



Parent Guidebook

www.isiflorence.org

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WELCOME TO ISI FLORENCE!

Thank you for choosing ISI Florence. It is our goal to aid you and your son/daughter as he/she partakes in this exciting study abroad adventure. Our dedicated staff provides each student with individual attention to make their semester in Florence safe, memorable, and enriching.

A semester abroad can seem intimidating, maybe even overwhelming at times. Support from home can make the difference in preparing and being open to these new experiences. In order to make the transition ahead as smooth as possible, we have prepared the following information as a guide for parents and guardians. It includes much of the material covered in the Student Handbook that we emailed to all our applicants. For more in-depth information, we encourage you to read it and visit our website (www.isiflorence.org). We hope you find it useful and invite you to contact us with any question you may have.

ABOUT ISI FLORENCE

The International Studies Institute (ISI Florence) was established in 2001 as an independent private educational organization serving as an American center for higher education in Florence, Italy.

In 2005, ISI Florence founded the Consortium for Public Universities whose members include Pennsylvania State University, University of Connecticut, University of Virginia, University of Maryland, and University of Melbourne (Australia). The Institute also maintains academic affiliations with Roger Williams University, Rutgers University, Connecticut College, Marywood University, Arizona State University, along with many others, and collaborates with the Università di Firenze on a number of academic initiatives, including conferences, publications, and architecture workshops. Finally, since 2013 ISI Florence has a sister program at the Umbra Institute in Perugia.

As befits its prestigious and historic facilities (Palazzo Rucellai, designed by Leon Battista Alberti in the 1440s, and Palazzo Bargagli on the River Arno) ISI Florence offers academic programs rooted in the liberal arts tradition. Internationally recognized for its distinguished faculty and the high caliber of its staff, the Institute is committed to offering an educational experience of outstanding quality. In addition, and in keeping with the students' desire to go beyond the classroom, the Institute provides a variety of cultural immersion, internship and community involvement opportunities throughout regular semesters and summer terms.

THE FLORENCE EXPERIENCE

The Institute is in the very heart of Florence. In many ways the city center is our campus. The language lab components of our courses include the outdoor markets and shops; the cultural centers can be found in the palaces and piazzas; the cafeteria consists of the many trattorias, pizzerias and cafes, as well as the local University of Florence dining hall. Finally, the "library" includes the Uffizi Gallery and the Medici Chapels. Within walking distance of the Institute, students can explore the rich collections of more than thirty museums and numerous churches and palaces, or simply absorb the beauty of the Duomo, Piazza della Signoria, and the view from the Piazzale Michelangelo.

The center of Florence offers every practical amenity within a few short blocks of the Institute buildings. Students can find grocery and convenience stores, internet cafés, buses, taxi stands, laundromats, post offices, restaurants and "gelaterie".

ISI FLORENCE STAFF

ISI staff members are on-site and available to help students daily during office hours. The staff is well versed in study abroad. They are understanding and always willing to help. In addition, ISI provides an emergency service for students available 24/7.

ISI FLORENCE FACILITIES

Palazzo Rucellai

The Institute occupies 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.

Palazzo Bargagli

Our facilities in Palazzo Bargagli include the first and second floors and stretch across an area of over 3000 square meters. Both floors have classrooms that overlook the River Arno. Palazzo Bargagli was one of the patrician residences of the XIV century; originally owned by the Bardi (a prominent banking family), it was completely refurbished and modernized in 2009. It is located on Lungarno delle Grazie, a block away from the National Library and the beautiful Piazza Santa Croce.

The educational resources at the Institute include a library that holds books selected to support the needs of the academic program, computer labs with Internet, study rooms and student lounges. WiFi is available throughout the facilities, which allows students to connect their own laptops to wireless Internet.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

ISI Florence encourages parents to take an active role in their son or daughter's interest in study abroad. To help you participate in their semester and experience abroad, we offer the following suggestions:

Prior to Departure

- Assure them that they have your full support.
- While offering assistance, encourage them to take responsibility for pre-departure logistics and paperwork.
- Read the Parent Handbook carefully.
- Create a Personal Information File.
- Develop a plan for accessing funds:
 - ATM, credit card.
 - Emergency plans for accessing funds.
- Make sure they have adequate health coverage.
- Discuss what your student is anticipating:
 - Expectations of studying abroad.
 - Any fears or apprehensions they may have before they leave.

