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Global Education Office  
Reves Center for International  
Studies  
The College of William & Mary

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Photo Courtesy of Carolyn Sloan

## Florence Summer Handbook

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# William & Mary Florence

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# Visa Information and Budgeting

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## Travel Documents

### Passport

- You should apply as early as possible before departure to secure your passport through a Passport Agency (found in major cities), a local issuing office, a Federal or State Court House, or a Class I Post Office. Start the process early so that there will be plenty of time to resolve any problems that may arise. If you will be using your current passport, make sure that it is good for six months after your return to the U.S. If it is not, you will need to renew it.
- Guidelines on renewing your passport or applying for a new one can be found at:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports.html>



### Visa

According to the Italian Consulate, “student visas may not be issued for taking basic Italian language courses. Furthermore, the period of study must be comprised of, at least, 25 hours per week” to qualify as student status needing a visa. Therefore, you are not eligible for a student visa as a U.S citizen. International students should contact the GEO Advisor for more information on obtaining their visa. Additionally please check with your Embassy and on the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs website:  
<http://vistoperitalia.esteri.it/home/en> .

Please be advised, however, that if you are asked by immigration/custom officers at the airport for your intent of visit, you must tell them you are a tourist. Because you are in classes for less than 25 hours a week, you are considered a tourist by the Italian government

## Budget

Your budget for incidental expenses will depend on your personal taste/extravagance and the amount of independent travel you intend to do before or after the program. The program fee covers most of your necessary expenses: tuition, housing, and transportation and entrance fees for program excursions. You are responsible for your round trip airfare to Florence, incidentals, personal expenditures and any additional travel. Entertainment,

travel and incidentals during the weeks of the program may vary greatly with individual tastes. You should expect to budget around one and a half times the amount you normally spend at home per week, or roughly \$125-\$175 per week (around € 100), keeping in mind that expenditures will depend largely on your own spending habits and plans to travel. It is wisest to bring more than you expect to spend in order to be prepared for emergencies or for special occasions.

- Breakfast and dinner will be provided by your host family. Plan to pay for your own lunch, as well as meals during the excursions (with the exception of the Cinque Terre trip).
- Former students have reported spending between \$500-\$1,500 on this program, with most students spending close to \$1,000.



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## Traveling to Florence

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**NOTE: You are responsible for your own travel arrangements to and from Italy**

### **Airport Pick-Up**

Students should plan to arrive at either FLR (Amerigo Vespucci Airport) in Florence or PSA (Pisa) on May 22, 2020. Pisa is an hour away by train, but the station is located right in the airport terminal. From FLR you have the option of taking a bus to the train station or taxi (fixed fare rate) to the hotel. You should arrange your flight so that it leaves on May 21<sup>st</sup>, arriving in Italy on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

It is advised that students travel in pairs, if not larger groups. Use the Blackboard site and share flight information, or plan travel arrangements during the orientation sessions.

After you arrive, remember to call or email your family to let them know you have arrived safely. This will not only save them from worry, but also will help the Global Education Office and the LinguaViva Institute from receiving panicked phone calls regarding your whereabouts.



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## Coursework

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During your stay in Florence, you will study at the:

**LinguaViva Institute**  
**Via Fiume 17**  
**50123, Firenze**  
**Phone: 011-39-055/294359**

Since 1976, LINGUAVIVA has been offering international students the opportunity to study Italian in Florence, to know our culture and to experience Italian life.

The school is centrally-located, in a quiet street next to the main railway station.



Key features:

- Three stories of a 19th century building
- 17 comfortable, well-equipped and air conditioned classrooms where you will learn Italian language, provided with audio and video equipment
- Small garden
- Free internet and wireless access
- Excellent social activities program
- High-quality accommodation within walking distance of the school
- Minutes' walk to the historic center of Florence

**Classes at LinguaViva Institute:** Students will earn a total of 7 credits, including 4 credits of Italian language and a choice between two other 3 credit courses (taught in English) . All course fulfill the COLL 300.

