



Arrivederci

PREPARING TO GO HOME HANDBOOK

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General Information

Remember to:

- **RETURN LIBRARY BOOKS** before Final Exams begin, after which date books will only be available in the library for consultation.
- **PAY UNSETTLED INSTITUTE BILLS:** Students with outstanding bills will not receive grades
- Return the University of Florence dining hall card to Student Services.

Florence Airport Transportation

The Institute is not responsible for your departure transportation. You are asked to organize your own transportation.

TAXI tel. 055.43.90 or tel. 055.42.42

Approx. 25,00 Euros

A: You should reserve the taxi the day before if you need it before 8:00 am. Call the taxi number, tell them the day/time you want the taxi to be by your front door and your street address & phone number.

B: If you need a taxi after 8:00 am, call it at least 30 min. before the time you want to be at the airport.

TRAM - Line T2: The T2 tram takes you to the Florence airport (stop name **Aeroporto Peretola**) from the city center and runs from 5:00am to midnight on Sun.-Thurs. and until 2:00am on Fri. and Sat. Take the tram from either the **Unità** stop (located outside Hotel Baglioni) or from **Alamanni-Stazione**. The ticket costs 1.50 Euros and can be purchased from either the ticket machines located on the track or from tabacchi shops around the city. Remember to punch your ticket upon boarding in one of the designated validating machines on the tram. Travel time approx. 20-25 minutes with departures every 5-10 minutes.

Items forgotten in the apartment and packages received after departure:

The Institute is not responsible for shipping any forgotten item or package that arrives at the Institute after your departure.

Food & Clothes Donations

At the end of every semester, ISI Florence puts out **collection boxes at Palazzo Bargagli** for those of you who would like to donate unwanted clothing that is in good condition, unopened and non-perishable foods, and books. You may also donate school supplies, sealed shampoo, soap, detergent etc. Items will be donated to the Italian Red Cross for charity.

Receipts from Doctors Visits

For those of you who have been to the doctor and paid, you should have received a receipt at your visit. If you have not done so yet, you can **fill out an insurance claim form** and **attach the original receipt**, as well as any other documents you have collected (i.e., pharmacy receipts) that are accepted by the insurance company for reimbursement.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I have extra bags?

All passengers are allowed to check-in one large bag (some airlines allow 2 large bags) plus one carry-on. The carry-on must be small enough to fit in the overhead compartment. Please check with the airline for limits.

If you have extra bags, you must pay the fee when you check in at the Florence airport. The charge for an extra bag could be as much as \$150,00 (check with the airline) and can be paid in the Euro equivalent or with a major credit card only.

Is it possible to check my bags through to my final destination?

Yes. However, you still must claim them in your first point of entry in the States. For example, if you have a ticket from Rome to Dallas, but have to change planes in Atlanta, you will first pick your bags up in Atlanta, go through customs, recheck your bags to your final destination at a recheck baggage station, then continue on to Dallas. Once in Dallas, you will not have to pass through customs again as you have already done so in Atlanta. While there might be long lines for passport control, usually rechecking your bags is a very quick process. For those of you with a layover only in Europe, you will have to go through passport control at your layover location and will go through customs at your first point of entry in the States.

What is forbidden to bring back to the U.S.?

It is forbidden to bring fruits, plants, meats, soils, birds, snails, other live animals, wildlife products, farm products, etc. For more information on food regulations, please refer to:
<http://www.cbp.gov/document/publications/agriculture-notice>.

Can I bring wine back to the U.S.?

Each passenger over 21 years old can bring two bottles of wine (or other alcohol) packed in the checked-in bag (not the carry-on unless you buy it at the duty free after security checks). You can also ship wine to the U.S. through wine shops and Mailboxes stores. If you are under 21, and are stopped for a custom check, you will have to hand in the bottles.

How many liquid ounces am I allowed to carry on?

All liquids that you plan to pack in your carry-on must be three ounces or less (a small travel-sized bottle) and in a small clear plastic bag. For more information regarding travel regulations, please visit the website of your airline.