- Discuss health and safety:
 - Appropriate conduct in a foreign country.
 - Avoiding theft.
 - Being wary of one's environment.
 - Importance of maintaining a healthy and responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption.
 - Plan for medications.
- Establish a monthly budget that includes:
 - Everyday expenses.
 - Emergencies.
 - Extra excursions.
 - Create a communication plan for how you will stay in touch (Skype, WhatsApp, FaceTime, cell phone, e-mail, etc.).
 - Frequency (how often you expect to be in contact).

While Abroad

- Allow students to begin the program in Florence unaccompanied by family.
- Remember that culture shock will occur to some degree. This may have significant impact on what they are communicating to you during the semester.
- Allow them time and space to develop a support network abroad rather than relying solely on the one at home.
- Maintain communication with your student, but encourage independence and self-reliance.
- Schedule a visit when classes are not in session (i.e. during mid-term break).

Returning Home

- Be aware of their plans for returning home, especially if they are traveling after the program ends.
- Recognize that your son or daughter has had a life-changing experience and that they are probably not the same person they were before going abroad.
- Let them share their experience with you as much as they want.
- Understand that they may experience re-entry culture shock, and that this can be even more intense than the original culture shock upon arriving abroad.

HEALTH CARE & SAFETY IN ITALY

Health and safety are our first concerns. All students are given contact numbers for the staff who can be reached 24/7 in case of emergency.

Covid-19

Upholding the highest health and safety standards has remained our top priority since the pandemic began. Our plans for a responsible and safe semester are in accordance with the health and safety guidelines defined by the Italian government and its ministries (above all the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Education), advised by the WHO, the European Community, and recommended by the American Association of University Programs in Italy (AACUPI). Our commitment has been to ensure that all necessary health, safety, and preventive measures are firmly in place.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES IN STUDENT APARTMENTS

All Institute apartments have been professionally cleaned and sanitized prior to student arrival. Professional and periodic cleaning and sanitization services will be made available throughout the term (as requested by students and at their expense). Finally, students will be provided with the following items & resources upon arrival in their apartments:

- The sanitization certificate;
- A document outlining Covid-19 protocols, preventive measures, and best practices for health and safety;
- The ISI Florence Student Handbook documenting the rules and regulations of the Institute and local laws governing Covid-19.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AT THE INSTITUTE

The Institute follows the current health and safety guidelines established by the Italian Ministry of Education. Institute policies and guidelines are prepared by certified local health and safety consultants, and may be subject to change at any time. Current measures include:

Regulations for Entry

- Restricted access: all Institute facilities have an entry security system;
- Hand sanitizing gel at entrance;
- Touch-less thermometer at entrance;
- Regulations and guidelines poster at entrance;
- Restricted entry for those with symptoms attributable to Covid-19.

Regulations and Guidelines Inside the Institute

- Standard Rules:
 - Masks are recommended while indoors;
 - Social distancing is encouraged at all times;
 - Frequent sanitizing or hand washing required.
- Poster and signs of official Covid-19 rules and regulations are placed at the entrance and throughout the Institute.
- Sanitizing gel will be in all classrooms and common areas of the Institute.
- Floor markings for social distancing.
- Frequent cleaning of common area surfaces in classrooms, restrooms, and high-traffic areas are carried out with products that meet Italian and EU anti-Covid-19 sanitation recommendations.
- Daily deep cleaning and sanitizing of the entire Institute every evening.

SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID-19

If there is suspicion (but not confirmation) of a Covid-19 positive student, the student will be asked to self-isolate in a separate room in their apartment. Institute staff will assist in contacting the appropriate physician who will evaluate the student's symptoms. ISI Florence will assist the student with instructions on testing options (PCR and rapid testing).

