

# SEA YOU IN ITALY



## SEASIDE TOURISM IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

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Featured images:

*Travel in Italy July 1935, ENIT. Sourced at: New York Public Library.*

# FROM ÉLITE TO MASS TOURISM



The evolution of seaside tourism in Italy reflects changing social needs and cultural influences from antiquity through the modern era. In ancient Greece and Rome, natural waters and spas were valued for their healing properties. However, the popularity of such tourism surged post-Industrial Revolution as urbanization and pollution led people to seek health and relaxation in coastal environments.

## 1920S

In the early 20th century, seaside tourism catered to the élite, emphasizing health and climate—reflective of the Belle Époque values. Luxury resorts on the Ligurian Riviera and Venice Lido attracted wealthy tourists seeking therapeutic experiences.

## 1930S

Changes in the 1930s began to shift this focus toward more inclusive tourism, appealing to middle-class American travelers interested in warmer, exotic destinations like Sicily and Capri.



Featured images:

[Travel in Italy, July 1933, ENIT. Sourced at: New York Public Library.](#)

[Travel in Italy, July 1935, ENIT. Sourced at: New York Public Library.](#)

# TOURISM'S... MAKEOVER

Under Mussolini's regime, tourism was used as a propaganda tool to project a **modern Italian image**. The fascist government's efforts to promote tourism aimed to alter Italy's perception from ancient to modern but often clashed with historical narratives shaped by travel writers and cultural enthusiasts, impacting American tourists' views of the country.



## MASS TOURISM AND POP CULTURE IN POST-WAR TIMES

The post-World War II era marked a transition towards mass tourism, emphasizing **accessibility and leisure over therapeutic benefits**. The rise of popular media, from films showcasing Italy as a serene escape to the marketing strategies borrowed from American advertising, played a pivotal role in reshaping the tourist landscape. This period highlighted Italy's natural beauty and rich heritage, contributing to a collective romantic image of the country as a **desirable holiday destination**.

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[Travel in Italy July 1935, ENIT. Sourced at: New York Public Library.](#)

# EVOLUTION OF SEASIDE TOUR TYPES IN ITALY

## 1920S

Climate and  
thermal tourism

## 1940S – EARLY 1950S

Shift from climate  
to seaside leisure

## 1930S

Seaside tourism

## 1950S

Cultural and nature-  
based tourism



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[Travel in Italy July 1935, ENIT. Sourced at: New York Public Library.](#)

# CLIMATE AND THERMAL TOURISM 1920S-1930S

In the 1920s-1930s, the primary focus of tourist promotions in Italy centered around climate and thermal tourism. This type included **health resorts** where visitors sought refuge from harsh northern winters. Brochures emphasized the **regenerative qualities of destinations** like the Ligurian Riviera and Gulf of Naples, where luxury spas and thermal baths were advertised as optimal for health restoration.

Promotional materials in brochures often showcased the **therapeutic properties** of locations such as **Sorrento and Abano**, framing them as essential destinations for winter tourists escaping colder climates. Magazines articles reflected the same trend, with significant content focusing on **climate tourism**, comprising **26.5% of articles**. The emphasis was on **rejuvenation and exclusive experiences** at high-end resorts.



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Featured images:

