DU Study Abroad Guide to Italy

Please use this booklet in conjunction with the DU Study Abroad Handbook

University of Denver
Office of International Education
2200 South Josephine Street
Denver, CO 80208 USA
Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Mountain Time
Office: 303.871.4912
Fax: 303.871.4910
duabroad@du.edu
www.du.edu/abroad

Emergencies:
Campus Safety: 303.871.3000
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Introduction

Congratulations! You have been accepted to participate in a University of Denver Partner Program at one of the following partners in Italy (or an Approved Unaffiliated Program/Unaffiliated Program by Petition elsewhere in Italy):

**Milan:**
- IES Milan: Music, Tradition, and Innovation
- Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Business or Italian Track)
- EuroScholars

**Torino:**
- USAC: Torino

**Florence:**
- SACI Studio Arts Centers International

**Rome:**
- Arcadia: Rome—Center for Italian Studies
- John Cabot University of Rome

**Perugia:**
- Arcadia: Umbra Institute
- Arcadia: University for Foreigners
- Arcadia: University of Perugia

**Bologna:**
- University of Bologna-Exchange

This handbook will provide you with a general overview of issues involving travel to and living in Italy. We thank the US State Department and the Italian Embassy for sharing the safety and travel information in this Handbook. Please use this guide in conjunction with the DU Study Abroad Handbook.

We hope this information will assist you and your family in preparing for your time abroad. It is important that you review all the information, as well as the information sent by your program before you leave the US and that you complete all visa requirements before departure and take all necessary documents with you to Italy.

Studying abroad is an exciting opportunity. Nothing during your college years will likely change you more. You will learn about another country and another culture. You will also learn to look at your own country from a different perspective and most important, you will learn more about yourself. So, the OIE encourages you to invest yourself fully into this experience.

How much you gain from this opportunity will depend on your preparedness, flexibility and responsibility. Review the general pre-departure information the OIE has provided to you. Complete the administrative and academic matters that need to be taken care of before you leave. Research the country and city you will be going to. Review some of the suggested readings in the Study Abroad Handbook about what it means to go abroad. Be respectful of other cultures; things are not better, they are not worse; they are just different – learn to accept, not expect. Remember, you are there to complete an academic program successfully, just as if you were at DU. Good time management and goal setting are keys to handling a challenging academic program and becoming familiar with life outside the classroom.

Most of all, we want you to have a great experience and to make the most out of this opportunity. And when you return, be ready to share your stories with others. Your personal experience will be the best source of inspiration for others.
**Italian Student Visa**

All U.S. citizens going to Italy to attend a study abroad program longer than 90 days must apply for a student visa, a type of documentation required by the Italian government that allows you to legally stay in Italy for the length of your program.

**Applying for a student visa, making sure you comply with all the application requirements, and ensuring your legal entry into Italy is your responsibility. No one else can do this for you! Governments, not universities, determine visa regulations.**

The information provided below is to serve as a guideline to assist you in understanding the Italian Student Visa application process. However, Italian Consular laws can change at any time without prior notification to this office, you, or the public. Please note that the information provided is current as of the time of printing this information (January 2016). **Always verify with the Consulate website that you have the correct documents before you submit your visa application.**

Your ultimate resource for immigration advice and information should be the consulate that has visa-issuing jurisdiction for residents in your home state or country (see next section).

Many Italian universities and programs offer visa support or information resources, so contact your program directly to see what resources they offer. Your program may send you detailed information about visas via email, so read all correspondence thoroughly. Conversely, your program may direct you back to the Consulate website, so be sure to familiarize yourself with that resource.

*As a third-best resource, the OIE is available for immigration guidance. Keep in mind that information from our office on this topic is not official legal advice nor are OIE advisors immigration specialists. Rather, the OIE can be a resource for finding information.*

**How to Apply for a Student Visa**

**ATTENTION IES Students:** Follow the instructions given to you by IES. The visa information given here does not pertain to you.

**Students on USAC Torino’s program may also choose to use USAC’s visa processing support services. Please contact USAC directly for more information.**

Unless you are attending a program in Italy through IES (or USAC Torino if you choose to use their visa support), you have two options on how you can apply for a student visa:

- **Option 1:** Apply to the Chicago Consulate
- **Option 2:** Apply to the Consulate serving your state of residency

Further details about each option are described below. While students with residency outside of Colorado may be able to apply through a different Consulate, please be aware that the Chicago Consulate is used to working with DU students and the detailed information below applies only to the Chicago Consulate. The OIE holds no knowledge of the requirements of other consulates. The visa process is always your responsibility and the OIE does not provide official visa advice.

**Non-US citizens should contact the Chicago Consulate directly to understand their application requirements and whether these differ from requirements for US citizens.**
Option 1: Apply to the Chicago Consulate

Students residing or studying full-time in Colorado fall under the jurisdiction of the Chicago Consulate, and may submit their passport and visa application by mail (details can be found on the Chicago Consulate website - http://www.conschicago.esteri.it/Consolato_Chicago/Menu/I_Servizi/Per_chi_si_reca_in_italia/generalr

eqvisa.htm).

