

Cultural Note –

Renting a Car in Italy

The Italian railroad system is the most efficient way to travel throughout Italy, especially for the tourist with a limited period of time to spend. But, for those for whom driving the **autostrada** in a Ferrari has always been a dream (see www.red-travel.com), or for those who have enough time to spend to really get to know the countryside (www.italylogue.com/agriturismo), here are a few tips about what is needed to rent a car and drive in Italy.

A quick search of the internet for “rent a car in Italy,” yields many companies that promise quick and easy deals. Auto Europe is not a car rental company, but a car broker that allows the traveler to book online, and offers several additional services (www.autoeurope.com). They are recommended by Slow Travel Italy, which can also be found on the internet at www.slowtravel-italy.com. Here are some of the benefits that Auto Europe can provide for the renter: competitive pricing, a list of what is included for the price, pick-up and drop-off at different locations within Italy at no extra charge, and a 24/7 customer service line that will help the traveler handle any issues encountered on the road or with the local rental company. Note that commonly included fees when renting a car in Italy include taxes, a surcharge for picking up the car at the airport, and possibly a daily road tax. Insurance is necessary to drive in Italy, and can significantly increase the price of the rental when obtained through the rental company, so it is worthwhile to check if you can get cheaper insurance through a credit card company.

Picking up a rental car at the airport can be difficult at peak travel times due to long lines, and also on off-hours, when parts of the airport may be closed. In addition, many Italian hotels, especially if located centrally within a city, do not have parking available for their guests. There are tolls on most Italian freeways, and gas is expensive in Italy. It may be easier to take the train to your initial destination and pick up the car the next day, or when you are leaving for the next city on your trip – again, public transportation in most cities is excellent. The city streets in Italy are narrow, so remember that a smaller car is probably better than a larger car, as long as luggage and family will fit!

Here is a check-list of things to find out before leaving the rental office: (1) does the car take **unleaded gas (benzina)** or **diesel (gasolio)**; (2) how to put the car in reverse; (3) how to lock/unlock doors and windows; (4) is a reflective vest and other equipment required by law in case of an accident provided (in the trunk); (5) is a GPS or map of the town where you will be driving available; (6) can you get a parking disc for the car?

In order to rent a car and legally drive in Italy, some additional paperwork will need to be completed. Before leaving, call AAA to obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP), which is an

official translation of a US driver's license. Both the IDP and driver's license should be presented at the time of rental, along with proof of insurance.

-Adapted from *Conversational Italian for Travelers*, Chapter 6 Cultural Note,
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Find more interesting facts and helpful hints about getting around Italy in each chapter of our book, [Conversational Italian for Travelers!](#) Learn how to buy train tickets on line, how to make international and local telephone calls, and how to decipher those Italian coffee names and restaurant menus, all while gaining the basic understanding of Italian that you will need to know to communicate easily and effectively while in Italy.

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