

# UNDERSTANDING CENTRAL ITALY



## A BRIEF HISTORY *of* *the* REGION

WHEN YOU TRAVEL TO CENTRAL ITALY, you become a time traveler. Where else can you explore the mansion of Nero, pray in the same chapels as Michelangelo and Amerigo Vespucci, or drink pure water from aqueducts built more than a millennium ago? There'll be a little bit of history in everything you do while touring through Rome, Florence, or Assisi. Forget your concept of *old*. Trevi Fountain, which was completed only in the mid-18th century, is considered a relatively new artwork in Rome, a city that marks its official birthday as April 21, 753 BC.

Keep in mind that understanding one region of Central Italy does not mean you'll understand the other. Sure, they all speak the same language—or some dialect thereof—and all cook their pasta *al dente*, but knowing the Tuscan countryside will not necessarily prepare you for the frenzy of Florence or the lazier pace of Urbino in the Marches. Every *città* tells a story. Every region also has its own tale to tell.

We have provided a very brief outline of the history of central Italy followed by an abridged time line. To learn more about specific cities and regions, see the beginning of each chapter.

### **EARLY HISTORY: THE ETRUSCANS AND OTHER PEOPLES OF CENTRAL ITALY**

THE ETRUSCANS DEVELOPED ONE OF THE EARLIEST CIVILIZATIONS IN ITALY, having settled in Central Italy possibly as early as the 12th century BC. Although the Etruscans left behind many remnants of their society, including an alphabet, town planning expertise, and elaborate, frescoed tombs, their origins have remained a mystery to most anthropologists and historians. Some theorize that

the pre-Roman tribe migrated to Italy from central Asia; others claim that the Etruscans are, in fact, indigenous to the peninsula. Either way, we are certain that Greek influence in art, commerce, and politics from early Hellenic settlements in southern Italy fanned upward toward Etruscan villages. The “Etruscan Belt,” as it is sometimes called, stretched from Florence south to Rome and east to Umbria, with strongholds in Volterra, Arezzo, and Cortona in Tuscany; Perugia and Orvieto in Umbria; and Cerveteri, Tarquinia, and Veio near Rome. Thousands of artifacts, including black clay vases (*bucchero*), coins, jewelry, tools, and weapons, all featured in museums throughout Central Italy, attest to the productiveness of the Etruscan society, as well as to its domination on the peninsula.

It is important to note that several other tribes were also present in Central Italy during the time of the Etruscans. The Umbrii, of whom we have little record, lived in what is today northern Umbria. For the most part, the Umbrii kept to themselves, until their land and culture were absorbed by the Romans. Meanwhile, in the Marches, the rabble-rousing Piceni held their ground between the Apennine and the Adriatic until they succumbed to the powerful Romans in the first half of the second century BC.

## **THE ROMAN REPUBLIC AND THE ROOTS OF EMPIRE**

THE BEGINNING OF ROME’S DOMINATION over Italy, and eventually over most of the known world, began shortly after the defeat of the tyrannical Tarquinius Superbus (534–510 BC), the last of a short line of Etruscan rulers. From the ashes of the Etruscan kingdom rose the Roman republic, the first government to succeed in unifying the peninsula. Initially, the patrician class (aristocracy) held all the power and wealth in the republic, electing two consuls, who served jointly for a one-year term, and quaestors, early bureaucrats. Meanwhile, the plebeians, or middle and lower classes, who accepted the largest burden of debt but had no say in government, felt the need to rise up against the ruling patricians. Eventually, the plebes organized themselves, effectively creating a separate state with its own laws and tribunes. Knowing they could not ignore the masses, the aristocracy finally caved in, thereby ceding a share of power to the plebeians. By 287 BC, the plebeians enjoyed the right to make laws and vote on consuls and quaestors. This type of power sharing, no doubt mimicked by future governments within and outside Italy, lasted until roughly 50 BC, with the rise of Julius Caesar.