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## Excursions & Activities

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**Santa Maria Novella Train Station** – A street view of the SMN Train Station. All buses stop here, and the bus stops are located throughout the train station complex. Students will use the station to visit Venice, or for personal travel throughout their time in Florence

### **Official and Personal Travel Options**

Excursions in the past have included an afternoon trip to the Chianti, day trips to Siena and the Cinque Terre on the Ligurian coast, where you have a chance to do some hiking and relax at the beach. Plan to bring a swimsuit to Cinque Terre. There also will be a weekend trip to Venice. The program director will provide details. In addition to the group excursions, students may participate in a number of activities organized by our host institution, *LinguaViva*. In the past, these activities have included volleyball, soccer, cinema, picnics, shopping trips, walking tours and cooking classes. Some of these activities, such as the cooking class and shopping trip, will cost extra.

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# Housing and Meals

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## Housing

- Participants of the William and Mary program live with Italian families in Florence. Two students are housed with each family in a shared room. The family provides breakfast (a small meal in Italy) and dinner daily. Linens are also provided.
- Water and electricity are much more costly in Italy than in the U.S., so each student will be expected to take only one shower per day.
- Many of the homestays have internet service, although the speed and quality varies.
- You are allowed to do one load of laundry per week.
- We will ask you to indicate your preferences regarding smoking, pets, children, roommates, etc., or any allergies and every effort will be made to find housing that suits your individual needs.

## When living with a Host Family:

- You should respect the timetable that your host family has set for meals. Do not be late. Tell them ahead of time if you will not be at a meal.
- Try to keep the host family informed when you plan to travel or go on an excursion.
- Please inform your Program Director as soon as possible if you have any dietary restrictions so your host family will know before you arrive.
- You should always ask permission before using your host family's phone. And ask your host family when it is a good time for you to receive calls on their home phone.
- You should always ask permission to bring friends to your host family home.
- Try to help at home as much as possible. Keep your room and bathroom tidy.
- Switch off the lights when you leave a room.
- Do not walk around barefoot in the house.
- Take very short showers and use as little electricity as possible.

**Note:** In keeping with the policy of the W&M Office of Residence Life, the Reves Center does not offer housing for the family of any students participating in W&M-sponsored study abroad programs. Also, family members or friends may not participate in any program activities or excursions. If you have family or friends who want to visit you while abroad it is recommended they do so after the completion of the program.

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## Communication

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The GEO provides local cell phones for all students on William & Mary summer programs with *homestays*. Students that are not participating in a program with a homestay are responsible for researching and arranging their communication plan.

### **PLACING INTERNATIONAL PHONE CALLS**

See the “Handy Information” section for a time zone conversion chart before you call!

**Calling Galway from the United States:** Dial 011 +-353-91 + Local Number

**Calling the United States from Galway:** Dial 00-1+area code + phone number.

### **Emergency Numbers**

Police: 112 or 999

Medical Emergencies: 112 or 999

Fire: 112 or 999

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## Health & Safety

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### **Immunization**

Although it is no longer necessary to have smallpox immunization to re-enter the USA after international travel and no special health precautions are necessary for travel to the UK or Western Europe, students are encouraged to consider updating standard immunizations against meningitis and tetanus. For current information concerning recommended protection against communicable diseases for those planning to travel abroad, you may check the Center for Disease Control's website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/italy.htm>. If you prefer to talk to someone in person about the currently recommended immunizations, you can call Travel Health of Williamsburg at 757-220-9008 (located at 287 McLaws Circle), or consult with a physician in your area who has some expertise concerning immunizations for international travel.

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## Travel & Country Information

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We encourage all students to research their study abroad destination. The State Department has important information available online. Be sure to read up on Italian history, culture, and current events before your arrival. Knowing as much as possible about where you are going will not only make you more comfortable during your time in the country, but will also allow you to talk more knowledgeably with your teachers and new friends.

We strongly recommend that you register your travel plans with the U.S. State Department at this website:

<https://step.state.gov/step/>

This will help the State Department contact you if there is a family emergency in the U.S., or if there is a crisis where you are traveling. On this website you can find information ranging from geographic and political descriptions of the country, to special health and safety announcements.

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# Florence

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**FLORENCE** (Firenze) is the capital of the region of Tuscany. It has a population of around half a million inhabitants, spreads on the banks of the Arno, between the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian seas, almost in the middle of the Italian peninsula. It is a city which bustles with industry and craft, commerce and culture, art and science. Being on the main national railway lines, it is easily accessible from most important places both in Italy and abroad. The climate is temperate but rather variable, with breezy winters and hot summers. The **Chianti** area, between Florence and Siena, is one of the most beautiful country sides in Italy and a famous wine production area.