Please note that you are allowed to mail your visa application directly to the Chicago Consulate and do not need to apply in person (that’s the good news). HOWEVER, the Consulate has strict instructions for what forms must be notarized and by whom. If you don’t follow their instructions, they will simply return your application without processing it. Read the website carefully for this information (the above link has the details). Be sure that the packet you mail to the Chicago Consulate includes all of the documents detailed in the link below as well as your physical passport.

You can find a complete list of the items that you need to submit on the Chicago Consulate website http://www.conschicago.esteri.it/Consolato_Chicago/Menu/I_Servizi/Per_chi_si_reca_in_italia/study.htm. See notes below for additional information pertaining to this list.

There can be NO MISTAKES on the application form. We recommend that you complete the application form electronically and then print it so that it is clearly legible. We have also compiled a PDF Guide to help you fill out this form here.

IMPORTANT
The following items must be notarized:
- Visa application form for long-term stay (found on the Consulate website)
  - This form must be notarized by the Honorary Vice Consulate of Italy in Denver. Do not sign the form until you are in the presence of the Honorary Vice Consul. Find contact information here and see their website for further instructions to book an appointment: http://coitalianhc.com/
- Copy of your Student ID (do not mail the original)
- Copy of your Driver’s License (do not mail the original)
- Affidavit of Support (found on the Consulate website)
- Affidavit of Health Insurance (found on the Consulate website)

Notes on Notarization
The visa application form MUST be signed by the Honorary Vice Consulate of Italy in Denver. All other forms can be notarized by any other public notary (simply check Google for listings; banks and UPS stores are examples of places where you can go for notary services). The Honorary Vice Consulate can also notarize the Affidavit of Health Insurance if needed, but all other forms should be notarized before your appointment at the Honorary Consulate another public notary.

Some notaries do charge for notarization services. If this is the case, you are responsible for these fees, regardless of CGS status.

Remember, it’s up to you, not the Honorary Vice Consulate, to make sure that your application is CORRECT and COMPLETE.
Mailing your Visa Application
Per the Honorary Vice Consulate’s website (http://coitalianhc.com/), you are responsible for mailing your own visa application and all supporting documents to the Chicago Consulate. However, you should bring all documents with you to your appointment at the Honorary Consulate (including all other notarized forms) as well as the self-addressed return envelope and stamp for the Consulate to return your documents. See the Honorary Vice Consulate’s website above for more detail.

Option 2: Apply to the Consulate serving your state of residency

If your permanent residency is in or close to a city with an Italian Consulate, you may decide to work with that Consulate if eligible.

To find out to which Italian Consulate you can submit your visa application to, go to the Italian Consulate Network site at:
http://www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it/Ambasciata_Washington/Menu/Informazioni_e_servizi/La_rete_consolare/

Please be aware that some consulates require you to appear in person to make your application. If that is the case, you may be required to travel by car or plane to the city in which the consulate is located. DU does not reimburse for expenses related to obtaining the visa, only the visa application itself.

The OIE does not hold any knowledge of visa processes outside of the Chicago Consulate. Students are urged to do detailed research on their process before electing to work through a different Consulate and should contact their program for further guidance.

Student Visa Application Forms and Reminders

As a reminder, the student visa application consists of many pieces, but there are three forms that can be downloaded from the consulate website:
1. The visa application form for long-term stay
2. The Affidavit of Support
3. The Affidavit of Health Insurance Coverage

For students applying through the Chicago Consulate:

The checklist of forms and documents you need to collect can be found on the Chicago consulate website:
http://www.conschicago.esteri.it/Consolato_Chicago/Menu/I_Servizi/Per_chi_si_reca_in_italia/study.htm.

Please note you must complete the Visa Application Form for Long-Term Stay (found in the link above and also here: http://www.conschicago.esteri.it/NR/rdonlyres/218D7190-AC19-4D86-9522-335B2937B7D6/0/NuovoFormularioNazionaleChicago07012011.pdf. Be careful that you do not fill out the short-term form by mistake as this is not valid for your study abroad program.
Note: The DU Office of International Education will provide you with the **Letter of Enrollment**. The **Letter of Acceptance** comes from the university or program in Italy you are attending.

As of December 2015, the Italian Student Visa now has a **visa application fee of 50 Euros**. Students should enquire with the Honorary Vice Consulate in Denver as to how to best pay this fee. The Chicago Consulate recommends payment via money order.

**For students applying through any Consulate other than the one in Chicago:**

First, locate the appropriate Consulate that you should use on the Italian Embassy website: [http://www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it/Ambasciata_Washington/Menu/Informazioni_e_servizi/La_rete_consolare/](http://www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it/Ambasciata_Washington/Menu/Informazioni_e_servizi/La_rete_consolare/).

