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Italy

Self-Drive Guide



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Take a Self-Drive Holiday in Italy

With over 25 years experience and award-winning service, let DriveAway Holidays plan your next self-drive adventure. We offer an extensive range of vehicles to suit everyone's need and budget at over 8000 locations in 130 countries worldwide. Enjoy the freedom of having your own rental car and discover the world at your own pace.

In a country as large and diverse as Italy, the best way you can experience it all is by car. Italy has a fantastic road and highway network that will allow you to enjoy all the famous sites, and give you the freedom to discover some wildest treasures as well. This guide is aimed at the independent traveller who enjoys the comfort of their own vehicle. We have included information you'll need for a self-drive holiday in Italy, from hiring a car, rules of the road to some great ideas for touring the different regions of this enormous and wonderful country.

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Renting a Car in Italy

When selecting a rental vehicle, take into consideration where you will be travelling, how many people will be travelling in the vehicle, luggage size and the kind of driving you intend to do. DriveAway Holidays offers a vast range of vehicles from small economy sizes to larger full-sized cars, 4WDs, convertibles and luxury vehicles. The ACRISS system on page 4 will help you find a car that suits your needs. This is internationally recognised code which will ensure you get the same standard of vehicle wherever you rent.

Automatic and Manual Transmissions

Yes, automatic cars are available in Italy, however they will be more expensive than manual cars and not as readily available as manuals.

Do I need a Credit card?

Yes. A credit card will be needed when collecting, which will be used for a security bond. The deposit is generally the insurance excess of the rental car which depends on the category of vehicle you have booked and the rate type.

Collecting at an Airport in Italy

At most airports you will find your rental company has a desk in the arrivals hall, with the rental cars being located within walking distance. However, at smaller airports you may be required to collect your vehicle from a downtown depot. A courtesy transfer will be provided from the airport to the depot in this instance.

DriveAway Holidays offer all-inclusive prices which generally include any location / airport fees and charges that may otherwise apply. Remember to check at the time of booking to ensure your rental will include all airport fees.

What are 'premium location' fees?

Premium location fees apply when a vehicle is collected from an airport, railway or selected downtown locations. DriveAway's car rental prices usually do include the airport or 'premium location' fees for car rental collections in Italy. Check on your prepaid voucher to ensure that this included.

Rental Vehicle Insurance

Your car rental supplier should already have comprehensive insurance covering their cars. In the case of an accident it must be reported to the insurance provider immediately and an excess will be due.

Car Rental Companies in Italy will normally include:

- **Third Party Insurance:** Compulsory insurance and will be included in your car hire price. This covers you for other people's injury and damage to their vehicle.
- **Collision Damage Waiver (CDW):** This limits your financial liability for damage to the rented vehicle and is normally included in prepaid car hire prices. Rentals are normally subject to liability excess, which can be reduced at the time you collect your rental car or by taking out **DriveAway Hire Car Excess Insurance**.
- **Theft and Loss Cover:** This limits your financial liability for the loss or theft of the rented vehicle and is generally included in the prepaid car rental price.
- **Fire and Liability:** Limits your financial liability for bodily injury or death, and is normally included in the prepaid car hire price.
- **Personal Accident Insurance:** This covers the driver for personal injuries and is generally not included in your car rental rate. It is considered an optional extra that you can take out upon collection of the car.

DriveAway Hire Car Excess Insurance

When renting a vehicle, the rental rates include basic insurance, however, in the event that the vehicle is stolen or accidentally damaged, there is usually an Insurance excess amount which the driver is liable to pay to the rental company. To avoid any unexpected costs opt for DriveAway Hire Car Excess Insurance which will offer a reimbursement for the supplier's damage and theft excess to a maximum for AU\$5,000. Simply add this onto your car rental booking prior to departure and you could save thousands of dollars in the long run! To find out more, simply call DriveAway Holidays on 1300 723 972 or visit the DriveAway website.



ACRIS System

Class	Fuel Capacity	Type	Transmission	Fuel/Air Cond.
M = Mini	0.8 - 1.0	B = 2 Door	M = Manual	R = Yes
E = Economy	1.0 - 1.4	D = 4 Door	A = Automatic	N = No
C = Compact	1.2 - 1.6	C = 2/4 door	N = Manual 4WD	D = Diesel Air
F = Full size	2.0 - 3.2	L = Limousine	C = Manual AWD	Q = Diesel No Air
P = Premium	2.0 - 4.2	S = Sports Car	B = Auto 4WD	H = Hybrid Air
L = Luxury	2.0 - 4.2	T = Convertible	D = Auto AWD	I = Hybrid No Air
X = Special	1.2 - 3.0	J = All Terrain	Examples: ECMN: E = Economy C = 2 or 4 door M = Manual N = No Aircon FDAR: F = Full Size D = 4 Door A = Automatic R = Aircon	E = Electric Air
	R = Recreational	C = Electric No Air		
	F = 4 Wheel Drive			
	X = Special			
	K = Commercial Van/Truck			
	P = Ute			
	X = Special			
	E = Executive			

The DriveAway Hire Car Excess Insurance is managed by Accident & Health International Underwriting Pty Limited, ABN 26 053 335 952, AFSL 238261 and underwritten by CGU Insurance Limited, ABN 27 004 478 371, AFSL 238291.

Driving In Italy

Driving in Italy can be a wonderful experience, and in some cases it's a pure necessity. Here are a few tips to help you acclimatise to Italian driving and help make your self-drive holiday the best that it can be.

- Familiarise yourself with the road signs and parking rules.
- Drive on the right hand side of the road. The driver sits on the left hand side of the car.
- Italian drivers are competent and fast. Don't be daunted by aggressive driving, instead be confident and you'll fit right in.
- When you collect your car rental, familiarise yourself with the car's controls.
- The centre lane of a three lane highway is for passing or overtaking. Slower traffic drives on the right lane.
- Be cautious on narrow winding roads on routes such as in Cinque Terre and along the Amalfi Coast. Most of the small towns on these routes have little or no parking, some don't permit cars at all so park your car outside of the towns and see the sites on foot.