**Population:** 374,500 (men 47 %; women 53 %)

**Contry:** Italy | **Region:** Tuscany

**Languages:** standard Italian, no dialects.

**Time:** GMT/UTC plus one hour (plus two hours in summer)

**Annual growth:** 1.7% | Inflation: 2.1%

**Major industries:** tourism, textiles, food processing (wine and olive), clothing & footwear.



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# For Fun: Light Reading and

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## Tips from a Past Student

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### **My first day or two in Florence:**

The first day was the arrival day for all the students in the program. We were checked into the hotel rooms, which we shared with 2-3 other students. We all met for dinner with our program director at a scheduled time. Before dinner we visited LinguaViva for a brief orientation and received some basic materials to help explain our stay in Florence - homestay information, insurance information, emergency numbers, etc. We then walked to a cellphone store to receive our phones. After, we took a brief tour of Florence on our way to the Piazza Della Signoria where we enjoyed dinner. The next day was a free day where we explored Florence without any guidance from the school or program. Most students decided to orient themselves in Florence, walking around the city and visiting the main sites. The group decided to have a big dinner at a restaurant friendly to students and enjoyed the nightlife in Florence. The third day we all left mid-morning to go to our homestays.

### **Home stay and convenience to restaurants, shopping, nightlife:**

In the Florence program, students are placed in roommate pairs and then placed with a homestay in the Florence area. The roommate pairs share a room with two twin beds. Homestay location in Florence varies for each student, from a 5 minute walk to LinguaViva to a 20 minute bus ride. Most students use the bus system to get around Florence as it is quite convenient and operates from the early morning until late at night (depending on the bus line). Some students did find it difficult to experience the nightlife from their homestay locations, but a willingness to share a cab on the return home or walk with others can take care of that problem.

**Meals:** Two meals a day with our host family were included in the program, so most students participated in these meals. Breakfast consisted of toast with butter and jam or Nutella, fruit, and fiber biscuits, as well as juice and tea. We did not eat breakfast with our homestay, but our host mom set up the meal for us and the other students in the house. We were asked to clean up after breakfast. My homestay breakfast was quite different from other student's breakfasts in terms of food and custom, but all of our dinners were similar. We all ate around 7:30-8 with our host families. Dinner was 3 courses, starting with pasta, then a meat and veggies course, and finally dessert, which usually consisted of fruit. My homestay offered us wine, but dinner is not a time to drink too much. Be prepared to talk about how delicious the food is multiple times (it always is delicious!) - Americans are stereotyped as being picky, so most host moms are

unsure if students really like the food, and will ask many times. Even if you don't like it, say it's delicious - they spend a lot of time and money preparing dinner and appreciate your acknowledgment.

**Money:** I discussed a budget beforehand with my parents - they paid for food and travel expenses, while I paid for all my souvenirs. We created a joint bank account through Sun Trust, so they would have access in case my bank card was stolen or lost while abroad. I accessed money throughout my trip through ATMs (I used the post office ATMs). I probably spent 150 euros on food, 200 euros on individual travel, and 200 euros on souvenirs for myself and family.

**Laundry:**

Laundry was included in our homestay and was done once a week (3 times in total). Our homestay only did 1 load for all the students in her house (3 in total) each week, so don't expect to separate darks and lights. Our clothes were hung out to dry, and although I asked to use an iron once, I could not due to the high cost of electricity.

**Academic differences or similarities to your regular classes at W&M:**

I've never taken a language class or art history class at W&M so I can't speak to those specific differences, but otherwise class expectations are very similar. Attendance is required at all classes, and while course difficulty depends on the individual student's experience with language and art history, both classes did not require extensive nightly review. However, studying for both midterms and finals required a lot of time.

**Access to the internet and computers:**

I did not bring a computer, but many students did—even though wifi was not prevalent. I used one of the three computers at LinguaViva and internet cafés. However, my roommate did have an iPad touch for internet access when we were planning our trips and to send quick updates to our families. I would not recommend bringing a computer but be prepared for the transition to slow internet access in Italy.

