

[ITALY] – [Università degli Studi di Firenze]

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I. Your overall feeling after your semester abroad

¹ To update the agenda just click right on your moose

My semester abroad in Florence was truly one of the most enriching and unforgettable experiences of my life. I had a lot of fun, met incredible people, and immersed myself in a culture that I already felt deeply connected to. I grew up in El Salvador surrounded by Italian culture. My grandfather left Italy after World War II, fleeing the poverty of that time, and brought with him the traditions, food, and values that shaped my upbringing. When he passed away, I promised myself that one day I would live in Italy.

Being able to fulfill that promise made this experience profoundly special. Living in Florence not only deepened my appreciation for Italy's beauty, history, and lifestyle, but also challenged me in ways that allowed me to grow both personally and professionally. I return with a broader perspective, greater independence, and an even deeper love for the country that has always felt like a part of my story.

GRADE : 5/5

I would give this experience a 5 out of 5. I highly recommend this semester abroad to anyone considering it. It exceeded all my expectations: academically, culturally, and personally. I truly believe it's an opportunity that everyone should experience if they can.

II. Before the travel

A. Preparation

1. Visa

I hold an Italian passport, so I did not need a visa to study in Italy. No additional procedures were required in terms of immigration or legal stay.

2. The flight

I booked my flight on January 18th with the airline Vueling. I chose a direct flight from Paris Orly Airport to Florence Airport (Amerigo Vespucci), which I took on February 6th. The booking process was straightforward, and I opted for this route because it was convenient, time-efficient, and allowed me to arrive directly in Florence without needing additional ground transportation from another city.

3. My luggage

Packing for my semester in Florence was a bit of a challenge, but I ended up bringing most of what I needed. Some of the most useful things were comfortable walking shoes (since I walked everywhere), a compact umbrella for the occasional rain. I also brought a small backpack that was perfect for day trips and everyday use. I stayed in a shared apartment with a roommate rather than student housing, so I'm glad I packed a few small items from home that made the space feel more personal, like photos and a cozy blanket. One thing I wish I had brought was a better jacket for the early spring weather. I underestimated how chilly it could still get in February. And if I could do it again, I'd bring fewer clothes overall and save space for the many things I ended up buying locally.

4. Bank account

I did not need to open a new bank account while in Italy. Before leaving, I closed my French bank account and relied solely on my Revolut account, which proved to be extremely helpful throughout my semester abroad. It allowed me to easily manage my finances, make payments, and withdraw cash without any major issues or additional requirements.

5. Insurance

For my semester abroad, I remained covered under the French social security system through Ameli. I extended my coverage to include the Carte Européenne d'Assurance Maladie (CEAM). This allowed me to access public healthcare services in Italy under the same conditions as Italian residents. I didn't subscribe to any additional private insurance, as the coverage provided by the French system was sufficient for my needs during the stay.

B. Housing

1. Where to live

I lived in the Santo Spirito neighborhood and absolutely loved it. It's a beautiful, vibrant, and very safe area with lots of character and local charm. It's close to the center, well connected, and easy to get around on foot or by public transport. Living there gave me a perfect balance between a peaceful home environment and access to everything I needed. I would 100% recommend this area.



I personally wouldn't recommend living in the city center, especially around the most crowded parts. While I didn't have a bad experience myself, some friends who lived there did have their apartments broken into. It's a very busy area with a lot of movement at all hours, which can make it less secure and less comfortable for day-to-day living. Especially next to the train station, Santa Maria Novella.



2. Find a flat or a room

I found my flat through a WhatsApp group chat called “Latinos in Florence”, where members of the community help each other out with a variety of things, including accommodation. A friend added me to the group, and one day I saw a message from a girl saying she had a free room in her apartment. I decided to text her, and she accepted me as her new roommate.

It ended up being a great decision. We got along really well, and she became a good friend. I highly recommend joining local or cultural WhatsApp groups like this one, as they can be incredibly helpful and lead to genuine connections.

3. Cost

I paid €850 per month for my room, and around €300 every two months for utilities (including electricity, water, gas, and Wi-Fi). I’m aware that this was on the more expensive side, but I made a conscious decision to prioritize safety and comfort, especially since I was moving to a new city where I didn’t know anyone.

I also chose not to live in student housing, as most of the options I came across were located quite far from the center. I preferred to live in a more central area so I could have everything (university, shops, cafés, and cultural sites) within walking distance, which made daily life much more convenient and enjoyable.

III. When I arrive at the university

A. Inscription at the university

The enrollment process at the university was very easy and smooth. I completed everything by email and simply sent the documents they requested. There were no major complications, and the instructions were clear.

The only downside was that response times could be quite slow, so I sometimes had to wait a while to get confirmation or answers to my questions. Still, overall, the process was straightforward and manageable.

