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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 2017

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This handbook offers guidelines that we hope you will find useful in making your preparations and while studying in Florence. Please read the handbook carefully before your departure and **bring it with you** to Italy, either as a paper or email copy. The program policies are included, along with lists of important items to bring with you, tips for handling your money, and precautions for safeguarding your health and belongings. In an effort to serve you best, the material in this handbook is edited each year and contains the latest information available to assist you in preparing for your trip. While we do our best to provide you with the most accurate information, inevitably some changes may take place and we will need to make adjustments. Your program director and the Global Education Office Advisor at the Reves Center will keep you informed of any changes.



## Handy Information

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### Summer holidays and Events in Italy

Date	Holiday	Description
June 2	Anniversary of the Founding of the Republic	A national holiday
June 17	The Historic Regatta of Saint Ranieri	Pisa
Late June to mid July	<b>Festival dei Due Mondi</b> , Festival of Two Worlds	A performing arts festival in Spoleto in Umbria
June 24	Santi Giovanni Battista (patron saint of Firenze)	Religious holiday

### Average Min/Max Temperatures in Italy (°F)

January	February	March	April	May	June
35/48	40/50	40/58	48/68	55/79	61/85
July	August	September	October	November	December
64/82	64/89	55/73	50/68	40/59	35/50

### Time Zone Comparison: Florence is 6 hours ahead of Virginia during summer

Pacific (US)	Mountain (US)	Central (US)	Eastern (US)	FLORENCE, ITALY
5:00am	6:00am	7:00am	8:00am	2:00 pm (14:00)
1:00pm	2:00pm	3:00pm	4:00pm	10:00 pm (22:00)
9:00pm	10:00pm	11:00pm	Midnight	6:00 am (next day)

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# Overview, Dates, and Money

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## Program Overview

- Fees: \$5,400
- **Program Director:** John Donahue, Dept. of Classics (jfdona@wm.edu)
- **Accommodation:** Homestays with Italian families, which include breakfast and dinner. Some excursion meals are provided.

## Program Dates

- Arrive May 26 – Depart June 24, 2017

## Pre-departure Orientation

Your Program Director will schedule meetings prior to the program leaving to answer questions and have you know what to expect, as well as how to prepare for your program. These meetings will be associated with a 1-credit course that will begin after Spring Break. More details will follow.

## Money

A note on currency: Regardless of the level of financial resources you may have available for your period of study abroad, all students share the same need to have quick access to their funds and, at the same time, to have their money protected against loss. The currency of Italy is the Euro (and exchanges to the US dollar at a rate of \$1 US = .94 *Euros (EUR)* or 1 EUR = \$1.07 USD (as of January 2017). You can check the current exchange rates on the web at <http://www.xe.com/ucc> or in the financial section of a large city newspaper.

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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. 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.

#### Study Abroad Program Worksheet for Florence (1 USD=0.94 EUR)

Expenses:	Amount:	When due:	Paid to W&M?	Paid out of pocket?
Program Fee	\$5400	Deposit March 4 <sup>th</sup> , Balance April 1 <sup>st</sup>	Yes	
Airfare	\$700-1300			Yes
Meals (daily lunch, snacks and dinners on and some excursion meals)	\$800			Yes
Reves Center Fee	\$75			Yes
Visa, passport, photos	N/A	Prior to beginning of program		Yes
Books & supplies	\$100			
Misc./Personal	\$800			Yes
Total	~\$8175			
Eating	Items		Average Price	Price Range
	Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant		\$20.00	\$14.04 - \$20.02
	Combo Meal at McDonalds or Similar		\$8.67	\$6.67 - \$10.68
	Coke/Pepsi (0.33 liter can) restaurant price		\$2.67	

	Water(1.5 liter bottle)	\$0.70	\$0.60 - \$1.20
	Milk (regular), 1 liter	\$1.93	\$1.68 - \$1.99
	Cappuccino (regular)	\$1.60	\$1.55 - \$2.67
Living	Cinema, International Release, 1 Seat	\$10.00 -11.00	
	1 min. of Prepaid Mobile (monthly)	\$0.25	
Traveling	Transportation Methods	Average Price	
	One-way Ticket (local transport)	\$1.60	
	Monthly Pass ( Regular Price)	\$ 46.70	
	Taxi Rates	Taxi Start: \$4.40 Taxi 1km: \$1.19 Taxi 1hour Waiting: \$31.50	

#### Planning your budget:

Funding Sources:	Amount:	When Available:
Scholarship(s)		Varies by deadline, Reves scholarships will reduce your total balance due. You will find out if you've been awarded a Reves scholarship by the end of February.
Financial Aid (Loans, grants, through W&M)		First day of classes on campus or the first day of the summer program, whichever is <b>LATER</b> .
Savings		
Parental/Guardian support		
Other		
Total		



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# Packing Tips

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## General

- Many items you need can be purchased once you've arrived in Florence. For example, bring travel-sized toiletries to keep your bags light, and purchase full-sized items once you've arrived.
- Do not bring any items of sentimental value that you couldn't bear to lose.

