

**Mini travel guide**  
**(with checklists)**  
**Preparing for your trip to Italy**

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This mini travel guide corresponds to Chapter 1 of the book "Italy with Your Dog": a practical travel guide with 470 pages full of information for anyone who wants to visit Italy with their dog.

The guide contains hundreds of dog-friendly tips for wonderful trips you can take with your dog: cities, nature parks, wineries, beaches, restaurants, and much more.

You will also find an overview of the transport options to and within Italy (plane, train, car, tram and metro, ferries, cable cars, etc.) and the rules that apply.

For each region, city, and area, there is also an overview of veterinary clinics for emergencies.

Finally, the guidebook refers to 1200 (!) websites with further information.

The guide is available as a paperback and e-book at your bookstore, bol.com, bravenewbooks.nl, and other online stores.

All information can be found on the website: <https://stefsmulders.nl/Italy-with-Dog-Travel-Guide.php>



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# Preparing for the trip

Every trip starts with good preparation, and this is even more important when you are traveling with your pet. In this chapter, we discuss everything you need to consider when traveling with your pet.

## **Disclaimer: The role of your veterinarian**

This guide is comprehensive and based on current legislation (2025), but it is never a substitute for personal advice from your veterinarian. Always discuss a suitable vaccination and preventive care plan with your veterinarian that is specifically tailored to your dog and your travel plans.

## 1.1 Health and documentation

### *1.1.1 The EU pet passport*

The EU pet passport is the basis for any trip with your dog to Italy. This blue document is issued by approved veterinarians and contains all the important information about your pet. The passport must contain the following information:

- Personal details of the dog (name, breed, sex, date of birth)
- Microchip number
- Rabies vaccination (with date and expiry date)
- Other relevant vaccinations

Apply for your passport in good time, ideally at least three months before departure, as some vaccinations take time to become effective.

If you are traveling by car, the passport is not automatically required, even when transiting through Switzerland, which is not a member of the EU. Random checks may be carried out at the border/by the police or at the vet, especially since 2024 due to stricter measures against the illegal trade in dogs. To avoid unpleasant problems, it is therefore better to have the passport ready. (Switzerland is not a member of the EU, but recognizes the EU pet passport and applies EU regulations). Therefore, always carry the passport with you. This is also in case a visit to the vet is necessary (hopefully not!). The costs are limited and may vary depending on the vet. Further information can be found here:

[https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/carry/pets-and-other-animals/index\\_de.htm](https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/carry/pets-and-other-animals/index_de.htm)

### *1.1.2 Microchip requirements*

Before other procedures can be carried out, your dog must first be microchipped:

- The chip must comply with ISO standard 11784 or 11785.
- In Germany, almost all microchips are compliant, but please check this if your dog was microchipped abroad.
- If the chip is not ISO-compliant (11784/11785), the owner can bring a suitable reader or have a second ISO chip implanted. This is standard practice in accordance with EU regulations.
- The chip must always be inserted before the rabies vaccination – if this is done the other way around, the vaccination must be repeated.

### *1.1.3 Mandatory vaccinations and treatments*

The rabies vaccination is the most important requirement for travel to Italy. Here are the specific conditions:

- The first rabies vaccination may only be administered from the age of 12 weeks.
- Your dog may only travel 21 days after vaccination. This is the waiting period during which the vaccine takes effect.
- The vaccination must be valid for the entire duration of the trip.

This waiting period does not apply to a **booster vaccination** within the validity period. If the booster vaccination is given within the validity period (e.g., for a 3-year vaccination), there is no new 21-day waiting period. If the booster is given after the validity period has expired, the 21-day waiting period applies again.

Throughout the EU, including Italy, your dog must be at least fifteen weeks old to travel.

A **titer test** for rabies (a blood test to measure the amount of antibodies against a specific disease in the blood) is not required within the EU, but it is required when returning from certain non-EU countries.

