

# *Frequently Asked Questions*

[https://www.aifscustomized.com/ncsac/florence\\_spring/faqs.asp#](https://www.aifscustomized.com/ncsac/florence_spring/faqs.asp#)

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## *Transportation*

### **Do I have to take the AIFS flight?**

No. However, bear in mind that if you purchase the AIFS transportation package, the transatlantic flight will be provided with round-trip airport transfers. You will be met at the airport on arrival and taken to your accommodations. At the end of the program if you leave on the group flight on the group departure date, you will be picked up from your residence and taken to the airport.

### **Can I change my return flight once I am in Italy?**

Maybe. For a fee and subject to airline approval and availability, you may try to change your return flight. You must contact the agent directly. Only date changes are allowed; there can be no changes to the routing, and there will be an agent and airline-imposed change fee that could be as high as \$350. If you have a connecting flight in the US, you must check whether you are able to change that, as some cannot be changed. Please note that once you receive your ticket, it is your property and therefore AIFS staff cannot make the changes for you.

## *Housing*

### **Where will I live?**

You will live in an apartment with other AIFS students. The apartments will be scattered throughout the historical center of the city and will be varied in size and style. An average of four AIFS students will share a two-bedroom apartment.

### **Can I have a single room?**

We have limited availability on single rooms, and they can only be guaranteed upon payment of a supplement. Contact the Connecticut office [customizedfaculty@aifs.com](mailto:customizedfaculty@aifs.com) with individual requests, which will be dealt with on a first-come, first-served basis.

### **Can I move into my accommodations before the program starts if I am arriving in Italy early?**

AIFS cannot supply you with accommodation until the official start date of the program. However, if you plan on arriving early, we can recommend local hotels and/or hostels.

### **Can I choose my own roommate?**

Yes. Simply indicate your roommate preference when completing the AIFS online enrollment form and have your prospective roommate do the same. If you decide to room with someone after your enrollment form has been submitted, please both of you email the Florence Student Services staff at [florence@aifs.co.uk](mailto:florence@aifs.co.uk) with your request and the name of your home school.

### **How is my roommate chosen?**

We allocate roommates based on the information provided on the AIFS program online enrollment forms completed by every student. First, we look to see if a student has requested a particular roommate, and if they have, we house them with that person. We then put students with similar routines together, similar likes and dislikes, hobbies, etc. This is why students should always fill out the housing section of the online enrollment form honestly and with as much information as possible.

**When will I find out who my roommate is?**

Rooming assignments will be notified on arrival in Italy.

**How many people are there per room?**

In the apartments there will be an average of four people, two per bedroom. Single rooms are very rare in apartments but can occasionally be found. Again, students should request these and be prepared to pay a supplement.

**Are the rooms/apartments coed?**

Generally, apartments are all shared by people of the same sex. Contact your study abroad advisor and the Florence Student Services staff for special requests.

**What is provided in apartments?**

Your apartment comes with kitchen facilities, including stove, refrigerator, storage areas, pots, pans, dishes, silverware and either an oven or microwave. There is also a washing machine but no dryer (these are very rare in Italy).

When you move into your apartment, your bed will already be made and you will be given a spare set of bed linen. There are no phones in the apartments and, most importantly, towels are not provided. You are responsible for bringing or purchasing your own towel.

**How far is the housing from school?**

The apartments are all located in the historical center and can be up to a 30-minute walk from the school.

**What are the meal arrangements?**

There are kitchen facilities in all the apartments, allowing you to prepare meals whenever you like. No meals are supplied. As an optional extra, AIFS offers a meal voucher program, which gives you vouchers to use in various restaurants in the center of the city. The number of vouchers you receive depends on the length of your study abroad program. For example, if you were studying with us for a semester, thirty vouchers would be available.

Currently, we have ten restaurants as part of the program, all of them providing a quality restaurant experience in exchange for your voucher.

**What are the apartment restrictions?**

City-wide quiet hours are 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. We expect you and your roommates to be responsible, particularly when it comes to noise. If you ignore the noise restriction, then your neighbors are perfectly entitled to call the police and report you.

Overnight guests are not permitted to stay in any AIFS accommodation. This is a city-wide regulation and also due to insurance purposes.

No posters or photos are permitted on walls. This can seriously damage the paint.

**Can I choose to make my own living arrangements instead of living in AIFS accommodations?**

In theory, yes, you can make your own arrangements; however, it is very difficult with lots of pitfalls unless you have close friends or relatives living in the city who can help you. There is a reduced program fee for making your own living arrangements, but any money saved will not be adequate to pay for housing you would find on your own in the short-term rental market.

If you choose this option, first you must provide details to the program coordinator at your school. You must also notify AIFS in writing at [aifscustomized@aifs.com](mailto:aifscustomized@aifs.com) that you do not require housing. Please be

sure to include your Italian contact address and phone number in case we need to reach you in an emergency.

## *Culture*

### **What events will be on the cultural calendar?**

There will be a good variety of low-cost events on offer that make the most of what Italy has to offer. Usually included will be a cooking class, wine appreciation or olive oil tasting class, the chance to see a local soccer match, a trip to the opera and a pizza making class, to name but a few!

### **Are these events good value for the money?**

Yes. The price is lower than you could find on your own as AIFS is able to get group discounts through our contacts in the area.

