

# Winter Olympics 2026: Travel Risk Assessment

---

An assessment of the security, infrastructure, and operational risks associated with the 2026 Winter Olympics in northern Italy, analysing potential threats from civil unrest, crime, cyber activity, and travel disruption.



# **Table of contents**

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Political &amp; Economic Context</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Threat: Civil Unrest</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Threat: Crime &amp; Cyber Risks</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Threat: Terrorism</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Threat: Transport &amp; Infrastructure</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Outlook</b>	<b>12</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Anticipating the Impact of Record Visitor Numbers on Travel and Security

The upcoming Winter Olympics are scheduled to take place in northern Italy from 6 to 12 February, 2026, followed by the Winter Paralympics from 6 to 15 March.

For the first time, the games will be jointly hosted by two cities - Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo - located in the regions of Lombardy and Veneto. Some events will also be held in the neighbouring region of Trentino-Alto Adige.

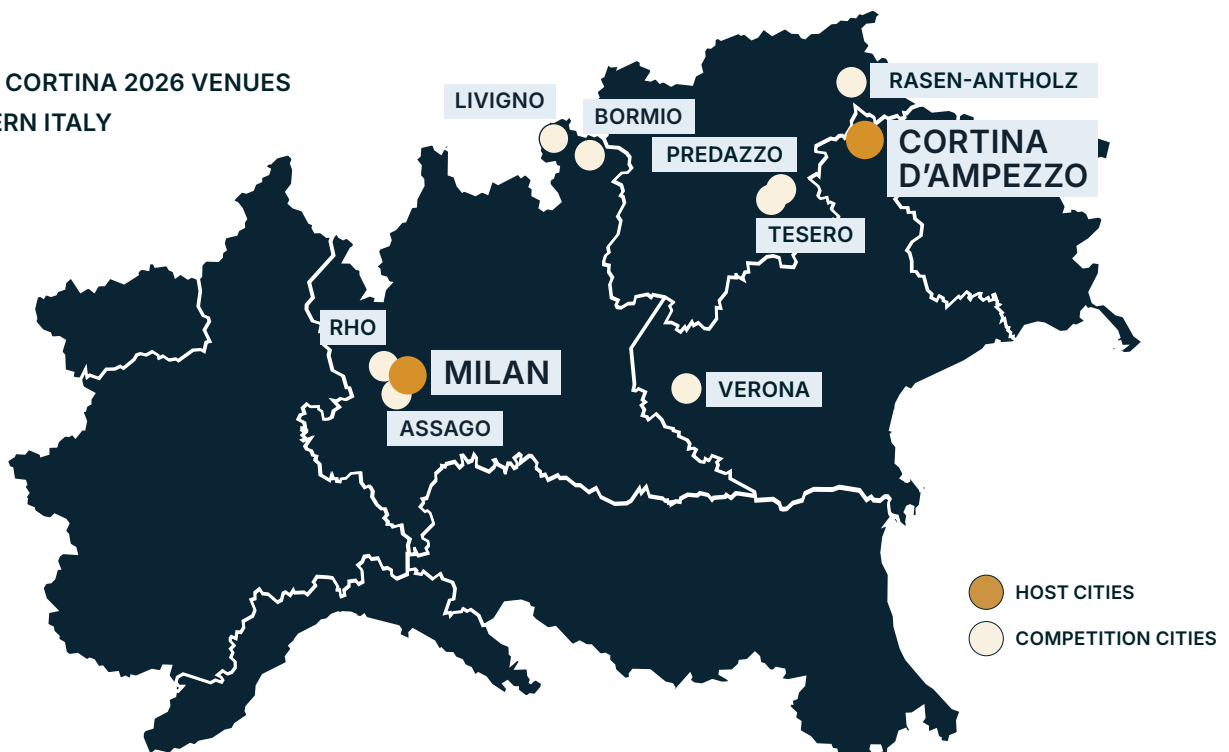
The Winter Olympics are highly likely to generate a major surge in arrivals to northern Italy. The games coincide with a period of heightened tourism and will follow shortly after the conclusion of the Catholic Jubilee, which is expected to bring an additional 35 million visitors to Italy by the end of 2025.

In Milan alone, early forecasts anticipate between one and two million extra visitors during the Olympic and Paralympic Games, bringing the total number of arrivals to northern Italy to more than 2.5 million.

