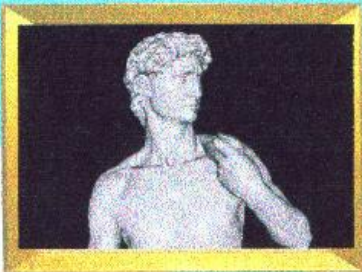


ITALY

Report



May 2005

ITALY

A Country Report, by [a Fifth Grade Student at HDS]

2005

Have you ever wondered where many of your fancy cars and stylish clothes come from, or where Caesar and Cicero wrote, or where the Pope lives, or where Michelangelo came from, or where you can ride through a whole city on a boat, or where the heart of the Renaissance was, or where you get delicious pasta and pizza, not to mention gelato? That's right! Italy! Italy, located in Southern Europe, is full of wonderful tourist towns, ancient buildings and art, and delicious food. I didn't even mention that Italy is the leading country in fashion design! Keep reading to find out more about this fascinating and beautiful country.

Archeologists have found evidence of human activity in the land we now call Italy from before 5,000 B.C.E., in the Neolithic period. According to legend, Romulus and Remus, who were two brothers descended from Trojans who escaped the Greek destruction of Troy, founded Rome in 753 B.C.E. A little before this time, in around 900 B.C.E., Etruscans, who were ruled by kings, came to Italy from Asia Minor and lived in the Po Valley, located in the north of Italy.

In 509 B.C.E., after the last few Etruscan kings had been expelled from Rome, the Roman Republic was founded. The Roman Republic was in some ways like an early form of democracy, but only for the male citizens of Rome. There were two consuls who were elected every year, and there was a senate. During the time of the Roman Republic, Caesar, who was a great general, conquered Gaul (now France) for the Romans. Then Caesar decided to come back to Italy in 49 B.C.E. and cross the Rubicon River with his army, violating the Roman rule that generals were not allowed to bring their armies across the river into Italy. After he crossed the river into Italy, his followers and those who wanted democracy fought a civil war, but in the end, Caesar conquered the country.

Forty-four B.C.E. brought Caesar's assassination by a group of senators on the Ides of March (March 15th). Julius Caesar had turned the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. After Caesar's death, his adopted son Octavian became the first Roman Emperor. Octavian, who is almost always called Augustus, gave himself a title that would be equivalent to "Prime Minister" today, even though he really was an emperor.

There were many more emperors after Augustus. Diocletian, who ruled from 284 to 305 C.E., divided the Empire into a western and eastern part. Constantine the Great became the emperor in 306 C.E. He ruled over both halves of the Roman Empire and made Constantinople (now Istanbul) the eastern capital. He adopted Christianity as the official religion of the Empire.

The cities in the land called Italy split apart in the 11th century and made and sold their own merchandise independently. In the 14th century C.E., the Renaissance officially began. The Renaissance was a time when the Church didn't have as much power as before, and people rediscovered Greek and Roman art, architecture, literature, and philosophy. Italy was the center

of the Renaissance. There were rich people in Italy who were paying artists to create paintings, and architects to design buildings. People were finally allowed to express themselves and use their talents.

Around the 18th century political ideas from France and Britain were coming in and reuniting the city-states after they had split apart in the 11th century. This was known as the Italian Unification. Then came the Fascist Period after World War I, when Italy's economy was weak. The poorer people and the middle class felt as if the rich were taking away their rights, probably because they were! Mussolini, the Prime Minister, outlawed all the political parties and took away all of the rights of the people of Italy. In World War II, Mussolini was an ally of Hitler. After their defeat, somehow everything came back together and Italy started to become more and more like it is today.

Today, Italy has a Constitution that was written in 1948. The Constitution states that there should be a bicameral Parliament made up of a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate. The Chamber of Deputies has 630 members. Usually, there is an election every five years for new Chamber members, but this part of the Italian government can be dissolved before five years are up. The Senate has 315 members, plus some former presidents and a few other people appointed for life because of what the Constitution says. The Senate also has elections every five years, but, like the Chamber of Deputies, can be dissolved before five years are over.

There are separate executive and judiciary branches that are not part of the Parliament. The Executive Branch is made up of a Council of Ministers and the President who is currently Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. The head of the Council of Ministers is the Prime Minister, who is currently Silvio Berlusconi. The President has a higher ranking than the Prime Minister. Elected every seven years, the President chooses someone to be the Vice President. The Vice President picks all the other ministers.

As well as having a democratic political system, the Italians have both an industrial and agricultural economy. They manufacture clothing, shoes, foods, beverages, motor vehicles, petroleum products, machinery, and chemicals. The Italians grow grapes, wheat, beef cattle, hogs, olives, corn, oranges, and tomatoes. They also produce natural gas and mine granite and marble. Twenty-seven percent of Italy's economy is industrial, only 4% agricultural, and the remaining 69% consists of services such as restaurants, hotels, transportation, and communication. Most manufacturing takes place in the northern part of the country, and most of the actual growing of things takes place in the south, the warmer part of Italy. Currently, the currency is the euro, although the euro was just recently adopted. Before the euro was adopted, the currency used in Italy was the lira. One euro equals approximately \$1.50.

