

IL PERMESSO DI SOGGIORNO

A Step-By-Step Guide

rickzullo.com

Il Permesso di Soggiorno

Il Permesso di Soggiorno, A Step-By-Step Guide, by Rick Zullo. .

Copyright © 2015 Richard S. Zullo. **All rights reserved.** No part of this publication may be reproduced, shared electronically, or transmitted in any way or form, whether physical, electronic, or otherwise, without the express written consent of the editor and the authors who have contributed.

DISCLAIMER:

The content of this book is for informational purposes only. The author has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the material. However, no guarantee is provided regarding the information put forth. Furthermore, the author accepts no responsibility for the quality or nature of the content found within any external websites linked throughout the text. The links are provided as a convenience to the reader, and do not imply an official endorsement by the author unless specifically stated.

rickzullo.com

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

GETTING STARTED

FILLING OUT THE FORMS

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

CONCLUSION

APPENDIX

APARTMENT HUNTING

Introduction

My first trip to Italy was in the year 2,000. Just a two week vacation, but it was enough to get me hooked—you might say obsessed—with the idea of living in the *Bel Paese* one day. What's not to love about this lifestyle, I thought? Great food, beautiful scenery, friendly people. It was spring, I was young(er), the dollar was trouncing the *lira*, and I saw the miracles in real life that I had only seen in photos.

Ten years and several vacations later, the dream of living in Italy became a reality. Only the “dream” was occasionally interrupted by the nightmare of dealing with the Italian bureaucracy—something that never occurred to me while on holiday. It was a bit depressing, quite frankly, but blogging about it was a sort of therapy. And I thought that if I could help a few others in their struggle, I’d somehow vindicate myself against my sworn enemy—the *Questura di Roma*.

Over the last several years, I’ve received lots of visitors to my website looking for the same information that I needed way-back-when. I’ve done my best to provide them with the benefit of my own experience, and hopefully I’ve helped a few conquer the beast along the way. Many folks have written to me directly via email asking very specific questions about their particular circumstances. Unfortunately, I’m not an immigration lawyer or an employee of the Italian consulate, so I certainly don’t know everything. But I’m willing to talk about what I’ve learned from my own misadventures, as well as stories and feedback that others have shared with me.

Therefore, this guide is intended to represent **the full extent of my knowledge** regarding the *Permesso di Soggiorno*. I’ll also include some links to help with other questions, such as visas, healthcare, the *codice fiscale*, and apartment hunting. I offer this guide as my experience and my opinions—it is for information purposes only. Please consult a legal professional if you have any questions or concerns about your immigration status or other serious issues. And to be honest, **I just can’t keep up with all the email questions anymore.**

I also make the disclaimer that my experiences were in Rome, and I use Rome in all of my examples. The process “should” be the same in every city. But then again, this is Italy. So you never know...

Getting Started

One of the first things that you'll notice about living in Italy is that many things are still done the old-fashioned way; which is to say as inefficiently as possible. For example, often you must physically go to the post office and wait in endless lines to accomplish the smallest of tasks—the least of which has anything to do with mailing letters and other such things that one normally associate with post office activities.



On the positive side, there is an enormous sense of victory when these goals are (eventually) achieved. Case in point is the topic of this guide: the coveted "*Il Permesso di Soggiorno*," which is a sort of residency card that long-term sojourners in Italy should (theoretically) obtain. The first step in the process is to go to the nearest post office and pick up an application packet. I know, this sounds like something that your beagle could do for you, but let me assure you that it is not. The trick is that there are—for some unknown reason—a limited number of these little jewels scattered throughout the city and your job is to engage in a sort of scavenger hunt in order to secure one in your own possession.

So you must recruit allies for these missions. The ultimate maneuver would be to make friends with a post office worker. While this may seem like a solid plan, I wouldn't count on it. Post office workers have no friends—indeed, this was a condition of their employment. These people are unfriendable, so don't even waste your time.

It doesn't really matter, though, because any random Italian will do. If they grew up in Italy, then they'll have a few shortcuts to share with you, gleaned from a lifetime of working the system. It is an innate sort of knowledge that all Italians seem to possess and I never cease to marvel at it. They know how to figure things out, to find creative solutions to ostensibly insurmountable obstacles. It is "*l'arte d'arrangiarsi*," the art of getting by, as they say.

