

# **Driving in Italy & Italian Road Signs**

**English & Italian  
By  
Cristina Fassio  
[www.expatsinitaly.co](http://www.expatsinitaly.co)  
[www.expattalk.com](http://www.expattalk.com)**

## Who can drive in Italy?

Americans may drive in Italy as long as they have a translation of their home driver's license. This can be done in one of two ways:

- AAA will make an [International Driver's Permit](#) for any U.S. resident with a State driver's license. You will need \$10 and 2 passport sized pictures. If you do not have the pictures, they can take them for you for an additional amount. The IDL is valid for 1 year and can be post dated until the date of your arrival in Italy.
- Go to the local A.C.I. when you arrive in Italy and ask for a translation. You will need to have a marca da bollo and 2 passport pictures. The marca da bollo costs around €10.

You do not need an [IDP](#) to rent a car but you do to drive a car. If stopped by the police they may not ask for it but if you get someone who does and you do not have it you will face a fine. Not worth it. Get the [IDP](#) (click on the link and you can read about the law).

The [IDP](#) by the way is not used instead of your license but with it. You must carry your home state license at all times while driving as well as your passport (this is considered valid identification which is required at all times in Italy)

Residents may drive with the [IDP](#) and their home state license for their first year of residency. After this they will need to get an [Italian driver's license](#).

### International Road Signs

Even though they are called International, these signs are not the standard signs used in the United States. Please pay careful attention. Below you can follow links to the explanation of the signs you will find in Italy. Print them out and keep them in your cars glove box for easy reference. The explanations are in both English and Italian so these can also be used to study for the Italian driving exam. For a small donation I can send you a .pdf file of all of the signs if you would prefer. You can contact me at [cristina@expatsinitaly.com](mailto:cristina@expatsinitaly.com)

***Helpful hint: It is illegal to make a right hand turn on a red light. It is also a good way to get killed so don't do it!***

Do you know what this sign means?



This is the "dare precedenza" sign. It is found 50 meters before an intersection or roundabout where you do not have the right of way. It means that you must wait for all others to pass before you may go. Along with the sign there will be upside down triangles on the road, right at the intersection.



Yes, the above is a stop sign and they are used in Italy. Only problem is that some people think of them like a flashing yellow. They only stop if there is a reason. Because of this, never assume that the other will stop.

If you want to know why Italians drive the way they do, it is because they start at a very early age. How early? Check out this short film [www.expatsinitaly.com/images/italiandrivers.mpg](http://www.expatsinitaly.com/images/italiandrivers.mpg) (make sure you have your sound turned on)

## **IDP & the Law**

After debating this issue on different forums, I did a little research. Of course there are many sites, including some that are travel agents, that say you do not need an IDP but they are not the law. I found the 2 comments below and their answers are the same that I was given by my driving instructor here as well as friends who are police.

From the State Police Site <http://www.poliziadistato.it>

From their FAQ:

Sono un cittadino statunitense. Per condurre un'auto in Italia posso utilizzare la patente dello Stato di New York, USA, o e' d'obbligo la patente internazionale?

Risposta: E' necessario disporre della patente internazionale o, in alternativa, della patente americana accompagnata da una traduzione ufficiale in lingua italiana. Poiché le stesse disposizioni valgono anche per gli altri Paesi dell'Unione Europea, pare opportuno suggerire di chiedere il rilascio della patente internazionale con la quale è possibile condurre veicoli anche nel resto dell'Europa ed evitare di avere al seguito la traduzione della patente americana nelle diverse lingue europee.

Translation: I am an American citizen. To drive an auto in Italy, may I use my NY State license or do I need an International License?

Response: It is necessary to have an international license or your American state license accompanied by an official translation in Italian. Because this same rule is valid for the entire EU, we suggest applying for an international license so that you can drive throughout Europe and avoid having to carry multiple translations of your American license.

From the [ACI](#) site (department of motor vehicles in Italy):






















I conducenti con patente o permesso internazionale rilasciati da uno Stato estero non appartenente alla CE possono guidare in Italia veicoli per i quali è valida la loro patente (o il permesso) purché non siano residenti in Italia da oltre un anno. Se la patente, o il permesso, non sono conformi a modelli stabiliti in convenzioni internazionali cui abbia aderito anche l'Italia, devono essere accompagnati da una traduzione ufficiale in lingua italiana o da documento equivalente.

