



Elisabetta Scarabelli

11 things you can do in Italy once you know the language

Dedicated to those who are contemplating learning Italian only weeks before their trip

Here are some reasons why knowing some Italian makes your experience in Italy more memorable and fun:

1. **Build on.** You will know yourself as someone who can do things....any thing. Knowing a few words and sentences will boost your confidence for building new sentences, even if not perfectly. You jumped in once, you can jump in again.
2. **Their favourite person.** Knowing that you made an effort to learn their language, shop owners will feel like you deserve due respect. Not that they would be rude to others, but right now you are definitely their favourite person.
3. **Subtleties.** You become more attuned to subtleties and small differences. For example, when you can ask what ingredients are in the dish (*che ingredienti ci sono in questo piatto?*), you can fully appreciate the taste experience and exchange looks that say oh-yeah-I-can-taste-the-sage!
4. **That's the one I wanted.** When you can say that you want something smaller or bigger, you can walk away with what you want, rather than giving up because it was too hard to explain yourself.
5. **Get behind the bar.** By giving things a go, you really open the door to fun conversations and, possibly, to the restaurant owner grabbing that bottle of *Limoncello* he keeps behind the bar only for people he likes. It happened to my husband just because he started the conversation with the waiter about their cool uniform (and how he could get one too).
6. **Top of the world.** Imagine yourself rising from a crowd of many other tourists simply by the way you ordered your food and used polite manners in Italian. Wouldn't you feel on top of the world? You would, and there is no stopping you now.
7. **Get there faster.** You can find the bathroom, the exit, the entrance and the chemist faster than anyone else who doesn't speak the language.



8. **Repeat please.** If you can speak Italian, even a few words, you can ask to get things repeated. And they gladly will repeat, because you are making the effort to have the conversation in Italian. This is particularly useful when it comes to prices or directions.

9. **You love my family.** Picture yourself listening to a tourist in your country trying to converse in your language. As an Italian, finding out why someone has learnt my own country's language is like hearing why someone likes my family. I am listening to you on a different level.

10. **I don't like it.** You can tell the persistent seller that you don't want to buy something because you don't like it (*non mi piace*). This way you don't have to avoid their looks or, worse still, run away.

11. **Go anywhere.** Quite often the less touristy places don't have keen English speakers, so your Italian, even if basic, will come most handy on the roads less travelled. Those small towns you only see in postcards are now available to you. You no longer need to worry whether they will understand English or not.

**In the end,
it's all about
connections,
and some will
become foundations
of truly
unforgettable
moments.
Connections
you didn't know
were included
in the ticket.**

