

## Tips for Travellers – Flights

I hope that the following series of articles will make travelling to Italy easier for those students who are thinking of going over there and putting their language skills in to action. The themes include: Flights, Accommodation, Insurance and visas, Public transport, Supermarkets and markets, Restaurants, Money, Photography, Electrical appliances, Schools and scholarships, Internet, telephones and Skype and last minute things to do before you leave.

In this article, I will concentrate on the topic of “Flights”. For the first or second time that you go to Italy, I would recommend that you take an escorted trip, such as the one that Giovanna escorts most years or the tour to Venezia that Luisa holds. A tour such as one of these would give you an excellent orientation to Italy and also allow you to relax without having to worry about organising flights, accommodation and local tours etc. It would let you feel the general ambience of this beautiful country and hopefully stimulate you to want to go again soon. When you do want to go again, the first thing to really think about is how you are going to get there.

For novice travellers, I would recommend that you use a Travel Agent. If you are wanting to get the most out of your trip, and also to do it most economically then you need to do some homework before going to the agent, else you won't get the best deal. The initial things that you need to think about is your budget, when you want to go, how long you want to go for and where you want to go to. The temptation is to try and see as much of Italy as you can in one go. Try to resist that temptation, as Italy is a large country and there is much to see.

The cost of flights is seasonal, the cheapest being in the colder months and the most expensive in their summer. Italy can be very hot and crowded in summer, so the shoulder seasons are better value and less crowded. In general, the longer the time between booking and travel, the cheaper the fare. You need to work out whether you wish to travel economy, premium economy or business class. In round figures, economy flights are approximately \$2,500 and business class approximately \$9,000. Within economy, there are multiple levels. The seats are all exactly the same and can be anywhere in the aircraft, however there are different restrictions depending on the price. For example, there may be restrictions on how long you can stay away for, or restrictions on whether or not you can change your itinerary once you have booked it.

There are several good search engines on the internet such as: [www.webjet.com.au](http://www.webjet.com.au) or [www.jetabroad.com.au](http://www.jetabroad.com.au) that will give you a general idea of the cost of flights and the timetables. Remember though that these search engines do not search all airlines, so if you have a specific airline that you prefer, it may be best that you search that specific airline's site. After you have a general idea of which airline you would like to fly with, I would recommend that you check that airline's site as it will give you more information regarding stopovers and also the conditions of the tickets. If you are a member of an airline's frequent flyer program and you wish to fly with an airline of that program, check each of the airlines sites that belong to that group. For example, if you are a Qantas frequent flyer, then you are a member of the Oneworld Alliance and you should check the sites of Qantas, Cathay Pacific, British Airways, Malaysia Airlines, Qatar Airlines and Finnair. Some other airlines do code-share with these airlines, however, unless it is ticketed as one of these flights, then you cannot use the Oneworld lounges or get frequent flyer points. Emirates has a reciprocal arrangement with Qantas. Emirates is not a member of Oneworld Alliance, but flights on Emirates

can be counted on your Qantas account and you can use Qantas points to redeem flights on Emirates.

Many airlines offer the ability to upgrade to business class if you have enough points, so it is worth considering.

Armed with all of this information, go and visit your Travel Agent and see if they can match or better your prices or if they know of any special deals. These days there are low commissions (and hence little chance of a further discount) on international air travel and you must pay for your tickets within a few days of booking. Many agents will charge a commission if you pay via a credit card, so it may be worth you paying in cash or with a bank cheque or by doing a direct payment from your account.