



# ITALY



## GALILEO GALILEI TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL, GENOVA

**Myths, Legends and Folktales**



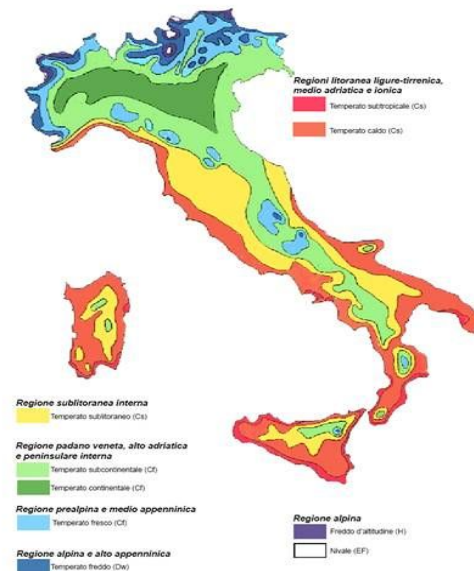
# LAND

To the north the Alps separate Italy from France, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia. Elsewhere Italy is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, in particular by the Adriatic Sea to the northeast, the Ionian Sea to the southeast, the Tyrrhenian Sea to the southwest, and the Ligurian Sea to the northwest. Areas of plain, which are practically limited to the great northern triangle of the Po valley, cover only about one-fifth of the total area of the country; the remainder is roughly evenly divided between hilly and mountainous land, providing variations to the generally temperate climate.



# CLIMATE

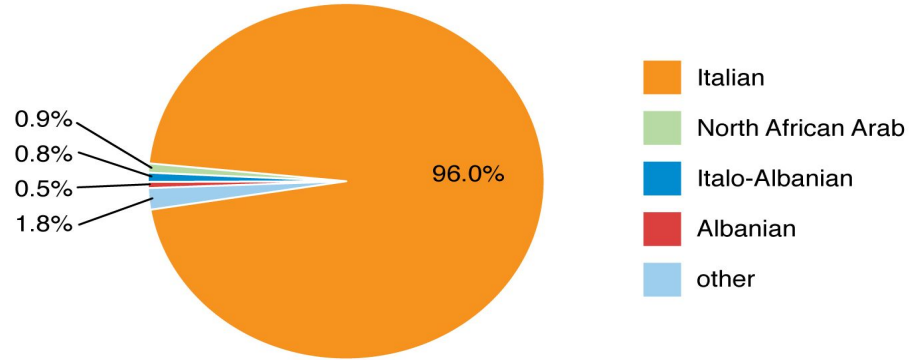
Geographically, Italy lies in the temperate zone. Because of the considerable length of the peninsula, there is a variation between the climate of the north, attached to the European continent, and that of the south, surrounded by the Mediterranean. The Alps are a partial barrier against westerly and northerly winds, while both the Apennines and the great plain of northern Italy produce special climatic variations. Sardinia is subject to Atlantic winds and Sicily to African winds. In general, four meteorological situations dominate the Italian climate: the Mediterranean winter cyclone, with a corresponding summer anticyclone; the Alpine summer cyclone, with a consequent winter anticyclone; the Atlantic autumnal cyclone; and the eastern Siberian autumnal anticyclone.



# LANGUAGES

Standard Italian, as a written administrative and literary language, was in existence well before the unification of Italy in the 1860s. However, in terms of spoken language, Italians were slow to adopt the parlance of the new nation-state, identifying much more strongly with their regional dialects. Emigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries played an important role in spreading the standard language; many local dialects had no written form, obliging Italians to learn Italian in order to write to their relatives.

**Ethnolinguistic composition (2000)**



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# TRADITIONAL REGIONS

Italy is divided into 20 administrative regions, which correspond generally with historical traditional regions, though not always with exactly the same boundaries. A better-known and more general way of dividing Italy is into four parts: the north, the centre, the south, and the islands. The north includes such traditional regions as Liguria, where we live, extending southward around the Gulf of Genoa. The north of Italy is industrialized and all the major financial centres are set here; the south and the islands, on the contrary, are not so economically rich, but they have changed a great deal since about 1960 and have become more modernized. Within these four main divisions, the variety of the much smaller traditional districts is very great and depends on history as well as on topography and economic conditions.



