



Pre-Departure Handbook

Spring 2020

www.isiflorence.org

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ACADEMIC CALENDAR SPRING 2020

Tuesday, January 7	Departure from U.S.
Wednesday, January 8	Student Arrival - Settle into apartments
Thursday – Friday, January 9 – 10	Orientation
Monday, January 13	Classes Begin
Monday – Thursday, February 24 – 27	Midterm Exams
Friday – Sunday, February 28 – March 8	Midterm Break
Monday, April 13	National Holiday – Institute Closed
Thursday, April 23	Classes End
Monday – Thursday, April 27 – 30	Final Exams
Thursday, April 30	Farewell Reception
Friday, May 1	Program Ends
Saturday, May 2	Students vacate apartments

NOTE: Students cannot be housed until the official arrival day. Students who arrive early must find their own accommodations until the program begins. The Institute is not responsible for students who arrive before that date. No student may remain in Institute housing after the vacation date. NO exceptions can be made.

All students participating in the program must be present in Florence on Wednesday, January 8. Likewise, no student may be absent from orientation.

FLORENCE AND ITALY

LOCATION

Florence is located in the central Italian region of Tuscany. The area is known for its picturesque countryside, which forms the background of many Renaissance paintings. Wine from the Chianti area, between Florence and Siena, is world famous and Tuscan olive oil is among the finest in the world. The Carrara marble quarries in the northwest part of the region, from which Michelangelo's sculptures were carved, continue to produce the purest forms of Italian marble.

Florence is bordered on the north by the hill town of Fiesole and on the south by the hills of Bellosguardo. The city itself is divided by the Arno River, which flows towards Pisa. Several bridges connect the city to the Oltrarno, "the other side of the Arno". The city's population is approximately 500,000 inhabitants.

ISI FLORENCE FACILITIES

PALAZZO RUCELLAI

Via della Vigna Nuova 18
Tel: 055.264.5910

Office Hours:

Mon.—Thurs. 8:30am to 5:00pm
Friday 9:00am—3:00pm
Saturday and Sunday closed

The Institute is located on the piano nobile (or main floor) of Palazzo Rucellai, a historic residential palace designed in the fifteenth century by Leon Battista Alberti, eminent Renaissance humanist, scholar, and architect. Located on the splendid Via della Vigna Nuova in the heart of the city, Palazzo Rucellai is one of the oldest and most prestigious patrician residences in Florence and holds an important place in the city's historic patrimony. It has been home to the Rucellai for over 500 years and the family continues to occupy portions of the building. In addition to the classrooms there are one computer lab and one student lounge. The entire Institute has wireless access.

PALAZZO BARGAGLI

Lungarno alle Grazie, 22
Tel: 055.535.9751

Office Hours:

Mon.—Thurs. 8:30am to 6:00pm
Friday: 9:00am—3:00pm
Saturday and Sunday closed

Our facilities in Palazzo Bargagli stretch across an area of over 2500 square meters. Classrooms overlook the River Arno. It was one of the patrician residences of the XIV century. Originally in the hands of the Bardi, a prominent banking family, it was completely refurbished and modernized in 2009. It is located on Lungarno alle Grazie, a block away from the National Library and beautiful Piazza Santa Croce. In addition to classrooms, one art and two architecture studios, there are one computer lab and one student lounge at Palazzo Bargagli. The entire Institute has wireless access.

DOCUMENTS

PASSPORT

All students must have a valid passport. If you do not have a passport, you can apply for one at your county court house or post office. Follow the printed instructions carefully and allow at least six weeks for processing.

STUDENT VISA

All students studying in Italy are required to have a Student visa. Student visas are issued by Italian Consulates in the United States. Please see your Study Abroad Office for details. The requirements to apply for the Student visa differ from consulate to consulate. Items may include but are not limited to the following:

- A letter of acceptance from the Institute stating the dates of your study sojourn in Italy;
- Proof of health insurance stating your coverage, policy number and emergency contact numbers;
- A letter from your parent(s) or legal guardian(s) stating that they accept full financial responsibility for you during your stay in Italy;
- Application fee.

Students may not participate in the Program without a student visa.

