



TRAVEL TIPS

PREPARING FOR TRAVEL OVERCOMING JET LAG

There are several tips to help decrease jet lag. While traveling, drink lots of water, especially while on the plane. After arrival, shower and take a short nap, as needed. If you decide to nap, make sure to set the alarm to limit to no more than an hour. Avoid drinking too much caffeine or alcohol, and don't overeat for dinner. Even if exhausted, try to stay up until 9 or 10 pm before going to bed. Drink extra water the next day too.

WHAT TO PACK

Make sure to bring your passport, prescription medications or vitamins and supplements, clothing, comfortable shoes or sandals, sunscreen, as well as other personal essentials. Layer clothing and bring a jacket or scarf for windy hilltop towns. If you'd like to pack a good book, you can see my recommended list for books set in or about Italy.

Good walking shoes are essential. Italians often wear stylish tennis shoes, even with skirts or dresses, so choose your sandal or shoe selection based upon comfort.

Bring a swimsuit in case you want to try the thermal baths.

OUTLETS, ADAPTERS AND CONVERTERS

Italy uses different outlets and stronger voltage than the United States, but most lodgings will provide USB ports, adapters or universal

ports. You may want to purchase an adapter or converter. Phone or laptop chargers and curling irons will be acceptable to plug into an Italian outlet with an adapter, but converters are needed with larger items that use more energy. Most CPAP machines are dual voltage, making a converter unnecessary, but always double-check before traveling.

COMMUNICATIONS

Before leaving, please contact your cellular provider to add the international features to your plan for the time you will be gone. This will allow you to receive texts and be able to use your GPS if you are driving. You will need to turn roaming on, unless you are connected to a wifi network.

CASH/EUROS

Be sure to submit a travel notice to your bank or credit card company before traveling. You can get euros ahead of time, but we always use our ATM card. You can get euros at one of the airport ATMs or one of the many bank ATMs around the country. My banker husband always recommends using an ATM at a bank. If you are going to Rome, it will be easy to find a bank and use an ATM. If you are driving, you will need some euros for the toll roads, but they also take credit cards.

DRIVING RENTING A CAR

When you arrive at the rental car location, look around to see if you need to take a number, depending on the rental car agency. When you drive out of the rental car area, you may need to take a ticket before exiting the garage. You will insert that ticket once you leave the rental car's gated area on your way out. Make sure your GPS is plugged in and ready to go once you leave the parking garage. When you return the car, you will

do the same thing. Take a ticket when you enter the garage, and then insert it when you arrive at your rental car floor.

DRIVING ON THE AUTOSTRADA

First, say a prayer. I'm sort of kidding because driving in Italy is a lot of fun. In Italy, the speed limit appears to be a suggestion, although you can get a ticket for speeding from the cameras that monitor it. When passing, get back in the right lane and do not linger in the left lane or a car might appear out of nowhere, flash its lights and introduce you to Italian sign language. It is not nearly as generous as American ramps, so throttle down as soon as you take the exit.

You will need to get a ticket for the autostrada. There will be many lanes but choose the one that says "Biglietto." Do not take the lane that says TelePass only. When you exit the autostrada, you will choose the lane based on your method of payment. For example, choose the lane with a picture of a hand and change if you have euros, or if you only have a credit card, you will choose the lane that shows the cards.

The Autogrill, or Italian rest stops, are very nice places to stop for a bathroom, water, or coffee. If you want to order coffee, go to the "Cassa" counter and order your coffee and pay for it. Then take the receipt to the barista at the bar, lay it on the counter, and they will see it and make your coffee. [See more in the next column on coffee]

PARKING

Most importantly, white lines are free and blue lines are paid. It's often best to look for the blue sign with the white "P" for a paid parking lot. Like most parking in the United States, there is pay in advance or ticket gates. To pay in advance, estimate your time, pay for the ticket and then leave the ticket on the dash. If there is an entrance gate, take a ticket to enter. When you are ready to leave, locate the pay box, insert your ticket, pay the amount, and take your ticket that will be used to open the arm to leave the lot. Sometimes the pay box can be challenging to find or down a level or across the street.