## Luggage

- **Pack only what you can carry by yourself up 2-3 flights of stairs, or walk with for relatively long distances.** A wheeled duffle bag or suitcase plus a generous tote or backpack for weekend travel should suffice. Returning students recommend that your carry-on be a backpack rather than a handheld bag if you plan to do any extra traveling.
- Do not pack valuables, medications, or eyeglasses (contact lenses) in your checked luggage.
- Put address labels and contact information inside and outside each piece of luggage.
- Pack medications in your carry-on luggage.
- Pack all sharp objects securely in your checked baggage.
- Pack all liquids in plastic bags to avoid leakage during travel.
- Place your camera in your carry-on
- Put TSA-approved locks on all of your luggage so that it can be opened without the lock or bag being destroyed.

## Clothes

- Bring easy care clothing items that are lightweight, drip dry, and wrinkle-proof, such as knits, permanent press, and cotton clothes. Dark colors are more practical than light, as they do not show dirt as easily.
- Pack clothes you can mix and match so as to give your wardrobe as much variety without having to pack as much.
- Only bring clothes you can imagine wearing often.
- Bring clothes that you can layer for various temperatures.
- Do not bring clothes that immediately mark you as 'foreign' – avoid items with obvious phrases in English, or other symbols that will immediately mark your outsider status.
- Roll clothes instead of folding them; you will fit more in the bag, and have fewer wrinkles upon arrival.

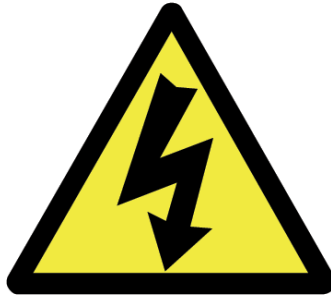
## Gifts

- Students often ask what small gifts they can take with them to give to their host families. Try to think of things that are unlikely to be available in Italy: items made in your home region, calendars or books with photos of America's

outstanding features (wildlife, national parks, plantations, cities, and so on), William & Mary paraphernalia, and the like.

For more tips, please consult the Summer Study Abroad Manual, as well as the “Know Before You Go” section of this handbook.





### **An Important Note on Electricity in Florence**

Electricity in Italy is 220 volts, 50 cycles alternating current (AC). For comparison, in the United States it is 110 volts, 60 cycle AC current.

If you plan on using your own 110-volt appliances, you will need a voltage converter, unless your appliance is designed to also work with 220 volts electricity (dual voltage). For example, most laptop and camera chargers are designed to work both at 110 and 220 volts. **Plugging in an appliance that is not designed to run on 220 volts electricity without using voltage converter will most likely kill it and may cause fire!**

Regardless of voltage, if your appliance has flat prongs, you will need a plug adapter: Italian sockets are designed to accept round prongs. Do get one before your leave!

As a matter of fact, Italian plugs can be of two different sizes. Some sockets will take in the plugs with large prongs only, some other will take in the ones with small prongs (more common for small appliances; large prongs are used for demanding appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines).

Regardless of prong size, **the outlets all produce 220 volts!**



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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 26, 2017. 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 25<sup>th</sup>, arriving in Italy on May 26<sup>th</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**

Courses
<b>ITAL 200/300:</b> Italian Language & Literature (4 credits)
<b>ITAL 300/ATH 360:</b> Florentine Renaissance Art (3 credits)
<b>INTR XXX:</b> Mediterranean Food & Culture: A Taste of Tuscany (3 credits)

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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 Sienna and the Cinque Terre on the Lingurian 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 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., 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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## Online

Students have limited computer access at the school, but **you will not need your computer for coursework while in Florence; none of your instructors will expect you to type your work** (but they will expect it to be neat!). Wireless connectivity is available in certain sections of *Lingua Viva*. Additionally, there are numerous internet points in Florence and *LinguaViva* students are eligible for some discounts and free computer time. Whether you take a tablet or laptop is entirely up to you, but do keep in mind security and luggage weight issues.

## Cell Phones

The Global Education Office provides cell phones for all participants on this program.

