

How Italy's politicians learned to stop worrying and love Airbnb

A revolt is brewing in Georgia Meloni's coalition over a planned tax raid on holiday lets — a sector that now contributes billions to the country's economy



[Tom Kington](#), Rome

Wednesday October 29 2025, 7.55pm, The Times

Luigi Ricci feels proud of his home town in Tuscany every time he welcomes foreign visitors to the 16th-century home that belonged to his late father.

“I currently have an English family renting who will go to local restaurants and museums and give life to the town,” said Ricci, 62, a statistician who was born and raised in Montevarchi, between Florence and Arezzo.

Ricci is one of thousands of Italians now renting out about half a million properties on platforms such as Airbnb, part of a phenomenon blamed for driving residents out of historic neighbourhoods in favour of tourists.

But renters are emerging as a powerful voting bloc in Italy, able to create friction within [Giorgia Meloni](#)'s coalition government when it tries to hike taxes on short term rentals.

“If you take the renters and the 200,000 people managing their properties then add their families, you have three million voters, which the government should be paying attention to,” Marco Celani, who heads an association of Italian companies managing short term lets, said.

Ministers in Meloni's coalition were clearly paying attention when they realised the government's new budget included a proposed tax increase, from 21 to 26 per cent, on the first property rented out by Italians.

“This is a foolish tax,” Matteo Salvini, deputy prime minister and head of the League party, said. Antonio Tajani, head of

Forza Italia, Meloni's other coalition ally, promised to "defend the home" and oppose the increase in parliament.



Italian law does not help landlords to evict renters if they refuse to pay rent, a property owner said

ALAMY

This apparently undramatic tax change has exposed cracks in Meloni's coalition because the value of Italy's short-term rental business reached €8.8 billion last year, equivalent to 70 per cent of the value of the country's pharmaceutical industry and 60 per cent of its chemicals industry.

- [Italy to ban key boxes on Airbnb flats over security fears](#)

Francesco Chiodelli, a Turin University academic who studied the rental business for a recent report, said politicians of all stripes have always been ready to do the bidding of Italy's property owners, who account for 75 per cent of home dwellers.

“Now that property owners are renting out their homes, it makes Airbnb an important political issue,” he said.

Even as governments around the world limit the spread of short-term rentals to stop the hollowing out of historic cities, Italian governments have done little, leaving frustrated mayors to try to act at local level to preserve the integrity of neighbourhoods with 1,000-year histories that risk becoming tourist dormitories overnight.

- [Airbnb protesters vandalise key boxes in Milan and Florence](#)

“Cities are now tackling this, but I fear the trend may be irreversible,” Chiodelli said.

For renters, the money is too good. Chiodelli's report revealed that Italians are now charging an average of €167 a night per property, up 50 per cent from 2017.

Roberta Daga, a supermarket employee from Sassari in Sardinia, said the rent from her flat was a lifeline that allowed her to support her children.

Daga, 49, and her husband invested €140,000 of savings into buying the flat, which now yields about €2,000 a year in rental profit.

“If the government raises taxes now it will take away the little money we are making after years of saving up,” she said.



Tourists' spending power means short-term lets have become a lucrative business for Italians

ALAMY

Meloni's finance minister Giancarlo Giorgetti justified the hike by claiming that Airbnb had “destroyed” the long-term rental market in Italy by driving up rents and reducing the availability of houses.

“The spending power of a New York tourist is forcing out of the market a student in Florence who has come from Calabria,” wrote the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper this week.

Renters argue they are not interested in long-term rental contracts because Italy's courts rarely kick out non-paying tenants.

"I would be happy to offer long term contracts but I am scared tenants will refuse to leave," Riccardo Giovannini, an academic who offers short-term rents on two flats he owns near the Colosseum in Rome, said.

- [Can Airbnb save a dying Italian village?](#)

In Montevarchi in Tuscany, Luigi Ricci said that before putting his father's house on Airbnb he had tried a long-term rental.

"My tenant paid the first month's rent then stayed another three years without paying and even sub-let the house before he left. The courts were no help and that is why so many Italians prefer to rent through Airbnb," he said.