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# **An Overview of Italy for Travelers**

Rome, the Winter Olympics, Wine, Ferrari, beautiful beaches ?Italy has it all. If you are considering traveling to Italy, here are some things you should know.

italy, italian, rome, vatican, roman, gladiators, michelangelo, ferrari, caligula, roads, emperor,

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From a European perspective, there is little doubt that Italy is the foundation of modern society in the West. This conclusion is primarily due to two facts, the reign of the Romans and the Roman Catholic Church.

In more modern times, Italy became a nation-state in 1861 when the city-states of the peninsula, along with Sardinia and Sicily, were united under King Victor Emmanuel II. An era of parliamentary government came to a close in the early 1920s when Benito Mussolini established a Fascist dictatorship. His disastrous alliance with Nazi Germany led to Italy's defeat in World War II.

A democratic republic replaced the monarchy in 1946 and economic revival followed. Italy was a charter member of the European Economic Community. It has been at the forefront of European economic and political unification. Persistent problems include illegal immigration, organized crime, corruption, high unemployment, sluggish economic growth, and the low incomes and technical standards of southern Italy compared to the prosperous north.

If you are going to Italy, here are some basic things you need to know.

1. Northern Italy is wealthy while the south is not.
2. Italy is slightly larger than the state of Arizona.
3. Italy's climate is predominantly Mediterranean with Alpine in far north and hot, dry areas in the south.
4. Vatican City in Rome is considered an independent country.
5. You cannot get into any area of the Vatican wearing shorts.
6. Rome had the first paved streets in the world in 170 B.C. Vehicles had to be banned because of traffic jams!
7. Roman gladiators were the first athletes to endorse products.
8. Considered one of the oddest Emperors, Caligula appointed his horse to a senate position among other more infamous actions.
9. Roman statutes were very utilitarian. The heads could be removed and replaced to reflect the changes in political climate.
10. When the Roman army lost a battle, they really took it hard. Commanders would kill every tenth soldier under their command. This act is the root of the word "decimate"?
11. Surprising to many is the fact there were significant time periods where ancient Rome had no Emperor. The senate would rule. In times of threat, the senate would elect a person as Emperor. He had absolute power, giving rise to the term dictator.
12. Vast percentages of Romans died from lead poisoning. They used it as a sweetener!

13. In the early 1900's, Prince Piero Ginori Conti invented the geothermal pump. He is considered the father of modern geothermal power.

14. 20 Italians have won the Nobel Prize.

15. Michelangelo's real name is Michelangelo Buonarroti.

16. The population of Italy as of 2005 was 58,103,033 people.

17. The flag of Italy was inspired by the French flag brought in 1797 by Napoleon.

18. Lehman Brothers owns seven percent of Ferrari.

19. Italy trails only Brazil in World Cup wins.

Italy is an amazing country with colorful, animated people. From ancient culture to a bustling modern country, a trip to Italy is hard to beat.

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