In addition to creating one of the first democratic political systems, the Roman republic succeeded in expanding and unifying the Roman domain. Unlike the Etruscans, whose Etruscan League consisted of mostly autonomous city-states, the Romans conquered cities and then incorporated them into the empire, offering them

economic and defensive privileges. Those cities that didn't cooperate came under Roman control through resettlement programs. Eventually, the Romans defeated the Carthaginians in Sicily and northern Africa (during the Punic Wars), and wrested control of northern Italy and southern France from the Gauls.

## THE CAESARS

THE BEGINNING OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE can be attributed to one man: Julius Caesar. In 59 BC, consul-hopeful Julius Caesar made an alliance with military and political leaders Crassus and Pompey, thereby creating the First Triumvirate. The bond was sealed when Pompey married Caesar's daughter, Julia. However, with the sudden death of Julia and the increased ego of Caesar after a notable victory in Gaul, Caesar sought total control of the growing empire. By 47 BC, Crassus was dead, Pompey had fled to Egypt, and Julius ruled by default. Caesar had his tenure as emperor of the Roman Empire extended to ten years, and in 44 BC, he declared himself dictator for life. Caesar's thirst for power no doubt alienated many within the Senate, and he was famously betrayed and murdered on the Ides of March in that same year.

Caesar's death caused a power struggle. At first, Mark Antony took control of Rome. Then Caesar's heir apparent and great-nephew Octavian came to claim what had been willed to him. A Second Triumvirate was formed with Mark Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus, an army commander. Soon, the empire was divided and ruled by Octavian in the west and Mark Antony in the east. But, like his great-uncle, Octavian had bigger plans. After he discovered that Mark Antony had been cheating on his wife, Octavian's sister, Octavian dispatched his general Marcus Agrippa to defeat the smug Antony. Both Antony and his lover, Cleopatra, committed suicide less than a year later.

However, hoping to avoid Julius Caesar's fate, Octavian made sure that he didn't appear power hungry. In 27 BC, he surrendered his powers to the Senate, and they promptly gave them back. Octavian, now called Augustus ("Your Eminence"), also emphasized artistic endeavors, commissioning the Pantheon and the Ara Pacis. In the end, Caesar Augustus ruled for 40 years.

## FROM EMPIRE TO CHRISTIANITY

FOLLOWING OCTAVIAN, ROME WAS RULED by a motley succession of emperors, some noteworthy, some notorious. Taciturn Tiberius reformed government but lived most of his rule in seclusion on the coast of Latium and in Capri. Caligula, the ruler best known for having made his horse a consul, followed. The crazy Caligula only managed to squeeze in four years before his own guard assassinated him. Nero, the man who built a lavish estate over Rome's ashes, wasn't

far behind. After Nero committed suicide, Rome fell into the hands of the Flavian dynasty, which saw the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian and the inauguration of the Colosseum. Following years of infighting and political and religious persecutions brought on by the Flavians, Rome saw great political stability under the rule of the “Five Good Emperors”: Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius, who ruled from AD 96 to 180. Unfortunately, this stable and prosperous time came to a close as Marcus Aurelius’s corrupt son Commodus took power.

In the meantime, the cult of Christianity had been gaining ground among plebeians, soldiers, and a large swath of citizens throughout the empire. Saints Peter and Paul were murdered for their beliefs; Emperors Nero and Titus, to name just two, had thousands of other Christians slaughtered for laughs. Emperor Decius (renamed Trajanus), who ruled from AD 248 to 251, instituted the first systematic persecution of Christians. Tyrants Septimius Severus, Diocletian, and Caracalla did nothing to change the anti-Christian laws, resulting in the torture of hundreds of thousands. It was not until the reign of Constantine (from AD 306 to 312) that Christianity was proclaimed the official religion of the empire and that the persecutions against Christians ceased. His conversion, which was the result of having seen a vision of the cross bearing the inscription *In hoc signo vinces* (“In this sign you will be victorious”), was to forever change the church and the empire. In AD 312, Constantine moved the imperial capital to Byzantium, later Constantinople (today’s Istanbul), thus dividing the Roman Empire—and loyalties—for hundreds of years.