Translation: Drivers with licenses or international permits from a foreign country not of the EU may drive a vehicle for as long as their home license is valid as long as they have not been residents of Italy for more than a year. If the license or permit does not conform to the international conventions\* as does Italy, you must have an official translation into Italian or an equivalent document (IDP)



















\*A US State driver's license does not conform as it is only in English and it is state not country issued.

*Special notes: You must carry your US State, Canadian state, etc. license along with your IDP as they work together. Neither of these are considered valid ID in Italy which everyone who is here must carry at all times. The only ID that Italy recognized from a US or Canadian citizen is their passport.*




## Danger – Pericolo

	Strada deformata. Uneven road.		Dosso. Bump.
	Cunetta. Dip.		Curva a destra. Road curves to right.
	Curva a sinistra. Road curves to left.		Attraversamento tramviario. Tram crossing.
	Attraversamento pedonale. Pedestrian crossing.		Attraversamento ciclabile. Bicycle crossing.
	Discesa pericolosa (es. 10%). Dangerous descent. (ex. 10% decline)		Salita rapida. (es. 10%) Steep incline (ex. 10% angle)
	Doppia curva la prima a destra. Double curve ("S" curve), first curving to the right.		Doppia curva la prima a sinistra. Double curve ("S" curve), first curving to the left.
	Passaggio a livello con barriere. Rail road crossing with safety arm.		Passaggio a livello senza barriere. Rail road crossing without safety arm.
	Ponte mobile. Drawbridge ahead.		Animali selvatici vaganti. Wild animal crossing.
	Animali domestici vaganti. Domestic animal crossing.		Doppio senso di circolazione. Two way street.
	Circolazione rotatoria. Roundabout.		Banchina pericolosa. Soft shoulder.
	Strettoia simmetrica. Road narrows.		Strettoia asimmetrica a sinistra. Road narrows from the left.





## Danger – Pericolo

	Strettoia asimmetrica a destra. Road narrows from the right.		Materiale instabile sulla strada. Unsteady materials on the road.
	Aeromobili. Low flying airplanes.		Sbocco sul molo o su argine. Quay or river bank.
	Caduta massi. Falling rocks on the left.		Caduta massi. Falling rocks on the right.
	Semaforo. Signal lights ahead.		Semaforo. Signal lights ahead.
	Forte vento laterale. Strong lateral winds.		Pericolo di incendio. Fire hazard.
	Altri pericoli. Other dangers.		Bambini. Children.
	Strada sdruciolevole. Slippery road.		Croce di S. Andrea. Rail road crossing (one track)
	Doppio croce di S. Andrea. Rail road crossing (two or more tracks).		Croce di S. Andrea installata verticalmente. Rail road crossing (one track).
	Doppio croce di S. Andrea installata verticalmente. Rail road crossing (two or more tracks)		1° pannello distanziometrico. First warning for train crossing, used with train crossing triangle. This is placed 150 m from crossing.
	2° pannello distanziometrico. Second warning for train crossing. This is placed 100 m from crossing.		3° pannello distanziometrico. Third warning for train crossing. This is placed 50 m from crossing.

## Precedence

	Dare precedenza. Yield right of way.		Fermarsi e dare precedenza. Stop and give the right of way.
	Preavviso di fermarsi e dare precedenza. Upcoming stop sign.		Preavviso di dare precedenza. Upcoming yeild right of way.
	Intersezione con precedenza a destra. Crossroads with right of way from the right.		Dare precedenza nei sensi unici alternati. Oncoming traffic has the right of way.
	Fine del diritto di precedenza. End of current right of way.		Diritto di precedenza. You have the right of way. (in the direction where posted)
	Intersezione con diritto di precedenza. You have the right of way at the intersection (with cars coming from the left and right).		Intersezione a "T" con diritto di precedenza. You have the right of way at the intersection with a subordinate road coming from the right (or if shown, from the left).
	Confluenza a destra. Merging traffic from the right, you have right of way.		Confluenza a sinistra. Merging traffic from the left, you have right of way.
	Diritto di precedenza nei sensi unici alternati. Oncoming traffic must wait.		

