We the Italians

April 2026
N.198

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We the Italians

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Editorial

What's up with WTI #198

by Umberto Mucci

Dear friends,

We the Italians is launching its **first survey of 2026**, asking all of you to choose the Italian who has contributed most to the greatness of the United States over these 250 years, whose anniversary we are celebrating this year.

We have selected 18 names, without distinguishing between those who were born in Italy and later emigrated to the United States, and those who were born in America with Italian roots. To us, they are all Italians - perhaps two different kinds of Italians, but Italians nonetheless, all of them. You can choose between **John Basilone, Ettore Boiardi, Costantino Brumidi, Francesca Cabrini, Enrico Caruso, Luigi Del Bianco, Joe DiMaggio, Enrico Fermi, Gaetano Filangieri, Amadeo Giannini,**

Fiorello La Guardia, Filippo Mazzei, Antonio Meucci, Maria Montessori, Rocco Petrone, Joe Petrosino, Piccirilli Brothers, Frank Sinatra.

We invite you to vote here; in May, we will share the results of your preferences.

The survey naturally connects to the section *"Happy Birthday USA: Italy's role in America's greatness"* within our project *"Two Anniversaries, One Heart,"* as the 18 names you are voting on are the same individuals featured in the project's articles.

As you know, every even month (February, April, June, August, October, and December) we publish three articles for this section, along with three articles for the *"Happy Birthday Italy"* section and a full set of articles dedicated to one U.S. region for the *"Happy Birthday USA: Unsung Heroes"* section.

This month, the Unsung Heroes we will highlight are from the state of New York. Stay tuned – all the articles and the insert will be ready by the end of the month. The first one, published in February, is available here.

Our project *"Two Anniversaries, One Heart"* will also play an important role in this year's **We the Italians Gala Dinner**, which will take place on June 4 in Rome. We are working on several new elements to comple-

ment the now well-established format.

One of these innovations is the transformation of the morning conference into a recurring annual format, featuring speakers and panelists who will engage in discussions on key topics related to Italy-United States relations.

The content will differ slightly from the Gala itself: the morning sessions will be more in-depth and conversational, allowing time for discussion and analysis, while the evening will be more social in nature - featuring awards and recognitions, music, and an excellent dinner.

We look forward to welcoming you. Here you can find all the details, the honorees (others will be announced soon), our brochure, highlights from past editions, and information on how to purchase tickets or sponsor the Gala.

And speaking of conferences, We the Italians has been a media partner of an exciting event hosted by the Italian Consulate in New York on April 13, focusing on Italy-United States relations in the healthcare sector.

We are always pleased to support prestigious Italian institutional partners as they engage with audiences in the United States.

And it doesn't stop here! That's why we ask you to subscribe to We the Italians.

It's all for now. Please stay safe and take care, and enjoy our magazine and our contents on our website. Stay safe and take care: the future's so bright, we gotta wear tricolor shades! A big Italian hug from Rome.


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Italian handcrafts

Piedmont's wind instrument craftsmanship. The quiet excellence of Quarna

We the Italians Editorial Staff

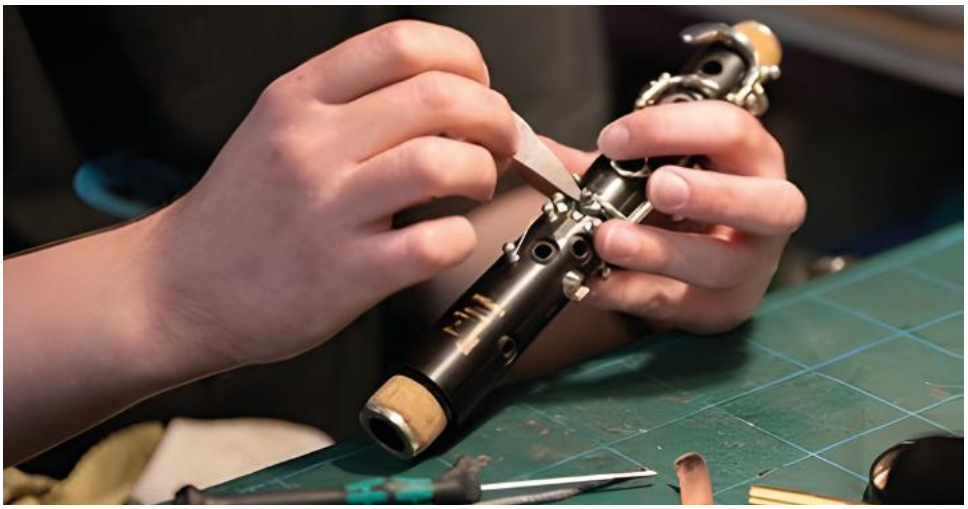
In the hills above Lake Orta, in northern Piedmont, the small villages of Quarna Sotto and Quarna Sopra have built an international reputation around a highly specialized craft: the production of wind instruments. With fewer than 1,000 residents combined, this area represents one of Italy's most distinctive artisan districts, where music is not only performed but physically created through skilled hands and generations of knowledge.

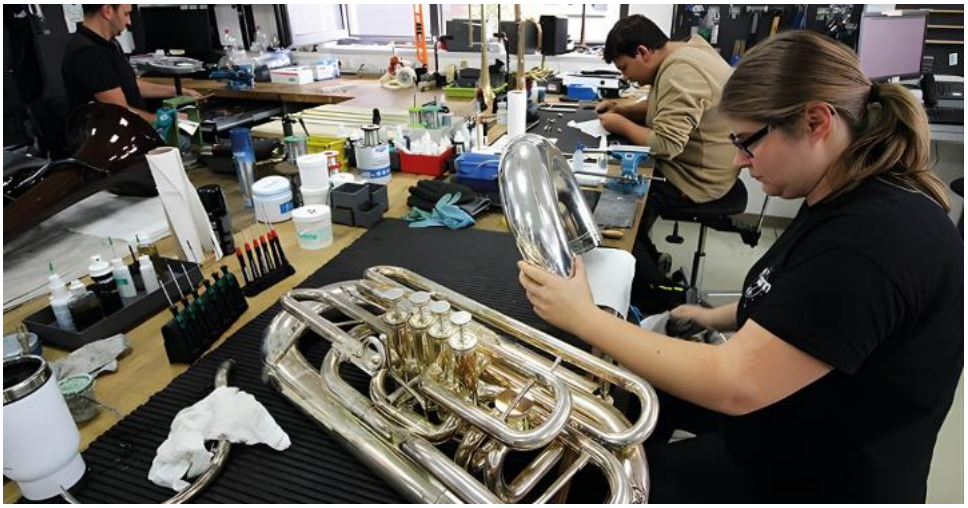
The origins of this tradition date back to the early 19th cen-

tury, when local craftsmen began producing simple wooden flutes and gradually expanded into more complex instruments. By the late 1800s, Quarna had developed a structured production system, with workshops exporting instruments across Europe and, eventually, to the United States. At its peak in the 20th century, dozens of small factories operated in the area, employing a significant portion of the local population and contributing to a niche but globally recognized industry.

What makes Quarna unique is its dual expertise in both brass and woodwind instruments. On the brass side, artisans produce trumpets, trombones, flugelhorns, and French horns. These instruments require precise metalworking, often involving multiple stages such as casting, bending, soldering, and polishing. Even small variations in thickness or curvature can affect sound quality, which is why much of the process still relies on manual adjustments rather than full automation.

At the same time, Quarna has long been known for its woodwind production. Clarinets, oboes, and flutes are crafted





using carefully selected woods such as grenadilla and boxwood, materials chosen for their density and acoustic properties. Although saxophones are typically made of metal, they are classified as woodwinds due to their reed system, and they are also part of the local tradition. Producing these instruments requires a combination of woodworking and mechanical precision, with tolerances often measured in fractions of a millimeter.

Despite technological advancements, a large portion of the work remains artisanal. Many workshops still use lathes and tools that date back decades, sometimes updated but rarely replaced entirely. This continuity allows craftsmen to maintain a direct connection with traditional techniques while integrating modern innovations where necessary. It is estimated that up to 60% - 70% of the production process in smaller workshops still involves manual labor, particularly in finishing and tuning.

The cultural importance of this craft is reflected in the local Ethnographic and Wind Instrument Museum in Quarna Sotto. The museum preserves historical machinery, original tools, and a wide range of instruments, offering insight into how production has evolved over time. It also doc-

uments the social impact of the industry, which for generations provided employment and shaped the identity of the community.

Training and knowledge transfer have always been central to the district's survival. Skills are often passed down within families or through informal apprenticeships, creating a continuity that formal education alone cannot replicate. At the same time, collaboration with musicians plays a key role in refining instruments, as feedback from performers helps improve tone, ergonomics, and durability.

Although global competition and industrial manufacturing have reduced the scale of production compared to the mid-1900s, Quarna remains a reference point for quality. Today, the district focuses more on specialized, high-end instruments rather than mass production. This shift reflects a broader trend in European craftsmanship, where value is increasingly tied to precision, customization, and heritage rather than volume.

In a world where many products are standardized, the wind instruments of Quarna stand out for their individuality. Each piece reflects a balance between technical accuracy and human touch, where sound is shaped not only by materials and design but also by the experience of the artisan. The result is not just an object, but a tool for expression, carrying with it the history of a place where craftsmanship and music have been inseparable for over two centuries.

Italian art

In New York, Raphael stops being a sum of isolated masterpieces

Giulia Silvia Ghia

There are exhibitions you visit. And then there are exhibitions that, in the end, force you to ask questions. Raphael: Sublime Poetry, at the Metropolitan Museum in New York (March 29 to June 28, 2026), is one of these. Because its greatness lies not only in the numbers – over two hundred works, seven years of work, around 10 million dollars invested – but in its ability to construct a vision. A vision that, inevitably, concerns us.

Entering the galleries, you immediately perceive something that normally does not exist. Not a

simple sequence of masterpieces, but an unrepeatable constellation. Works that rarely travel, that belong to different institutional histories, which here, for the first time, are placed in relation to one another. And then something powerful happens: Raphael stops being a sum of isolated masterpieces and becomes a system.

There are works that, on their own, would be enough to justify a journey.

La Fornarina, from Palazzo Barberini in Rome, an absolute icon, enigmatic, intimate. La Muta from Urbino, with that psychological suspension that still today disorients and captures the gaze. The Portrait of Baldassarre Castiglione from the Louvre, perhaps the most modern portrait of the Renaissance, built on a human depth that anticipates centuries. Then the Lady with the Unicorn from the Galleria Borghese, the Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia from Bologna. And then the tapestries of the Sistine Chapel, derived from Raphael's cartoons: monumental works, created to dialogue with Michelangelo, which here enter a completely different context, revealing all their narrative and political power.

Within this perfect machine, the Italian works play a central role and engage in dialogue with paintings from the Louvre, the Prado, the National Gallery, just to name a few. These works are not simply displayed. They

are placed in relation. And this is the point: we Italians have never seen them like this either.

It is not only a matter of loans, but of constructing meaning. Seeing La Fornarina and Baldassarre Castiglione together means understanding two different ways of constructing identity. Juxtaposing portraits with tapestries means moving from intimacy to the representation of power. It is a kind of montage, almost cinematic. Necessary for an American audience, but effective also for those coming from a Eurocentric culture.

There is, however, another element that makes this exhibition exemplary: the awareness of its limits. The great altarpieces such as the Baglioni Altarpiece, the Deposition, are not here. They cannot be. They are panel paintings, fragile, immovable. And so the exhibition chooses another path: telling their story through drawings.

Over 170 sheets allow visitors to enter Raphael's creative process, to reconstruct what cannot be moved, to see the work before the work. It is an intelligent, contemporary choice. Not to force the masterpiece, but to expand knowledge. Raphael thus emerges not as an icon, but as a system, as an artist capable of building networks, managing relationships, engaging with power – a contemporary artist. Not only for his painting, but for his way of being in the world.

And this is where the curatorial strength of this exhibition becomes clear. Within this construction, Italy is everywhere. Thirty-seven loans come from our country. It is our heritage that makes this exhibition possible. But we are not the ones telling its story. And this is the fracture. Because while we preserve, others construct the global narrative. And they do so with tools that, quite simply, work better.

The exhibition's main sponsor is Morgan Stanley. And this is not a detail. It is the key.

In the United States, the relationship between public and private in culture is structural. Patronage is not seen as a contamination, but as a resource. Funding an exhibition of this level means participating in a project of global prestige, building reputation, making a long-term impact.

It is a system. The Met is able to mobilize private capital, integrate it with public resources, and transform it into a cultural project on a global scale. It has long timelines, autonomy, decision-making capacity. Raphael's youthful processional banner, restored by the Central Institute for Restoration thanks to funds from the Met, is concrete proof of how the relationship between public and private can produce knowledge and preservation. In the United States this awareness is structural, while in Italy – also thanks to the Art Bonus – patronage is growing, but still struggles to become a true systemic driver of cultural policy because we continue to have an ambiguous relationship with private support. We invoke it, but we fear it. We regulate it, but often suffocate it. We have legislative tools and regulations that are not always up to date. Slow procedures, rigid constraints, cultural distrust. The result is that the heritage remains, but the ability to build major international operations weakens.

And so this happens: the works leave Italy and the narrative is constructed elsewhere. If we have the most important heritage in the world, why do we not have the same level of ability in telling its story? Why does the Renaissance, which was born in Italy as an integrated model of art, politics, and economy, today find its most effective representation elsewhere? Perhaps the answer lies right here, in these galleries: in the ability to bring together public and private resources, vision and courage, preservation and planning. Raphael, after all, had already understood this five hundred years ago. And us?

Italian cuisine

Pizzelle or Ferratelle from Abruzzo

Maria Teresa Capdevielle

Known as pizzelle or ferratelle depending on the area, these thin, crisp waffle cookies are believed to be among Italy's oldest. Traditionally made using a patterned iron, they emerge embossed with intricate designs, geometric, floral, sometimes resembling snowflakes.

They are delicate but not fragile. Simple but not plain.

Flavored most often with anise, pizzelle carry a subtle licorice

aroma that lingers gently rather than overwhelming. In Abruzzo, they are part of daily life as much as celebration, served with coffee, offered to guests, and made in generous batches that reflect a culture of hospitality.