REGISTRATION IN ITALY – PERMESSO DI SOGGIORNO

Upon entering Italy, students have 8 days to apply for the Extended Stay Permit, the Permesso di Soggiorno.

Italy now requires all persons applying for an extended permit of stay to acquire a kit which outlines the procedure. The Institute staff will guide you through the entire procedure. Most students have paid this fee in advance along with their tuition at their home schools.

For the Stay Permit, you must bring the following documents to Orientation:

- 1 photocopy of your passport photo page with your permanent home address
- 1 photocopy of the visa page
- The packet of original documents presented to the Consulate for the student visa with the Consulate's seal/stamp. PLEASE NOTE: ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS WITHOUT THE CONSULATE'S SEAL WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

IN ADDITION:

- All students must bring a photocopy of the international health insurance that they have obtained through their Study Abroad office.

Note: Students may not participate in the Program without an Extended Stay Permit. Bring with you all necessary documents!

It is wise to record your passport and credit card numbers, and to leave this information with a family member as well, in case of loss or theft. We also suggest that you make photocopies of them.

ARRIVAL

Students are required to arrive on **Wednesday, January 8** at the Florence Airport (Peretola) with flights scheduled to land **no later than 6:30pm**, so as to receive airport arrival assistance (and consequent apartment check in) from ISI Florence staff.

If your flight (scheduled to arrive in Florence before 6:30pm) happens to be late, you must call the ISI Florence emergency phone number. You will then receive instructions on what to do.

Students arriving at Florence airport with flights scheduled to land after 6:30pm:

- **If your flight is regularly scheduled to land after 6:30pm**, you **will not** receive assistance from ISI Florence staff at the airport. You will also be responsible for your own accommodation for your first night. Before your departure from the U.S., ISI Florence will send you an email message with instructions on how to meet us at orientation on the following day. You will then get into your apartment after orientation.

Students arriving at an airport other than Florence:

- **If you have chosen to arrive at an airport other than Florence**, in order to check in at your apartment the same day, you are required to get to the school building (Palazzo Bargagli) by your appointment time.

All appointments will be scheduled between 9am and 6:30pm. You will receive a detailed email with instructions, address and appointment time.

If you are arriving in Florence later than 6:30pm, you will have to find your own accommodation for the night and check in the following day after orientation. You will receive a detailed email with instructions, address and orientation time.

Students arriving before January 8th:

- **If you arrive in Florence before January 8th**, you will not be able to move into ISI Florence accommodations until the check-in day, that is, January 8th.

On check-in day you are required to get to the school building (Palazzo Bargagli) by your appointment time. You will receive a detailed email with instructions, address and appointment time.

Please get in touch with us for any missed connection and/or emergency:

Emergency Phone: (+39) 348.897.2155

Palazzo Rucellai : (+39) 055.264.5910

Palazzo Bargagli: (+39) 055.535.9751

We urge all students to arrive with at least 50 euros on hand.

LOST LUGGAGE

Please note that lost luggage must be reported to the airport authorities **BEFORE** exiting the baggage claim area. In case of lost luggage, instruct the claims office to deliver the bags to the Institute and give them the Institute's address and phone number (see below). You may have to leave keys or codes for the locks in order to allow the bags to clear customs when they arrive. Please exit the baggage claim area as soon as possible. For security reasons, the Institute staff cannot enter this area. Do not wait for friends who have to report lost luggage; this will delay your departure to the apartments.

Please note: Since it is not unusual for luggage to be temporarily lost, be sure to carry all essentials for the first few days in a carry-on bag (see Packing, p. 11).

MAIL & PACKAGES

ALL MAIL & PACKAGES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE INSTITUTE (NEVER to student apartments) and addressed as follows:

**Student Name
c/o International Studies Institute
Via della Vigna Nuova, 18
50123 Firenze, FI
ITALY**

Lastly, always keep your tracking number.

PACKAGES

The Institute recommends that **no package** be sent to students while they are studying in Florence. This is because slow mail service and excessive customs fees make getting the package difficult and expensive for students. Customs paperwork is often complicated and time-consuming and staff is not always available to assist students with this process. If a family member or friend feels they must send a package anyway, be sure to have them declare a very small amount when asked what the contents of the package are worth. You cannot declare "\$0", but we recommend declaring from \$10-\$50 and no more.