In the event a student tests positive (either asymptomatic or symptomatic), the Institute will provide detailed guidance on the procedures to follow, according to the Italian Health Dept. regulations. In order to ensure correct isolation, the Institute will arrange for the positive student to temporarily move to a Covid Hotel. In the Covid hotel, a medical team will monitor the student's symptoms regularly, and provide them with all necessary medication, as well as daily meals. The student will stay at the hotel until they have isolated for the required number of days. Public health laws on quarantine/isolation are dictated by the Italian Ministry of Health, and therefore both students and ISI Florence are legally required to follow them.

In the event a student requires medical care or hospitalization, the Institute personnel, the student, and the appropriate personnel from the student's home university/program will work together to address this issue.

Medical Services in Florence

Students are provided with the contact information for local private medical services, with a staff of English-speaking doctors. These services have walk-in hours Monday through Saturday for non-urgent medical needs, and they also provides a 24-hour emergency service. Medications prescribed by these doctors can be purchased at any local pharmacy. Many insurance companies cover doctors' visits; you should check to see if yours does too.

Students should also inform us BEFORE their arrival of any special needs, including dietary restrictions, physical problems, learning disabilities, and allergies. Prior to the beginning of each semester, ISI asks students to complete a Health Form, which allows us to assist students with any health problems once in Florence. We strongly suggest that any chronic or pre-existing health problems be treated and/or disclosed to our staff prior to the student's departure for Italy.

Medications & Prescriptions

Most over-the-counter drugs that are found in the U.S. can also be requested in Italy at any local pharmacy and may be purchased without a prescription. However, students are strongly encouraged to bring their own supply of preferred medications for quick relief of minor illnesses such as headaches, colds, or upset stomach.

If your son/daughter is currently taking medications prescribed by his/her doctor at home for a chronic ailment, he/she must bring enough to last throughout the semester. Any prescription medication brought to Italy must be accompanied by a physician's note containing the following:

Description of the medical problem.

Dosage taken.

Generic name of the drug (not the U.S. brand name).

Emergency Services

Upon arrival, students are given an Institute student card, which lists the Institute emergency contact information, as well as general emergency numbers (fire, ambulance, police, U.S: Consulare in Florence, etc.). We encourage students to carry this card with them at all times and also to copy Institute numbers in their cell phones. An ISI Florence staff member is available 24/7 to help students with serious emergencies. The emergency contact number is an in-house emergency line, operated solely by ISI Florence staff members. Students are expected to exercise discretion in distinguishing between an inconvenience that can be remedied on their own and a real emergency requiring immediate assistance.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Misconduct due to abuse of alcohol, prescription medication, or illegal drugs is not tolerated. Italian authorities see substance abuse as an extremely serious matter, as does the Institute. Students will be subject to local law if found with illegal substances. ISI also reserves the right to take disciplinary action, including program dismissal, should a student's use of alcohol and/or drugs create a health risk to him/herself or his/her peers.

Students should remember that alcohol consumption can affect one's ability to make sound judgments. They are thus urged to exercise caution so as not to compromise their health and safety. If ISI staff learns that a student engages in the use or sale of illegal drugs (including the use of prescription drugs other than those prescribed to the student by a licensed physician), all parties involved will automatically be dismissed from the program and sent home immediately at their own expense.

Personal Safety

Florence is generally a safe city. Yet, students must assume responsibility for their safety and remember that the decisions made on a daily basis can have a major impact on health and safety while abroad. City life, which is quite different from campus life, means students should be alert while out and about. The most common crime in Italy is petty theft. Bags should be kept close at all times and students should avoid carrying valuables in their backpacks.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is the feeling of anxiety or frustration from losing familiar cultural elements. While in Italy, students will need to become accustomed to new food, language, behaviors, and ways of communicating. At some point during their study abroad experience every student will experience some degree of culture shock. These feelings are completely normal. However, not everyone experiences culture shock in the same way or at the same time. Various factors such as prior intercultural experiences, level of cultural immersion, language barriers, and familiarity with change can impact how intensely a student is affected by culture shock.

