ITALY

HISTORY

Italy's story began with small farming villages and grew into the Roman Empire. Later it was split into many small states for centuries. Then Italians joined them into one country.

Early Peoples and Rome

Farmers lived in Italy thousands of years ago. The Etruscans (ih-TRUSS-kunz) built towns in central Italy and traded across the sea. Greeks settled in the south and founded cities such as Naples. An old legend says Rome was founded in 753 BC by twin brothers, Romulus and Remus. In 509 BC, the Romans set up a **republic**, where citizens chose leaders to make laws.



The Roman Empire

Roman armies conquered all of Italy and then lands around the Mediterranean Sea. In 27 BC, Augustus became the first emperor, and Rome ruled a huge **empire**. The Romans built roads, bridges and aqueducts that carried water into cities. They spoke Latin, which grew into Italian, Spanish and French. In AD 476, a Germanic leader removed the last emperor in the west, and the Western Roman Empire ended.



Cities on Their Own

After Rome fell, Italy split into many small states. The pope, head of the Catholic Church, ruled lands around Rome. Venice and Genoa grew rich by trading with ships. Marco Polo, a trader from Venice, traveled to China and came home in 1295. In the south, Emperor Frederick II built Castel del Monte in the 1240s.

The Renaissance

From about 1300 to 1600, Italy was the center of the **Renaissance**, a time of new art and ideas. In Florence, rich banking families paid artists to make paintings and statues. Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa. Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Galileo used a telescope to study the moon and planets. Christopher Columbus, from Genoa, sailed for Spain in 1492.

One Italy

For hundreds of years, parts of Italy were ruled by Spain, France and Austria. In the 1800s, many Italians wanted to **unify** their land into one country. In 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi led about 1,000 volunteers to take Sicily and Naples. On March 17, 1861, the Kingdom of Italy began. Rome became its capital in 1871.

Modern Italy

Between 1880 and 1920, about four million Italians moved to the United States for work. Italy fought on the winning side in World War I. In World War II, Italy first fought beside Germany. In 1943, Allied armies landed in Italy, and the war there ended in 1945. In 1946, Italians voted to end the kingdom, and Italy became a republic. Today, Italy is known for its food, art, fashion and cars.

ITALY THROUGH TIME

753 BC	27 BC	AD 80	AD 476	1295	1508	1861	1871	1946
Rome is founded, says legend	Augustus becomes emperor	The Colosseum opens	The Western Roman Empire ends	Marco Polo returns from China	Michelangelo starts the Sistine ceiling	The Kingdom of Italy begins	Rome becomes the capital	Italy becomes a republic

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Julius Caesar	Roman general and ruler
Leonardo da Vinci	Artist and inventor
Galileo Galilei	Scientist who studied the sky
Giuseppe Garibaldi	General who helped unify Italy
Maria Montessori	Doctor who started Montessori schools

WORDS TO KNOW

republic	a country where people choose their leaders
empire	many lands and peoples ruled by one government
Renaissance	a time of new art and learning in Europe
unify	to join parts together into one