

# DU Study Abroad Guide to Italy

2021 -22



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](mailto:duabroad@du.edu)  
[www.du.edu/abroad](http://www.du.edu/abroad)

**Emergencies:**  
Campus Safety: 303.871.3000

Introduction .....	3
Academics .....	3
<b>Academic Culture in Italy</b> .....	3
<b>The Italian Academic System</b> .....	3
<b>Course Load, Credits, and Assessments</b> .....	4
<b>Learning Accommodations</b> .....	5
Living the Life of an Italian Student .....	5
<b>Housing</b> .....	5
<b>Italy and Alcohol</b> .....	6
<b>Meeting the Locals</b> .....	6
<b>The Siesta or La Pausa</b> .....	7
<b>Gym Membership</b> .....	7
<b>Internet</b> .....	7
<b>Health and Medical Facilities Abroad</b> .....	7
Transportation in Italy .....	8
Safety, Homesickness, & Mental Health .....	8
<b>Personal Safety</b> .....	8
<b>Emergency Number</b> .....	9
<b>Personal Safety for Women</b> .....	9
<b>Apartment Safety</b> .....	9
<b>Homesickness and Mental Health</b> .....	9
Communication .....	10
<b>Calling Home</b> .....	10
<b>Mobile Phones</b> .....	10
<b>Other Modes of Communication</b> .....	10
Money .....	11
<b>Italian Currency</b> .....	11
<b>Banks Accounts in Italy</b> .....	11
<b>ATM &amp; Credit Cards</b> .....	11
<b>Tipping</b> .....	11
General Information .....	12
<b>Weather</b> .....	12
<b>Electricity</b> .....	12
<b>Packing Tips from Italy Study Abroad Alums</b> .....	12

## 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:**

ISA: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – Business, Communications & Italian Culture  
ISA: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – Business, Communications, Italian Culture & Courses with Locals

**Torino:**

USAC: Torino – International Business, Art & Architecture, and Italian Studies

**Florence:**

SACI Studio Arts College International

**Rome:**

Arcadia: Rome – Center for Italian Studies  
John Cabot University of Rome

**Perugia:**

Arcadia: The Umbra Institute  
Arcadia: University of Foreigners  
Arcadia: University of Perugia

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. Please refer to the [Italy Immigration Instructions](#) document for detailed information on the immigration process.

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.

Safe Travels,  
The DU Office of International Education (OIE)



# 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 to avoid the Italian job market or who are trying to receive a better education to be hired in another country.

## The Italian Academic System

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 US.** You may not be able to register for classes until later into the semester. You may audit your preferred courses when the semester starts, attend them regularly, and officially register for the course later.
- **You may be required to enroll in the final exam.** Be sure to check with your program and your professors to make sure you complete any exam registration requirements.
- **Exams are often oral, rather than written.** Students on direct enroll programs in Italy (and courses with locals options) will likely experience this different style of exams. 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. The DU Italian Department is another good resource for preparation.
- **The Italian/European academic system functions differently than the US.** Your class and assessment structures will likely look different. Courses will likely be more lecture-based than here in the US. You will also have less assessments throughout the semester, often one or two larger ones that makeup your final grade. Students typically do a great deal of individual research and learning outside of the classroom.
- **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, make-up exams, and make-up 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. Connect with your program directly for any further clarification.

## **Program Differences**

- For those attending a US-based program, your program will be structured similarly to that of a US university. This includes *Arcadia: Rome*, *Arcadia: Umbra*, *SACI*, *John Cabot University*, and *USAC: Torino*.
- Those attending a program based off the European/Italian system will be immersed in the European style of academics. This includes *ISA: Università Cattolica (both tracks)* and *Arcadia: University of Perugia*.
- Students attending *Arcadia: University for Foreigners* should be prepared for a block system for classes.

## **Course Load, Credits, and Assessments**

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.
  - Be aware that some institutions use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) rather than a US semester system. Confirm with your program how many credits you must earn to be considered full time both by your program.
- Be enrolled in enough credits to be above the minimum amount required to maintain the student visa status, as applicable.

## **Credits and Grades**

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.” While the credit earned is considered DU credit, these grades will not be figured into your GPA. You can read about minimum grade requirements for both DU Partner Programs and unaffiliated programs in the [DU Study Abroad Policies](#).

The grading system for US-based programs is similar to that at DU. The grading system at Italian universities differs. 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.