IMPORTANT: Specify that the package includes "Used personal goods, not for resale" on the front and on the customs form. If those who send you a package follow these guidelines, it should help your package arrive more smoothly, but it is never guaranteed.

Under no circumstances should students receive vitamins, medicines or similar from abroad. These packages will be stopped in customs for inspection and they are generally never deemed acceptable for delivery. Students should have enough prescription medicine to last the entire semester. In emergency situations, students should consult a local doctor and have them prescribe the Italian equivalent of any medications they may need. We also discourage students from having their loved ones send electronic devices. These often are stopped at customs and once released students must pay expensive customs fees.

We strongly discourage packages containing candy and the like to be mailed to you. If necessary, we suggest that you purchase food products at international markets in Florence that sell American brands of peanut butter, pancake mixes, etc. Italy has one of the world's great cuisines. You will certainly survive for the time you are here!

MONEY MATTERS

It is a good idea to notify your bank that you will be abroad for an extended period of time. Some students have found that access to their bank account via their ATM card was denied for security purposes after several instances of use abroad.

THE EURO

The Euro is the official currency of Italy and the member states of the European Union. As the value of the Euro and Dollar fluctuate daily we suggest that you visit www.xe.com for up-to-date currency rates.

It is important to know your options for getting cash:

1.) ATM CARD

ATM's are the fastest and best method for obtaining cash and are located conveniently throughout Italy and the rest of Europe.

Please note: Students should check with their home bank to obtain information regarding international withdrawal fees. It is advisable to set up an account in the bank with the most reasonable withdrawal fees. All receipts issued in Italy print out the Euro amount only and do not show the account balance or the rate of exchange. The student's home bank statement at the end of the month will show the exchange rate. Be aware that you are not given the option of withdrawing from your savings account but from your checking account only.

2.) CREDIT CARDS

Visa and Master Card are accepted throughout Europe. Students may be charged service fees by the store and/or bank when using their credit cards. These fees might differ from what they are normally charged in the U.S.

Good travel advice: Arrive with a small amount of euros – perhaps around € 50 worth. Do not rely on changing money or finding ATM machines immediately upon arrival.

RECEIVING MONEY FROM HOME

Please inform family members and friends of the following:

They should not:

- mail cash.
- mail checks (personal checks cannot be cashed in Italy).
- wire money (except in case of emergency). Wiring money includes costly transaction fees.

Recommended:

- To arrange for a family member or friend to deposit money directly into your bank account which you can access with an ATM card.
- American Express Gift Checks or Money Orders. These are efficient ways to send money as the family or friend can purchase a desired amount in check form and the AMEX check can be cashed here in Florence.
- If your wallet gets lost or stolen or you run low on cash, you can have family and friends from home wire some to you through Western Union. Money can be sent in dollars and picked up in euros. There are several locations in Florence with Western Union pick-up points. For more information, call 800.789.124 from Italy or 00322.639.7065 from abroad. Visit www.westernunion.it

HANDLING YOUR AFFAIRS FROM ABROAD

Students needing to sign documents, such as financial aid forms, should make arrangements for someone to be able to sign on their behalf, probably by means of a Limited Power of Attorney. Likewise, arrangements should be made for filing your U.S. tax forms.

BUDGETING WHILE ABROAD

To help you successfully budget your money while abroad, take a look at how much past ISI Florence students spent on the following items during their time in Florence.