Follow the instructions for a student visa on the appropriate Consulate’s website. Read through all directions carefully!

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**When to Apply For a Student Visa**

The visa application process can take several weeks. You can submit your visa application documents **within 90 days of your program start date (BUT NOT before that time)**, and with no less than **FIVE WEEKS prior to the start of the program**.

You should begin gathering the required documents immediately. Issuance of a student visa is dependent upon the satisfactory health and character clearance conducted by the Italian government. If your application needs to be revised, it may take more time to finalize the process. **Delaying your student visa application until the last moment may interfere with your travel plans.**

Due to the processing time, do not plan any international travel over the summer. **Remember that you will need to submit your physical passport to the Consulate along with your visa application, and there is no guarantee that you will have your passport back from the Consulate in time for you to undertake additional travel.**

**Immigration and Permit to Stay**

The Permit to Stay is a legal document that registers non-EU citizens with the local Italian government officials so that they may remain in the country legally. By law they must apply for a **Permesso di Soggiorno** (Permit to Stay) within eight (8) business days of their arrival in Italy at one of the appropriate Public Offices as required by the Permit to Stay procedure. Based on latest Italian immigration law, students staying over 3 months in Italy will be required to get fingerprinted by the local police station.

Don’t start stressing out about it though! Your program abroad will help to facilitate this process. Sometimes, this means that the program/university abroad will tell you where to take these documents. Other times, they may process the documents on your behalf. The following list is a sampling of the documents you should be prepared to produce for the Permit to Stay. Most of these documents you need for your visa, so you will already have them ready to go!
- A declaration from your university assessing your regular enrollment
- 4 passport photos (take extra photos with you, they might be useful)
- A valid identification document/card and a photocopy of it
- Copy of the health insurance certified by the Italian Consulate or Embassy in your home country
- Copy of the visa
- Proof of your means of financial support
- A residence declaration (recommended) released by your house owner/landlord in your city.
- Permit to Stay processing fee (Note: Cherrington Global Scholars will be reimbursed for the Permit to Stay fee if you provide an original receipt to your OIE Advisor by the deadlines outlined in the DU Study Abroad Policies).

The residence permit is generally issued according to the visa (type and duration) that has been issued by the Consulate, and it is the only document (not the visa itself) which entitles foreigners to stay in Italy. For this reason, the residence permit must be carried at all times and must be shown with the passport at the request of the Italian authorities; it allows the foreigners to exit and reenter Italy for the entire period of its validity.

**Travel Arrangements & CGS Reimbursement Processes**

Refer to your DU Passport Account as well as OIE pre-departure emails regarding transportation logistics for details on booking your flights to and from Italy. Remember that if you are a CGS student, you are responsible for booking your tickets per the instructions sent to you by the OIE in your pre-departure emails. CGS Reimbursement Processes and deadlines are outlined in that email as well as in the DU Study Abroad Policies.

As of December 2015, the Italian Visa now has a 50 Euro application fee. Students who are Cherrington Global Scholars can submit receipts to be reimbursed for this cost as well as the Permit to Stay application fee. Please note reimbursement is subject to the deadlines outlined in the DU Study Abroad Policies (linked above).

**Customs Regulations**

At the airport, once you have found your luggage, you have to go through customs. Make sure you have letters from both schools (DU and the Italian institution) and your passport. Italy is not noticeably stricter than most customs, but in general there are a few things you cannot bring and they include:
- fresh foodstuffs
- plants or plant products
- animals or wildlife or their products
- drugs
- firearms or other weapons

**Prescription Drugs**

If you are taking regular medication, you should contact an Italian Consulate well before departure to confirm that the medicine and the quantities you will be carrying are permitted into the country. You can also consult with International SOS regarding these questions. You should also find out what documentation you need to provide to the customs agents. We advise you to get a letter from your
doctor that describes the medication you are taking and certifies that the medication has been supplied to you for a particular medical condition. Bring this letter in your carry-on. The maximum allowable amount is usually a three-month supply. *Keep all medications in their original containers.*
Academics

Academic Culture in Italy

Italy hosts some of the most reputable centers of education, notably the University of Bologna, which is the oldest university in all of Europe, and the University of Padova, the famous university of Galileo and his classroom. The antiquity of Italian culture reflects a great respect for education in the arts, music, literature, politics, and many other fields of study.

As you meet other students your age, it will become more and more evident how important education is for the current generation of youth. Like any other country, Italy faces challenges, one of which is unemployment. You will immediately learn that education has become increasingly important for students your age, who stay in school much longer, often earning multiple degrees. You will meet many individuals who are stretching their time in school in order to avoid the Italian job market or who are trying to receive a better education in order to be hired in another country.