As previously stated, it is generally warmer in the south of Italy than in the north, in the north, snow lingers on the highest peaks of the Alps all through the summer. In the south, there are hot, dry summers when the temperature can easily reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit. The southern part of Italy is called Mezzogiorno, meaning "midday," because that is when the sun is the hottest there. Generally, there is more rain in the north than in the south.

Italy is shaped somewhat like a boot, a boot that is 116,320 square miles!! The Alps run

east-west along the top of the “boot,” going from France to Slovenia. The Apennine Mountains run north-south along the length of the “boot” and are about 870 miles long, even though Italy as a whole, top to bottom, is only about 760 miles long. This is because the Apennines twist and turn on their way down the center of the country. There are four active volcanoes among the Apennines. One of these is Mount Vesuvius, which is the volcano that erupted and buried the city of Pompeii in the year 79 C.E. There are 4,723 miles of coastline, mostly the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Two islands called Sicily and Sardinia are also part of Italy. Sicily has two volcanoes and five million people. Italy as a whole has about sixty million people. Sardinia has more flat land than Sicily. It is a little smaller than Sicily, and has far fewer people living on it. Italy’s longest river is the Po River which is located in the top of the country and runs through the country’s only major valley.

Most people in Italy speak Italian which is a Romance language derived from Latin. However, French is spoken in the Aosta Valley near France, and German is spoken in South Tyrol near Austria. Small numbers of Italians speak Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, and Occitan. About 95% of people living in Italy are Roman Catholics, but only about 30% regularly go to church, although most baptisms, weddings, and funerals are held in church. There is an agreement having to do with the church that is called the Lateran Pact. It exempts priests and other people of religious rank from military service. This pact also gives tax exemptions to Catholic organizations.

Vatican City, also called “The Vatican,” is the center of the Roman Catholic church, and is located in the middle of Rome. Even though it is physically inside Rome, it is its own nation. The Vatican has its own military system, and its own schooling system.

In Italy, people mostly eat only lunch and dinner, and maybe a small breakfast. Lunch and dinner consist of similar foods, starting with antipasto, an appetizer of cold meats, then a pasta dish, then a main course (meat or fish), then a salad, and cheese and fruit. Wine and bread are included at every meal. Children are allowed to drink the wine at meals in Italy! Italy is famous for its gelato, pizza, and pasta with sauce.

Italy is a country full of art treasures, many of them from the time of the Renaissance. One of the many artists who lived in Italy in the time of the Renaissance was the famous Michelangelo. Much of the art reflects culture and religion, and also what was happening at certain points in time. Italy is also full of amazing buildings and general architecture. Filippo Brunelleschi was a terrific architect and designed many things in Florence in the 15th century. He designed churches, chapels, and more. Another amazing architect was Leon Battista Alberti. All of these architects built classical style buildings. Many of these buildings are still standing in parts of Italy today.

Italy is also a country full of car and clothes designers. People in Italy tend to dress in the stylish clothes the designers make because it gives other people a good impression. Also, many of the fancy, expensive car designers work in Italy.

There are a large number of cities in Italy that you really don’t want to miss. Rome, for example, is full of archeological, art, and architectural treasures. For a while during the Roman

Empire, Rome was basically the center of the Mediterranean world. Many wonderful writers, philosophers, artists, and architects either were born in Rome or lived in Rome for a period of their life. The ancient Romans were excellent fighters in war, and that explains why they managed to conquer a lot of the world a few times!! Vatican City, the nation inside Rome, is where the Pope lives, and it is the cultural and spiritual center of the Roman Catholic Church. “The Vatican” only has 1,000 or so citizens.

Venice was founded in 421 B.C.E. by some of the pre-Roman inhabitants called the Veneti. In the 6th century C.E., Venice was nothing more than a swampy village in a lagoon. However, by the 13th century, Venice had sacked Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, and became one of the most powerful Empires in the world! Three-hundred years later, the Pope, the King of France, the King of Spain, and the Holy Roman Emperor all thought they had to join forces to stop this empire from advancing and conquering the world. They did stop Venice from gaining more territory, but Venice was still the central power in the Mediterranean for another 200 years until Napoleon showed up in 1797.

One of the most interesting things about Venice is that its streets are actually canals on which boats come and go. The most important canal in Venice is the Grand Canal which is the site of an ancient riverbed. Venice has a very important glassmaking industry that was moved to one of the islands in Venice to avoid the risk of fire to the rest of the wooden buildings in Venice. This island is called Murano. There is also an island that is used exclusively for making lace, called Burano. Another tiny island that was the site of a metalworking industry called a geto in Italian, was the island that the Venetians used to put all of the Jews onto starting in 1516. This is where the name ghetto came from. The Jews weren’t liberated from this ghetto until 1866.