## MEDIEVAL TIMES

THE LATE 5TH TO THE LATE 14TH CENTURIES constituted the end of an omnipotent Roman kingdom and signaled the rise of geographical and political divisions among Italians. During this time, Italy lost the hegemony that it had acquired as an empire, not to be seen again until the Risorgimento (see page 16), as a powerful papacy emerged and foreign factions invaded. The rifts that resulted from the split of the Roman Empire into east and west spilled over into medieval times, pitting the Guelphs (pro-papacy) against the Ghibellines (pro-Holy Roman emperor). From Tuscany to the Marches, citizens took sides. But the divisions had little to do with faith and more to do with city pride or local wealth. In cities like San Gimignano (Tuscany) or Ascoli-Piceno (the Marches), loyalties often stood with the patrician family who could build the tallest watchtower. Likewise, allegiance shifted as new houses came to power. The Church in Rome was especially threatened during these tumultuous times and eventually moved for a time to Avignon, France. Further infighting subdivided the papacy when the king of France did not recognize the Italian pope and elected one of his own.

The “Great Schism” lasted for 68 years, from 1378 to 1417, and ended with the reign of Pope Martin V and the return to Rome. This solidified the power of the papacy and made for conditions that gradually gave way to the golden years of the Renaissance.

## **THE RENAISSANCE**

IT WAS A TIME OF SCIENTIFIC INVENTION, artistic improvement, rigorous religiosity, and tremendous wealth for those in the upper class. The Renaissance (rebirth) saw a revival in classical interests, from Greek philosophy to Roman sculpture, and basically saw Italy (and the rest of Europe) transition into modern times. Humanism helped shape the mind-set of Renaissance Italy. The “Renaissance man” was one who studied many subjects, such as art, politics, mathematics, and philosophy, to foster a greater knowledge of the world as a whole. However, the driving force behind much of the ingenuity between the 14th and 16th centuries was largely religious, inspiring future masters such as Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci to create colorful frescoes, pious portraits, and monumental sculptures based on poignant moments in biblical history. Of course, that was only half of it. Patrician families and guilds grew richer thanks to expanded trade routes and fortified affiliations. Bankers (like the Medici in Florence), textile merchants, and other members of the elite were an integral part of the patronage system in Florence, Rome, and throughout Italy, commissioning chapels, artwork, and entire buildings in their names. By pacifying the Church elders and donating much of their wealth to the Church, these wealthy citizens hoped to ensure themselves a seat in heaven.

## **THE SACK OF ROME AND THE COUNTER-REFORMATION**

THE 16TH CENTURY WAS AN ESPECIALLY tumultuous time, marked by political, cultural, and religious upheaval. In 1513, Pope Leo X (Giuliano de’ Medici) ascended to the papacy and continued the construction of Saint Peter’s Basilica. To finance this massive project, Leo sold indulgences, or, in effect, forgave the sins of those who added to the Church coffers. This fraudulent use of power incensed a young German friar named Martin Luther, who, with his 95 Theses, would spark the religious revolution in 1517 known as the Reformation. Clearly threatened by Luther’s theses (such as “Every believer is a priest before God”), the pope had Luther excommunicated, and the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, also spoke out against the heretic. Yet, Luther’s influence grew in Germany and began to spread throughout the continent.

Meanwhile, Charles V, a Hapsburg emperor with control of Spain, the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Naples, and Sicily, among other territories, sought to expand his empire. In 1527, he targeted

Rome, which was ruled at the time by Clement VII, another Medici pope. With his band of underpaid mercenaries, Charles V sacked the Eternal City and held the pope captive for months. Subsequently, the Medici clan was also expelled from Tuscany for three years. The Sack of Rome and the Medici ouster are widely considered to signal the end of the Renaissance.

In response to Luther's theses and the Reformation came the Counter-Reformation in the second half of the 16th century. Under Pope Paul III, the Church consolidated power in Rome and quashed dissent. Paul instituted the Roman Inquisition, officially recognized the Jesuits, and appointed commissions to report abuses in the Papal States. In the century to follow, numerous groups, including scientists, Jews, Protestants, and artists, were persecuted, including Galileo in Florence and Giordano Bruno in Rome. However, those who were able to conform to the Church's heightened piety were rewarded. The Baroque movement in art, of which Gianlorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini are especially notable, followed in line with the Counter-Reformation by portraying in sculpture and painting themes like religious ecstasy and the supernatural.