Types of roads in Italy

- Autostrada: Motorways and freeways.
- Major Roads: Dual carriageways and highways with more than one lane in each direction and generally fast moving.
- Minor Roads: Narrow, winding roads with one lane in each direction and slower moving traffic
- White Roads: Narrow, dirt or white gravel roads through the countryside. Known locally as 'Strade Bianche'.

Driving Laws in Italy

- Drivers must carry proof of insurance, international and domestic drivers licence and registration papers at all times.
- Hefty fines can be issued for speeding offences, and police have the authority to collect fines on the spot. Speed cameras are set up in many places, so if you're caught speeding the fine will be posted to the car rental company, who will then pay the fine with your credit card used at the time of collection.
- Children under the age of four must be seated in an approved safety child seat restraint, and children aged 4 to 12 years must be secured in a suitable child restraint while seated in the front seat.
- When driving on the Autostrada, you must drive with your headlights on.
- It is illegal to talk on a mobile phone while driving in Italy.
- Drink driving is illegal. The maximum blood alcohol level is 0.05, and DUI drivers can face hefty fines or imprisonment so be smart, don't drink and drive.
- An emergency triangle must be carried in the vehicle at all times.
- Motorcyclist must wear a helmet.

Speed limits

130km/hr (80miles/hr) on highways (Autostrada), 110km/hr (68miles/hr) on highways when wet.

110 km/hr (68miles/hr) on dual carriageways, 90km/hr (56miles/hr) when wet.

90km/hr (56miles/hr) on open roads, 80km/hr (50miles/hr) when wet.

50 km/hr (31miles/hr) inside cities regardless of weather conditions.

Tuscany

Licence Requirements

An International Driving licence is required for Australian Drivers Licence holders. International licences can be obtained from motoring associations. Make sure that you take your Australian licence with you as well. Car rental companies will require that drivers have held a full licence for at least one year.

Min & Max Age Requirements

Min Driving Age: Generally 21 years but some suppliers allow drivers from 18 years.

Young Driver's Surcharge: Drivers under 24 years may be charged an additional fee.

Max Driving Age: There is no maximum driving age in Italy with most car rental suppliers; however the max driving age for some car hire companies is 75 years. In these cases, aged drivers may be required to hold a letter from their GP stating they are healthy and fit to drive. Check with DriveAway Holidays for further details.

Road Tolls & e-Tags

The Autostrada system is privately owned, and drivers pay a toll to use it. You collect a ticket when you enter the Autostrada, and pay the toll once you exit. When you arrive at an entrance of the Autostrada, head to the gate marked Bigletto' (ticket), rather than the Telepass or Viacard gate. When you exit you can pay the toll at the Bigletto cards with either cash or credit card.

Parking in Italy

Although parking may be hard to find in larger cities, everywhere else in Italy parking is relatively easy to find. In larger tourist areas there are numerous pay parking lots outside of the historic areas. Street parking is designated with signs, and coloured lines denote whether it's paid or free parking. Blue lines indicate pay parking, where a ticket machine will be close by to purchase a parking ticket to display on the car dashboard.

White lines or no lines indicate free parking. If the parking sign indicates that the parking time is limited you'll need to display a parking disc on the cars windshield, which shows the time you parked. Parking discs are sometimes included in your car rental; if not they can be purchased from tobacconists. Ask for a "disco orario".



Cinque Terre

Italy Car Rental FAQs

Can I visit another country outside of Italy and then return the car to Italy?

In most cases, travel to other countries is permitted but this depends on the type of vehicle rented and the country that you're be visiting. Generally, luxury and prestige cars are not permitted into some Eastern Europe countries. Check with DriveAway Holidays for further details.

Can I collect my rental car in Italy and drop it off in another European country?

Yes you can, but be aware that an international one way fee will be charged upon collection. This is dependant on the country and the distance that country is from the collection point. DriveAway Holidays will advise you at the time of booking of any international one way fees.

Can I drive my rental vehicle on Cinque Terre?

Yes. There are some sections of the Cinque Terre where cars are not permitted, however when you do travel to Cinque Terre, park your car outside the towns and explore these places on foot. Drive with caution and confidence on this route, as the roads are winding and narrow, however with confidence and common sense this will be a brilliant experience.

What do I do if I want to extend my car rental whilst I'm in Italy?

Once the car rental has commenced you will have to call the depot where you initially collected the vehicle, and if the car is available to be extended, you will be offered additional days at the local rate.

Should I take out additional insurance on my car rental?

Rental rates will include basic insurance: Collision Damage Waiver (CDW), Third Party Liability and Theft Protection. In the event that your rental vehicle is accidentally damaged, regardless of who is at fault, or stolen, the Insurance excess is the maximum amount you are liable for. In Italy, the base amount of excess begins at €600.

Should I hire a GPS for driving in Italy?

GPS hire is available from DriveAway Holidays. Our rates include the GPS, travel guides and entertainer. The GPS is delivered direct to your home or travel agent before you depart. GPS units can also be requested direct with some suppliers, however this will be at their own rates. If time is short though, or you would simply prefer to collect your GPS unit together with your rental, then this may be an option for you.

Italy's Regions

NORTHWEST ITALY: Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy and Valle d'Aosta.

NORTHEAST ITALY: Emilia-Romania, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trentino-Alto Adige and Veneto.

CENTRAL ITALY: Lazio, Abruzzo, Marche, Tuscany and Umbria.

SOUTHERN ITALY: Apulia, Basilicata, Campania and Molise.

SICILY & SARDINIA

MAJOR CITIES: Rome, Florence, Milan, Venice, Cinque Terre, Turin, Genoa, Siena, Pisa, Lucca, Naples, Pompeii, Amalfi Coast, Calabria and Palermo.



Rome

The capital city of Italy, Rome, is situated on the river Tibur between the Apennines and the Tyrrhenian Sea. The Eternal City of Rome was originally founded as a village in the 8th Century BC and over the last two and a half thousand years, with the might of the ancient Roman Empire, earned the esteemed title of the Capitol of the World.