The high-profile nature of the event, the significant influx of visitors, and ongoing domestic and international political and economic developments are all highly likely to shape a range of risks that could affect travel to the Winter Olympic venues and host cities.

This report provides an overview of the key trends and potential threats associated with travel to the 2026 Winter Olympics.

MILANO CORTINA 2026 VENUES  
NORTHERN ITALY



## POLITICAL & ECONOMIC CONTEXT

# Financial, Political, and Public Challenges Facing the 2026 Olympics

Italy's bid to host the 2026 Winter Olympics was submitted in 2018 and approved the following year. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government has strongly promoted the games as a symbol of Italy's post-COVID-19 economic recovery and as a key opportunity to enhance the country's appeal to international investors and visitors - particularly after Rome's unsuccessful bid for the 2024 Summer Olympics. The total projected cost stands at approximately EUR 5.3 billion, with the majority of funding allocated for infrastructure projects.

The upcoming games have also faced significant opposition. Critics have drawn parallels with Italy's last Winter Olympics, held in Turin in 2006, which were plagued by soaring costs, allegations of irregularities in the awarding of construction permits, and the subsequent abandonment of much of the event's infrastructure. These past issues are frequently cited as warning signs of the potential risks and long-term challenges associated with hosting the 2026 Winter Olympics.

The games are also taking place at a time when sustainability issues - including overtourism, rising living costs in major cities, and failures in environmental conservation - feature prominently in Italian domestic politics. These concerns have already shaped public debate around the feasibility and long-term impact of the Olympics and could become key triggers for civil unrest in the period leading up to, and during, the events.

Milan, which has become one of Europe's fastest-growing centres for finance, education, and tourism in the post-pandemic period, is widely viewed as a reflection of this broader national trend. Data shows that average rents for a two-bedroom apartment in the city have risen by more than 22% over the past five years, with increases reaching as high as 40% in certain districts and for newly built properties.

AVERAGE RENT FOR STUDIO APARTMENTS  
IN MAJOR ITALIAN CITIES IN 2024

Milan	+31%	€1,311
Rome	+80%	€1,078
Belogna	+33%	€1,001
Turin	+75%	€815
Naples	+23%	€739

SOURCE: INVESTING.PLUS

Foreign developments are also likely to have a significant influence on the 2026 games. They will take place against a backdrop of mounting global uncertainty and insecurity. As a member of both NATO and the European Union, Italy must navigate an international environment shaped by the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict, instability in the Middle East, and the increasing prevalence of hybrid security threats.

## THREAT: CIVIL UNREST

# Grassroots Movements Mobilise Against the “Unsustainable Olympics”

Given the event’s prominence and the wider political and social context, civil unrest is highly likely to be the risk most directly affected by the Olympics.

Despite a ceasefire having been reached by Israel and Hamas to end the conflict in the Gaza Strip, protests related to the war cannot be ruled out. Italy has been one of the major European epicentres of pro-Palestine protests, and organisers have pledged to continue their demonstrations even after the deal. The participation of a small number of Israeli athletes in the Olympics is likely to remain a trigger of unrest, particularly in Milan, even if the ceasefire holds.

Previous pro-Palestine protests in Europe have affected major sporting events. In September 2025, large-scale pro-Palestine demonstrations opposing the participation of Israeli athletes forced the cancellation of the final stage of the Vuelta a España, Spain’s main cycling competition.

While domestic and international political dynamics will shape the broader threat of civil unrest during the games, the primary driver of protests is almost certain to be sustainability concerns.



In early 2024, several Milan-based protest groups formed a network called the Comitato Insostenibili Olimpiadi 2026 - or "Unsustainable Olympics Committee" (CIO) - to oppose the event. The movement cites the Olympics' potential to deepen socioeconomic inequality and exacerbate the cost-of-living crisis in Lombardy.

CIO's stated goals are first to "hinder, block, and cancel" construction projects linked to the Olympics, and ultimately to stop the games themselves. Like other anti-Olympics movements, CIO is not a unified organisation but rather a loose coalition of several direct-action groups espousing



a variety of causes, ranging from anti-tourism and environmental protection to feminist activism.

