

LOCATION

Country: Italy

Town: Decimomannu Sardinia

Base: Decimomannu, Air Force Base (AFB). The RCAF is planning to send one instructor pilot (IP) to the International Flight Training School (IFTS) at Decimomannu AFB in 2022, to be followed by two students in 2023.

Other info to consider:

- Family (non-dependents) can visit and stay 90 days **without a visa** (Schengen Area)

POPULATION

Size: Decimomannu AFB is an Italian Air Force base located northwest of the city of Cagliari which is the southernmost municipality on the island of Sardinia. Sardinia is an autonomous province of Italy, located west of mainland Italy, in the Mediterranean Sea.

Ethnicity: Mostly Italian nationals. In 2016, there were 50,346 foreign national residents, forming 3% of the total Sardinian population.

Religion: The majority of Sardinians have been baptized as Roman Catholic, much like their Italian counterparts. A fifth of the population still attends Sunday mass, one of the lowest turnouts in Italy.

LANGUAGE(S)

Official language: The first language of Sardinia is Italian, although the Sardinian language, Sardo, is still widely spoken.

- **Prevalence of French or English:** During RECCE, little English was spoken by staff in health care facilities visited. No French speaking was observed. English is spoken in touristy areas of Cagliari in restaurants and hotels.

COST OF LIVING

Exchange rate to consider: Euro

- The Cagliari region is considered affordable.
- Vehicle insurance is less expensive in Sardinia than in the rest of Italy. More than 75% of people pay less than 500 Euros per year.
- Petrol is expensive, but taxes are refunded at some locations with a special card offered to all family members. (Forax card)

QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:

- Climate is temperate Mediterranean with usual temperatures ranging from highs of 40C in the summer and lows of -5C in the winter. The summer months of June to August have minimal rainfall. 470 square km are covered by forests, lagoons, ponds and salt marshes.
- Topography: Decimomannu AFB is located in a low-lying river valley at an elevation of approximately 30m, 20-25 km northwest of the port city of Cagliari. The island of Sardinia is a mountainous region with peaks approaching 1000m above sea level.

Laws and culture:

- You may drive for up to one year with a valid Canadian driver's licence and an international driving permit, or an official translation of a Canadian licence by a recognized translator.
- Penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.05%. Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines, their driver's licence may be confiscated immediately and they could face imprisonment.
- 90% of rental vehicles have a standard transmission.
- Penalties for possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect jail sentences or heavy fines.
- Buying counterfeit merchandise, such as sunglasses or purses, is illegal. Local authorities may impose heavy fines on tourists caught buying counterfeit merchandise.

- It is illegal to photograph government buildings and military installations without permission from local authorities.
- Authorities may require you to present identification at any time.
- Italians are very family-oriented and love children. Canadians may find it difficult to adapt to the Italian rhythm. Home repairs, appointments and deliveries are often postponed to "domani" which can be tomorrow...or in two weeks. Those who thrive in highly organized and structured environments will find Italy challenging.

Safety and security:

- Petty crimes such as pickpocketing and purse snatching occur. Foreigners are targeted.
- The threat of terrorism is a reality in Europe. Terrorists have carried out attacks in several European cities and further attacks are likely. Italy's terror level at the moment is lower than in other European countries but radicalization is on the rise.
- Risk of forest fires exists, particularly in wooded areas in the dry months of June to August. CAF families should follow local government recommendations regarding prevention, preparedness and response to natural disasters.

Level of isolation:

- Language challenges can cause a high level of isolation, particularly among spouses.
- The inability to easily converse with neighbours and community members can contribute to feelings of isolation. Routine errands can become very arduous.
- Decimomannu AFB is considered a remote and isolated posting, which may mean social isolation as opportunities to socialize with other Canadian or English-speaking families will be few.
- There is one Canadian family posted to Decimomannu AFB.

HOUSING

- Houses in Italy are not built to Canadian standards.
- Due to the location of Decimomannu AFB, the member should be able to secure single or duplex housing in a town that is within 10-20 minutes from the base. If the member decides on a more metropolitan location, the commute could increase to 25-45 minutes.
- The sponsors and the housing agency will help make an informed decision.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment opportunities for spouses: Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment in Italy is not a realistic option.

- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, so families should plan to be a single-income family for the duration of the posting.

Op tempo: The op tempo will vary greatly depending on the position. TD is possible.

HEALTH CARE

Access: Italy's healthcare system is routinely ranked among the best in the world.

- Private on the economy.
- Individuals with serious medical issues should not be considered for this posting, as accessing regular medical care may be extremely limited.
- Difficulty receiving medications/vaccinations.
- Sardinia is considered a remote posting and as such, Canadian NATO members and their families must find doctors and dentists in Ferrara, as we do not have medical or dental privileges at the US base in Vicenza, Italy (Camp Ederle).
- The language barrier and the bedside manner are not what Canadians are accustomed to.
- The Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP

Special needs:

- Resources and services are limited and language barriers could pose serious challenges.
- If a family member has special medical needs it is highly advised that they consult with MFS(E), and/or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting to this location.

Consideration for pregnancy/birthing:

- Private available.