The Recipe: Simplicity Refined

Maria Teresa's version remains faithful to her family's tradition, with a balance of brightness from lemon zest and richness from olive oil.

Ingredients

3 eggs
Zest of 1 lemon
¾ cup sugar
1 tsp anise seeds
2½ tsp vanilla extract (optional, or other extracts)
½ cup olive oil
1½ cups all-purpose flour

Method

Preheat your pizzelle iron so it's fully hot before the batter touches it.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, lemon zest, and sugar until the mixture becomes pale and fluffy, this step builds the cookie's delicate texture. Stir in the anise seeds, olive oil, and extract, mixing until smooth.

Fold in the flour gently with a spatula, just until incorporated. Overmixing will toughen the batter.

Drop a heaping tablespoon of batter into the center of the iron, close it firmly, and cook until golden, about 45 seconds, though timing varies depending on the iron.

Remove carefully with a fork and let cool on a rack. As they cool, they crisp up into their signature texture.

Serving the Moment

Pizzelle don't need much. A spoonful of jam, a swipe of Nutella, or nothing at all, they stand on their own.

What matters is how they're served: alongside coffee, in conversation, in passing moments that feel ordinary but linger long after.

A Memory in Every Batch

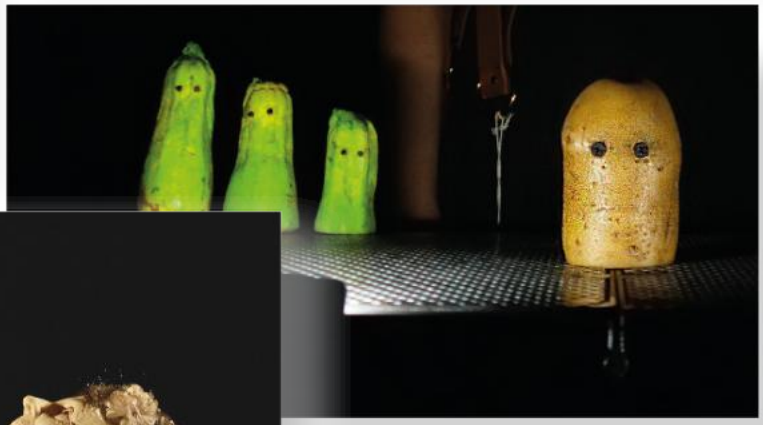
For Maria Teresa, pizzelle are inseparable from her mother.

She remembers large batches being made at home, her mother hoping they would last long enough for breakfast or to share with friends dropping by for coffee and conversation. But that rarely happened.

Warm from the iron, the cookies were irresistible. Crisp at the edges, slightly tender in the center, they disappeared almost immediately. Sometimes they were eaten plain, other times spread with marmalade or Nutella. Always, they were eaten quickly.

There was humor in it, too. Her mother would laugh when the plate sat empty before guests arrived, a small, familiar defeat in a house where good food was impossible to ration.

That fleeting quality is part of what defines pizzelle. They are not meant to be hoarded or preserved. They are meant to be enjoyed, together, in the moment.



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Italian entertainment

From Broadway to Rome, the rise of Italian musical theater

We the Italians Editorial Staff

In recent years, musical theater has experienced a strong revival in Italy, evolving from a marginal genre into one of the most dynamic sectors of the country's live entertainment industry. Once overshadowed by opera and traditional prose theater, musicals are now drawing larger audiences, bigger investments, and increasing media attention. From Broadway adaptations to original Italian

Rugantino

productions, the genre is gaining renewed cultural relevance across the country.

The history of postwar Italian musical theater has produced extraordinary masterpieces such as *Rugantino* and *Aggiungi un posto a tavola* by Pietro Garinei and Sandro Giovannini. These successes are closely tied to the defining characteristics of Italian musical comedy, including a strong presence of humor and social satire, original songs that often became popular hits, and a blend of theater, variety show, and music. Central to this tradition is the figure of the actor–showman. Alongside these works, there is also a rich tradition of musicals connected to Neapolitan culture.

This resurgence began in the early 2000s but has accelerated significantly over the past decade. Today, musical theater repre-

Mamma Mia!

sents close to 20% of total ticket sales in Italy's live performance market, compared to just over 10% in the early 2010s. Major cities like Milan and Rome have become central hubs, hosting long-running productions and national tours that often sell more than 100,000 tickets per show. In some cases, the most successful titles exceed 150,000 admissions, demonstrating a growing appetite for this type of entertainment.

A key driver of this success has been the adaptation of internationally acclaimed musicals. Italian-language versions of global hits such as *The Lion King* and *Mamma Mia!* have consistently attracted large audiences, combining familiar narratives with local performers. These productions often maintain the original staging and music while adapting dialogue and cultural nuances for Italian viewers. The result is a hybrid format that feels both global and local, helping to expand the audience base.

At the same time, original Italian productions are playing an increasingly important role. Shows like Notre Dame de Paris, with music by Riccardo Cocciante, have become cultural phenomena, selling over 4 million tickets since their debut. Another example is Romeo e Giulietta – Ama e cambia il mondo, which reinterprets Shakespeare through a modern musical lens and has toured extensively across Italy. These productions highlight a growing confidence in domestic storytelling, blending international formats with Italian artistic identity.

The success of musical theater in Italy is also closely tied to its performers. Artists such as Luca Ward, known for his powerful stage presence, and Giò Di Tonno, who gained widespread recognition through musical roles, have helped elevate the gen-

Notre Dame de Paris

re's profile. Female performers like Serena Autieri and Vittoria Belvedere have also contributed to its popularity, bringing versatility and star power to major productions. Their visibility has made musical theater more appealing to mainstream audiences, bridging the gap between theater, television, and music.

Another factor behind this growth is the increasing professionalization of the sector. Over the past 10 years, enrollment in musical theater academies has risen by approximately 30%, reflecting a new generation of performers trained in acting, singing, and dance. This has significantly improved production quality, allowing Italian shows to compete with international standards in terms of choreography, scenography, and vocal performance.

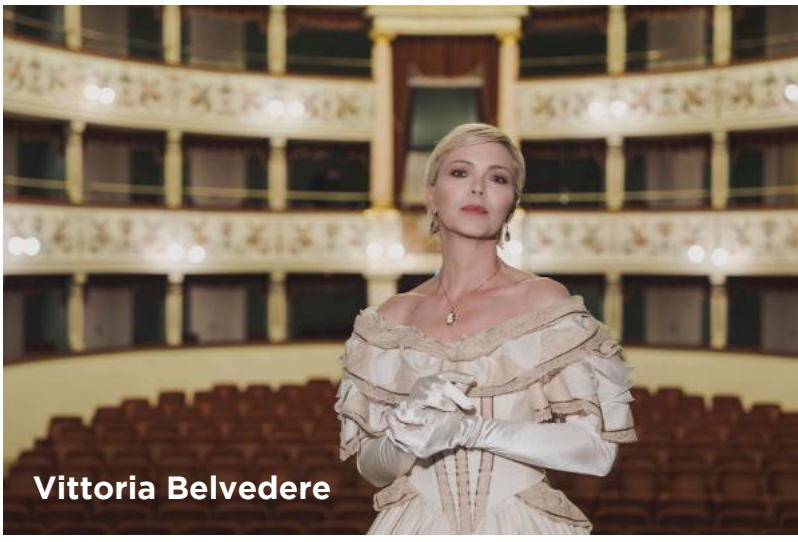
Economically, the impact is substantial. Large-scale productions typically require investments between 2 and 5 million euros, but successful runs generate strong returns through ticket sales, touring, and merchandising. In cities like Milan, where theater attendance has rebounded by more than 25% since 2021, musicals are playing a central role in revitalizing the live entertainment economy.

Audience demographics are also shifting. While traditional theater in Italy has long been associated with older viewers,

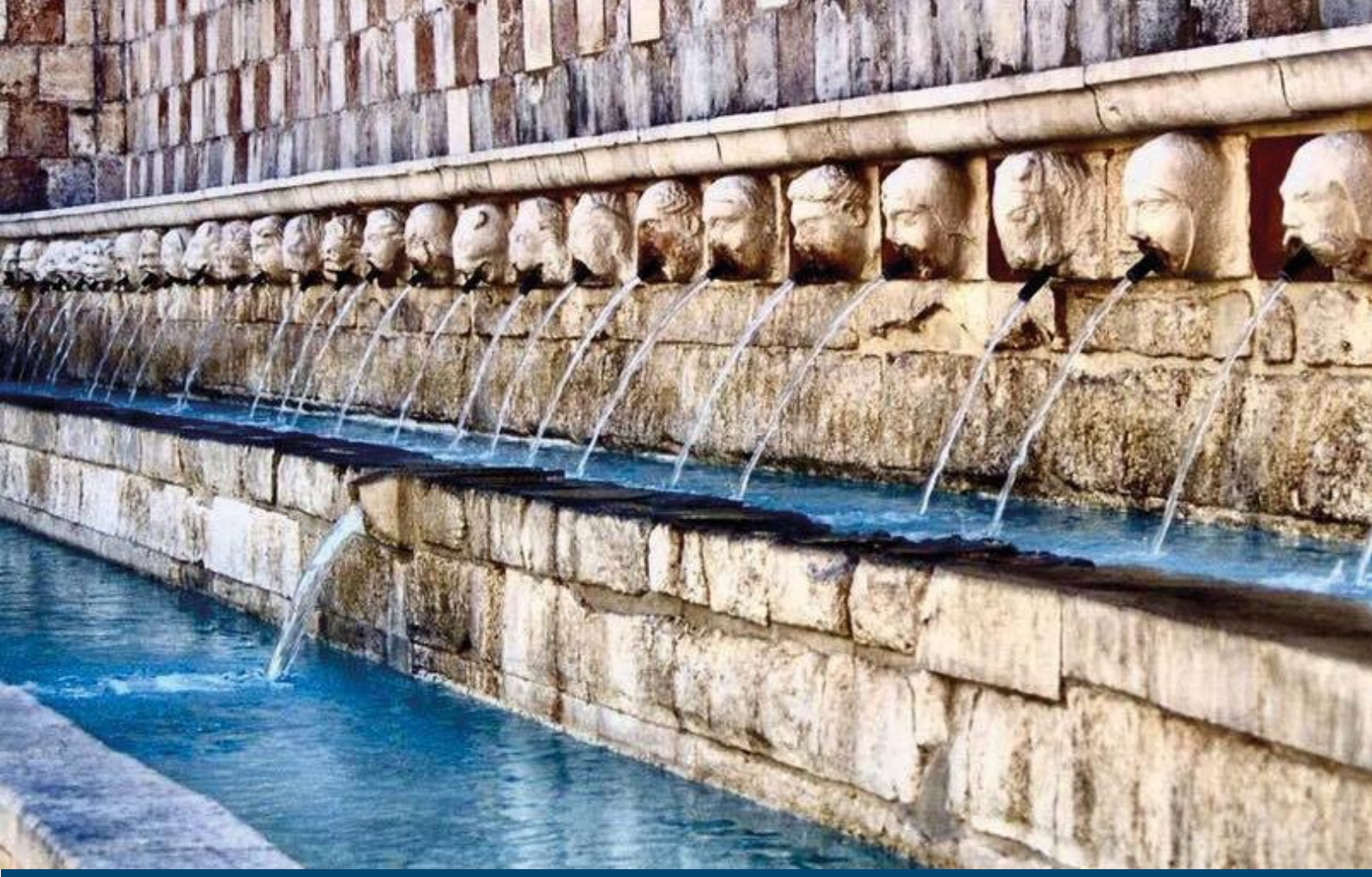
Romeo e Giulietta – Ama e cambia il mondo

musicals are attracting a younger crowd. Recent data suggests that over 40% of attendees are under 35, drawn by the combination of music, storytelling, and visual spectacle. This broader appeal has helped position musical theater as a modern, accessible form of entertainment.
Despite challenges such as high production costs and competition from streaming platforms, the genre continues to grow. The live, immersive nature of musical theater offers an experience that cannot be replicated on screen, making it particularly valuable in today's digital age.

Serena Autieri



Vittoria Belvedere



Italian curiosities

L'Aquila, a city shaped by many communities

We the Italians Editorial Staff

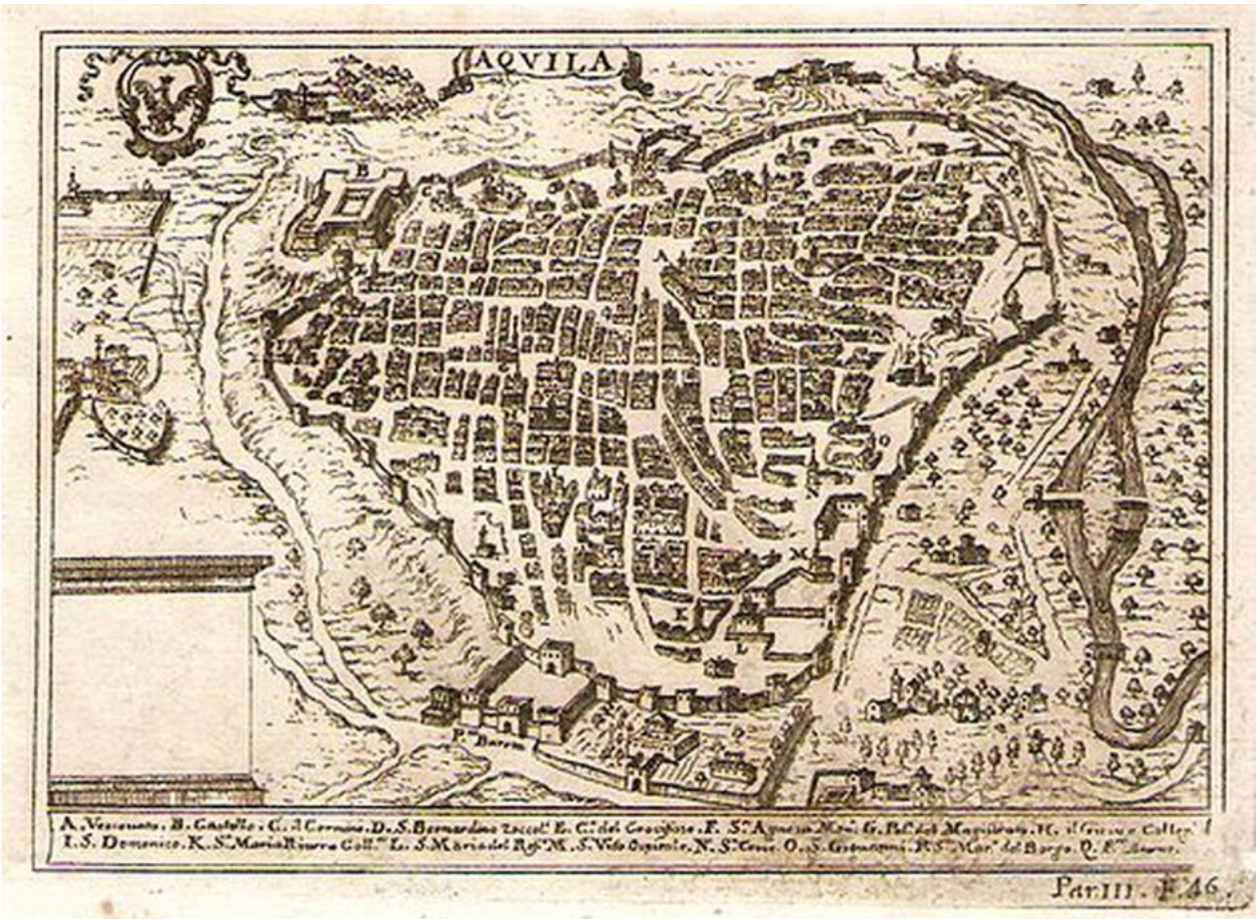
L'Aquila did not emerge as the vision of a single ruler or architect. Instead, it was built collectively in the 13th century by roughly 71 fortified villages scattered across the Aterno valley. Each of these communities contributed people, materials, and skills, taking part in a coordinated effort to create a new urban center. This was not symbolic cooperation – it was a practical system in which every village physically constructed its own section within the city walls.