Academic System in Italy

Students studying abroad in an Italian university system should be aware of a few differences in the university educational system:

- **Class registration can be a different process than in the U.S.** You may not be able to register for classes until later into the semester. Most likely, you will audit your preferred courses when the semester starts, attend them regularly, and officially register for the course later on.

- **You may be required to actually enroll in the final exam.** Do not take for granted that just because you are in the class you have a reserved spot for the exam. Be sure to check with your program and your professor to make sure you complete any exam registration requirements.

- **Examination tests are often oral, rather than written.** Many professors have their students answer questions orally in front of the class during examination periods. This can be frustrating, but talking to your professors ahead of time and letting them know you are an international student may help.

- **Remember that you are a student in a foreign institution and bound by their policies, procedures, and requirements.** Do not assume that policies regarding class attendance, makeup exams, makeup work are the same there as at DU. It is your responsibility to understand the policies that bind you both at DU and at your host institution, and you should ask your program directly for any further clarification.

For those attending a U.S.-based program such as SACI, Arcadia, or IES, your program will be structured similarly to that of a U.S. university.

Students attending Arcadia: University for Foreigners should be prepared for a block system for classes.

Course Load, Credits & Assessment (Grading)

Students studying abroad in Italy must observe the following rules:

- **Enroll as a full-time student at the host institution.** This typically means registering to take a full-time course load, ranging from 12–15 US semester hours. This is also the equivalent of being a full-time student at the University of Denver.
o Be aware that some institutions use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) rather than a US semester system. You must confirm with your program how many credits you must earn to be considered full time both by your program and by DU.

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- Be enrolled in enough credits to be above the minimum amount required to maintain the student visa status, as applicable.

The credits and grades earned on a DU Partner Program will appear on your DU transcript and are considered “resident credit.” They will not count as “pass/fail.” In order for the credit to transfer to DU, you must pass with a “D” or better. However, in order for the credit to apply to your major or minor, you must generally pass with a "C" or better (check with your major/minor department to verify what will be accepted as passing grade). While the credit earned is considered DU credit and grades will appear on your DU transcript, these grades will not be figured into your GPA.

The grading system at U.S.-based programs is similar to that at the University of Denver. The grading system at Italian universities differs from the U.S.-based programs grading system.

Students should consult the Global Grades and Credit Scale to understand the grading system and credit scale at their study abroad institution and how that translates to DU grades and credits.

What Your APR Will Look Like

When you return to DU, the general 16-credit study abroad placeholder course will remain on your APR until our office has received your host university’s transcript. It can take a while for the transcript to be sent, but once we’ve received it, we will need an additional 10-14 days to apply those credits to your APR, along with any course approvals you have. Therefore, your actual credits and classes that you took abroad will not be visible on myWeb until a few months after you return.

Once the transcripts have been received, the Registrar’s Office will use any course approvals you submitted online through the Registrar’s TIERS System to place your study abroad classes in the proper requirements for graduation. If one of your courses was never approved by a DU academic advisor, the course will be placed in a general elective category by default so long as it corresponds with a department on campus. If you are planning to graduate at the end of winter or spring quarter, it is important to let us and your program know so that we can arrange for rushed delivery.

Learning Disabilities

If you have special needs in the classroom such as reading assistance or note taking assistance, please inform your OIE Advisor. He or she will find out what services are provided by your specific program. Also be sure to make DU’s Disabilities Services Program aware that you are going abroad.
Living the Life of an Italian Student

Housing

Many of you will be living independently for the first time when you go abroad. This means you will have to deal with issues you’ve never had to deal with when you lived at home or on campus at DU, as well as the issues arising from living in an entirely different country. Depending on your living situation, you may or may not be provided with living “essentials” —i.e., bedding, towels, dishware, etc. Before you get to Italy, contact your program and see how exactly your housing will be supplied. If there won’t be some of these “essentials,” you can either pack some of them or buy them once you get to Italy. It will really come down to a question of whether or not you want to save space or money. If you are living with a host family you won’t have to worry about these things.

Most students will live in an apartment. Depending on the program, this could be an apartment with other US students or, in rare cases, with locals/other international students. Consult with your program and reference your program brochure to understand the option that you will have available. Refer back to your program brochure and your Billing OIE email to confirm whether you will be charged DU Housing or whether you will be responsible for paying for your housing directly.

In rare cases on some programs you may be able to live with a host family, giving you a unique opportunity to experience authentic, daily Italian living. As a guest in someone else’s home, you want to be courteous and respectful. Communicate your plans. For example, if you’re going to miss a meal or will be travelling over the weekend, let them know. Cultural misunderstandings are to be expected, but do all that you can to reduce them by asking questions, observing the way your host lives and organizes their lives, and joining in whenever possible. The more you engage with your host, the more you will benefit.

