

What and where is the **Garfagnana**?

The Garfagnana is a historical and geographical region of central Italy, today part of the province of Lucca, in Tuscany. It is the upper valley or basin of the river Serchio, and thus lies between the main ridge of the Northern Apennines to the north-east and the marble mountains of the Alpi Apuane to the west.

Garfagnana means streams of beautiful water. Water falling down over the sides, what makes the base of the two rock faces (a canyon), which almost closes over as a cave.

Hiking, horseback riding, biking, skiing, golfing and canoeing are popular activities in the magnificent scenery, and are also among the most frequent types of outdoor activities in Garfagnana in northern Tuscany.



Very Helpful Websites to help plan you stay:

<https://www.visittuscany.com/en/ideas/livorno-city-of-flavours-a-food-tour-from-cacciucco-to-ponce/>

Places of Interest

www.visittuscany.com

www.tuscanyitaly.info

Google Places to Visit in Garfagnana

What do these mean? (In case you were wondering....)

Pranza di Lavoro- workers lunch includes fixed price menu- antipasto, main, dessert and a drink.

L'edicola: newsstand

La gioielleria: jewelry shop

La profumeria: perfume/cosmetic shop

La libreria: bookshop

La tabaccheria: tobacco shop

Il supermercato: supermarket

La farmacia: pharmacy

La tintoria/lavanderia: drycleaners

La pasticceria: pastry shop

La macelleria: butcher

La panetteria/il forno: bakery

La pizzereria/salumeria: delicatessen

Il fruttivendolo: greengrocer

La cartoleria: stationery shop

La merceria: sewing goods store

La passamaneria: upholstery/trimmings store

La ferramenta: hardware store

Immobiliare- real estate

Arredamento- home furnishings

Where do we eat?

Ristorante is fine dining establishment and frequently a well-known chef. A complete menu with antipasti, primi, secondi, contorni and dolci which means a starter, the first course, the second course, side dishes and dessert. You can get seafood and meat dishes. The price level is high compared to the other Italian restaurants but it offers a relaxed atmosphere and a whole meal that can take hours, so if you're in a hurry don't look for it.

Osteria is a small bar like establishment, frequented by locals and found in neighborhoods rather than a tourist place. It offers pasta dishes, sandwiches and wine. It offers a casual and informal atmosphere with a focus on regional specialties. An osteria has elements of a bar but will have more restaurant style services than a typical bar.

Trattorias are typically family run casual places to eat traditional and homemade dishes. The difference between a Ristorante and a Trattoria lie in the form of a location, Trattoria is often found on a side street while a Ristorante is on the main street furthermore a Trattoria is also likely to be a smaller eatery than a Ristorante.

Pesceria is a restaurant that offers fish dishes. Not to be mixed up with pescheria which means of fish market or shop.

Tavola Calda- "hot table". This type of Italian restaurants typically has no table service. You need to choose your food from a cafeteria style serving area. It had a small section for ready cooked hot dishes and a bar which offers everything a regular Italian bar offers. It is like a fast food or snack bar.

Rosticceria usually sells roast chicken or other meat products. It offers cooked meats ready for you to take home for your family dinner. At lunchtime it sells meats or chickens and smaller portions so you can eat them on the premises as a quick lunch. Other than meats it also sells roast vegetable dishes.

Pizzeria mainly serve pizza with wine, a variety of salads and a few pasta selections. They are sit down Italian restaurants.

Pizza a taglio Pizza by the slice with limited seating but offer pizza slices calzones and occasionally some desserts packed up to take away.

Taverna is an equivalent of a British pub. It used to be an established found in the mountainous regions of Italy where a traveler could stop for evening and order a hearty meal, drink wine instead of beer and even stay the night nowadays they are in bigger towns and may have a full-service eatery.

Pasticceria Is a pastry or bakery shop. Which is also a type of café which offers self-made Artisanal pastries brioches croissants and the like. They may also serve fresh baked bread meats cheeses. You'll pay and get the food on the counter the casual style and fast moving service makes it a great place to stop for a quick breakfast or pick up everything anything along the way. **Laboratorio** means goods are made on the premises.

