

Dr. Culture's Guide: Rome

Dr. Culture Travel Tip: You must pay extra attention to your body during long-haul trips like this; get extra rest, drinking extra water, take your vitamins, etc. Force yourself into a “down day” during your trip here. If not, you’ll suffer a weaker resistance to all kinds of germs floating about, etc., and the next thing to happen will be getting sick on a business trip -- one of the worst experiences a business traveler can have. You are worthless to the company, can’t make decisions, feel horrible, are contaminating others and can’t remember what Nyquil and Tylenol is in Italian, etc....

TRAVEL SECURITY:

Security considerations reviewed again as your location and threats have changed dramatically. Italy has continued difficulty with not only terrorist activities, but kidnappings and street crime have increased in the last two years. As a result, the *Travel SMART* business traveler must adjust their activities and behavior depending on different and changing conditions. . During hotel comparison component, additional information on hotel security will be included. However a few terrorism, travel safety and criminal activity items are included here:

There have been occasional episodes of violence in Italy, most often connected to Italian internal developments or social issues. In 1997 and 1998, Italian authorities found bombs outside public buildings, received bomb threats and were themselves the subjects of letter bombs, all of which were ascribed to organized crime or anarchist movements. Americans were not targeted or injured in any of these instances.

Italy has a low rate of violent crime, little of which is directed toward tourists. Petty crimes such as pick pocketing, theft from parked cars, and purse snatching, however, are serious problems, especially in large cities. Most reported thefts occur at crowded tourist sites, on public buses or trains, or at the major railway stations, including Rome's Termini. Clients of Internet cafes in Rome have been targeted and elderly tourists who have tried to resist petty thieves on motor scooters have suffered broken arms and collarbones.

We recommend minimizing the risk by using our in-the-front-pants wallet to reduce the chance of becoming a petty-crime victim. Waist packs are notorious for inviting a two-prong distraction and razor attack which

empties your bag in seconds. Thieves in Italy often work in groups or pairs. In most cases, one thief distracts a victim while an accomplice performs the robbery. In one particular routine, one thief throws trash or waste at the victim; a second thief assists the victim in cleaning up the mess; and the third discreetly takes the victim's belongings. Criminals on crowded public transportation slit the bottoms of purses or bags with a razor blade or sharp knife, then remove the contents.

In a scam practiced on the highway between Rome and the airport, one thief punctures the tire of a rental or out-of-town car. An accomplice signals the flat tire to the driver and encourages the driver to pull over. When the driver stops, one thief helps change the tire, while the other takes the driver's belongings.

GROUND TRANSPORTATION IN ITALY

Arrival in Rome: Ground transportation to Hotel.

Train: N/A

Taxi: Although you should already have an idea of the cost of taxi -- in Euro Dollars -- ask first -- and no, don't try and pay with US dollars.

Bus: With prior coordination, a shuttle bus is available for the Ambasciatori Palace Hotel. However, as found in most hotels on Planet Earth, the hotel shuttle bus is always the weak link in any travel strategy.

CROSS CULTURAL COMPETENCY TIPS

Rome, Italy

Italy's geographic structure produced distinct regions each with its own dialect, politics, culture, etc., which frequently warred with each other. This is one reason why family life became a central focus. The motto "Family First" reflects the Italians' need to preserve and protect not only their relatives but also their own regional cultures. This is especially evident during regional futbol (soccer) playoffs.

Given the choice, Italians would prefer to do business with even a superficial acquaintance rather than a complete stranger. Since familiarity is so important in Italian business culture, ensure that you find a well-connected contact that can establish the right introductions on your behalf.

Honor and personal pride are critical in this culture. Consequently, never insult the honor or personal pride of the Italians, their families, their towns, or their friends.

The use of business cards is common and you should have your card translated into Italian on the reverse side. Moreover, ensure that any advanced educational degrees and your full title or position are featured on both sides of your business card. Italian businesspeople will want to know that they are dealing with an important person.

You will probably notice that very senior Italian businesspeople usually have less information on their business cards. Yours should be of similar design.

In Italian culture, people are traditionally expected to behave with a sense of decorum and formality at all times. This concept is known as "bella figura" ("beautiful figure") and is often used in reference to the ability to put on a good performance or simply to present oneself well. What other people think is considered extremely important, and your actions must always at least appear to be the "right" thing to do. Moreover, there is a belief that behaving appropriately, especially out of loyalty to family members, friends, and neighbors, contributes to the beauty and sense of order in the world. The goal, at least for the initial meeting, should be to cultivate feelings of respect and trust between yourself and your Italian colleagues. Do everything you can to show how you (primarily) and secondly, your proposal, and relationship with you and your company, enhances their "bella figura."

Italian corporations often have a horizontal chain of authority. Italians call it a *cordata* which actually means a team of mountain climbers on the same rope. This parallel channel is based on levels of personal, reciprocal concern. This concept is difficult to explain to Americans but it exists and to facilitate business with the Italians, one should have a reliable contact that has full knowledge of a company's inside structure. Perhaps the best description is that, as found in US corporations as well, there is the formal power structure and then there is the informal structure; often the latter being much more efficient and effective.

Here is tremendous respect for power, as well as age. As in France, age is synonymous with rank.

Italians will sometimes make sudden, unexpected demands as a way of unsettling the other side. The use of this strategy does not automatically mean the negotiations will collapse.