## **IL RISORGIMENTO**

FROM THE LATE 16TH TO THE 19TH CENTURY, a succession of rulers from Spain, France, and other kingdoms governed various parts of Italy. Even Napoleon's troops held stakes in Rome, Tuscany, and the Marches at the end of the 18th century. The Risorgimento (or reawakening) was a highly romanticized political movement that sought to unite the many city-states and principalities in Italy into one nation, linked not only by geography but also by government. Europe, especially Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Great Britain (the four major powers of the time), was wholly against the reformation of Italy as a state, as evidenced by the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815, but the citizens of the peninsula were hopeful of a republic. One such citizen was Giuseppe Mazzini, widely considered the father of the Italian nation, who helped initiate public interest in Italian unification through his literature. In 1848, the Risorgimento began to sprout legs as minor revolts shook the balance of power from Southern Italy up through Austria. But the movement couldn't fully gain ground until it enlisted the help of a king, Vittorio Emanuele II; a statesman, Camillo Cavour; and a revolutionary, Giuseppe Garibaldi. By 1870, the actions of these main players, including Mazzini, and the will of the people had resulted in the creation of what we know today as the modern Italian state.

## **FASCISM AND WORLD WAR II**

NO SOONER HAD ITALY EARNED FREEDOM as an independent and unified state than it fell under the leadership of a tyrant. After fighting

in World War I, Italy fell under mismanagement, and the government was fundamentally weak. These conditions, however, were favorable for fascist leader Benito Mussolini. In 1922, the former-elementary-school-teacher-turned-despot became prime minister of Italy. While he espoused the ideals that Garibaldi and his followers had—that is, the vision of a united Italy—Mussolini took the dream a step further, hoping to regain the dominance that Rome had during the days of empire. Mussolini sought to extend the line of imperial Rome by reconquering Europe. He even created a physical link between himself and the emperors of yore by bulldozing through the Roman Forum and creating a wide boulevard, Via dei Fori Imperiali, which led from the Colosseum to his headquarters in Piazza Venezia.

By the outbreak of World War II, Mussolini saw an ally in world domination in Hitler and plunged his country into war in 1940. All in all, Mussolini and fascism were junior partners to Hitler and Nazism. By 1943, the Germans occupied Rome and installed Mussolini as a puppet dictator in northern Italy. Subsequently, Allied forces were able to take advantage of the situation and launched a massive bombing campaign on the region. Many of Italy's city centers are still scarred by the devastation.

## MODERN HISTORY

ALTHOUGH MORE THAN 50 COALITIONS have governed postwar Italy, the state has remained relatively stable. Industrial innovation, fueled by American aid, cheap labor, and a demand for exports, helped usher in Italy's "economic miracle" between 1959 and 1962. And companies that gained ground during this time, including Olivetti, Fiat, and others, have continued to contribute to the nation's bottom line. By 1987, in fact, Italy experienced the "Sorpasso," which meant that its gross domestic product surpassed that of Great Britain, making it a major contender on the economic stage of Europe and the world. Italy's involvement with the European Union contributed to the country's success during the 1990s.

The year 2000 ushered in not only a new millennium but also the Jubilee, a Holy Year devoted to reiterating the history and rites of the Catholic Church. Celebrated every 25 years since approximately 1300, the Jubilee was marked in Rome with particular fervor by pilgrims and tourist operators alike, and resulted in a host of new public works and beautification projects throughout the city. Jubilation for the Jubilee also extended throughout Central Italy, and much of the area saw a boom in tourism, as well as improvements in churches, public spaces, and infrastructure.

