

Study & Intern in Florence

PROGRAM HANDBOOK 2019–2020



LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Important Names & Addresses

In the United States

University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center
230 Heller Hall
271 19th Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0430
Phone: 612.626.9000
Fax: 612.626.8009
Toll Free: 888.700.UOFM
Email: UMabroad@umn.edu
Website: UMabroad.umn.edu

Contact Prior to Departure

Kate Johnson, Enrollment Specialist
Phone: 612.625.6076
Email: foste287@umn.edu

Whitney Westley Fisher, Associate Program Director
Phone: 612.625.8827
Email: west1104@umn.edu

Jessica Hartnett, Program Director
Phone: 612.625.2571
Email: hart0581@umn.edu

Emergencies

In case of a serious emergency, contact the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) at 612.626.9000. If it is after business hours, a recording will give you a number to call. The LAC has someone on call to deal with emergencies and can contact the on-site administrators if needed. Once overseas, you should contact ACCENT in case of an emergency.

In Italy

Note: Please direct pre-departure questions to the Learning Abroad Center, not to the on-site staff.

ACCENT Florence Center

Piazza Santo Spirito, 10
50125 Florence Italy

Phone:
01.39.055.238.16.57
01.39.055.26.70.501

Emergency Phone:
001.39.338.898.10.61

ACCENT Staff

Michelangelo D'Elia, Director
Mariarosa Mettifogo, Academic Coordinator

Telephone Codes

US exit code: 011
Italy country code: 39
How to call Italy from the USA: 011 + 39 + phone number

Time Differences

Italy is 7 hours ahead of Minneapolis.

Program Health & Safety

Program health and safety information is available at global.umn.edu/gosafe/index.html.



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Introduction

Purpose of This Handbook

Before you leave the country, make sure that you have read and understood the information in your Confirmation Checklist, the Health & Safety Online Orientation (available in your confirmation checklist), and the information outlined in this handbook. These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Valuable resources for your friends and family members can be found at UMabroad.umn.edu/parents. It discusses topics such as health and safety, program prices, logistics, and travel.

Overview of the Program

Study & Intern in Florence provides you with the unique opportunity to experience Italian life and culture firsthand. Sharing living space and attending courses with the same individuals will give you ample time to bond with your fellow participants. The confidence gained through the security of a group experience will also enable you to venture out on your own and explore historic Florence.

Italy, however, is not like the US, and you should not expect anything to be the way it is here. Although some differences may seem obvious, it is important to prepare yourself for your upcoming experience by reading the enclosed information carefully and by preparing for unexpected differences in the new culture. While the program can provide a solid support system for you on site, the ultimate success of your time abroad depends on your ability and commitment to make the most of the experience and to adjust effectively to the changes you will encounter.

The following information is intended to help prepare you for your upcoming experience by acquainting you with certain customs and aspects of life in Italy and Florence, which may not be familiar to you. It also addresses academic issues including the academic program, internship placements and considerations at your home institution in the US.

Take this guide with you. It offers you an overview on certain topics but is not comprehensive; you are encouraged to read other information in preparation for your stay. You will find a resource list in the appendix. You may also want to check your local libraries for additional information. The better prepared you are, the more quickly you will adjust and function effectively in Italian society.

Study abroad requires independence and individual initiative. To encourage and guide you, the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) provides a full

range of services such as preliminary program advising, travel help, and assistance with re-entry. Do not hesitate to contact the Learning Abroad Center or your local institutional study abroad adviser with any questions you may have.

Buon viaggio.

Preparation & Planning

Documents

Passport

A passport is required to enter Italy. If you don't have a passport, you should apply for one right away. Passports can take 4–6 weeks to process, so it's important to begin this process early. More information is available at UMabroad.umn.edu/students/travel/passports.

Embassy Contact Information

Always keep your passport in a safe place. If your passport is lost or stolen, contact the local police, the American Consulate or Embassy, and the on-site staff. To identify the consulate or embassy nearest you, consult usembassy.gov.

Visa/Immigration Documents

The University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) can assist you with the visa process for your time in Italy. Please contact the adviser for your program if you have questions.

Non-US Passport Holders

Students who are not traveling under a US passport may have to follow different visa procedures in order to enter Italy. Contact the adviser for your program for assistance in determining the correct visa process.

Power of Attorney

We encourage you to consider designating someone as your Power of Attorney while you are abroad. Your Power of Attorney can act as your legal representative in a number of situations, including banking and tax issues. For more information, review the information at UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/finances/powerofattorney.

Safekeeping Important Documents

Copy all of your important documents and store the copies separately from the originals. Leave an additional copy with someone in the US and keep an electronic copy in a secure location.

Coordinated Group Flight

Purpose & Benefits of Village Travel

The LAC arranges an optional coordinated flight in consultation with Village Travel, a local travel agency. This flight confirms the official arrival date and time. The program staff will meet this flight at the airport. Village Travel will contact you directly when this information is available. Information, booking, and payment are handled directly by Village Travel. Consult Village Travel's website for information on the coordinated flight: villageinc.com.

The coordinated flight cost is designed to be competitive, but priority is placed on services such as routing, ticketing flexibility, and the ability to make group reservations and reserve specific travel dates. Travel can be arranged from any location in the US or internationally and every attempt will be made to connect with the coordinated flight. While you are not required to choose this group flight, it is designed to offer travel in the comfort of other participants in the program.

If you make your own flight arrangements, select a round-trip flight that has a flexible return date, since most students change their return date. Flying standby is not allowed.

If you are not taking the coordinated flight, you are required to provide the LAC with a copy of your flight and train (if applicable) information by the date requested.

Arriving Early & Staying After the Program

If you plan to arrive in Italy before the start of the program, you will need to book your own accommodations and make your own way to the ACCENT center on the arrival date. You can check in at the center between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the address listed at the beginning of this handbook.

Semester students will have a student visa for the dates of the program. You are allowed to stay 90 days outside of the dates of your student visa on a tourist visa. This can be before the program, after the program, or a combination of the two.

Round-Trip Airline Tickets

Round-trip tickets are the best option, since many countries require travelers to purchase a round-trip ticket as part of the visa process. In addition, one-way tickets can be expensive, and it is extremely difficult to find a return flight to the US.

Packing

Packing Principles

Weather in Italy will vary throughout the year. The summer is hot, and the winter is cold and rainy. We recommend you bring layers so you can adapt to the changing weather and seasons. In general, apartments in Italy do not have the heating and cooling systems that you may be used to in the US. They are generally colder in the winter and warmer

in the summer, so keep that in mind as you are packing. Apartments and homestays have washing machines, but not dryers. We recommend bringing clothes that will air dry easily, are wrinkle-free, and are generally low maintenance.

Electricity is different in Europe than in the US. The actual outlets are different, and the voltage is different. If you plan to bring a computer, cell phone, or camera, most of those will have electricity converters already in the charger. You will, however, need to bring an adapter for the different outlets in Italy. You can purchase both adapters and converters before you depart at places like Target. If you plan to use a small appliance that would require an electricity converter (such as a hair dryer, straightener, electric razor, etc.), we encourage you to purchase the appliance in Italy instead of bringing one from the US and using an electricity converter.

If you plan to do an internship, bring a few nice outfits that you can wear to the office and the interview. There is no need to bring a suit, but some nice pants and nice shirts, blouses, or dresses will be appropriate.

Important Policies

Policies of the University of Minnesota and the Learning Abroad Center exist primarily for the protection and safety of LAC study abroad participants. The LAC expects all participants to read, understand, and adhere to the University of Minnesota and LAC policies, guidelines, and contractual documents. These include academic policies, finance and cancellation policies, health and safety policies, and student rights and responsibilities: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies.

