



ITALY – COUNTRY BRIEF

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Introduction

Italy is the world's seventh largest industrial economy and the fourth largest within the European Union (EU). In 2007, its annual GDP accounted for 12.5% of total EU outputs. As a founding member of the EU, Italy enjoys freedom of trade with other member states, and is part of the common currency union, Eurozone. As a member of the EU, it shares integrated border control policies with other members allowing free movement from one country to another.

Key Economic Indicators

Economic Indicator	Italy
Population	58.7 MM (2007)
GDP	US\$2.1 Bn (2007), US\$2.3 billion (2008 forecast)
GDP Growth Rate	1.5% (2007), 0.3% (2008 forecast)
GDP Per Capita	US\$35,872 (2007), US\$39,565 (2008 forecast)
Inflation	2.1% (2007), 2.5% (2008 forecast)
Unemployment Rate	6.0% (2007)
Total Imports	Euro 368.01 Bn
Total Exports	Euro 358.63 Bn
Currency	1 Euro (€) = 100 cents
Exchange Rate: NZ\$	NZ\$1 = 0.52 Euro (March 2008)
Exchange Rate: US\$	US\$1 = 0.63 Euro (March 2008)

Source: Istat, IMF, Eurostat

Overview

On 1 January 1999 Italy relinquished control over exchange rate policy to the European Central Bank. Italy's admittance to the Euro currency zone obliged the country to adopt a series of reforms improving many fundamental factors of the Italian economy, in particular:

- progressively lower interest rates
- inflation control at about 2%
- high productivity and a highly varied system of incentives to foster productive investments especially in the south.

The reforms are taking effect, with the inflation rate of 2.1% in 2007, which is within the guidelines specified for the European Monetary Union (EMU). The economy is enthusiastically European in focus with strong commercial links to Germany and France, along with close ties to Eastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean.

The economy remains divided into a developed industrial north which is dominated by private companies, and a less developed agricultural south. Unemployment rates in the north are under 5%, while in the southern regions they are at least three times higher. Income streams are much higher in the north (Lombardy, the region to which Milan belongs, is one of the richest provinces in Europe where consumption and earnings are very high by global standards).

The Italian State traditionally played a dominant role in the Italian economy. In the early 1990s, the Italian government controlled about a third of all industrial activity and almost two-thirds of banking operations. As a result of governmental privatisation in many sectors, the State's role has been eliminated or vastly reduced. There are, however, a few exceptions with the Government of Italy (GOI) having a controlling stake in ENEL and ENI, two utilities providers, and a golden share in Telecom.

Opportunities exist in Italy on many levels. The restructuring process taking place will create new opportunities in telecommunications, energy and infrastructure. As growth picks up in Europe, and the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is reformed, there will be increasing opportunities for New Zealand exporters to match New Zealand supply with globally recognised Italian flair for design. Moreover, as the majority of Italian companies are small to medium sized and family controlled, they can build effective personal relationships with New Zealand companies of a similar size.

Philosophically, there is great synergy between the two countries and, despite superficial distance and language difficulties, Italians appreciate the "can do" approach of New Zealanders as well as their products and services. Italian business has hefty local human resource costs and this provides greater opportunities for partnerships with New Zealand. Italians appreciate the reliability of supply in both quality and availability of products from New Zealand. Our reputation as honest dealers is a critical advantage, particularly where long-term personal relationships are concerned.

Italy's strategic position in the Mediterranean Basin makes it an ideal gateway to the emerging markets of Eastern Europe, as well as North Africa, and the Middle East. Awareness of New Zealand is high due to the America's Cup regattas, the success of New Zealand films *Lord of the Rings* and *Whalerider*, and a large interest in rugby, with several high profile former All Blacks coaching or playing there.

Political Overview

The Republic of Italy has been a parliamentary democracy since 1946. The Constitution allows the powers of a democratic state to be divided among the Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary. Parliament consists of a 630 member Chamber of Deputies, and a Senate of 315

elected members, plus a small number of senators (currently seven) who are elected for life. The Chamber of Deputies is the more influential body. No single political party commands a parliamentary majority and coalition governments are the norm. Parliament is elected by popular vote every five years. The electoral system is based on both first past the post and proportional representation.

Executive authority is vested in the Council of Ministers, headed by the President of the Council (Prime Minister) who, as Head of Government, is responsible for its day-to-day functioning. The Ministries form the basic structure of the state's public administration.