Although today it's no longer *caput mundi*, it is a living masterpiece and rich in architectural and cultural beauty with a unique love of life and appreciation of art and history. Rome is a bustling, thriving, chaotic city, where the modern day life blends in with ancient buildings and magnificent *dolce vita* – the sweet life.

Events

January

Epiphany Fair in Piazza Navona – A fair of toys, sweets and other presents around the Bernini fountain.

April

Rome's Good Friday Procession – A torch lit procession moving from the Colosseum re-enacting the 14 Stations of the Cross.

May

May Day Musical – Rome celebrates the arrival offspring with fantastic music festival.

June

Estate Romana Festival - This festival offers music, film theatre and fun.

July

Donna Sotto le Stelle – Roman high fashion paraded on the Spanish Steps in the Piazza di Spagna.

August

Feast of the Assumption - The streets of Rome come alive with the Gran Ballo di Ferragosto, with dancing in the town squares.

September – October

Roma Europa Festival – Modern art, theatre, music and dance including Italian and European artists.

Rome Jazz Festival – music festival dedicated to jazz that's been running since 1876.

Celebration of St Francis – Rome celebrates its patron Saint, St Francis, on this feast day.

International Film Festival – A celebration of the Italian Film Industry.

Attractions

Visit The Vatican – Home to the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church. See St Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel, St Peter's Square and the Vatican City Gardens. View the brilliant work of Michelangelo, Raphael and Botticelli on the chapel ceilings and frescoed panels.

The Colosseum - See where gladiators fought in mortal combat in Ancient Rome in the epitome of Roman architecture that was built in AD72.

The Roman Forum - Visit what was once the religious, commercial and political centre of Ancient Rome.

The Pantheon – This is one of Rome's best preserved ancient monuments, built as a temple in 27BC, and is a brilliant example of Ancient Roman architectural ingenuity.

Trevi Fountain – Toss a coin into Rome's largest and most famous fountain to ensure that you return to Rome.

Escape the city's buzz and head to Tivoli: Villa d'Este – Enjoy a stroll through the landscaped gardens and mossy fountains in this famous Italian-styled garden.

Experience magnificent food – Try some local made gelato, pasta and pizza, and sip coffee at an outdoor café!

The Colosseum, Rome

Self-Drive Tours around Rome



Villa d'Este, Tivoli

Rome to Tivoli

This drive is a relatively short drive and well worth the effort. Head east from Rome toward La Rustica, and follow the Strada del Parchi until you reach Colle Merulino. Turn north onto the SP51 to Pontelucano, then east along the SS5 to Tivoli in the region of Lazio.

Tivoli is home to the Villa d'Este in the Piazza Trento. This is one of Italy's finest palaces, however one of the main reasons people come here is for the gardens. Villa d'Este is constructed with hundreds of water fountains and water features. Whilst in Tivoli, make some time to see the Hadrian's Villa, a magnificent complex incorporating lakes, fountains, baths, temples and gardens. If you get the chance see the other ancient monuments of the Temple of Tiburtine Sibyl and the Temple of Hercules.

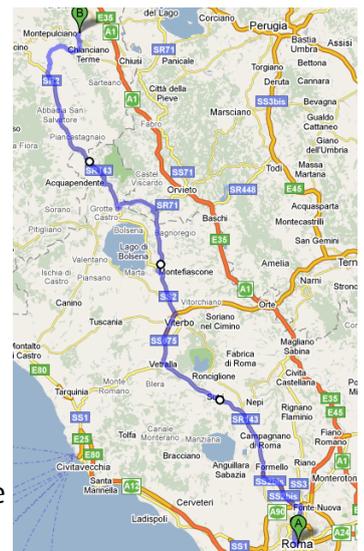


Rome to Montepulciano, Tuscany

Montepulciano is located right in the heart of Tuscany. You can drive there in a little over two hours if you take the autostrada, but if you'd like to see the magnificent countryside of the Tuscan regions, head north from Rome via the SS2. This will take you on a beautiful drive through La Storta, Le Rughe, Sette Vene, Monterosi and Ronciglione, which is in the Cimini Mountains and close to Punta del Lago. Head further north, stopping along the way at Viterbo whose historic centre is surrounded by medieval walls and is home to the Viterbo University and fantastic ancient architecture.

Further along the SS2 you'll come across the beautiful town of Montefiascone on the banks of Lake Bolsena, where you'll be met by the incredible Saint

Margherita's Cathedral. Head north around the lake to Bolsena, then on through San Lorenz Nuovo and Acquapendente, which is home to the Cathedral of San Sepolcro and some of Tuscany's best historical buildings. Enjoy the picturesque countryside and medieval villages along the way to Montepulciano. This beautiful town is set amongst vineyards and beautiful scenery and is renowned for its art, architecture and exquisite lifestyle.



Civita di Bagnoregio, Viterbo

Northwest Italy

Northwest Italy is a unique and spectacular region, offering all the best for a wonderful holiday. Relax on the Italian Riviera, bask in the sun in crystal clear waters, wind through medieval towns with narrow cobble stoned streets, shop in the fashion capital of Italy, explore incredible historical sites, drive through vineyards over rolling hills and ski, hike or bike over the magnificent mountains.

Regions: Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy and Valle d'Aosta

Cities: Aosta, Bergamo, Brescia, Genoa, La Spezia, Milan, San Remo and Turin.

Other: Cinque Terre and Lake Como.

Attractions

Lombardy

Milan – Visit the financial and economic powerhouse city of Italy.

Como – See the lake where the rich and famous holiday, enjoy all the water sports and leisure of this beautiful region.

Bergamo – This is one of the most picturesque cities in Italy, where modern and historic architecture stand side by side.

Liguria

La Riviera di Ponente – Drive along the Ligurian coast from Genoa to the border with France to Nice.

Portofino – Stay in one of Italy's most exclusive seaside resorts.

Cinque Terre – Visit the World Heritage Listed Site and now national park, and see small coastal villages clutching the terraced cliffs with unparalleled views of the Mediterranean.

Explore the winding streets of Genoa – Explore the *caruggi* in the old part of Genoa and get a taste of true Italian history.