FERPA

Under Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and University policy, college students are considered responsible adults and are allowed to determine who will receive information about them. As a result, the LAC does not share academic, personal, or financial information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without the student's written permission. As part of their application, all students designate two emergency contacts who will receive information only in the case of an emergency.

Official Communications

Your UofM email address is the official means of communication. LAC messages will be sent to your UofM email address.

Health, Wellness, & Safety

Health

Health Information Form

The purpose of the form is to help the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) to assist you in preparing for your time abroad. It is critical to disclose fully any health conditions or accommodation needs you may have on the LAC's Health Information Form. If your condition changes after completing this form or you realize you forgot to fully disclose anything, contact the LAC and provide the updated information as soon as possible.

Timely disclosure allows the LAC to support your overseas experience effectively. The information provided will remain confidential and will be shared with program staff, faculty, or appropriate professionals only as pertinent to your own well-being.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/healthinfo](https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/healthinfo).

Mandatory Health & Safety Online Orientation

The mandatory Learning Abroad Center Health & Safety Online Orientation contains important information on health precautions, taking prescriptions overseas, and the mandatory insurance policy in which you will be enrolled as a program participant. Refer to your online acceptance checklist for the link to this orientation information and contact the LAC with questions.

Health Insurance

US Health Insurance

All students enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have US health insurance. This includes students registered for education abroad.

The travel, health, and security insurance coverage through CISI is specifically exempt from the requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and was not intended to and does not satisfy a person's obligation to secure minimum essential coverage beginning in 2014 under the ACA. The University encourages travelers to consult with their legal counsel or tax adviser for information on their obligations under the ACA.

For more details and specific process information for students with University of Minnesota Student Health Insurance through the Student Health Benefits Office, visit the LAC's US insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement](https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement).

CISI Insurance

In addition to your US health insurance, the University of Minnesota has contracted with Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) to provide comprehensive international travel, health, and security insurance. This coverage is mandatory for all students and included in the program fee. You are covered by CISI only for the dates of the program and a few days to allow for travel to and from the US. If you plan to travel before or after your program, you should extend your CISI coverage or purchase your own insurance.

CISI does not include any preventive care, and individuals are advised to consult their medical providers for any checkups or preventive care prior to departure. Your CISI card and insurance policy will be emailed directly to you. Carry the card with you at all times. If you have any questions or need additional information about CISI, visit the LAC's insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance](https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance).

Medication Overseas

Prescriptions

Bring all necessary medication (including such items as birth control), for the entire term of your program, with you to your study abroad site and bring it in your *carry-on luggage only*. It is illegal to ship medication overseas and will be rejected at customs. Contact the LAC if you need an enrollment verification letter to submit to your insurance company requesting prescription medication for your entire stay abroad.

Consult with your LAC program contact if you would like to consult with CISI about obtaining any medication once abroad. Some medications, including those that are commonly available over the counter in the US, are controlled or banned substances abroad. The LAC, in consultation with CISI, will assist you in determining if you can travel with your medications or if alternative solutions must be explored.

Vaccinations, Immunizations, & Travel Medicine

The LAC recommends that all students visit a travel clinic before their program abroad. Make an appointment as soon as possible so that you can get a scheduled appointment in time to complete any required and recommended immunization series. Many travel clinics often book far in advance (especially around the holidays), and some immunizations need to be started months in advance of your departure. For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/preplanning](https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/preplanning).

Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel)) and US Department of State (travel.state.gov) websites for general vaccination, immunization, and other travel medical information for the countries you will visit. However, only a travel clinic will be able to make a recommendation tailored for your specific travel plans and health history.



Wellness

Wellness & Study Abroad

In addition to any medications and required vaccinations, it is important to plan proactively for how you will maintain healthy habits abroad, both mentally and physically. Consider the following guidelines for your time abroad:

- **Physical self-care:** Be physically active for 30–60 minutes daily, sleep enough to have energy through the day, spend at least an hour outdoors, and eat a balanced and moderate diet mostly of wholesome, minimally processed foods.
- **Emotional self-care:** Talk to your medical provider prior to departure about effective ways to cope with the stress than can arise from experiencing unfamiliar surroundings and lack of family and friend support, as well as to identify new ways of centering and embracing change and new experiences. This is a valuable lifelong skill.
- **Stress reduction practice:** Participate in at least one practice to quiet your mind and body. Examples include deep breathing, time in nature, prayer, journaling, sensory grounding, meditation, yoga, tai chi, qigong, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic training, biofeedback, imagery work.
- **Hydration:** Be certain to drink sufficient water and nutritious fluids as your body adjusts to a new climate and daily rhythm.
- **Making adjustments:** Monitor your stress levels while abroad and adjust your daily routine (sleep patterns, exercise, food balance, hydration) to meet the needs of your new location.

- **Positive attitude:** Try to keep perspective on the challenges that you may encounter and work toward your long-term study abroad goals.
- **Support structures:** Identify who in country is available to provide support and guidance when you feel confused or challenged.
- **Finding resilience:** Keep in mind that it is important to recover and grow from adversity and navigate difficult challenges with awareness, intention, and skill. Seek out healthy connections to others, focus on balanced self-care, keep an open, engaged mind, and work to address manageable challenges with patience and intention. The following website provides additional suggestions: globaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp

Mental Health

Learning abroad can be both fulfilling and challenging for all students and may present some additional challenges for those with mental health conditions. Even if you have no history of a mental health condition, it is possible that the impact of cultural adjustment or being in a foreign environment can influence your well-being.

The Health Information Form requires you to disclose any past and current mental health issues, family history of mental health, indications of mental health concerns, and current prescription medicines. It is imperative for LAC staff to receive this information before you study abroad to best support you and provide reasonable accommodations.

Past or current treatment for psychiatric and mental health conditions does not preclude you from studying abroad. However, if a healthcare professional recommends no travel or travel under certain conditions that cannot be met at a certain study location, you may be encouraged to focus on your health first and postpone program participation until a later time.

The following steps for managing mental health are important, regardless of where you will be traveling:

- Meet with your mental health professional prior to departure to discuss learning abroad and its implications, your plan to manage your health while abroad, and access to alternative support networks.
- Discuss a realistic communication plan for your time abroad with your support networks (i.e., family and friends).
- Understand that ups and downs are normal during study abroad. Check in with yourself often and seek support if you are feeling more intense ups and downs than expected.
- Connect with an LAC staff member prior to departure to set up on-site care with a mental health care professional, if required.

- Plan to bring sufficient amounts of prescriptions with you for the entire duration of your program. Work with LAC staff to ensure you can safely bring all necessary prescriptions abroad.

Resources for UofM Students

- Student Counseling Services (counseling.umn.edu) and Boynton Mental Health Clinic (bhs.umn.edu/east-bank-clinic/mental-health-services.htm): Staff in both settings can inform you about treatment options and offer immediate crisis counseling if needed.
- Behavior Consultation Team (BCT) (mentalhealth.umn.edu/facstaff/behavioral-consultation.html): If you are concerned about causing harm to yourself or others, call the University's BCT at 011.612.626.3030. For additional resources, visit mentalhealth.umn.edu.

Safety

Travel & Safety Considerations

State Department Travel website

Consult the United States State Department Country Information sheets, travel advisories and travel warnings at travel.state.gov for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying or traveling.

CDC Information

Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov/travel) and US Department of State (travel.state.gov) websites for travel and safety information.

Embassy STEP Registration

The LAC will register you with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), which makes your presence in Italy known to the US Department of State. Once you are enrolled in this program, you will receive the travel updates and information directly as they are issued. Please carefully review these messages and contact the LAC or on-site staff with questions. For more information, visit: step.state.gov/step.

In addition, the local embassy can be a source of assistance and information in the case of an emergency. Each of our programs has information about the local embassy, and you might even have an embassy visitor at your orientation. For more information, visit the Country Information sheet at travel.state.gov for the countries you will visit and study in.