The allocation of space followed a clear rule. Each settlement received a plot based on

the number of "fires," meaning households. A larger population translated into a larger portion of land. Within that assigned area, each group built essential elements of urban life – a square, a fountain, and most importantly, a church. These churches were dedicated to the same patron saints as the original villages, ensuring continuity of identity. Even after many of those rural settlements declined or disappeared, their legacy remained embedded in the city's religious and urban fabric.

In 1272, the Florentine planner Lucchesino da Firenze designed the overall layout of L'Aquila. The plan followed a traditional Roman model, structured around a main north–south axis (cardo) and an east–west axis (decumanus). These lines divided the city into four major medieval quarters. However, within this orderly grid existed a complex patchwork of smaller districts, each tied to a founding community. These districts, known as locali, preserved distinct identities, customs, and social networks.

This method of urban formation was highly unusual for me-



dieval Europe. Most cities were established by centralized authority – kings, feudal lords, or ecclesiastical powers. L'Aquila, by contrast, developed through negotiation among rural populations seeking greater autonomy and protection from feudal control. The result was a shared civic project built piece by piece, reflecting both cooperation and local independence.

More than 750 years later, the original structure remains visible. The four historic quarters still define the city, and the internal divisions continue to follow the same layout established in the 13th century. Walking through the historic center today, one can still recognize how each square, church, and street corresponds to a specific founding village. The city itself acts as a living map of its origins.

Among the contributing settlements were Arischia, Assergi, Bagno, Barete, Bazzano, Camarda, Coppito, Paganica, Pizzoli, and Preturo, along with many others. Each brought its own population and resources, helping to shape a city that was both unified and diverse.

A well-known tradition associated with L'Aquila is the symbolic number 99. According to local lore, the city was formed with 99 squares, 99 churches, and 99 fountains. This idea is reflected in landmarks such as the Fountain of the 99 Spouts and in stories about bells ringing 99 times. While the number

Collemaggio

is not historically exact, it captures the concept of a city built from many parts.

The foundation of L'Aquila began around 1254 under Conrad IV and was further developed between 1266–1268 during the rule of Charles I of Anjou. The goal was to consolidate the region, but the process allowed local communities to play a central role in shaping the urban environment.

Some interpretations go further, suggesting symbolic links between L'Aquila and Jerusalem. These theories point to similarities in elevation – about 731 m for L'Aquila and roughly 750 m for Jerusalem – as well as comparable urban divisions into four quarters. Other ideas focus on numerology, noting recurring references to the number 9 and its multiples. These perspectives remain speculative but add to the city's cultural narrative.

What remains clear is that L'Aquila represents a rare example of collective urban creation. Its streets, buildings, and layout still reflect the contributions of dozens of communities that came together to form a single city while preserving their individual identities.

Italian sport

The Azzurri in soccer, between myth and harsh reality

Federico Pasquali

There is something profoundly cruel about the geography of soccer. Zenica, Bosnia - a gray, industrial city wedged between the mountains of the Balkans, with a stadium that seats fewer than ten thousand. And yet it is here, on March 31, 2026, that the Italian national soccer team, four-time world champion, lost on penalties to Bosnia and Herzegovina, failing to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup, which this summer will take place in the United States and Canada.

Italy is the only team in history to have won at least one World Cup and then fail to qualify for three editions in a row. A truly

dismal record. To understand how deep this pain runs for the millions of Azzurri fans around the world, you have to remember what soccer means to Italy. You have to go back in time and recount the four occasions when that blue jersey reached the very top.

The first world title came on home soil, in fascist Italy in 1934. The regime of Benito Mussolini wanted to stage that World Cup as a propaganda showcase - and succeeded. The team was coached by Vittorio Pozzo, born in Turin, who led the national team for more than twenty years, in addition to managing major clubs such as Torino FC and AC Milan. At the 1934 World Cup, Italy won its opening match 7-1 against the United States, then defeated Spain and Austria, and finally overcame Czechoslovakia in the final. It was a thrilling victory that turned

into a nationwide celebration in a still poor and underdeveloped country.

Four years later, once again under Pozzo, Italy achieved the feat of winning the World Cup held in France. The final in Paris against Hungary ended 4-2 and was a true football spectacle. Italy was still a developing country, yet that national team played a modern, physical, tactical style of soccer. It became the first team to win two consecutive titles - and, to this day, the last to accomplish that feat. That is how the Azzurri - as the national team players were called because of their jersey color - became legends of world soccer. But only one year after that triumph, Europe was devastated by World War II, and soccer disappeared for many years.

Italian soccer glory returned in the 1960s, during the economic boom that transformed Italy into one of the ten most industrialized and prosperous countries in the world. In 1968, the Azzurri won their first European Championship, thanks to players like Gianni Rivera and Sandro Mazzola, two true international stars.

But it would take forty-four years to win a third world title - the one no Italian has ever forgotten. The 1982 World Cup was played in Spain. To understand what that summer meant, you first have to understand Italy in 1982. It was a country struggling to emerge from a decade of turmoil. The 1970s had been marked by clashes between opposing extremist forces - from neo-fascist terrorism to attacks by communist

groups such as the Red Brigades and Lotta Continua - events that deeply divided and frightened the country, leading to widespread disillusionment with politics. The kidnapping and murder of a leading government figure, Aldo Moro, in 1978 had left a wound that was still open. The economic crisis was severe, and trust in institutions was at historic lows.

Italy was searching for something to believe in - something that would not betray it. It found it in eleven men wearing blue. Or rather, in one of them above all: Paolo Rossi, a player from Vicenza with a boyish face who had been suspended for two years due to a betting scandal. Rossi returned to the national team, called up by coach Enzo Bearzot, a former player from Joannis, in the province of Udine, who had not enjoyed great success either as a player or as a coach. In just a few weeks, Rossi became the sym-

bol of a nation rising again. Six goals in three matches, including a hat trick against star-studded Brazil in what is still considered one of the greatest World Cup matches ever played. The final against West Germany ended 3-1. In Italy, there was an explosion of collective, liberating joy, as if soccer had given the country a unity that politics could not.

The last title is still vivid in memory. Germany, summer 2006. Italy arrived at the World Cup in the midst of the "Calciopoli" scandal, a system of referee corruption that had involved the biggest clubs and cast a shadow over the entire system. The team of Marcello Lippi, the Viareggio-born coach famous for always having a cigar in his mouth, responded on the field with extraordinary strength. After defeating host nation Germany in the semifinals, the Azzurri won the final on penalties against France. On the night of July 10, Italy turned into an ocean of flags. Four World Cups won - a feat also achieved by Germany and surpassed only by Brazil, with five.

All of this makes the silence of the past twelve years even more painful for millions of Azzurri fans - from 2014, the last World Cup Italy played in, to today.

Italian land and nature

The Riviera dei fiori and Liguria's unique microclimate

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Along the western stretch of Liguria, between the sea and the mountains, lies a landscape shaped as much by climate as by human ingenuity. Known as the Riviera dei Fiori, this area around Sanremo and the province of Imperia offers one of the most distinctive natural environments in Italy. Here, a unique microclimate has transformed a narrow coastal strip into one of Europe's most important centers of floriculture.

The secret of this landscape lies in geography. The Ligurian Alps rise sharply just a few kilometers inland, forming a natural barrier that protects the coast from cold northern winds. At the same time, the Ligurian Sea moderates temperatures throughout the year. As a result, winter temperatures rarely drop below 8–10°C along the coast, while summers remain relatively mild compared to other Mediterranean regions. With over 300 days of sunshine annually and limited temperature variation, the conditions are ideal for cultivating delicate plant species that would not survive elsewhere in Italy.

This favorable climate has supported agricultural activity for centuries, but it was in the 19th century that floriculture began to develop on a large scale. By the early 20th century, the Riviera dei Fiori had already established itself as a major supplier of flowers across Europe. Today, Liguria accounts for approximately 60% of Italy's total flower production and up to 90% for certain varieties, including cut flowers like ranunculus and anemones.

The landscape itself reflects this specialization. Hillsides are covered with greenhouses that cascade toward the sea, often built

on narrow terraces supported by traditional dry-stone walls. These structures maximize exposure to sunlight while protecting crops from wind. In some areas, more than 70% of arable land is dedicated to floriculture, creating a patchwork of cultivated slopes that blend natural and human-made elements.

Sanremo, often associated with its famous music festival, is also the symbolic heart of this floral economy. The city hosts one of Italy's most important flower markets, where millions of stems are traded each year. It is estimated that over 500 million individual flowers pass through the Ligurian supply chain annually, destined for domestic markets and international export. France, Germany, and the Netherlands are among the primary destinations, highlighting the region's integration into the broader European economy.

Beyond its economic impact, the Riviera dei Fiori also represents a unique ecological balance. The combination of Mediterranean vegetation and cultivated species creates a rich biodiversity. Wild plants such as olive trees, maritime pines, and aromatic herbs coexist with carefully managed

crops. This coexistence is made possible by the mild climate, which reduces the need for extreme agricultural interventions and allows for more sustainable practices compared to harsher environments.

However, this delicate system faces growing challenges. Climate change has begun to alter rainfall patterns and increase the frequency of extreme weather events. In recent years, periods of drought have alternated with intense storms, putting pressure on both infrastructure and crops. According to regional agricultural data, water availability has decreased by nearly 20% over the past two decades, forcing farmers to adopt new irrigation techniques and invest in more resilient plant varieties.

Urbanization also poses a threat. As coastal land becomes increasingly valuable for tourism and real estate, agricultural areas are shrinking. Since the 1960s, Liguria has lost a significant portion of its cultivated land, with some estimates suggesting a reduction of over 50% in certain coastal

Sanremo

zones. This trend risks undermining not only the local economy but also the cultural identity tied to this landscape.

Despite these challenges, the Riviera dei Fiori continues to adapt. Innovation in greenhouse technology, sustainable water management, and organic cultivation methods is helping to preserve this unique system. At the same time, there is a growing awareness of the cultural and environmental value of this landscape, which goes far beyond its economic output.

In the Riviera dei Fiori, nature and human activity are inseparable. The microclimate provides the conditions, but it is centuries of adaptation and knowledge that have turned this narrow strip of land into a thriving floral region. It is a place where winter feels like spring, where the air carries the scent of blossoms even in January, and where the relationship between land and people remains as vital as ever.

BEING ITALIAN HAS ALWAYS MEANT
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Italian innovation

Italy's AI breakthrough: from Ipazia's global win to dialects saving lives

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Italy is emerging as an unexpected powerhouse in artificial intelligence, with breakthroughs that combine cutting-edge performance, cultural identity and real-world impact. From enterprise systems outperforming global tech giants to life-saving applications rooted in dialects, recent developments show how innovation can grow from local strengths.

One of the most striking results comes from Ipazia, a Milan-based startup founded in 2021. In a benchmark organized by ServiceNow, its AI sys-

tem achieved a score of 90.3%, outperforming some of the most advanced models in the world. Google's Gemini-3 Flash reached 86.1%, OpenAI's GPT-5 stopped at 79.1%, and Anthropic's Claude-4 Sonnet at 63.3%.

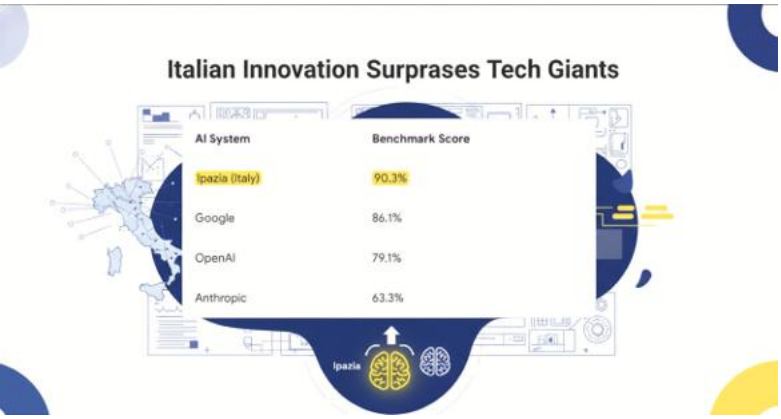
What makes this result even more impressive is the context. The test – known as WorkArena++ – evaluates the ability of AI systems to handle real business processes, not just generate text. Tasks include navigating product catalogs, retrieving data from multiple databases and completing structured workflows.