Students attending the University of Bologna or Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore are responsible for making their own housing arrangements as this is not provided by the university abroad. While the program may have recommendations, this process is the responsibility of the student to organize and to pay for directly. Please review your program housing information in DU Passport and be in touch with your program directly to understand next steps and any housing recommendations. If you are using a housing service recommended by the program, be mindful of any application deadlines for those services, as you may not be considered if you apply late. Students in these programs should be especially cognizant of longer commute times (30-60 minutes by subway is typical in Milan) and the higher cost of living, especially in Milan. Students should budget accordingly both for their housing costs as well as use of regular public transportation (see Money Matters section for more resources).

All students should research daily life in the city where they are heading as well as commute times, public transportation costs etc.

Damage & Unpaid Bills

Most programs in Italy will organize housing for DU students. Exceptions to this rule apply to the University of Bologna and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan), where participating students have to secure their own housing.

Some of our U.S. based program partners may require a refundable deposit to secure your place. If so, you are responsible for paying that deposit as it will be refunded back to you after completion of your program (granted you don’t leave behind any unpaid incidental bills or housing damages). In cases
where a ‘secure placement deposit’ was paid by DU on your behalf, should there be any damage to your housing or other unpaid bills when you leave the program, the cost of those damages will be paid by DU and DU will pass on charges to your DU account. You will owe that money to DU plus the cost of wiring and at the current exchange rate, (i.e. it will cost you more if you leave behind unpaid damage costs than if you paid for the damage on-site). Either way, failure to pay will result in the program abroad not releasing your transcript or a hold will be placed on your DU account, hindering you from registering for classes at DU.

**Behavior**

If you consider yourself old enough and mature enough to live independently, then you should act accordingly. You need to respect quiet hours, guest policies, and other rules of the housing complex. Your mature behavior ensures that DU can continue to house its study abroad students in those apartments. Failure to adhere to housing rules may result in you being asked to leave the housing arrangement.

**Use of Alcohol**

You will find that many countries have different attitudes about the consumption of alcohol than the United States. In many countries, attitudes around drinking (at least in regards to age) are much more liberal than in the US. In Italy, you may find that beer, and especially wine, are consumed as part of family meals, including by people of a much younger age than what is customary in the United States. In addition, the legal drinking age may be lower. In contrast, in other regions of the world, such as many countries in the Middle East, consumption of alcohol may be much more restricted (if not forbidden) and/ or culturally taboo.

If you chose to drink while abroad, please drink responsibly and within limits of cultural norms. You, of course, should never feel like you have to drink. Drinking to excess is never acceptable and especially not while on your study abroad program. First and foremost, you are most vulnerable to violence, theft, or other crime when under the influence of alcohol. Excessive alcohol consumption has been identified as the single greatest risk factor for study abroad participants. Drunk driving, besides the obvious dangers, often carries much heavier penalties abroad than in the U.S. Students who exhibit a pattern of dangerous drinking may be expelled from their study abroad program.

The DU Honor Code follows you abroad. DU policies around the use and consumption of alcohol do apply. Student conduct issues, including those involving the use of alcohol, will be reported to DU Student Conduct. If a student is found to be in violation of the DU Honor Code, appropriate outcomes will be assigned.
Meeting the Locals

Although you will be studying in Italy with other US students, the idea of study abroad is not to just hang out with all of your US friends. Get out of your comfort zone and meet some Italians! Here are some pointers for meeting the locals and learning about their lives.

1. Make an effort. Because the universities host new study abroad students each semester (some of whom promise to keep in touch with the locals but never do), the Italian students may not immediately try to befriend you. As the “outsider,” you must show that you want to meet the locals and get to know their culture. Be friendly and genuine.

2. Take advantage of the cultural excursions or activities your program may offer. If your program offers Italian cooking classes, Italian conversation partners, or just guided tours throughout the city, make sure you get involved! You will be more likely to meet Italians and get an Italian perspective (as opposed to the tourist perspective).

3. Stick around. While you may be tempted to head out every weekend to travel, doing so could impede your chances of making friendships with local students. Constantly talking about your travel, particularly about expensive excursions, could also turn off the local students.

4. Practice Italian with local vendors. You will likely shop for food at a local fresh food market where the same vendors work daily. Many students find specific vendors to regularly buy food from. Like any other culture, Italians appreciate Americans who make an effort to use and learn their language. Just by making mistakes and continually trying to learn, you’ll find that Italians are happy to help correct and teach students. This type of interaction opens the door for cross-cultural friendships.

5. Be respectful. Compare and contrast gets old fast. Instead of talking about and dwelling on what you are missing in the US, think about and enjoy everything you are experiencing in Italy! Although it may be difficult to adjust, embrace the cultural differences and try not to insult the Italian people and their way of living. Most likely, when you return to the US, you will miss Italy and the Italian lifestyle just as much as you initially missed home!