### **Will there be trips?**

Yes, depending on your particular program, there may be low-cost day trips at student/budget prices. Look out for details once the program starts and sign up in the student services office.

## *Money*

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

This very much depends on individual tastes. However, AIFS recommends that students budget \$700-\$1000 per month for day-to-day needs. This would allow for some theater visits and excursions but not extensive overseas travel or expensive purchases.

### **How can I get money in Italy?**

Throughout Italy you will find plenty of ATM's allowing access to your funds from your US bank account. Please let your bank know that you will be in Europe and intend on using your debit/credit card(s). Also check with your bank for details of any charges for out of network/overseas withdrawals. Please also be aware that your card may not work in every ATM; you may have to try a couple of different ones before accessing your funds.

Debit/Credit cards are accepted in many places throughout Italy but not everywhere, and there is often a minimum spending requirement. It is a good idea to have cash and bank card available at all times.

Some students also bring pre-paid money cards with them as a backup in case of any emergencies. These can be loaded with funds via the internet from anywhere in the world.

If you run short of money or in the unfortunate event you have your wallet stolen, AIFS on-site staff can give you details of how to have money wired to you in an emergency situation from friends and family.

## *Communication*

### **Will I be able to access the internet?**

Yes, of course. AIFS will provide wireless internet access free of charge in all of its accommodations in Italy. The study center where classes take place has wifi, and there are many bars/cafes throughout the country allowing you to access the internet.

### **How can people contact me when I am in Italy?**

Once you have sent in your application, you will receive details of the mailing address at the study center, where you can receive any mail/packages.

Italian cell phone plans are reasonably priced and are a good option if you are staying for a semester. Directions will be available if you wish to purchase a sim card when you arrive. An added bonus of using an Italian cellphone is that it costs nothing to receive calls. There are no telephones in the accommodation.

The majority of our students use Zoom, Facetime, WhatsApp or similar to talk with family and friends back home, using an internet connection in Italy.

## *General*

### **Do I need a passport?**

You will need a valid passport to travel abroad. If you have a passport that will expire during your program or within four months after the end of your program, renew it now. You will not be able to board your flight without a valid passport in hand.

If you are applying for your first passport, go to [http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first\\_830.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_830.html).

If you need to renew your passport, go to [http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/renew/renew\\_833.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/renew/renew_833.html).

To obtain a passport you will need:

- I. Passport Application Form DS-11
- II. Proof of Citizenship
- III. Present Identification and Photocopy
- IV. Application Fee
- V. Two Passport Photos

The automated appointment number for all passport agencies is (877) 487-2778. For general passport information, you may dial the Federal Information Center at (800) 688-9889, or visit their website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

### **Do I need a visa?**

If you are staying less than 90 days, no. If you plan on staying longer, you should get a tourist visa before coming. If you are not a US citizen, please talk to the nearest embassy or consulate for requirements. Do not forget to obtain visas for other countries you may wish to visit. It is not possible to do this once you are in Italy.

### **What should I take with me?**

Not too much! Students always find that they brought clothing that they never wear and toiletries that they could have easily bought in Italy.

If you are on medication, you should bring enough to last you for the program as well as a copy of the prescription in case you need a refill.

The weather can be unpredictable, so bring warm clothes. It is best to bring clothes that you can layer to be appropriate for all kinds of weather. You should also bring a weatherproof coat. You will do a lot more walking than you are used to, so bring comfortable shoes.

You will not need much "dressy" clothing, but bring an outfit for the opera or ballet. Full evening dress is not required, but it is nice for women to wear a dress and men casual slacks (not jeans). Italians are smart and trendy dressers, and you will have the opportunity to purchase similar style clothes when you are there. Remember to leave space in your suitcase for souvenirs you will buy.

**What happens if I get ill abroad?**

There is a 24-hour doctor service that has English-speaking doctors if needed. They are available for appointments or home visits. You will have to pay for everything up front including the doctor's visit and medication, then you may make a claim on your AIFS medical insurance. For this you must make sure you have filled in all the medical claim forms correctly and have all receipts. Pre-existing conditions have limited coverage. Please read your insurance information for conditions that may be excluded.

**Will my hair dryer/hair straightener work in Italy?**

In theory, yes. However, you will need to bring the correct outlet adapter and voltage converter, and even then, past experience has shown US electrical items to work for a short while before failing. The voltage in Europe is greater and the outlets are also different, so you need to be 100% sure before plugging things in. A basic hair dryer can be purchased in Italy for approximately \$25, and you can share the cost with your roommate.

**Can I buy textbooks and course-related materials in Italy?**

Yes, in the majority of cases you can. All major Italian cities have some English language bookstores, but unless your professor has asked them in advance to order your books, they may not have the exact edition your professors require.

**What sports facilities are available?**

Italian cities do not have as many sports facilities as you may be used to back at college in the US. Gyms are fairly common, but the quality and size varies. There are public parks for jogging and playing soccer along with some outdoor swimming pools. Yoga is also fairly common, with many studios offering student discounts.

**Can I work when I am in Italy?**

It is illegal to work in Italy unless you have a work permit. If you do want to stay and work after the program, you will need to apply for a work permit before you leave the US. It cannot be done once you are in Italy.