Ipazia's advantage does not come from bigger models or higher computing power. Instead, it uses a multi-agent architecture that breaks complex problems into smaller tasks handled in parallel, improving reasoning and reliability. The company operates with just 18 professionals, including 7 PhDs, proving that innovation does not always require massive scale.

At the same time, another Italian project is redefining how AI interacts with people – especially in critical situations like healthcare. The University of Naples Federico II has developed PARLA CHIARO, a system designed to teach AI how to understand Italian dialects such as Neapolitan, Sicilian and Romanesco.

The project has been selected among 16 winners of Microsoft's LINGUA Open Call, an initiative aimed at preserving linguistic diversity and improving digital inclusion across Europe.

The need for such technology is clear. According to ISTAT data,



about 42% of Italians use dialects in daily communication, often alongside standard Italian. In family contexts the number reaches 38%, while 35.5% use dialects with friends.

This linguistic diversity can create serious problems for AI systems trained mostly on standard Italian. In healthcare, misunderstandings between doctor and patient can lead to incorrect diagnoses or treatment errors. PARLA CHIARO addresses this risk by creating high-quality voice and text datasets and by developing a Dialect-Aware Warning System that detects ambiguous expressions and suggests clarifications in real time.

The impact goes beyond medicine. These tools could improve communication in public services, local administrations and digital platforms, ensuring that speakers of regional languages are not excluded from technological progress.

Together, these initiatives highlight a broader trend: Italy is focusing on practical, human-centered AI. Instead of competing solely on scale with global tech giants, Italian researchers and startups are targeting specific problems – from enterprise workflows to linguistic inclusion – where precision and adaptability matter most.

This vision aligns with wider reflections on the future of AI in Europe, where experts emphasize the importance of ethical design, transparency and cultural diversity. The Italian approach shows that innovation can be both globally competitive and deeply rooted in local identity.

From a startup of 18 specialists outperforming billion-dollar systems to a university project protecting millions of dialect speakers, Italy is demonstrating that the next wave of artificial intelligence may not be defined only by size or power – but by intelligence, creativity and a strong connection to people's real lives.

My life in Italy

Move first, buy better. Why living comes before investing in Italy

Matteo Cerri

Italy is not a bad investment, but approaching it like one can be. The smartest path is not rushing into property, but giving yourself the time to belong before you decide where to stay. There is a recurring pattern I have seen over the years, especially among Americans with Italian roots or a long-standing fascination with the country: Italy appears, at first glance, as an extraordinary real estate opportunity. Prices, outside a handful of cities like Milan, Rome or Florence, seem almost irrationally low when

compared to major US markets. Entire homes, sometimes entire buildings, available for what feels like the price of a small apartment elsewhere. And to be clear, this perception is not entirely wrong. Italy can be affordable. In some areas, it is remarkably so.

The mistake begins when affordability is interpreted as value, and value is interpreted as investment. Because Italy, outside very specific micro-markets, is not a real estate market designed for speculative logic. It is a country where property behaves differently, where liquidity is limited, where resale timelines are unpredictable, and where the true return - if there is one - is rarely financial in the short or medium term. This is not a reason not to buy. It is simply a reason to understand what you are actually doing.

Renovation is not a line item, it is a process

The second layer of misunderstanding usually emerges once the purchase is made. What looks straightforward on paper - buy, renovate, enjoy - quickly becomes more complex when translated into reality. Renovation in Italy is not just about budgets and contractors; it is about navigating a system that is deeply local, often fragmented, and sometimes slow by design.

Permits, compliance, historical constraints, coordination between professionals, availability of skilled labour - these are not obstacles, but they are variables. And variables require presence, patience, and a degree of cultural adaptation that cannot be outsourced entirely.

Trying to manage all of this remotely, from another country, often leads to a combination of rising costs, extended timelines, and a level of frustration that few people initially account for. And yet, even when everything goes reasonably well, a more fundamental question remains unresolved.

Owning is not the same as belonging

Buying a property is a transaction. Living in a place is a process. This is where many relocation journeys start to drift off course. The assumption is that ownership creates integration, that once you have a home, the rest will naturally follow. In reality, the opposite is often true.

Belonging is not built through ownership; it is built through time, exposure, relationships, and daily experience. It is understanding how a place functions beyond the postcard version, how services work, how communities interact, what daily life actually feels like in November, not just in August. Without this layer, a property risks becoming an isolated asset, disconnected from the life it was supposed to support.

The cost that is never in the spreadsheet

There is also a dimension that is rarely discussed openly, perhaps because it does not fit neatly into a financial model: the psychological cost. Managing uncertainty, dealing with unexpected issues, navigating a system that operates differently from what you are used to - these things accumulate. They create friction, and over time, that friction can transform what was meant to be a positive life decision into a source of stress.

At that point, the question is no longer whether the investment makes sense, but whether the experience itself still does. And that is a much harder position to recover from.

Relocate first, buy second

There is, however, a more rational sequence, and it is surprisingly simple. Relocate first. Buy later. Spend time in Italy not as a visitor, but as someone testing a possible life. Choose a place, live there, understand it, question it. See how it aligns with your professional needs, your personal rhythms, your expectations.

And just as importantly, give yourself the freedom to change your mind. Because one of the most valuable insights you can gain is not where to buy, but where not to.

The real bottleneck: living before buying

If this approach is so logical, why is it not more common? Because the infrastructure to support it has historically been weak. Short-term rentals are expensive, inconsistent, and rarely designed for real life. Long-term contracts, on the other hand, are often too rigid, binding you for years in a place you are still trying to understand. Transitional contracts exist, but they are not always easy to find or structured in a way that truly supports relocation.

So people default to what is available, not what is optimal. And that is how the sequence gets inverted.

A new model is quietly emerging

This gap is now becoming increasingly evident, and with it, a different approach is starting to take shape. Instead of forcing people to

choose between unstable short-term solutions and rigid long-term commitments, there is a growing effort to create ready-to-live homes designed specifically for this transitional phase. Spaces that are not temporary in quality, but flexible in structure. Homes that allow you to live properly - work, rest, integrate - without locking you into a decision you have not yet fully understood.

In our own experience, this has meant developing a pool of properties in locations where real communities already exist, where other international residents have integrated, and where there is a balance between local authenticity and professional, cultural accessibility. Places in Sicily, Puglia, Marche or Tuscany, often connected to broader hubs, where you are not isolated, but not overwhelmed either.

Flexibility is not a compromise, it is a strategy

There is sometimes a perception that renting, especially for a year, is a form of delay, or even a cost to be minimised. In reality, it is often the opposite. A well-structured transitional rental gives you something far more valuable than immediate ownership: clarity. It allows you to observe, to adjust, to understand where your time, your energy and your resources are best placed. And if we are honest about the numbers, the cost of a year spent living properly in Italy is often comparable to, or even lower than, the

financial and emotional cost of correcting a rushed purchase. In some cases, it may cost less than a couple of long-haul flights.

You are not buying a property, you are choosing a life

This is perhaps the most important shift in perspective. Moving to Italy is not a real estate decision. It is a life decision that happens to include real estate at some point. When you reverse that order - when you treat the property as the starting point rather than the consequence - you introduce a level of rigidity into a process that actually requires flexibility. Italy rewards those who take the time to understand it. It can be extraordinarily generous in return, but it rarely aligns with accelerated timelines or purely transactional logic.

A final thought

Italy is worth it. But it is worth doing properly. Taking a year to live before you buy is not hesitation. It is not inefficiency. It is not missing an opportunity. It is, in most cases, the most intelligent investment you can make - financially, practically, and perhaps most importantly, mentally. Because the goal is not simply to own a piece of Italy. It is to feel that you belong to it.

Intrigued? Need a friendly help to make it true? Get in touch!

Italian sustainability

Italy leads the rise of biohybrid plants

We the Italians Editorial Staff

A new scientific frontier is reshaping how we think about the relationship between nature and technology, and Italy is at the forefront of this transformation. Researchers in Italy are developing biohybrid plants – living organisms enhanced with advanced materials – that can generate energy and help reduce pollution without altering their genetic structure. This Italian-driven innovation is opening new possibilities for sustainable development.

At the core of this research are plants integrated with nanomaterials and conductive polymers. These elements are so small – up to 500 times thinner than a human hair – that

they can be absorbed through the roots and distributed throughout the plant. Italian scientists have been among the first to demonstrate how these materials can safely interact with biological systems, effectively turning plants into functional, energy-producing structures.

One of the most promising applications involves improving photosynthesis. By introducing light-sensitive polymers similar to those used in solar panels, researchers in Italy have managed to increase the plant's ability to capture and use sunlight. Early experimental results suggest measurable gains in efficiency, in some cases exceeding 20%, which could allow plants to act as living solar collectors while continuing their natural growth. This Italian approach combines clean energy production with organic processes in a way that traditional technologies cannot replicate.

The potential impact is especially relevant for urban environments. In cities, green areas could evolve from decorative spaces into active infrastructure. Trees and plants enhanced through this Italian research could produce renewable energy, absorb carbon dioxide, and contribute to lowering pollution levels. In highly polluted areas, even a modest improvement of 10–15% in air purification capacity could have significant public health benefits.

Another major advantage is the ability of these biohy-

brid plants to capture pollutants. By strengthening natural absorption processes, they can remove higher concentrations of CO_2 and other harmful particles from the air. This dual function – energy production and environmental cleanup – makes the technology particularly attractive in the fight against climate change, and once again Italy is playing a leading role in advancing these solutions.

Unlike genetic engineering, this method does not modify the DNA of plants. Instead, it enhances their natural capabilities through external materials, making it more acceptable from both a regulatory and public perspective. Italian researchers emphasize that this approach preserves the integrity of the organism while expanding its functionality.

Although still in the experimental phase, the progress made so far highlights Italy's leadership in this field. Research centers and universities across the country are collaborating with international partners, but the conceptual and experimental breakthroughs are strongly rooted in Italian science.

Looking ahead, the goal is to scale these technologies and integrate them into everyday life. If successful, cities could one day rely on living systems for part of their energy needs, while also improving air quality. In this vision, strongly shaped by Italian innovation, nature is no longer just something to protect – it becomes an active component of the solution to global environmental challenges.

Italian flavors

Ciauscolo, the soft soul of the Marche

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Ciauscolo is one of Italy's most distinctive cured meats, a product that immediately challenges expectations. Unlike most salami, which are firm and sliced, this specialty from the Marche region is soft, spreadable, and designed to be enjoyed in a completely different way. Its uniqueness lies not only in texture, but in history, production methods, and flavor – all deeply tied to rural life in central Italy.

The origins of ciauscolo go back centuries, with documented references appearing as early as the late 1600s, although its roots are likely even older. The name itself is believed to derive from the Latin word "cibusculum," meaning "small food" or "snack," a reflection of how it was traditionally consumed by farmers during long working days. In an agricultural society where nothing was wasted, ciauscolo was a practical solu-

tion – a way to transform leftover pork cuts into a nutritious and ready-to-eat product.

Today, ciauscolo is protected by IGP status, obtained in 2009, which guarantees that it is produced according to strict regional guidelines in specific provinces such as Macerata, Ancona, Fermo, and Ascoli Piceno. Annual production is relatively limited, estimated at around 600 tons, reinforcing its identity as a niche, high-quality product rather than a mass-market salami.

The production process is carefully structured but still strongly rooted in tradition. It begins with selected pork cuts, primarily shoulder, belly, and trimmings from ham and loin. The meat is first rested under refrigeration for 2–10 days to reach optimal conditions, then finely ground multiple times – often two or three passes – until it reaches a very smooth, almost creamy consistency. This fine texture is one of the defining characteristics of ciauscolo, setting it apart from coarser cured meats.

After grinding, the mixture is seasoned with salt, black pepper, garlic, and wine, creating a balanced aromatic profile. The seasoned meat is then stuffed into natural casings and tied by hand, a step that still reflects artisanal practices. The curing process is relatively short compared to other salami – typically a minimum of 15 days at temperatures between 8°C and 18°C – which helps preserve its softness and moisture. In some cases, a light smoking phase is added, contributing subtle complexity to the final flavor.

Visually, ciauscolo is cylindrical, usually weighing between 400 g and 2.5 kg, with a uniform pink–red interior. But its most remarkable feature is its texture. High fat content – in some traditional recipes up to 70% of the mixture – ensures a spreadable consistency similar to pâté. This softness is not a flaw but a defining quality, carefully controlled through the balance of lean and fatty cuts.

The flavor of ciauscolo is equally distinctive. It is savory but not aggressive, with a delicate sweetness from the pork and a gentle aromatic lift from garlic and pepper. Unlike aged salami, it never

develops sharp acidity or excessive dryness. Instead, it remains smooth, rounded, and approachable, making it appealing even to those who might not typically enjoy cured meats.

Traditionally, ciauscolo is eaten simply – spread on slices of bread, often slightly toasted. This method highlights both its texture and its flavor, turning a humble product into a deeply satisfying experience. It can also be paired with local cheeses or used as a base for more elaborate dishes, but its true identity lies in its simplicity.

One of the most interesting aspects of ciauscolo is how it reflects a specific way of life. It was never designed as a luxury product, but as a practical, everyday food. Over time, however, it has moved beyond its rural origins and gained recognition in modern gastronomy, appearing in high-end kitchens while still maintaining its original character.

In a country known for its diversity of regional foods, ciauscolo stands out because it breaks the rules. It is neither fully fresh nor fully aged, neither sliced nor cut, but spread. It represents a different approach to charcuterie – one that values texture as much as flavor and tradition as much as technique.

Interview with Mauro Lorenzini

Lots of Italy in Houston, Capital of Italian Creativity in the World for 2026

Umberto Mucci

The Italian consular network extends across the United States, and each Consulate has specific characteristics tied to the states within its jurisdiction. Today we welcome Mauro Lorenzini, Consul General of Italy in Houston, who oversees four important Southern U.S. states.

