

## **Tourism in Italy: benefits, responsibilities and problems**

Italy is a diverse and intriguing country, which travellers and visitors from all over the world have always chosen to take part in a wonderful cultural experience.

With more than 46.1 million tourists a year, Italy is the fifth most visited country in the world, after France (79.5 million), The United States (62.3 million), China (57.6) and Spain (56.7 million).

People mainly visit Italy for its rich art, cuisine (the most famous Italian dishes are spaghetti and pizza, but every corner of this country has a traditional dish), history, fashion and culture, its beautiful landscapes which are amazing wherever you go, and its ancient monuments. Italy also has more World Heritage Sites than any other country in the world.

For these reasons, tourism is one of Italy's fastest growing and most profitable industrial sectors.

Tourism in Italy is not new: people have visited Italy for centuries: in the Middle Ages a lot of pilgrims from Northern Europe visited Rome; then, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it became the natural destination for young European aristocrats who wanted to complete their education with the so-called "Grand Tour". It is the native land of the Roman Empire and has always attracted thousands of travellers from all over the world.

Some of the most popular cities in Italy are: Rome, which is the country's cultural and religious center with an average of 7-10 million tourists a year. The Colosseum and the Vatican Museums

are the most visited places. Venice with its ancient palaces, art, world famous canals and handcraft because, on the nearby Island of Murano, you can find wonderful hand-blown glass.

Other fascinating cities include:

[Florence](#), the city of the Renaissance;

[Genoa](#), one of the medieval maritime republics;

[Naples](#), one of the oldest cities of the western world, with a historic city centre that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's also near the famous volcano Vesuvius and the ruins of the ancient Roman towns of Pompeii and Ercolano.

[Pisa](#), another medieval maritime republic, is home to the world-famous Leaning Tower.

[Turin](#), the first capital of Italy, which maintains its aristocratic character in its wonderful palaces and was home to the 2006 Winter Olympics.

Moreover, visitors to Italy will not only broaden their knowledge of art and history, but also enjoy Italy's wonderful natural beauty: from the towering Alps in the North, crowded with people in every season of the year, to the fantastic large volcanic Island of Sicily in the south; from the lake district, a paradise for relaxation, to the busy seaside resorts on the coasts, which are popular with young people who especially love the lively nightlife these places can offer.

Tourism is an important factor for Italy's economy because it brings money and trade. This industry creates a lot of jobs in many different areas: hotels, restaurants, car rental agencies, travel agencies, transport, service stations, souvenir shops, sports

equipment rentals, and much more. Another benefit is investment in new infrastructure like ports, airports, motorways, or restoration of monuments, which can help to improve the living conditions of the residents, too.

However, tourism can also create problems: it can attract thieves and encourage begging, especially in overcrowded places, near the most visited monuments of a city; it can also encourage illegal jobs, for example illegal tourist guides who are less expensive and for this reason are chosen by many tourists; it can reduce many cultural traditions, like the medieval festivals which can be found in the summer all over Italy, to simple tourist attractions, considering them easy occasions to earn more money.

Tourism brings about a lot of environmental problems, too: air and road travels are polluting; trekkers in the Dolomites throw their litter as they go; too many new roads are built every year, spoiling the wonderful Italian countryside and increasing traffic and air pollution; new hotels or seaside resorts are built even near the most beautiful beaches of Sardinia or Tuscany to accommodate more and more tourists. Moreover, some fantastic natural spots are sold to millionaires from all over the world.

Besides, most of our cultural sites are not respected by Italian and foreign tourists as well.

I think this is mainly due to lack of education, lack of respect for our cultural heritage, and also lack of control. For example, the beautiful Pompeii is polluted by the waste and the misbehaviour of some of its visitors. Having seen this site with my own eyes, I can say that many visitors don't care about the frailty of the place

which is thousands of years old. They take photos where it's strictly prohibited, for reasons of protection and preservation of important pictures, they touch the frescoes, or walk on short walls where it is forbidden, or even take small archaeological finds as souvenirs. Another problem caused by tourism in Italy is related to the presence of huge cruise ships in Venice, which ruin the bottom of the lagoon and can be very dangerous to the city itself if something goes wrong. Fortunately, after some demonstrations of residents and tourists, a law has been passed lately to forbid the access of these ships in the Canal Grande.

I believe that education plays an important role to decrease the problems and to increase the benefits brought about by tourism. In Italy we all should take care of our enormous heritage and should teach the new generations to love and appreciate what our ancestors have left us. Obviously, the government has a great responsibility in the management of all this richness.

It should invest more and more money in the restoration and maintenance of the most important treasures of art and in the training of museum staff who sometimes don't even speak a foreign language and can't help tourists.

This could help our country to become more competitive among other tourist destinations in the world. The government should also constantly monitor our tourist destinations, especially in southern Italy, so as not to leave this major industry in the hands of criminals or unscrupled mayors, who destroy our wonderful landscape in exchange for great amount of money.

ARIANNA BETTONI 3D RIM