CIO and other similar movements in Italy bear a strong resemblance to the *Anti-Jeux (Anti-Games)* groups that emerged in France ahead of the 2024 Summer Olympics. These groups, while retaining the ability to stage large-scale protests, their greater threat to travellers is likely to come from acts of sabotage or deliberate disruption, particularly targeting public transport and infrastructure.

The Anti-Jeux movement in France was likely behind the sabotage of train lines and infrastructure on the eve of the 2024 Olympics, which caused significant travel delays. Italian groups are likely to possess both the capability and the intent to conduct similar actions.

As some events of the Winter Olympics occur in more remote areas of the Italian Alps and under harsh weather conditions, any act of sabotage could result in severe disruptions and possible threats to life.

In addition to possible acts of sabotage, groups opposed to the Olympics may attempt to stage temporary blockades at key transport hubs - for instance, by occupying roadways or train tracks, or carrying out less disruptive protests in high-visibility parts of the host towns, particularly Milan. Similar tactics were used in several Italian cities during the 3-5 October protests in solidarity with the Global Sumud Flotilla to Gaza, which resulted in severe transport network disruptions.

## THREAT: CRIME & CYBER RISKS

# Increased Targeting of High-Net-Worth and Business Travellers

Civil unrest is the “highest visibility” threat to travellers in Italy during the Olympics. However, crime poses an equally important concern. While Italy overall maintains a low crime risk level, Milan has had an increase in the number of reported crimes since 2019. It now ranks as the Italian city with the highest reported number of offences for 100,000 inhabitants, ahead of Rome and Florence.

A notable recent trend in crime that may affect travel to Milan is the rise in opportunistic offences targeting high-net-worth tourists.

Italian authorities have reported an increase in organised criminal groups operating near luxury hotels, restaurants, and shopping districts, where they identify potential victims based on visible signs of wealth. Items such as expensive watches, handbags, and jewellery are especially sought after, as they retain significant value on the black market and are difficult to trace once stolen.

These groups often employ highly sophisticated methods. After identifying a potential target, perpetrators have been known to follow them for hours - and in some cases even days - before striking when the victim is distracted or in a less crowded area.



With the Winter Olympics likely to drive an increase in luxury tourism, these groups could both increase their activities in cities like Milan and Verona and expand their reach to smaller towns near the host venues.

Scams, particularly those conducted online, are likely to pose an elevated threat to travellers during the Olympic period. Phishing scams are among the most frequently reported by visitors to Italy and often target the leisure and hospitality sectors. In a typical case, scammers send convincing emails purporting to be from hotels or booking platforms, prompting recipients to share personal or financial information. Scammers often leverage major events that generate high demand, such as the Olympics, to maximise the number of potential victims and the likelihood of success.

AI and other emerging technologies have already started to *supercharge* cybercrime, including the types of scams expected to proliferate around the Games.

With the help of inexpensive AI tools, phishing emails can now be easily personalised and shared on a large scale, allowing criminals to reach vast numbers of potential victims with “tailored”, and therefore more credible, messages.

Spoofing – the creation of fake websites resembling official ones – is also a growing threat. In Italy, the rise in spoofed sites linked to events of the Catholic Jubilee prompted authorities to issue several official warnings in 2025. Similar activity is highly likely to emerge in connection with the 2026 Winter Olympics.



## THREAT: TERRORISM

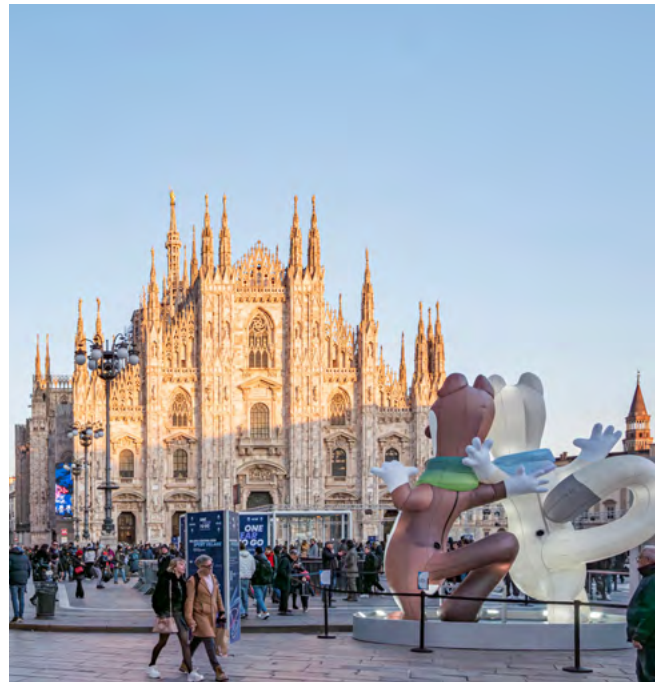
# Heightened Vigilance Amid a Regional Rise in Lone-Actor Extremism