The Head of State is the President of the Republic, who is elected by the Members of Parliament and representatives of the 20 regions. The President holds office for a period of seven years and has limited powers. The President appoints the Prime Minister, subject to parliamentary concurrence, and can dissolve Parliament and call for elections if it is clear that no governing majority can be formed.

The most recent parliamentary elections in April 2008 were won by the centre-right coalition, headed by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Mr Berlusconi has served two previous terms as prime minister, last resigning in May 2006. One of Italy's richest men, he is the head of a business empire that spans media, advertising, insurance, food and construction.

Imports and Exports

Italy's Imports

Italy lacks natural resources and is heavily reliant on imports for energy needs. Membership in the EU has been the most important factor in Italian trade during the post-World War II period, having a mainly beneficial effect on the economy. The later accession of Greece, Spain and Portugal to the EU has created stiff competition for Mediterranean agricultural products, especially fruit, wine, and cooking oil.

Italy's Imports

This table shows Italy's top 10 imports for the 12 months ending December 2007.

Italy's Top 10 Imports in 2007	Billions of Euros
Crude oil	33.17
Motor cars	27.47
Confidential items of HS chapter 271	16.38
Medicaments	7.96
Parts and accessories for motor vehicles	5.79
Refined oil	5.41
Telephone equipment	4.54
Computers	4.25
Copper	4.08
Flat-rolled products of stainless steel	3.43
Total imports	368.08

Source: Eurostat Database

Italy's Exports

This table shows Italy's top 10 exports for the 12 months ending December 2007.

Italy's Top 10 Exports in 2007	Billions of Euros
Refined oil	12.21
Parts and accessories for motor vehicles	11.12
Medicaments	9.21
Motor cars	8.39
Furniture	6.14
Footwear	5.77
Taps, cocks, valves, etc	5.74
Machinery not elsewhere specified	4.78
Trucks and vans	4.42
Jewellery articles	4.41
Total exports	358.63

Source: Eurostat Database

NZ Imports from Italy

This table shows New Zealand's top 10 imports from Italy over the last two years ended March.

New Zealand's Top 10 Imports from Italy (millions of NZ dollars)	YE March 2007	YE March 2008
Medicaments	36.42	34.29
Motor cars	34.29	33.51
Electrical heating equipment (mainly ovens & cook-tops)	26.01	28.49
Dish washing machines	14.08	25.70
Taps, cocks, valves, etc	24.86	24.14
Trucks and vans	7.90	20.76
Tractors	23.77	17.91
Iron or steel tubes and pipes	2.52	17.80
Pumps	16.01	17.50
Aircraft	2.03	16.18
Total (all imports)	817.12	914.87

New Zealand's Exports to Italy

This table shows New Zealand's top 10 exports to Italy over the last two years ended March.

New Zealand's Top 10 Exports to Italy (millions of NZ dollars)	YE March 2007	YE March 2008
Bovine leather	140.19	115.74
Wool	85.94	75.33
Sheep meat	56.51	48.31
Whey and products	27.64	33.99
Kiwifruit	29.46	32.48
Raw hides and skins	42.36	30.16
Casein	28.01	16.46
Milk powder	0.79	12.54
Raw skins of sheep or lambs	17.09	8.21
Molluscs	9.79	7.13
Total (all exports)	512.97	461.07

Sector Opportunities

Agritech

Agriculture is one of Italy's most important domestic industries and Italy is one of the biggest food producers in the EU. Despite the often protectionist regulations of the Common Agricultural Policy, there are still many opportunities in the near-to-medium term to both maintain and expand the market for a variety of New Zealand agricultural technology products. While the recent economic recession has dampened luxury food sales and expensive restaurant visits, Italy still spends more per capita on food than any other EU country, except Portugal. New Zealand agritech products (especially in the animal husbandry segment) are very well regarded on the Italian market.

Energy Generation Equipment

Italy is characterised by high-energy import dependence, amounting to about 86% of its overall requirements and 15% of electricity needs. Although Italy is an industrialised country, its vulnerability in the energy sector remains very high. With technically advanced industries, Italy needs to invest resources in new technologies. Government policy is focusing on investments in energy production (including incentives to self-producers), diversification of energy sources, promotion of energy conservation technologies, and utilisation of alternative renewable sources.