- Birthing classes in English/French are hard to find

Dental:

- Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay upfront, and you can then claim your expenses
- It is easy to access, however; providers do not always speak English or French.

SCHOOLING

- During the virtual RECCE, there was only one school that met the requirements, and this school is only for grades 1-5.
- It is important to be aware that there are currently no accredited English-language middle schools or high schools in Cagliari or around Decimomannu AFB.
- Military members who are screening for this post and have middle or high-school-aged children (grades 6 to 12) will need to consider an alternative plan for their children's schooling. Such a plan could include:
 - a) Homeschooling (all grades);
 - b) Full-time eLearning with a distance learning provider (all grades);
 - c) Boarding school in Canada (grades 9-12);
 - d) Public high school in Canada while living with family/friends (grades 9-12); and
 - e) Boarding at the closest Canadian curriculum boarding school: the current options are the Canadian School of Florence or Canadian College Italy (grades 9- 12) and Neuchatel Junior College (grade 12).

Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- Curriculum varies depending on the choice of school.
- Canadian history or geography is not available.

Resources for special needs children:

- Resources for special needs children are extremely limited.
- Should it be determined that a child requires special needs due to developmental or mental health concerns while posted OUTCAN, this could pose a serious risk to the posting and the family may be considered for repatriation.

CHILDCARE

- The only options available for daycare for preschool-aged children are Italian daycares, which are a lot less structured than what Canadian parents are accustomed to, or a nanny that would need to be personally screened by the parents.
- The availability of Canadian babysitters is limited. Parents should be prepared that they may need to engage and personally screen Italian childcare providers.
- Local childcare available (an estimated €8 to €10 a day) but typically in Italian with little English (no French).

TRANSPORTATION

- The closest Airport to the Decimomannu AFB is called the Cagliari Elmas Airport. The airport is located close to the city centre thus making a trip to the city easy. It takes 10 to 15 minutes to get from Cagliari Airport to the city centre. Transportation options available to passengers include taxi services, buses and rental vehicles.
- Driving in Italy can be challenging at first, as the style may be more aggressive than in Canada, and the road regulations may not always be respected.
- Car is strongly recommended. Narrow roads, not maintained are very common and might not be suitable for local roads with big American cars.
- Imported vehicles might be expensive to maintain, and parts might be expensive or imported at high cost and delay.

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?

- No, but remote services are available from MFS(E) Naples.

Psychosocial/mental health resources:

- Not at the post, and the MFS(E) SW is for dependents only. The CAF SW/Mental Health Team for members and families is located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. The chaplain is located in Naples, Italy.

Communications (e.g. quality of Internet connection):

- Internet connection quality and availability vary widely depending on the location. In general, it is unreliable.
- Cellular phone plans and Internet are reasonably priced.
- Some areas of the city have fibre optic Internet. Outside the city centre, this may not be available.
- Cloudy/windy days may affect the signal.

ACTIVITIES

Access to sports or other leisure activities:

- There are sports facilities (swimming pool, outdoor sports fields, gym, etc.) available at Decimomannu AFB. However, these sports facilities are only available to families upon payment of dedicated insurance. Members and their dependents have access to recreational facilities and services such as cinemas, theatres, clubs and sports facilities, on the same conditions awarded to Italian Air Force personnel.
- There are gyms in the area surrounding the base. They vary from small to large depending on the municipality. The gyms offer a wide range of fitness activities including, but not limited to, cross fit, weight training, boxing, aerobics, spin classes, dancercise and martial arts.

Availability of playgrounds:

- Parents need to be aware that there is very little 'green space' available for outdoor recreation.
- Most homes have small tiled outdoor spaces fenced between neighbours. The "parco" layout is usually unsafe for unsupervised play.

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are common-law relationships recognized? Yes

Are same-sex couples recognized? Yes

Medications that are illegal in the country:

- Cannabis is illegal in Italy.
- For some medicines - like sleeping pills, medication for ADHD and strong painkillers - you need a medical certificate.
- Syringe kits, opiates and psychotropic medication also require a letter from your medical practitioner on official letterhead.

Other considerations:

- The language might be an issue.
- Medication that is sold over the counter in Canada (cold and flu medication, antihistamines, etc.) is available locally. A pharmacist can be the first resource to diagnose before doctors.
- Banned dog breeds: American Bulldog, Yugoslavian Shepherd Dog, Anatolian Shepherd Dog, Central Asian Shepherd Dog, Caucasian Shepherd Dog, Portuguese Sheepdog, Fila Brasileiro (Brazilian Mastiff), Dogo Argentino, Perro de ganado majorero, Dogo Canario, Pitbull and all its variants, Portuguese Mastiff, Rottweiler, and Tosa Inu.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- European Commission Country Reports (2022)
https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en
- Canadian Travel Advisories
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- CIA World Factbooks (One pager from the US)
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/italy/>
- Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-italy>
- Consumer Price Index (CPI)
<https://data.imf.org/?sk=4FFB52B2-3653-409A-B471-D47B46D904B5>

For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below:

- MFS(E) Social Worker: Andrea Liss at liss.andrea@cfmws.com
- CAF Social Worker: GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca
- MFS(E) Naples: +39 081 509 6663, MFSE.Naples@cfmws.com
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, MFS.Europe@cfmws.com