Piedmont

See the Museo Egizio, Turin – One of the world's largest Egyptian museums.

Visit the Mole Antonelliana, Turin – This houses Italy's National Cinema Museum that was originally built as a synagogue.

Turin – Stroll through the many elegant squares, gardens, parks and cafés.

The Italian Alps – The Milky Way is one of the world's most well renown ski fields and home to the 2006 Winter Olympics.

Valle d'Aosta

Sightsee in one of Italy's wealthiest regions – Visit the Aosta Cathedral, the Arch of Augustus and La Maison de la Fontina.

Take a cable car ride – Glide over the Alps from Aosta to Chamonix for the best view of the region.

Go hiking – Follow one of the hiking trails across some of Europe's most spectacular mountains, Mont Blanc, Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn.

Brindisi

Events

January

San Remo Flower Festival - San Remo, Liguria.

Fair of Saint Orso, Aosta - This 1,000 year old event attracts artisans, musical entertainment, food and wine.

February

Fair of San Faustino & Giovita, Brescia, Lombardy – The cities largest fair, with Italian and European vendors

March

Feast Day of St Joseph, La Spezia, Liguria – Massive festival, with markets, music and local foods.

Chocolate Fair, Turin, Piedmont – Market fair of local and Italian chocolates.

April

St George Bonfire, Portofino, Liguria

May

Zegna Regatta, Portofino, Liguria – Watch the sailing regatta along the spectacular coast.

Sagra del Pesce (fish festival), Camogli, Liguria – Visitors flock to witness the locals pay homage to the patron saint of fisherman, St Fortunato.

Alba International Music Festival - Alba, Piedmont – Musical festival held over May, June and July.

September

Aplio de Asti, Asti, Piedmont – Famous bare back horse race.

December

Christmas markets, Borga Dora, Turin – Best festive markets in Italy.

Self-Drive Tours in Northwest Italy

Tour the Alpine Valleys

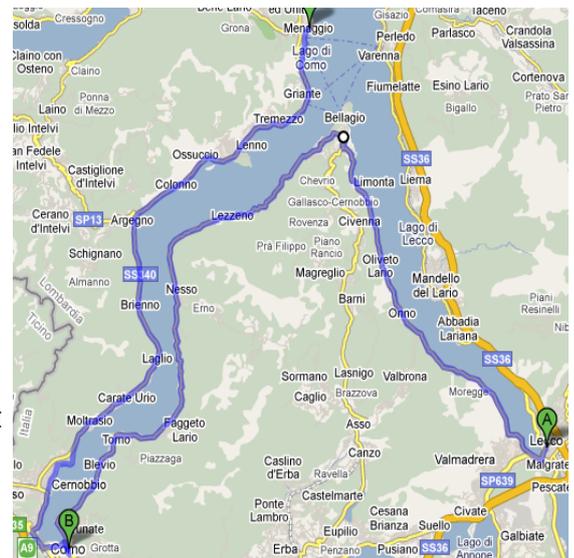
Begin this tour in Ivrea just north of Turin and head toward the famous Carema vineyards. Drive further north to Point St Martin, where you'll be able to see an ancient Roman bridge. From here, travel east to Gaby and see the Neil Falls and further on to Gressoney la Trinite at the foot of Mount Rosa. Here you can take in great skiing or snowboarding in winter and fantastic hiking or watersports in the summer.

If you head west from Point St Martin, you'll come across Bard, etched into a deep narrow gorge at the head of the Aosta Valley. There's a magnificent fort and lovely cobbled streets to explore. Further along, you'll get to Verres, home to the Verres Castle that was built in the fourteenth century. Drive through Emaiese and Brusson and you'll arrive at the ski resort of Champuloc, which is a quiet and pristine ski resort town on Mount Rosa.



Tour Lake Como

This route follows just one section of Lake Como, and needs to be handled with care, since the roads at times can be narrow and somewhat windy. But don't be daunted, it's well worth the drive. Begin this tour at Lecco and follow the SS583 through Moregge, Onno and Limonta to the town of Bellagio which is located at the tip of the peninsular that juts into Lake Como. This pretty town is one of the main tourist centres on the lake and the main centre for the lake's boat services. Follow the SS583 back down the west coast of the peninsular through Lezzeno, Careno and Blevio to the town of Como. From Como, drive north again on the SS340 through Cernobbio, Ossuccio and Tremezzo to Mennagio. Mennagio is a little quieter than other towns along the lake, but has great restaurants, cafés and gelaterias.



Northeast Italy

The northeast region of Italy is spectacular with its beauty and majesty of rugged snow-capped mountains, exceptional art, ancient frescoes and historic architecture. Unique cities such as Venice and Padova, true romantic cities like Verona, magnificent scenery and friendly locals make this a special holiday destination.

Regions: Emilia-Romania, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trentino-Alto Adige and Veneto.

Cities: Bologna, Ravenna, Padova, Rimini, Trento, Trieste, Verona, Venice and Vicenza.

Attractions

The Veneto

Venice – No trip to Italy would be complete without seeing Venice. Walk along the canals, take a gondola ride, marvel at the Basilica di San Marco and St Marks square and savour the good life.

Explore the homes of Romeo and Juliet – Visit Verona and see *Casa Giulietta* (Juliette's house), see the huge amphitheatre Arena, and the *Palazzo e giardino Giusti*, one of the finest gardens in Italy.

Trentino-Alto Adige

The Dolomites – enjoy over 600km of ski runs and hundreds of cross country tracks.

Lakes Region – Visit the beautiful Lake Garda and Lake of Carezza.

Bolzano – The capital of Alto Adige and influenced by German culture due to its close proximity to the German border.

Wine tasting – Drive to Meran, surrounded by high mountains and is one of the best red wine producing areas of Italy.

Friuli-Venezia Giulia

See the Gian Grotto - Near Trieste.

Visit the Miramare Castle, Trieste – Built in the 18th Century and is positioned above the Adriatic Sea.

Emilia-Romania

Parma – Home to Parma ham and the original *parmigiano reggiano* (parmesan cheese)

Bologna – Home to Europe's oldest university and also hosts a fantastic medieval centre.