As in other European countries, the threat of terrorism in Italy has risen in recent years, due to a combination of increasing online radicalisation and international political developments - most notably the ongoing war in Gaza.

Italian authorities have maintained the highest alert level for terrorism since the Crocus Hall attack near Moscow in April 2024 and reiterated this status in June 2025, following US strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities. In May 2025, the US State Department issued a "Level 2 – exercise increased caution" advisory for Italy for terrorism, though it did not specify the factors that prompted the warning.

In addition to continental trends common with other countries, Italy's terrorism threat is further heightened by the ongoing Jubilee, with Catholic places of worship being particularly at risk. As in the case of the Paris 2024 Olympics, the upcoming Winter Olympics are likely to be attractive targets for terrorists seeking to maximise the visibility of their actions and destabilise the state.

The primary terrorism threat in Italy comes from self-radicalised "lone wolf" actors, consistent with other European countries. Italian authorities, like their counterparts in Britain and France, have noted that self-radicalisation cases increasingly involve young suspects, many under the age of 18. In July 2025, for example, Italian authorities made



22 arrests nationwide in connection with extremist activity linked to both racial supremacist and Islamist ideologies. Among those detained were several individuals under 17, with some reportedly as young as 13 years old.

Lone wolf actors typically rely on unsophisticated or improvised weapons, favouring bladed instruments and vehicles, and less frequently, small firearms. Terrorists often prioritise achieving maximum visibility for their actions, ahead of maximising casualties. As a result, they tend to strike targets such as tourist attractions, monuments, and places of worship. High-visibility events linked with the Olympics, such as the opening and closing ceremonies, are therefore at particularly high risk of terrorism.

## THREAT: TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE

# Construction Delays and Weather Risks Challenge Olympic Readiness

The Winter Olympics will be held across a total of ten locations in Italy's Lombardy and Veneto regions, with most events centred in the host cities of Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo.

Due to the nature of the competitions, several venues are situated in more remote areas, such as Anterselva/Antholtz and Bormio. While these sites offer suitable accommodation and visitor facilities, access and transport are likely to be more challenging. Services such as emergency healthcare may also be harder to reach compared with the larger and better-connected cities of Milan, Cortina, and Verona.

The easiest and likely most popular method of reaching the main host cities will be by air. Milan is served by two airports - Milan Malpensa (MXP/LIMC) and Linate (LIN/LIML) – and can also be accessed via nearby Bergamo Airport. Travellers heading to Cortina d'Ampezzo will typically fly to Milan or to Venice's Marco Polo Airport (VCE/LIPZ).

Attending events held in smaller towns will require will require additional onward travel. Train services to the various venues will be supplemented by additional public transport arranged by local authorities to accommodate the increased number of visitors.



## THREAT: TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE



While such travel is expected to be largely smooth, public transport systems carry a higher risk of disruption from petty and opportunistic crime, as well as from potential civil unrest, including strikes and other forms of labour action.

Despite the high volume of financial investment in infrastructure, estimated at around EUR 3.5 billion, several vulnerabilities are likely to persist by the time the Games begin in February, potentially affecting travel to host venues.

According to some media analyses, approximately half of the planned works for the Olympics will only be completed after the Games. While most of these delays are unlikely to directly affect access to venues, some could have an impact on travel logistics. For example, several planned expansions of the road network near Cortina are expected to only be completed after the end of the games, with some projected to become operational by 2032.

In the province of Belluno, which includes Cortina d'Ampezzo, local reports have highlighted multiple delays in planned roadworks caused by rockfalls and landslides. Adverse weather conditions in northern Italy during late autumn and winter could further hinder progress, increasing the likelihood of travel disruptions to and from key Olympic sites.