1. Average amount spent *per week* on groceries (toiletries, apartment food, cleaning supplies)
 - 46% - spent between 20 and 30 euros per week.
 - 34% - spent between 30 and 40 euros per week.
 - 13% - spent between 40 and 50 euros per week.
 - 5% - spent between 50 and 70 euros per week.
 - 2% - spent more than 70 euros per week.
2. Average amount spent *per week* eating out (cafes, restaurants, gelaterias, etc.)
 - 8% - spent between 0 and 15 euros per week.
 - 24% - spent between 15 and 30 euros per week.
 - 41% - spent between 30 and 50 euros per week.
 - 23% - spent between 50 and 100 euros per week.
 - 4% - spent more than 100 euros per week.
3. Average amount spent *per week* on social activities (movies, museums, tours, bars)
 - 29% - spent between 5 and 25 euros per week.
 - 38% - spent between 25 and 50 euros per week.
 - 18% - spent between 50 and 75 euros per week.
 - 10% - spent between 75 and 100 euros per week.
 - 5% - spent more than 100 euros per week.
4. Average amount spent *per month* on personal items (clothes, shoes, home goods, souvenirs)
 - 9% - spent between 0 and 10 euros per month.
 - 21% - spent between 10 and 30 euros per month.
 - 24% - spent between 30 and 60 euros per month.
 - 24% - spent between 60 and 100 euros per month.
 - 22% - spent more than 100 euros per month.
5. Average amount spent *per month* on independent travel (buses, trains, flights, accommodations)
 - 5% - spent between 0 and 200 euros per month.
 - 21% - spent between 200 and 400 euros per month.
 - 33% - spent between 400 and 600 euros per month.
 - 26% - spent between 600 and 800 euros per month.
 - 15% - spent more than 800 euros per month.
6. Average amount spent *per semester* on school supplies (notebooks, pens, art supplies)
 - 70% - spent between 0 and 20 euros per semester.
 - 22% - spent between 20 and 40 euros per semester.
 - 4% - spent between 40 and 60 euros per semester.
 - 3% - spent between 60 and 100 euros per semester.
 - 1% - spent more than 100 euros per semester.

7. Average amount spend *per semester* on course textbooks
 - 13% - spent between 0 and 30 euros per semester.
 - 15% - spent between 30 and 60 euros per semester.
 - 18% - spent between 60 and 90 euros per semester.
 - 27% - spent between 90 and 120 euros per semester.
 - 27% - spent more than 120 euros per semester.
8. (For Architecture Students Only) Average amount spent *per semester* on architecture studio supplies
 - 58% - spent between 0 and 50 euros per semester.
 - 24% - spent between 50 and 100 euros per semester.
 - 18% - spent between 100 and 150 euros per semester.
 - 0% - spent more than 150 euros per semester.

CELL PHONES & ISI FLORENCE APP

For safety and security reasons, all students are required to have a cell phone plan for the duration of the program that allows them to make calls to local Italian numbers, such as the Institute's 24/7 in-house emergency line. Before your departure, check with your U.S. provider to see what international plans are available that meet this requirement.

Upon arrival in Florence students are required to carry their phone with them, and have it turned on at all times in case of an emergency. Additionally, students may find it valuable to bring a smartphone so that they may download the ISI Florence App, available on both the Apple and Google Play stores. The Institute App contains important contact numbers and information that will be useful to students during their time abroad.

HEALTH CARE & SAFETY ABROAD

Health and safety are our first concerns. All students are given contact numbers that can be reached 24/7 in case of an emergency.

All foreigners in Italy are required to have valid emergency health insurance.

Note: Be sure to plan ahead and budget for medical treatment and doctor's appointments. If necessary, extend your credit card limits so as to cover any medical expenses encountered.

The Institute provides the name of a medical service in Florence comprised of English speaking doctors available on a walk-in basis or by appointment and who provide a 24/7 emergency response. This service has an arrangement with CISI and GeoBlue. For any student with this insurance the medical service may bill the insurance company directly and no payment may be required at the time of the visit. Many of our students have CISI or GeoBlue insurance through their home institutions. For those students with other insurance plans, payment may be required at the time of the visit and the students will have to submit their bills to their insurance companies for reimbursement.

If you take prescription medication for a chronic condition, you must bring sufficient medicine to last the semester. Medications such as Ritalin, Cylert, Adderall, Wellbutrin, Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft are not available in Italy. Any prescription medication that you bring with you to Italy must be accompanied by your physician's written description of the medical problem, the medication dosage, and the generic name(s).