Enjoy ancient artworks – Drive to Ferrara and Ravenna so see magnificent Byzantine mosaics and a wonderful Renaissance centre.

Events

January

Vintage Car Race, Dolomites – Racing over 500km of icy roads, the Winter Marathon drives to & from the Madonna do Campiglio resort, and features historical cars built before 1968.

February

Carnevarle, Venice – Annual Mardi Gras festival with ornate masks, exquisite fancy dress balls and festivals.

Verona in Love, Verona – Five day festival over Valentines Day, inspired by the story of Romeo and Juliette.

Carnevale di Cento, Cento – One of the major festivals in Italy.

April

Vinitaly - The Wine Festival, Verona – One of the largest wine exhibitions in the world.

June

San Daniele Ham Festival, Dan Daniele, Friuli – Four day festival dedicated to food, particularly prosciutto.

December

Christmas Fairs across Northeast Italy – Fantastic festive market stalls held across the month of December in almost all regions, offering traditional crafts and food plus classic Christmas concerts and exhibitions.

Venice

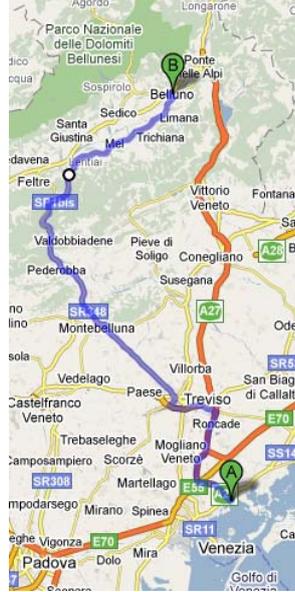
Self-Drive Tours in Northeast Italy



Dolomites, Trentino-Alto Adige

Explore the Dolomites

Travel from Venice to Belluno to see the best of the Dolomites. Use Belluno as your base to explore the spectacular mountains which offer skiing, snowboarding, hiking or mountain biking. You can travel the fast way across the A27 that leads direct to Belluno, which should take just over an hour on the Autostrada. The alternative will take you a little over two hours without stops, but this is definitely not a drive to be rushed.



From Venice take the A27 to Casier and head west on the SR53 to Treviso, where there are plenty of ancient ruins and gardens to explore. Head onto the SR48 head northeast through Montebelluna and Pederobba, and onto the SB1 through Vas, Capen and the beautiful town of Lentiai. Enjoy the winding roads, charming villages and magnificent mountain vistas along the way through Mei, Trishiana, Viscome and onto Belluno.

Venice to Lake Garda

Head west from the city of Verona on the E70 towards Padua, which is reputed to be the oldest city in northern Italy. See the *Scrovegni Chapel*, the *Palazzo della Ragione* and the *Basilica do Sant'Antonio*. Further west, you'll come into Vicenza which has been listed as a World Heritage Site. In Vicenza you'll be able to see the Basilica Palladiana, the Teatro Olimpico and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto.



Lake Garda, Trentino-Alto Adige

Drive west through the town of San Boniface to the beautiful city of Verona. Here you can visit the *Arena*, the Roman amphitheatre, the Castelvecchio, and see what inspired Shakespeare to write Romeo and Juliette. Outside of Verona you can



explore the magnificent wine districts of Valpolicella and Soave. Back onto the A4, drive another half hour to the unrivalled Lake Garda, one of the most beautiful lakes in all of Europe. This beautiful region offers splendid natural scenery and is a playground for people of all ages. Visit the village of Sirmione with historical buildings and castle, see the beautiful Gardone Riviera, go hiking or climbing at Monte Baldo and Riva del Garda.

Central Italy

Central Italy is home to some of the most iconic sites in Italy including the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Michelangelo's David, the Tuscan countryside, the Colosseum and the Vatican City. The regions of central Italy also offer magnificent mountains, rolling fields, beachside resorts, world famous wines and wonderful food, exceptional art, architecture and culture. You'll never be short of something fun to do or something beautiful to see in central Italy.

Regions: Lazio, Abruzzo, Marche, Tuscany and Umbria

Cities: Rome, Ancona, Florence, Latina, L'Aquila, Livorno, Perugia, Pescara, Pisa

Attractions

Lazio

Rome – Visit the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Vatican, the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Museums. While in Rome, do as the Romans do and enjoy coffee in an outdoor café, dine on pizza and pasta or toss a coin in the Trevi Fountain for good luck.

Visit the market place – Go to Campo de Fiori, Rome, a beautiful rectangular market place with fresh produce.

Lake Albano - Visit this beautiful region, see some of the historic towns and grand villas and visit the summer home of the Pope in Castel Galdolfo.

Tuscany

Florence – See some of the world's best and most famous artworks, including Botticelli, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian at the Uffizi gallery; visit the Boboli Gardens, and the *Ponte Vecchio* that crosses the Arno River.

Pisa – See one of the true icons of Italy, The Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Sienna – Explore the Gothic architecture and incredible art in this World Heritage listed site.

Learn to cook – Take in a cooking class and learn how to create authentic Italian (and Tuscan) dishes.

Lucca – A beautiful old city that's home to great restaurants, lovely churches and a rich history and is hidden behind monumental renaissance walls.

Il Chianti – Drive through rolling hills, vineyards and farmhouses sampling the world famous food & wine.

Umbria

Perugia – Explore the cobbled streets, stroll along a Roman aqueduct, walk under the Etruscan arch and visit the *Duomo* (cathedral).

Assisi – See this magnificent hill town that was home to St Francis.

Orvieto – See the gorgeous cathedral in the city that's built precariously on the edge of a cliff.

Explore the countryside – Stop in some beautiful, ancient towns and villages, such as Gubbio, Spoleto and Spello.

Abruzzo

National Parks – Mountain climbing, hiking and sightseeing in Nazionale del Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga.

Skiing – Ski or snowboard any one of Abruzzo's 15 ski resorts in the Apennines.

Coastline – Fossacesia, and Marinscuro are popular beaches with great seaside resorts.

