

Primo Maggio or **Festa dei Lavoratori** is a huge public holiday in Italy. It is also referred to as International Workers Day and is celebrated in 80 countries. This holiday commemorates the struggle and sacrifices of the working class in Italy and around the world. It is a day of reflection and appreciation for the contributions that workers have made to society. Just like Labor Day in the US, Festa dei Lavoratori celebrates the economic and social gains that Italian workers have achieved.

History of Primo Maggio in Italy

Festa dei Lavoratori was preceded many years ago by “**Il Calendimaggio**,” an agricultural celebration marking the start of the growing season. Many regions in Italy still celebrate **Il Calendimaggio** – “calendi” means day, and “maggio is May – May Day. In Assisi, residents plan all year for the celebration, which lasts several days.

The origins of Primo Maggio can be traced back to the late 19th century. Labor movements around the world began to organize protests and demonstrations to demand better working conditions and higher wages. In 1886, the Haymarket affair in Chicago led to the deaths of several protesters who were advocating for an eight-hour workday. This event inspired workers across Europe to organize similar protests, and eventually, May 1st became recognized as International Workers’ Day.

In Italy, the first official celebration of Primo Maggio took place in the late 1800s. This event marked the beginning of a long tradition of labor activism in Italy, which continues to this day. It was declared a public holiday in 1891.

What Italians do on Primo Maggio

Primo Maggio is a national holiday in Italy, and many businesses and government offices are closed for the day. Italians typically spend the day with family and friends, enjoying picnics, concerts, parades, and other outdoor activities. It is also common for people to attend political rallies and demonstrations, where they can voice their opinions on issues affecting the working class.

One of the most popular events on Primo Maggio is the annual concert (**Il Concerto del Primo Maggio**) in Rome’s **Piazza San Giovanni**. This concert, which is organized by Italy’s largest trade union, the CGIL, attracts hundreds of thousands of people each year. It features performances by some of Italy’s most famous musicians and is a celebration of the labor movement’s achievements.

This holiday occurs at the beginning of May when the weather is usually quite warm, so Italians take the opportunity to take some days off and go on a short holiday, enjoying time with friends and family, going on a picnic, and relaxing.

Special Foods

Foods for Primo Maggio often include “**fava e pecorino**,” featuring fava beans (broad beans) which are in season. Their nutty flavor pairs well with Italian pecorino cheese made from sheep’s milk. Add a loaf of Italian bread, dried sausage or ham, and some wine, and it’s a perfect Italian picnic.

Activities to commemorate this Italian holiday at our lodges:

- Prepare Italian picnic baskets and have a picnic enjoying some simple Italian foods and Italian wine.
- Have a “fava and pecorino tasting” enjoyed with some crusty Italian bread and Italian wine.