

## Are you connected?

Walter De Marco (May 15, 2009)



Meetup.com. New York-based website helps Italian language and culture lovers join and create real-life communities wherever they live.

What do Florence, Moscow, London and Seattle have in common? Give up?

Then I'll tell you the answer. They are all home to an Italian Connection Meetup group, an international network of over 1,200 Italian language and culture lovers.



These groups were created through [Meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) [2] to help people with an interest in the Italian language and culture connect with one another, both online and in person.

About once a month, Italian Meetup members around the world meet at a local venue to have a friendly chat and/or practice their Italian with other group members while sharing a meal or sipping a cappuccino or a glass of wine in a casual atmosphere. This is made possible by Meetup.com, a Manhattan-based website where anyone can join or create a real-life community or club on just about any imaginable topic, wherever they live.

Currently there are Italian Connection Meetup groups in eight cities across the US and Europe. I founded the first group two years ago in Florence, when I was struggling to find a job as an English teacher there, and juggling a couple of part time jobs to make ends meet.

My professional life did not go quite as planned, but the success of the first Italian Connection group inspired me to create similar groups in other countries. I proposed the idea to two longtime friends who immediately offered me their support, so we founded a non-profit organization called **Lega mondiale di cultura italiana / World Italian Culture Connection** (Lega italiana in short).

The founders of Lega italiana strongly believe in the importance of social networking with a cultural and educational purpose, and with Meetup.com we have found the ideal technology to manage real-life clubs through the Internet in a professional and user-friendly manner.

We are planning to start Italian Connection Meetup groups in other cities as well, and this summer we are launching a cultural holiday program in Italy, in partnership with **Centro linguistico italiano Dante Alighieri (CLIDA)** in Florence. To learn more about the program, or to join an Italian group near you, visit [Legaitaliana.org](http://legaitaliana.org) [3]

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#### **Links**

[1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/9229foto31241961613jpg>

[2] <http://www.meetup.com/>

[3] <http://www.legaitaliana.org/>