In order to ensure that all official communication from the US Department of State is sent to the correct address while you are abroad, check your official contact information prior to departure. Visit onestop.umn.edu to verify that the information is correct. If your contact information changes, you must notify the LAC.

Sexual Harassment & Sexual Assault

The University of Minnesota and Learning Abroad Center take the risk of sexual harassment and assault very seriously. This topic will be covered in orientations in more depth, and LAC staff and our colleagues on site are trained and prepared to provide support to victim survivors.

Anyone who experiences sexual harassment or sexual assault while abroad must deal with the stress of this unwanted event in a place and culture that is unfamiliar. Being away from the support and comfort of home can exacerbate feelings of hurt, confusion, anger, and loss of control. This is normal.

Do not tolerate behavior that feels threatening or disrespectful by staff in country, faculty members, or homestay family members. When in any doubt, consult with someone with whom you feel comfortable.

Report any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault to in-country or LAC staff so that we can help you understand your options and supports available. The Aurora Center is a fully confidential resource for all students on LAC programs, even if you don't normally attend the University of Minnesota.

For more information on resources, including the Aurora Center, visit: global.umn.edu/travel/assault/index.html.

The University of Minnesota prohibits sexual harassment and retaliation. In compliance with Title IX, the LAC will work with the University's Title IX coordinator on any related inquiries and complaints. For more information, please contact the LAC or visit diversity.umn.edu/eoaa/titleix.

Alcohol & Drug Use

The University of Minnesota Code of Conduct and Code of Conduct for Education Abroad allow for responsible drinking if you are legally allowed to drink in your host country. Illegal, irresponsible drinking and/or misbehaving while drinking are violations of the University's policy.

The University of Minnesota has a no-tolerance approach to drug use while abroad. Students using drugs abroad may immediately be removed from the program at their own cost. You are subject to the laws of the host country while abroad, and penalties for foreigners using or possessing drugs abroad are often very strict.

For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/alcoholdrugs.

Personal Safety

When traveling overseas, there are a number of precautions you should follow in order to travel safely. Consult the US State Department's resources and your orientation materials for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying or traveling.

For more information on women travelers: travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/Women.html

For more information on students abroad: travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html

Demonstrations occur fairly regularly in Italy. Avoid any gathering, whether it is of anti-American character or not. Although most demonstrations are intended to be peaceful, they could escalate into violence. Italy has a low rate of violent crime, little of which is directed toward tourists. Petty crimes such as pickpocketing, theft from parked cars, and purse snatching are serious problems, especially in large cities. Most reported thefts occur at crowded tourist sites, on public buses, metros or at the major rail stations.

Thieves in Italy often work in pairs or groups. Pairs of accomplices or groups of street children are known to divert tourists' attention so that another can pickpocket them. Criminals on crowded public transportation slit the bottoms of purses or bags with a razor blade or sharp knife, then remove the contents.

Our best advice is to always be aware of your surroundings and of your belongings. Keep purses and backpacks close to your body, and consider bringing bags that are not easily opened. Walk in small groups or pairs, and always watch out for each other. While Florence is a generally safe city, we still encourage students not to walk alone, especially at night.

For more information on staying safe while abroad: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/safetyabroad.

Emergency Procedures

All students are required to carry a cell phone for use in an emergency. On-site staff will contact you on your cell phone, and you will utilize your phone to contact on-site staff and/or emergency services. In a life-threatening emergency, please seek immediate emergency care; otherwise, please contact on-site staff for assistance and recommendations. On-site staff are trained and have resources available to respond to all types of emergencies including, but not limited to, civil disturbance, natural disaster, illness or injury, hospitalization, robbery or pickpocketing, sexual assault/harassment, hate crimes, and mental health.

The LAC will utilize on-site resources as well as insurance and security resources, including CISI. See more details above on insurance.

For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/emergency.

Independent Travel

Independent Travel Notification

You are encouraged to travel during official program break periods, over holidays, or after the program is completed. During the program, travel on the weekends should be limited to nearby locations to ensure that you are able to maintain good rest, health, and timely completion of all coursework. Students are not permitted to travel during the program dates, including on weekends or vacations, to countries currently under a US State Department Travel Warning. See travel.state.gov for the most up-to-date list.

Consult with the on-site staff, well in advance of your planned travel, to understand if there are other locations, beyond the Travel Warning locations, that you are not permitted to visit within your host country or region. These limitations are put in place for your safety and security and apply within the program dates. If you choose to visit a Travel Warning or other banned location before or after your program, you do so at your own risk.

All LAC program participants must notify the on-site staff of any independent travel that leaves the program location overnight. The required independent travel form is provided in the appendix of this handbook. Some sites will collect this form and others will have a slightly different way of collecting the same information, so refer to your on-site orientation for more specifics.

Travel Restrictions

During the Program

Students are not allowed to visit any country currently under a US Department of State Travel warning as a part of personal travel. Please visit travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html for up-to-date information about travel warning countries. If you have questions about travel restrictions, contact the LAC.

Driving & Renting Vehicles Abroad

It is against University and Learning Abroad Center policy to drive or rent motor vehicles (including motor scooters or motorcycles) while a participant on an LAC program. These limitations extend from the start date to the end date of your program and are put in place for your safety and security. Traffic accidents are the leading cause of injury and death of students abroad.

Arrival Logistics

Arriving at the Program Site

Coordinated Arrival

A Twin Cities travel agent, Village Travel, in consultation with the Learning Abroad Center, organizes an optional coordinated flight. Travel can be arranged from any location in the US, and Village Travel will attempt to connect you with the coordinated flight.

If you are on the group flight, the staff will meet you at the airport and help you take a taxi to your apartment or homestay.

Independent Arrival

If you choose not to take the group flight, you will need to make your own way to the ACCENT center between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on the arrival date. Detailed instructions on how to do this will be sent via email about a week before you depart.

Initial Arrival Housing

You will check in to your housing on the arrival date of the program. You will spend the first day settling in and unpacking at your apartment, or getting to know your homestay family.

Program Information

Orientation in Country

Orientation will take place immediately after arriving in Italy. Before classes start, you'll spend a few days getting to know Florence and the services ACCENT provides. You will get to know the staff and the other students on your program and will also discuss academics, health and safety, policies, excursions, etc.

Program Excursions

You will participate in a weeklong study tour to Sicily to visit places like Taormina, Catania, Mount Etna, Syracuse, and more. The exact dates and schedule of the study tour will be shared with you during your orientation in Florence. You will stay in the coastal town of Taormina, take classes at a local language school, and visit sites around Sicily related to your semester classes. While we often think of Italy as having one Italian culture, you'll see during this study tour that, much like in the US, the culture of the north differs from the culture of the south. You will explore this idea, and there will be assignments for each of your classes while you are in Sicily.

In addition to Sicily, you will take excursions in and around Florence for the majority of your courses. It is important to us that you are able to use the city as your classroom and that the faculty and staff take advantage of this throughout the semester.

Since this is an academic program, you should be careful about the amount you travel during the weekends. Plan longer trips during your week break or before or after the program. Do not plan any trips before you arrive in Florence. When you travel, notify ACCENT and your roommates or host family of your destinations, planned return dates, and where you can be reached.

In-Country Staff

ACCENT serves as the on-site program administration. They are responsible for housing and coordination of excursions, and they can assist you with individual travel suggestions and daily routine questions. Academic concerns that cannot be addressed with the professor should also be brought to the attention of the ACCENT staff.

ACCENT on-site staff provide information to students regarding cultural activities as well as ensuring 24-hour emergency support. ACCENT provides housing, classrooms, and study areas, as well as on-site orientation, program excursions, and social and cultural events. Italian and international faculty from universities in and around Florence provide all course instruction.

