



**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.**



This is the second installment of the "Italy in a Nutshell" articles. It covers Structures and Geography. There are two videos at the end that you might really enjoy.

### **Structures/Geography**

- Italy has more earthquakes than any other European country. (It's all those volcanos that shake things up.)
- The Leaning Tower of Pisa was built in 1173 and began to lean soon after, probably due to a poorly laid foundation. During WWII, the Nazi's used it as a watch tower. (They apparently had no fear about it tipping over!) After reconstruction efforts in 2008, engineers declared the tower would be stable for at least another 200 years. (So even when the Italians built something screwy, it still lasts for hundreds of years.) And, yes, we've seen the tower--in every way possible.



- The longest river is the Po, the largest lake is Lake Garda, and the highest peak is Mont Blanc. The border between France and Italy passes exactly through the summit – so Mont Blanc is both Italian and French.
- Florence was Europe's first city to have paved streets in 1339. In other places, projects to pave roads were abandoned for fear it would help enemies attack faster.
- More than 1.3 million euros is tossed every year in the Trevi Fountain. Toss one coin and you'll return to Rome; two coins and you'll find love.



*First squeeze in to find a spot.*



*Go ahead and toss a coin.*



*At night, they'll all be scooped up...*



*...and the next day, counted and packed up*

- Did you know that the world's deepest thermal pool is only 1/2 hour from Venice (by train). The "Deep Joy" pool in the Millipini Hotel is 137 feet deep with four underwater grottos and a cave along the way? There's a viewing tunnel (you won't get wet!) at about the 5-meter mark. Fed by the warm waters of the Terme Euganee, one of the most popular thermal spa complexes in Italy, it maintains a constant temperature of 90F degrees. No wet suit needed. Want to take a peek? Put on your goggles and [click here](#).



*Underwater viewing tunnel-keeping dry!*

- Did you know that Venice was built on 10 million underwater logs? The city was built in 402, and a million tree trunks were first sunk underwater to be the foundation of the new city. About 1200 years later, those same tree trunks still support almost all of central Venice.
- There is bronze statue of Christ of the Abyss submerged in the Mediterranean Sea off San Fruttuoso (near beautiful Portofino). The original bronze statue was placed in the Mediterranean in 1954, 56 feet down, and it stands 8 feet tall. The statue was placed near the spot where Dario Gonzatti, the first Italian to use SCUBA gear, died in 1947. It depicts Christ offering a benediction of peace, with his head and hands raised skyward. If you'd like to see a short underwater video, [click here](#)

A second one, cast from the same mold as the original, is off the coast of Grenada. It was a gift of the navy of Genoa for help in rescuing the crew of the Italian vessel MV Bianca C., which was destroyed by fire. The sculpture was placed underwater on October 22, 1961.

And a third, also from the original mold, was presented to the Underwater Society of America in New York in 1962. It was placed in approximately 25 feet of water off the coast of Key Largo, Florida.

- If you've never been to Portofino, it's gorgeous. Here's a very short video that captures the flavor of the town. [Click here for the tour.](#)



*Christ of the Abyss in Italy*



*Portofino--One of a kind*

We hope you liked this one. The next one is about Superstitions--Italians are VERY superstitious!