



It's Italy in a nutshell. Here are some things you may not know and some that you might know about Italy. It's a little of this and a little of that.



We all think we know all about Italy. Here are some facts you may know—or not.

This is the first of "Italy in a Nutshell" messages that we will be issuing. Each one will cover a different group of facts: Superstitions, Food, People, Inventions, and a category called "Just for Fun--Only in Italy." This first message is "General Things—This and That."

General Things—This and That

- Though it's called Italy, the official name is the Italian Republic: Repubblica Italiana.
- The capital of Italy is Rome--also known as the Eternal City and it's almost 3,000 years old. It's called the Eternal City because it was believed that it would last forever. (And so far, so good.)
- Ever heard the National Anthem of Italy? If you'd like to, turn up your sound and give it a click [here](#). If you look closely before the video starts, you'll also see the National Emblem. The white star, the Stella d'Italia ("Star of Italy") is a five-pointed white star symbolizing Italy for centuries. It is the oldest national symbol of Italy, since it dates back to ancient Greece. The cog in the background represents work, (Italians have always worked hard), the olive branches represents Italy's will for peace, and the oak branches, the strength and dignity of the Italians.

- Over 50 million tourists a year visit Italy. Tourism is vital to the economy and provides nearly 63% of Italy's national income.
- Italy is the European country with the most hotel rooms. (They have to have rooms for those 50 millions tourists!)
- The wolf is Italy's unofficial national animal and plays a large role in the legend of the founding of Rome. Remember the she-wolf who took care of Romulus and Remus? It was the grey wolf, or Apennine Wolf.



Looks like the 50 million tourists are all in Venice!



Italy's National Animal--Beautiful!

- There are only 21 letters in the standard Italian alphabet. The Italian alphabet doesn't have the letters J, K, W, X or Y.
- Italy has won the (soccer) World Cup four times, the most wins second to Brazil. In 2018, however, they failed to qualify for the games. (Fans were NOT happy.)
- Did you know that the first bank in the world was in Italy? In 1157, the first bank opened in Venice: the Bank of Venice.
- Italy outranks any other country in the world in the number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites with a total of 47 cultural and 4 natural sites.
- The National Flower of Italy is the lily. Romans held the Lily in very high regard, including it in dozens of their religious myths
- The strawberry tree is the national tree of Italy. (Yes, there is such a tree.) Why the strawberry tree? Because it has all the colors of the flag of Italy: green for the leaves, white for the blossoms, and red for the fruit.



The Strawberry Tree- National Tree of Italy



The National Flower--the Lily

- The country has more masterpieces per square mile than any other country in the world.
- The word "quarantine" (which we are most certainly aware of now) comes from the days of the Black Plague when ships entering Venice were forced to anchor offshore for 40 days before being permitted to unload. "Forty" in Italian is "quaranta," hence, quarantine.
- Italy is the biggest wine producer in the world. In 2019, it also had the highest export volume of wine in that year.
- The most common surname in Italy is Russo. (Yet no one in the Italian Club has this last name.)

- Bad news for street racers and criminals in Italy. Italian Polizia have two Lamborghinis! It's the perfect answer to speeding criminals. It has an automatic number plate recognition system and a system to help track stolen cars. There is also a refrigeration system that delivers organs to those in need--fast!



Woo-Hoo! Crooks won't have a chance with the police chasing them in this!

- The world's longest land tunnel is the Lötschberg Base Tunnel, which proves a 22-mile railway link between Switzerland and Italy.
- Italy has over 3,000 museums.
- There are three active volcanos: Vesuvius, Etna and Stromboli.
- The Roman Empire fell in 476 AD, when Emperor Romulus Augustus abdicated to Odoacer, a Germanic general who became the first King of Italy. (A German? King of Italy? Who knew!)



*First King of Italy--General
Odoacer of Germany*

We hope you enjoyed this first snapshot of Italy. There are more to come, all with some interesting information and fun facts. Stand by!

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