Because ACCENT serves the needs of all students who reside at their housing, it is important for you to take initiative and solve minor questions and problems on your own. Part of a successful study abroad experience is the ability to tackle issues and discover solutions independently.

Program Center

Students take courses at the ACCENT center and have access to a computer lab, library, and classroom space. The center is located in Palazzo Guadagni, a building located on the historic Piazza Santo Spirito with origins that date back to 1500. When looking at a map of Florence, you'll notice this piazza is located south of the Arno River. This neighborhood is still located in the city center, but it is more of a local neighborhood filled with small shops, family restaurants, quaint coffee shops, and beautiful piazzas. The bustling tourist center of the city, including the magnificent Duomo, is only a 15-minute walk away.

Housing Considerations

Housing Options

Students are housed in apartments or homestays throughout Florence.

Notification of Placement

Placing students in housing is a puzzle and is based on many factors. You should expect to hear about your placement a week before the program start date.

Homestay Families

Homestays come in all shapes and sizes and are located throughout Florence. Be prepared to live with an array of different Italian families. Many Florentines who choose to host students are single *signoras*. Two meals a day, Monday through Thursday, are included in the homestay.

The Placement Process

Staying in a homestay can be a great way to learn or improve your Italian and to get a glimpse of Italian culture from the inside. It's important to us that the family you are placed with is a good match to facilitate this learning, so we seek out families that are eager to incorporate students into their lives. As part of the application process, students interested in a homestay will complete a questionnaire to aid in the placement process. The on-site staff will use these answers to match students up with a homestay family.

Homestay Conditions

Many of the homestay families have hosted students in the past, so they have experience with American students. Even if they haven't hosted students in the past, they will go through an orientation training with the ACCENT staff to learn more about what it takes to host a US student.

If you choose a homestay, you will have a single room to yourself within the home. The family will be a middle class family and will provide breakfast and dinner for you Monday through Thursday. Lunches and weekend meals will be on your own.

Tips for a Successful Homestay

Students who participate in a homestay often say it was the highlight of their time abroad. However, it is an interesting blend between being a part of the family, and being a guest in their home for a semester, and this can take some navigating.

Remember to keep your room neat and tidy. While it is your space for the time you are abroad, you are still a guest in their house, and should treat your area with respect. Similarly, be respectful of the common spaces within the home. Keep your belongings in your room, and not strewn about the house.

The homestay families realize you are an adult and will want your freedom. There usually isn't a curfew, and it's fine for you to go out at night with your friends. Just always be sure to let your homestay family know if you will be gone for a meal and if you will be out later than normal. It's all about communicating with them.

Overnight guests are not allowed, and you should not be in your bedroom with a member of the opposite sex. Before you invite anyone over to visit, always talk to your homestay

family about it first. In some cases they will be open to having a visitor for dinner, and in some cases they won't. Be respectful of this.

If you have any issues with your homestay, contact the ACCENT staff to discuss your concerns. They will work with you to determine the best course of action. It's rare, but students can be moved if needed. Oftentimes the students become very close with their homestay family, keep in touch with them after their return home, and even go back to visit years later.

Apartment

Student apartments are scattered around Florence in a number of neighborhoods, and there are usually only one to two student apartments in each building. The rest of the apartments in the building will house Italian families, so you can really experience living along side the locals. Each apartment will be unique and no two apartments will be the same. No one will be housed more than a 30–40 minute walk, bus or metro ride from the ACCENT center.

You will share an apartment with several other students from the program. The apartment will include cooking facilities, plates, glasses, and utensils so you will be able to cook your meals. Linens, pillows, blankets, and towels are all provided. Kitchen areas are shared, so be prepared to keep it clean for others to use. Traditionally, Italian apartments do not have common living spaces. Oftentimes there are just bedrooms, the kitchen, and the bathroom.

Observe the quiet hours designated by the landlord. Failure to do so will result in behavioral warnings followed by eviction from the apartment and the program.

Liability Insurance

Regardless of your housing arrangement, you should consider your insurance coverage and needs. Does your renter's or homeowner's insurance cover your items if they are lost or stolen abroad? You may also wish to buy additional insurance in case you accidentally damage your accommodations, since any damages will be yours to pay.

For more information, visit: global.umn.edu/travel/insurance/outgoing.html#personal-tab.

Visitors

Program Housing

Your personal guests (e.g. friends, family, etc.) are not allowed to stay overnight in program housing, including apartments, dorms, and homestays.

During Program Period

Friends or relatives may visit during official program breaks or before or after the program, but not while classes are in session. Visits during this time interfere with your ability to focus on the program and host culture. Visitors are not allowed to stay with you in your official program housing.

Academics

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to the academic policies for study abroad as published on the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC)'s website: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/academic-policies.

Courses

Overview of Program Courses

Semester students enroll in 13–16 credits and will be enrolled in the classes listed on the course enrollment form at the time of application. All courses, with exception of the Italian language courses, are taught in English by Italian and international faculty. View a list of courses at UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/europe/florence/academics/full-course-list.

Students register for classes according to their interests and current US coursework. Each course will have readings and assignments just as in the US. You will earn a grade based on effort and ability. The program is designed to be academically rigorous, and it is up to each individual student to maintain good study habits and to complete assignments on time.

Incompletes are usually not an option, since professors are hired only to teach for the duration of the program. If you have a personal emergency which requires you to return from the program early, you must speak with the on-site staff in advance to discuss the possibility of any incomplete.

Global Identity

Global Identity: Connecting Your International Experience to Your Future

This optional, one-credit course will provide opportunities for you to “make meaning” of your learning abroad experience and prepare you to communicate your intercultural competence to future employers, graduate schools, or law schools. As global connectivity becomes increasingly important, you are asked to think beyond the borders of your own perception and better understand the world based on the new ideas and experiences to which you are exposed. Your ability to work in a multicultural setting and succeed in different cultural contexts is vital to your future. This course will help you apply these skills to your post-graduation plans.

For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/academics/globalidentity.

Internships & Community Engagement

Internship placements will try to be found for students who completed the internship application requirements. It is important for students to be flexible as internships are not

guaranteed. Limited information will be shared with you about your internship placement prior to departure. You will be required to interview with your potential internship placement after you arrive in Florence. Some internships may want you to complete some of your internship hours over the weekend, but most hours will be completed during the work week. If an internship placement is found for you it is important for you to follow through on your commitment to complete the internship. If you break the terms and conditions in the internship contract after arriving in Florence you could be asked to leave your placement. In most cases, failure to keep in good standing at your placement results in not passing your Internship in Florence course.

Registration

Registration through the UofM

University of Minnesota–Twin Cities Students

Before registering, you should meet with your academic adviser(s) to discuss the courses you plan to take and complete the Academic Planning form. All University of Minnesota–Twin Cities students will be responsible for registering themselves using the University of Minnesota online registration system. Prior to departure, you will receive an email with all the necessary information for registration. Do not look for your class number to appear on the class schedule on the MyU website. The numbers required for registration can only be obtained from the LAC. If you register for a course that is listed online, you have registered for the wrong course and may be subject to tuition charges. Complete your registration by the stated deadline in the registration instruction email from the LAC. Check online for holds or required registration approvals that would prevent you from registering for classes and clear them before the registration deadline. The LAC cannot remove holds on student accounts. Failure to complete registration may result in late registration fees and may delay or prevent financial aid disbursement. If you do not register for study abroad, your grades cannot be processed. Failure to register before departing for study abroad may result in no credit for your study abroad program.



UMN System Students

Students from the University of Minnesota—Morris, Crookston, Rochester, or Duluth will be set up as a multi-U student by their home campus. Please contact your study abroad office to verify that your multi-U status has been set up. You can then register as a UMTC student (see above).

Non-University of Minnesota Students

Students from other institutions will be registered by the Learning Abroad Center and do not need to register themselves through the MyU website.

