



ITALIAN STATE TOURIST BOARD
UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND

ITALY: THE WONDERLAND



Photos from top: Baskets of cherries; Hilltop town of Sangimignano; Cathedral and Bell Tower of Florence Cathedral; Costa Smeralda. Below: Vicenza Theatre



If it is true that Italy is the romantic destination “par excellence”, it is also true that there is a love affair between the United Kingdom and Italy that has faithfully continued since the time of the 18th century Grand Tour when no gentleman or lady could consider themselves “educated” without a trip to the Bel Paese.

In the 21st century Italy is still one of favourite destinations for the British holidaymaker who goes back year after year and always discovers something new and different. This is precisely one of the main reasons why Italy is such a fascinating destination: during much of its troubled past the country was divided into a number of little independent states and was unified as late as 1860. These mini-states had different languages, traditions, culture and were often dominated by foreign dynasties.

All this resulted in the variety that a visitor to Italy can enjoy today: virtually every region has its own distinctive cuisine, produces different wines, has its own dialect, architecture, folklore, traditions.

Geography is another contributing factor: Italy is a country that with its peculiar boot-like shape spans from the Alps that embrace the whole of the North to the Mediterranean Sea with its all-year-round temperate climate. It is therefore, the perfect country for a winter-sport holiday, not limited to the Alpine regions but also possible in the resorts of the Apennines that run lengthways through Italy and even in Sicily.

At the same time it has about 8500 Km of coastline, some breathtakingly beautiful seaside resorts that offer crystal clear waters, two of the largest islands of the Mediterranean, Sicily and Sardinia, plus a myriad of smaller, but not less interesting, ones.

Let’s not forget that Italy is a land of active Volcanoes too, with Etna regularly offering pyrotechnic and spectacular “fireworks” and of thermal waters and springs and therefore, of renowned spas and health and beauty centres to rejuvenate both body and spirit.

Italy is indeed a land of water, apart from its seas and Venice - fragile “lacework” precariously built on its lagoon - we must mention its magnificent lakes. The three major ones of Northern Italy: Lake Maggiore dotted with graceful islands of which Isola Bella is the most famous, Lake Como with its Villas and gardens and Lake Garda, the largest of them all which spans from the Trentino mountains to the Morenic hills of Peschiera and Valsugana, where so many battles to free Italy from its foreign invaders were fought. There are also innumerable less well known lakes all around the country: the enchanting pre-alpine lakes and Lake Orta in the North, Lake Trasimeno in Umbria, Lake Bolsena and Lake Vico in Lazio, just to mention a few.

Italy is not only dramatic sceneries, it is also famous for its gentle, rolling hills, perfect for walking, mushroom picking and cycling, its Medieval hilltop towns and picturesque villages where time seems to have stopped and, on the other hand, modern, busy cities where business, fashion, art, beauty and progress have found a perfect balance. Part of the charm that the visitor to Italy immediately perceives lies precisely in the ability that Italians have to participate fully in the 21st century and at the same time never forget how to enjoy the good things in life, even in busy, business orientated cities like Milan. Not by chance the word “Dolce Vita” was created in Italy!

Last but certainly not least, Art. Better preserved Greek temples than in Greece, unforgettable Roman cities like Pompeii, Etruscan tombs that hunt the imagination, the Museum of Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan, Turin: too many to see in a lifetime and we have mentioned only the main cities. The legacy of numerous civilisations and dynasties, Arabs, Normans, Spaniards, Austrians, the Medici, the Gonzagas, the Farnese, the Este, the Popes and many many others are all still alive in the works of art of these incredible country called Italy.

So do not delay: come and visit, Italy has always something for you!

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Photos left: Spanish Steps, Rome



Below: Venice Carnival

