

History Of The Italian Flag

Culture Magazine

By Elizabeth Walling

February 11, 2020

Can you remember off-hand the colors of the **Italian flag**? Think of 10 countries whose flags you know... most probably Italy is among them.

The Italian flag owes its notoriety to all the Italian food places selling pizza, pasta, gelato that have 'invaded' the world. It is strange because Italians are not as proud of their flag as Americans are of the Stars & Stripes. You will very rarely see a house in Italy with the flag on the front porch, but I think very few Italians would feel comfortable damaging in any way their flag. Anyway, in Italy it is forbidden to burn, destroy or damage the flag. This is the law in Italian:

Art. 292 (Vilipendio o danneggiamento alla bandiera o ad altro emblema dello Stato). – Chiunque vilipende con espressioni ingiuriose la bandiera nazionale o un altro emblema dello Stato è punito con la multa da euro 1.000 a euro 5.000. La pena è aumentata da euro 5.000 a euro 10.000 nel caso in cui il medesimo fatto sia commesso in occasione di una pubblica ricorrenza o di una cerimonia ufficiale.) Chiunque pubblicamente e intenzionalmente distrugge, disperde, deteriora, rende inservibile o imbratta la bandiera nazionale o un altro emblema dello Stato è punito con la reclusione fino a due anni.”

However, a few years ago Bossi from the Lega Nord (Northern League) did publicly burn the Italian flag in one of his political demonstrations and I do not think he was punished by the state in any form. Hopefully, after that, he lost some votes.

-Paolo

The Italian Flag and its Many Changes



One of the Italian flags flying on front of the Altare della Patria, in Rome (Dave Kellam/flickr)
The design of the **Italian flag** has undergone numerous changes throughout Italy's history. In fact, one could say that the chronicle of the Italian flag represents the incredible journey in history which eventually united the Italian people under one nation.

In the late 18th century, several Italian regions adopted a **tricolor flag** of green, white, and red. The **tricolor** was an inspiration taken from France, which at the time had control over the areas occupied by Napoleon's army in northern Italy. The Italian tricolor was officially adopted by the **Cisalpine Republic in 1798**. This flag was in the shape of a square, and the three colors were represented in vertical bands.

In 1802, the Italian Republic (a Napoleonic state comprising of his possessions in the North of Italy, not to be mistaken with the modern Italian Republic, of course) was formed and adopted a new flag. This flag was still comprised of the same three colors, but was altered in design, although it was still in the shape of a square. The flag of the Italian Republic was red with a white rhombus in the center and a green square in the middle of the white.

The Italian Republic of Napoleon became the Kingdom of Italy in 1805, when Napoleon became emperor. The flag of the Kingdom of Italy was similar to that of the Italian Republic, except that the square flag became rectangular in shape, and the eagle of Napoleon was added into the center of the former design. This flag remained in use during Napoleon's rule, which lasted until 1814.

The Italian states were not widely united under one flag again until the year of **1848**. In this year, the tricolor flag was again adopted as the national Italian flag, with vertical stripes of red, white, and green. **Savoia**'s coat of arms was displayed in the center of this flag. The Venetian and Roman regions later adopted similar flags, which further symbolized the progressing unity of the Italian states.



Italian Savoias flag (Walter Riccio/flickr)

By the time Rome was appointed as the capital city of the **Kingdom of Italy** in 1872, a crown had been added to the center of the tricolor flag by King Vittorio Emmanuele II. The crown and Savoia's coat of arms remained a part of Italy's flag until Italy officially became a republic in 1946, ending the monarchy rule. The flag now consisted only of the red, white, and green vertical stripes. This design has remained as Italy's national flag to date.



The flag of the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (northern Italy) during the Second World War(wikimedia)

Colors of the Italian Flag

The colors of the Italian flag derive from the French one, from which the Italian is inspired. The blue color was replaced by the green of **Milan's Civic Guard**.

Its colors can be interpreted in two different ways. One is that green symbolizes hope, while white represents faith and red signifies charity. Another interpretation pronounces green to be the symbol of the Italian landscape, white as the representation of the snow capping the mountains of the Alps, and red symbolizing the bloodshed that brought about the independence of Italy as a nation. All of these symbols embody the presence of unity and nationalism among the Italian people.