Maintaining Full-Time Status

Students are required to maintain full-time registration status as defined by their individual program throughout the duration of their study abroad program. Dropping or withdrawing from a class will not be allowed if it will bring a student below the required full-time enrollment.

Post-Program Registration

While abroad, University of Minnesota students and most other students will need to register for classes for the following term on their home campus. You must make any necessary arrangements prior to departure so that you are able to register while overseas. In many cases, students are able to register online.

Course Drop/Add/Withdrawal

Course Changes

These must be made in consultation with the on-site staff and per the deadlines as outlined on the LAC's Academic Policies website.

Enrolling in Courses

You will sign up for courses on your Course Enrollment Form when you apply to the program. Enrollment in each course is on a first-come, first-served basis, and we will notify you if a course is full or needs to be canceled. Due to scheduling, you may not be allowed to drop or add courses once you arrive in Florence, so you should be confident about your course selections when you apply to the program. Be sure to list one or two alternate courses in the event that a course is full or needs to be canceled. You can access your Course Enrollment Form through your Education Abroad Application Checklist.

You will receive a "W" on your transcript if you drop a course, and you will need the approval of on-site staff and the LAC to drop any courses.

UMN 13-Credit Policy

University of Minnesota students are required to maintain a minimum enrollment of 13 credits per semester or maintain the minimum credit enrollment determined by their study abroad program, whichever is greater. For certain semester programs, 12 credits is considered a full-time course load.

Academic Culture

Teaching Styles

While you are on a study abroad experience, you may find that the professor/student relationship can be quite different from the kind of relationship you may be used to in the US. Your interpersonal relationships with your instructors vary depending on differences in cultural background and teaching style. If you have any questions about a course, discuss your questions with the professor teaching the course. If you need additional assistance, contact the ACCENT staff.

Many students have expressed in their evaluations that they have had some of the best teachers of their academic careers while studying abroad, citing the professor's passion for the field and extensive knowledge of the subject matter under discussion. However, any course demands student participation in order to be stimulating, and it is important that participants are actively engaged in class discussions and complete assignments.

Academic Rigor

The program is designed to be academically rigorous, and it is each student's responsibility to maintain good study habits and complete assignments on time.

Books & Materials

Most necessary books and materials will be bought on-site or provided for you. If a course requires that you purchase a book before you depart, you will be alerted by email. Paper items are a bit more expensive in Italy so you may want to bring notebooks or folders. The estimated fee for books is \$100.

Grades & Transcripts

Grades will be posted to the University of Minnesota transcript 6–8 weeks after the LAC has received them from the program. Grades will be converted into US equivalents, if necessary, prior to being posted on the University of Minnesota transcript. The LAC will provide one free transcript to the home institution of all non-University of Minnesota students. Additional transcripts can be ordered separately on the One Stop Student Services website: onestop.umn.edu.

Incompletes

Students are generally expected to complete all course requirements by the end of the term. In very rare circumstances, students can arrange an "Incomplete" in consultation with the instructor, the on-site staff, and the LAC, whereby the remaining work can be finished shortly after returning to the US.

Grade Appeals

If you wish to question a grade issued for a particular course after the program is completed, you must provide evidence that the professor made an error in his/her grade

calculation. The following are not reasonable grounds for grade appeal:

- Differences between US and host country educational systems
- Personal disappointment in the grade outcome
- Comparison with one's own prior academic record/GPA
- Failure to complete one or more assignments
- Minimum grade requirement of college/department or home university
- Health concerns/missed classes

Consult with your program contact in the LAC if you believe an error has occurred and you wish to complete the Grade Petition Form.

Student Grievances

Academic grievances are complaints brought by students regarding the provision of education and academic support services affecting their role as students. For grievances concerning University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center or affiliated programs offered through the LAC, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the LAC, the Assistant Dean for Learning Abroad, the Student Conflict Resolution Center, and the Office of the General Counsel. For complaints concerning non-University of Minnesota programs, students should make appeals to the program sponsor.

Relationships

Dating Apps

Be cautious when considering online dating applications or other venues for meeting people. This is particularly important when seeking to meet new people because there are different cultural norms and values that surround relationships of all kinds. What might be considered a casual drink or meal with a person of interest can have a much more significant meaning in a different cultural context. Online dating applications can carry different connotations or serve different purposes than they do in the United States. It is important to remember that it is very difficult for you to safely determine who might be genuinely interested in you and who has ulterior motives (such as stealing your passport or money, or seeking a visa to the US). Given the significant cultural differences between the US and countries abroad, the LAC strongly encourages students to prioritize their academics and be mindful to seek out cultural experiences that are safe, such as through homestays, local staff, and program activities.

Living in the Host Country

History Resources

Early & Medieval History

Florence was founded around 200 B.C. as a colony of Fiesole, an Etruscan city. It became a strategic garrison settlement called Roman Florentia that protected the main highway connecting Rome with northern Italy. During the medieval period, barbarians inflicted severe damage on the city, and it was only in the 12th century that the city became a free commune, ruled by twelve Consuls who were assisted by the Council of One Hundred, a group of prosperous merchants. Constant fighting for personal advantage led to the appointment of a foreign head of state.

By the mid-13th century, the upper class had divided itself into two camps—those in favor of the Pope, known as Guelphs, and those who backed the Holy Roman Emperor, called Ghibellines. Power rotated between these two factions for more than 100 years, but by the mid-14th century, Florence finally became democratized and ruled by the merchant class. The great plague of 1348 swept through Florence, decimating half of the population. Financial problems followed and old rivalries flared up again.

The Birth of the Renaissance

In the 15th century the Medici family assumed control of the city and the arts began to flourish under the patronage of Cosimo de' Medici. His grandson Lorenzo (1469–1492) and his court continued to encourage the fine arts and ushered in the Renaissance—a period during which artists, philosophers, musicians, and poets were sponsored financially and produced the works that now fill museums throughout the world.

The ideas and works developed in Florence soon spread throughout the European continent. Students from France, Germany, the Netherlands, and England traveled to this great city to study under the Italian masters.

When the Medici bank failed late in the century, the Medici family, sponsors of this magnificent period in Florentine history, were forced to leave the city. The fanatic Dominican monk Savonarola assumed great power, but his puritanical reign was short-lived; he was burned to death as a heretic.

Foreign Rule & Occupation

Spain, under Charles V, defeated Florence and two years later, the Medici made peace with him. The great-grandson of Lorenzo de' Medici married Charles' daughter and the Medici family again ruled Florence and eventually all of Tuscany for nearly two hundred years. Under Napoleon, the French conquered Florence but their rule lasted only 15 years. The House of Lorraine governed Florence until 1860,

when Florence was incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy. Florence was actually the capital of Italy from 1871 to 1875.

Modern History

During World War II, the Germans severely damaged the city while bombing the bridges (all except the Ponte Vecchio). Then, in 1966, terrible floods caused inestimable damage, and international groups arrived to assist in repairing the buildings and the precious works of art. In 1993, the bombing of the Uffizi Gallery by a terrorist group horrified the world. Once again, restorers and scientists rushed to the aid of the Florentines to assist in saving damaged works of art for the enjoyment of future generations.

Florentines Today

From a political viewpoint, Italy is a young republic, having just adopted a constitution with a president and a parliament in 1948. However, the country has witnessed over 50 changes in the government since World War II, none lasting over four years. Because of weak leadership, the Mafia crime families have flourished, inspiring fear and resentment among the people. The present government is making a valiant effort to fight them and bring them to justice and create peace.

Modern Italians love *la dolce vita* (the good life). With an abundance of fresh foods available and local vineyards producing good wine, they have made eating into a fine art. Italians go crazy at soccer games and love bicycling. Hand gestures form a large part of their conversation. Italians of all ages will dress up and promenade in the *piazza* and along the river in the evenings. The idea is both to see and be seen, to gather the local gossip, and to eat the world's best gelato.