Texas in particular is essential for many areas of Italy–U.S. relations. It is here, in Galveston, that the current U.S. Ambassador to Rome, Italian American Tilman Fertitta, owner of the Houston Rockets basketball team, was born. Houston itself is at the center of several developments in

2026: from the remarkable success of Italy's national baseball team, which defeated the United States here in the World Baseball Classic, to the launch of the direct Rome–Houston flight operated by ITA Airways. But the most important event is certainly *Lots of Italy in Houston.*

Consul Lorenzini, welcome and thank you. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has designated Houston as the Capital of Italian Creativity in the World for 2026. The project promoting Made in Italy with which the Houston Consulate won is called *Lots of Italy in Houston.* Could you tell us what it is about and what initiatives will be part of this year?

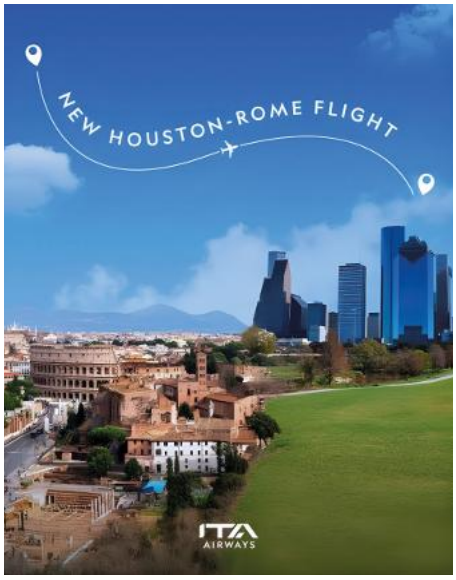
Consolato Generale d'Italia
Houston

We are deeply honored by this recognition, which reflects the dynamism of the Italian presence in our region. Houston was selected as the Capital of Italian Creativity in the World 2026 as part of the fourth edition of the award promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooper-

ation, which aims to highlight the best projects developed by Italy's diplomatic, consular, and cultural network worldwide to promote Made in Italy. In this edition, the city shared the recognition with Belgrade and Bangkok.

The initiative celebrates Italian ingenuity and innovation, developed in synergy with the *Sistema Italia*, and represents an opportunity to encourage Italian missions to create projects capable of enhancing National Made in Italy Day, established on April 15, 2024, through innovative initiatives rooted in local contexts. The selection of winning projects was overseen by a committee composed of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, and, for the first time, the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, evaluating originality, alignment with integrated promotion goals, and the ability to engage local communities.

Lots of Italy in Houston, presented by the Consulate General of Italy, aims to highlight the significant role of Italians and Italian Americans in the city's cultural, scientific, and economic growth. Throughout 2026, Houston will become a vibrant hub of Italian creativity thanks to a comprehensive program that will include an interactive app dedicated to Italian presences in the city, educational activities for schools, exhibitions, artistic performanc-



es, and a network of initiatives spread across the area, involving local institutions, universities, businesses, and the Italian community. The city represents a particularly meaningful model of integrated promotion of Italy abroad, combining creativity, innovation, culture, and Made in Italy, strengthening transatlantic dialogue and consolidating the role of the Consulate General as a point of reference for the Italian community, Italophiles, and local partners.

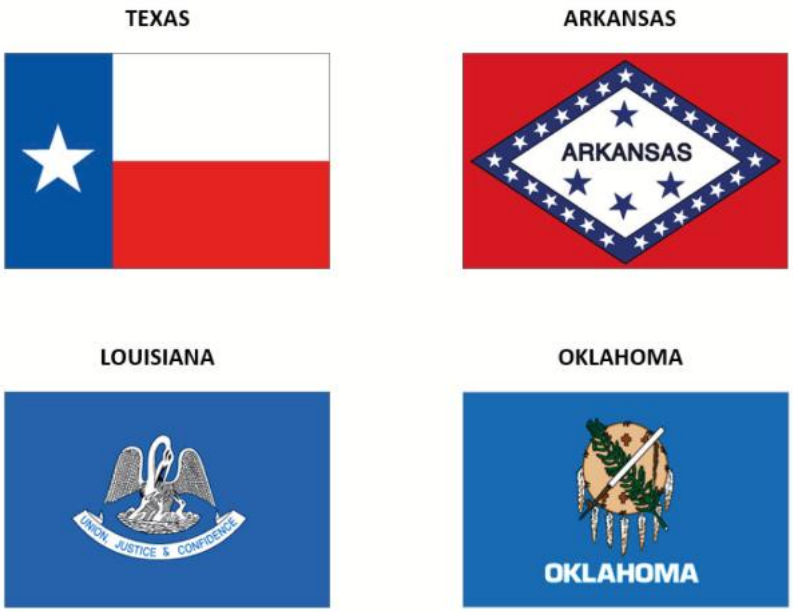
How would you describe today the role and evolution of the Italian community in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma, and the con-

nection these communities maintain with Italy?

The Italian community in Texas and neighboring states is fully integrated into local society. The mayor of Houston, on the occasion of Republic Day, issues an annual proclamation recognizing the contribution of Italians on civic, cultural, and professional levels. The community includes more than 17,000 people and is composed mainly of young professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers, and scientists. The connection with Italy remains strong: it is expressed through language, traditions, and the desire to maintain active economic, cultural, and scientific relationships. The younger generations serve as a bridge between the two countries.

What are today the main directions and opportunities in relations between Italy and the area covered by your Consulate? How can Italian companies enter the Texas market?

Relations are dynamic and growing, especially in the sectors of energy, aerospace, infrastructure, agribusiness, and advanced manufacturing. Texas is one of the most attractive markets in the United States: if it were an independent country, it would be the eighth-largest economy in the world. Italian companies can position themselves by offering quality, innovation, and specialized expertise. The Consulate, together with the *Sistema Italia*, supports businesses in entering and establishing themselves in the Texas market, facilitating



contacts and strategic partnerships.

Houston is an energy hub, a topic that is more essential than ever: are there collaborations between Italy and Texas in this field?

Houston is a global energy center, and Italian companies such as ENI and Saipem are actively operating in the oil and gas sector, renewable energy, and the energy transition. There are also synergies in hydrogen and sustainable technologies. A significant example is the photovoltaic plant inaugurated by ENI in a Texas county, demonstrating Italy's commitment to renewable energy in the state most famous for oil.

What is Italy's current contribution in Texas in economic and innovation terms, and what prospects do you see for the future?

Italy contributes with significant investments, technological know-how, and advanced research. Key sectors include energy, construction, mechanics, design, agribusiness, and aerospace. In the space sector, we collaborate with NASA: some modules of the International Space Station and the panoramic cupola are produced in Italy, and Italian astronauts such as Paolo Nespoli, Samantha Cristoforetti, Luca

Parmitano, and Walter Villadei have operated in Houston. The future offers major opportunities in high technology, research, and sustainable development.

How important are Italian culture and language today in the southern United States in strengthening identity and ties with new generations of Italian Americans?

Italian culture and language are fundamental tools for maintaining identity ties. Through schools, university programs, and cultural initiatives, the Consulate supports new generations in learning about their roots while also engaging with contemporary Italy. Each year, more than 1,260 student visas are issued to Texas students, fostering academic exchanges and educational opportunities. Promoting language and culture also strengthens the sense of community among Italian Americans and Italian residents.

What impact has the Italian national baseball team's extraordinary series of successes in Houston had on the Italian community in Texas?

The success of the Italian national baseball team generated enthusiasm and pride, strengthening the sense of belonging within the Italian and Italian American community. Sporting events of this kind act as catalysts of identity, help raise Italy's visibility, and provide moments of connection for the community.

If I asked you to choose an anecdote from your experience as Consul in Houston, which is the first that comes to mind?

One episode I recall with particular pride is the inauguration of an ENI photovoltaic plant in a Texas county. It was a fully Italian investment in the state most famous for oil, and it demonstrated Italy's contribution to the energy

transition. At that moment, I felt both the responsibility and the pride of representing our country. Other important memories include supporting the Italian community during Republic Day celebrations and the cultural initiatives we have promoted in Houston and Dallas.

What advice would you give to a young Italian who wants to move to the United States?

I would recommend openness, preparation, and initiative. The United States offers great opportunities, but it requires adaptability and determination. It is essential to have a strong command of English, understand the cultural and professional context, and maintain a connection with Italy, which remains an added value for both personal and professional growth. Investing in education, networking, and knowledge of key sectors of the American market is essential for success.

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Italian industrial districs

Trieste's coffee district, a complete ecosystem from port to espresso

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Trieste is often called Italy's coffee capital, and not without reason. The city's identity is deeply tied to coffee, thanks to its historic free port, established in 1719, which transformed Trieste into one of Europe's main trading gateways. Today, the port still handles roughly 40% of Italy's green coffee imports, making it a strategic hub in the global coffee supply chain. From raw beans arriving by ship to the final espresso served in a cup, nearly every stage of the process is concentrated in and around the city.

What makes Trieste unique is not just volume, but structure. The Trieste Coffee Cluster brings together around 50 companies, creating a tightly connected industrial ecosystem. These businesses span logistics, storage, roasting, quality control, research, and training, generating a combined turnover worth hundreds of millions of euros annually. It is a rare example of a fully integrated coffee district, where each phase of production supports and reinforces the others.

At the core of the cluster are major roasting companies that have shaped both Italian and global coffee culture. Illycaffè, founded in Trieste in 1933, is one of the most recognized premium brands worldwide, exporting to over 140 countries. Hausbrandt, another historic name dating back to 1892, represents a different but equally important tradition rooted in the Austro-Hungarian era. Alongside these global players, smaller artisanal roasters continue to thrive, preserving local expertise and offering more specialized products. Many of these companies have been active for decades – some since the mid-20th century – contributing to a strong sense of continuity.

The district also depends on a network of specialized services that operate behind the scenes. Port

logistics companies manage the arrival and storage of thousands of tons of raw coffee each year, while laboratories perform rigorous quality checks. Sensory analysis plays a key role, with trained professionals evaluating aroma, body, acidity, and balance to ensure consistency. This technical infrastructure is essential, as even minor variations in beans or roasting can affect the final product.

Innovation is another defining element of Trieste's coffee ecosystem. The district collaborates closely with scientific institutions such as the University of Trieste and advanced research centers. Together, they explore new roasting technologies, sustainability practices, and methods for improving extraction and flavor profiling. This ongoing research helps maintain high standards while adapting to changes in global demand and climate conditions, which increasingly impact coffee production.

Every two years, the city hosts Triestespresso Expo, an international event dedicated entirely to the espresso supply chain. The exhibition attracts companies, buyers, and professionals from dozens of countries, highlighting Trieste's central role in the industry. It is not just a trade fair, but a meeting point where innovation, business, and tradition intersect.

Beyond industry and research, coffee is embedded in the daily life of the city. Historic cafés, some dating back to the 19th cen-

tury, continue to serve as social and cultural landmarks. These spaces were once frequented by writers like Italo Svevo and James Joyce, and they still reflect a slower, more reflective approach to coffee consumption compared to the fast-paced habits seen elsewhere.

Even ordering a coffee in Trieste follows its own system. Locals rarely use standard Italian terms. A “nero” is a classic espresso, while a “capo” refers to an espresso with a small amount of milk. Adding “in B” means the drink is served in a glass instead of a cup. This specialized vocabulary reflects how deeply coffee culture is rooted in everyday life – it is not just a product, but a shared language.

In many ways, Trieste’s coffee district represents a balance between scale and identity. It handles millions of kilograms of coffee each year, yet remains closely tied to local traditions and knowledge. The result is a model that combines industrial efficiency with cultural depth, showing how a global commodity can still retain a strong sense of place.

Italian good news

Montepulciano named the world's most welcoming destination for 2026

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Montepulciano, a small hilltop town in southern Tuscany, has been ranked the most welcoming city in the world for 2026, according to Booking.com's latest Traveller Review Awards. The recognition is based on more than 370 million verified guest reviews collected globally, offering a data-driven snapshot of where travelers feel most genuinely welcomed.

With a population of roughly 14,000 residents, Montepulciano stands out not for its size but for the quality of its hospitality. The ranking evaluates the percentage of local accommodation providers that received awards for high review scores, requiring an average rating of at least 8.0 out of 10. Destinations must also have at least 200 award-winning properties to be considered, ensuring a consistent level of service across the area.

Tourism plays a key role in the local economy, developed steadily over the past 60 years. What distinguishes Montepulciano is its small-scale, community-based approach. Visitors are more likely to stay in family-run guesthouses or agriturismi rather than large hotel chains, creating a more personal experience. This direct interaction with residents contributes significantly to the town's reputation for warmth and authenticity.

According to Booking.com data, 45% of travelers consider friendly locals a major factor when choosing a destination. Montepulciano aligns perfectly with this preference, offering an environment where daily life unfolds at a slower pace and visitors can easily connect with local culture.

The town's layout also enhances this experience. Its compact historic center is largely walkable, with narrow streets leading to Piazza Grande, the central square. This design naturally encourages encounters with shop owners, winemakers, and residents, reinforcing a sense of belonging rather than anonymity.

Cultural identity plays another major role. Montepulciano is internationally known for Vino Nobile, one of Italy's historic wines, and for traditional dishes such as pici pasta. Food and wine are not just tourist attractions but integral parts of everyday life, giving visitors a deeper, more authentic connection to the destination.

Globally, Montepulciano leads a list of ten cities recognized for exceptional hospitality in

2026. Other destinations include Magong in Taiwan, San Martín de los Andes in Argentina, and Harrogate in the United Kingdom, reflecting a diverse geographic spread.

The broader awards highlight the scale of the hospitality sector worldwide. In 2026, Booking.com recognized 1.81 million partners across 221 countries and territories. Italy continues to perform strongly, ranking among the top countries for the number of awarded properties, confirming its long-standing reputation for quality tourism services.

Ultimately, Montepulciano's top ranking is not driven by major attractions or mass tourism infrastructure. Instead, it reflects consistent guest satisfaction, strong community involvement, and a model of tourism built on authenticity. In an era where travelers increasingly seek meaningful experiences, this Tuscan town demonstrates how smaller destinations can compete globally by focusing on quality, personal connection, and cultural identity.