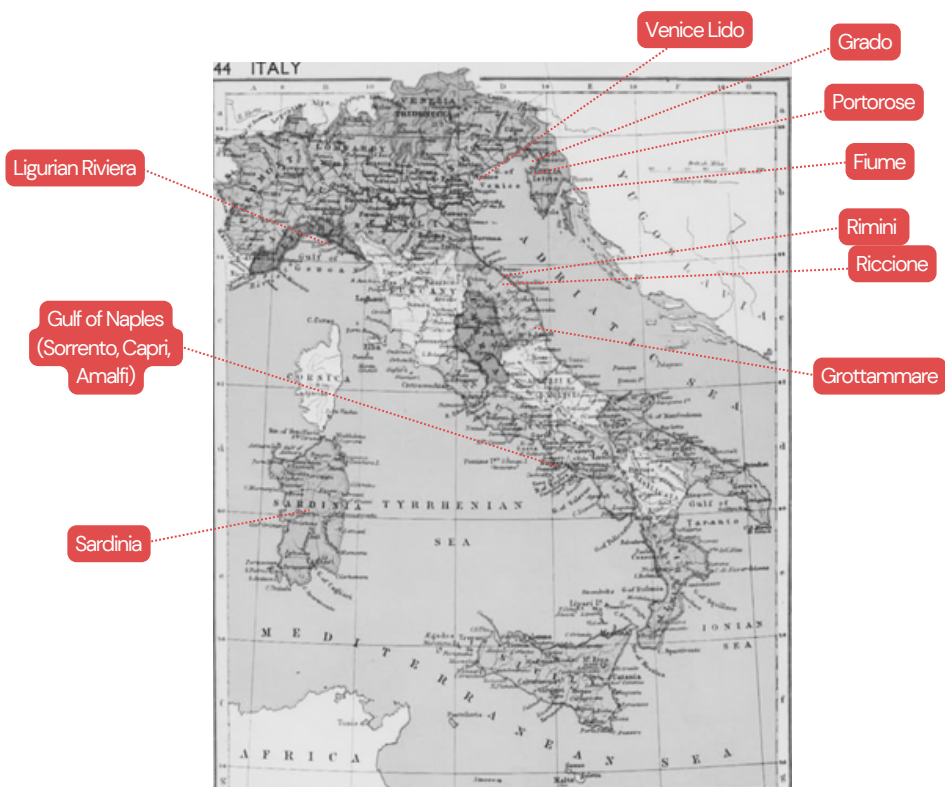
[Google Images](#).

[S. Margherita Ligure e Portofino, ENIT](#). Sourced at: Biblioteca Manfrediana, Faenza.

# SEASIDE TOURISM

## 1930S

Seaside tourism began to emerge in 1920 alongside climate-focused promotions. However, it was still relatively secondary in importance. In the 1930s, brochures started to feature information on seaside resorts like **Brioni and the Lido of Venice**, indicating an early recognition of leisure and bathing industries. Magazine articles began to feature **seaside vacations** as part of broader summer offerings, including sport and entertaining activities.



# FROM CLIMATE TO SEASIDE LEISURE

## 1940S – EARLY 1950S

The years following World War II marked a transitional period where seaside tourism increasingly took center stage, transitioning away from a focus purely on health. While thermal tourism materials continued, the 1950s saw a higher frequency of brochures dedicated to **seaside resorts**, particularly in regions like Emilia-Romagna.



Publications promoted accessible beach towns like Riccione, emphasizing cheerful vacations filled with sunshine and family-friendly activities. Magazine narratives shifted significantly, displaying a **decline in content centered around climate tourism**. Seaside articles, although fewer, began to highlight leisure activities and family-oriented experiences along Italy's beautiful coastlines, with a **major focus on entertaining and leisure activities**.

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[Travel in Italy July 1935, ENIT. Sourced at: New York Public Library.](#)



# CULTURAL AND NATURE- BASED TOURISM 1950S

Magazine articles from this era began to emphasize **scenic viewing and nature gazing**, with 22.7% of 1950s articles falling into this category. Cultural engagement became a pivotal selling point, showcasing **Italy's artistic and architectural traditions**.

By the mid-1950s, a notable evolution occurred, with cultural tourism and scenic experiences gaining prominence alongside traditional seaside offerings with a focus on entertainment.

The promotion of cultural heritage became increasingly important, introducing brochures that emphasized Italy's rich history and landscape beauty. Destinations were framed not only as seaside resorts but also as gateways to discover local culture, folklore, and cuisine.