SPECIAL MEDICAL NEEDS

If you have any medical or psychological condition that may require attention from a physician or psychiatrist during your stay in Italy, please be sure to have your physician/psychiatrist prepare an adequate summary of the details so you can be properly treated by a physician/psychiatrist in Italy. One copy of this should be carried with you to Italy; one copy should be left with a parent or guardian.

SAFETY ABROAD

U.S. CONSULAR PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS: These are issued when there is a perceived threat of terrorist activity and they are meant to spread information about conditions which may pose risks to the security of Americans.

You can access Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, Public Announcements and other helpful safety information by visiting www.travel.state.gov or <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/> or by calling (202) 647-5225.

If your passport is lost or stolen you must notify the American Consulate immediately.

American Consulate Lungarno Vespucci, 38 Tel. 055.266.951	Working Hours: Monday – Friday 9:00am – 12:30pm
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IN FLORENCE: During orientation students will listen to a chief police inspector speak about proper safety measures to follow when in Florence and while visiting other European cities. The same crimes that exist in the U.S. exist in Florence and around Europe as well. Therefore students are urged to follow the police inspector's advice and to exercise smart behavior around the city.

STUDENT HOUSING

Each apartment is different from the others and, of course, different from the housing students are accustomed to in the U.S. For instance the available storage and living spaces may be smaller than in the U.S.

Students must remember that they are living in an apartment and not in a dormitory on a U.S. campus. You will be responsible for conducting yourself as a responsible adult and for observing all housing policies and rules, such as keeping noise to a minimum and to be careful with energy use. There is a strict rule that prohibits accommodating overnight guests. Violators will be given a disciplinary warning and will be charged four star hotel rates for their guest's use of Institute housing.

Flexibility and maximum consideration for your apartment mates and neighbors are essential to a successful and rewarding experience.

Location & Buildings: Apartments are located in the historical center of Florence within walking distance of Palazzo Rucellai and Palazzo Bargagli (up to a 20–25 minute walk). Please note that most apartment buildings do not have elevators and that apartments can be located on the third or fourth floor.

Housing: Program participants share apartments with four to eight students. Apartments are composed of single, double and occasionally triple rooms, a kitchen and shared bathrooms (at least one bathroom for approximately every 3/4 students).

Kitchens: Kitchens are reasonably equipped and have a refrigerator, stovetop range and one of the following: oven, toaster oven or microwave.

TVs: ISI doesn't provide TVs in student apartments. If students find them in their apartment on arrival it is because past semester students have left them there.

Washers & Dryers: Washers are provided in the apartments to allow students to wash small items (i.e. underwear and t-shirts). Dryers are extremely rare, but students will be provided with shared drying racks, irons and ironing boards. Due to limited space in the apartments for washing and drying clothes, students are advised to use self-service laundromats to wash items such as jeans, sweatshirts, towels, and sheets. Please note that the cost of laundromats (and dry cleaners) is higher in Italy than in the U.S. partly due to the higher cost of electricity and water. Students should expect to pay a total of approximately 7 Euros (\$8) to wash and dry one load of laundry at a self-service laundromat.

Sheets & Towels: Sheets, blankets and pillows will be provided for each student. **However, students must provide their own towels.**

Cleaning Supplies, etc.: Basic cleaning supplies (i.e. broom, dust pan and mop) will be provided in the apartments. However students are responsible for purchasing cleaning products from houseware stores. In addition, students are responsible for purchasing all consumable household items such as toilet paper, paper towels and light bulbs.

Phones: The apartments do not have phones; as said above, each student in the program is required to have a cell phone for the duration of the academic term. Information will be available during orientation.

Appliances: Do not bring American appliances such as hairdryers, curling irons etc. The appliances will not work unless they are specifically dual voltage. If they are not, both the appliance and the apartment will be damaged since the wattage and voltage are different in Italy. These small appliances can be purchased in Florence at a very reasonable cost. Do not rely on voltage converters, which frequently malfunction causing short circuits.

All student apartments are smoke free.

Damages: If damages occur, the student or students responsible will be given the choice of reimbursing the Institute in cash or by credit card. Personal checks cannot be accepted.

You will receive further information regarding housing during Orientation.