Fashion

With its large and developed domestic apparel industry, Italy is renowned as a leader in world fashion, and sales of clothing and footwear were worth an estimated €39 Bn in 2007. Although the Italian apparel market is mature and competitive, it is constantly changing, which creates opportunities. Over the past decade there has been a move away from classical lines towards more casual wear. New Zealand manufacturers of outdoor, technical, nautical apparel are well positioned to capitalise on the Italian trend away from 'high fashion'. Italians have become familiar with the culture and style of the New Zealand way of life and now strongly associate New Zealand with the 'great outdoors'.

Floriculture

There is a definite need in Italy for more information on the range of ornamental horticultural products available for export from New Zealand. The product interest centres on cut flowers and foliage, seeds and bulbs (eg calla), young plant liners, semi-mature plants (eg camellia), and indigenous material such as tree roots and branches that can be used in the manufacture of artificial plants. The 'garden' has become an important component of the Italian household in recent years.

Food and Beverage

Although gradually changing, Italy is still a very traditional country when it comes to food and food habits. In general Italians prefer healthy and good quality food and are willing to pay for it but at the same time there is a large market segment for low price products. Products with potential in the Italian market are organic foods, functional foods, and low fat food products. Gradually changing food habits and two working parents are increasing the demand for frozen and easy to prepare products. New Zealand meat, wine, fruit and seafood enjoy a good reputation within the market, and other products with potential are dried fruits and nuts, and breakfast cereals. It is important to bear in mind that product preferences and distribution channels differ greatly between the rich north and the poor south.

Forestry

Italy ranks among the top consumers of forest products in the world, using timber for construction, milling for paper and in the production of furniture (Italy was the world's second

Sustainability Issues

Environmental issues are becoming more of a concern to the public. In a recent survey conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project 2, 51% of Italians cited pollution and environmental problems as the top global threat, up from 39% in 2002.

Italian industrial companies are placing increasing emphasis on waste minimisation and pollution prevention in production processes and recycling projects. The Italian government has implemented EU directives on waste, hazardous waste, and waste packaging and is applying these laws in Italy.

Other regulations to be implemented are the EU Directive on the prevention, re-use and recycling of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) as well as the Italian "Water Safeguard Law". The Italian Government has approved the 2001 National Remediation Plan which identified 40 Italian sites of "national interest" in need of urgent clean-up. The Italian Government is planning large investments over the next decade to deal with these environmental problems and to create a healthier environment.

Market Entry

Italy is a large and rich market where personal relationships are extremely important. Consequently, some form of local presence is generally required to be successful. New Zealand exporters should rely on local agents or distributors who have contacts, understand the market and can most effectively develop sales. There are also

numerous trade associations that are a useful means of approaching potential partners by sector or region.

There are important distinctions in Italian law between distribution and agency agreements:

Agency Agreements

Agency contracts are governed by the Italian Civil Code and by a number of other legislative decrees. An Italian agent for a foreign firm is generally regarded as being authorised to act for the firm. Depending on the contract, the principal may be subject to termination compensation payments and to income taxes and other levies on sales carried out through the agent.

Distributorship

Under this arrangement the local distributor takes title of the merchandise, assumes the risks and has the obligation to pay any taxes. Distribution agreements are subject only to the terms of the contract itself. There are no laws or regulations currently in effect in Italy providing for advance notice of termination, termination compensation, or social security payments in connection with these agreements.

In addition, franchising has become an increasingly successful concept. In its 30th year of existence in Italy, franchising has been growing constantly and forecasts for the next three years indicate that the positive trend will be maintained. Franchising plays a significant role in the Italian economy and is perceived as the most innovative way to introduce a new business concept in Italy

Market entry requires a wide range of information. New Zealand businesses have to make decisions on all kinds of issues that will ultimately affect their approach to the market. New Zealand Trade and Enterprise can provide hard data that is factual, complete and comprehensive, ranging from trends and segments in the market to distribution, competition and market demographics.

Regulatory Issues

Here is an outline of some of the regulatory issues New Zealand exporters need to be aware of:

Anti-Dumping Regulations

As a member state, Italy applies European Community anti-dumping regulations. Anti-dumping procedures are the most frequently used as EU trade defence instruments. They target dumped imports that cause significant injury to Community producers.

The European Commission undertakes the investigations if an EU industry officially complains that dumped or subsidised imports are causing it “material injury”. The industry must show that:

- The sales price of the product in the EU market is lower than the normal price of the goods on the producer's home market (dumping) or that a specific subsidy has been paid in the country of origin (subsidisation), and
- Evidence that the dumping or subsidisation has caused or threatened material injury to a major proportion of producers within the EU and that the complainant is representative of a major proportion of the industry concerned, ie 25% percent of the total EC production of the product in question.