B. Information on the university

1. Class

Workshop in Probability for Economics and Finance

This course was very interesting but involved advanced calculus, which I found challenging. Although comfortable with numbers, this was a bit difficult for me.

Fundamentals of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics

My favorite class by far. It deepened my knowledge about starting and managing a sustainable business through a semester-long project. Highly practical and enjoyable.

Organization Design for Well-being

My second favorite. It explored different ways to organize companies and improve employee well-being. I really enjoyed the content and teaching approach.

Sustainable Finance and Responsible Investing

I didn't enjoy this course as much. It focused heavily on banks and finance, which I found dense and less relevant for my personal career. The workload was demanding with long readings.

Social Enterprise in Sustainable Food Systems

An interesting course with important themes. Although it doesn't directly align with my career goals, I think the topics are valuable to understand.

2. Organization of the Class

Each class lasted 1.5 hours, which I found to be an ideal duration. Longer classes I had taken in the past often made it difficult to maintain focus throughout. Although there was usually a substantial amount of material to cover, the workload was generally manageable.

All the teachers were very kind and approachable. However, since most classes were held in large lecture halls, I didn't have many opportunities for personal interaction with the professors.

3. List of courses and recommendation

Compared to the first-semester courses at MOMA, I found MOMA's classes generally more challenging in terms of workload and rigor. However, UNIFI's courses offered better ways to learn through practical projects and clearer organization.

Workshop in Probability for Economics and Finance: Harder stats content; recommended if you have strong quantitative skills.

Fundamentals of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics: My favorite; practical and well-organized. Highly recommended.

Organization Design for Well-being: Similar difficulty to MOMA; insightful and enjoyable. Recommended.

Sustainable Finance and Responsible Investing: Easier but dense and less engaging. Recommended only if interested in finance.

Social Enterprise in Sustainable Food Systems: Easier and more specialized; interesting but less relevant to my goals.

Overall, UNIFI provided a complementary learning experience with a focus on practical application.

4. Exam

I appreciated that the assessment process did not rely solely on a single exam, which I personally find unfair. Instead, there were multiple opportunities to pass, often including projects that contributed significantly to the overall grade. The exams themselves never lasted more than two hours and were mostly multiple-choice, with a few open-ended questions. I found the projects particularly valuable, as they encouraged practical application of the material and made the learning experience more engaging and hands-on.

IV. When I live there

A. Safety

Florence felt very safe overall. I never experienced any issues, but like anywhere in the world, it's important to stay aware of your surroundings. Especially at night or in crowded areas. Basic precautions are enough to feel secure in the city.

B. Phone and Internet

Mobile service was quite limited indoors, and I often had little to no signal inside buildings. However, I always had access to Wi-Fi, both at home and in most public places, which made it easy to stay connected.

C. Events

I found out about most events through Instagram accounts, Facebook groups, and Erasmus WhatsApp group chats. These platforms are very active and regularly share information about student activities, parties, cultural events, and more. Staying connected to those channels made it easy to keep up with what was happening in the city.

D. Sports

There are plenty of sports options available in Florence, from football and tennis to yoga and dance classes. Personally, I chose to go to the gym during my stay, which was convenient and fit best with my routine. It's easy to find gyms or sports clubs depending on your interests.

E. Eating

The food in Italy is amazing almost everywhere, you truly can't go wrong. One place I definitely recommend is the Mercato Centrale in Florence. It's a great spot to try different types of Italian dishes in a vibrant, casual setting. You'll also find plenty of small local trattorias and bakeries that serve incredible meals at reasonable prices. My tip: skip tourist menus and follow where locals eat, you'll always find something delicious.

F. Go to the university : bus, car, bike

I used the tram to get to the university. It was reliable, fast, and well-connected to the main areas of the city. I didn't need a car or bike, as the tram system covered all my commuting needs efficiently.

G. Travels

I traveled quite a bit during the semester and really recommend it. Within Italy, I loved Portofino, Pisa, Sienna, Capri, Positano, Amalfi, Naples, Rome and a few more day trips. I also did quick trips to London and Barcelona. One place I wouldn't really recommend is Milan, it felt less charming than other Italian cities. Overall, traveling was a highlight of my experience!

H. Any other information you would have liked to know about

If I could go back, I would have liked to know more about local transportation options and the best ways to get discounts for students. Also, some tips on managing paperwork and deadlines at the university would have been helpful, as the process was sometimes a bit unclear.

V. After your semester abroad

A. What are you planning to do?

Next year, I plan to focus on gaining practical experience by working in my family's company. I already have a few businesses running and many exciting plans for the future. At the same time, I want to explore different fields to decide which area to specialize in moving forward. Additionally, since I haven't lived with my family for the past four years, spending quality time with them is very important to me.

B. Did you apply for a master?

I haven't applied for a master's program yet. I plan to take the next year to explore my options and decide exactly what I want to focus on before starting the application process. That said, I'm definitely looking forward to pursuing my master's degree in the near future.