Geography & Climate

January and February can be cool to cold, but there is rarely any snow. Many of the old buildings do not allow for comprehensive heating, so students often find themselves cold, even inside. Be prepared with a proper coat, hats and mittens for the cold time of the year. It is a federal policy in Italy that all building heat be turned on in November, regardless of the weather. This table shows the monthly average temperature in Florence:

Month	Low	High
January	37	53
February	38	54
March	42	59
April	48	66
May	55	74
June	62	82
July	65	90
August	64	87

September	60	80
October	53	70
November	45	59
December	39	52

You can find up-to-date weather at accuweather.com/en/it/florence/216189/weather-forecast/216189.

Language of the Country

Italians really appreciate when students are able to communicate with them in Italian. Even if you can only say a few words, they will appreciate that you are trying, and it will show that you are there to be more than a tourist passing through. If you have time, we recommend learning a few words and phrases before you depart.

You can hear and decipher language better in context. If you know the subject matter, you will better anticipate what you are going to hear: If you ask how much something costs, you are going to hear numbers. If you ask where the supermarket is, you are going to hear directions and distances. You do this anticipation unconsciously in your own language, but need to focus special attention on it in a foreign language. Carry a small Italian-English dictionary or phrase book, such as the *Berlitz Italian Phrase Book and Dictionary*.

Practice Italian pronunciation. Unlike English, Italian is entirely phonetic and has relatively few sounds. The vowel sounds are simple, pure sounds pronounced within strict limits. When you learn a new phrase or expression, use it as frequently as possible, to reinforce it in your memory. Carry a small notepad and pen with you. If you are having trouble hearing names, prices, addresses, etc., ask the person to write them down for you.

When you are introduced to someone, the correct response is *piacere* (it's a pleasure). When you see someone for the first time in the morning, you say *buon giorno* (good morning).

If you wish to say "excuse me" because you have actually stepped on someone's foot or bumped them with your luggage, you say "*scusi*," which means "forgive me." If you wish to say "excuse me" because you need to squeeze past someone or want to get their attention, you say "*permesso*" meaning "with your permission."

People older than oneself are shown respect by the form of address. If you know the last name, you would call a man "*Signor Dante*" (Sir/Mr.) and a woman "*Signora Dante*." A young unmarried woman is "*Signorina*" (Miss).

Food Considerations

Meals

Food and meals are a very important aspect of Italian culture. You'll find that meals are simpler, with fewer, quality

ingredients. In comparison to Americans, Italians take their time eating. When going to a restaurant, a lunch can take several hours. Italians put a lot of emphasis on in-person communication and on food, and meals are an important time to combine those two.

When at a restaurant, the staff will never bring your check to you if you don't ask for it. This would be taken as rude, and as if they are pushing you out of their restaurant. They will wait for you to ask for the check, as a sign that you are done with your food and your conversation. It is not expected that you leave a tip when you eat at a restaurant in Florence because you are often charged a table charge. Tipping norms vary by region and country, so do some research before visiting a new destination.

Living in Florence

Bus

Most students walk everywhere in Florence, since it is not very big, but other transit options are available if needed. ATAF buses service the city center and the suburb of Fiesole. You will need to have a photo ID with you on the bus in case the bus driver needs to check that your ticket belongs to you (your American driver's license will work). Monthly bus passes are available from ACCENT, but you will need to request them individually. Take the pass with you when using public transportation. If you are caught without your pass, you will be fined on the spot.

Taxi (tassi)

Compared to buses, taxis are very expensive so use them only when needed. Official taxis congregate at the train station and at most major piazze. Do not hail taxis from the street. Generally drivers will respond only to phone calls or pick up at taxi stations. You must pay the fare from where the taxi is until it arrives to pick you up. There is a supplemental charge between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. on weekdays and also on Sundays and public holidays. When you leave the city limits, the fare also increases. Taxi drivers do not expect a tip, but it is nice to leave a small tip of 25–50 centesimi. The passenger limit is four or five people depending on the size of the taxi. If your Italian pronunciation leaves something to be desired, print your destination on a piece of paper and give it to the driver. This will avoid a tour of the city and get you to your desired destination in a reasonable amount of time.

Main Attractions

The main attraction of Florence is Florence itself. It is a city steeped in art and history, the city of the Renaissance, of the Medici, of Machiavelli, of Michelangelo. When you stand and look at the Palazzo Medici, remind yourself that in 1450, it was an international bank with connections to Basel, Lyon, Paris, Bruges, London, Constantinople, and further. The entire city of Florence is actually one huge museum with palazzi, beautiful churches, priceless art

collections displayed in palatial buildings, and municipal structures of architectural splendor—all connected by cobblestone streets.

There is a wonderful view of the city from the Piazzale Michelangelo. Shopping on Ponte Vecchio is a fantastic experience. The world-famous Boboli Gardens are beautiful. Sidewalk cafés and street markets are varied and entertaining. There are many magnificent museums, beautiful churches, and municipal architectural gems.

Museums

Known as the center of the art world, Florence has the greatest collection of art to be found anywhere. Many museums are free the first Sunday of the month, and select other holidays throughout the year. Listed below are a few of the city's museums along with a sampling of priceless art works they house.

Uffizi Museum—Galleria degli Uffizi

The collections in this museum were gathered by several generations of the Medici family. Housed in this museum are Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*, Leonardo da Vinci's *Adoration of the Magi* and *Annunciation*, Michelangelo's *Holy Family*, Raphael's *Madonna of the Goldfinch*.

Bargello Museum—Museo Nazionale del Bargello

This austere palazzo was formerly the residence of the governing magistrate and later a police headquarters (bargello). A remarkable collection of Donatello's sculptures is located here, including the bronze *David*, as well as several works by Michelangelo.

Medici Chapels

One of the chapels is the burial place of several generations of the Medici family, the great benefactors of the Renaissance. In the other, New Sacristy, there are the magnificent tombs created by Michelangelo with allegorical figures of Dawn, Dusk, Day, and Night.

Palatine Gallery in the Palazzo Pitti—Galleria Palatina

The Palazzo Pitti was built by the wealthy Pitti family, rivals of the Medici. It now houses four different museums, including the Galleria Palatina which contains Raphael's *Madonna del Granduca*, *Portrait of a Lady*, and Carravaggio's *Sleeping Cupid*.

Academy Gallery—Galleria dell'Accademia

The gallery contains major works by Michaelangelo, including the *David*. It also contains a large collection of paintings.

Convent and Museum of St. Mark—Convento e Museo di San Marco

In the early Renaissance, Fra Angelico decorated the cells and refectory of this former Dominican monastery with scenes from the lives of Mary, Christ, and the saints. The cell of Savonarola, a Dominican monk who was burned as a heretic, is located here.

Entertainment

Entertainment Publications

There are several free monthly and bi-monthly publications listing Florence's variety of events and festivals. Tourist offices should be able to provide *Florence Today* and *Firenze Avvenimenti* (Firenze Information).

The best bet for finding out what's going on is the bi-monthly *Firenze Spettacolo*.

Popular Gathering Places

There are many types of places to decide among when planning a night out on the town.

Cinemas: Astro Cinema shows films in English Tuesday–Sunday in the evenings. Odeon is a beautiful old theatre that shows American movies in English on a regular basis.

Concerts: Posters and flyers are located throughout the city which advertise upcoming concerts.

Discoteca: There is a variety of these throughout Florence with large bars and dance floors. They can be lots of fun but tend to charge high covers. Drinks are expensive.

Wine bars: Usually a small “hole in the wall” offering glasses of popular local wine.

Shopping

Most shops are open from approximately 10 a.m.–1 p.m., then close for a riposo and open again from about 4–8 p.m. From July to September, shop hours are 9 a.m.–1 p.m., 4–8 p.m. and closed on Saturdays. From October to June, 9 a.m.–1 p.m., 3:30–7:30 p.m., and closed on Monday mornings.