Paninoteca is a sandwich bar where you can buy sandwiches like Panini, Tramezzino, bread, cold cuts and cheese. It offers food at cheaper prices.

Enoteca It's a wine bar for tasting and buying regional wines. And Enoteca serve typically a small menu of food similar to tapas for you to accompany your wine. You can expect a selection of cheeses and meats, simple salad bruschetta and occasionally pasta.

Bar A place for refreshments for you one can have a quick breakfast in the morning some like food such as sandwiches for lunch and some appetizers before dinner a bar is similar to a café. Throughout the day the bar usually serves coffee juices and alcohol as well it's also a social place were local chat with each other but everything from family affairs to politics.

Eating Times in Italy

Italians eat 4-5 times a day:

- breakfast is early in the morning;
- there's a morning snack around 11 am (for some it's just a coffee break);
- lunch is between 1 and 2 pm, and is usually at least an hour long;
- the afternoon snack is around 4 -5 pm (again, for some it's just a coffee or tea);
- between 6 and 7 pm it's aperitivo time: something to drink (alcoholic or not), a snack like nuts or olives, and an excuse to meet friends after work or on weekends. This is not an everyday custom, but a pleasant exception.
- and dinner is around 8-9 pm (a little earlier if you go North, a little later if you go South).

<https://www.gourmetproject.net/italian-eating-happy-eating/>

Understanding Italian Police

Carabinieri and Polizia

The two main police forces in the country are the Carabinieri, the national gendarmerie, and the Polizia di Stato, the civil national police. The third one is the Guardia di Finanza, a militarized police force responsible for dealing with financial crime, smuggling, illegal drug trade, and others.

Carabinieri are a military police force, a Gendarmerie-like group governed by the Ministry of Defense, with military and civilian duties; while Polizia di Stato is similar to other civilian police forces and is governed by the Ministry of Interior.

From experience, I have been pulled over for no reason along a road by the Carabinieri and they just want to see your documents.



Vigili Urbani- city traffic police

<https://www.understandingitaly.com/italian-police.html>

Emergency Numbers

Within Italy, the general number for all emergencies – the equivalent of 999 in the UK or 911 in the US – is **113**. This nationwide number connects you to the state police (Polizia di Stato), the civil police force that will assist you not only if you're reporting a crime but for any other kind of emergency too.

112 – Carabinieri

113 – Emergency Police Help Number (also ambulance and fire)

115 – Fire Department.

116 – A.C.I. (Italian Automobile Club) road assistance.

118 – Medical Emergencies.

1515 – Forest Fires.

Train schedules <https://www.italiarail.com/train-schedules>

There are several types of trains in Italy, from high-speed and luxury trains to the trains that connect smaller towns. The type of train you take in Italy can depend on where you're going, how much time you have, and what your budget is.

Italy's high-speed trains are sleek and efficient, with relatively inexpensive ticket prices if purchased in advance. High-speed trains always require reservations. Trenitalia, Italy's state-run rail network, operates most of the high-speed trains. Others are run by a private company, Italo. The two options are competitively priced and reasonably similar, though they sometimes serve different train stations. High-speed train tickets usually cost more than slow trains, but they're much more efficient if you're short on time.

Regional trains in Italy are slower, but serve a much wider network of cities and smaller towns throughout Italy. Many don't require reservations, and some have only second-class cars. Regional trains may be your only option if you're traveling through rural parts of Italy. They take longer, but are sometimes the cheapest option. Other types of trains in Italy include overnight trains for long-haul trips and privately-run scenic trains that are excellent options for sightseeing day trips.

Money

The currency in Italy is **the euro**. Each euro is divided into 100 cents. When you're buying currency for Italy, look out for the currency code EUR. And once you're in Italy, you'll see the symbol € used to show prices.

The euro is the official currency of 19 of the 27 member states of the European Union.

It is not necessary to bring Euro with you. You can use your ATM card at the airport and there are ATMs(Bancomat) in most cities.

USING YOUR **ATM** CARD IN ITALY

ATMs (Bancomats) are the best way to take cash out once you are in Italy, but the daily limit is 250 Euros (banks do that to prevent fraudulent transactions).