Possible signs of culture shock are:

Excessive sleep or lack of sleep

Stress

Feelings of homesickness

Irritability or anger

Judgment of new culture

Changes in appetite

Refusal to learn language

Dependence on, and exclusive desire for, people from one's own home country.

As a parent or guardian, here are a few things you can do to help your son/daughter both before and during his/her study abroad experience:

Before departure, encourage him/her to prepare for life in Italy by learning about Italian culture. This step will help set up realistic cultural expectations and create a smoother transition into the host culture.

During the program, give your son/daughter support, as well as independence, as he/she learns how to problem solve on his/her own. Help him/her be patient as he/she adjusts to life outside of the United States. You can do this by encouraging him/her to create strong social networks, pursue familiar hobbies, participate in community engagement, and actively involve himself/herself within the host culture; a proactive approach will aid greatly in coping with culture shock.

ISI Florence wants each student to have a rewarding and successful study abroad experience. Psychological counselors and psychologists are always available throughout the semester to help each student through this process. These professionals are all English-speaking, and their offices are centrally located in the city.

PERSONAL INFORMATION FILE

The Personal Information File is a file your child can create before departure containing copies of important documents to leave with you. These documents are both for legal and financial purposes. In an emergency situation, he/she can contact you at home and you will be able to provide the necessary information to help resolve the issue. Items to include in the file are everything one would need to replace if a wallet or purse was stolen:

- A copy of the Student Handbook
- A copy of your student's insurance letter, financial support letter, passport (name page), visa (in passport)
- Personal bank information including account names and numbers
- Credit card information including account names and numbers (It is a good idea to photocopy your credit cards and other items in your wallet in case they are lost)
- Telephone numbers for lost or stolen ATM bank cards, debit cards, and/or credit cards
- Names and phone numbers of the dean and academic advisor at your student's home institute
- Social security number

MONEY MATTERS

The Euro is the official currency of the European Union. Visit xe.com for current exchange rates. We suggest that your son/daughter brings the following three forms of money so that he/she can access cash at all times under a variety of circumstances:

ATM Credit Card/ Debit Card

Using an ATM/Debit card in automated machines is the fastest and most efficient method for obtaining cash. The exchange rate is more favorable and networks are safe and reliable. If your student's bankcard also acts as a credit card, then it can be used for purchases at any store or shop that has the symbol of your card provider. However, the bank account in the U.S. is debited immediately and a small surcharge is often added for exchange rates. Please note that many stores do not accept American Express.

Generally, any four-digit PIN will work for the ATM's abroad but your student should call his/her bank to verify. PIN's with fewer or more than four digits or PIN's that include letters may not work overseas.

Credit Cards

For cash advances, emergencies, and relatively large purchases such as hotel stays and other travel-related expenses, credit cards are widely accepted. However, your son/daughter should notify his/her credit card company of their stay abroad to find out what their policy and fees are for use overseas. Some credit cards are blocked for security measures after a second use in a foreign country.

Arrival

Students should arrive in Italy with approximately 50-100 Euro in cash to make immediate small purchases: a bite to eat, some groceries, and other incidentals. While larger stores all accept credit cards, many smaller shops will require cash.

ISI staff will meet incoming students at the airport and transport them via taxi to their apartments. To guarantee transportation on arrivals day, student flights should be scheduled to land no later than 6pm. For later arrivals, please plan funding to take a taxi independently to downtown Florence.

Sending Money from Home

It is recommended that students give close family members their checking account number, allowing direct deposits into the student's account so they can access it easily with their ATM card. For reasons of counterfeiting and terrorist activity, it is illegal to send cash through the mail; this includes through Federal Express and other private carriers. We do not recommend wiring money as it includes costly transfer fees and, given the time difference, more time and money is wasted than necessary. Additionally, personal checks from the U.S. cannot be cashed. Finally, you can send money orders through Western Union, should your son/daughter not have immediate access to a bank.

