

Dual Citizenship: Do You Qualify?

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Many Americans of Italian descent are pleasantly surprised to discover that they are entitled to dual citizenship, but do they need it?

There are several reasons other than sentimental ones, to consider applying for Italian citizenship. Italian nationals are automatically citizens of the European Union and may be entitled to benefits including work permits, health insurance and tax savings. However, not every Italian American qualifies for dual citizenship.

The general framework governing Italian citizenship is Law 91 of 5 February 1992, which reaffirms the principle of *jure sanguinis* (continuity of blood), by which any children born of an Italian father or mother instantly inherit Italian citizenship. However, the inheritance of Italian citizenship through the maternal line is only possible for those born after January 1, 1948.

Also under Italian law, if your ancestors became naturalized American citizens, they automatically surrendered their Italian citizenship. However, if they were still Italian citizens at the time of your birth in the U.S., you may have claim to Italian citizenship.

Since birth on American soil automatically ensured your American citizenship, you did not need to be naturalized (which would have terminated the Italian citizenship you gained automatically through your parents or grandparents, who were still Italian citizens).

The application process and required documents will vary depending on your family circumstances. The process can be long and complex, but there are firms that offer assistance. (See below.)

If you want to go it alone, consult the Italian consulate that has jurisdiction over the state in which you now reside to see if you qualify and learn which documents you need. [See page 28 for the list of Italian Consulates and their states.]



Passing through Ellis Island. If your ancestors did not become U.S. citizens, you may be entitled to dual citizenship.

[Photo: courtesy of "The Golden Door"]

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW LONG DOES APPLYING TAKE? That depends on how long it takes to find and process birth, marriage and death certificates in your state and in your town or city in Italy. Once they arrive, it can take a few more weeks to have them translated and legalized. You can complete the application in a day, but it might take the Italian Embassy or Consulate anywhere from a week to a year to process it. It saves time to go in person whenever possible.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST? Budget several hundred dollars for the entire process. Certificates, translations and official stamps add up. Also, the fee for an Italian passport is currently \$30 for one year and \$145 for five, though prices may vary.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I QUALIFY? The Italian authority

through which you submitted your citizenship application will contact you by phone or mail officially recognizing you as an Italian citizen.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET AN ITALIAN PASSPORT? It could take from one to six weeks, from the time you submit your passport application.

IF I DON'T QUALIFY, IS THERE ANOTHER WAY TO DUAL CITIZENSHIP? You can live in Italy with a visa or permit. You must live there **one year** if you formerly held citizenship; **three years** if you are a foreigner with native-born Italian parents or grandparents; **four years** if you are a citizen of another European Union nation; and **ten years** if you are a citizen of a non-EU nation. You are also eligible if you marry an Italian citizen. *Courtesy of My Italian Family.com*

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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