Shipping Home

Option 1: Do-it-yourself

The Italian Postal Service offers you the possibility to send packages (max. 20kg = 44lb) to the U.S.

Central Post Office
Via Pellicceria, 3 (Piazza della Repubblica)

- If you don't have one, buy a box at the Post Office.
- Follow instructions at the Post Office when filling out the customs declaration forms. You will have to indicate the contents of the package and its value, together with the name and complete address of the receiver.
- To avoid a high customs charge when the package arrives at your home, identify the contents as used personal articles and be sure to write down a low \$ value.

- Choose regular air or surface (by sea) mail or an express airmail service: Paccocelere Internazionale or EMS – Corriere Espresso Internazionale.

The current prices for standard shipping can vary from 30 Euros (1kg) to 90 Euros (20kg). Please see the Italian Postal website, www.poste.it, for limitations on dimensions.

Option 2: Professional Packaging and Shipping

Mailboxes
Corso Tintori, 39 or Via della Scala, 13r

- They offer shipping from Florence to the USA taking care of wrapping your things, packing them up or even picking them up at your apartment. Reserve in advance. For more information and prices visit their website, www.mbe.it.

Reentry Challenges

1. Boredom

After all the excitement and stimulation of your time abroad, returning to old routines might seem dull. It is natural to miss the adventure and challenges that characterize study abroad.

2. No one wants to listen

Many people might be uninterested in hearing about your adventures and triumphs when you try to share your experiences.

This is not a rejection of you or your achievements, but simply the fact that once they have heard the highlights, further interest could fade.

Be realistic in your expectations of how fascinating your journey is going to be for people at home who were not there with you.

3. You cannot explain

Even when given a chance to explain all the sights you saw and feelings you had while studying abroad, it is likely to be a bit frustrating to try to relay them coherently. It can be difficult to convey this kind of experience to people who do not have a similar frame of reference or travel background, no matter how sympathetic they are as listeners. You can tell people about your trip, but you may find it difficult to make them understand exactly how or why you felt a particular way.

4. Reverse homesickness

Just as you probably missed home for a time after arriving in Italy, it is natural to experience some "reverse" homesickness for the people, places, and things that you grew accustomed to in Florence. Writing letters or emails to keep in contact with your classmates from ISI Florence can help, but feelings of loss are an integral part of international education and should be anticipated and accepted as a normal phase of studying abroad.

5. Relationships have changed

It is inevitable that, when you return, some relationships with friends and family will have changed.

Just as you have altered some of your ideas and attitudes while abroad, the people at home are likely to have also experienced some changes. These may be positive or negative, but expecting that no change will have occurred is unrealistic. The best preparation is flexibility, open-mindedness, minimal preconceptions, and tempered optimism.

6. People misunderstand

People might misinterpret your words or actions because your way of communicating has changed. New clothing styles may be seen as provocative or inappropriate, or references to Italy and speaking Italian as boasting. Be aware of the way you present yourself and how your behavior might be interpreted.

7. Feelings of alienation / "critical eyes"

Sometimes the reality of being back at home is not as natural or enjoyable as anticipated. When daily life is less enjoyable or more demanding than you remembered, it is normal to feel some initial alienation, see faults in society that you never noticed before, or even become overly critical of people and things for a time. This is no different than when you first left home. Keep mental comparisons in check until you regain your cultural balance.

8. Inability to apply new knowledge & skills

Many returnees are frustrated by the lack of opportunity to apply newly gained social, linguistic, and practical coping skills that appear to be unnecessary or irrelevant. To avoid ongoing frustration, change what is possible, be creative and patient, and above all use the cross-cultural adjustment skills you acquired abroad to assist you with your own reentry.

9. Loss or compartmentalization

Being home, along with the pressures of jobs, families, and friends, often combine to make returnees worried that somehow they will "lose" their experience abroad. You may feel that somehow the experience will become compartmentalized like souvenirs or photo albums kept in a box to be admired only once in a while. However, you can avoid this happening by keeping in touch with contacts, sharing your experiences with people who have had similar ones to yours, and remembering and honoring both your hard work and the fun you had while studying abroad.