Italian economy

Energy between Italy and the US, an industrial choice – not just environmental

Fabrizio Fasani

A few weeks ago, during a working session on an energy project tied to a region in southern Italy, I found myself in a situation that, more than any theoretical analysis, captures the moment we are living through. Around the table were local entrepreneurs, engineers, a U.S.-based investor, and - just as importantly - a personal connection to Italy that went beyond business.

At a certain point, the conversation shifted from numbers to perspective. No longer about

the return on investment, but whether that model could be replicated, scaled, and sustained over time. In other words, whether it was truly industrial.

That's when it became clear to me that the energy transition - at least for those actually building it - has already changed in nature. It is no longer a topic for conferences or strategic plans, but an operational choice that requires vision, capital, and execution.

And, above all, relationships.

In recent months, I've increasingly found myself working on projects that bring together energy, territory, and industrial development. Energy communities, hydrogen initiatives, integrated models that link production and consumption. Across all these contexts, one constant emerges: technology is not the issue. The real challenge is building an economic model that holds up.

And it is precisely on this front that the relationship between Italy and the United States is evolving.

For a long time, we viewed this relationship through the lens of exports. Today, however, the question that keeps coming up in working groups is different: how can we build pieces of the value chain together that will still make sense in five or ten years?

This is not a semantic shift. It is a shift in mindset.

In the United States, this evolution has been accelerated by clear policy choices that have brought energy back to the center of industrial policy. In Italy, the path is more fragmented, but for that very reason it offers interesting opportunities for those who know how to navigate between the public and private sectors.

In my work, this dynamic has become increasingly evident. I often find myself acting as a bridge between worlds that struggle to communicate on their own: local companies with strong technical expertise but limited scale, and international counterparts - often American, sometimes Italian American - with financial capacity and a broader vision.

When that balance is achieved, it is extremely powerful.

Because Italy, in this space, brings a level of design and project quality that is far from guaranteed. The ability to integrate energy, manufacturing, and territory stems from a unique industrial history - one built on districts, specialization, and adaptability.

The United States, on the other hand, brings scale, speed, and an investment culture that can turn an idea into an industrial platform.

The Italian American community fits squarely into this space.

Not as a symbolic presence, but as a concrete accelerator. A network of relationships that helps reduce distance, build trust more quickly, and make possible deals that might otherwise remain on paper.

In the project I mentioned earlier - which, for obvious reasons, I cannot detail - it was precisely this element that made the difference. The presence of an American counterpart with Italian roots helped overcome, in just a few weeks, roadblocks that would normally take months to resolve. Not through shortcuts, but through cultural alignment.

And when you are working on energy investments - where timelines are long and capital commitments are significant - that kind of acceleration is decisive.

Take energy communities, which in Italy are now entering a more concrete phase. They are not just an environmentally sustainable model, but a new way of organizing energy production and consumption.

However, to become truly impactful, they must find a scalable and economically viable structure.

Or consider hydrogen, often framed as a promise of the future, but already today a field of industrial experimentation. Here too, the challenge is less technological than it might seem: it is about building supply chains, infrastructure, and business models.

These are exactly the contexts in which a structured collaboration between Italy and the United States can generate real value.

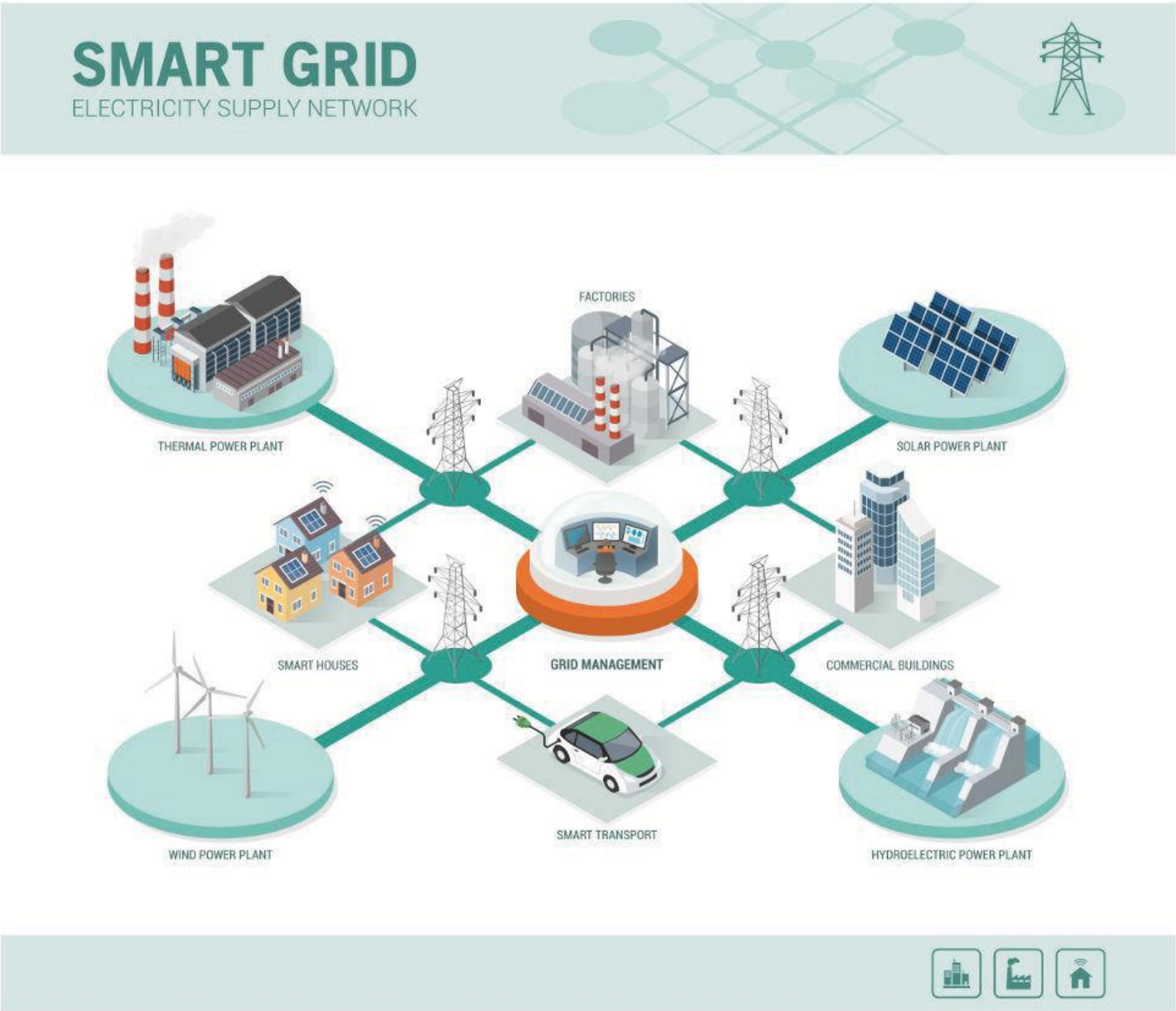
Of course, anyone working on these projects is well aware of the less straightforward side of the Italian system - regulatory complexity, permitting timelines, fragmented decision-making. These are not minor issues; they directly affect the economic feasibility of projects.

But precisely for this reason, working with international partners can become a source of discipline as well as opportunity.

Over the years, I have developed a conviction that grows stronger with each project: the energy transition will not be won on technology, but on governance. On the ability to bring together different stakeholders, with different interests, around a shared vision.

And this is where the relationship between Italy and the United States can take a leap forward.

No longer just a commercial relationship, but a platform for industrial co-development, where capital, expertise, and culture intersect.



If this happens - and the signals are there - the Italian American community will play a central role. Not as a reflection of shared origins, but as an active part of a contemporary economic process.

Because, in the end, the real question is not whether we will continue to collaborate.

The question is whether we will be able to do so on a more ambitious level.

Energy, today, is one of the few areas where that leap is both possible - and perhaps necessary.

Italian culture and history

Puglia, where Magna Graecia met the gateway between East and West

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Puglia, the long, sunlit region stretching along Italy's southeastern edge, has always been more than a geographic boundary. It is a threshold – a meeting point between worlds. Facing the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean, with Albania less than 80 kilometers away across the Adriatic at its narrowest point, Puglia has historically functioned as a bridge between East and West. Its identity was shaped not by isolation, but by constant movement – of people, goods, and ideas.

Long before modern Italy existed, this region was already

Otranto

deeply connected to the wider Mediterranean. As early as the 8th century BCE, Greek settlers arrived along the southern coasts, establishing colonies that would become part of Magna Graecia, or "Greater Greece." Cities like Taranto, founded by Spartan colonists around 706 BCE, emerged as powerful urban centers. At its peak, Taranto is estimated to have had a population of over 200,000 inhabitants, making it one of the largest cities in the ancient Greek world outside mainland Greece.

The influence of Greek civilization in Puglia was not superficial. It shaped language, urban planning, religion, and philosophy. The nearby site of Metapontum became associated with Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher and math-

Brindisi

ematician, who is believed to have spent part of his life in the region during the 6th century BCE. Archaeological remains – temples, pottery, coins – still testify to a deeply rooted Hellenic presence. Even today, traces of Greek heritage survive in dialects and cultural practices, particularly in the Salento area, where a small community still speaks Griko, a language with ancient Greek origins.

Yet Puglia's role as a crossroads did not end with Magna Graecia. Its strategic position continued to attract empires and travelers for centuries. Under Roman rule, the region became a critical hub for trade and military movement. The port of Brindisi, for example, served as the eastern terminus of the Via Appia, one of the most important roads of the Roman Empire. From here, ships departed toward Greece, Asia Minor, and beyond. By the 2nd century BCE, Brindisi had become one of the busiest ports in the Mediterranean, facilitating the movement of thousands of people and tons of goods each year.

In the Middle Ages, Puglia's role as a gateway intensified. The city of Otranto, located at the easternmost point of Italy, became a symbolic and practical "door to the East." During the Crusades, thousands of knights and pilgrims passed through its harbor on their way to the Holy Land. It is estimated that between the 11th and 13th centuries, tens of thousands of crusaders embarked from ports along the Apulian coast, including Brindisi and Bari. These movements brought not only military expeditions but also cultural exchange, introducing new artistic styles, technologies, and culinary influences.

This continuous interaction with different civilizations – Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Norman, and later Aragonese – gave Puglia a layered identity. Byzantine rule, in particular, left a lasting imprint between the 6th and 11th centuries CE, reinforcing ties with the Eastern Mediterranean. Churches with Greek inscriptions, mosaics, and iconography can still


Bari

be found across the region, reflecting a blend of Eastern Orthodox and Western Christian traditions.

Today, Puglia's historical role as a bridge is increasingly visible again. In recent decades, the region has become a point of arrival for migrants crossing the Adriatic, echoing ancient patterns of movement. At the same time, tourism has surged, with international arrivals increasing by over 30% in the past decade. Visitors are drawn not only by beaches and cuisine, but by the region's unique cultural synthesis – a place where East and West have met for more than 2,500 years.

To understand Puglia is to recognize that its story is not one of periphery, but of connection. From the Greek colonies of Magna Graecia to the bustling medieval ports that linked Europe to the Levant, this region has always looked outward. Its history reminds us that borders can also be bridges – and that cultural identity is often born at the crossroads.

Italian healthcare

Rome's Bambino Gesù named Europe's top pediatric hospital

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital in Rome has been recognized as the leading pediatric hospital in Europe and the sixth best in the world in the latest global healthcare ranking published by the U.S. magazine Newsweek. The list evaluates specialized medical centers across multiple disciplines and highlights institutions that demonstrate outstanding clinical performance, patient outcomes, and quality of care.

The ranking is part of the annual "World's Best Specialized Hospitals" report produced by Newsweek in collaboration with the data research company Statista. The study examines thousands of hospitals worldwide and analyzes factors such as professional recommendations, patient experience, treatment quality, and healthcare safety indicators. More than 2,500 medical institutions from 32 countries were assessed in the latest edition of the ranking.

Within the pediatric specialty category, the hospital based in Rome secured the 6th position globally while becoming the top pediatric facility in Europe. It is also the only pediatric hospital operating within Italy's national health system to appear among the world's top 30 specialized institutions in this field.

The global pediatric ranking is led by major North American institutions. Hospitals such as the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Boston Children's Hospital, and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia are consistently ranked among the top facilities internationally. In this highly competitive environment, Bambino Gesù's placement confirms its role as one of the most advanced pediatric centers in the world.

The hospital has steadily improved its position in recent years. In the 2024 ranking it held 9th place worldwide, meaning the latest evaluation reflects an advance of three

positions in just one year. The consistent progress highlights the institution's strong focus on research, clinical innovation, and specialized treatment for complex pediatric diseases.

Founded in 1869 and owned by the Holy See, Bambino Gesù operates as a nonprofit institution integrated into the Italian National Health Service. Over time it has developed into one of Europe's leading centers for pediatric medicine, combining advanced clinical care with scientific research. The hospital treats thousands of young patients every year and carries out highly specialized procedures in areas such as oncology, cardiology, neurology, and rare genetic diseases.

The international recognition also reflects the work of a large multidisciplinary community that includes physicians, nurses, researchers, technicians, and support staff. Their efforts focus not only on medical treatment but also on the psychological and social support of children and their families during hospitalization.

For Italy's healthcare system, the ranking represents an important acknowledgment of the quality of pediatric medicine in

the country. Having a hospital positioned in the global top 10 confirms the strength of Italian expertise in children's healthcare and reinforces Rome's status as a major center for medical research and advanced treatment.

As international healthcare competition intensifies, Bambino Gesù's placement among the world's best pediatric hospitals demonstrates that European medical institutions can continue to play a leading role in innovation, specialized care, and scientific advancement.

Italian design

Bonaveri design, from mannequins to furniture

Alberto Improda

Design is a rapidly expanding phenomenon, steadily broadening its scope and exerting an increasingly pervasive influence across all areas of business. This trend is clearly reflected in the story of a somewhat hidden excellence of Italian design – a company that, within its sector, represents a true gem of *Made in Italy* on the global stage: Bonaveri.

The company was founded in Renazzo di Cento in Emilia Romagna by Romano Bonaveri in 1953, during the extraordinary period of growth in Italy known as the Economic Boom, and today it is a global leader in mannequin production. The business grew out of its founder's artisanal experience: in the postwar years, he masterfully shaped paper to create allegor-

ical figures for the floats of the famous Carnival of Cento.

