

## LOCATION

**Country:** Italy

**Town:** Milan

**Base:** NATO Rapid Deployable Corps Italy HQ (NRDC-ITA)

**Other info to consider:**

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

## POPULATION

**Size:** 1.3 million and over 3.1 million in the greater Milan area

**Ethnicity:** Mostly Italian nationals. 10% of the population are foreigners (Romania, Pakistan, Morocco and Albania).

**Religion:** 80% Christian.

## LANGUAGE(S)

**Official language:** Italian

**Prevalence of French or English:** English or French as a second language sometimes.

- Most restaurants and shops will have some staff that speak English or French.
- The inability to easily converse with neighbours and community members can contribute to feelings of isolation. Routine errands can become very arduous.

## COST OF LIVING

**Exchange rate to consider:** Euro

- The cost of living is extremely high and most items from groceries to clothing are much greater than in Canada.
- Vehicle insurance is astronomical compared to Canada.
- 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:**

- The weather is seasonable with hotter summers (30-35 degrees) and milder winters (0-10). There is a requirement to have winter tires on from 15 Nov until 15 Apr unless you have chains in your vehicle.
- Italy is located in an active seismic zone.

**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 the 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.
- 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.

**Safety and security:**

- Petty crimes such as pickpocketing and purse snatching occur. Foreigners are targeted.
- Train passengers have been robbed while distracted or sleeping.

- 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.

#### Level of isolation:

- Language challenges can cause a high level of isolation, particularly among spouses.
- The NRDC-ITA Family Support Centre offers Italian lessons.

## HOUSING

- Houses in Italy are not built to Canadian standards.
- Although the houses may look spectacular with marble flooring and large in-ground swimming pools, families need to keep an eye out for things like mould or inadequate power supply.
- The posting is in Milan but the actual base is located in Solbiate Olona (38 km from Milan).
- Many people live in Busto Arsizio (the closest to the base); some in Como (where the international school is) and others choose to live in Varese.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Are there 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. TDs occur in cycles and typically last 2-3 weeks. On average you can expect one TD every 3-4 months for 2 weeks. The dates of the exercises are known in advance, usually 4-6 months.

## HEALTH CARE

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

- Private on the economy.
- The hospital in Varese is modern. No translation is provided but the NATO Family Support Centre could if required.
- 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.
- While some doctors speak English, many of their office staff do not. Therefore, it is advisable to go to the office in person to make your first appointment.
- The language barrier and 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 personal 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 Milan.

#### 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 all speak English or French.

## SCHOOLING

- There is currently no list of compatible schools for Milan. Attendance at a school at the post must be approved by WG B. Member should proceed with request through CEM/Education clerk at CFSU(E).
- Families need to be aware that some schools will require significant commuting times and/or have limited bus services.

- The vast majority of private schools are denominational (Roman Catholic). Schools enrol students based on their denominational requirements and if there is space they will enrol students from other denominations or who have no denomination. Religious philosophy may be integrated across the curriculum in denominational schools, therefore, making it difficult to avoid.

#### **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**

- Local childcare is available but very limited in English/French, with none on base.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

- Airports: Milan Malpensa International (MXP)
- 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.
- Imported vehicles might be expensive to maintain, and parts might be expensive or imported at high cost and delay.
- The US base gives a NATO driver's licence, which has Italian on it.
- The train networks are extensive and easy to use.

## **RESOURCES AND AMENITIES**

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

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

#### **Psychosocial/mental health resources:**

- Not at the post, and 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):**

- The Internet is very good. Most places have access to fibre.

## **ACTIVITIES**

#### **Access to sports or other leisure activities:**

- On the economy, very limited in English or French

Availability of playgrounds: Yes.

## **RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER**

#### **Are common-law relationships recognized? Yes**

**Are same-sex couples recognized? Yes,** and there are some anti-homophobia laws to protect same-sex couples, although Italy is one of the worst Western countries when it comes to the status of LGBT rights.

#### **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:**

- 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](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](mailto:liss.andrea@cfmws.com)
- CAF Social Worker: [GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca](mailto:GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca)
- MFS(E) Naples: +39 081 509 6663, [MFSE.Naples@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSE.Naples@cfmws.com)
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