

Italy's 10 best beaches

Spiaggia dei Conigli's turquoise waters enjoy legendary status.— Bepsimage / Getty Images

Blessed with mountains, lakes and 7600km of coastline, Italy offers some of the most stunning beaches in Europe. From the trendy hotspots to the out-of-the-way locales, it's not hard to find a piece of sand with unforgettable vistas. Here are Italy's 10 best beaches to add to your bucket list.

1. Spiaggia Rena Bianca - Santa Teresa di Gallura

The "just like the Caribbean" comments come thick and fast when it comes to Spiaggia Rena Bianca - a glorious sweep of pale sand lapped by shallow, crystal-clear aquamarine water. From the eastern tip, a trail threads along the coastline past granite boulders and formations that fire the imagination with their incredible shapes.

2. Cala Goloritze - Golfo di Orosei

The last beachette of the gulf, Cala Goloritze rivals the best. At the southern end, bizarre limestone formations soar away from the cliffside. Among them is jaw-dropping Monte Caroddi, also known as the Aguglia, a 148m-high (485ft) needle of rock beloved of climbers. Many boat trips will take you here, or you can hike in from the Altopiano del Golgo on the beautiful, 3.5km (2.2-mile) Cala Goloritze Trail. Note that the

beach itself is rather small and can get crowded in summer; boats cannot land as it's protected park.

3. Spiaggia di Sabaudia - Sabaudia

Sabaudia's fabulous beach stretches for kilometers. A wide expanse of fine, soft sand flanked by billowing dunes capped by Mediterranean scrub, it's largely free of invasive development, with facilities concentrated at the end nearest town. The sea is clean and excellent for swimming, though it can get choppy when the wind whips in. You'll need your own wheels (a car or bike) to get here, and note that parking can be a headache in peak summer months.

4. Spiaggia dei Conigli - Lampedusa

Few beaches in the world enjoy such legendary status as this long stretch of pristine white sand lapped by turquoise waters, with pretty views out to a verdant offshore

island. It's managed to retain its beauty thanks in large part to its protected status as the centerpiece of the Riserva Naturale Isola di Lampedusa. The beach is accessible only by boat or on foot via a 15-minute trail off the main road (look for the sign of the lounging rabbit).

Spiaggia dei Conigli is one of the few places in Italy where caretta caretta (loggerhead sea turtles) lay their eggs and is strictly off-limits at night during peak nesting season (typically between May and August; watch for signs advising of current restrictions).

5. Fossola Beach - Riomaggiore

This small pebbly beach is immediately southeast of Riomaggiore marina. Take the short trail that leads just past the harbor to get here. The shore is rugged and delightfully secluded from the village (though it gets packed in the summer); it's also

remarkably photogenic with the waters framed by the steep hillsides. Swimmers should be wary of currents here.

6. Spiaggia Capriccioli - Costa Smeralda

Dotted with granite boulders and backed by fragrant macchia, this gorgeous half-moon bay has water that goes through the entire spectrum of blues and is shallow enough for tots. Several unique mini-beaches dot the promontory. Umbrellas and sunbeds are available to rent. Find it at the end of SP160, with a car park and large summer-only facilities.

7. Spiaggia di Sansone - Elba

Ensnared by a cliff, about 5km (3 miles) west of Portoferraio off the SP24 road to Enfola, is Samson's Beach - a picture-postcard swathe of tiny white pebbles and shingle, with crystal-clear, turquoise waters much-loved by snorkeling enthusiasts.