In addition to rabies, the standard vaccinations are also important:

- The combination vaccine (DHP) against distemper (not mandatory, but recommended), parvovirus, and hepatitis
- Kennel cough vaccination (not mandatory, but recommended), especially if you plan to board your dog
- Leptospirosis, which still occurs regularly in Italy. This disease can be transmitted via standing water – relevant for lakes and ponds.

#### *1.1.4 Parasite control*

Certain parasites are found in Italy that are less common in Germany. Preventive treatment is therefore essential.

##### **Heartworm (Filaria)**

Can be life-threatening, transmitted by mosquitoes. Treatment for heartworm (Italian: Filaria) is necessary if you are staying in Italy for more than a month or travel regularly to southern Europe. There is a particular risk in southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, and the Po Valley. Common treatments include Milbemax and Advocate.

Talk to your veterinarian and have a blood test (e.g., SNAP 4Dx) done before starting treatment to avoid treating an infected dog (may cause reactions). An **antigen test** is recommended **before** starting treatment in dogs > 6 months old or with an uncertain prevention history; the main goal is to retest **immediately after return** and **6 months after exposure** (prepatent period).

Begin treatment one month before departure or **upon arrival at the latest and continue monthly until one month after return** (or follow your veterinarian's schedule).

Protection against ticks and fleas is important year-round, but especially during the warmer months. Use a product that remains effective for at least 24 hours after contact with water, as your dog will likely swim.

##### **Leishmaniasis**

Leishmaniasis is a parasitic disease that is widespread in the Mediterranean region, including Italy. The disease is transmitted by sand flies (tiny insects, no bigger than a pinhead), which are mainly active between sunset and sunrise. The areas with the highest risk are marked on the map.

The disease can manifest itself in various ways, but the most common symptoms often develop months after a bite:

- Skin problems, especially around the ears and nose
- Weight loss despite normal appetite
- Fatigue and listlessness
- Advanced kidney problems



*Distribution area of leishmaniasis*

Prevention:

- **Pyrethroid-based repellents** (e.g., **deltamethrin collars such as Scalibor, Seresto, or permethrin spot-on treatments such as Advantix**) are the recommended first choice against sand flies; start **1–2 weeks** (collars) or **a few days** (spot-on treatments) before exposure to ensure optimal protection upon arrival.
- Vaccination: CaniLeish or Letifend available; the former requires 3 injections at 3-week intervals, the latter requires one injection. Annual booster shots are also required. Start well in advance of departure.
- The vaccine reduces the risk of serious illness but does not offer 100% protection → combine it with a collar/drops that repel flies.

Practical measures are also important:

- Keep your dog indoors between sunset and sunrise.
- Use mosquito nets or fly screens when you have the windows open.
- Avoid walking near standing water where sand flies breed.
- If possible, use a light dog blanket that covers the body.

### **Ticks and fleas**

Ticks are active from March to November, especially in forests, grass, and bushes. They transmit diseases such as babesia, ehrlichia, and Lyme disease.

Prevention:

- Use a waterproof repellent that remains effective for at least 24 hours after swimming.
- Babesia is found in northern Italy and further south.
- Preferably use repellents and insecticides (e.g., fluralaner, afoxolaner).
- Check your dog for ticks every day.
- Take tick tweezers with you.
- In case of tick bites: Remove with tick tweezers; disinfect the area; note the date for observation.

#### *1.1.5 Other dangers*

### **Processionary moths**

Processionary moths (pine processionary moths and oak processionary moths) can also pose a seasonal risk. Their **stinging hairs can cause necrosis** of the tongue/mucous membranes, requiring **emergency treatment**. Processionary moths are found throughout Italy and, due to climate change, are also invading inhabited areas. The pine processionary caterpillar

(*processionaria del pino*) is active in early spring. The oak processionary caterpillar (*processionaria della quercia*) is active from May to July.

**Caution:** Stinging hairs can be spread by the wind – the danger also exists outside forests, especially after mild winters.