While the new century started with promise, many factors have made Italy's future a bit hard to predict. During his turn as prime minister, media mogul Silvio Berlusconi was the subject of multiple scandals. Parmalat, formerly one of the country's largest

companies, was called out on inappropriate accounting practices, resulting in an economic scandal of Enron-like proportions and bankruptcy of one of Italy's best-known brands. Reverberations from the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York have led to a ramping-up of security in Italy's cities and, consequently, a slightly perceivable decrease in Italians' freewheeling spirits. And, of course, the death of Pope John Paul II and the subsequent ascension of German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to the top spot in the Vatican in April 2005 brought about uncertainty with regard to the direction of one of the world's oldest institutions.

## THE LANGUAGE: *Italiano*

YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNOW A NUMBER OF ITALIAN WORDS, thanks to years of Italian American innovation in the media, music, and culinary corners. Dino Crocetti (aka Dean Martin) taught us *amore* (love). Francis Ford Coppola introduced us to *la famiglia* (the family). Today many American kitchens are stocked with pasta, *prosciutto* (ham), *formaggio* (cheese), and *vino* (wine).

The language of music, art, and love, *la lingua italiana* moves with the rhythm of Italian life, but that doesn't mean you won't be able to get by with English. Over the past several decades, as tourism has engulfed the peninsula, many Italians have studied English. Hoteliers, restaurateurs, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, and even that little old *nonna* crossing the street are sure to know an English phrase or two. On the other hand, if you really want to endear yourself to the Italians you meet, try practicing some vocabulary before you go. It could mean the difference between being a regular tourist and a world traveler.

### GETTING LINGUISTICALLY EQUIPPED

IF YOU TOOK FRENCH OR SPANISH in school, Italian may look quite familiar to you. As the original Romance language, Italian stemmed from Latin and has many root words and pronunciations in common with its linguistic cousins. Consider the Italian phrase *per favore* (please); it looks and sounds similar to the Spanish *por favor*. *Città* (chee-TAH) in Italian becomes *cit * in French and *city* in English. There are numerous examples of Italian words that you'll be able to understand on sight or from context.

As far as pronunciation goes, Italian is fairly straightforward in that all syllables are pronounced and almost all words end in a vowel (thus perpetuating the musicality of the language). Emphasis in a word is usually on the second to the last syllable, unless otherwise noted with an accent mark. Below (and throughout the text) we have laid out a beginner's Italian course for you. *Pronto* (ready)? *Andiamo* (let's go)!



## SURVIVAL ITALIAN

FOR THE MOST PART, THE ITALIANS YOU ENCOUNTER will speak fast but clearly. You'll have to tell them to slow down (*Per favore, parla più lentamente*). You may also want to initiate conversation with the phrase *Parla inglese?* (Do you speak English?). If you're lucky, the answer will be *Sì!* (Yes!). If the answer is no, then you may need to try out some Italian.

Below are some basic words you may need to use during your time in Italy.

### Saying Hello and Good-bye

*Buon giorno* Good day

*Buona sera* Good evening

*Arrivederci* Good-bye

A more casual way to say hello is *'giorno* or *'sera*, depending on the time of day. The ubiquitous *ciao*, like the Hawaiian *aloha*, can be used as both a greeting and a salutation.

### Questions

*Quanto costa . . . ?* How much does (this item) cost?

*Dov'è . . .* Where is . . . ?

*Quando . . . ?* When . . . ?