Banks have very strange hours to say the least (some, but not all, follow this schedule: 8:20am-1:20pm and then from 2:35pm-4:05pm), so it's not always easy to find one open while you're out. Make sure to tell your local bank the dates you will be gone so your check card doesn't get blocked!! Also, make sure your PIN number will be good overseas, some banks require a different PIN, so again, ask your local branch. **DO NOT** take Traveler's Cheques, they are **VERY** hard to change, many banks off the tourist track do not accept, so avoid the whole trouble by not taking any.

USE YOUR **CREDIT CARD**

Most stores in the bigger cities take credit cards. Stores are more willing to give you a small discount on price if you pay cash! MasterCard and VISA are the most commonly accepted cards. You will get a better exchange rate by using your credit card, as opposed to exchanging US dollars in Italy. When you pay by credit card you'll be able to track your spending better and dispute a charge. Each credit card company has their own policy about international exchange rates and many may even add an international exchange fee on top of the exchange rate. Make sure you check with your bank or credit card company about their policy.

DON'T BRING CASH, US DOLLARS

A note: use your credit card, use ATM machines (which in Italy are called "BANCOMAT"), but don't exchange your cash dollars, unless it's an emergency, because shops will give you a terrible rate and you'll end up paying a commission. Stay away for the exchange booths in the Airports near train stations in the major cities. You will not find Money Change Shops in smaller cities and most smaller bank branches do not even have dollars on hand.



You may on occasion come across a situation where an unkempt but “helpful” gentleman, usually wearing a cap of some kind, will advise you on where you can park. Italians refer to these characters as “parcheggiatore abusivo” – no translation is required. They are definitely not to be trusted as they’ll often charge you to park somewhere it is forbidden so when you return you’ll also have a fine to pay. Follow the parking regulations outlined above.

Tolls

Italy’s highway tolls are pricey at times and varies. It has something to do with relative income levels. You can ask your GPS/Google to route you via non-toll roads, but the journey time will often be much longer if you’re traveling far. Certainly the back roads are more scenic and you never know what you’ll find, but you could spend more on gas than you save, plus you’ll lose a lot of time. Because of the high prices, traffic jams are rare on toll roads.

Usually the way the toll system works is that when you join the highway you’ll stop at a barrier and take a ticket. Keep this somewhere easy to get to (usually there’s a strap on the driver’s-side sun visor to slip it behind). If you see a toll gate that just has a blue or blue and yellow Telepass sign on it, do NOT go through it. That’s for a credit-based system where you have a sensor placed in the car. Your rental almost certainly won’t, unless that was specifically added at the rental desk. Running a toll will cause you problems later. When you come to your exit from the highway you’ll find either manned or automated toll gates. Above them you’ll see signs indicating whether they take cash, card or telepass. You may notice there’s often a line at the cash ones and none at the card-only ones. This is because Italians have a deep mistrust of paying by card. They may have had an experience where the card is swallowed by the machine, or the payment is rejected, at which point a slip is spat out that will require you to go to a post office and pay, or pay online somehow later – the barrier opens but you’d better pay up later! In general it’s better to have cash (crisp notes work best, or lots of 1 & 2 Euro coins) and use a cash-accepting gate.

A ZTL is a “Limited Traffic Zone.” They are sometimes permanent, and sometimes apply only during certain times. The instructions for these are only ever written in Italian. ZTLs are designed to limit the amount of vehicles entering historic city centers. In some cases, by discouraging you they’re doing you a big favor. Some of the streets in these towns are incredibly narrow and really only best navigated by a local.

Usually if the ZTL isn’t permanently in force or the times aren’t completely consistent you’ll see a digital display with a sign that will say “Varco Attivo” or “Varco Non Attivo” (Gate Active or Gate Not Active). Varco Attivo means you should only enter the ZTL if you have permission, which you won’t have unless you’re staying at a hotel inside the ZTL. The hotel can send your car registration number to the police to make sure you’re not fined for entering.