Communication

Email & Internet

Students have free Internet and computer access at the ACCENT facilities, although it is limited and the computer lab is small. ACCENT and classrooms have wireless access throughout. You will have Wi-Fi at your housing, but the speed and reliability will not be what you are used to in the US. If you choose to bring your laptop, you can connect wirelessly in many places through Florence and Europe; however, you may find that free Wi-Fi hotspots are less common in Europe than in the US. Internet cafes are available throughout Florence. You may also purchase a wireless Internet plan that provides Internet access through a USB connection.

Social Media

Not all countries share the same laws about freedom of expression that we have in the US. Keep in mind that derogatory comments, especially on social media, can result in legal claims and have extended legal implications even after you have returned to the United States.

Phones

The Florence program requires all students to have a working cell phone throughout the semester. You could keep your US cell phone with an international plan, purchase a local SIM card to put in your unlocked US phone, or purchase a small local phone that you can use for calling and texting. This is not only a good safety precaution, it also facilitates communication between students and program staff. Florence on-site program staff will assist students with selecting and obtaining cell phones and service contracts. The cost of the cell phone, SIM card, and/or service plan are included in the estimated additional expenses on the Cost of Participation.

Calling home to the US is expensive. Most students will use Skype or FaceTime when on Wi-Fi to connect with friends and family at home.

Mail

Italy's postal service is notoriously slow and unreliable. Despite this, Italy charges more than most other countries for postage. Letters to the US can take between 10 and 14 days, while postcards, classified as low-priority, take even longer, up to several weeks.

The main post office (*Ufficio Postale*) in the city is located in Piazza della Repubblica on Via Pellicceria. Look for the yellow sign with POST printed on it. It is open daily from Monday to Friday from 8 a.m.–6 p.m. and on Saturday from 8 a.m.–1 p.m.

Your family and friends should send any mail to you directly at the ACCENT center. They should not send mail to your apartment or your host family. Your family or friends should never mail medications to you. Also, if anyone mails you “goods” (foods, clothing, etc.) you may be forced to pay custom fees to receive the package.

Money Matters

Credit Cards

A credit card is a good resource for emergency situations and for obtaining cash advances, including cash for emergency situations, as long as you have a personal PIN. It is important to know your PIN in both letters and numbers. Please note that some ATMs require that the card have a metal “chip” visible on the front for added security. Many US credit cards now have this chip, but it is wise to ask your credit card company whether they can issue you a “chip credit card” if you do not yet have one.

Keep in mind that you may incur fees for using your credit card abroad. Be sure to notify your bank and credit card company that you will be traveling abroad for the semester/summer. If you do not, they may assume your foreign transactions are fraudulent and may deny further transactions.

Financial Planning

One of the easiest ways to obtain euros is by using your debit card at an ATM machine. This is convenient because you do not need to find a bank, carry large amounts of cash, or pay commission for converting fees. Most ATMs accept cards on the Cirrus or Plus networks. You will need a four-digit numerical PIN. A standard fee is charged for each transaction, so do not plan to withdraw money daily. Check with your bank regarding any additional charges.

Review the Cost of Participation sheet before you depart to budget for your time abroad. Many things will not be billed to your student account, and you will be responsible for paying for them when you are in Italy (cell phone, meals, etc). The estimate additional expenses on the Cost of Participation sheet are there for guidance, but it's important to think about your personal spending habits, and adjust as necessary.

Expatistan

Expatistan.com is a great resource to research the cost of living in Florence. You can compare where you currently live with Florence, to see what the differences will be, and where you will likely spend more of your money.

Tips

Living in another country where the native language is not that of your own may be intimidating, but it is important to take advantage of the opportunities offered, by the program and the country, to interact with the host people and culture. Here is a list of ways to take advantage of these opportunities:

- Frequent places like markets, local restaurants, or a bakery.
- Do what the locals do. Don't spend a lot of time in touristy hangouts.
- Participate in activities your program may offer that includes host country nationals.
- Spark up conversations when possible with Italians.
- Venture out in smaller groups, which will make it easier to meet people.
- Make an effort to speak the language.

You can minimize the stress involved in adjusting to life in the Italian community and get maximum benefit from your experience abroad by preparing adequately. The cultural differences you encounter can enrich your life by presenting you with a different worldview and new approaches to solving problems.

Read as much as possible about where you are going to gain some insight. Talk to international students and veteran travelers who have been where you want to go. The University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) has travel tips from return travelers, many of whom are willing to be contacted and offer in-person advice. The LAC may also have some past participants who are willing to share their experiences with you.



Social & Cultural Adjustments

Student Identity

As a foreigner in Italy, you will need to take the initiative to meet people. Don't be afraid to start a conversation with others.

Race & Ethnicity

You may wish to consult the resources available at the LAC related to students of color and learning abroad. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity.

Gender

Many females experience catcalls while they are in Italy. While these can get annoying, it's important to remember that they are usually not a threat. If you do feel threatened by anyone on the street, contact the ACCENT staff right away. In most cases, if you keep walking they will leave you alone. It's hard to avoid these all together, but dressing more like the locals can help. Italians dress up, so you will stick out wearing leggings or other casual clothing.

Sexual Orientation

Attitudes toward sexuality vary greatly from country to country. Some cultures are open about homosexuality, and strong gay communities exist in many cities. However, some cultures and peoples are intolerant of different sexual preferences, and strict taboos or laws against such relationships may exist. As a result, it is important to disclose to the program staff either through the program housing form or by contacting the LAC program staff directly for guidance. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity.

Disabilities

Many of the disability accommodations or services that are provided at US universities may be different or unavailable overseas. Being in a new environment can also be stressful, and accommodations that you may not have needed at home may become necessary in an unfamiliar setting. Participants with any kind of disability, whether hidden or visible, should contact the LAC in advance to discuss their particular needs. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity.

Cultural Adjustment

The On-Site Experience

What happens when you suddenly lose clues and symbols that orient you to situations in everyday life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are unfamiliar? The psychological discomfort and adjustment period in a foreign country is commonly known as culture shock or cultural adjustment.

You will almost certainly experience some form of culture shock. It might hit you after two days, two weeks, or two months—timing varies widely for different people. Six common phases of cultural adjustment are listed below. These may be out of order for you, one phase may last longer than another, or you may skip a step entirely.

Initial Fascination: On arrival, your surroundings seem glamorous and exotic. You feel like the focus of attention and activity.

Initial Culture Shock: The initial fascination and euphoria fade as you settle in and you enter an emotional decline.

Surface Adjustment: After the initial “down” (a few days to a few weeks for most), you begin to truly adjust and settle into your surroundings. Language skills begin to improve, and you’ll feel less fatigued. Often you’ll be forming a small group of friends at this stage as well.

