

FAQ regarding the MSU in Florence program

May 20 – June 21, 2018

What makes this program unique and wonderful?

So many things! Here are the top three:

- 1) Italy! The art, food, culture, people, and pace of life in Italy is amazing. We should all live like Italians every day.
- 2) Rather than moving about en masse, living in hotels, passing from city to city as tightly scheduled tourists, we become locals for a month. We live in apartments alongside Italians, shop and eat locally, and become immersed in the workings of this amazing city. This is as close to a full immersion study abroad experience as can be done in a short term trip. We live in the city, study at facilities provided by our host school, visit a many of the 70 plus museums/sites with Renaissance, Medieval, and contemporary art, and experience the Italian pace of life through it all. There's so much to photograph, eat, breathe, and live in Florence.
- 3) Six credit hours in four weeks! You can't do that at home. The courses offered meet actual requirements for art majors, art minors, and offer a general education option, too.
- 4) (Couldn't stop at 3!) This program has been running continuously since 2007. We've become quite good at making everything run smoothly, assuring an enjoyable, cultural, and life-changing educational experience for all.

What courses are available?

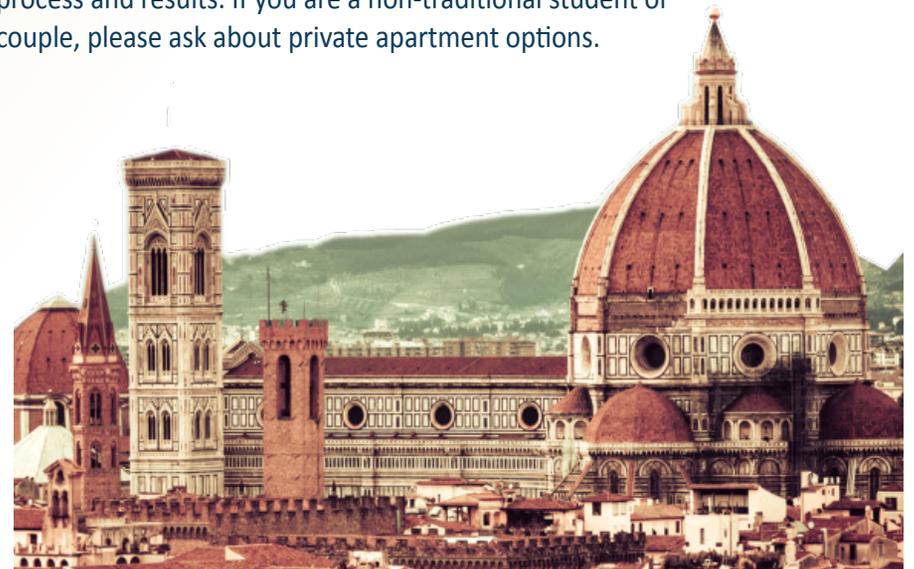
Photography and general education courses are available. Each student must take six credit hours, one photography course at the appropriate level (ART 255 or ART 357) and IDS 297/397. ART 255 is a beginning black and white photography course, and ART 357 is an intermediate/advanced black and white photography course. IDS 297/397 is a visual literacy and culture class and can be used either to meet general education requirements OR it can be used as an upper division Art elective for the BA, BSEd and BFA degrees. This course will be taught mostly onsite, through museum visits, writing, reading, and digital photography. Ask about graduate level courses and honors options.

Do I need to have art pre-requisites or be an art major to join the program?

No, you will be enrolled in the courses based on your experience level and the requests made on the application. No matter if you're a beginner, intermediate, or advanced, you will have courses available for your level. You do not need to be an art major or have had any art courses in the past in order to enroll in our program.

Where will I live during the month in Florence?

Students are housed in shared apartments in the historic center of Florence. All apartments are within a 5-15 minute walk of the host school, Santa Reparata International School of ART (SRISA). These are typically two bedroom or three bedroom furnished apartments with double occupancy bedrooms, full kitchens, showers, washing machines, and wi-fi. Based on preferences listed in your housing requests, SRISA will group like-minded students together. You are welcome to list a specific person with whom you would like to share a bedroom. If you would like to request a private bedroom in a shared apartment, you may do so for an additional \$175. The available single rooms are limited and cannot be guaranteed, but the charges will be refunded if a single room is not assigned. The program fees include a \$250 housing deposit which will be refunded to you in the fall semester of 2018, less any charges for damages. MSU students have been very happy with the apartments arranged by SRISA and have been pleased with the roommate selection process and results. If you are a non-traditional student or couple, please ask about private apartment options.



What is our daily schedule?

We must be somewhat flexible in our plans due to travel, museum open hours, and many other factors associated with international study. However, the typical weekday schedule (Monday-Thursday some weeks and Monday-Friday once or twice) will include five-six hours of class time each day with a two hour break for lunch. Most of the activities will be within the scheduled class times, but occasionally we will gather at other times to visit museums/historic sites. SRISA offers cultural classes and opportunities you may opt into as well, and it's likely our program will require several of those sessions. Weekends and evenings are free time for students to socialize, do homework, shop, cook, eat, do laundry...and eat more gelato.