## Landline Phones

Most Italian host families will not allow lodgers to use the phone to call out unless they have a prepaid phone card, and sometimes not even then. Public phones in Italy accept credit cards and/or prepaid phone cards (this last being by far the most widely accepted means of payment). Even local calls are timed in Italy, though they are not expensive. Students have had difficulty in the past using prepaid cards bought in the U.S.; it is wise to wait and purchase your international prepaid card in Italy, as they are widely available and are inexpensive.

### Placing International Phone Calls

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

**Calling Florence** from the United States: Dial 011+ 39 055 + phone number.

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

### Emergency Numbers

General: 112

Operators speak Italian, English, French, and German

Police: 113

Fire: 115

Medical Emergencies: 118

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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.

### **Staying well/Getting sick**

For the duration of the program, the LinguaViva support staff is always available to assist students in obtaining medical care. Be sure to make a paper copy of the medical insurance card that has been emailed to you by the Reves Center. It is necessary to present this cards to get insured medical care in Italy. Useful information on preparing for medical emergencies before you go abroad is provided at <https://step.state.gov/step/>

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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.

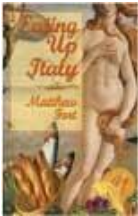
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## For Fun: Light Reading and Movies

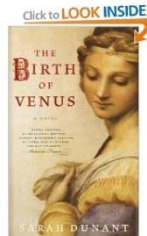
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*Following are a few books regarding Italy. Check them out, or consider looking for other books to put you in an Italy mood prior to – or during – your time abroad. Don't worry; you won't be tested on them!*

### Books

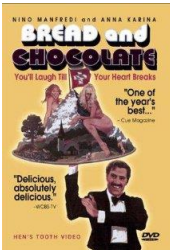


Eating up Italy  
By Matthew  
Fort

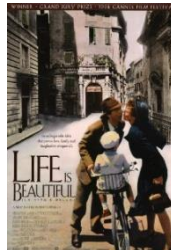


The Birth of  
Venus  
By Sarah  
Dunant

### Movies



Bread and  
Chocolate



Life is Beautiful



Cinema  
Paradiso



Under the  
Tuscan Sun

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Will I need a visa?**

A visa for study is not required for US citizens. According to the Italian government, you are not considered a student because you aren't in class for 25 hours per week. If asked upon arrival, you are tourist for visa purposes. Only a valid passport is required for US citizens.

### **What airport will I fly into? Do all W&M students travel together on the same flights?**

Please refer to the section in this handbook on "Traveling to Florence" for specific information. W&M students do not necessarily take the same flight. However if you wish to travel with other students you can arrange to communicate through Blackboard or Facebook.

### **Can I arrive earlier or stay longer than the program dates?**

Yes, you may but you will be responsible for making your own accommodation arrangements. You will **NOT** be able to stay in the housing provided during the program.

### **If my family or friends visit, may they stay with me?**

No, they will need to make their own arrangements for accommodations. Please advise your program director if you expect family or friends to visit you during the program.

### **Am I required to participate in all excursions provided by the program?**

Yes, unless your program director says otherwise. The excursions supplement the coursework and expand cultural learning.

### **Will I need to seek post approval for the courses I take?**

No, all of the courses offered in the W&M faculty-led summer programs have already been approved.

**Will my grades be posted on my transcript?**

Yes, the grades you receive will be posted on your W&M transcript and will be calculated into your GPA.

**Can I take class pass/fail?**

No, this is not an option.

**Do I need to take my own sheets and towels?**

You will be staying in a homestay in Florence so you do not need to bring sheets and towels. Although, if you plan to travel on your own and stay in hostels, it is suggested to bring your own thin towel and sheet.

**Will my study-abroad facility have a fitness center/gym for student use?**

Unfortunately, LinguaViva does not offer a fitness center facility for students.

**How much spending money will I need?**

That varies on your normal spending habits, especially in regards to eating meals out and how much shopping you like to do. Former students have indicated they spent on average between \$500-1,600 during the program. Most students reported spending \$1,000 or more, but again this depends on your personal spending habits. Former students recommend carrying some cash or using your credit or debit card.

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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 Signora 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. I decided not to bring toiletries from home, but this was a mistake - shampoo, conditioner, shower gel, shaving cream, and lotion are much more expensive in Europe and the language barrier was difficult to overcome when deciphering what exactly a product was.