Le Marche

Urbino – This university town is full of Renaissance art, history and steep, steep streets.

Macerata and Ascoli Piceno – Full of culture, art and rich in history, these towns dot the landscape of Le Marche.

The beachside resorts along the east coast – Near Monte Conero and Pesaro.

Trevi Fountain, Rome

Events

January

Carnivale, Foiano della Chiana, Arezzo – One of the oldest Carnivale celebrations in Italy, with masked balls, costumes and parades.

February

Spello, Perugia, Umbria – Olive and bruschetta festivals celebrating the olive harvest.

March

La Festa degli Statuti, Fossato de Vico, Perugia, Umbria – Festival re-enacting the signing of the towns constitution, medieval costumes and plenty of food and music.

May

Corsa dei Ceri, Gubbio, Perugia, Umbria – Authentic and unique medieval festival.

Iris Garden of Florence Opening, Florence – For 19 days in May, these magnificent gardens are open to the public.

June

Festival of the Two Worlds, Spoleto, Umbria – Music, dance and cultural festival.

Giostra Della Quintana, Foligno, Umbria – Historic parade and Renaissance jousting, run from June to September.

International Opera Festival - June – August, Arena di Verona.

July

Malborghetto Festival, Rome – Festival featuring theatrical performances in the Malborghetto Archaeological Park.

Mercantia Festival, Certaldo Alto, Florence – International gathering of street performers and artist set in the beautiful medieval town.

Umbria Jazz Festival, Perugia and Cortona, Umbria – Weeklong music festival.

August

The Baroque Festival, Viterbo – From August to October the Baroque Festival focuses on classical music, both Italian and International.

September

La Macchina de Santa Rosa, Viterbo – Celebration of the City's Patron Saint, St Rosa.

Sagrantino Wine Festival, Montefacto, Tuscany – Festival devoted to celebrate the local regions wines.

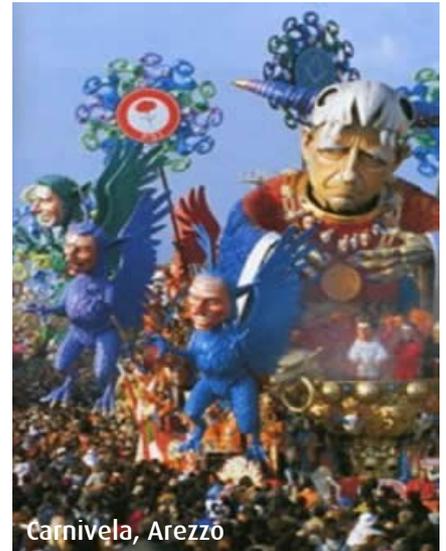
Umbra Music Festival, Perugia, Umbria – Historic music festival.

Pane Nostrum, Sendigallia, Marche – The City of the White Art hosts a three day festival dedicated to bread.

October

Feast Day for St Francesco – Nationwide celebrations in honour of Italy's Patron Saint.

Euro Chocolate Festival, Perugia, Umbria – 9 day festival of indulgence and decadence, in honour of this ancient Etruscan towns most famous export.



Carnivela, Arezzo



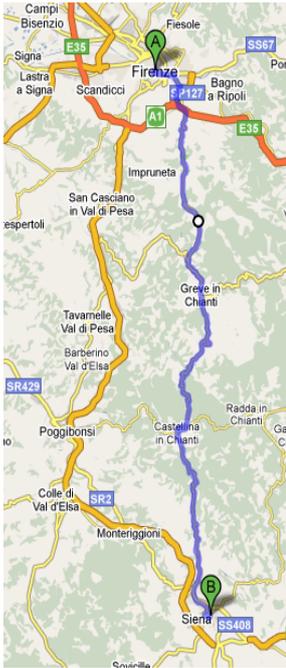
Gubbio Festival, Umbria



Umbria Jazz Festival, Perugia

Self-Drive Tours in Central Italy

Florence to Siena via the Chianti Valley



Take on the beautiful Tuscan countryside on this lovely drive that would take just under two hours without stopping. Follow the SS222 south from Florence and enjoy the scenery through Strada in Chianti, Grete and Greve in Chianti. Once you get to the town of Castlina in Chinati, head west to Radda in Chianti and then south through Lecchi, San Sano and Monti. The small village of San Giovanni is a pretty rest stop, then on through Bogleione to Siena. Spend an hour, a day or even base your holiday in this beautiful region; there are so many vineyards, restaurants and friendly villages for you to visit and explore.



Umbria

The Best of Umbria

Begin this circle tour from Perugia, Umbria. Take the SS75 southeast through Bastia Umbra and Spello to the town Foligno. Here you can enjoy the Renaissance architecture when you stroll around the town, which is surrounded by olive groves and vineyards. Take the SS3 through Trevi and onto Spoleto, where you can visit the Duomo, see ancient relics in the Museo Archeologico or walk across the 14th Century viaduct, Ponte delle Torri.



From Spoleto, drive west through Acquasparta and onto Todi which is home to great architecture, fine regional foods and a laid back pace. Further west on the SS448 you'll come across Orvieto, the city built on the edge of a craggy clifftop. From Orvieto, follow the SR71 via Piegara, enjoying the Umbrian scenery along the way, to complete your circle back to Perugia.



Vineyard in Umbria

Southern Italy

Experience true Italian culture in the heel and toe of the Italian boot. This region is home to wonderful national parks, spectacular coastline and beaches, incredible historic sites, and friendly locals. Its close ties to agriculture generate some of Europe's most famed food and wines, with year-round festivals commemorating great produce. You will also enjoy the warmth, hospitality and culture of the people of Southern Italy.

Regions: Puglia, Basilicata, Campania, Calabria and Molise.

Cities: Bari, Brindisi, Catanzaro, Foggia, Naples, Potenza, Salerno, Taranto and Reggio

Attractions

Puglia

Bari – Visit Swabian castle and the Basilica of San Nicola, visit the old town (*Bari Vecchia*) or just soak up the atmosphere in its restaurants and cafes.

Magnificent coastline – Explore white sand beaches, dramatic white limestone cliffs, grottos and sparkling blue waters.