### **Poisoned attractants**

These are mainly found in parks, parking lots, and at the edges of forests.

Tip: Train your dog to respond reliably to a "Leave/No" command; do not let your dog eat anything off the ground; if in doubt, wear a muzzle with gauze.

If you suspect contact: Do not induce vomiting, do not treat yourself – go to the vet immediately and (if it is safe) take the bait with you in a bag.

### **Dangerous Italian foods for your dog**

Italy is a paradise for *foodies*, but not everything that is a delicacy for you is safe for your dog. Some typical Italian ingredients can even be life-threatening:

- Grapes & raisins (*uva & uvetta*)  
Often used in desserts (*panettone, schiacciata con l'uva*). Can cause acute kidney failure.
- Garlic & onions (*cipolla, aglio*)  
Indispensable in Italian cuisine, but toxic to dogs: cause anemia.
- Coffee & espresso  
Caffeine can cause heart palpitations and even cardiac arrest. Never let your dog lick leftover *cappuccino*.
- Chocolate (*cioccolato*)  
In desserts and *gelato* – contains theobromine, which is toxic to dogs. The darker the chocolate, the more dangerous it is.
- Macadamia nuts & almonds (*noci di macadamia, amandorle*)  
Sometimes used in cakes and cookies. Macadamia nuts are toxic, almonds often cause stomach problems.
- Alcohol (*wine, limoncello, grappa*)  
Dangerous even in small amounts: causes dizziness, low blood sugar, and coordination problems.
- Xylitol (sweetener)  
Found in some chewing gum and modern low-calorie products. Very toxic to dogs – causes a dangerous drop in blood sugar levels.

Practical advice:

- Keep your dog away from the dining table during family meals and *in restaurants*.
- Ask the waiter if cookies or snacks contain grapes, chocolate, or onions.
- Practice a reliable command (let go) in case something is lying on the road.

### **Foxtails**

These can penetrate the skin, ears, and nose. They are particularly prevalent from late spring to late summer in dry verges/fields. Signs: violent sneezing/head shaking, obsessive licking of a paw, sudden limping. Routine: After every walk, check paws, armpits, groin, ears, and nose; keep a fine-toothed comb and tweezers in the car.

### **Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae)**

Risk in stagnant/warmed water; liver/neurological toxins; no antidote; call a veterinarian immediately if suspected.

### **Exercise areas**

The maintenance of facilities in Italy often leaves much to be desired. In fenced-in exercise areas, always check whether any fence panels are missing and whether the fence has any holes.

### **Overheating or hypothermia/frostbite**

See the chapter "Traveling with your dog – Some considerations."



## Cuts

Your dog can easily injure itself on rocky beaches or on dirty roads (glass containers!). Proceed as follows in the event of cuts:

- Clean with saline solution
- Cover with a sterile bandage
- Consult a veterinarian for deep wounds

### 1.1.6 Health certificate

Health certificates are not required by law within the EU, but airlines sometimes require a certificate that is no more than 10 days old. It is therefore advisable to have your veterinarian issue a health certificate shortly before departure (maximum 10 days). This certifies that your dog:

- is in good health
- has no contagious diseases
- is fit enough for the journey

The name and registration number of the veterinarian must be stated on the certificate.

### 1.1.7 Longer stay

If you are settling or staying for a longer period, your dog must be registered with the local animal registration office (**Anagrafe Canina**). Deadline: within 15 to 30 days of arrival.

Please note:

- There is no uniform nationwide system—procedures vary from region to region.
- Some ASLs require an Italian tax number (*codice fiscale*).
- An Italian veterinarian is often required for registration; the EU pet passport is accepted, but a translation is sometimes required.

## Where do you have to register?

At the *Ufficio Anagrafe Canina* of the ASL (local health authority) or at the municipal office of your municipality of residence or stay. An Italian pet passport is only issued after registration at the local *Anagrafe*; this is relevant if you settle in Italy. As a tourist, the EU pet passport from your own country is sufficient.