Do I need to speak Italian?

No, although it is polite for you begin any conversation in Italian with a few greetings and phrases you can quickly learn, you will find that nearly all Florentines speak English very well. Being able to say "hello," "please," "thank you," "goodbye," "do you speak English?" and other basic phrases is necessary to be culturally sensitive and polite.

(Buongiorno! Per favore, Grazie, Arrivederci, Parla Inglese?)

There are apps, websites, podcasts...so many ways to learn Italian. To get the most of your experience in Italy and to better culturally prepare yourself for the program, you should consider taking any of the Italian courses offered through our MSU Foreign Language Institute. They offer short, non-credit travel language courses as well as credit courses beginning through intermediate and advanced:
<http://fli.missouristate.edu/Italian.htm>



Is there group travel or do I book my own airfare?

You can choose to book your own flight or fly with the group. Arrangements will be made to fly together with the faculty leader on the program

dates, but if you choose to stay longer in Europe after the program ends and travel about, you may wish to book your own flight and find cheaper, more flexible dates for flying. All program participants will confirm which choice they prefer before group flights are booked. If you book your own flight, MSU will remove from the program cost the amount

charged for airfare (estimated at \$1500-1700). If you choose to fly alone, be assured that international airports are all very similar to domestic airports and always feature English language signs throughout. If you have flown at all, you'll find it nearly as easy to navigate an international



airport as it is any domestic airport. A group flight will likely be booked from Springfield (STL and MCI are typically not enough cheaper on an international flight to warrant the drive) into Florence or to Bologna or Pisa. If you fly on your own, DO book a flight directly to Florence airport (FLR) where school staff will meet you and directly check you into your apartment. If a group flight is arranged into Bologna or Pisa (costs are sometimes less), we will make train/bus arrangements and travel that segment also as a group.

Do I need a passport, visa, any vaccinations?

You do need a passport book (not a passport card) to fly internationally. This costs \$110 for a new or renewed passport. You can apply for a passport at two public library locations in Springfield or many US Post Office locations. Your passport must be valid at least six months beyond the travel dates/flights booked. For details and documents needed, visit: <https://travel.state.gov/>

If you are a US citizen, you do not need a visa to visit Italy for our length of stay. If you are an international student, it's possible you need a visa to travel to Italy. Talk with the International Center on campus for assistance pursuing those visa related answers.

There are no vaccinations required for this trip.

How do we get around the city on a daily basis?

Walking is our primary mode of transportation throughout our stay in Florence. Florence is a very walkable city, and all the sites we visit are within a 30 minute walk from the center. Most are less than 20 minutes walking. Grocery stores, fresh markets, shops, etc. are all within 10 minutes of your apartment. For longer or more strenuous walks, climbs, excursions, there may be bus or taxi options. If you have any physical limitations, please discuss with program leaders what, if any, accommodations might be made. Door to door taxis or bus service are typically not available and there are limits to the accommodations MSU can make in other countries. Walking, if you're able, is the simplest and easiest method of navigating the city, but be aware that there are a lot of stairs and there is a lot of walking required, approximately 6-9 trips of 10-30 minutes each, every day. Bring comfortable shoes. It's a fun and easy work out program.

Can I travel outside of Florence on weekends?

Yes, you may travel outside of Florence in your free time IF traveling in groups of two or more persons. You must notify program leaders of your plans and alert us of your return. There are many small cities near Florence which are fabulous day trip experiences. Beaches, medieval towns, countryside retreats, hikes...can all be nice day trips. Rome or farther destinations may be visited in overnight trips. One long weekend will be designated for such opportunities. Program leaders are happy to help with train ticket purchases, hostel recommendations, and other travel arrangements as necessary.

What travel opportunities are built into the program?

There are arranged, guided trips to Rome and Chianti available. You may opt into one or both of those trips. The Rome trip includes transportation, accommodations, some museum entries, and SRISA staff guides. The cost for the Rome trip is €280, paid in advance, usually around March or April previous to the trip. The Chianti trip includes transportation (lovely scenic views throughout), a cultural and historic stop along the way, a winery tour and leisurely multi-course lunch with wine



tasting. The cost is €80 for the Chianti trip, also payable in advance when you opt into any additional trips and list food preferences, allergies, etc. for the other group meals.

How are meals arranged?

Most of your meals are independently procured and allow for individualized preferences and options. You will have full kitchens, markets and grocery stores nearby, and lots of options for restaurants, trattorias, pizzerias, sandwich shops, etc. You will be introduced to the amazing central market and some local trattorias. One of the best cultural experiences of the trip is navigating food purchases, which is easy and fun to do without many Italian language skills. The food options are amazing, fresh, and healthy. Unlike the US, Italy offers quite inexpensive, good quality food, and it's possible to eat very well on less than \$10 a day. There are three group meals planned, two that SRISA arranges, and one we will have together as a 'farewell dinner.'