From my own experience, I can offer a few small pieces of advice for finding one of the prized application packets.

- First, you'll likely have **more success finding this packet at a bigger post office** than the smaller ones. At least your odds are better because they are allotted a great number of these precious gems. I eventually had luck at the post office located on the north side of Piazza di San Silvestro.
- Second piece of advice; **go in the morning** shortly after the post office opens. And you don't really have to wait in the line to just pick up the packet.
- Third, **go directly to the “Sportello Amico,”** which are windows dedicated to this type of activity and should contain someone who speaks at least a little English. But don't let the word “amico” fool you. He/she is no friend of yours, believe me. Indeed, they are the enemy. Stay focused and show no fear—they can smell it from a kilometer away, and once they do, you might as well turn around and go home.

Filling Out the Forms

OK, let's assume that—by some confluence of divine acts—you have the application packet in hand. From here on, I'll be referring to Mod. 209, **Modulo 1 for NON-EU citizens.** There are eight (8) pages in all. If you haven't yet acquired the application, a copy of the document in “.pdf” format can be found [here](#). [Permesso di Soggiorno – Modolo 1](#) Print it out if you want to follow along. Also, you might want to print out a glossary of the **terms in translation** if your Italian isn't up to the task. Here: [Permesso Terms in Translation](#).

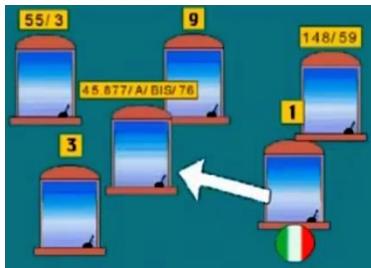
Furthermore, what I will discuss here will be the “standard” answers which should apply to 95% of Americans. My advice is by no means definitive and you should certainly consult our so-called “friends” at the Sportello Amico if you have any doubts. And it might not hurt to consult with a qualified *nonna* to have the *malocchio* removed before you begin, too.



Please note that you MUST complete the forms in **black ink only**. I made the mistake of filling mine out in dark blue ink the first time, which gave the postal clerk a great deal of satisfaction when she instructed me to go have a proctologic exam—I mean, to go home and start

over. (Maybe I misunderstood her instructions—my Italian is still far from perfect. However the general sentiment behind her words required no translation.)

The second thing that you see on the form is the little space for the *Marca da Bollo*, €16,00. You can **buy this stamp at any tobacco shop** and affix it to the space provided. If this



seems sort of cheap, don't worry, they'll be asking you for more money later in the process. (But actually, the financial costs are quite reasonable compared to other countries, such as the U.S., where a Green Card costs thousands of dollars.)

Again, I will be using Rome as my example, but of course the information applies to any Italian city.

Let's look at some of the individual lines in the form. The first line asks for the name of the *questura* that you'll be applying to. In our example, this is Roma, and the next line asks for the abbreviation, which is RM. (3) Your Last Name, (4) Your First Name, (5) the same abbreviation, RM, (6) the name of your *comune*, which again is Roma.

In the next part, (8-12) are all possible answers to question (7), so **just pick one and only one**. For our example, it will be (8) rilascio, which means the first issuing ("release") of the permesso. In the next column, choose number (14), *permesso di soggiorno*, and then the code for the type of residency you are requesting in (16). I'll provide the legend in the addendum at the end of this guide.

You can skip (18-20) because we are assuming that this will be your first issuing.

If you are filing for yourself only (and not other family members), write "1" in boxes (22) and (23), and "0" in boxes (24) and (26). This also assumes that you'll not be completing Modulo 2, which is for permission to work in Italy. **Unless you have already obtained a work visa, do NOT submit this additional form.** It will only slow down the process to the point where time itself begins to move backwards.

For box (25), count the total number of pieces of paper that you are including with the application form. These will be items such as copies of your passport pages, financial documents, healthcare information, etc. We will get to all of that eventually, so you can leave

the box empty for now—just don’t forget to fill it in later! Then put the date that you fill out the form in line (28) and sign your name in the box (29) provided.

