

Due parole sull'Italia: Geografia e clima



- Italy is roughly the size of Arizona and it is a country of extremely varied landscapes and climates.
- Italy is located in Southern Europe. It occupies a large peninsula that juts into the **Mediterranean Sea**, and two large islands: Sardinia and Sicily. Four different sections of the Mediterranean surround the peninsula from three sides: the Adriatic Sea to the east, the Ionian Sea to the south, and the Ligurian Sea and the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west.
- The peninsula resembles a boot, so much so that the country is often referred to as "the boot" - **lo stivale** - with the Puglia region in the southeast as the "heel of the boot" and the Calabria region in the southwest as the "toe of the boot."
- From West to East, Italy is bordered by France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia.
- Two big mountain ranges define the peninsula: the imposing mountain chain of the **Alps** in the north, and the **Apennines**, a series of mountain ranges bordered by narrow coastlands that form the physical backbone of the peninsula.

- The Alps separate Central Europe from the Italian peninsula. The location of the Alps, as well as the great variations in their elevations and exposure, give rise to differences in climate within a particular section. Although the Alps are high and imposing, they are not entirely inaccessible: it has been calculated that in the 16th century there were already 23 passes.
- Italy is a volcanically active country, containing the only active volcanoes in mainland Europe. It was **Mount Vesuvius**, near Naples, that buried the famous Roman town of Pompeii. On the island of Sicily, **Mount Etna**, also still active, is one of the world's largest volcanoes.
- Important cities rose on the banks of well-known rivers: the **Tiber River** flows through the city of Rome; the **Arno River** flows through the cities of Florence and Pisa, and the **Po River** (the longest Italian river with the shortest name of any river) flows through the city of Torino.
- There are a few sizable lakes, especially in the northern part of the country. **Lake Garda** is the largest Italian lake.

- Italy is known for its Mediterranean climate, which is found mainly on the coast.
- Inland, throughout the peninsula, the weather is often colder and wetter in winter, but hot in the summer.
- The Alpine north of the country has cold, harsh winters with heavy snowfall. Around the northern Italian lakes, however, a mild microclimate prevails, benefitting the olive groves.
- The area of the Po Plain in the North has its own distinctive climate. Although the winter months can be very cold, and can experience fog, frost and snow, the summer months can be almost as hot and sunny as southern Italy.
- Rainfall is higher on the Tyrrhenian (western) side than on the Adriatic (eastern) side of the Apennines.
- In the south, and on the islands of Sicily and Sardinia, summers are hot and dry and temperatures more akin to those in North Africa prevail. The south of Italy has the least rain and the most sunshine of any area in Italy. Winters are mild.

Italy is divided into 20 different administrative regions, including the islands of Sicily and Sardinia in the Mediterranean Sea. The national capital is Rome, in the Lazio region.