## Restriction



















	Divieto di transito. No vehicles allowed.		Senso vietato. No entry, one way street.
	Divieto di sorpasso. No passing.		Distanziamento minimo obbligatorio di . . . . metri (es. 70 m) Minimum required distance of . . . meters. (ex. 70 meters).





















Restriction			
	<p>Limite massimo di velocità . . . km/h (es. 80 km/h).</p> <p>Maximum speed limit. (ex. 80 km/hour)</p>		<p>Transito vietato ai veicoli che trasportano esplosivi o prodotti facilmente infiammabili.</p> <p>Vehicles transporting explosive materials prohibited.</p>
	<p>Transito vietato ai veicoli che trasportano prodotti suscettibili di contaminare l'acqua.</p> <p>Vehicles transporting water pollutants prohibited.</p>		<p>Transito vietato ai veicoli aventi larghezza superiore a . . . metri-(es. 2.30 m).</p> <p>Maximum width allowed. (ex. 2.30 meters)</p>
	<p>Transito vietato ai veicoli aventi altezza superiore a . . . metri (es. 3.50 m)</p> <p>Maximum height allowed. (ex. 3.50 meters)</p>		<p>Transito vietato ai veicoli aventi lunghezza superiore a . . . metri (es. 10 m)</p> <p>Maximum vehicle length allowed. (ex. 10 meters)</p>
	<p>Divieto di segnalazioni acustiche.</p> <p>No honking.</p>		<p>Divieto di sorpasso per i veicoli di massa a pieno carico superiore a 3.5t</p> <p>No passing by vehicles of over 3.5 tons. Exception are passenger vehicles.</p>
	<p>Transito vietato ai veicoli a trazione animale.</p> <p>Animal pulled vehicles not allowed.</p>		<p>Transito vietato ai pedoni.</p> <p>Pedestrians not allowed.</p>
	<p>Transito vietato alle biciclette.</p> <p>Bicycles not allowed.</p>		<p>Transito vietato ai motocicli.</p> <p>Motorcycles and motor scooters not allowed.</p>
	<p>Transito vietato ai veicoli a braccia.</p> <p>Carts (human carried) not allowed.</p>		<p>Transito vietato a tutti gli autoveicoli.</p> <p>No motor vehicles allowed.</p>
	<p>Transito vietato ai veicoli di massa piena carico superiore a 3.5t.</p> <p>Vehicles over 3.5 tons not allowed.</p>		<p>Transito vietato ai veicoli di massa a piena carico superiore a . . . t (es. 6.5t)</p> <p>Vehicles over . . . tons not allowed (ex. 6.5 tons)</p>

Restriction			
	Transito vietato ai veicoli a motore trainanti un rimorchio. Vehicles pulling other vehicles not allowed.		Transito vietato alle macchine agricole. Agricultural vehicles not allowed.
	Transito vietato ai veicoli che trasportano merci pericolose. Vehicles carrying hazardous materials not allowed.		Via libera. Previous signage is cancelled.
	Fine limitazione velocità. End of speed limit (50 km/hour).		Fine del divieto di sorpasso per i veicoli di massa a pieno carico superiore a 3.5t. End of no passing for trucks.
	Fine del divieto di sorpasso. End of no passing.		Divieto di sosta. Restricted no stopping.
	Divieto di fermata. No stopping at any time.		Parcheggio. Parking.
	Preavviso di parcheggio. Parking in . . . meters (ex. 300 meters).		Passo carrabile. No blocking of passageway.
	Regolazione flessibile della sosta in centro abitato. Rules and times of parking and or stopping.		Sosta consentita a particolari categorie (es. handicapped). Stopping allowed only for certain categories. (ex. handicapped)
	Sosta consentita a particolari categorie (es. pronto soccorso). Stopping allowed only for certain categories. (ex. Emergency Room)		Sosta consentita a particolari categorie. Stopping allowed only for certain categories (no example given).
	Direzione obbligatoria diritto. Mandatory direction of travel - Straight ahead		Direzione obbligatoria a sinistra. Mandatory direction of travel - Left