Now led by his sons Andrea and Guido Bonaveri, the Ferrara-based company is unquestionably a benchmark in its field, combining craftsmanship, design, industrial processes, and technology in the creation of its mannequins.

The company has recently strengthened its international leadership through the acquisition of another historic brand in the sector: Rootstein, a London-based firm founded in the late 1950s, specializing in mannequins modeled after famous models and personalities.

Bonaveri's reputation is now universally recognized: leading fashion houses and major costume museums – including Fondazione Valentino, Les Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, to name just a few – choose its mannequins not only as display tools but, above all, as vehicles of their visual identity.

Andrea Bonaveri summarizes more than seventy years of history as follows: "Bonaveri was born from our father Romano's

intuition. In the postwar period, he created allegorical figures for Carnival floats; from that experience came his vocation for shaping bodies and bringing to life forms that tell stories. The first mannequins were entirely handmade in papier-mâché and plaster, with an almost sculptural approach. Over the years, we have evolved this artisanal heritage, officially founding the company in 1953 and integrating it with advanced technologies, new materials, and aesthetic research. Today Bonaveri produces around 15,000 mannequins per year and is recognized as an international benchmark, with a strong presence in major global markets. We have several lines, each expressing a different aesthetic language. Our mannequins are chosen by major international brands because they combine design, sustainability, innovation, and a quality that remains authentically artisanal."

Over time, the company has undergone significant growth, marked by courage and foresight, always focusing on mannequins – a product that may seem simple but actually embodies remarkable complexity.

Bonaveri's production is organized into four main lines, each further reinterpreted in details and poses to cover all product categories: Classic, Schläppi, Sartorial, and B by Bonaveri.

Across every aspect of the company's activity – from the stylized lines of Schläppi to the tailored silhouettes of Bonaveri Sartorial, from the more glamorous figures of B by Bonaveri to the hyper-realistic forms of Adel Rootstein – digital innovation, including 3D scanning and computerized volume studies, coexists with the craftsmanship of sculptors skilled in shaping clay, plaster, resin, marble, bronze, and wood.

In recent years, the company has paid increasing attention to the principles of sustainability and the demands of corporate social responsibility. Since 2012, Bonaveri has been developing alternative materials, bio-resins, and

low-impact coatings. The BNatural project, in particular, replaces fiberglass with plant fibers and bio-based resins, while renewable energy and redesigned packaging help reduce consumption and emissions.

In 2025, the project "BNatural – Sustainable Mannequins for Ethical Fashion" was awarded the prestigious Responsible Innovators Prize 2025 by the Emilia-Romagna Region.

In line with the expanding trajectory mentioned at the outset, the company is now bringing its heritage, expertise, and know-how into the field of furniture design with the launch of Bonaveri Decor, presented in Milan in October 2025.

The collection, titled "The 10 Collection," is conceived as the imagined exhibition of a collector "who, over the course of a lifetime, has gathered precious objects filled with emotion, memories, and personal history" (from the company's website).

The project brings together ten sculptural elements and ten architectural pedestals, transforming materials and anatomical forms into a new domestic landscape. It draws inspiration from the atelier's 75-year history, translating it into unexpected and contemporary forms.

Among the standout pieces is "The Red Hand," a modern reinterpretation in lacquered bio-resin of the historic Schläppi hand

from 1968, painted in Bonaveri Red – the historic color of Ferrara, the family's hometown.

Also striking is "La Baronessa," which pays tribute to Constantin Brâncuși's *Sleeping Muse*, combining Portoro marble and polished brass.

The 1967 Loisir mannequin, originally conceived as a monumental work, is reimagined on a smaller scale as a totemic, primitive, and enigmatic object carved in Rosso Verona marble.

The collection also explicitly pays homage to British artist Barbara Hepworth, particularly inspired by her 1949 blue marble work *The Cosdon Head*.

Bonaveri's remarkable journey can truly be seen as a modern manifesto of the potential of design – a multifaceted tool capable of creating virtuous and surprising connections between creativity and sustainability, business and art.

Italian street food

Cicchetti, Venice's street food tradition between history and everyday life

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Cicchetti are Venice's answer to street food, but their story begins long before the modern idea of grab-and-go eating. The tradition dates back to around the 1400s, when merchants and traders stopped near the Rialto market to rest, close deals, and enjoy a quick bite with a glass of wine. What started as a practical habit gradually became a defining feature of Venetian daily life.

The word itself comes from the Latin "ciccus," meaning "small

quantity," which perfectly describes their nature. Cicchetti are small, flavorful bites designed to be eaten quickly, often without utensils, making them one of the earliest forms of European fast food. Unlike industrial fast food, however, they rely on fresh, local ingredients and traditional recipes shaped by centuries of trade and cultural exchange.

At their core, cicchetti are simple but highly varied. They can be served on slices of bread, small pieces of polenta, or as fried bites. Common ingredients include seafood, cured meats, cheeses, and seasonal vegetables. Among the most iconic versions is baccalà mantecato – a creamy spread made from salted cod – typically served on toasted bread. Other classics include sardines prepared in sweet-and-sour sauce, small meatballs, marinated anchovies, and fried vegetables.

This variety reflects Venice's history as a global trading hub. At its peak, the city imported thousands of tons of spices and goods

each year, blending local lagoon products with influences from across the Mediterranean and beyond. That same mix of cultures still defines cicchetti today, where traditional recipes coexist with modern interpretations.

Cicchetti are not just about what you eat, but how you eat. They are typically served in bacari, small wine bars with limited seating, where the experience is informal and social. The idea is not to sit down for a full meal, but to move from place to place, sampling different bites along the way. This practice is often compared to Spanish tapas, but in Venice it follows its own rhythm and rituals.

A key element of the experience is the "ombra," a small glass of wine traditionally enjoyed alongside each cicchetto. The term dates back to when wine sellers in St. Mark's Square would keep their barrels in the shadow of the bell tower to stay cool. Today, pairing cicchetti with wine remains essential, turning a quick snack into a social ritual.

One of the most distinctive aspects of cicchetti culture is the way people eat them. Instead of ordering a single dish, locals usually select two or three pieces at a time, eat them standing at the counter or outside, and then move on to another bacaro. Over the course of an evening, this can turn into a progressive meal made up of multiple stops, each offering a slightly different atmosphere and selection.

Prices are traditionally accessible, with most cicchetti costing between 1 and 3 euros, making them an affordable way to experience Venetian cuisine. This accessibility has always been part of their identity – a food for everyone, from merchants centuries ago to locals and visitors today.

What makes cicchetti unique is their balance between simplicity and depth. Each bite is small, but it carries layers of flavor and history. They are not designed to impress through presentation or size, but through taste, quality, and context. Eating cicchetti means stepping into a rhythm that is distinctly Venetian – unhurried, social, and rooted in everyday life.

In the end, cicchetti are more than just street food. They represent a way of experiencing Venice that goes beyond landmarks and postcards. They invite you to slow down, to explore, and to connect with the city through its most authentic spaces.

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Italian Citizenship Assistance

Italy is reshaping citizenship by descent. What the new centralized system means for applicants

Italian Citizenship Assistance

Italy has introduced a major reform that will transform how citizenship by descent (*jure sanguinis*) applications are processed for individuals living abroad. While the legal foundations of citizenship eligibility remain unchanged, the administrative pathway is undergoing a significant overhaul—one that will gradually shift authority away from consulates and into a centralized office in Rome.

This reform marks one of the most substantial procedural updates in decades and reflects

a broader effort by the Italian government to modernize consular services and standardize application handling worldwide.

A Shift Away from Consulates

For years, Italian consulates have served as the primary gateway for individuals applying for citizenship by descent outside of Italy. Under the new legislation, that model will be phased out.

In its place, Italy plans to introduce a centralized system managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale*). A newly established office in Rome—dedicated exclusively to citizenship-by-descent applications—will gradually take over responsibility for reviewing cases submitted from abroad.

Once the system is fully implemented, adult applicants will no longer begin their process through their local consulate. Instead, applications will be submitted directly to this specialized office.

How the New Process Will Work

The reform introduces a more structured and uniform ap-

plication model. While operational details may continue to evolve during implementation, the framework outlines several key changes:

- Applications will be submitted directly to the Rome-based office rather than consulates
- Original documents will be required and typically sent by mail
- Consulates will step back from processing adult citizenship-by-descent applications

Going forward, consulates are expected to focus primarily on:

- Services for individuals who are already recognized as Italian citizens
- Administrative matters involving minor children of Italian citizens

This represents a fundamental shift in how applicants engage with the Italian system.

A Gradual Transition Through 2029

Despite the significance of the reform, the transition will not happen overnight. The legislation provides for a phased implementation period extending over several years.

During this time:

- Consulates will continue handling existing cases
- New application intake may become more limited
- The centralized office will progressively take on a larger role

The full transition is expected to be completed by 2029, at which point the Rome office will serve as the primary authority for applications submitted from abroad.

Longer Processing Times on the Horizon

One of the most notable changes introduced by the reform is the extension of the official processing timeline.

Under the new system, applications may take up to 36 months to be reviewed—significantly longer than the timelines historically associated with consular processing.

This adjustment reflects the logistical realities of centralizing a high volume of applications into a single administrative body.

What Hasn't Changed

While the procedural framework is evolving, it is important to clarify what remains the same:

- The eligibility criteria for citizenship by descent have not been replaced by this reform
- The changes primarily affect how and where applications are processed, not who qualifies
- The current system remains in place during the transition period

Applicants who already have pending cases or scheduled consular appointments should continue following existing procedures unless instructed otherwise.

Looking Ahead

This reform signals a broader shift in how Italy manages its global population of descendants. By centralizing citizenship recognition, the government aims to create a more consistent and controlled sys-

tem. However, the long-term impact remains to be seen.

For some applicants, the changes may bring greater clarity and uniformity. For others, longer processing times and reduced access to consulates could present new challenges.

As the system evolves, one potential consequence is already becoming apparent: an increased interest in judicial pathways for citizenship recognition, particularly for those seeking more predictable timelines.

Final Thoughts

Italy's move toward a centralized citizenship system represents a turning point in the administration of jure sanguinis. While the transition will unfold gradually, applicants should be aware that the process is entering a new phase—one that prioritizes centralized oversight over localized consular handling.

For now, the current procedures remain in place. But over the coming years, the path to Italian citizenship from abroad will look very different.

Take the Next Step

If you are considering applying for Italian citizenship by descent, understanding how these changes may impact your case is more important than ever—especially as the system transitions toward centralization.

Our team specializes in guiding applicants through every stage of the process, from eligibility assessment to document preparation and submission.

Schedule a consultation with Italian Citizenship Assistance's team today to evaluate your case and determine the best strategy based on your timeline and goals.

Italian traditions

A timeless regatta of reeds and tradition in Santa Giusta, Sardinia

We the Italians Editorial Staff

"Is Fassonis", A unique blend of nature, heritage, and craftsmanship comes to life each year in the small town of Santa Giusta, in the province of Oristano, Sardinia. Here, a remarkable water spectacle highlights one of the oldest boating traditions known to humankind. These vessels, entirely handmade from natural materials,

are tightly bound together using age-old techniques passed down through generations.

The process begins with weaving reeds harvested from the lagoon, shaping them into what is considered one of the earliest forms of watercraft. Mastering not only their construction but also their navigation is an art. Fishermen stand upright on these narrow boats, balancing carefully while propelling themselves forward with a long pole made of reeds. The hull, composed of dried marsh grass, glides just above the water's surface. While the image may seem almost poetic, for the local fishermen these boats, known as Is fassonis, are part of everyday life. They represent both survival and identity, a living tradition renewed daily through skill and dedication.

Originating in the nearby communities of Cabras and Santa Giusta, these boats are regarded as unique worldwide, despite their striking resemblance to South American vessels like the cabal-

lito de totora from Huanchaco and the reed boats of Lake Titicaca in Puno. Santa Giusta has maintained a cultural partnership with these South American towns for more than 10 years. Evidence of the boats' ancient roots can be found in a depiction inside the hypogeum of San Salvatore di Sinis, dating back to the 4th century AD. Some researchers suggest a Phoenician origin due to similarities with papyrus boats, while others trace them even further back to the Nuragic era, over 3,000 years ago.

Since 1978, Santa Giusta has celebrated this heritage every August with the Regata de Is fassonis, a popular event held along the lagoon's shores. The race combines cultural significance with competitive spirit, showcasing the balance and strength of the participants. The boats typically measure about 350 cm in length and 95 cm in width, dimensions that have remained largely unchanged over centuries. Historically used by Nuragic, Phoenician, and Roman populations, they were essential tools for fishing and transportation in shallow waters.

Construction relies on bundles of fenu, a local aquatic plant now protected by regional environmental regulations. The reeds are tied together with natural fiber ropes, forming a sharply pointed bow and a flat stern, ideal for navigating waters with minimal depth. Their design is both simple and highly functional, reflecting centuries of adaptation to the lagoon environment.

The regatta takes place in the Pauli Maiori lagoon and attracts visitors of all ages – families, tourists, and locals alike. Spectators gather along the banks to enjoy the cool breeze and the captivating race, which begins at sunset on the first Sunday of August. Standing upright, competitors push against the lagoon floor with a long pole known as a cantoi, racing across the water in a test of speed and balance.

The event also offers a chance to experience local cuisine, including freshly grilled fish and the renowned Vernaccia wine from Oristano. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of local associations, including the Pro Loco, munic-

ipal authorities, and a small number of skilled artisans, the knowledge of building Is fassonis continues to be passed on to younger generations. This ensures that a tradition spanning thousands of years will endure, preserving a distinctive piece of Sardinia's cultural identity for the future.

