushed backstreets are just as entrancing.

Venice is not only an entrancing city, it is also a very expensive city. Some of the romance of exploring its waterways is dampened by the feeling that everything here comes at a price, and a fairly hefty one at that.

Here's an example. We once visited a restaurant in the city centre for a coffee, where there just happened to be a live band playing. When we asked for our bill, we were charged not just for the coffee



*Travel Tip*  
Dress appropriately when visiting churches. The official dress code requires that shoulders, knees and midriff be covered.

### PAGE OPPOSITE:

Gondoliers still navigate the canals of Venice, as they have for centuries. Two hundred years ago, there were 10,000 gondolas in the city, today there are only 500, used only by tourists.



The band plays for guests at a restaurant in Venice. Meals can get quite expensive, as a bill for the music is added to the tab.



View from the top of the Duomo, one of Milan's architectural masterpieces.



and service, but for the music as well. Since what we thought was just a quick coffee stop proved to be so expensive, we decided to stay there for a half hour longer and just enjoy the music - why not, after all, we'd paid for it!

From Venice, we drove to Milan, and what a study in contrasts between the cities! Milan is the country's economic engine, and is home to Italy's stock market and business centres. It is also one of the world's fashion capitals, which judging by the stylishly attired folk is a sobriquet that is very well earned.

Milan is a sprawling metropolis, but most of its attractions are concentrated in its centre. Its hub is the Duomo, a fantastic Gothic confection topped by the Maddonina (our little Madonna), Milan's protectress. Not far away is La Scala, one of the world's great opera houses.





Tourists enjoy a leisurely gondola ride on one of Venice's numerous canals.

*Fast Fact*  
Italy has a two-hour lunch break (generally 1:30-3:30 pm), when most businesses and shops close down.

Tourists enjoy the warm weather at St. Mark's Square in Venice.



*Travel Tip*  
If travelling in more than one car, buy yourself a walkie-talkie which simplifies communication between cars.

Milan is a city that arouses extreme feelings, just like the city lifestyle is extreme too. A frenetic, restless rhythm is part of both work and leisure, so much so that it is difficult to stay unmoved and not get overwhelmed by all the cultural and social stimulus.

The Milanese are reputed to be completely caught up in their work, with little time for anyone else, but at least one Milan resident was more than gracious with his time. Former Yemenia Airways manager Abdullah Al Mutareb, a former resident of Bahrain,



*Fast Fact*  
Service charges are included in your restaurant bill, so you are not expected to tip. Most people, however, leave a small amount.

came and met the team, invited us over for a coffee, and wished us all success in our mission.

Italy is one of the countries where we have a double-stopover; the Friendship Tour officially ends during the Formula-1 Grand Prix in Monza, which

means we will be returning to the country within a few weeks.

For now, though, it's time to drive on to some cooler climates as we head further north into Europe. The mountains of Switzerland beckon.