Autogrill and the various similar entities are highway rest stops with a café and a canteen-style restaurant. The food’s actually edible and the coffee is decent and cheap. A stop at one of these is mandatory on any long journey. Try to avoid the temptation to pick up wine here though, as it’s usually not very good. If there’s a good price on parmigianno, however (17 Euros per kilo or less), go crazy. You’re allowed to take hard cheese back to the US. Some of them have a walkway between the two sides, which is where the picture above was taken from.

Road Conditions

- *Some country roads are narrow and often without guardrails.
- *Speeds vary in rural areas, and fog can cloud visibility in northern Italy.
- *Do whatever you can to avoid stopping in emergency lanes, as even they are dangerous and not very wide
- *Slow down at toll booths to avoid accidents and pileups.



Once you're off the major autostrada, you will be driving on roads that were built to accommodate horses and carriages, not automobiles. They're narrow, they're winding, and they snake their way through the terrain. In Cilento, a picturesque 15-minute drive would involve an average of three hairpin turns and some very close 120-degree turns. Small cars are a plus.

SOUND HORN when rounding blind curves!!

The legal drink driving limit in Italy is 0.05%, so watch how many vinos you have at dinner. However, if you have less than 3 years' experience, your limit is 0.00%.

Speed limits: cars and motorbikes (vehicles with engine size over 150 cc): urban areas 50 km/h (31 mph); minor out-of-town roads 90 km/h (56 mph); major out-of-town roads 110 km/h (68 mph); motorways 130 km/h (81 mph). In rain on snow, the limit is lowered to 110 km/h (68mph) n motorways and 90 km/h (55mph) on trunk roads.

Ticket Cameras

As we mentioned before, Italy loves its speed cameras. Speed limits are strictly enforced. Speed traps and cameras are everywhere and they will record an infraction even if you're driving just 5km above the speed limit. Fines range from 35 euros if you're driving under 10kph over the limit to 357 euros if you're driving more than 41kph over the limit.



Manual transmission

Everyone in Italy drives stick. If you want to rent an automatic you're going to pay a lot more.

Beware the GPS- the GPS choses the "fastest" route (by a minute or so) and these routes were also the most complicated. As detailed as the GPS's maps are, they didn't account for nuances of small Italian roads. The GPS got us to the general vicinity but we often found ourselves misdirected.

It's a fairly well-known fact that there is an unofficial **third middle lane** on Italian two-lane roads. It's the passing lane. Don't worry. Italians know how to use it. As a tourist, all you need to know is that when someone roars up behind you, you must move to the right and let them blow by in the "middle" passing lane. It's not unusual for people to pass on turns, narrow stretches or bends. Just get out of the way.

When you are on the autostrada, keep in the right-hand lane unless you are passing. And I don't mean in a North American, "I'll keep right if I remember to" kind of way. Stay in the right lane. If you don't you will make everyone angry and they will hate you.

<https://stayclosetravelfar.com/complete-guide-driving-in-italy/>

Hours of Operation in Italy

Very many **shops** in Italy have a lunch break. This even applies to smaller supermarkets. Typical opening hours with a break are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. However, these times are not regulated by law and there are variations. Some grocery shops open earlier or have no lunch break. Some large shops are also open longer in the evening.

In general the opening hours of shops in Italy are getting longer and longer, especially in the evenings. More and more supermarkets are also open on Sunday. Some for a few hours, others at the same times as during the week. You read more and more opening hours in Italy like 8 am to 8 pm, 7 days a week.

In general, shops in the city centre of big cities are open longer than shops in the countryside. Large, modern shopping centres usually don't have a break at lunchtime and not infrequently open on Sundays.

Generally speaking, all shops in Italy are open during the core hours of the week (around 9.30am to 1pm and 3pm to 7pm). However, many and more shops are open much longer.

In tourist areas like the seaside, opening hours are much longer in summer than in winter. In summer, there is often no lunch break and / or shops are also open at weekends. This applies to supermarkets and not infrequently also to other shops such as souvenir shops or clothing shops.

Opening hours **banks and post office** in Italy

Tourists hardly ever need to visit a bank. As a rule, holidaymakers also withdraw their cash from ATMs or pay by card. If you still need a bank, they are only open in the morning, from 8.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Monday to Friday).

The smaller post offices in Italy are also only open until 2 pm. However, the central post offices in Italy in the city centre often close at 6 pm or similar.