**Slang/phrases/idioms students should know and use or refrain from using:**

Just be aware that most Italians will not recognize American slang/sayings, so be prepared to rephrase and repeat requests to ensure complete other understanding. At restaurants and stores, always say hello, goodbye, and thank you in Italian, even if you speak in English at other times. Same goes for your homestay - they appreciate if you integrate Italian words, even if you can't always speak fluently.

**Program excursions:**

We visited Venice for 3 days, Cinque Terre on a day trip, and had a Chianti wine tasting one afternoon. I fully enjoyed each of these excursions and would definitely recommend them in the future. We also enjoyed 3 group dinners in Florence, all of which were delicious. It was nice to come together as a group often, as some students were located far from other students in Florence.

**Weather:**

The weather was a lot like that in Williamsburg, minus the humidity. The first two weeks, the temperature was in the mid to high 80's, with some days over 90. The third week, it was cooler, and every afternoon it thunder stormed. The last week was much like the first two, although the temperature was more comfortable (or we had adjusted). I wore summer clothes – dresses, shorts, skirts, and capris. Definitely have something appropriate for the many church visits. I wore jeans a few times at night. Bring a rain jacket and umbrella.

**Packing:**

Pack lightly - you will buy things and if you travel after your program, you don't want your bag to be too heavy. Make peace with wearing clothes more than once - you will be able to do laundry and no one will remember your exact outfit.

**Free time:**

We had very little free time, but usually after our afternoon classes and before going home for dinner we would explore Florence a little more/visit stores/get gelato or coffee. On our two days off from program/class requirements, we traveled to neighboring towns. We went to Rome for our free weekend.

**Everyday life:**

3 days of the week we had class all day - Italian class began at 9am with a 30 minute break at 10:30am and ended at 12:30pm. We would then get lunch before our afternoon art history class, which began at varying times but always lasted for 2 hours. Every day, we would wake up around 7am, have breakfast at 8am, and be out the door for our bus at 8:30am. During our morning break we would either get coffee or go on the computers. We would get a quick lunch from the *supermercato* and eat at the *LinguaViva* gardens, or got to a cheap restaurant or *gastronomia*. Usually, we would try to get home between 6:30pm and 7pm so we could relax before dinner. Because we were so tired from our days, we would usually go to bed early, although our host mom was ok with us going out 2-3 nights a week.

**Opportunities to meet locals or immerse in the culture outside of the program:**

This was hard to do because of the shortness of our stay, but our homestays were excellent interactions with the culture. Dinner conversations revolved around politics and different Italian customs. Our homestay recommended places to visit in Florence, and around Italy, and helped us with our Italian.

**Staying in touch with family and friends back home:**

I stayed in touch mainly through email and Facebook, but I also spoke with my family on the phone a few times. This was expensive, but usually the fastest way to communicate, as I didn't want to spend all my time on the computer.

**Need to know:**

Don't expect to maintain complete contact with all your friends and family - it's not worth spending your time on the internet when you only have 4 weeks in Florence. Air

conditioning is not prevalent in Europe but you will get used to the heat. First impressions with your homestay are integral - bring a nice hostess gift and be on your best behavior at dinner.

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## Contact Information

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### Reves Center Contacts

You may call the Reves Center and its advisors at the numbers below between 8am and 5pm (Virginia time), Monday through Friday. In case of an emergency that falls outside of these times, please call William & Mary Campus Police at +001(757) 221-4596. Campus police will then forward your call to the correct person or office.

**Reves Center Advisor:** Laura McDonald ([lbmcdonald@wm.edu](mailto:lbmcdonald@wm.edu)) +001 (757) 221-2003

### Reves Center for International Studies

**College of William and Mary**

**P. O. Box 8795**

**Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795**

**Fax – (757) 221-3597**

\*To call the U.S. from abroad: 001+ (Area Code) + phone number

### At the LinguaViva Institute

Via Fiume 17

50123, Firenze

Italia

Phone: +39-055/294359

**Program Director:** Professor Sara Mattavelli, Lecturer of Italian Studies

([smattavelli@wm.edu](mailto:smattavelli@wm.edu))

**Note:** During your stay in Italy, it is important to discuss problems and concerns with your program director first. They will be able to solve most simple problems and can easily refer you to other resources.