Readjustment Tips

1. Prepare for the adjustment process

Anticipate what returning home will be like and reflect on how going home can be both similar and different from going abroad. Florence has become your new home, and going back to the U.S. may actually feel like going abroad. It might have changed while you were away or it may just be different from what you expect it to be like.

2. Give yourself time

Allow yourself time to relax and reflect upon what is going on around you, how you are reacting to it, and what you might like to change.

3. Understand that the familiar will seem different

You have changed; home has changed; you will be seeing familiar people, places, and behaviors from new perspectives. Some things will seem strange, perhaps unsettling. Anticipating these differences will help in the reentry process.

4. There will be some “cultural catching up” to do

Some linguistic, social, political, economic, entertainment, and current event topics may be unfamiliar to you. New academic programs or regulations, slang expressions, popular culture references, recent events, and even major social changes may have emerged since you left. Prepare to do your own “cultural catching up.”

5. Reserve judgments

Try to resist the natural impulse to make snap decisions and judgments about people and behaviors once back home. Mood swings are common at first, and your most valuable and valid analyses of events are likely to take place after allowing some time for thorough reflection.

6. Respond thoughtfully & slowly

Quick answers and impulsive reactions often characterize returnees’ behavior. Feelings of frustration, disorientation, and boredom are sometimes incomprehensible to family and friends. Take some time to rehearse what you want to say and how you will respond to predictable questions and situations. For example, how would you respond to the questions, “How was Italy?” or “Did you have fun?”?

7. Beware of comparisons

Making comparisons between cultures and nations is natural, particularly after living abroad. However, it is best not to be too critical of home or too lavish in praise of foreign things.

8. Cultivate sensitivity

Showing an interest in what others have been doing while you have been away is a sure way to reestablish rapport. Some annoyance with returnees can result from the perception that they are so anxious to share their experiences that they are not interested in what happened to those who stayed at home.

9. Remain flexible

Try to achieve a balance between resuming and maintaining earlier habits and enhancing your social and intellectual life with new friends and interests.

10. Seek support networks

There are lots of people back home who have gone through their own reentry process and who understand and empathize with a returnee’s concerns. Returnees may find it useful to seek out people with international living experience, such as academic faculty, exchange or international students, Peace Corps volunteers, international development staff, church mission officials, those doing business internationally, or to join international students, clubs, and organizations associated with your home institution.

Beyond Study Abroad

Upon returning home, you can use your study abroad experiences to your advantage in both the academic and professional worlds.

ACADEMIC

1. Involvement

Get involved in any organizations or events that are happening on-campus or plan your own! Try presenting at conferences or seminars with an international focus; become a study abroad advocate; join a study abroad alumni group at your university or create one if it does not already exist; or take new classes that have an international focus. Being proactive and involved will give you a competitive edge in your experiences and on your résumé as well as keep you active in the international community.

2. On-Campus Resources

Use the time on-campus to start talking to your career center, study abroad office, professors, returnees, and alumni about how to incorporate your study abroad experience into your academic life and post-graduation plans.

PROFESSIONAL

1. New career options

Just because you are done studying abroad does not mean it is the end of your adventures! If you are looking to go outside of the U.S. again, consider some of these options: internships, volunteering, teaching English, au pair opportunities or pursuing a Master's degree internationally.

2. Résumé writing

Do not just list your study abroad experience. Instead, use it to highlight some of the most valuable skills you can bring to a future job.

3. Interviewing

During an interview, explain or expand upon any skills acquired during your study abroad. You want to dispel the myth that you were just overseas for a semester "having fun." Think about examples of your successes and accomplishments while abroad.

Buon viaggio!



Thank you for being part of ISI Florence.

“Why do you go away? So that you can come back. So that you can see the place you came from with new eyes and extra colors. And the people there see you differently, too. Coming back to where you started is not the same as never leaving.”

-Terry Pratchett, A Hat Full of Sky