Pharmacies in Italy also usually have a lunch break. Typical opening hours are 9am to 12.30pm and 3pm to 7pm, as with smaller shops. At night and on weekends, there are pharmacies in Italy for emergencies.

Museums and sights in Italy often have a day off. For many this is Monday, but there are also museums with a different day off. Otherwise, the opening hours of museums are not uniform. However, times from 10 am to 6 pm or similar are typical.

Opening Hours Gastronomy Italy

Like everywhere else, **restaurants, cafés, bars and clubs** have the longest opening hours in Italy. Restaurants often open at 10am and close at 11pm. Many bars, discos and nightclubs stay open until the early morning. Of course, there are also places that offer breakfast and open early.

Generally speaking, everything is not uniform.

Please check hours of operation before going to your destination, many places also pick a day off during the week!

Gas stations

A whole article could be written on Italian gas stations. If you're used to a well-stocked convenience store with pumps under a big canopy where you roll up, fill your tank, stroll inside, pick up some snacks and pay for your gas, be aware that these are not common. Gas stations can be as stripped down as a couple of pumps on the sidewalk. They might not be staffed. They might not take credit cards. If they are staffed, watch out for the dual prices. There's usually a "fai da te" or "self" price, which is lower, and a "servito" price, where you'll be paying between 10c and 40c per litre (there are 4 litres in a US gallon) for the pleasure of someone pumping the gas for you. Some pumps are designated as self-service and some with an attendant. Make sure you pick the right one or you'll pay extra and still do the work yourself. In many places, you'll need to pay for the gas before you put it in the car. Returning a rental with a full tank may not be so easy when you need to guess how much you need to put in. In general, always have 10-20 Euros in cash on you for gas just in case you run low.

Make sure that you put the correct type of gas in your rental car.

Olive Harvest at Casa Elena Di Fucchi

In Tuscany, the tradition of harvesting olives begins in late October/early November and usually continues until mid-December, depending on the climatic conditions in order to harvest the fruit at the optimal time.

The olive harvest starts with picking olives. You head out to the fields and you spread out huge nets below the trees, which will be used to gather the olives when they fall. You're given gloves and a rake, and one branch at a time, you rake down the olives by hand. It's super important that you don't step on the olives!



After you've raked down the olives, the nets are gathered, olives collected and placed in baskets which are taken to the olive mill.(Frantoia) It's super important that the olives are pressed on the same day they're picked to ensure a high quality olive oil. Once the olives are at the mill, they get separated from the leaves and dirt and cleaned.



The olives are then placed in a tank, where they get sucked up and then grounded. The result is a homogenous paste which is stirred for a while. The paste is then put into a "cold press" which compresses the olive paste—this is a key step because the the solid part is divided from the liquid part. The liquid part is then sent into a vertical centrifuge that separates the olive oil from the water, and voilà, what's left is olive oil!

But not all olive oil is the same! What's the difference between extra virgin olive oil, virgin olive oil and olive oil? The classification depends on the acidity parameter of the olive oil, which is tested in a lab. For extra virgin olive oil, the acidity must be lower than or equal to 0.8, for virgin olive oil it's between 0.8 and 2, while for regular olive oil it should be more than or equal to 2. The less acidic the olive oil, the better the olive oil. Why? Because the acidity checks the amount of saturated fat, less saturated fat means higher quality olive oil.



So the question is: how do you obtain the low acidity needed to produce extra virgin olive oil? There are three steps you should follow!

1. Pick the olives in autumn! We don't harvest olives in autumn just for the pretty colors! Olives are greener during the fall, while in wintertime they become black and the acidity levels increase. And you know what that means—high acidity levels equals lower quality olive oil.

2. You should press the olives on the same day they are picked. The maximum amount of time you should wait to press the olives is 48 hours since you've harvested them. That's because after 48 hours, the olives start becoming moldy and become more acidic.
3. Cold press the olive paste! When you press the olive paste it must be cold. If the paste is hot, the acidity increases when they get pressed.