The Commission then has 45 days to examine the complaint, consult the member states and decide whether or not there is enough evidence to merit a formal investigation. Anti-dumping measures will only take place if they are shown to be in the broader Community interest. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) disputes settlement procedure may be used to settle disputes between WTO signatories (of which Italy is a member).

Currency and Currency Restrictions

There are no local and foreign currency import and export restrictions. Since January 2002 the Euro replaced the Lira as the Italian currency.

E-Business

E-business is an extremely dynamic market in Italy. The number of business and home internet users is booming: internet users reached an estimated 41.3 million in 2007, around 71% of the population. Electronic commerce applications have taken off and continue to show positive growth.

It is common practice for internet service providers (ISPs) to offer free subscriptions as well as enhanced services for premium packages and e-commerce platforms. Moreover, the government is backing a number of initiatives aimed at improving the Italian internet infrastructure as well as the availability of skilled staff.

- The main factors fuelling the development of e-business in Italy are:
- Improved internet access infrastructure
- The increasing recognition of e-business as a means to provide better support to customers and suppliers
- Recent Italian legislation which recognises the legal validity of digital signatures and digital contracts
- Improved consumer protection legislation

- Recent agreements between Italian banks and credit institutes.

A growing number of companies are implementing web sales and web purchasing applications. Business-to-business transactions are expected to have a dramatic impact on the Italian economy, similar to that in other countries. E-business is also expected to be one of the key drivers for management consulting services in the near future.

Import Barriers

There are monitoring measures applied to imports of certain sensitive products. Various apparel and textile products (Italy being a major producer), and controlled items such as arms and munitions, are the most frequently regulated items. Various specific Italian restrictions are occasionally imposed for genuine public safety reasons rather than as a barrier to competitive entry.

There are a number of Italian regulations and EU directives that prohibit certain foodstuffs, food colourings, drugs and narcotics, animal products, plants, seed grains, alcohol, cosmetics and toiletries, etc.

Import Quotas and Licensing

As part of the EU, Italy follows the overall restrictions and freedom of movement of goods within the EU. With the exception of a small group of largely agricultural items, almost all goods originating from most other free-world countries can be imported without import licenses and free of quantitative restrictions.

Licenses are not transferable. They may be used to cover several shipments within the total quantity authorised. The Harmonised System classification number and the corresponding wording of the tariff position indicate the goods involved on the license. Italy is generally supportive of New Zealand's requests for improved access and conditions, particularly in the food sector.

Standards

Most standards, labelling requirements, testing and certification have been harmonised within the European Union. For example, the EU has adopted a number of regulations covering production standards, analytical characteristics, product specifications, allowable additives, and labelling. Specific EU regulations exist for cocoa, chocolate products, sugars, fruit juices, fruit jams and jellies, milk and casein products. The Treaty of Rome requires member states to incorporate approved EU directives into national laws but there is frequently a lag in national implementation.

Where EU standards do not exist, Italy can set its own national requirements and some of these have been known to hamper imports

of game meat, processed meat products, frozen foods, alcoholic beverages, snack foods and confectionery products.

With the development of a single harmonised EU product standard, New Zealand exporters may find that it is usually much easier to comply with one EU-wide standard rather than having to meet several individual national standards when exporting to Europe.

Health Regulations

Food and agriculture products imported into one EU-member can be transhipped unimpeded into Italy provided they have a label written in Italian and the products do not present a risk to human or animal health. Food products imported directly into Italy must comply with all Italian food safety regulations, quality standards and national labelling and packaging regulations that are as strict as, or sometimes a little stricter, than EU rules and regulations.

Import regulations for products containing meat and/or blood products, particularly animal and pet food, have become more stringent in response to concerns over transmission of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). New Zealand exporters of "health" or organic foods, weight loss and diet foods, baby foods and vitamins should work closely with an Italian importer as Italy's labelling laws regarding health claims can be particularly stringent.

Marking and Barcodes

The 1988 Trade Act states that the metric system is the preferred system for weights and measures. The common standard for barcoding is the EAN/UCC system.

Packaging and Labelling

There is no general requirement that imports be marked as to the country of origin. Under Italian legislation, the origin of imported merchandise is established through documentation accompanying the shipments arriving in Italy. Imports of certain commodities, including numerous foodstuffs, however, are subject to special regulations regarding the manner in which they must be labelled to show the manufacturer. The following articles are subject to special marking or labelling regulations: packaged foods, distilled spirits, ethical medicines, beer, wine, vinegar, and foodstuffs.

