

## DOCUMENTS

A valid U.S. passport is all that is required to enter Italy. One is supposed to obtain a “Permesso di Soggiorno” or “Permit to Stay” if remaining in the country for more than three weeks, but this requirement seems aimed at people who plan to stay for a significantly longer period, such as students, rather than tourists. This permit is obtained at the central police station, called the Questura, which in Rome is just off via Nazionale at via San Vitale, 15.



To drive in Italy you need a valid license from your home state, an International Driving Permit, obtainable in a few minutes from AAA offices in major US cities, and a spirit of adventure.

Major credit cards such as Mastercharge, Visa, American Express, Diners Club, etc., are useful for hotels, restaurants, car rentals, shopping, and perhaps most important, unlike many years ago, for obtaining cash from money machines. Gasoline company credit cards are not widely used or accepted so don't plan on using them unless you check first. You may have better luck with MC or Visa, but to be on the safe side, keep enough cash on hand to keep your car running. That's no small order since gasoline currently sells for about 1.15 Euro/liter, i.e. about \$6./gallon.

## CHANGING MONEY

Getting cash used to be one of the big adventures and mysteries encountered on any European, and especially Italian vacation. It's about as difficult these days as getting cash in Connecticut.

You can obtain Euros at any of the following places:

1. Airport Exchange Offices (Ufficio di Cambio)- convenient if the lines aren't too long.
2. Any normal bank will exchange money. It used to be a surreal nightmare doing so but all that has changed. However, they will charge you a fee, as will the exchange offices, so it probably isn't worth the trouble.
3. Money machines- They're now virtually everywhere. Some of them are only for Italian accounts, but there are plenty of them in every city that will give you money using any major credit card. They also will give you the best exchange rate. In my view, they make travelers checks obsolete.
4. Restaurants and hotels will usually change your traveler's checks at the least favorable rates. Plan ahead enough to avoid this.

\*\*\*\*\*