REGULATIONS

GUESTS

Please note that guests (family members, friends, current and past program participants) are not permitted to stay overnight in Institute housing. It is a violation of Institute regulations and a violation of Italian law, which requires declaration and documentation of all persons spending the night in any housing.

Furthermore, if any family member or friend wishes to visit a student apartment during the day, they must first sign a waiver promising to respect the privacy of the other apartment inhabitants and to comply with Institute regulations specified in the Student Handbook. If you plan on having a guest visit your apartment, you must email the Housing Coordinator during regular office hours (at least two work days in advance) in order to receive the waiver and send it back once signed by your guest. This waiver must be signed BEFORE the guest enters Institute housing. Additionally, if family or friends need to store luggage, they should inquire at the hotel where they are staying. Visitor's luggage cannot be stored in the apartments.

Receiving guests in the apartments, even for a few hours, is a privilege, not a right. Students should not abuse this privilege by having non-program participants excessively present in the student apartments. Casual acquaintances must never be invited over.

NOISE

Loud music, loud talking or shouting is not permitted. Respect for neighbors is fundamental. Italian law is very strict about disturbing the peace. Conduct at all times must be quiet and civil.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol is not permitted to be stored or consumed in the apartments, with the exception of beer or wine with meals. Empty wine or beer bottles must not be accumulated.

ACADEMICS & TEXTBOOKS

The main mission of the Institute is to provide a high-quality academic experience. Therefore class attendance is required. Unjustified absences will adversely affect your grades. **On Fridays** there are no regularly scheduled classes. **Yet this day is set aside for required site visits**, as well as optional school activities. **Students should make no travel plans before checking the dates of required site visits in their courses.** **Travel plans do not constitute a justified absence from course activities.**

With regard to course textbooks, we need you to be aware of the following:

During orientation and/or the first week of classes students will purchase the textbooks and/or readers if required for their courses. A few weeks into the semester students will receive an electronic invoice so that they may pay for the textbooks online.

COMPUTERS

PCs are available in the computer labs at Palazzo Bargagli and Palazzo Rucellai. WiFi is also available throughout both Institute buildings. The computer labs and reading rooms are available to students for academic work. **You will probably find it convenient to bring your own laptop computer.** **If bringing a laptop, make sure that it will work on European current (most laptops are dual voltage).**

Internet access is available in the apartments. Additionally, many Internet points can be found throughout the city.

PACKING

LUGGAGE

Always label suitcases and carry-on baggage with the address of your destination:

**Student Name
c/o International Studies Institute
Via della Vigna Nuova, 18
50123 Firenze, FI
ITALY
Tel. 39.055.264.5910**

Carefully check the luggage regulations of your airline carrier well before departure date. **Remember to bring only the quantity of luggage that you can carry comfortably.** **Please note that airplanes from European airports (Milan, Rome, Paris, etc.) to Florence are often much smaller and due to weight restrictions some of the checked luggage will be sent on separate flights and may arrive several days after your arrival.**

CARRY-ON LUGGAGE – PACK THE FOLLOWING:

- At least one change of clothing
- If you have one, a laptop computer (see “Computers”, pg. 11)
- Travel documents
- Medication (with physician’s written description see "Health" section)
- Several passport photocopies and address of destination on the photocopy
- Personal toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, lotion, perfume/cologne, etc.): pack all liquids and shampoo/conditioner in plastic zip-lock bags
- An extra pair of contact lenses and/or glasses (if necessary)
- U.S. student ID for discounts (may or may not be accepted)

WHAT TO PACK OTHER THAN CLOTHING:

- Over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol Cold & Flu, Advil, NyQuil/DayQuil, Robitussin and Benadryl
- Basic school supplies

WHAT NOT TO PACK

- **Do not bring electrical converters/adaptors. Most do not work in Italy.** The wattage and voltage often do not convert correctly and can damage the appliance or the apartment's electrical supply.
- **Do not bring items that plug in:** Hairdryers, curling irons etc. These appliances can be purchased at reasonable prices in Florence. If bringing a laptop or video camera that needs to be recharged, make sure that your charger will work on European voltage.
- **Do not bring valuables.** It is not recommended to bring valuable jewelry or the like while studying abroad.