When you return to DU, the general 16-credit study abroad placeholder course will remain on your account until our office has received your host university’s transcript. It can take a while for the transcript to be sent and an additional 10-14 days to process your transcript at the OIE. 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. 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 explore whether rushed delivery is possible.**

## Learning Accommodations

If you have learning accommodations in the classroom, such as reading assistance or note taking assistance, please inform your program and OIE advisor **as soon as possible**. You will need to connect with your program to find out what services may be possible through your specific program, and how to make those arrangements **before** you go abroad. Accommodations may differ abroad. Please note that you will likely need to provide formal documentation of your accommodations at DU. Also, be sure to make DU's Disabilities Services Program aware that you are going abroad.

## Living the Life of an Italian Student

---

### Housing

Most programs in Italy will organize housing for DU students. **USAC: Torino organizes housing, but students must pay for that housing directly, not through DU.**

Depending on your living situation, you may or may not be provided with living essentials (i.e. bedding, towels, dishware, etc.). Contact your program to see how exactly your housing will be supplied. If these essentials won't be provided, 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 you want to save space or money.

You should research daily life in your city, including commute times, public transportation costs, etc. Budget accordingly both for housing costs as well as use of regular public transportation (see [Money Matters](#) section for more).

### Apartments

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

### Homestays

**In very rare cases**, you may be able to live with a host family, giving you a unique opportunity to experience authentic, daily Italian living. Contact your program to see if this is an option for you.

### Damage & Unpaid Bills

Some of our U.S. based program partners may require a **refundable** deposit to secure your place. 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 will then charge 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 must 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 and possibly the program.

### **Italy and Alcohol**

Please see the [Safety & Security Considerations page](#) in the handbook.

### **Meeting the Locals**

Although you will be studying in Italy with other U.S. students, the idea of study abroad is not to just hang out with all of your U.S. friends. Get out of your comfort zone and meet some Italians:

1. **Make an effort.** Since 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/activities your program offers.** 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.
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. Like any other culture, Italians appreciate Americans who try 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.** 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 U.S., you will miss Italy and the Italian lifestyle just as much as you initially missed home!

### **Practicing Italian**

Use every opportunity 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.

### **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 this time. Each business owner's siesta will vary but will generally last between 1:00pm-4:00pm. 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, 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 many 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. Check with your program regarding with internet at your housing will look like. Some apartments will include wireless internet for no additional charge, but some housing options may require you to pay to use the internet. Also, the city you live in will have numerous cafes or other areas with internet available.

While the internet makes communication with your friends and family back home convenient and easy, too much time spent on Skype, social media, or messaging apps may prevent you from having a full study abroad experience. Keep in touch with your friends and family here, but don't forget to be present abroad.

### **Health and Medical Facilities Abroad**

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. Your program may provide you with information on walk-in doctor offices around the city. There may also be on-call doctors who will come to your apartment if necessary.

See the [Handbook](#) 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.

### **Health Insurance**

You are responsible for ensuring that you have sufficient health insurance coverage while abroad. Be sure that you understand what your U.S. insurance will cover for you while abroad. Many programs include 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.** Please refer to the [Insurance Coverage](#) page in the handbook for more information.

## Pharmacies

Pharmacies, or the *Farmacia*, in Italian, are an interesting phenomenon in Italy. They are marked with a green 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. 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.

Most pharmacists will recognize an American immediately and a sign language conversation will ensue if they cannot speak English or you cannot speak Italian (if you have bilingual friends, take them along so that you may better describe your illness). Connect with your program on resources to help you communicate with locals. If your throat hurts, point to it; if you have a cough, cough. The pharmacist is like a physician's assistant in the US. Be sure to describe if you have allergies to medications. 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.

## Transportation in Italy

---

You can get taxis either by going to designated taxi stands or by calling for one to come pick you up, not by hailing one. Always keep a taxi company's phone number in your phone or on you.

Be aware that public transportation (bus, train, tram, etc.) services tend to go on strike. The public transportation company will usually announce a strike, or *sciopero*, and it will last for a few hours during the day. You will either hear people talking about the upcoming *sciopero* or read about it online/in a newspaper. You can go to the transportation company's website for announcements.

## Safety, Homesickness, & Mental Health

---

### Personal Safety

- Most 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 they are not vulnerable to theft.

- Avoid carrying large sums of money with you. Carry only what you need for the day and remember that 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 at home as well. We recommend making a copy of the front and back of the cards you are planning on taking and leaving one at home with a trusted family member or friend and bringing the other copy with you.