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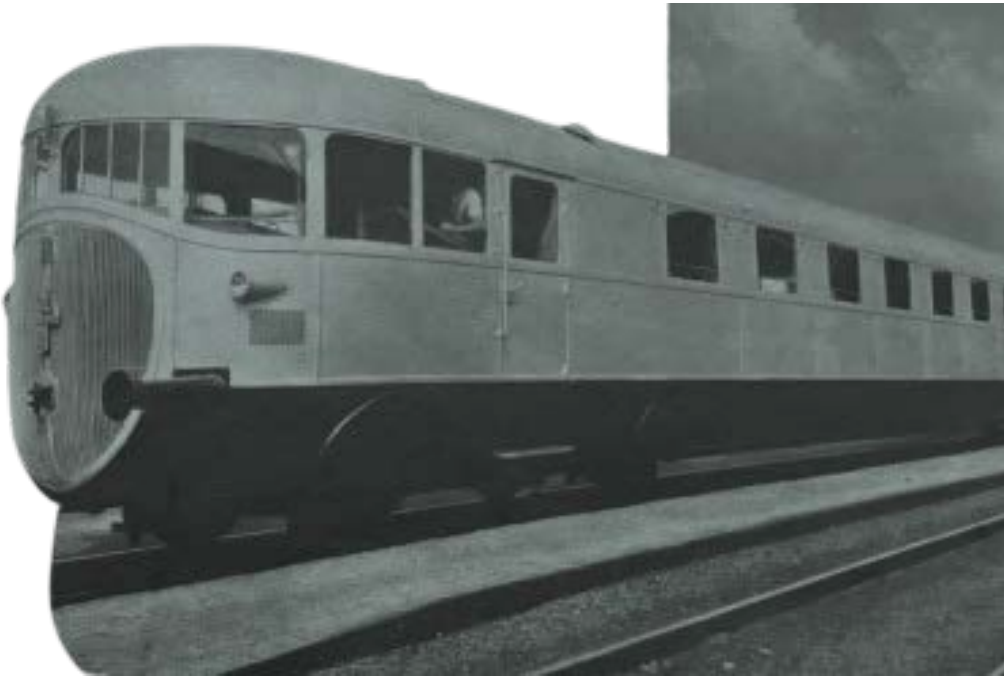
*Travel in Italy July 1935*, ENIT. Sourced at: New York Public Library.

*Italy's Life August 1951*, n. 7, ENIT. Sourced at: New York Public Library.



# THE IMPROVEMENT OF TRANSPORT SERVICES

Improvements in transport became a significant theme, facilitating broader access to coastal destinations and enhancing the overall tourist experience. The promotion of efficient travel options, including railways and cruises, became **integral to the narrative of seaside tourism**, highlighting the ease of access to idyllic Italian locales and helping drive tourism growth.



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Featured images:

*Italia marzo 1937, ENIT. Sourced at: Private collection.*



# WHAT NEXT?

## 1950S CULTURAL TOURISM

Continuous increase in brochures focusing on cultural heritage and activities

## 1950S NATURE TOURISM

Greater emphasis on scenic viewing and nature gazing in promotional materials

## 1960S-1980S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Increasing focus on events, festivals, and historical narratives

## 1950S THERMAL TOURISM

Ongoing promotion of thermal facilities, although less frequent than earlier decades



Featured images:

*Grado*, 1933, Marcello Dudovich. Sourced at: Museo Nazionale Collezione Salce.

*Sea-side Resorts in Italy*, 1951, ENIT. Sourced at: Biblioteca Sormani, Milano.

*Leisure and Pleasure in Italy*, 1956, ENIT. Sourced at: Biblioteca Sormani, Milano.

# SEALING THE JOURNEY

The evolution of seaside tourism in Italy illustrates a **significant transformation** influenced by economic factors, political agendas, and cultural narratives. These shifts show how Italy's tourism narrative has **evolved and adapted**, providing valuable insights into its enduring appeal as a premier destination for diverse tourists across the world.



## POST WW2

Transition towards **seaside leisure**, with **increased accessibility** and **family-oriented experiences** taking precedence over exclusive health-oriented offerings

### 1920S – 1930S

Dominance of **climate and thermal tourism** and emergence of early seaside promotions

### 1950S – ONWARDS

Growth of **cultural tourism** alongside seaside vacations. Improved transport becoming critical for enhancing tourist experiences. By the mid-20th century, **Italy established itself as a vibrant tourist destination**, balancing health, leisure, culture, and natural beauty

Featured images:

[Marina di Massa Apuana, 1949, Filippo Romoli. Sourced at: Museo Nazionale Collezione Salce.](#)