Lecce – Explore the rich Baroque architectural monuments and the Church of the Holy Cross.

Basilicata

Metera – See the stone *Sassi* (houses) that have been dug into the cliff face and visit the seaside resort.

Parco Nazionale del Pollino, and discover the soaring peaks of the Lucanian Apennines.

Campania

Naples – See the Angioino Castle, the Napoli Cathedral, the Royal Palace and the Catacombs of San Gennaro.

Go back in time in Pompeii and Herculaneum – Take a look at the ancient Roman cities that were covered by volcanic ash over 2,000 years ago and frozen in time.

Take a tour to Capri – See one of the best natural beauties in all of Italy, with vineyards, olive groves, fantastic beaches and magnificent resorts.

The Amalfi Coast – This is one of Italy's most famous roads.

Mt Vesuvius and the craters of the Campi Flegrei.

Salerno – The second largest city in the Campania region, and home to the Monastery of St Benedetto and the Castle of Salerno.

Calabria

Calabria's National Parks – Visit Pollino, Sila and the Aspromonte.

Explore the cities – See Reggio Calabria, Cosenza and Crotona.

Molise

The Monte del Matese – For brilliant snow sports in winter and climbing in warmer months.

Sepino and Pietrabbondante – Dates back to 1,000BC.

Events

February

Sant'Agata in Catania, Catania – Follow this 500 year old celebration of the cities patron saint.

Carnivale – all across southern Italy, costumed parades, masks and street parties dominate February with a fabulous party mood.

May

I Tri de Cruci, Tropea – This annual folk festival celebrates with fireworks and street performances.

Infiorata, Noto – See amazing floral displays that line the streets of this Baroque town.

Three Gulfs Cup, Bay of Naples – See beautiful boats race from Naples to Capri.

June

Marriage of the Trees, Accettura – Witness the ancient ritual of fertility with a re-enactment of the marriage between the king and queen of the forest.

St Andrews Celebration, Amalfi – A celebration for St Andrew, with food and song.

August

Byzantine New Year, Amalfi – Costume parades and medieval tournaments commemorate this annual party.

September

Feast of San Gennaro, Naples – Residents celebrate St Gennaro as their Patron Saint's statue is paraded through town.

Pizza Festival, Naples – Taste a genuine Pizza Napolitana over 11 days of celebrations.

Self-Drive Tours in Southern Italy

The Amalfi Coast

A world heritage site, the Amalfi Coast stretches from Vietri sul Mare to Positano along the southern side of the Sorrentine Peninsula in the Campania region of Italy. One of the most famous drives in Europe, it is renowned for its breathtaking scenery and the picturesque towns that dot the coast and its rugged terrain. The road is steep, winding and narrow, so be confident and take your time around the bends. Once you arrive at a town, park your car outside and explore on foot.

To drive the entire route, begin the Amalfi Coast tour from Vietri sul Mare and follow the SS163 west along the coast through the town of Cetara and the seaside resort of Maiori. Head inland to Ravello where you can see Villa Cimbrone which hosts magnificent views. On to Amalfi, where you should leave the car and explore the small squares, buzzing Piazza's and the Vagliendola region. Marvel at the white houses that cling precariously to the rockfaces. Drive along to Conca, the town also built along the cliff edge, through to Praiano and onto Positano. Explore the town, and take a boat trip out to explore Il Galli.

From Positano, drive inland through Colli di Fontanelle and Sant'Agello and onto Sorrento. This beautiful town is perched on cliffs that looks directly over the Bay of Naples, with plenty of cafés, restaurants, cathedrals and museums. Stroll through the streets of the old town,



and see where the rich and famous spend their summer holidays!



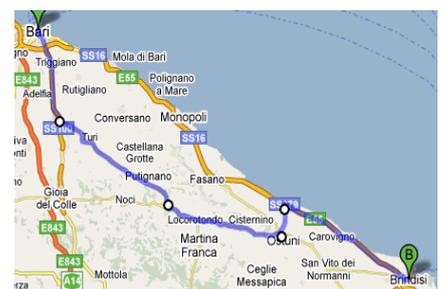
Amalfi Coast, Campania



Trulli, Alberobello

Bari to Brindisi

Spend time exploring Bari, throughout the old town, *the Bari Vecchia*, its beautiful medieval quarter and the cathedral of Saint Nicolaus. Drive south on the SS100 through Cellamare and Casamassima and onto the town of Alberobello. Here you can see the World Heritage listed *Trulli*, where these buildings are made from dry-walled limestone blocks that date back from the 1600s. Further along you'll come across the gleaming white town of Ostuni perched on a hill in the olive groves of the Trullo Valley. From here, head north toward the coast and travel south east along the SS379, enjoying the white sandy beaches and rugged cliffs to the city of Brindisi.



Sicily & Sardinia

Sicily is the largest Mediterranean island. Here you will see ancient Italian and Greek ruins, amazing beach resorts, beautiful baroque architecture, magnificent cuisine, a smouldering Mt Etna, brilliant blue coastline and buzzing cities. Sardinia is an island with unparalleled natural beauty, magnificent national parks, great beaches and crystal clear waters. Its hinterland is covered with citrus groves and pastures of grazing cattle and sheep. The people from Sardinia have a laidback lifestyle the result of a wonderful mix of different cultures and heritage.

Attractions

Sicily

Palermo – Explore the Cathedral of Monreale with its magnificent mosaics and impressive structure. Taste incredible fresh produce and marvel at the amazing blend of modern, sophisticated buildings next to crumbling architecture.

Catania – See the Greek/Roman theatre, the Odeon, St Francis of Assisi nigh the Immaculate, St Agatha's Abbey, the Piazza del Duomo, the Church of St Benedict, and the Ursino Castle.

The Valley of the Temples – Visit Agrigento and see the site of the village first founded by the ancient Greeks.

Visit the islands – Jump in a boat and visit the Aolian Islands, including Lipari, Vulcano and Panarea.

Noto – Visit the World Heritage listed sandstone buildings and see the beautiful baroque architecture.