Line (31) asks for your *codice fiscale*, if you have it. The **codice fiscale is sort of like your social security number**—it tracks your financial (and other) activities for the government. If you don’t have it yet, no worries. In the appendix I’ll provide a link to a site that will calculate it for you. Note: If you need an official *codice fiscale*, then you must go to the *Agenzia Delle Entrate*. However, if you’re not looking for employment, this really won’t be necessary.

Then (32) your marital status (“A” for single, “B” for married), (33) your sex (“M” or “F”), and (34) your birthdate: **day/month/ year**. My American friends, don’t forget to double check this because even when we’re aware of the difference, our brain naturally wants to write: month/day/year.

Questions (35) and (36) refer to the enclosed instruction form where you’ll find abbreviation codes for your country and citizenship. For the United States the code is simply USA. (37) Asks if you are a refugee (I assume not, leave it blank). In (38) write the city of your birth. NOTE: Write exactly what appears on your passport, which is probably the state and not the exact city. And in English, of course. You’d be surprised how many people try to write NUOVO YORK. Wrong. New York is the correct answer.

In section 4, mark the box (40) for passport and leave (41-43) blank. Line (46) refers to the agency authorizing your passport. Simply write “01,” which means the federal government.

In line (48) write the date that you arrived in Italy (again, day/month/year). The “*frontiera*” means the border where you entered, for example “FIUMICINO,” for the airport in Rome. The lines (50-53) refer to your visa. Write the official number of your visa in (50) as well as the type of visa in box (51), which in your case will be “D,” meaning more than 90 days. Then choose either single (52) entry or multiple (53). It should already be stated on your visa and most likely it will say “multiple.”

Question (54) asks the reason for your visa. For example, study (*studiare*) or elective residence (*residenza elettiva*). Line (55) asks the duration of your visa, which is typically 365

days. In (56 and 57) they want to know the dates your visa is valid, from and to; day/month/year.

Section 6 deals with renewals, so you can skip (58-64) entirely.

In section 7, they want to know where you'll be living. They can (but probably won't) stop by to verify this information. In (66) put RM for the Provincia di Roma, and in (67) write the word ROMA for the Comune di Roma. In line (68) write out the name of your street, for example: VIA DEL CORSO. Then in (69) your street address, for example: 123 B. Some buildings have a "*scala*" or staircase number/letter designation. If yours does, put in in (70), and if it doesn't you can write, "UNICA," meaning there's only one staircase. Line (71) asks for your apartment number. The CAP (72) is the postal code, like our US zip code.

Obviously (73) asks for your email address and (74-75) asks for your landline phone number and cellular number, respectively. If you don't have one, then leave it blank or use the landline number of the person that you're living with, if they have one.

In Section 8 they want to know if there is an alternative address where you might be reached, such as a friend or relative's house. If not, leave it blank. Or if you want to have a little fun with them, write Piazza Colonna, 370. It's the Prime Minister's address. (Just kidding—don't do that.)

The next section which begins on (85) should not apply to you. In fact, I'm having a difficult time imagining just who this would apply to. Certain dwellings require an official endorsement that they are fit for human habitation. So unless you're planning to set up home in a barn or under a bridge, just leave this section blank.

Let's skip down to (94-95) where they are asking if in the last six years, you have had other official addresses in Italy. I'm assuming that you haven't, otherwise you'd already know how to navigate your way through this nightmare and you wouldn't be reading this silly guide just for its entertainment value. Well, maybe you would. But I doubt it.

So now we can move all the way down to (112). In this section they're asking if there are other persons in your immediate family who are applying for their *permesso* at the same time as you. Again, this gets a little more complicated, and it was my initial assumption that we were

going to keep this as simple as possible. (Ha!) And since most of you will not be requiring this additional guidance, I will end my discourse here.

But do not imagine that we're done yet. Next, we need to prepare for battle against that most feared of enemies: the Italian Post Office.

Submitting Your Application

OK, by now you've obtained your application kit, and filled it out properly in black ink. Is the *Marca da Bollo* for €16,00 affixed to the top of the application? If so, it's time to do battle.