Other Expenses

Students may also want to allocate some additional money for personal items. Examples include a gym membership, gifts, laundry services, etc. On average, students spend between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per semester in addition to the program fee. For more information, please visit www.isiflorence.org/prospective-students/tuition-fees.

Preparing a Budget

As you can see, there is a lot to organize in terms of money alone. We recommend that your son/daughter prepare a budget for their semester abroad, taking into account all the items we have mentioned above plus any additional expenses which may be unique to them.

STUDENT HOUSING

Each apartment is different from the others and, of course, different from the housing that 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. They will be responsible for conducting themselves as responsible adults and for observing all housing policies and rules, such as keeping noise to a minimum and being 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 housemates and neighbors are essential to a successful and rewarding experience.

Location & Buildings: Apartments are located 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 every 3/4 students). Double rooms are the norm (single and triple rooms are an exception).

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

TVs: ISI Florence 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 general 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. 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 and cause short circuits.

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.

ISI Florence Housing & Bed bugs: All ISI Florence apartments have been professionally sanitized and treated for parasites and bed bugs prior to student arrivals. Certificates attesting to the complete and successful preventative disinfestation of each student apartment can be found pinned inside the apartments. The Housing Office also has copies of the sanitation certificates, should students wish to reference them.

If students suspect the presence of bed bugs, they must immediately inform the Housing Office so that a prompt examination and intervention can be scheduled and to prevent spreading to other areas.

If the presence of bed bugs is confirmed in a student's room/apartment, all the affected areas and surfaces must be professionally treated. Students may also be required to wash and dry their clothing and bedding at high temperatures at a local laundromat or dry cleaner.

NOTE: All fees for bed bug treatment and any additional costs associated with it (i.e. dry cleaning/laundry services, clothing purchases, etc.) will be at the students' expense.

Traveling & Bed Bugs: All travelers may be at risk of encountering bed bugs, with luggage being a prime means of transport for these insects. Their presence does not indicate a lack of cleanliness; bed bugs may be common in inexpensive hotels and student hostels, but they can also be found in five-star hotels and resorts. They can also be found on airplanes, buses, and trains – particularly those with sleeping cars. Travelers are at a particularly high risk of encountering bed bugs when staying in places with a high turnover rate. Here are some suggestions that may help students avoid getting bed bugs while traveling:

- Inspect hotel/hostel rooms before unpacking bags. Look around the corners of the sofa, furniture and bed. Inspect the sheets and mattress seams to spot stains or signs of bed bugs; these are common places for bedbugs to bite you. If you suspect any infestation immediately change your hotel room.
- Do not place luggage on the hotel room floor or on the bed. Always keep it on top of a chair or on a table, if possible.
- Protective suitcase covers are recommended in order to avoid a bed bug infestation while traveling and during a hotel stay.
- Always keep backpacks sealed in a plastic bag to prevent bed bugs from riding back home with you.
- Make sure to clean and disinfect luggage thoroughly after traveling. Wash all the clothes you packed before wearing them again.

Students should immediately inform the Housing Office in the event they encounter any bed bug issues while traveling. We can provide some useful tips to prevent bringing the infestation back to their ISI apartment and avoid costly treatments.

Students will receive further information regarding housing during Orientation.

HOUSING REGULATIONS

GUESTS

Please note that guests (family members, friends, 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 people spending the night in any housing. This policy is especially important in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, **it is highly recommended that students do not invite guests into their apartments** even for short periods of time. In the event students wish to invite a guest inside their apartment they must email the Housing office during regular office hours (at least two work days in advance) in order to receive a waiver their guest must sign. This waiver must be signed BEFORE the guest enters Institute housing. It specifies that the guest promises to respect the privacy of the other apartment inhabitants and to comply with all Institute regulations listed in the Student Handbook.

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 student apartments, and casual acquaintances must never be invited over. 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.

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 small quantities of beer or wine with meals. Empty wine or beer bottles must not be accumulated.

SMOKE

All student apartments are smoke free.