The relationships between families, friends, and neighbors are of crucial importance, especially in Rome and the south of Italy. Business relationships don't come close to these top three relationships. As a result, your business needs may "take a back seat" to the needs of family, friends or neighbors. Remember that US business culture simply doesn't translate here. Right or wrong is irrelevant. As a culturally competent business type you must recognize it just "is" and plan accordingly.

Hospitality plays a key role in Italian business culture, and usually involves dining in a restaurant. Regardless of how you feel, refusing an invitation of any kind will be perceived as an insult.

Business dinners involve only a small, exclusive group. If you are the host, consult with your Italian contact before extending any invitations. Since you have no way of knowing all of the "inside" personalities and ranks, don't hesitate to ask for help.

Italians believe that wine should be sipped slowly; moreover, they take pride in not appearing affected by alcohol. Drinking too much at once or appearing inebriated is considered gauche, tacky, tasteless, and will always be viewed as an affront to proper Italian business etiquette.

Don't *even think about* asking for a non-smoking section in a restaurant. Assume everyone in Italy smokes -- *Don't ever ask someone to not smoke around you.* Hey, you're not at home now...

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If you are invited out, you may offer to pay. In accordance with Italian business etiquette, however, your host will usually decline this offer. As a general rule, insist on paying only when you have made the invitation.

If you are hosting a meal in a restaurant and footing the bill, it's a good policy to make all payment arrangements ahead of time. This guideline is especially important to follow if you are a businesswoman, since your male guests may refuse to let you pay.

Remember that cappuccinos at the café at night are wonderful but with more than two, the caffeine will keep you buzzed all night long.

It is considered bad form to leave the table to go to the washroom or for any other reason.

Understand that in Italy your social skills and how you handle yourself at a formal dinner or casual meal is being watched and evaluated. It is safe to say that your social skills are nearly as important as your on-the-job technical capabilities. As a result, if you are putting an American team together, keep in mind this can be more important than your representative's technical skills. It doesn't matter if it's right or wrong, it just is.

BUSINESS HOTELS COMPARISON – ROME

Two Rome Hotels for comparison featured: One Moderate Range: *Canova Hotel* and One Upper Range: *Ambasciatori Palace Hotel*

Hotel Canova: The Hotel Canova is a three star hotel located in the heart of downtown Rome -- 500 meters from the central train station, and less than 500 meters from the Coliseum and the Roman Forum. This is a small family owned and managed hotel with nicely priced accommodations -- especially considering the location. This is ideally located for the businessperson but don't be surprised to find tourists there as well. Breakfast is served on the hotel roof in their "garden" which is a great beginning to another beautiful Roman day. Remember, in Rome prices are established by location. This hotel is plainer in décor and amenities but clean and certainly worth the prices range of \$95-125. If you are on a tight business budget, this isn't too bad.

Ambasciatori Palace Hotel: Ideally situated for the traveling businessperson, the Ambasciatori Palace is only about 40 kilometers (approx. 24 miles) from the Rome Fiumicino airport. The Ambasciatori is a 4-star hotel with restaurant, bar, currency exchange, safe deposit boxes, 12 meeting rooms, business center, fax machines, full audio visual support

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if required and the ever elusive secretarial services. Summer travel? You'll positively love the air conditioning. Price is a bit more in line with a nicer (by American standards), but not luxurious hotel. Depending on time of year, expect \$220-275 US.

Although your time in Rome is very limited, you're less than ten miles from the Vatican/Sistine Chapel. Check with the concierge for transportation to meet pop-up opportunities to take in these wonders of history, architecture and art. It goes without saying that photography opportunity here is excellent.

DINING OUT DISCUSSION - ROME

Dinner out options: Low Cost – *La Pilotta*, moderate priced; *Edy*; and high end: *Ristorante Taverna Antonina*

La Pilotta: If you have a hard time making a decision, eat somewhere else. This restaurant comes as close to unlimited selections as you'll find anywhere on the planet. You'll need a "few more minutes" here as you choose from more than 120 pastas, rices and soups. Add meat, fish and salad starters, desserts and an excellent wine list, and just thinking what you missed the first time will make you want to return to try something else. The pasta and vegetables are fresh. Located less than a quarter mile from the Vatican. Figure a price of approximately \$20 per person.

Edy: Moderate Cost: This is another one of a thousand wonderful, small Italian eateries squeezed into an intriguing side street and the owners, their mothers, wives and children are delightful, friendly and the food superb. and medium priced. Huge frescos inhabit a fabulous old ceiling while the walls are draped with huge modern art canvases.

Ristorante Taverna Antonina: High End: With an average entrée price of \$40, *più o meno*, you'd expect this restaurant to deliver and it does. Specialty of the house (and this is not easy) has to be the authentic, southeastern Italy shore style seafood. Best *delivery for the dinero* here has to be the four-course, fixed price menu (about \$35) -- especially if you are really hungry. Not a well-known tourist restaurant but instead, well respected among the locals. This is one you'll come back to during the inevitable vacation trip back to Roma.

Dr. Culture Travel Tip: By this point in the trip, you've probably learned that hotel laundry can be pretty expensive. This should fall within your daily per diem allowance somehow. If not, you can save by either

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hand washing (hair shampoo works well for detergent) if you're going to be in town for a couple of days or, as suggested to me by one exec; just mail it home and buy new stuff....We'll show you tips on managing this unpleasant but unavoidable task.