## OUTLOOK

# Key Security and Operational Trends Likely to Shape the Olympics

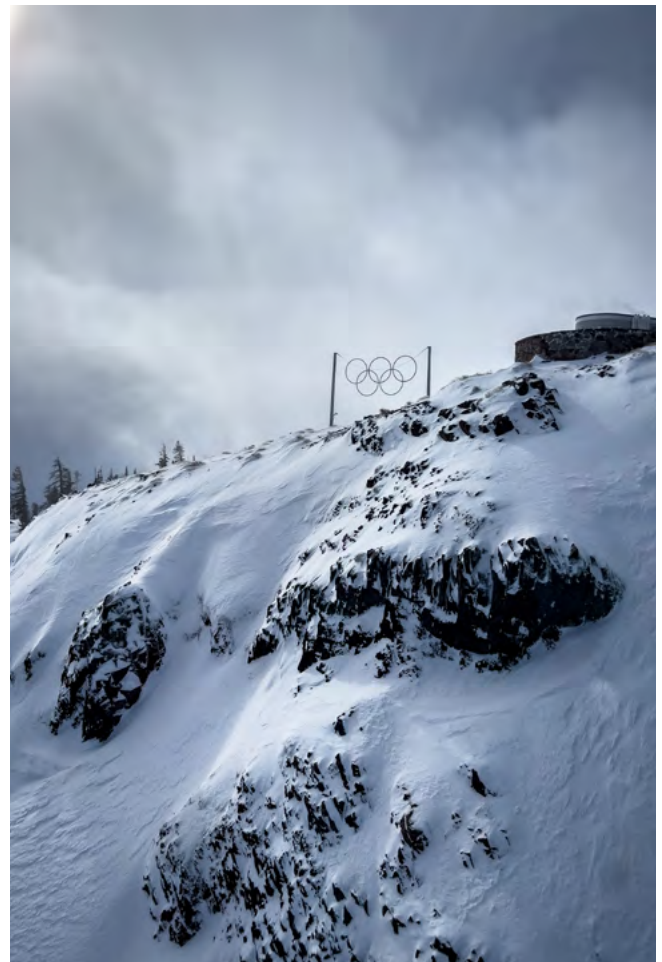
The Winter Olympics and Paralympics are expected to attract an additional 2.5 million international visitors to northern Italy, including more than one million to Milan alone.

While travel to the host venues is largely to be trouble-free, travellers should still take mitigation measures to address threats associated with visiting northern Italy during this period. Some threats are likely to affect certain traveller profiles more than others. For example, the rise in luxury-targeting crime poses a growing risk to high-net-worth visitors and is likely to intensify during the Olympics. Other factors, such as protest activity, or environmental hazards, could also cause sudden shifts in the security environment at key destinations

Adopting a solid risk-mitigation framework can significantly increase the likelihood of having a smooth visit to northern Italy and a Winter Olympics experience in 2026.

Travellers should take both proactive risk mitigation measures and establish clear protocols for responding to incidents or emerging threats. Basic precautions, such as researching destinations ahead of visiting, avoiding high-risk areas and situations

while in-country, and relying on reputable transport and accommodation providers, can be highly effective in reducing exposure to potential risks. Depending on their individual profiles, travellers may also wish to adopt additional safeguards tailored to their specific circumstances and level of risk.



## ABOUT UNITEDHEALTHCARE GLOBAL

UnitedHealthcare Global is a Fortune 5 company whose mission is to help people live healthier lives and help the healthcare system work better for everyone.

UnitedHealthcare Global uses their breadth of global solutions, capabilities and resources to develop comprehensive products and services that enable better outcomes for all. From health and wellbeing programs to intelligence and assistance services we proudly serve members in over 150 countries. Visit [uhcglobal.com](https://uhcglobal.com)

## ABOUT SOLACE GLOBAL

Solace Global Risk is a leading provider of comprehensive risk management solutions, serving clients globally with a commitment to excellence. With a worldwide presence and a team of seasoned experts, Solace Global Risk empowers organisations to navigate complex risk landscapes with confidence and resilience. Visit [solaceglobal.com](https://solaceglobal.com)



+44 (0)1202 078610

[uhcglobal@solaceglobal.com](mailto:uhcglobal@solaceglobal.com)

[worldwatch.uhcglobal.com](https://worldwatch.uhcglobal.com)