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## BOOKS ABOUT ITALY

Italy has inspired creative minds to write books that showcase the sights, smells, and passion of this beautiful and historically rich country. Get inspired – and excited! – with these great reads.

### General

Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy*, 1304

*The Divine Comedy* is an Italian long narrative poem written in 1320, a year before the author's death. It is widely considered to be the preeminent work in Italian literature, and one of the greatest works of world literature.

Bassani, Giorgio. *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, 1962

An Italian historical novel which chronicles the relationships between the narrator and the children of the Finzi-Contini family from the rise of Benito Mussolini until the start of World War II.

Blech, Benjamin & Dolliner, Roy. *The Sistine Secrets: Michelangelo's Forbidden Messages in the Heart of the Vatican*, 2009

The recent cleaning of the Sistine Chapel frescoes removed layer after layer of centuries of accumulated tarnish and darkness. *The Sistine Secrets* endeavors to remove the centuries of prejudice, censorship, and ignorance that blind us to the truth about one of the world's most famous and beloved art treasures.

Brown, Dan. *Angel and Demons*, 2000

Best-selling mystery-thriller novel set in Italy.

De Luca, Erri. *God's Mountain*, 2001

This is a story told by a boy in his thirteenth year, recorded in his secret diary. His life is about to change – his world is about to open.

Dunant, Sarah. *The Birth of Venus*, 2003

This novel is set in late 15th-century Florence, centering around a young Florentine girl, Alessandra Cecchi, who is drawn to a young painter commissioned to paint the family's chapel walls.

Ferrante, Elana. *The Neapolitan Novels* (a series of four books): *My Brilliant Friend* (2012), *The Story of a New Name* (2013), *Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay* (2014), *The Story of the Lost Child* (2015)

Against the backdrop of a Naples that is as seductive as it is perilous, Elana Ferrante tells the story of a sixty-year friendship between the brilliant and bookish Elena and the fiery rebellious Lila.

Flavius, Josephus. *The Jewish War*, 75 AD.

Divided into seven books, it opens with a summary of Jewish history from the capture of Jerusalem by the Seleucid Ruler Antiochus IV Euphron in 168 BC to the first stages of the First Jewish-Roman War.

Saviano, Roberto. *Gomorra*, 2006

*Gomorra* is a non-fiction investigative book which documents Saviano's infiltration and investigation of various areas of business and daily life controlled or affected by the criminal organization Camorra.



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Severgnini, Beppe. *An Italian in Italy*, 2005

Join the bestselling author of *Ciao, America!* on a lively tour of modern Italy that takes you behind the seductive face it puts on for visitors—la bella figura—and highlights its maddening, paradoxical true self.

Stone, Irving. *The Agony and the Ecstasy: A Biographical Novel of Michelangelo*, 1958

*The Agony and the Ecstasy* is a biographical novel of Michelangelo Buonarroti written by American author Irving Stone.

### Jewish Italy

Calimani, Riccardo. *The Ghetto of Venice*, 1995

*The Ghetto of Venice* chronicles the Jewish ghetto of Venice, from its creation in 1516 through its travails during World War II, and sheds light on subjects including the Inquisition, the Marranos, and the organization of the Jewish community.

Di Castro, Daniela. *Treasures of the Jewish Museum of Rome*, 2010

The guide describes the creation of the Jewish Museum of Rome, inaugurated in 2005 with various additions.

Ginzburg, Nataliya. *Family Sayings*, 1963

*Family Sayings* is a semi-biographical description of aspects of the daily life of Nataliya Ginzburg's family, dominated by her father, the renowned histologist, Giuseppe Levi.

Laurenzi, Elsa. *Jewish Catacombs: The Jews of Rome: Funeral Rites and Customs*, 2014

This slender well-written book is packed with easy-to-read information about the structure of the Jewish community of Rome and the politics and history of the city where it developed and grew.

Levi, Primo. *If This Is a Man*, 2003

A clear and matter-of-fact description of concentration camp survival, where cruelty, starvation, and privation were a part of life. It's a powerful testament to the ability of humans to survive the relentless inhuman treatment. It is an important history to tell by the few that survived. Life is stranger than fiction. Few people can imagine such a horror yet it happened to real people perpetrated by real people.

Sacerdoti, Annie. *A Guide to Jewish Italy*, 2004

The Jewish community in Italy has a long and storied history going back more than two millennia to the days of the Roman Empire. This remarkable guidebook – the only one of its kind – is a city-by-city survey of every location in Italy that contains art, artifacts, or architecture tied to the Jewish heritage of Italy.