### 1.1.8 Veterinarians, pharmacies, insurance

## The role of pharmacies in Italy

For many minor ailments and basic first aid supplies (disinfectant, bandages, tick tweezers, flea treatment, some medications), you can go to any pharmacy (*farmacia*), which can be recognized by a green cross. The pharmacist can often also give you advice and refer you to a local veterinarian.

## Where can you find veterinarians?

For each of the major cities in the regions covered and all regions, we provide a selection of veterinarians, clinics, and emergency numbers in Chapter 5. If you need a doctor in a specific other location, you can proceed as follows:

- Official: [www.fnovi.it](http://www.fnovi.it) → Search by province
- Google Maps: Search for "*pronto soccorso veterinario* + [place name]"
- Check opening hours and 24-hour emergency services

## Insurance and insurance coverage in Italy

Under Italian law (Art. 2052 of the Civil Code), you as the owner are strictly liable for any damage caused by your dog, even if it has run away. Make sure that your liability insurance (with foreign coverage) or special dog insurance covers incidents abroad. The financial consequences of a bite incident can be significant.

## 1.2 Muzzle requirement in Italy

There is no nationwide muzzle requirement for the constant wearing of a muzzle, but there is clear legislation that is often misunderstood.

### **There are two important obligations:**

#### **1. Always carry a muzzle with you (*avere con sé*)**

According to the *Ordinanza Martini* (national law), every dog owner must always carry a muzzle (and a leash no longer than 1.5 m) with them in public areas. The dog does not have to wear the muzzle at all times, but you must be able to put it on immediately at the request of the authorities (police, Carabinieri) or in case of danger.

#### **2. Actual wearing (*indossare*)**

Wearing is mandatory in:

- Public transportation (buses, trains, subways, ferries) – even for small dogs (including those in carriers), leashes and muzzles are generally required in accordance with local regulations
- Cable cars and ski lifts
- Markets, shops, and open-air events (depending on local regulations)
- At the request of the authorities

Tip: Pay attention to local signs. If in doubt, put a muzzle on your dog.

### **Situations in which wearing a muzzle is often mandatory**

In Italy, wearing a muzzle is (theoretically) mandatory in the following situations:

- On public transport (trains, buses, subways). Details can be found in Chapter 2.
- In many public buildings
- In busy tourist areas
- In some restaurants and shops
- At certain events
- For certain dog breeds that are considered "potentially dangerous"

### **Types of muzzles**

Choosing the right muzzle is important. Although the law does not prescribe a specific type of muzzle, it is essential for your dog's well-being to choose a model that allows them to pant and drink water. A well-fitting basket muzzle (made of plastic, metal, or biothane) is therefore the only correct choice. Avoid tight nylon muzzles that completely close the mouth; these are unsuitable for long-term use. Preferably choose a lightweight, well-ventilated basket muzzle made of plastic or metal. At [www.4pfoten-urlaub.de/blog/die-unterschiedlichen-maulkorb-varianten](http://www.4pfoten-urlaub.de/blog/die-unterschiedlichen-maulkorb-varianten) you will find an up-to-date overview of types and prices.

Note: Some municipalities and transport companies do not recognize Biothane muzzles as fully compliant. A hard metal or plastic basket is most commonly accepted.

### **Getting used to the muzzle**

Start getting your dog used to the muzzle well in advance of the trip. Make it a positive experience by:

- initially associating the muzzle with tasty treats
- gradually increasing the wearing time
- letting the dog walk and drink with it on
- practicing in different situations

If necessary, consider consulting a professional behavior trainer or watch *YouTube tutorials* on getting your dog used to the muzzle, such as <https://youtu.be/sXswT84D33o>

## **1.3 Practical preparations**

### *1.3.1 Training and habituation*

Start preparing your dog for the trip at least two months before departure.