### Time and Days of the Week

*Un minuto* One minute

*Un'ora* One hour

*Mezz'ora* Half hour

*Un giorno* One day

*Una settimana* One week

*Un'anno* One year

*Lunedì* Monday

*Martedì* Tuesday

*Mercoledì* Wednesday

*Giovedì* Thursday

*Venerdì* Friday

*Sabato* Saturday

*Domenica* Sunday

### Numbers

*Uno* 1

*Nove* 9

*Diciassette* 17

*Settanta* 70

*Due* 2

*Dieci* 10

*Diciotto* 18

*Ottanta* 80

*Tre* 3

*Undici* 11

*Diciannove* 19

*Novanta* 90

*Quattro* 4

*Dodici* 12

*Venti* 20

*Cento* 100

*Cinque* 5

*Tredici* 13

*Trenta* 30

*Mille* 1,000

*Sei* 6

*Quattordici* 14

*Quaranta* 40

*Milione* 1,000,000

*Sette* 7

*Quindici* 15

*Cinquanta* 50

*Otto* 8

*Sedici* 16

*Sessanta* 60



## Further Reading about Central Italy

### HISTORY AND CULTURE

- Barker, Graeme and Tom Rasmussen. *The Etruscans*.
- Barzini, Luigi. *The Italians*.
- Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.
- D'Epiro, Peter and Mary Desmond Pinkowish. *Sprezzatura: 50 Ways Italian Genius Shaped the World*.
- Ginsbourg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy*.
- Von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Italian Journey*.
- Hibbert, Christopher. *Rome: Biography of a City and The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall*.
- Lamb, Richard. *War in Italy 1943–1945: A Brutal History*.
- Lawrence, D. H. *Etruscan Places*.
- Masini, Giancarlo and Lacopo Gori. *How Florence Invented America: Vespucci, Verrazzano, and Mazzei and Their Contribution to the Conception of the New World*.
- Origo, Iris. *The Merchant of Prato*.
- Ridley, Jasper. *Garibaldi*.
- Smith, Dennis Mack. *Mazzini*.
- Suetonius, Gaius. *The Twelve Caesars*.

### RELIGION, FOOD, AND THE ARTS

- Bruschini, Enrico. *In the Footsteps of Popes: A Spirited Guide to the Treasures of the Vatican*.
- Hutchinson, Robert J. *When in Rome: A Journal of Life in the Vatican City*.
- King, Ross. *Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture and Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling*.
- McCarthy, Mary. *The Stones of Florence*.
- Root, Waverley. *The Food of Italy*.
- Vasari, Giorgio. *Lives of the Artists*.

### LITERATURE

- Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy* (particularly the *Inferno*).
- Castiglione, Conte Baldassare. *The Courtier*.
- Forster, E. M. *A Room with a View*.
- James, Henry. *Italian Hours*.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*.
- Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*.
- Sobel, Dava. *Galileo's Daughter*.
- Virgil. *The Aeneid*.
- Vreeland, Susan. *The Passion of Artemisia*.

## kids *Further Reading for Kids*

- Anholt, Laurence. *Leonardo and the Flying Boy: A Story about Leonardo Da Vinci.*
- Calvino, Italo. *Italian Folktales.*
- Cox, Phil Roxbee, Annabel Spenceley, and Katie Davies. *Who Were the Romans?*
- Henry, Marguerite. *Gaudenzia, Pride of the Palio.*
- Mayo, Margaret and Peter Malone. *Brother Sun, Sister Moon: The Life and Stories of Saint Francis.*
- Morrison, Taylor. *Antonio's Apprenticeship: Painting a Fresco in Renaissance Italy and Neptune Fountain: The Apprenticeship of a Renaissance Sculptor.*
- Shimony, Abner and J. Shimony. *Tibaldo and the Hole in the Calendar.*

## NUMBERS *and* PRICES: *The* EURO

MAKE SURE YOU DOUBLE-CHECK PRICES before booking a hotel or making other purchases. For the most current information on the euro, consult the European Union's Web site at [europa.eu.int/euro](http://europa.eu.int/euro). If you need further conversion help and up-to-date rates, try [oanda.com](http://oanda.com), which has a handy "Cheat Sheet for Travelers" that you can print and carry with you. Remember: Italians—indeed, most Europeans—use the comma where Americans would traditionally use the decimal point. Thus, \$50.50 would be written \$50,50 in Italy. Conversely, large numbers are separated by decimal points rather than by commas.