Florence is a city full of art. During the Renaissance, there were rich people living in Florence paying artists to paint and architects to build. The rich Medici family held power in Florence for more than 300 years. Two of the Medicis were elected Pope, but in Florence they were the dictators. Some of the greatest art in the world can be found in Florence.

Italy is a fascinating country. It is full of ancient artifacts, yet it is also one of the leading countries in fashion, modern day cars, and other modern developments. A lot of the greatest artists and architects came from Italy, not to mention writers! Italy was the center of the world for a while. So many important parts of history occurred in this boot-shaped piece of land. I hope I will continue to learn about this country, and maybe even go there some day and see all of the amazing things I’ve learned about.

Bibliography

“Italian Art and Architecture.” Grolier Encyclopedia. 1995

Blashfield, Jean F., Italy: Enchantment of the World. New York: Children’s Press

“History of Italy.” Grolier Encyclopedia. 1993.

“Italy.” Worldbook Encyclopedia. Chicago ed. 1995.

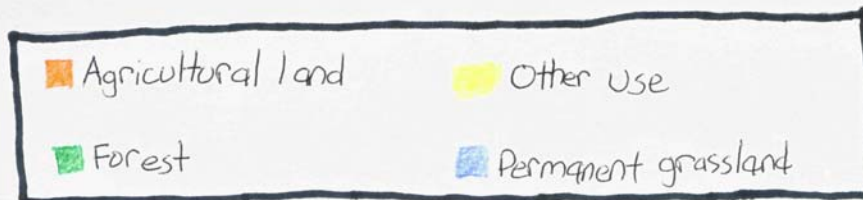
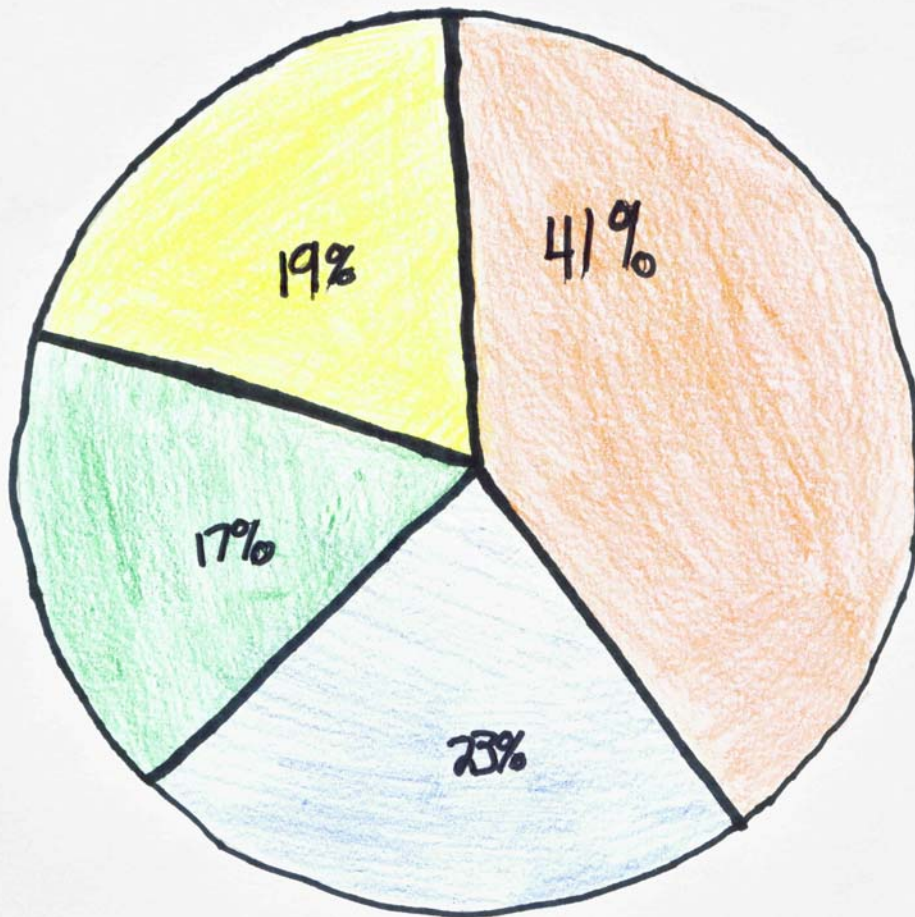
Wikipedia. “Italy.” Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org>

Italy



KEY/LEGEND	
	Part of Italy
	Other places
	Water

Land Use in Italy



source: <http://www.italocorotondo.it/>