Italy, officially the Italian Republic, is a country in Southern and Western Europe. It is located on a peninsula that extends into the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, with the Alps on its northern land border, as well as islands, notably Sicily and Sardinia. Italy shares its borders with France, Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia and two enclaves: Vatican City and San Marino. It is the tenth-largest country in Europe, covering an area of 301,340 km2 (116,350 sq mi), and third-most populous member state of the European Union, with a population of nearly 60 million. Its capital and largest city is Rome; other major urban areas include Milan, Naples, Turin, Florence, and Venice.

History

A loose union of city-states spreading out from the center of Italy, the Etruscans—who were probably a group of aristocrats ruling over the "native" Italians—reached their height in the sixth and seventh centuries CE, with a culture blending Italian, Greek and Near Eastern influences alongside wealth gained from trading in the Mediterranean. After this period the Etruscans declined, pressured by Celts from the north and Greeks from the south, before being subsumed into the Roman Empire.​

Italy entered World War 2 in 1940 on the German side, unprepared but determined to gain something from a swift Nazi victory. However, Italian operations went badly wrong and had to be propped up by German forces. In 1943, with the tide of war turning, the king had Mussolini arrested, but Germany invaded, rescued Mussolini and set up a puppet fascist Republic of Salò in the north. The rest of Italy signed an agreement with the allies, who landed on the peninsula, and war between allied forces supported by partisans against German forces supported by Salò loyalists followed until Germany was defeated in 1945.

King Victor Emmanuel III abdicated in 1946 and was replaced briefly by his son, but a referendum that same year voted to abolish the monarchy by 12 million votes to 10, the south voting largely for the king and the north for the republic. A constituent assembly was voted in and this decided upon the nature of the new republic; the new constitution came into effect on January 1st,1948 and elections were held for parliament.

Culture

Italian culture is the amalgamation of thousands of years of heritage and tradition, tracing its roots back to the Ancient Roman Empire and beyond. Italian culture is steeped in the arts, family, architecture, music and food. Home of the Roman Empire and its legendary figures such as Julius Caesar and Nero, it was also a major center of the Renaissance and the birthplace of fascism under Benito Mussolini. Culture on the Italian peninsula has flourished for centuries. Here is a brief overview of Italian customs and traditions as we know them today.

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Venice

Venice is a city in northeastern Italy and the capital of the Veneto region. It is built on a group of 126 islands that are separated by expanses of open water and by canals; portions of the city are linked by 472 bridges. The islands are in the shallow Venetian Lagoon, an enclosed bay lying between the mouths of the Po and the Piave rivers (more exactly between the Brenta and the Sile). In 2020, around 258,685 people resided in greater Venice or the Comune di Venezia, of whom around 51,000 live in the historical island city of Venice (centro storico) and the rest on the mainland (terraferma). Together with the cities of Padua and Treviso, Venice is included in the Padua-Treviso-Venice Metropolitan Area (PATREVE), which is considered a statistical metropolitan area, with a total population of 2.6 million.

The name is derived from the ancient Veneti people who inhabited the region by the 10th century BC. The city was historically the capital of the Republic of Venice for almost a millennium, from 810 to 1797. It was a major financial and maritime power during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and a staging area for the Crusades and the Battle of Lepanto, as well as an important centre of commerce—especially silk, grain, and spice, and of art from the 13th century to the end of the 17th. The city-state of Venice is considered to have been the first real international financial centre, emerging in the 9th century and reaching its greatest prominence in the 14th century. This made Venice a wealthy city throughout most of its history. For centuries Venice possessed numerous territories along the Adriatic Sea and within the Italian peninsula, leaving a significant impact on the architecture and culture that can still be seen today. The Venetian Arsenal is considered by several historians to be the first factory in history, and was the base of Venice's naval power.The sovereignty of Venice came to an end in 1797, at the hands of Napoleon. Subsequently, in 1866, the city became part of the Kingdom of Italy.

Venice has been known as "La Dominante", "La Serenissima", "Queen of the Adriatic", "City of Water", "City of Masks", "City of Bridges", "The Floating City", and "City of Canals". The lagoon and the historic parts of the city within the lagoon were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987, covering an area of 70,176.4 hectares (173,410 acres). In light of the fact that Venice and its lagoon are under constant threat in terms of their ecology and the safeguarding of the cultural heritage, Venice's UNESCO listing has been under constant examination by UNESCO. Parts of Venice are renowned for the beauty of their settings, their architecture, and artwork. Venice is known for several important artistic movements – especially during the Renaissance period – and has played an important role in the history of instrumental and operatic music; it is the birthplace of Baroque composers Tomaso Albinoni and Antonio Vivaldi.

In the 21st century, Venice remains a very popular tourist destination, a major cultural centre, and has often been ranked one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It has been described by The Times as one of Europe's most romantic cities[18] and by the New York Times as "undoubtedly the most beautiful city built by man". However, the city faces challenges including an excessive number of tourists, pollution, tide peaks and cruise ships sailing too close to buildings