The Siesta or La Pausa

As in many European countries, Italians generally take a long lunch and/or nap during the afternoon, which means that many businesses and stores are closed during the afternoon. Each business owner’s siesta will vary, but generally, siesta lasts between 1 and 4 p.m. While this may be frustrating at first, you will learn to love it! Go take a well-deserved nap or a stroll in the park and enjoy your afternoons if you don’t have class.

Gym Membership

Most of the universities in Italy are small and limited in space and likely do not have student gyms. There are gyms to join around the cities but they tend to be bit expensive and may have outdated equipment.

Internet

You will have access to the Internet and computers at your university library and/or labs; however, there may be a long wait if computers are limited. Students who bring their own laptop to Italy may have the option of paying for a wireless internet card. Also, the city you live in will have numerous internet cafes available to purchase Internet at hourly rates. Some apartments will include wireless internet for no additional charge.

Tip: While email is a great way to keep in touch with family and friends back here, too much time spent on Facebook, chat, or Skype may prevent you from having a full study abroad experience.
Medical Facilities

It is not unusual to catch a cold, the flu, or just generally feel a bit run down as you adapt to a new climate and different eating and sleeping patterns. The best advice is to eat sensibly and get enough sleep. Don’t try to do too much at once! While your program may provide you with information on walk-in doctor offices around the city, there are also on-call doctors who will come to your apartment if necessary. If available in your area, the on-call doctors will likely charge a visitation fee that will vary depending on your city or home location.

Be sure that you understand what your US insurance will cover for you while abroad. If your program includes additional insurance, be sure that you understand its structure, what it covers, and how to use that coverage. **Ask your program if there is a recommended medical facility for visiting students that may have more experience working with foreigners and foreign insurance plans.**

See the Student Handbook and your DU Passport account for more information on International SOS services and costs—remember that International SOS can help make medical arrangements but these are not free and will be charged to your US insurance.

Pharmacies

Pharmacies, or the *Farmacia*, in Italian, are an interesting phenomenon in Italy. They are marked with a universal green cross (like our Red Cross) and can be found all over European cities. They look the same as their American counterparts, but their function is somewhat different. In general, when Italians get a cold or the flu, they tend to go to the pharmacist first to ask for advice and later on to the doctor if symptoms are not getting any better.

Most pharmacists will recognize an American immediately and a sign language conversation will ensue if they cannot speak English or you cannot speak Italian. Remember your dictionary to describe your ailments. If your throat hurts, you point to it. If you have a cough, perform your cough. The pharmacist is much like a physician’s assistant in the US. If you have allergies to medications, do not hesitate to describe this! If you have bilingual friends, take them along so that you may better describe your illness. In the experience of past study abroad students, they found the pharmacy service to be highly useful in helping get over their colds and other ailments.

When you arrive in your host city, take note of the nearest *Farmacia* to your school and your housing. Most cities have one or two 24-hour pharmacies—take note of where these are located as well. Keep in mind also that most *Farmacias* take part in the siesta and may not be open during the afternoon.
Transportation in Italy

Important general things to know:

- You cannot hail taxis in Italy! You can get taxis either by going to designated taxi stands or by calling for one to come pick you up. Be sure you keep a taxi company’s phone number in your phone or on you at all times!
- Be aware that public bus and tram services tend to go on strike. The interesting thing, though, is that the public transportation company will usually announce a strike, or sciopero, and it will only last for a few hours during the day. You will either hear people talking about the upcoming sciopero, will read about it in a newspaper, or you can go online to the transportation company’s website for announcements.

Safety, Homesickness, & Mental Health

Personal Safety

- The majority of deaths in Italy are under the age of 30 and occur from motor vehicle accidents. Most accidents have been linked to drinking and/or speeding during the early hours of the morning after bars close.
- Please note that pedestrians do not have the right of way. Always be alert when crossing streets or turning corners!
- There have been cases where people on motor scooters have grabbed purses from women walking on the crowded streets and sidewalks. If you are walking along a street, be conscious of your belongings and try to hold them on the opposite side of the street so that they are not vulnerable to theft.
- Avoid carrying large sums of money with you. Carry only what you need for the day and remember—tourist cities attract pickpockets, so always be aware of your possessions and surroundings, especially in crowded places or on crowded buses or metros.
- Leave your passport, credit cards, and other important documents in a safe place. While you should always carry a photocopy of your passport with you, be sure to keep photocopies of it and other important cards or documents at home as well.

Personal Safety for Women

Foreign women can get a lot of unwanted attention from Italian men. Most of the time, no harm is intended—though it can be annoying. The best way to protect yourself from this unwanted attention and to ensure your personal safety is to conform to local cultural expectations. We recommend that you stay in groups of three or more late at night. Adopt an Italian mode of bearing and appearance and do not acknowledge attempts to get your attention. If someone insists on following you, step into a public place or get on a bus and ask for help. If necessary, yell "va via," (go away!) but do not lead the person to where you live.