CONTACTING YOUR CHILD

If you need to contact them in Italy, email, FaceTime, Skype, and WhatsApp are the best and least expensive ways to do so. Please do not call ISI Florence unless it is an emergency or if your repeated attempts to get a response from your son/daughter have failed. Furthermore, please be aware that, for the duration of the academic program, all students are required to have a cell phone that is able to make calls to Italian numbers. Students receive information on this requirement prior to their arrival in the Pre-Departure Handbook, so that they may make all necessary arrangements with their U.S. cell phone provider before departure.

Parents might want to download useful cell phone applications to stay in touch with students and follow along with what they are doing. We find the following applications to be useful: Facebook Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

Calling within Italy

The Florence area code is 055 and all local landlines begin with this number. Keep in mind that calling a landline from your cell phone is more expensive than calling a cell phone number.

Calls to Italy from abroad within Europe

Italy's country code is 0039. To call an Italian phone number while traveling in Europe, dial: 00 + 39 + area code + number.

Even when calling Italian mobile phones, you will need to dial 0039 before the cell phone number.

Calls to Italy from the US

To call from the U.S., dial the number in this way: 011 + 39 + area code + number.

Calls to the US

U.S. country code is 001. To call the U.S. from Italy you must dial the number this way: 001 + area code + number.

Internet at ISI Florence

ISI Florence is equipped with stationary computers and wireless access for use with personal laptops. Apartments will not have phone lines but are equipped with WiFi. Florence has many Internet cafes that are open late and public WiFi hotspots. As a backup, ISI Florence recommends that students bring along an external hard drive or CDs with original settings in case they need to restore data.

PLEASE NOTE: Florence is a medieval town with limited optical fibers. This means the Internet connection is not as fast as in the States. Neither ISI Florence nor the Internet companies can guarantee high-speed connection. Downloading, streaming, skypeing, Zooming, and multiple users will slow down the Internet greatly.

MAIL & PACKAGES

ALL MAIL AND PACKAGES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE INSTITUTE - NEVER to student apartments - and addressed as follows:

STUDENT'S NAME

c/o ISI Florence, Palazzo Rucellai

Via della Vigna Nuova, 18

50123 Florence

ITALY

Lastly, always keep your tracking number.

The Institute phone number is: +39.055.264.5910

Packages

The Institute recommends that no package is sent to students while they are studying in Florence. This is because extended wait times and excessive customs fees make actually getting the package difficult and expensive for students. Customs paperwork is often complicated and time-consuming. If a family member or friend feels they must send a package, be sure to 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, no more. Specify that the package includes "Used personal goods, not for resale" on the front and on the customs form. Following these guidelines should help your package arrive with as few problems as possible, but it is never guaranteed.

Under no circumstances should students receive vitamins, medicines or similar from abroad. These packages will be stopped at 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. Besides, Italy has one of the world's greatest cuisines. You will certainly survive for the time you are here!

PARENTS VISITING STUDENTS

Parents, friends, and relatives are welcome at ISI Florence. We fully appreciate the desire for students to dedicate time to friends and relatives who make the long journey to visit them during the semester. However, ISI students are also required to respect academic policies such as, attend and participate in all classes, course field trips, exams, and other co-curricular activities and events. Therefore, ISI provides one week-long break each semester, just after mid-term exams, during which no classes are held. This way, students can travel independently and dedicate time to visitors, not having to worry about missing any portion of the academic program. During the six week summer session there is no extended break.

We kindly ask all students, relatives, and friends to visit during the break so as not to interfere with the student's responsibility to participate fully in the ISI courses. Students will not be excused from class or class-related activities to spend time with visiting friends and/or relatives. To coordinate travel, please visit our website (isiflorence.org) to view the current academic calendar.

Getting to Florence

Most visitors will be heading to Florence after arrival in Rome or Florence airport. Travel from the Florence airport is easiest by taxi, which costs around 25-30 Euro plus baggage. There is also a tram (above ground metro) that significantly cuts down on travel time. The T2 tram takes you directly from the Florence airport to the city center and runs from 5am-midnight from Sun.-Thurs. and until 2am on Fri. and Sat. From the airport, take the tram all the way to the end of the T2 line, stop name: Unità.