## Emergency Number

The standard emergency phone number in Italy is 113. You can call [International SOS](#) to find out additional emergency numbers in the area.

## 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

Here are some tips to help safeguard your property and for your own personal safety:

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 helpful in preventing problems in your building.
5. Post the number of the local police station somewhere visible and add them in your phone.
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. Homesickness is something that everyone experiences it at one point or another and to varying degrees. Some suggestions for dealing with it include trying to view everything that is different as a new experience, finding something that reminds you of home, or calling home. Once you've found a way of working through it, it is easier to 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.

If you are seeing a counselor here, you might want to consider seeing one abroad too. Culture shock and homesickness tend to exacerbate, not resolve, depression, anxiety, and many other emotional concerns and mental health issues. Even if you're not accustomed to meeting with a counselor, you may consider meeting with one while you're abroad, even if you just want to talk through and process how you're adjusting to your new surroundings. Ask your program about services they may provide or recommendations they can make for you. [International SOS](#) can also help you find Englishspeaking counsellors if there are any in your area.

## Communication

---

### Calling Home

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 a [direct call to the US](#) using a phone that provides a direct dialing option, dial: **00 + 1 + (area code) + (7 digit phone number)**.

#### Time Differences

During *Mountain Standard Time (MST)*, which goes from last Sunday of October to first Sunday in April, **Italy is 9 hours ahead of Denver**. During *Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)*, which goes from first Sunday in April to last Sunday in October, **Italy is 8 hours ahead of Denver**.

### Mobile Phones

Many students purchase a pay-as-you-go SIM card while in Italy. Please be sure to unlock your phone before going abroad if you would like to use this option. Connect with your cell phone carrier regarding international plans as well. You can also purchase a local mobile phone that gives you a local number that can be used off Wi-Fi.

### Other Modes of Communication

#### Internet

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.

#### Email

Your program in Italy may provide you with a local email account, which you should check regularly for program information. 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

---

### Italian Currency

The Irish currency is the “Euro”. The Euro (€) is made up of 100 cents (sometimes called Euro cents). Notes come in denominations of €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200, and €500 and differ in color and size. Coins come in €2, €1, 50c, 20c, 10c, 5c, 2c, and 1c, and differ in color and size. Start to familiarize yourself with the currency, both notes and coins, as well as [exchange rates](#).

We suggest you carry a small amount of local currency before you leave (roughly €200), especially if you plan to arrive on a weekend. You can exchange money at a US bank or airport before departure or at an Italian airport upon arrival.

### Banks Accounts in Italy

It is not necessary/always possible to open a bank account in Italy and may be more work than its worth. If you are interested in the option, ask the international office at your host university for further information and advice.

### ATM & Credit Cards

Make sure you know how to contact your US bank from overseas. Find out if they offer a 24-hour customer service help line and what their emergency phone number is for calls from outside of the US (1-800 numbers do not work outside of the US).

If your bankcard is lost or stolen, you should notify your financial institution immediately. We recommend making a copy of the front and back of the cards you are planning on taking and leaving one at home with a trusted family member or friend and bringing the other copy with you.

Most major credit cards Italy, as well as worldwide. ATMs, called *bancomats*, are widely available. International credit cards and ATM cards will work as long as they have a four-digit PIN encoded. Check with your bank before leaving home.

### Tipping

Most restaurants in Italy have a service charge, a charge for bread, and 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 (not Fahrenheit).

Approximate maximum/minimum temperatures (in Fahrenheit) for your study abroad city is listed below:

	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
<b>Florence</b>	69/49	51/35	66/44	85/61
<b>Milan</b>	64/43	45/25	62/40	80/57
<b>Perugia</b>	70/51	54/35	66/45	83/62
<b>Rome</b>	71/53	56/39	65/47	81/63
<b>Torino</b>	59/50	50/40	67/53	80/65

## Electricity

Electricity in Italy is **220 volts** versus in the US it is 110 volts. If you plan to bring any electrical appliances with you from the US, make sure that you bring a voltage transformer **and** an adaptor. Make sure that your transformer is configured for the 2-prong Italian plug.

You need not only an adaptor to change the shape of the plug, but also a transformer to lower the voltage for American appliances. If you are planning on bring some heating elements (i.e. hairdryers, straighter, etc.), keep in mind that they get dangerously hot, even with a transformer. Consider purchasing these items once you arrive in Italy to avoid blowing out a socket.

## 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