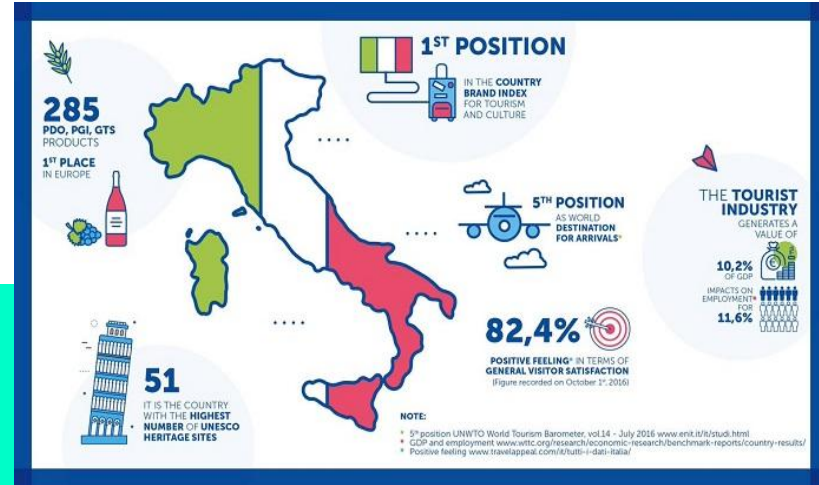
# RELIGION

Roman Catholicism has played a historic and fundamental role in Italy. It was the official religion of the Italian state from 1929, with the signing of the Lateran Treaty, until a concordat was ratified in 1985 that ended the church's position as the state religion, abolished compulsory religious teaching in public schools, and reduced state financial contributions to the church. More than four-fifths of the population declare themselves Roman Catholics, although the number of practicing Catholics is declining. An estimated 450,000 people worship in the Protestant church, including Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, and Waldensians.



# ECONOMY

The Italian economy is mixed, and until the beginning of the 1990s the state owned a substantial number of enterprises. At that time the economy was organized as a pyramid, with a holding company at the top, a middle layer of financial holding companies divided according to sector of activity, and below them a mass of companies operating in diverse sectors, ranging from banking, expressway construction, media, and telecommunications to manufacturing, engineering, and shipbuilding.



# TOURISM

Italy is renowned as a tourist destination; it attracted more than 40 million foreign visitors annually in the early 21st century. Conversely, less than one-fifth of Italians take their holidays abroad. The tourist industry has flourished under both national and international patronage. The most popular locations, apart from the great cultural centres of Rome, Florence, Venice, and Naples, are the coastal resorts and islands or the Alpine hills and lakes of the north; the Ligurian and Amalfi rivieras; the northern Adriatic coast; the small islands in the Tyrrhenian Sea (Elba, Capri, and Ischia); the Emerald Coast of Sardinia; Sicily; Gran Paradiso National Park and the Dolomites; and Abruzzo National Park.





# LITERATURE

Italian literature, and indeed standard Italian, have their origins in the 14th-century Tuscan dialect—the language of its three founding fathers, Dante, Petrarch, and Giovanni Boccaccio. The thread of literature bound these pioneers together with later practitioners, such as the scientist and philosopher Galileo, dramatist Carlo Goldoni, lyric poet Giacomo Leopardi, Romantic novelist Alessandro Manzoni, and poet Giosuè Carducci. Women writers of the Renaissance such as Veronica Gàmbara, Vittoria Colonna, and Gaspara Stampa were also influential in their time. Rediscovered and reissued in critical editions in the 1990s, their work prompted an interest in women writers of all eras within Italy.



# MUSIC

Italian music has been one of the supreme expressions of that art in Europe: the Gregorian chant, the innovation of modern musical notation in the 11th century, the troubadour song, the madrigal, and the work of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Claudio Monteverdi all form part of Italy's proud musical heritage, as do such composers as Antonio Vivaldi, Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Gioachino Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti, Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini, and Vincenzo Bellini.