FOOD AND SHOPPING

COFFEE IN ITALY

If you want a coffee similar to what you are used to drinking at home, order a Caffè Americano or a Caffè Lungo. The Americano is an espresso with hot water added to make the version that Americans drink. The Caffè Lungo is a slightly stronger version of the Americano.

If you order a coffee or caffè, you will get an espresso. If you want coffee with milk, you can order one of the following: a cappuccino, which is an espresso with both hot and foamed milk; a macchiato, which is an espresso with a bit of foamed milk; or a caffè latte, which is an espresso with lots of hot milk. If you order a latte, you will get plain milk.

If you want to live like the Italians, don't order a cappuccino after lunchtime. They believe milk is bad for the digestive system in the afternoon. Italians drink cappuccinos in the morning up until 12:30 or so. Of course, you will be served whatever you want and whenever you want, but I love to give recommendations if you want to fold into the Italian lifestyle.

RESTAURANTS

Here is a short primer on the ordering process at Italian restaurants.

First, restaurant hours are slightly different in Italy. If you are outside of a tourist area, lunch begins at 12:30 and usually goes until 2:30 pm, with Italians eating around 1 or 1:30 pm. For dinner, restaurants usually open at 7:30 pm., but most Italians don't eat dinner until 8 or 8:30 pm.

Second, most restaurants have English version menus, so ask if you happen to get an Italian menu. Also, feel free to ask questions about the menu if you don't understand something.

Now the process. When you are seated at a restaurant, you will get the first question: do you want natural water or water with gas? The fizz in Italy is generally very light and not like American soda waters, for example LaCroix. You will not find

sodas on the drink menu, except in tourist areas, and sweet tea does not exist in Italy. Another thing to note is that ice is rarely used.

After you order your water preference, you can pick one or two things from any of the courses or even order side dishes, called contorni. Wine selection comes after ordering based upon menu selection. Wine is an essential part of the meal because Italians believe it is good for the digestive system since the wine helps to “cut the fat.”

In Tuscany, the bread is traditionally a conduit for the food, is made without salt, and can be tasteless. It is used primarily to sop up pasta sauce and with olive oil.

After dinner, some restaurants will offer post-lunch or dinner digestives, like limoncello, Mirto, or possibly even grappa. Italians believe this is also good for the digestive system.

PAYING THE CHECK

In Italy, you can have a table as long as you like. This means that a server will not bring the check to your table, and you must always ask for the bill. If you want to try your Italian, you can say “Il Conto Per Favore” or simply, “The check, please.”

TIPPING

Tipping in Italy is not compulsory, but in light of the difficulties faced by the tourism industry in Italy from Covid 19, we believe being generous is never a bad thing. If you want to know about specific instances and what is expected or not, there are many guidebooks that can shed light on tipping.

SHOPPING HOURS

Most shops are open from 9 – 9:30 in the morning until 1 pm. Then, they close for lunch and generally don’t open until 3 or 4 pm. The afternoon rest time after lunch is very important for Italians, and in the heat of the summer, you will appreciate it too. When they open again in the afternoon, they are usually open until 7:30 pm. Therefore, if you plan to go shopping, you need to keep this

schedule in mind. In addition, many shops are closed on Sunday except in tourist areas.

LA PASSAGIATA

“The walk” or la passeggiata is not necessarily for physical exercise but more of a social stroll. This usually refers to the walk that occurs around 6:30 in the evening before going inside for dinner. It’s a time to visit with friends and neighbors. Some folks may end up at the local bar for a predinner Aperol spritz. In many towns, it is centered around the main piazza.

FINAL TIPS

- Be present and soak it all in!
- Be humble, learn, and use the Italian greetings and pleasantries. Have fun!