ALWAYS carry enough extra money in case you need to take a cab.
Apartment Safety

To safeguard your property and for your own personal safety, you should always follow these simple precautions in your apartment:

1. NEVER give your apartment key to anyone else.
2. If your key is stolen, report it to the Housing Office so the lock can be changed if necessary.
3. ALWAYS lock the windows and doors of your apartment when leaving, even for a short time.
4. Make an effort to get to know the neighbors and to stay on good terms with them. They can be most helpful in preventing problems in your building.
5. Post the number of the local police station near your phone. The main emergency number for the Police is 113. You can call International SOS to find out additional emergency numbers in the area.
6. Be familiar with emergency procedures concerning fire, water leaks, gas leaks, etc.
7. NEVER open your door to unidentified visitors.
8. Don’t invite unknown people back to your apartment.
9. Report any suspicious behavior near your apartment to the Housing Office or to the police.

Homesickness and Mental Health

Moving abroad and living in a country that probably doesn’t speak your native language is hard, but it’s an adventure! It will be difficult adjusting and immersing yourself in this new culture, but embrace it as much as you can. Use each and every experience to speak Italian and learn more about where you are. If you don’t, you will come home wishing that you had. Yes, it’s scary and difficult, but each time you try, you will improve that much more. It will be exhausting, and sometimes your brain will hurt, but keep in mind that speaking as much Italian as you can every day will make you that much more fluent than everyone else that chooses to speak English. And it will get easier. You’ll even find yourself using phrases and verb tenses that you never understood in class without even thinking about it. It’s amazing! So don’t give up.

If you are seeing a counsellor in the U.S., you may want to look into the possibility of seeing one in Italy as well. Culture shock and homesickness tend to exacerbate depression, anxiety, and other emotional and physiological concerns. Even if you’re not used to meeting with a counsellor, you may want to consider doing so while you are abroad. Be willing to verbalize the changes and adjustments you are going through to make your study abroad experience as positive and stress-free as possible. Ask your program about services they may provide or recommendations they can make for you. International SOS can also help you find English-speaking counsellors if there are any in your area.

As for dealing with homesickness, remember that everyone experiences it at one point or another and to varying degrees. There are multiple ways to deal with it, too. You can either try to view everything that is different as a new experience, or you can find something that reminds you of home and connect with that, or sometimes calling home helps. Once you’ve found a way of dealing with it, it is easier to get over it and enjoy abroad! Despite how bad it might seem, and how much you might want to come home, always remember that homesickness does go away, so just give it time.
Communication

How to Call Home

First things first, call home as soon as you can after arrival because your family is anxious to hear from you. Give your family your abroad phone number, email address and mailing address so they know how to reach you in the event of an emergency.

To make an international phone call from Italy, you need to use the following numbers: 00 + (country code) + (city code) + (number). To call the US, you dial: 00 + 1 + (area code) + (7 digit phone number).

To help you call home or help your family call you, please refer to the following link for detailed dialing instructions: www.countrycallingcodes.com

Calling Cards

Pre-paid calling cards in Italy are inexpensive, while calling rates with cards from the U.S. are much higher. Therefore, we recommend you get a calling card when you arrive in Italy. Cards can be purchased almost anywhere: at the airport, train stations, tabacchis, etc. The L’EUROPA calling card, for instance, costs 5 Euro for approximately 250 minutes of call time to the U.S.

If you prefer to use a U.S. calling card, you can access several long-distance carriers while in Italy such as AT&T, Verizon, or Sprint. You will need to provide your calling card number if charging the call to your personal account or hold for an operator if you are calling collect. Be sure to obtain the international phone number of your desired phone service provider before departure.

Cell Phones

Many students buy or rent cell phones to use while abroad. Your program will provide information on the various cell phone options available to you—some programs will even give you a cell phone to use for the semester. With a cell phone, you can cheaply send text messages or call other friends with cell phones in Italy and often get good deals on calling the U.S. without the hassle of continually buying calling cards and having to use payphones.

You can also consult with your cell phone carrier regarding international calling plans or using a new SIM card while abroad. Keep in mind that it can still be expensive for locals to call or text a US number. You may also want to consider whether you’d like to use your regular phone or use a cheaper local phone more easily replaced if it is lost or stolen.

Other Modes of Communication

More and more students are relying on internet and phone apps to be able to communicate with home (Facebook, Skype, WhatsApp etc). While these can be very useful, CHEAP, and convenient, keep in mind that your internet may or may not always be reliable or fast enough to make these methods useful. You may want to consider the methods listed above as a back-up option in case access is limited or slow.
Time Differences

All of Italy is under the same time zone. Whatever calling method you use, consider the time difference before you call home. During *Mountain Standard Time (MST)*, which goes from last Sunday of October to first Sunday in April, the time difference from Italy is 9 hours ahead.