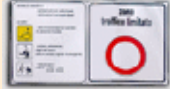




































## Necessity












	Direzione obbligatoria a destra. Mandatory direction of travel - Right		Preavviso di direzione obbligatoria a destra. Warning of upcoming mandatory direction of travel - Right
	Preavviso di direzione obbligatoria a sinistra. Warning of upcoming mandatory direction of travel - Left		Direzioni consentite destra e sinistra. Mandatory direction of travel - Left or right
	Direzioni consentite dritto e destra. Mandatory direction of travel - Straight ahead or right		Direzioni consentite dritto e sinistra. Mandatory direction of travel - Straight ahead or left
	Passaggio obbligatorio a sinistra. Stay to the left.		Passaggio obbligatorio a destra. Stay to the right.
	Passaggio consentiti. Stay to right or left.		Rotatoria. Roundabout.
	Limite minimo di velocità. Minimum speed (ex. 30 km/hour)		Fine del limite minimo di velocità. End of minimum speed (ex. 30 km/hour)
	Catene per neve obbligatorie. Snow tires required.		Percorso pedonale. Pedestrian lane.
	Fine del percorso pedonale. End of pedestrian lane.		Pista ciclabile. Bike lane.
	Fine pista ciclabile. End of bike lane.		Pista ciclabile contigua al marciapiede. Bike lane close to sidewalk.







	<p>Percorso pedonale e ciclabile.</p> <p>Bike and pedestrian lane.</p>		<p>Fine della pista ciclabile contigua al marciapiede.</p> <p>End of bike lane close to sidewalk.</p>
	<p>Fine del percorso pedonale e ciclabile.</p> <p>End of bike and pedestrian lane.</p>		<p>Percorso riservato ai quadrupedi da soma o da sella.</p> <p>Horse and mule lane.</p>
<b>Necessity</b>			
	<p>Fine del percorso riservato ai quadrupedi da soma o da sella.</p> <p>End of horse and mule lane.</p>		<p>Alt-Dogana.</p> <p>Stop for border check.</p>
	<p>Alt-polizia.</p> <p>Stop for police check.</p>		<p>Alt-stazione.</p> <p>Stop for rail station.</p>
	<p>Confine di Stato tra Paesi della Comunità Europea.</p> <p>Border between Italy and other EU countries.</p>		<p>Preavviso di confine di Stato tra Paesi della Comunità Europea.</p> <p>Warning of upcoming border between EU countries.</p>
<b>Helpful</b>			
	<p>Ospedale</p> <p>Hospital</p>		<p>Attraversamento pedonale</p> <p>Pedestrian crossing</p>
	<p>Scuolabus</p> <p>School bus stop</p>		<p>SOS</p> <p>Emergency phone box</p>
	<p>Sottopassaggio pedonale</p> <p>Underground passageway</p>		<p>Strada senza uscita</p> <p>Dead end street</p>
	<p>Preavviso di strada senza uscita</p> <p>Upcoming dead end street on the left.</p>		<p>Velocità consigliata</p> <p>Recommended speed</p>
	<p>Fine velocità consigliata</p> <p>End of recommended speed</p>		<p>Area pedonale</p> <p>Pedestrian zone</p>

