

THE ITALIAN GUEST

Travel Habits

Italian guests usually travel in groups, enjoying cultural excursions, shopping and good food.

Communication

It should not be taken for granted that Italians speak English. The older generation is more likely to speak French, whereas many younger people have learnt some English at school.

Should the hotel therefore have Italian-speaking staff, this should be made known at the inquiry stage. Signs could also be put up at reception advising: '*Si parla Italiano*'.

For hotels hosting a large number of Italian guests it would also make sense to add Italian signage to the existing signage.

Examples:

Entrance	<i>Entrata</i>
Exit	<i>Uscita</i>
Emergency Exit	<i>Uscita die sicurezza</i>
Elevator	<i>Ascensore</i>
Pool	<i>Piscina</i>

Italian newspapers are also welcomed and purchased at the hotel if these are not supplied for free.

Hotels of Choice

Centrally located hotels of all categories are booked.

Room Selection

Owing to the Italian heat, Italians are used to sleeping in completely darkened rooms. Hotel rooms should therefore have the necessary curtains with block-out lining or blinds.

Italians also like their rooms to be warm, especially in cold weather. Windows that are left open and heaters that are not switched on are considered to be inhospitable. On guests' arrival all windows should therefore be closed and the heaters turned up. Additional blankets should also be provided.

Italian City Guides are a welcome gesture and much appreciated. Tourism offices should be able to supply these.

Hotel information and emergency numbers should be translated into Italian and visibly displayed in the rooms.

Bathrooms

Provided as part of the benefits of membership of Cape Town Tourism. For more information visit www.capetown.travel/industry, call +27 (0)21 487 6800 or email membership@capetown.travel

Bathrooms with bidets are preferred.

Breakfast

Breakfast times should be adjusted to at least 10h00. Ordinary coffee is considered to be boring, and therefore espresso, cappuccino, juices, croissants and pastries are a must on the breakfast buffet.

Menus

Menus that are translated into Italian and that offer explanations of the local cuisine are appreciated and boost sales. Italians enjoy trying new dishes if they are explained properly in Italian.

Eating

Eating is an Italian passion and pastime for which much time is set aside. Restaurant times should therefore be adjusted accordingly. No dinner starts before 19h30 and it can last for 2-3 hours. The kitchen should not close before 22h00.

The ambience at dinner time should be refined; tables should be covered with tablecloths or at least have fabric napkins.

Bread is an important accompaniment during a meal and is consumed throughout the entire meal. It should only be cleared shortly before dessert is served. The bread should be replenished regularly, and local bread specialities are readily tried. Having to pay separately for bread is an uncommon practice in Italy and is frowned upon. The cost of bread is included in the cover charge (*coperto*). Establishments should therefore decide in advance whether a cover charge is levied and bread replenished regularly. If there's no cover charge and the bread is billed for separately, this should be conveyed at the beginning of the meal.

Italian guests prefer their salad without a dressing. Oil, vinegar, salt and pepper should however be made available with salad in order for the guests to make up their own dressing.

An Italian meal generally consists of the following courses:

- Cold grilled vegetables, meat, ham or sausage marinated in olive oil
- 1st course: noodle or rice dish – a must
- Maybe a salad
- 2nd course: meat or fish dish with vegetables. The accompanying starch is served separately.
- Cheese is a popular main course and should therefore be available as a main course or a dessert portion.
- Italians enjoy eating seasonal fruit for dessert. A selection of fruits could be offered on a plate, together with a fruit knife.
- Sweet desserts are popular but not a must on a menu, unlike cheese, fruit and espresso.

- Espresso after a meal is a must.

As a rule the courses are served one after the other. But bear in mind that Italians are not used to large portions.

Beverages

- Still water is preferred to sparkling.
- Italians like having an aperitif at the bar before a meal. Olives and snacks can be offered with this.
- Every meal is accompanied by wine. Apart from good bottled wines, carafes can also be served.
- Offering reasonably priced wines will prevent guests from bringing their own wines from outside.
- Italians are also keen on trying locally produced beers.
- A good grappa or local spirit is a welcome end to a dinner.
- Italians enjoy celebrating when on holiday and are likely to end the day in their room with a couple of friends, which can become a noisy affair.

Enjoyment

Italian guests love good food and drink and are prepared to pay for these. In return they expect excellent quality. A restaurant that can offer this will find Italians to be receptive clients.

Special Points

Children are treated with much care and love in Italy and are often allowed to run around making a noise. Strict reprimanding by hotel staff is therefore not advised.

Tips: Prices in Italy are inclusive of VAT and tips. They therefore only round up slightly when paying.

The above recommendations are also valid for other southern European countries such as Spain and France.