Feelings of Isolation: Difficulties in your new culture seem to stubbornly remain and you grow frustrated with the

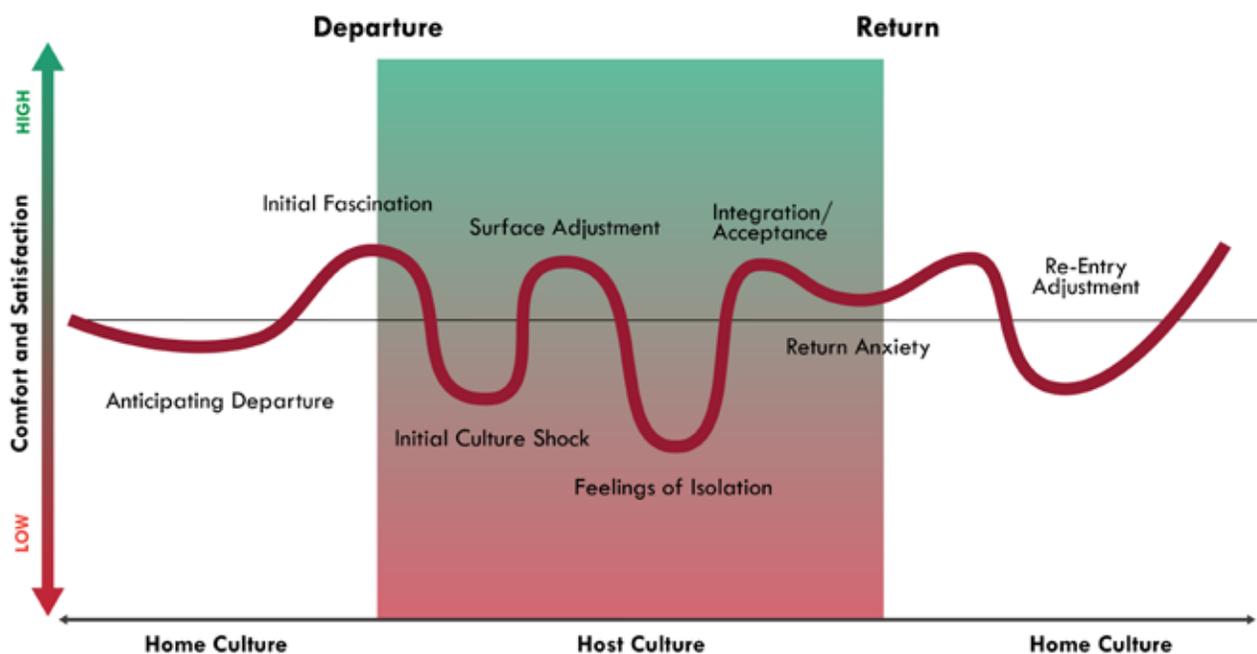
process. A sense of isolation sets in. Boredom and a lack of motivation often follow. Unresolved personal issues often surface during this stage.

Integration/Acceptance: After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, and professional and academic interests. The culture you are living in is more easily examined. Differences between yourself and the society you live in become understandable and you come to accept both the situation and yourself in it, allowing you to relax and feel at home.

Return Anxiety: Just when you feel at home in the new country it’s time to go. Thoughts of leaving new friends raise anxiety similar to those felt before departure. You sense that you’ve changed as a person, and apprehension grows when you think about people at home who may not understand your new feelings and insights, yet you may feel guilty for wanting to stay.

When in any of the above phases, you may experience changes in sleeping habits, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, loneliness, depression, unexplainable crying, placing blame for difficulties on the program or host culture, homesickness, getting angry easily, increase in physical ailments or pain, compulsive eating, or lack of appetite.

Other symptoms may manifest themselves as well. It is important to understand these are part of a normal process of adjustment; however, if uncomfortable feelings persist for extended periods or seem unbearable, seek assistance from your program’s on-site support staff.



Adjusted from Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn (1963)

Cultural Adjustment Curve

Looking Ahead

Career Information

Linking Undergraduate International Experience to Your Future Career

Learning abroad can help you develop and enhance intercultural competencies that are appealing to potential employers and graduate schools. Think about your academic and career goals before, during, and after your experience abroad. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/career-info.

Re-Entry

Students often find that it is just as difficult, if not more difficult, to readjust to life in the US after studying abroad. You may find that your perspectives have changed significantly and that you may not connect with friends and family in the same way you did before going abroad. The LAC offers a variety of resources and opportunities to help you readjust to life in the US. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/process/reentry.

Appendix

Suggested Packing List

It is extremely important that you pack lightly, because you will be carrying your luggage yourself during the trip, often for long stretches in airports, bus, and train stations. Take only as much as you can carry easily by yourself. One way to measure what is “easily carried” is to pack everything you would like to take, pick it all up and walk around the block. If you are not comfortable doing so, you may want to re-evaluate what you’ve packed.

Necessary Items

- Seasonable clothing that you can wash and wear, plus one or two formal outfits (in general, Italians dress more formally than most Americans)
- Walking shoes
- Supply of any prescription medication and vitamins you require (bring enough for your full stay and make sure it is in its original bottle for customs) **Do not have friends or family mail you prescription medications while you are in Florence.**
- Voltage converter and outlet adapter if you bring any electrical appliances
- Earplugs to eliminate background noise for study/sleep

These items are available but expensive in Italy:

- Camera, memory card, and batteries
- Set of travel-size toiletries for independent excursions
- Nylon duffel bag for independent overnight excursions (this is also useful in packing for return to the US)
- Lock for independent excursions
- Umbrella or rain jacket

Most apartments and homestays are equipped with washing machines. Dryers are rare so be prepared to let clothes air dry. Overnight-drying and wrinkle-free clothes are desirable. Italians (and Europeans) do not use washcloths, rather sponges. Take your own washcloth, if you wish to have one in Italy.

Do not send anything to yourself in Florence. It will never arrive, and, even if it does, you will probably have to go to the airport to retrieve it from customs and pay duty.

Mosquitoes are a problem in Florence. If you have a favorite repellent, bring it.

Cultural Resources

wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/italy.aspx
Health information for travelers to Western Europe

lonelyplanet.com/italy
General info about Italy and travel in the country

mega.it
Florence news, event listings, and maps

arca.net/tourism/florence/arthisto.htm
Art and history in Florence

maggiofiorentino.com
Musical events: opera, concerts, etc.

Social Media Hashtag Guidelines

Basic guidelines

- Keep hashtags on topic, always related to the post
- Place hashtags at the end of the post
- Always add a geotag based on the photo location
- Capitalize multiword hashtags for clarity

Number of hashtags to use

- Facebook: 0
- Twitter: 1–2
- Instagram: 9–11

Required hashtags

- #UMabroad
- #UMNProud
- (NOT #UMNabroad)

Recommended hashtags

- #communityengagement
- #globalseminar
- #goglobal
- #internabroad
- #internationaldevelopment
- #lifeonthemove
- #studyabroad
- #studyabroadlife
- #theworldasaclassroom
- #workreadyworldready

Program-specific usernames

- @accentflorence
- @accentrome
- @alc.fes.alif
- @capalondon
- @capasydney
- @cemanahuac
- @fogaargentina
- @fomtoledo
- @idsithailand
- @warawarc

Program-specific hashtags

- #LACFSA
- #MSIDEcuador
- #MSIDKenya
- #MSIDSenegal
- #MSIDThailand

STUDENT INDEPENDENT TRAVEL FORM

This form must be completed for all independent travel as indicated by the release and waiver you signed prior to participation. Failure to complete in full and submit prior to departure will be grounds for review and sanctions as outlined in the Policy on Student Conduct in Education Abroad Opportunities (UMabroad.umn.edu/assets/files/PDFs/policies/rightsResponsibilities/Student_Conduct_17_web.pdf).

Note:

1. You are not allowed to travel to a country or region under US State Department Travel Advisory Levels 3 and 4 or a country or region not recognized by the US government (e.g., North Korea) without prior approval. A copy of the suspension committee approval is required with this form.
2. Independent travel should not interfere with academic work, classes, or events. On-site staff has the authority to deny travel due to such conflicts.
3. Failure to return on time may be subject to dismissal. Travel with your program contact details and keep the staff updated on any changes to your plans.

Complete one form per student, per trip.

Student name _____ Cell phone (if applicable) _____

Proposed destination(s) _____

Departure date _____ Return date _____

US emergency contact name, email, and phone number _____

Contact information while traveling (below):

Dates at this location	City and country	Name of hotel or host	Phone number	Email address

Transportation Information:

Additional Information:

Signatures

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Authorized On-Site Staff Signature _____ Date _____

Acknowledge receipt: The form must be signed and dated by both the student and the authorized on-site staff person prior to travel and kept on file for the duration of program period.