Syracuse – See where the ancient Greeks settled.

Messina – Visit the Museo Regionale with works dating back to Byzantine and Norman ages.

Sardinia

Cagliari – Visit the open air archaeological sites, museums and churches.

Beach Resorts – Soak up the sun on the stunning beaches on the Costa Verde.

Local cuisine – Taste the difference between Sardinian and Italian food by sampling its bread, fresh pasta, cakes, plus delicious *semi freddo* ice-cream in Cagliari.

Dive or snorkel in the crystal clear waters near Alghero.

Events

January

Piana degli Albanesi, Palermo - Byzantine Epiphany celebrations.

St Sebastian, Acireale – Festival celebrating San Sebastiano.

February

St Agatha Feast Day, Catania – One of the largest religious processions in the world.

Almond Blossom Festival, Agrigento – Held on the first Sunday of the month, with procession, dancing and international folk dancing.

Carnival Week - Across Sicily and Sardinia

March

St Joseph's Day, across Sicily – Festivals and celebrations honouring St Joseph.

May

Beach Festival, Mondello – Beach parties held in second week on the month.

July

Renaissance Music Festival, Erice – International music celebration.

L'Ardoa di San Costantino, Sedilo, Sardinia – Monumental horse race held on the grounds of the Santuario di San Constantino.

August

Holy week and Ferragosta – Celebrations held all over Sicily.

Parade of the Giants, Messina – Parades with floats of the city's mythical founders.

Chiesa de Noto, Sicily

Self-Drive Tours in Sicily & Sardinia



Ragusa, Sicily

Eastern Tour of Sicily

Begin the tour at Messina, where you can see the Cathedral, the Church of the Annunziata dei Catalani and the Fontana del Nettuno. Head south toward Taormi, home to popular beaches on the Ionian Sea, as well as an ancient Greek theatre, lively bars and great restaurants.

Drive on past the nature reserve that is the gorgeous island of Isola Bella. You'll be able to view Mt Etna to your right as you head south to Catania. After a stop in Catania, go through Augusta to Syracuse, a beautiful city with ancient monuments dating back to 734BC, alongside excellent hotels and fascinating scenery. Drive to Noto, which is famous for its fine baroque style buildings and magnificent churches. Next stop is Modica, home to ancient medieval buildings that cling to the edges of the steep gorge on both sides. The last stop is at Ragusa that is built on a wide limestone hill and is home to gorgeous Baroque architecture.



Sardinia's Stunning Coast

The entire island of Sardinia is surrounded by brilliant beaches and crystal waters. To see the southeast corner, drive from Cagliari along the SP17 through Terra Mala, Geremeas and onto Solanas, then follow the road onto Villasimius. Follow the road on through Simius, Cala Pira, Cala della Maria and onto Monte Nai.

For the best of the *costa verde*, head southwest from Cagliari through Sarroch, Pula and then up to the islands of Sant'Antioco and San Pietro. Head north to Iglesias, and follow the SS126, enjoying the views of the coast and stopping off at some of the best beaches in the world.



Costa Paraiso, Sardinia

Climate and Weather

The north of Italy is much cooler than the south. Summers are warm in the northern mountains and winters are very cold, producing the best snow and ski conditions in the early months of the year.

The southern tip of Italy dips into the Mediterranean Sea and has hot, dry summers, with winters being moderately temperate. In between, summers can be very hot in some regions due to the winds from Africa (Sirocco) and winters are cold, sometimes producing snow and rain.

Stay Healthy

Italian hospitals are public and offer free standard treatments for EU residents; however for non EU residence emergency assistance is given. A reciprocal agreement exists between Australia and Italy that provides Australian citizens with health care via the Italian Public Health Service. You need to provide your passport and possibly your Medicare Card. Pharmacies and chemists carry most prescriptions, however it can be expensive, so it's best to have your prescriptions filled before you go, and carry these medicines along with a letter from your GP explaining your medical conditions.

Tap water is generally safe to drink, but avoid water where there is a sign 'Acqua Non Potabile' it means that the water is unsafe to drink.

Stay Safe

As with visits to other European countries, be vigilant for pickpockets and bag-snatchers who mainly operate in the main cities and on public transport. A money belt containing your valuables worn under your clothing is a good idea.

Keep your valuables out of view in your parked car to avoid potential smash-and-grab thefts. Don't make yourself a target by showing off expensive jewellery and cash in public. Keep your money and credit cards in a safe place. Respect the local customs and laws. Try not to leave anything in your car that will tempt thieves.



Italian Money Matters

Currency

The Euro is the local currency of Italy.

EURO (€) = 100 cents.

Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5.

Coins are in denominations of €2 and €1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Currency Exchange

The best places to change cash in Italy is either at banks or post offices, where they offer the best rates of exchange. You can also exchange cash at the airport or Bureau de Change however the exchange rates may be more expensive.

Banking Hours

Banks are open in Italy Monday to Friday 8.35am to 4.00pm and closes for an hour over lunch. In major cities and tourist areas some banks are open over the lunch period. Banks do not open on Saturday or Sunday.

ATMs

ATMs are called Bancomat, and are available in cities and small towns across Italy. Look for the ATMs that show the Cirrus or Bankmate symbol as these will accept foreign debit cards.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards are widely accepted across Italy, particularly Amex, Visa and Mastercard and can be used for most purchases, in hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Traveller's cheques are still used in Italy, however they're being outdated by credit and debit cards. It's a good idea to have cheques made in large denominations to reduce commission charges. You may need a form of photo identification to cash traveller's cheques.

Tax

Value added tax of around 20% is added to most goods and services in Italy, known locally as IVA (Imposta de Valore Aggiunto).

Tipping

Tipping is not expected, however when good service warrants it, leaving a 10% tip would be appreciated. The same applies in bars. Porters at major hotels will expect a tip. It isn't common to tip taxi drivers.

Opening Hours

In Italy, many business and attractions operate by having a riposo (siesta) during the day. Many stores shut from around midday - 1:30pm and open up again around 2:30pm - 4pm. Plan your trip carefully as some stores and attractions may also be closed Sundays and Mondays.

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