

Wonderful RETREATS

GETTING READY FOR ITALIA: PHONES AND APPS

When traveling to Italy, one of the unnerving things can be how to stay connected to your friends you're traveling with (or just to give Chelsea a heads up when you've landed!), as well as those back home!

So, we've compiled a list of our favorite Apps to download before we leave, as well as some tips and tricks for using your phone while abroad!

DATA & USING YOUR PHONE WHILE IN ITALIA

Before you leave for Italy, you need to visit your phone carrier and chat with them. Not only about what your data plan options are overseas but also how to turn off certain features so you don't come home to a large unexpected phone bill!

Phone carriers have some GREAT options these days (we have AT&T and a Samsung Galaxy, FYI) and it can be easy to stay connected to family back home if you want to pay a little money. This past summer, our carrier had a plan for unlimited texting (to friends in Italy and those back home) with photos, a little data for emergencies, and a cost per minute for phone calls for about \$60 for a month. I can't tell you how big of a relief it is landing in Rome, switching on my phone and being able to be in contact with family immediately. My mom loves this feature too ;)

Lots of carriers offer a per day option too! With this option, you keep your phone **on airplane mode** or **the data turned off** for most of the time except the days you really want to be connected and pay for those days only for a flat fee! This cost varies per provider to check with them but it's usually around \$10 per day for unlimited usage. Not too shabby!

Keeping your data turned off is crucial to making sure your phone isn't downloading updates or loading emails without your knowledge. This also means most apps won't work as there's no data allowing them to connect. Just find some wifi and you'll be set.

Another option? Keep the phone on airplane the whole time and take in Italia disconnected from pesky social media! Enjoy the break from the world back home without the incessant ding of emails and texts.

Can't disconnect? Don't worry, we're addicted too! With your phone in airplane mode or the data turned off you can still turn on Wifi (we have wifi at the apartments and villa) and stay connected that way through some of our favorite apps!

OUR FAVORITE APPS

WHATSAPP:

By far, one of the best advancements with traveling overseas and communication is WhatsApp! This app uses either a data plan OR wifi and you'll be able to send photos and messages and even call friends that also have the app! Keep in mind, your friends in Italy (or back home) will also have to have the app downloaded AND be connected to data/wifi for them to receive your messages but it's still an amazing resource! If you want to call someone back home too, you can call them through the app (so long as they also have the app downloaded). We use it often to stay connected with you all as you travel to the retreats from the airports and even afterwards! Did we mention this app is totally free? *Winning!*

GOOGLE MAPS:

Knowing where you're going in Italy can be stressful. Unfamiliar streets with poorly labeled names in a different language can make for a headache. If you can't shell out the money for a cab (that's gelato and Spritz money, after all!) we highly recommend downloading Google Maps! Before traveling to a new city or a new AirBnb, I love to look up the route from the Train Station to my AirBnb using wifi. Even better? I screenshot the whole route and the directions so I can find my way easily WITHOUT using data! You can download directions for trips, both driving or walking...I've downloaded routes from the Florence airport before driving down to the Villa, it's wonderful. Google Maps also has the option to download WHOLE CITY MAPS to use offline! This is an awesome feature in bigger cities. You can even set an expiration date so this big space taker leaves your phone before you run out of photo space.

GOOGLE TRANSLATE:

Oh Google, ya'll really are geniuses. On top of the Map feature being incredibly useful, we LOVE the Google Translate App too. When you have the App downloaded, you can also choose to download specific language dictionaries to use OFFLINE! At a restaurant with no signal or wifi and not sure what a specific ingredient is? Type it into the App and know within seconds! Even cooler (somehow, it's possible) is that when you have the language loaded in your phone you can hit the camera feature! Scan over the menu and watch the words (roughly) translate on your screen!

GOOGLE PHOTO:

We really can't sing enough praises about Google. Their photo App is another great feature if you're a photo snapping fiend like us! It's not unusual for us to run out of space on our phone a couple times during the summer. With the Google Photo app, it saves all your photos to the Google cloud so you can look at them on your computer or delete off your phone and not worry about losing all your favorites. Should your phone get stolen or damaged (fingers crossed it won't!) you'll still have access to all the photos in the cloud when you get home too! Just open the app every few days to refresh the saved content and you're good to go.

AMAZON PHOTO:

Amazon also has a free photo app for Prime users! They have unlimited photo storage and will also save some videos. It can run in the background whenever you're hooked up to Wifi so you don't miss backing up your photos while you're catching up on your beauty sleep.

AIRBNB:

We are HUGE fans of AirBnb! Not only is it a great way to find affordable places to stay, most places will have a host that greets you and can give recommendations of places to eat in your new town! It's a great, easy to use App and we've found some GEMS to stay all over Italy! Even some with air conditioning! We have some ex-pat friends in Italy that even manage their own AirBnbs if you're looking for some English speaking hosts.

BANKING APPS:

Worrying about conversion fees when withdrawing money is not fun when you're on vacation. Neither is constantly worrying about how much you have left to spend on gelato! Before we travel abroad, on top of calling our banks to notify them of our travels we like to download our banking apps! This is an easy way to keep track of your spending, the banking fees, and also communicate with your bank if they place any holds on your account or you lose track of your card.

AIRPLANE AND TRAIN APPS:

Another great way to keep an eye on your travels is with plane and train apps! Depending on your airline, they should all have apps so you can check in, check your luggage requirements, see if any times have changed and even load your boarding pass. [Tren Italia](#), the main train service in Italy, also has an App so you can check train schedules, routes, prices and even buy tickets ahead of time! This is especially useful when traveling on the bullet trains that have seat reservations and can sell out quickly during the summer months.