Get your dog used to the method of transport you will be using. For car journeys, this means regular short trips, which you gradually extend if your dog is not used to longer car journeys. For air travel, it is important that your dog gets used to the *transport crate* in which it will be traveling.

Provide specific training:

- Staying calm in busy environments
- Obedience from a distance
- Wearing a muzzle (required in certain situations in Italy)
- Heat resistance by gradually increasing exercise during the warmer times of day

### Basic commands in Italian

Even though your dog is probably used to English commands, it can be useful to know Italian commands and terms:

- Sit – *Seduto*
- Stay – *Resta*
- Come here – *Vieni qui, vieni*
- Leave it – *Lascia*
- Good boy/girl – *Bravo/a*
- Male – *Maschio*
- Female – *Femmina*
- May I pet him/her? – *Posso accarezzarlo/a*
- Bite – *Mordere*
- What's his/her name? – *Come si chiama*
- Can I feed him/her? – *Posso darle da mangiare*

### Stress

### relief

To make the trip as pleasant as possible for your dog:

Invest in natural sedatives such as Bach flowers or special dietary supplements for travel. Test these at home first to assess their effectiveness. Or possibly pheromones (Adaptil) and L-theanine/L-tryptophan (in consultation with your veterinarian). Never use sedatives such as benzodiazepines without the supervision of a veterinarian. Also take familiar items such as your pet's own basket or pillow, favorite toys, and usual food bowl with you.

#### 1.3.2 Checklist for important items

### Documents:

- EU pet passport
- Health certificate from the veterinarian (**not required by law**, but some airlines require a current certificate (usually  $\leq 10$  days). See 2.2
- Your veterinarian's contact details
- Current passport photo of your dog
- Digital copies of the passport/chip number on your phone and in the cloud - Spare USB stick with medical information
- GPS tracker/dog tag with cell phone number + country code

### Contact details of veterinarians along the route

For Italy, you can find many veterinarians at [www.fnovi.it](http://www.fnovi.it). You can search by province, which is often indicated in addresses as a two-digit code after the city name. An even easier method is often to use Google Maps and search for "*veterinario*" or "*clinica veterinaria*" near your location. Always check the opening hours and whether a 24-hour emergency service (*pronto soccorso veterinario*) is offered.

### Medical supplies:

- First aid kit for dogs, containing at least the following:
  1. Disposable gloves
  2. Sterile gauze bandages and dressings
  3. Antiseptic spray or ointment
  4. Tick tweezers

5. Saline solution for wounds
  6. Moisturizing gel
  7. Activated charcoal (for poisoning)
  8. Digital thermometer
  9. Muzzle for emergencies
- Regular medication for at least the entire duration of the trip plus additional medication for any unforeseen extensions
  - Tick tweezers and flea comb
  - Disinfectant and bandages
  - Paw balm and paw protectors (rocks/hot asphalt)
  - Antiemetic, if necessary (prescription required)

#### **Comfort items:**

- Familiar transport box or travel bag
- Sufficient blankets or cooling mats
- Cooling scarf/cooling collar for summer
- Drinking bottle and foldable water bowl
- Enough food for at least the first week
- Poop bags
- Additional leash, collar, and muzzle
- Identity tag with your phone number and location
- Reflective sunshades, including for the rear window
- Extra water bottles
- Small hand fan or power bank fan

#### **Contact & emergency**

Make sure you have:

- List of veterinarians along the route (see Chapter 5)
- Emergency numbers (ASL, pronto soccorso, see also below)
- Offline maps
- Glossary of medical terms (Italian): see Appendix 1.