## A Timeline of Italian History

### BC

- 753 Romulus and Remus found Rome (according to legend)
- 700–510 Etruscans rule the peninsula
- 550–509 Republican Rome
- 312 Via Appia and Rome's first aqueduct, the Aqua Appia, built; more than 6,000 slaves are crucified on the Via Appia for participating in Spartacus's slave revolt
- 59 Triumvirate of Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar; Florentia (Florence) founded as a town for retired Roman soldiers
- 49–44 Julius Caesar, dictator of Rome
- 20 Military colony of Saena (Siena) founded

### AD

- 64 Fire of Rome during Nero's rule destroys city
- 67 Saints Peter and Paul executed for practicing Christianity
- 72 Work on Colosseum begun under rule of Vespasian
- 80 Colosseum inaugurated by Titus
- 128 Rebuilding of Pantheon completed under Hadrian
- 270 Aurelian Wall begun
- 284 Roman Empire divided into East and West
- 312 Constantine wins control of the Roman Empire after victory at the Milvian Bridge
- 313 Constantine grants freedom of worship to Christians
- 320 Construction of the first Saint Peter's Basilica
- 380 Christianity declared the official religion of the empire by Theodosius
- 410 Rome sacked by Alaric and the Goths
- 455 Rome sacked by the Vandals
- 475 Western Roman Empire falls; Byzantium becomes seat of empire
- 590–604 Papacy strengthened under rule of Pope Gregory I (known as Gregory the Great)
- 773–774 Charlemagne conquers Italy

**AD (CONTINUED)**

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 800       | Charlemagne becomes first Holy Roman emperor and is crowned in Saint Peter's          |
| 1076      | Matilda becomes countess of Tuscany   |
| 1082      | Florence goes to war against Siena  |
| 1181–1226 | Life of Saint Francis   |
| 1296      | Construction of Florence's Duomo begun  |
| 1300      | First Holy Year proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII                                      |
| 1302      | Dante Alighieri begins writing <i>The Divine Comedy</i>                               |
| 1309      | Pope Clement V moves the papacy to Avignon, France                                    |
| 1378–1417 | The "Great Schism" of the papacy in Avignon   |
| 1417      | Pope Martin V ends the Great Schism   |
| 1434–1743 | The Medici family rules Florence  |
| 1436      | Brunelleschi completes Florence's Duomo   |
| 1444      | Sandro Botticelli born  |
| 1475      | Michelangelo Buonarroti born  |
| 1483      | Raffaello Sanzio (aka Raphael) born   |
| 1506      | Pope Julius II orders the construction on the new Saint Peter's                       |
| 1507      | Michelangelo begins painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel                        |
| 1527      | Sack of Rome by Charles V and the symbolic end of the Renaissance era                 |
| 1537–1541 | Michelangelo paints <i>The Last Judgment</i> in the Sistine Chapel                    |
| 1633      | Galileo excommunicated because of his astronomical observations                       |
| 1796      | Napoleon begins his first campaign in Italy   |
| 1799      | Napoleon expelled from Italy by Austrians and Russians                                |
| 1800–1801 | Napoleon retakes Italy  |
| 1807      | Giuseppe Garibaldi born   |
| 1848      | Nationalist uprising in Rome causes pope to flee                                      |
| 1849      | Pope is restored to power by French troops  |
| 1861      | Vittorio Emanuele II King of Italy; first elections and Parliament in a unified Italy |
| 1870      | Rome becomes capital of unified Italy   |



## *A Timeline of Italian History (continued)*

### **AD (CONTINUED)**

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1900 | King Umberto I assassinated  |
| 1911 | Vittorio Emanuele Monument is completed in Rome  |
| 1915 | Italy enters World War I   |
| 1922 | Fascists march on Rome; Benito Mussolini becomes prime minister                        |
| 1929 | Lateran Treaty creates the Vatican City  |
| 1940 | Italy enters World War II as an Axis power   |
| 1943 | Fall of the fascists   |
| 1944 | Allied troops liberate Rome from the Nazis   |
| 1946 | Italy established as a republic  |
| 1960 | Olympic Games held in Rome   |
| 1962 | Vatican II brings about Church reforms   |
| 1966 | Floods in Florence   |
| 1978 | Karol Wojtyla of Poland elected Pope John Paul II                                      |
| 1993 | Terrorist explosion damages part of the Uffizi Gallery                                 |
| 2000 | Italy celebrates the Jubilee   |
| 2005 | Death of Pope John Paul II; German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger becomes Pope Benedict XVI |
| 2006 | Italy wins World Cup soccer championship   |