Food Labelling

Food products sold in Italy must have the information outlined below provided in Italian (multi-language labels are acceptable):

- Name of the product
- Ingredients listed by category or by specific name (depending on the ingredient) in the descending order of weight (including starch, colourings and additives)
- Net content or weight (weights and measures declared in metric units). In the case of pre-packaged foodstuffs the net quantity of liquids is declared in litres, centilitres or millilitres; solids are declared kilograms or grams.
- Expiry date or, in the case of perishable foodstuffs, the “use by” date. Preferred wording: “Da consumarsi entro il dd/mm/yy” (To be consumed preferably by dd/mm/yy)
- Any special storage conditions or conditions of use and information regarding prohibited or non-recommended use or preparation
- Business name and address of the importer
- Business name and address of the manufacturer, packager, or of a seller established within the EU
- Place of origin or provenance, where failure to give such particulars might mislead the consumer as to the true origin or provenance
- Strength by volume when beverages contain more than 1.2% alcohol
- Selling price and the price per unit of measurement (kilogram or litres). There are exceptions provided
- Batch number. The producer, manufacturer, packager, or the first seller established within the Community must determine the lot and the marking must be preceded by the letter “L” unless it is clearly distinguishable from other indications on the label.

The presentation and the advertising of the products must not attribute properties for the prevention, treatment or cure of human disease. The labelling and methods used should not mislead the purchaser in any way.

Nutritional labelling must be present when a nutritional claim appears in presentation or in advertising. The only nutrition claims permitted are those relating to energy value, protein, carbohydrate, fat, fibres, sodium, prescribed vitamins, and to substances which belong to or which are components of one of these categories.

Product Liability

Food packages must list the minimum shelf-life period or state the time limit of consumption if the food is stored and prepared properly:

- “Best before (exact date)” for foods expected to keep for three months or less.

- “Best before end (month)” for foods expected to keep for more than three months but not longer than 18 months.
- “Best before end (month)” for foods expected to keep for more than 18 months.

Safety Regulations

All phytosanitary certificates are harmonised within the EU system. Biosecurity New Zealand has full details on phytosanitary certificates required for companies exporting to the EU -

www.biosecurity.govt.nz/exports/plants/euro-member.htm

Exporters of electrical, mechanical and other products (machinery, electronic and electrical equipment, medical devices, construction equipment, pressure equipment marine equipment, small pleasure boats, personal protective equipment) need CE marking (a European Community safety standard). The CE Mark is a label placed on a product or packaging meaning "Communautés Européennes", confirming that the product complies with all relevant EU Directives.

Tariffs and Duties

Italy conforms to the EU customs duties which are based on the international Harmonised System of product classification. Duty rates on manufactured goods from non-EU countries generally range from 5-8% and are levied on the Cost Insurance Freight (CIF) value of the goods at the port of entry. Most raw materials enter duty free or at low rates while agricultural products face higher rates and special levies.

Taxation

The Italian fiscal year runs from 1 January to 31 December. Income tax (Imposta sul Reddito delle Persone Fisiche - IRPEF) is generally deducted at source from salaried workers. The tax rate for an individual is between 23-43%. There are reduced rates of tax and tax exemptions available to certain income earners.

The standard rate of Italy corporate tax (IRES) is 27.5%. In addition, there is a local tax (IRAP) of 3.9%. The regions have the right to amend by up to 1% either way the basic 4.25% IRAP rate on a yearly basis.

VAT

Manufactured imports are subject to value-added tax (VAT) on the value of goods already cleared through Customs, that is the CIF value plus duties and any applicable surcharge. While customs duty rates are the same for all 15 EU countries, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and excise tax on products and services usually differ from country to country. These taxes are levied in the country of final destination.

The following table shows the schedule of VAT rates presently applicable in Italy:

GST Rate	Applies to...
0%	Exports outside the EU and supplies of goods to entrepreneurs in three EU states, sales of ships and aircraft and related parts, and supplies (with certain limitations) and specified services relating to international operations
4%	Numerous basic agricultural products, basic foodstuffs (i.e. bread, milk and fruits), certain medical aids, books and newspapers
10%	Certain agricultural products, transportation services for individuals, most foodstuff, livestock and meat, most pharmaceutical products, energy for private use, telecommunication services rendered through public phones (telecommunications for private use are at 20% rate), services rendered by hotels and restaurants and the cost of domestic airline tickets
20%	As the standard rate, all goods and services not subject to other rates (including most of the goods previously subject to the 12% rate, ie shoes, textiles, records and tapes)

Freight

Air Freight

Italy is connected by air to every continent.