#### **Important telephone numbers**

- General emergency number: 112

## 1.4 Practical checklists

When	What needs to be arranged/done
3 months before departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microchip (if not already done)</li> <li>• First rabies vaccination (21-day waiting period)</li> <li>• Apply for EU pet passport</li> </ul>
8 weeks before departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin training for the transport crate (transport crate = comfortable, safe place)</li> </ul>
6 weeks before departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muzzle training: build up slowly, reward positively</li> </ul>
4 weeks before departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan parasite protection with your veterinarian (ticks, heartworm, leishmaniasis)</li> <li>• Pet insurance / travel liability insurance or personal liability insurance with international coverage</li> </ul>

1 week before departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy/back up documents (cloud/USB/printout)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Always mandatory</b> Microchip (ISO-compliant), rabies vaccination (valid), EU pet passport</p> <p><b>Recommended</b> Muzzle (must be presented/used on request, on public transport or in crowds) Poop bags</p> <p><b>Leash requirement</b> In most cities: leash requirement, often max. 1–1.5 meters. Flexible leashes or retractable leashes are permitted, but must often be set to a short length (max. 1.5 m) in busy urban areas.</p> <p><b>Please note</b> Regulations may vary depending on the municipality/region. Check local signs or municipal websites for information. Fines are imposed by the (municipal) police. In some regions (e.g., Trentino), particularly strict regulations may apply to dogs running free in nature reserves.</p>	

### Checklist for departure day

Category	Take with you/Do
Documents & ID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU pet passport</li> <li>• Microchip number + copy (digital &amp; printed)</li> <li>• Tag/GPS tracker with international phone number</li> <li>• Muzzle (fitting) &amp; leash (<math>\leq 1.5</math> m)</li> </ul>
Health & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First aid kit (gauze bandages, disinfectant, tick tweezers, gloves)</li> <li>• Medication/pheromones/travel sickness medication (antiemetic)</li> <li>• Parasite treatment</li> <li>• Cooling mat/cooling collar, paw balm/boots</li> </ul>
Travel accessories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water + travel bottle/bowl</li> <li>• Blankets/carrier/pillow</li> <li>• Food + snacks</li> <li>• Towels/wet wipes/poop bags</li> <li>• Spare leash &amp; additional snap hooks</li> </ul>
Emergency & contact details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of veterinarians + emergency numbers</li> <li>• Translated phrases (Italian)</li> <li>• Offline maps/route on paper</li> </ul>

*Tip: Save this checklist digitally and check it off on the day of your departure.*

### Medical risks per region

Region	Heartworm	Leishmaniasis	Ticks / Babesiosis	Recommendation (brief)
Northern Italy (Alps, Dolomites, Po Valley)	Occurrence – mainly in the warmer months in the lowlands/Po Valley. Prevention recommended.	Low to moderate. Some hotspots (Ligurian coast, urban areas).	High in forests/grass (spring–fall). Babesia/Ehrlichia occur.	Monthly heartworm prophylaxis during the warm season; daily tick checks; sand fly repellent in risk areas.
Central Italy (Tuscany, Lazio, Umbria, Marche)	Moderate to high. Mild climate all year round → longer	Moderate to high. Sand flies are active from dusk to dawn.	High (spring–fall).	Continuous prevention plan: heartworm tablets/spot-on; sand fly collar/spot-on; daily tick check.

	infection period.			
Southern Italy (Campania, Apulia, Calabria, Basilicata)	High. Warm temperatures almost all year round.	High. Large sand fly population.	Medium to high (depending on habitat).	Protection against heartworms and sand flies throughout the stay; keep dogs indoors in the evening; bring tick hooks.
Islands (Sicily, Sardinia)	High. Endemic areas.	Very high Leishmaniasis is common.	Moderate. Continue daily checks.	Strict prevention: monthly heartworm medication, continuous sand fly protection, keep indoors at night.

*Tip: Always discuss an individual prevention plan (dosage & schedule) with your veterinarian.*

That was the mini travel guide, i.e. Chapter 1 from "Italy with your dog – The practical travel guide with hundreds of dog-friendly tips for trips with your four-legged friend". You can find all the information about the travel guide at <https://stefsmulders.nl/Italy-with-Dog-Travel-Guide.php>

You can order the **paperback** here: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0FSDB3R7J> and the **e-book** here: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0FS28XGRM>