Italian historical trademarks

Boccia Industria Grafica and its PrintlitoArt Platform

Associazione Marchi Storici d'Italia

Since 1961, Boccia Industria Grafica S.p.A. has operated in the paper printing sector for the European market, in the segments of magazine printing, books, puzzle magazines, sudoku, and large-scale retail distribution (GDO) on behalf of publishers and retail chains.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the company printed all European editions for Weider and for American Media, with mag-

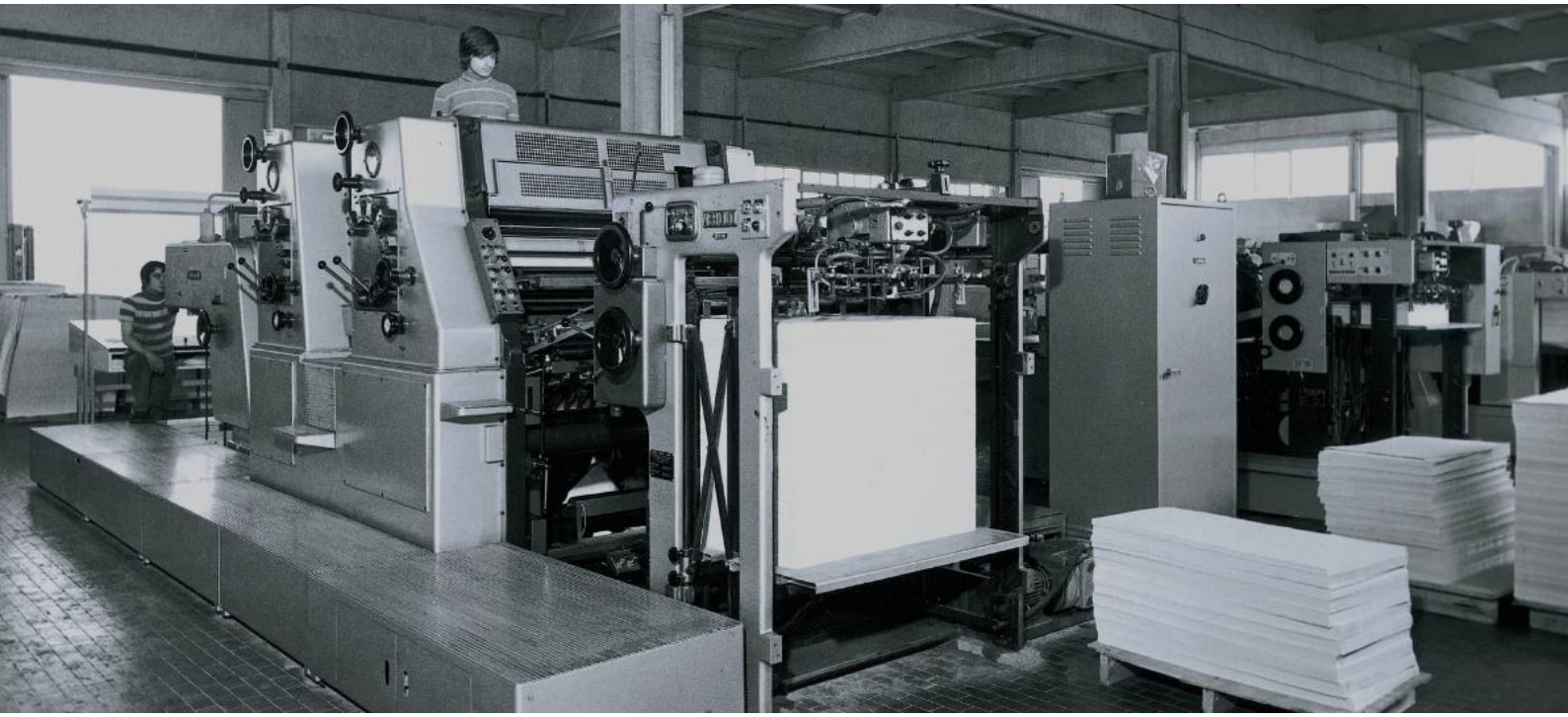
azines such as Muscle & Fitness, Shape, and other widely distributed titles.

The geographic location of Salerno makes Boccia Industria Grafica a strategic hub for the printing and distribution of European editions of American magazine publishers, positioned at the center between Europe and the Mediterranean.

Full control of the entire production chain within the company allows it to achieve particularly high performance for publishing clients, enabling them to recover efficiency in their production processes. Among its rotary presses, the company is one of the few in Europe to operate with a 578 mm cut-off, a distinctive feature that demonstrates the high level of technological specialization achieved.

This year, the company relaunched - returning to its more than sixty-year traditions and to the millenary history of its territory in the paper and printing sector - the first and only fully Made in Italy platform in the world for fine art lithographic printing, PrintlitoArt. This initiative creates a bridge across time between the 12th-century *Magistri in Arte Cartarum* (the renowned Amalfi paper tradition) and today's masters of the printing arts.

A dedicated division and independent brand have thus been created, targeting companies, art galleries, museums, artists, hotel chains, and cruise ship builders worldwide. Through PrintlitoArt, a fully Made in Italy product, the mission is to make art and beauty accessible to a broad audience.



Founded in 1961 by Orazio Boccia, Boccia Industria Grafica S.p.A. today represents one of the most established and innovative companies in the Italian and European industrial printing landscape. With over sixty years of experience, the company has successfully combined artisanal tradition with the most advanced technologies, earning a reputation for excellence recognized both nationally and internationally.

Boccia Industria Grafica S.p.A. originated from the vision of Orazio Boccia, who, starting from a small print shop equipped with a semi-automatic pedal press and a few sets of type, dreamed of transforming his passion for printing into a successful industrial enterprise.

In its early years, the company stood out for its meticulous craftsmanship, producing high-quality work primarily for the local market. Over time, Boccia Industria Grafica progressively expanded its expertise and production capacity, introducing technologies such as offset and roto-offset printing and building a modern, highly specialized machinery fleet.

The philosophy of Boccia Industria Grafica S.p.A. is based on clear values: quality, precision, reliability, and innovation. Another fundamental value is its connection to Italian tradition, which the company has always kept alive by passing down skills and techniques from generation to generation.

Membership in the Associazione dei Marchi Storici d'Italia and in Museimpresa, along with the Museo Boccia Industria Grafica, demonstrates the company's commitment to promoting Italian industrial culture and preserving the historical memory of the printing trade.

Boccia Industria Grafica S.p.A. represents a virtuous example of how tradition, innovation, and Italian values can coexist and thrive in the contemporary context.

From a small print shop in 1961 to a modern and technologically advanced industrial company, Boccia Industria Grafica has evolved without ever losing its connection to its roots, strengthening its reputation on the international stage and reaffirming the importance of passion, professionalism, and innovation that have always distinguished Made in Italy.

Italian territories

Valnerina, Umbria's hidden mountain valley of nature, history and slow tourism

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Valnerina is one of central Italy's most distinctive landscapes, a long and winding valley shaped by the course of the Nera River and framed by the rugged terrain of the Apennines. Located primarily in southeastern Umbria, the area extends across multiple provinces –

including Perugia, Terni, Macerata, and Rieti – and forms a natural corridor between Umbria, Marche, and Lazio.

At the heart of this region flows the Nera River, which stretches for about 116 km from its source in the Sibillini Mountains to its confluence with the Tiber near Orte. It is the Tiber's largest tributary by water flow, with a drainage basin of roughly 4,280 km². The river is not only a defining geographic feature but also the backbone of local ecosystems, agriculture, and tourism.

Unlike much of Italy, where plains dominate economic development, Umbria is a predominantly hilly and mountainous region. Around 29.3% of its territory is mountainous, while 70.7% consists of hills, and there are virtually no large flat areas. The Valnerina reflects this terrain perfectly, with steep slopes, narrow gorges, and small villages perched on ridges or tucked into the valley floor.

Historically, the valley developed as a network of rural communities connected by the river and mountain paths. Today, towns such as Norcia, Cascia, Cerreto di Spoleto, and Visso serve as key cultural and economic hubs. Smaller villages like Vallo di Nera, which has just over 300 residents, highlight the region's demographic reality – a sparse population and a strong sense of local identity.

Tourism in the Valnerina has grown steadily in recent years, driven by demand for slow travel, outdoor activities, and authentic rural experiences. Of-

ficial regional data shows that tourist arrivals in the area increased by about +5.6% in one recent period, although overnight stays declined slightly by –2.5%, indicating shorter visits but continued interest. Overall, broader trends in Umbria point to growth of +5.3% in arrivals and +6.1% in total stays compared to pre-pandemic levels, with domestic tourism rising more strongly than international demand.

The natural environment plays a central role in this appeal. One of the most important protected areas is the Nera River Park, which covers about 2,460 hectares and includes a 20 km stretch of river between Ferentillo and the Marmore Falls. This park supports outdoor recreation such as rafting, hiking, and cycling, as well as educational programs that attract thousands of students each year – in one estimate, around 44,000 participants annually.

Castelluccio di Norcia

Accommodation in the area reflects its rural character. In the municipalities of the Nera River Park alone, there are about 119 lodging facilities, with approximately 3,650 beds available. Notably, about 80% of these are non-hotel options such as agriturismi, bed-and-breakfasts, and guesthouses, highlighting a tourism model based on small-scale hospitality rather than large resorts.

Marmore Waterfalls

Vallo di Nera

Another defining feature of the Valnerina is its accessibility to major natural and cultural attractions. From the valley, visitors can easily reach the high plains around Norcia, known for agriculture and food traditions, or head toward the Velino River basin, whose waters create the famous Marmore Falls with a drop of about 165 meters.

Despite earthquakes and economic challenges over the years, the Valnerina continues to reinvent itself by focusing on sustainable tourism and environmental preservation. The region emphasizes local products, traditional crafts, and outdoor experiences, aligning with broader trends in travel that favor authenticity over mass tourism.

The Valnerina is not just a geographic area but a living landscape shaped by water, mountains, and centuries of human adaptation. Its relatively small population, modest infrastructure, and strong environmental identity make it a unique destination in Italy – one where nature, history, and community remain closely intertwined.

Italian wine

Basilicata wines, a hidden southern identity shaped by volcanoes and time

We the Italians Editorial Staff

Basilicata is one of Italy's smallest wine regions, with about 11,000 hectares of vineyards, yet it produces some of the country's most distinctive and long-lived wines. Unlike better-known regions such as Tuscany or Piedmont, Basilicata remains relatively under the radar, but its wines combine ancient origins, unique geography, and strong character. At the center of this identity

is Aglianico, a red grape that dominates local production, accounting for more than 60% of planted vines in some areas.

The history of wine in Basilicata stretches back over 2,000 years, when Greek settlers introduced vine cultivation to southern Italy between the 7th and 6th centuries BC. Over time, the Romans expanded production, recognizing both the quality and the medicinal value of local wines. During the Middle Ages, viticulture continued to develop, supported by monasteries and noble courts. By the 19th century, wines from the Vulture area were already in demand beyond the region, often used to strengthen other Italian wines thanks to their structure and intensity.

The heart of Basilicata's wine production lies around Mount Vulture, an extinct volcano whose last eruption dates back over 100,000 years. The volcanic soil, rich in minerals and porous in structure, plays a crucial role in shaping the character of the wines. Vineyards are typically planted at elevations between 450 and 600 meters, where temperature swings between day and night help preserve acidity and aromatic complexity.

This combination of altitude, soil, and climate creates a unique terroir that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere.

Aglianico del Vulture is the region's flagship wine and one of southern Italy's most important reds. Officially recognized as a DOC in 1971 and later elevated to DOCG status for its Superiore version in 2011, it is produced from 100% Aglianico grapes grown on the slopes of the volcano. Production remains relatively limited, with around 22,000 hectoliters annually, reinforcing its reputation as a niche but high-quality wine.

In the glass, Aglianico del Vulture is deep ruby in color, often almost opaque. Its aroma is complex, with notes of ripe cherry, dark berries, spices, and sometimes hints of licorice or cocoa. On the palate, it is full-bodied, structured, and tannic, with a firm backbone that allows it to age for 6–20 years or more. Younger versions can feel intense and slightly rustic, but with time they develop smoother textures and greater balance.

While red wines dominate – accounting for roughly 80%–90% of production – Basilicata also offers a surprising diversity. Alongside Aglianico, producers cultivate grapes such as Sangiovese, Montepulciano, and Primitivo, as well as international varieties like Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. White wines, though less common, are made from grapes such as Malvasia Bianca, Greco, and Moscato, typically producing fresh, aromatic styles.

The region includes several denominations beyond Aglianico del Vulture. Matera DOC, located closer to the

Ionian coast, produces a range of reds, whites, and sparkling wines, while Terre dell'Alta Val d'Agri DOC and Grottino di Roccanova DOC offer structured reds often aged in caves carved into tuff rock. These smaller appellations highlight the diversity of Basilicata's landscapes, from volcanic hills to coastal plains.

What makes Basilicata particularly interesting today is the balance between tradition and innovation. Since the 1990s, producers have improved vineyard management by reducing yields and selecting better sites, while also modernizing winemaking techniques such as controlled fermentation and the use of oak barrels. At the same time, many wineries continue to use traditional methods, including aging in large wooden casks or natural cave cellars.

Flavor remains the defining feature of Basilicata wines. They are rarely light or immediate – instead, they tend to be intense, structured, and deeply tied to their environment. The volcanic influence often brings mineral notes and a subtle smoky edge, while the

climate ensures both ripeness and freshness. This combination makes them particularly suited to pairing with rich foods such as grilled meats, game, and aged cheeses.

Despite their quality, Basilicata wines are still relatively undiscovered compared to those from northern Italy. This limited visibility, however, is part of their appeal. They offer authenticity, strong regional identity, and a sense of place that is increasingly rare in a globalized wine market.

In the end, Basilicata is not about volume but about character. Its wines tell the story of an ancient land shaped by fire, altitude, and time – a place where tradition continues to evolve without losing its roots.

Italian proverbs

Patti chiari, amicizia lunga

We the Italians Editorial Staff

The Italian proverb “Patti chiari, amicizia lunga” (literally “Clear agreements make long friendships”) expresses a simple but powerful idea: relationships last longer when expectations are clearly defined from the beginning. The saying emphasizes the importance of making terms explicit to avoid misunderstandings.

Its roots go back to Latin culture, reflecting a long tradition of valuing clarity in agreements. When rules, roles, and intentions are openly discussed, conflicts are less likely to arise. This proverb applies not only to friendships but also to business and everyday interactions. Ultimately, it suggests that transparency is not a sign of distrust, but a foundation for respect, stability, and lasting human connections.

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