Calling/WIFI

Country calling codes or country dial-in codes are telephone number prefixes for reaching telephone subscribers in the networks of the member countries or regions of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The codes are defined by the ITU-T in standards E.123 and E.164. The prefixes enable international direct dialing (IDD) and are also referred to as international subscriber dialing (ISD) codes.

Country codes are a component of the international telephone numbering plan and are necessary only when dialing a telephone number to establish a call to another country. Country codes are dialed before the national telephone number. By convention, international telephone numbers are represented by prefixing the country code with a plus sign (+), which also indicates to the subscriber that the local international call prefix must first be dialed. For example, the international call prefix in all countries of the North American Numbering Plan is 011, while it is 00 in most European, Asian and African countries. On GSM (cellular) networks, the prefix may automatically be inserted when the user prefixes a dialed number with the plus sign.

Go to country code list to find the country code you want to call.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_country_calling_codes

Dial another country from Italy

- Dial 00, Italy's international access code. Or, if you're dialing from a cell phone, you can often just dial the +. No access code needed.
- Dial your country's code. For Australia, that's 61; for England, that's 44; Ireland is 353; and Canada is 00.
- Dial the rest of the number.



Italy Country code is 39

All Italian residential (fixed) telephone numbers start with a "0", and have between 8 and 11 digits (area code+number). Cell (mobile) phone numbers have three digit prefix, all starting with a "3", and a 6 or 7 digit phone number.

Italy uses GMA technology, like AT&T or T-Mobile phones stateside. Other U.S. carriers, like Verizon, largely use CDMA technology but offer GMA phones to international travelers. If your phone operates on GMA technology you can probably replace the SIM card and use it in Italy. Jan 3, 20

<https://italyexplained.com/how-to-use-your-cell-phone-in-italy/>

Using Cell phone in Italy

Enable an International Plan with your current carrier. You first ask your cellular carrier if your phone model will work in Italy (if not, you can stop reading this section now), then alert your phone provider that you'll be traveling to Italy, and they'll turn on an international plan of some kind. Sometimes that's a package deal with a certain amount of data usage for a flat fee (no matter how much data you actually use), sometimes you'll only pay for what you use. This option is super easy, since you don't need to get a separate phone or deal with a SIM card, you just use your phone like you normally would at home.

Get an Italian SIM Card for Your Phone

If your phone is unlocked, you can purchase an Italian SIM card when you arrive in Italy and swap your main SIM card to use your phone while you're traveling. You'll know if your phone is unlocked if you can open the back or side of it and pull out the existing SIM card, or you can check with your carrier.

To get a SIM card in Italy, bring your passport to one of the mobile phone shops – it doesn't matter which you choose, just know that you'll need to purchase prepaid cards for that particular company when you need more minutes. The three major brands are Wind, TIM, and Vodafone. SIM cards usually come with a few euro already on them, but that runs out quickly. Most tobacco shops sell the prepaid cards (called a "ricarica" in Italian) so you can add more to your SIM – again, just know which company's SIM is in your phone.

Buy a Cheap Mobile Phone in Italy

How to Minimize International Roaming Charges on Your Phone

Stick to WiFi Use Only

If you keep your phone in airplane mode with the WiFi enabled for your entire trip, you'll never run the risk of using data if you haven't gotten an international roaming plan. Your hotel is likely to have WiFi (sometimes free, sometimes not), so you can log in to update social media or check train schedules before you start your sightseeing or when you're back in your room at day's end. Some public places have WiFi, too, though it's not as common in Italy as you might be accustomed to at home.

If you absolutely must have reliable WiFi in Italy, consider getting a Mifi device. A MiFi is a portable, battery-powered wireless device that taps into 3G, 4G or 5G mobile phone networks to create a mini broadband hotspot. Its signal can be shared between multiple internet-enabled devices — such as smartphones, laptops, tablets and even games consoles — that are within its range.

Download Tools to Use Offline

Having access to maps is one of the great perks of using your smartphone when traveling. Those maps, though, are major data users. I try to keep my mobile map usage limited, and download city maps to use offline instead.

Use Apps to Stay in Touch

WiFi Calling Apps to make calls

WhatsApp- the person you are calling has to have the app, most Italians use this.

Viber

Line

Facebook Messenger

Google Voice