A couple of years ago I read a book by the Milanese writer Beppe Severgnini called, "Ciao, America!" In the book, he recounts his year-long sabbatical in the U.S., highlighting the things he found strange and peculiar about American culture. In one of my favorite passages, he laments that American bureaucracy is too easy—for an Italian, there's just no challenge in it. The simile that he used was perfect: an Italian confronting American bureaucracy is like a champion matador facing down a milk cow.

This comparison can be enlightening to the newly expatriated American in Rome when you ponder the scenario from the other way around. Just so. My first foray into an Italian post office left me feeling like a Wisconsin dairy farmer that had accidentally wandered into *La Corrida de Madrid* on a Sunday afternoon. It wasn't pretty, my friends, and I was grateful to have emerged with my limbs intact.

So you must steel yourself against this enemy. Stare into his bottomless eyes without even a hint of fear as you present your documents at the *Sportello Amico*. Pretend as though you've done it a hundred times before and that you are, in fact, quite bored with the whole process. Unless you are a seasoned actor, you may want to practice this at home a few times before you go, either with a friend or at least in front of a mirror. And for God's sake, do not wear red that day—it only further riles their anger.

Here's exactly what you'll need to bring with you:

- 1) The completed Modulo 1 form.
- 2) Photocopies of every page of your passport (Yes, **even the blank ones**—yet another false assumption that I made during my process. Why should logic prevail, after all?)
- 3) Photocopy of Financial Statements
- 4) Verification of health coverage

5) Copy of the rental contract or of the form where the owner of the apartment declares to the police that you are staying in his/her apartment, or other documentation to certify lodging. If you don't have a contract, you might be able to use a letter of hospitality, as I have done in the past. You can see a [sample letter of hospitality](#) in the appendix.

6) Four passport size photos

7) Plenty of cash (technically you'll only need € 27,50 for the application plus € 30,00 for the postage, but it never hurts to carry a little extra for any unforeseen acts of extortion that you might be subjected to).

8) Don't forget to **bring along your original passport**, too. They'll want to look at it to make sure that it matches the copies in your packet.

IMPORTANT: Do **NOT** submit any original documents in the post office kit (except for the Modolo 1, of course, which you should make a copy of for your own records.)

So at this point, hopefully you've been absolved of your sins by the Pope, you've had the *malocchio* removed by your roommate's Sicilian grandmother, and all the requisite bribes have been paid out to the appropriate minions. If so, you will leave the post office with two documents in hand:

1) A yellow receipt (*ricevuta*) that is absolutely necessary in getting your final permit. What's more, on this receipt you'll find the user ID and password needed to check the status of your application online at [the immigration portal](#).

2) A letter with the appointment date and time at the Police Station (*Questura*), for the last step in the procedure where you will hand over one of your kidneys (Or is it fingerprints? I can't remember). You can verify that appointment on their website: [Polizia di Stato](#)

NOTE Until you have the final physical identification card, the receipt (*ricevuta*) has the same legal value. **Don't lose it.** And please don't make explain what will happen if you do. In fact, at that point, just give up and go back to your own country.

One more piece of advice: check the above websites from time to time to make sure that you're at least in the system. If for some reason there is a problem with your application, they will **NOT** contact you. It is up to you to be proactive. If you discover a problem, bring the above two documents along with your passport to the *Questura* where you gave your fingerprints. The chances of encountering a helpful person are remote, but it's your only hope to save you from starting all over again from square one.

Conclusion

So that's it, you're done! Along the way, I've poked a little fun at the Italian bureaucracy, but the truth is that (in theory) this is a pretty fair process—especially compared to the U.S. system, which literally extorts money and subjects would-be immigrants to unnecessary medical procedures. The problem with the Italian system is that none of the employees that you'll encounter are even vaguely familiar with the steps that I've just laid out for you here. More frustrating still, if you ask the same exact question to ten different employees, you'll certainly get ten different answers. It fosters self-doubt and anxiety in the newly arrived expat who isn't accustomed to such a seemingly mutable set of rules.

By the way, average waiting period from the time that you submit your packet until you receive the actual *permesso* card is 3-6 months. Don't fight it, that's just how it is.

Appendix

Italian Language Help

If you're going to actually live in Italy, then you MUST learn the language. Absolutely the quickest way is with a good software program. I've tried most of them, and by far the best one for quality and price is [**Rocket Italian**](#).