From other main locations in Italy (Rome, Milan, Bologna, etc.), it is most likely that the train is the easiest and most cost-effective way to arrive in Florence. Check www.trenitalia.com or www.italotreno.it to see train schedules and purchase tickets in advance. Most airports provide shuttle service or information on transit between airports and train stations.

Where To Stay

We suggest that you stay in a hotel or B&B located in the city center. Listed below are a few that we recommend. If you choose a hotel that is not on the list, check the location before you book. Some hotels claim to be in the historic center and they are actually quite far away.

HOTELS, HOSTELS, B&Bs

Westin Excelsior Hotel*****

Piazza Ognissanti, 3 Tel. 055.271.51

www.starwhoodhotels.com

Gallery Hotel Art ****

Vicolo dell'Oro, 5 Tel. 055.272.63

www.lungarnohotels.com

Residenza d'Epoca ****

In Piazza Della Signoria

Via dei Magazzini, 2 Tel. 055.239.9546

www.inpiazadellasignoria.com

Hotel Executive ****

Via Curtatone, 5 Tel. 055.217.451

www.hotelexecutive.it

Hotel Unicorn***

Via dei Fossi, 27 Tel: 055.287.313

www.hotelunicorno.it

Hotel Olimpia ***

Piazza della Repubblica, 2 Tel. 055.219.781

www.hotel-olimpia.it

Palazzo Guadagni Hotel***

Piazza S. Spirito, 9 Tel. 055.265.8376

www.palazzoguadagni.com

Hotel Torre Guelfa***

Borgo SS. Apostoli, 8 Tel. 055.239.6338

www.hoteltorreguelfa.com

Hotel Burchianti ***

Via del Giglio, 8 Tel. 055.212.796

www.hotelburchianti.com

Hostel Archi Rossi*
Via Faenza, 94r Tel. 055.290.804
www.hostelarchirossi.com

Albergo Firenze ***
Piazza Donati, 4
Tel. 055.268.301
www.hotelfirenze-fi.it

Tourist House **
Via della Scala, 1 Tel. 055.268.675
www.touristhouse.com

Albergo Giappone *
Via dei Banchi, 1 Tel. 055.210.090
www.hotelgiappone.com

Hostels

Tasso Hostel
Via Villani, 15 Tel: 055.060.2087
www.tassohostelflorence.com

Plus Florence Hostel**
Via Santa Caterina D'Alessandria, 15 Tel: 055.628.6347
www.plusflorence.com

Youth Hostel Firenze 2000
V.le R. Sanzio, 16 Tel: 055.290.756

PLEASE NOTE: Overnight guests and visiting friends and family members are not allowed, by Italian law, to stay in student apartments. Italian law requires that all overnight guests be registered with the local authorities.

GETTING AROUND

One terrific aspect of Florence is that you can see the entire city on foot, while visits to nearby towns like Lucca, Pisa, Cinque Terre and others will require some transportation. Public transport can get you to most places and back for a day trip, but overnight stays may require transporting luggage. No visit to Florence would be complete without exploring the stunning countryside and hilltop towns of Tuscany and nearby Umbria. Short of an extensive guided tour, the only way to truly explore these regions is on your own and by car. If you have a group for an extended stay, you may want to consider renting a villa in the country. It is a convenient and fun way to explore the hilltop towns in rural Italy and get to those hard-to-reach yet enchanting destinations.

USEFUL LINKS

About Florence from Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence>

Official Tourist Information: <http://www.firenzeturismo.it/>

Florence Guide: <http://en.firenze-online.com/>

Museums tickets online: <https://www.uffizi.it/en/tickets>

Events and Culture in Florence & Tuscany: <http://www.informacitta.net/index.php?b>

Weather Forecast: <https://weather.com/weather/tenday/l/ITXX0028:1:IT>