During *Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)*, which goes from first Sunday in April to last Sunday in October, time difference from Italy is 8 hours ahead.

For information on what time is in a city of Italy and what time is in a location in the U.S., go to [www.timeanddate.com/worldclock](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock).

Email

Your program in Italy may provide you with a local email account. Please make sure that you continue to check your DU email regularly as this, along with DU Passport, is how the Office of International Education will maintain communication with you.
Money Matters

Italian Currency

Italy converted from the Lira system to the European Monetary Union just before 2000. Start to familiarize yourself with the currency—both bills and coins—as well as exchange rates, which fluctuate on a daily basis. For the most up-to-date information, and for easy conversion rates calculations, visit www.xe.com. Keep in mind that the Euro is usually stronger than the dollar, which may impact your budget as you plan for the term abroad.

We suggest you carry a small amount of local currency before you leave (€50 to €100 Euro), especially if you plan to arrive on a weekend. You can exchange money at a U.S. bank or airport before departure or at an Italian airport upon arrival.

Banks

It is not necessary to open a bank account in Italy and it is much too difficult to do anyway. Your ATM card and credit card (and potentially some travelers’ checks if you find them useful) will be your primary money sources. You will use bank ATM machines, called bancomats, which charge a transaction fee. If you want to keep transaction fees minimal, consider taking out larger amounts of money at a time and keeping it secure. Keep in mind that your bank in the U.S. will also likely charge you an additional transaction fee.

We recommend only withdrawing money from a bank ATM during bank hours. On occasion, ATM machines have been known to not give back cards or to show that a transaction occurred without dispensing the money. In this rare occasion, it is better to be able to handle the situation immediately as opposed to waiting until the bank opens the next day. Sometimes ATM machines will cancel transactions without you knowing, but it’s always safe to double check with the bank and make sure that no money has been withdrawn from your account that you didn’t receive.

If you do have a problem outside of bank hours, don’t panic—just write down the time that the problem occurred and go to the bank at the soonest available time. Also, sometimes contacting your U.S. bank can resolve the problem, specifically if it is an issue of the transaction going through on your account when you never received the money.

Tipping

Most restaurants in Italy have a service charge, a charge for bread, and even a charge for water. As a result, you are not expected to tip, but you can leave a little extra if you feel the service warrants it. If there is no service charge, you should consider leaving a 10% tip, but this is not obligatory. In bars, Italians often leave small change as a tip, like €0.10-0.20. Tipping taxi drivers is not common practice.
**General Information**

**Weather**

Weather in Italy will typically be reported in degrees Celcius. To convert from Fahrenheit to Celcius, subtract 32 then multiply by 5/9. To convert from Celcius to Fahrenheit, multiply by 9/5 then add 32.

Approximate maximum/minimum temperatures for your study abroad city are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bologna</strong></td>
<td>65/49</td>
<td>43/31</td>
<td>64/46</td>
<td>83/63</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Florence</strong></td>
<td>69/49</td>
<td>51/35</td>
<td>66/44</td>
<td>85/61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milan</strong></td>
<td>64/43</td>
<td>45/25</td>
<td>62/40</td>
<td>80/57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perugia</strong></td>
<td>70/51</td>
<td>54/35</td>
<td>66/45</td>
<td>83/62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rome</strong></td>
<td>71/53</td>
<td>56/39</td>
<td>65/47</td>
<td>81/63</td>
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**Electricity**

Electricity in Europe is 220-240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. This means that if you plug your 110v hair dryer directly into an Italian plug it will BURN OUT. Transformers/converters are therefore required and these are probably best bought in the U.S. Make sure, however, that your transformer is configured for the 2-prong Italian plug. Anything that produces heat – hair dryers, straighteners, curling irons – is better left at home and purchased in Italy. Even with transformers and adaptors, they tend to fry upon first or second use, though some people are lucky and manage to get it to work throughout their stay. The good news is that most computers and camera chargers are now equipped to convert the voltage and you might just need a plug adapter, but be sure to check before making that assumption.

If you cannot get an adaptor in the U.S., consider buying one upon arrival to Italy. Keep in mind that if you buy appliances in Italy, you will almost certainly have trouble running them when you get back to the U.S. Below is a diagram of European adaptors:
Packing Tips from Italy Study Abroad Alums

Things to Take:

- Warm clothes, winter coat, sweaters, and scarves for layering
- Lots of black and neutral clothes
- An umbrella
- Boots and rain boots
- Pictures or small things that remind you of home
- A towel, pillowcase, and maybe even a travel sheet for when you spend the nights in hostels

Things to leave behind:

- Stiletto high heels or flip flops—neither are very practical for walking around the cobblestone of Italy
- Toiletries—if you’re looking to save space, you can buy everything you need for the bathroom once you get to Italy unless you have a particular brand or item that you prefer to have (i.e. contact solution, feminine products, etc)
- School supplies—you can buy all of that in Italy as well