

Good to know:

- Usually car rental companies do not pay traffic tickets directly to the relevant authorities, but just pass them the driver's details. For this activity the car rental companies apply a fee, often charged on your credit card long after you come back home, for each violation you receive.
- It is not advisable to put a traffic ticket in the trash only because it is sent by a private company and you think it is a scam. Some Italian traffic authorities have appointed a private company, the European Municipality Outsourcing – EMO (www.emoni.vi.it), with the management and notification of traffic fines.
- The form for lodging an appeal to the Justice of the peace, called "opposizione a sanzione amministrativa", can be downloaded from the website of the Ministry of Justice (www.gdp.giustizia.it/sigp).
- Lodging an appeal to the Justice of the peace is not free. To know the costs of proceedings visit the European Justice website (www.e-justice.europa.eu) under "Going to court".

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Italy is a country of cities of art, but when preparing to tour them either using your own or a rented car, you must be aware that in most of the historic city centres there are driving restricted zones (in Italian "zona a traffico limitato" ZTL).

WHAT IS A ZTL?

It is an area monitored with cameras whose access is only permitted to drivers with a special permit (usually to people living within the ZTL and public service vehicles). These areas are set up by the municipal authorities so as to reduce congestion near popular attractions and to protect historic city centres from the urban decay caused by the traffic.

DECODING ZTL SIGNS

The entrance to these areas is usually marked with a traffic ban sign and a fine print detailing the hours of the day when ZTL is active and the vehicles are allowed to enter the ZTL legally. If the entrance to the ZTL concerns a certain time slot a bright display will inform you whether you can enter by displaying the words "Varco non attivo" or not enter by displaying the words "Varco attivo".



the red circle means no cars allowed

08,00 - 20,00

time of day when ztl is active in this case from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm

accesso consentito agli autorizzati muniti di Pass ai sensi dell'O.S. n36/08

fine print detailing vehicles/permist that are allowed to enter the ztl legally



Drivers who cross into a ZTL boundaries without authorization are fined regardless they have overlooked or misinterpreted the sign. Thus, it is advisable not to rely on the GPS device that, in suggesting the shortest route to a destination, could most likely lead you through a ZTL boundary. Indeed, each city has specific and different rules about ZTL and this makes hard to include such information into GPS systems.

It has also to be said that driving a rented car does not authorize you to access ZTL. However, if your hotel is within the restricted zone you may be allowed to reach the hotel crossing the ZTL boundary. In this latter case you should ask your hotel how to obtain an exemption (usually the hotel communicates your plate number to traffic authorities upon your request).

Vehicles carrying a disabled person (if holders of a disability cards) may enter ZTL: however, cameras are not able to recognize the disability badge displayed on the dashboard of the car and you may be fined. If this is your case, you can lodge a complaint enclosing proper documentation.

Non-authorized drivers crossing ZTL boundaries shall not be fined immediately: cameras monitoring the entrance to limited traffic zones record the plate number, but the ticket will be issued at later stage, when the vehicle's owner is identified. All accesses to ZTL recorded by cameras, even if made on the same day and into the same zone, are considered separately and entitle police to issue a

different traffic ticket for each non-authorized entrance.

The traffic ticket is delivered to the owner's address or, in the case of car rental, to the address of the holder of the car rental contract once the police is provided with the personal data by the rental company to which the fine is addressed at first.

LIMITATION PERIOD

Art. 201 of the Italian Highway Code establishes that the traffic ticket is notified to the offender residing in a foreign country by **360 days**. This limitation period, in the event of rental car, runs from the day the rental company provides the police with the data of the holder of the car rental agreement at the time of the infringement. So, you shouldn't be surprise if you get a traffic ticket later than 360 days and you'd check the timeline of the process carefully before contesting the notice.

LODGE AN APPEAL

You have to pay the fine within 60 days running from the date you receive the notice otherwise, if you think that the traffic fine is wrongful, you can lodge an appeal to the Prefect within the same time limit. You are requested to write out your appeal in Italian, to enclose all documentation useful to assess your arguments and send it by registered letter. The procedure takes up to 210 days and if the Prefect doesn't consider your appeal well founded, he will issue a payment order with the double of the original amount.

Alternatively, you can lodge an appeal to the Justice of the peace no later than 30 days after receiving the notice. You are required to fill out a specific form in Italian (opposizione a sanzione amministrativa) and sent it by registered letter along with appropriate evidence to challenge the traffic ticket. You can also ask for the fine to be frozen at the lower amount until a resolution of the appeal, but there are no guarantees the judge will grant you this.