Healthcare Needs

If you're only going to be staying/living in Italy for one year or less, your best bet is to just buy some traveler's insurance to supplement the policy issued from your home country. In this case, you're just trying to protect yourself against major medical bills, and it's not really intended to be comprehensive coverage.

Check out [**Atlas Travel Insurance**](#). It's affordable, and everything you need for a short to medium term stay.

If you're planning to stay more than a year, you might look into the state system. [Iscrizione Volotaria](#) Use this page to help determine the cost of opting-in. It's in Italian, but brief and to the point.

A few useful government websites:

[The Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs](#) This is their general site.

[Visa Page](#) This is specific for visas, including information on fees and where to apply.

Here's the pdf version of the application form: [Schengen Visa Form \(Italy\)](#)

Again, if you need help with your visa, the [Schengen Visa Application Guide](#) is your best resource.

This is the main [Questura di Roma](#), or Police Station of Rome. However, there are small branches all around the city and you should locate the one nearest to your new home.

Use [THIS LINK](#) to check online for the status of your pending *Permesso di Soggiorno*.

You'll need a *Codice Fiscale*, or Fiscal Code, and it's very easy to [calculate online](#). Note: this is your UNofficial number. To get the "real" one, you must physically go to their offices. Information, in English, is on the [Italian Agenzie Delle Entrate website](#).

Apartment Hunting

The easiest (and in my opinion, the best) way to find an apartment is to let someone else deal with the headaches. Sure, you'll pay a small booking fee, but it's more than worth it for what you'll save in time and aggravation. The good ones can also help provide you with the "proof of accommodations" necessary to get your visa.

But if you're feeling adventurous and you'd rather do the legwork yourself, here are some suggestions.



First check general information websites, such as [Wanted in Rome](#) and [Expats Living in Rome](#). If you don't find what you're looking for there, then consider these:

[Porta Portese](#) It's only in Italian, but probably the best online source for finding longer-term apartments.

If you just need a room and not a full apartment, check out this site (available in many languages): [Easy Stanza](#)

[Cross Pollinate](#) is a great place to look for short to medium term accommodations, if you need something temporary while looking for a more permanent apartment.

Types of Residency

Related to the Permesso di Soggiorno, these are the types of residency permits/cards may be requested:

1. Adoption
2. Guardianship
3. Updating residency card (change of address, marriage status, addition of children, change of passport, updating photo)
4. Conversion of residency permit (change of address, marriage status, addition of children, change of passport)
5. Pending employment
6. Pending reacquisition of citizenship
7. Renewal of political asylum
8. Residency card for EU citizens (optional)
9. Residency card for aliens
10. Conversion of residency permit
11. Duplicate residency card
12. Duplicate residency permit
13. Family
14. Family, minor aged 14 – 18
15. Independent work
16. Subordinate work

17. Work – (special cases provided for by art. 27 of the Immigration Code)
18. Subordinate work - seasonal
19. Mission
20. Religious motives
21. Elective Residence
22. Scientific research
23. Renewal of stateless status
24. Study
25. Internship for job training
26. Tourism (This isn't actually a separate visa; it's good for 90 days and is extended to all U.S. citizens).

Applications for the issue and renewal of all other types of residency permits/cards must still be presented at the police department (*Questura*) immigration office.

To legally reside in Italy, foreign nationals must have legally entered Italian territory with a passport or equivalent travel document **and an entrance visa**, except in cases of exemption laid out by international agreements.

Foreign nationals (Non E.U.) must request a residency permit from the police department (*Questura*) of the province where they are staying within **eight business days** of their entrance.

SAMPLE LETTER OF HOSPITALITY

Declaration of hospitality

I the undersigned GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI born in Firenze (FI) – Italy
on 4th July 1967, Italian citizen, resident in Roma (RM), in Via Del Corso, 20
- Roma 00187

Passport number AA1234567 issued by “Questura di Roma” on 8th June
2003,
hereby

declare

that I will host in my place RICHARD ZULLO, born in Miami, FL USA,
on 29rd June 1969, American citizen, Passport number 123456789.

I declare moreover that Mr. Richard Zullo is a good friend of mine.

Signed,

Giuseppe Garibaldi