

ISLANDS & BEACHES

The Very Best Beaches in Italy, From Hike-In Coves to Stylish Shores

Whether you're headed for the shores of Sicily, Tuscany, or Liguria, here's where to go, how to get there—and where to stay.

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You'd be hard-pressed to find a more quintessential Italian pastime than spending a summer day at the beach—and the best beaches in Italy lend themselves to precisely that kind of leisurely indulgence. The country has nearly 5,000 miles of coastline, so you can bet there's a piece of waterfront for everyone. Some are long, wide strips of sand dotted by neat rows of lounge chairs and umbrellas, while others are rocky inlets or hidden coves reachable only by boat or hike.

The list below culls our picks for the best beaches all along the peninsula and on the islands, from Liguria in the north to Sicily in the south, along with tips on where to stay near each. Some are accessible by train or public ferry, while others require a car (road trip, anyone?). Keep in mind that summer (especially July and August) is the high season, so expect beaches to be more crowded than at other times of the year. For fewer crowds, consider shoulder season months like May, early June, and September.

Tips for visiting the best beaches in Italy

For some expert advice on planning a beach-oriented itinerary in Italy, we tapped Georgia Yuill, a *Condé Nast Traveler* Top Travel Specialist and Butterfield & Robinson's region director for Italy. Though the best time to visit Italy can vary depending on the type of trip you want to have, a beach vacation warrants some summer vibes—and strategy. "The best time to go to the beaches of Italy are on the weekdays of June, early July, and September," Yuill says. "Waterfronts in Sardinia and Sicily are particularly lovely in September with the water warmed up over the previous months and visitor numbers low, leaving you with a tranquil and gorgeous setting."

Yuill says the beaches can get crowded on the weekends in June, July, and August, when you're competing not only with fellow tourists for spots on the sand but also with Italians who are on their own vacations as well. "That said, experiencing the coastline or islands such as Sardinia by gulet or catamaran is an excellent solution to finding quiet inlets and harder-to-reach beaches," says Yuill.

This list features beaches that are free to access, but if you can swing it, private strips of sand at beach clubs are a great option as well. "Not only are they perfect for people-watching, but they provide all the things travelers may not have packed, like umbrellas and lounge chairs," Yuill says. Plus, families traveling to Italy with kids will especially appreciate the lifeguards on duty. And who can say no to the convenience of showers, changing areas, and eateries? Finally, Yuill suggests choosing an area designated as a Blue Flag Beach, which indicates that it is clean and well cared for from an environmental perspective.



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Punta Prosciutto, Puglia

No, this is not the place where dry-cured Italian hams come from, but with a name like that, one can't be blamed for assuming. At the end of this gorgeous beach with crystalline water and fine sand stands a cliff formation that, if you squint enough, does kind of look like a ham—allegedly giving this spiaggia its moniker. Located right on the heel of boot-shaped Italy, Punta Prosciutto is about an hour's drive from the two biggest settlements in the area: Lecce, with its beautiful Baroque buildings, and Brindisi, with its rich history of Adriatic trade. To get to this part of Italy, your best bet is to fly into Bari, the Puglia region's capital, and to rent a car. Bed down at La Fiermontina in Lecce, one of the best hotels in Puglia, where the vibe gives designer monastery. It's a discreetly stylish refuge in the center of town combining star-vaulted ceilings with vintage modernist furnishings and contemporary art from the private collection of the owner, Giacamo Fiermonte.

Where to stay near Punta Prosciutto, Puglia:

- For one of the best hotels in Puglia: **La Fiermontina**
- For romantic and refined luxury: **Masseria Donna Menga**

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