Sea Freight

Italy is centrally placed in Europe. It receives shipments from New Zealand into La Spezia, Livorno and Genova, as well as having daily links with the mega ports in Belgium and the Netherlands. Many imports arrive in the ports of northern Europe from where there are efficient and cost-effective regular options to bring goods into Italy.

Doing Business In Italy

Cultural Business Tips

- Italians tend to be hard-working, resilient, resourceful, self-confident and optimistic people with a good sense of humour and a strong distrust of authority. They are passionately loyal to their friends and families. The family remains of central importance in the fabric of Italian society (particularly in the south). Italians frequently identify largely with their region or even home town, although, when confronted with a foreigner, they energetically reveal a national pride. In terms of spectator sports, a great force in Italian life is soccer (calcio) and Italy is one of the homes of motor racing: Ferrari remains a leading team on the Formula 1 circuit.
- When meeting business colleagues nowadays, the America's Cup invariably enters the conversation. New Zealand has a high (clean, green) profile and Italians are fascinated by the fact that New Zealand is the antipodes to Italy, is similar in shape and size, but has a population of around four million people, as opposed to 57 million in Italy.
- Italian business etiquette is relatively formal, particularly at the outset. Try, if you can, to establish a relationship of trust before entering into negotiations and be prepared to dissuade fears that New Zealand is too far away. (Be aware that when confronted with what they consider a silly rule or an unjust law, Italians rarely complain or attempt to change rules, but rather try to find the quickest way around them.)
- Gift giving is normally only used by the party hosting the meeting (eg the host may present, say, a book on their company/region or a sample of their product to their guest). Gift giving is more common when a strong relationship has been developed.
- Courtesies: Italians shake hands when they greet one another and when they say goodbye. It is courteous to wait to be seated and to stand back to allow others to pass through a doorway. In restaurants, Italians generally place their order themselves (guests and women are invited to begin) - however, as a foreigner, once you have chosen, your host is likely to place your order for you. They will be flattered if you ask to try the local speciality.
- Italian is formal and has a polite and familiar form of address. Avoid first name terms until a strong relationship has been developed and the Italian party suggests a move to first names. Note also that Italians often start a title with their family names e.g. Sig. Rossi Tiziano - Tiziano is his first name.

- Hospitality is very important in Italy. If an appointment is fixed for late morning it is likely to include lunch. The style of restaurant is critical and will reflect the relationship – top class for new and important contacts or middle level for old friends. An offer to pay should always be repeated once if declined the first time. Business should be only discussed in detail when people have finished their meal and papers should not be presented on the table until this point. A service charge applies so tips need not exceed 5%.
- Business dress is invariably smart but often with a sports jacket in the day for men. For both men and women, a suit is appropriate for a first meeting and jackets are kept on even on hot days. In summer bring a lightweight suit and (for men) jacket and trousers. A tie is also important and its design can be a subject of discussion if it is unusual.
- Italian is the national language but in the north, English or French are sometimes spoken by business executives. Interpreters are often used by non-Italian speakers as a matter of courtesy.

Business Hours:

Government: 8.30am-2pm - Monday to Friday.

Businesses: 8.30am/9am-12.30pm/1 pm
2pm/3pm-5pm/6pm
Monday to Friday.

Visa Requirements

New Zealand travellers to Italy do not require visas for tourism or business visits of 90 days or less. Non-EU residents who stay in Italy for more than three months must obtain a visa. This can be arranged with the Italian Embassy in Wellington prior to departure.

Time Difference

Italy is 10 to 12 hours behind New Zealand depending on the time of year. During Italy's daylight saving (March-October), Italy is 10 hours behind. During New Zealand's daylight saving (late September – early April), Italy is 12 hours behind. To find out the current time in Italy, go to www.timeanddate.com.

Holidays

Public holidays for 2009:

January	1 (New Year's Day) 6 (Epiphany)
April	13 (Easter Monday) 25 (Liberation Day)
May	1 (Labour Day)
June	2 (Republic Day)
August	15 (Assumption Day)
November	1 (All Saints' Day)
December	8 (Immaculate Conception) 25 (Christmas Day) 26 (St. Stephen's Day)

The official Italian holiday season is July and August.