What safety concerns are there in Florence?

Florence is a very safe city and not very large. The rate of violent crime is quite low. As it is a popular tourist destination, it does have issues with pick-pockets, petty theft, begging, and purse-snatching. You will be taught how to avoid these situations, how to properly lock your doors and windows, and how to carry your personal items. None of our students have been victim to such crimes. There are a few areas of Florence you must avoid at night, a few sketchy nightclubs you're not allowed to enter, and it's best to walk about in the company of friends after about 11pm. Largely, though, Florence is a friendly, populated, and safe city without fear of lurkers around dark corners or random violence.

What facilities and campus services are available in Florence?

Santa Reparata campus will provide a home base available from 9am to 11pm. There are classrooms, a library, computer labs, facilities for photography, drawing, printmaking, and painting. The staff at SRISA are wonderful, warm, welcoming people who will assist in many ways, such as making calls on our behalf (lost luggage, taxis, museum questions), or making local recommendations on many topics. They also host a safety and cultural orientation program that is a wealth of information about Florence, as is the handbook you'll receive on arrival. SRISA also assists, advises, and translates if any medical issues arise.

What are the costs of the program?

The program fee is \$5100. This covers your airfare, housing (\$250 of which is refundable afterward), the facilities use and services provided by SRISA, a day trip to Siena, three group dinners, museum entry fees and all group activities within Florence, some class materials, international health insurance, a Study Away office fee, and other miscellaneous expenses required to keep us all in Florence for a month. What is not included is any MSU tuition not covered by Spring semester scholarships/aid (no student services fees are added to these courses, just the per credit hour tuition rate), most meals (estimated \$10-20 per day), personal expenses and souvenirs, additional travel to other cities. If you choose to book your own airfare, the cost of airfare will be deducted from your bill.

How is this program considered a Spring program while it actually travels in Summer?

The courses you will take during our summer program are listed as part of your Spring semester course load so that you may use your scholarship/aid for the regular academic year toward the program costs and tuition. The Study Away office will enroll you in the courses chosen and take care of overload permissions created by adding the Summer courses to your Spring semester. Enrollment/registration for the program courses will likely not take place until February, around the time financial aid/scholarships are released.

What scholarships or financial aid are available to me?

- Any scholarships or financial aid you already receive can be applied to the program costs and the tuition for this sanctioned MSU program. You should speak to the staff in the Financial Aid office to know clearly how your particular aid/scholarships can be used toward the program. Many times additional aid/loans can be obtained for approved study away programs, which applies to this program.
- If you have an MSU Board of Governors scholarship or University Scholarship, you will automatically receive a one-time \$500 voucher for study abroad. The \$500 will be removed from your bill.
- There are also a number of scholarships designed specifically for students in study abroad programs. Need and merit based scholarship opportunities are available and can be found through this link: <https://international.missouristate.edu/studyaway/117196.htm>

The November 1 deadline for the College of Arts and Letters scholarships is a very important one to remember. If you're a student in this program, you're qualified to apply. MSU and the College of Arts and Letters supports learning experiences which also enhance cultural competency! **Apply here:** http://missouristate-sa.terradotta.com/index.cfm?FuseAction=Programs.ViewProgram&Program_ID=10827

Are there requirements for attire, behavior, attendance?

Yes, you'll receive information at orientation regarding what to pack, what is expected of you to be culturally sensitive, appropriate, legal, etc. It will not be difficult to adhere to the simple rules necessary to conduct ourselves appropriately. Attendance and punctuality are essential for the entire group, as many of our activities depend on everyone arriving and entering together.

What is the legal drinking age in Italy?

18 years is the legal age. You will be legal to drink in Italy. There are many safety and cultural warnings about becoming intoxicated, though, and there will be guidelines and expectations to adhere to for our program. Having wine with meals is very usual and expected throughout Italy. It's one of the many cultural experiences to savor, slowly and wonderfully, while in Italy. Drinking excessively or without also ingesting food is simply not socially acceptable among Italians and can be potentially dangerous. More details about this and the program expectations will be shared at orientation. As any Italian would recommend, "slow down, enjoy!"

Do I need an Italian phone or an international plan for my cell phone?

For calls among our group, it's best to have an Italian mobile phone that is pay per use / prepaid. You will be provided with options for procuring an Italian SIM or phone that will work throughout Italy and without the need for wi-fi. This option can be quite inexpensive for infrequent short term use. For communicating with folks from home, free wi-fi enabled methods are best. Messenger apps, Skype, iMessage, FaceTime....there are lots of ways to connect with your people via the interwebs.

Gelato?

Yes! YES! The answer to that question is always yes.

Other questions? gwenwalstrand@missouristate.edu