**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 *supermercado* and eat at the *LinguaViva* gardens, or got to a cheap restaurant or *gastronomica*. 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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## Know Before You Go

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### ADDITIONAL TIPS FROM PAST STUDENTS

#### PLACES TO SEE IN AND NEAR FLORENCE

- Florence's most popular site is its Duomo (cathedral), the *Cattedrale de Santa Maria del Fiore*.
- The *Campanile*, bell tower, is in the *Piazza del Duomo*. The first storey was designed by Giotto and it is commonly called *Giotto's Campanile*. Buy a ticket and climb the 414 stairs (no lift!) for great views of the Cathedral and its dome, as well as of the city of Florence and its surroundings.
- The *Galleria degli Uffizi* holds the world's most important collection of Renaissance art, including thousands of paintings from medieval to modern times and many antique sculptures, illuminations, and tapestries. You will see many famous artists, such as Michelangelo, Giotto, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino, and Raphael.

- Florence's most famous square is the *Piazza della Signoria*, the heart of the historic center and a free open-air sculpture exhibit.

## **LIVING**

- You will receive two meals a day as part of your home stay arrangement accommodations fee (breakfast and dinner). You can also take one shower per day, sometimes more, and will have your laundry done once a week. You must cover your own lunch and after-dinner activities. You will also have to pay for most excursion meals, except for the excursion meal to Cinque Terre.
- "My host family was very welcoming and treated us like true family. It made my month here much richer and more unique."
- Many students felt that the homestay experience positively contributed to their interaction with the local community.
- "Without the homestay, I would not have gained the immersion experience I was hoping for."

## **MONEY**

- Be sure to call your bank and put a travel notice on your debit AND credit cards. Otherwise, purchases and withdrawals may be declined due to suspected fraud. Learn of any charges or fees that may apply for using the card overseas.
- Former students recommend carrying some cash and your credit or debit card.
- "You will use more cash than you think. Many places do not accept debit or credit cards, and constant cash withdrawals can be expensive, so come prepared."

## **PACKING SMART**

- A good way to keep a copy of your passport "with you" at all times is to scan your passport and email it to yourself. Access to your passport, therefore, will be possible at any computer with internet access.
- Returning students recommend that your carry-on be a backpack rather than a handheld bag if you plan to do any extra traveling and for field trips.
- It can get very hot in Italy, so be sure to have summer clothes. Occasionally you will get a cool, rainy day, so take along a sweater or a hoodie.

## **COURSEWORK**

- You will attend Italian language classes with other international students from Spain, China, Japan, Great Britain, Australia, France, and the USA.
- Part of your grade is based on class attendance.
- LinguaViva is a bright and clean environment with air conditioning, wifi, a beautiful garden, many classrooms in two buildings, and in a great location just one block from the bus and train station.

## **PREPARE YOURSELF**

- The only issue with housing is walking home after dark, especially for females. Be sure to travel with other students, especially at night, as Florence is a large city.
- In the past, all students were excited and complimentary of their host families, but switches are possible if the situation is unbearable.
- If you are ill, talk to the Program Director, as the program has a recommended doctor who will see you and provide treatment or prescriptions.
- Supermarkets are great places to pick up snacks or forgotten toiletries. The Central market is a great place to buy a cheap lunch.

## **ITALIAN CULTURE**

- Italians are rarely punctual for meetings or appointments, meaning that they usually commence 15 minutes after the scheduled time. Italians typically work fewer hours than Americans per day and their schedule is far more flexible.
- Italians are less sensitive about personal space as are Americans and you might feel as though they are invading your comfort zone. What Americans would feel to be an acceptable distance might seem like you are being cold or distant towards an Italian. Also, Italians often touch each other while they are verbally communicating.
- In daily life, Italians augment verbal communication by pronounced gesturing and frequent facial expressions in order to add liveliness to speech. Watch for “talking hands” and “flying arms!”

## **MEETING PEOPLE**

- Italians are usually happy to be engaged in small talk about weather/artwork and conversations focused on complimenting their region/country. Family and work are generally safe topics for conversation, although they don't take it lightly when foreigners are critical of their surroundings.
- Italian humor can come across as being very cynical or sarcastic. You could feel that they are laughing at you; just don't take it to heart.
- Public displays of affection are commonplace. Kissing on both cheeks as a form of greeting is normal.
- Social structure is often defined by what area of Italy you come from, with the South being poorer and the North being more prosperous. Be careful to tread lightly when discussing different regions of Italy, as Italians have strong opinions about differing regions of their country.
- The most common way to establish a more personal relationship with an Italian is to invite them to coffee or lunch.
- “The art history class allowed us to walk around Florence, see the sites, and interact with the local community.”

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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:** Sarah Mullen ([semullen@wm.edu](mailto:semullen@wm.edu)) +001 (757) 221-2003

### Reves Center for International Studies

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

### At the LinguaViva Institute

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Italia

Phone: +39-055/294359

**Program Director:** Professor John Donahue ([jfdona@wm.edu](mailto:jfdona@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.