## Helpful




















	<p>Fine area pedonale</p> <p>End of pedestrian zone</p>		<p>Zona a traffico limitato (ZTL)</p> <p>Limited traffic area, only listed vehicles may enter.</p>
	<p>Fine zona a traffico limitato (ZTL)</p> <p>End of limited traffic area.</p>		<p>Zona a velocità limitata</p> <p>Limited speed zone</p>
	<p>Fine zona a velocità limitata</p> <p>End of limited speed zone</p>		<p>Strada riservata ai veicoli a motore</p> <p>Motorized vehicles only</p>
	<p>Attraversamento ciclabile</p> <p>Bicycle crossing</p>		<p>Galleria</p> <p>Tunnel</p>
	<p>Ponte</p> <p>Bridge</p>		<p>Zona residenziale</p> <p>Residential zone</p>
	<p>Inizio autostrada (colore di fondo verde) o strada extraurbana (colore di fondo blu)</p> <p>Begin freeway (green background) or highway (blue background)</p>		<p>Fine autostrada (colore di fondo verde) o Fine strada extraurbana (colore di fondo blu)</p> <p>End freeway (green background) or highway (blue background)</p>
	<p>Preavviso di inizio autostrada (colore di fondo verde) o strada extraurbana (colore di fondo blu)</p> <p>Upcoming freeway (green background) or highway (blue background) start.</p>		<p>Senso unico parallelo</p> <p>One way in direction of arrow</p>
	<p>Senso unico frontale</p> <p>One way ahead</p>		<p>Preavviso deviazione consigliata autocarri in transito</p> <p>Upcoming detour for trucks</p>

<b>Helpful</b>			
	Deviazione consigliata autocarri in transito Detour for trucks		Limiti di velocità generali General speed limits (listed)
	Pronto soccorso Emergency room		Assistenza meccanica Mechanic
	Telefono Telephone		Rifornimento Gas station
	Fermata autobus Bus stop		Informazioni Tourist information
	Bar Cafe		Parcheggio di scambio con metropolitane od altri servizi extraurbani su rotaia Park and ride (on train or cable cars)
<b>Temporary</b>			
	Lavori. Men at work.		Strettoia simmetrica. Road narrows (symetrically).
	Strettoia asimmetrica a sinistra. Road narrows from the left.		Doppio senso di circolazione.
	Barriere di recinzione per chiusini. Protected work area.		Semaforo. Traffic lights.
	Mezzi di lavoro in azione. Caution road equipment at work.		Strada deformata. Rough road.
	Materiale instabile sulla strada. Unsteady materials on the road.		Paletto di delimitazione. Caution, road work, slow down.

<b>Temporary</b>			
	Delineatore modulare di curva provvisoria. Slow in curve.		Cono. To indicate area of caution. Slow down.
	Delineatori flessibili. To indicate area of caution - slow down		Passaggio obbligatorio per veicoli operativi. Mandatory direction/lane
	Presegnale di cantiere mobile. Upcoming work area, left lane merges right in 500 meters		Presegnale di cantiere mobile. Upcoming work area, left lane merges right in 500 meters
	Segnale mobile di preavviso di cantiere mobile. Movable sign. Upcoming work area, left lane merges right in 500 meters		Segnale mobile di protezione. Upcoming mandatory direction/lane
	Segni orizzontali in rifacimento. Caution, pavement being painted		Barriera normale. Normal barrier
	Barriera direzionale. Directional barrier		

<b>Add Ons</b>			
	Distanza. Distance between the sign and the beginning of the posted indication.		Estesa. The length of the posted indication.
	Validità. Hours of validity.		Validità. Hours of validity for holidays and Sundays (upper) and work days (lower).
	Limitazione od eccezione. Limits or exceptions.		Inizio, continuazione, fine. Start, continuation, end of posted action.

## Add Ons

	Scombraneve in azione. Snow plows at work.		Incidente. Accident.
	Zona soggetta ad allagamento. Possible flood area.		Coda. Possible traffic jam.
	Mezzi di lavoro in azione. Road or field equipment ahead.		Strada sdruciolevole per ghiaccio. Possible ice formation.
	Strada sdruciolevole per pioggia. Slippery when wet.		Autocarri in rallentamento. Slow down for trucks.
	Zona rimozione coatta. Removal of cars in no parking zone.		Segnale di corsia. Indication of lane.
	Tornante. Dangerous curve(s).		Numero del tornante. First dangerous curve upcoming.
	Pulizia meccanica della strada. Street cleaning hours and days.		Pulizia meccanica della strada. Street cleaning.
	Andamento della strada principale. Intersection with secondary roads.		Andamento della strada principale. Intersection with secondary roads.
	Andamento della strada principale. Intersection with secondary roads.		Andamento della strada principale. Intersection with secondary roads.
	Andamento della strada principale. Intersection with secondary roads.		