

ITALY– Università degli Studi di Firenze

Agenda¹

I.	Your overall feeling after your semester abroad	2
II.	Before the travel.....	3
A.	Preparation	3
1.	Visa	3
2.	The flight.....	3
3.	My luggage	4
4.	Bank account.....	4
5.	Insurance	4
B.	Housing.....	5
1.	Where to live.....	5
2.	Find a flat or a room.....	5
3.	Cost.....	6
III.	When I arrive at the university.....	6
A.	Inscription at the university	6
B.	Information on the university.....	7
1.	Class	7
2.	Organization of the Class	8
3.	List of courses and recommendation	8
4.	Exam	9
IV.	When I live there.....	9
A.	Safety	9
B.	Phone and Internet.....	10
C.	Events	10
D.	Sports.....	10
E.	Eating.....	11
F.	Go to the university: bus, car, bike.....	11
G.	Travels.....	11
H.	Any other information you would have liked to know about.....	12
V.	After your semester abroad	12
A.	What are you planning do to?	12
B.	Did you apply for master?.....	13

¹ To update the agenda just click right on your mouse

I. Your overall feeling after your semester abroad

My experience abroad was generally okay, but not as fulfilling as I had hoped. As an international student from outside the EU, I was excited to explore a new environment and meet new people. However, from the beginning, I faced challenges particularly with administrative procedures which made it difficult to settle in smoothly. These issues affected my overall enjoyment of the stay.

In terms of the social environment, I didn't feel entirely comfortable living here. While I appreciated the friendships I formed with other international students, I found that the local community was not very welcoming. This created a feeling of isolation, as if I was living "in a box," rather than being part of the broader student. Since I was only staying temporarily for Erasmus, I often felt like I was treated more like a tourist than a student which made everything more expensive than expected. This financial pressure added to the overall discomfort of living here.

Academically, the experience was fine. The study program was relatively easy to follow, and I appreciated the focus on sustainability, which is something I value and had the opportunity to explore more deeply here. What really kept me motivated, though, were the international people I met, the holiday destinations I visited, and, of course, the amazing Italian food.

If I could go back in time, I think I would choose a different country for my exchange. While I'm grateful for the experience and the people I did connect with, I believe I would have benefited more from a place with a more inclusive environment and smoother support systems for non-EU international students.

GRADE: 3

=> 0 (I do not recommend this semester abroad to my best friend) - 5 (I totally recommend this semester to my best friend)

II. Before the travel

A. Preparation

1. Visa

If you are a non-EU student, you need to be very careful with the administrative requirements. In my case, there was a miscommunication regarding my residence permit. I hadn't received the physical card yet, only the *attestation de décision favorable* by the time I had to leave for Italy.

Important to note they do not accept a visa. Your French residence permit card must be valid and cover your entire stay in Italy.

If you only have the attestation or a card that is about to expire, it can cause serious issues with the administration especially regarding your exam registration and your Erasmus scholarship, which may arrive late if your documents are not in order. If you're in this situation you should consider on choosing another university.

The university didn't offer much support regarding this process and expected that having the residence card would be enough for mobility. I had to return to France to collect my residence card to complete the administrative process and be allowed to take my exams. Without the card, I would have been blocked.

2. The flight

To minimize my costs, I chose not to take a flight. Instead, I traveled with FlixBus from Montpellier to Florence. It was a long journey (around 13 hours) but it was totally worth it considering the savings and flexibility. I opted to get off at the Piazzale Montelungo stop, which is closer to the city center, since Villa Costanza stop is a bit out of town.

The round trip cost me around 100 euros, and one of the biggest advantages was being able to bring up to 40kg of luggage or more without paying any extra fees. Compared to expensive plane tickets with strict luggage limits, this was a much more budget-friendly, eco-responsible, and convenient option for students.

3. My luggage

I came to Florence during the spring semester. If you're going on the 2nd semester, you will likely arrive around February, and while it's cold at the beginning, the winter season only lasts for about two months. So don't overpack winter clothes, they won't be useful for long.

What I recommend is to bring a few warm layers for the first weeks, but focus more on summer clothes, because the weather in Italy gets warm quickly and stays that way for most of the semester.

4. Bank account

I used my French Société Générale account with the Mobilité Internationale option for students, which costs about 2 euros per month. This option makes international transactions easier during my stay abroad.

Alternatively, you can use Boursorama, which is free of charge. The only thing you need to do is activate the international transaction option and remember to update it every three months to keep using it smoothly.

So, if you already have a French bank account with international features, you won't need to open a new one.

5. Insurance

I used my EU Health Insurance Card (EHIC) from Assurance Maladie, which covers basic healthcare services. In addition, I subscribed to an international health insurance called AVA for extra coverage and peace of mind during my stay abroad. It cost me around 80 euros to cover the whole period of my mobility.

B. Housing

1. Where to live



You will be studying at the Novoli campus, so it's a good idea to look for housing around the Novoli area. Alternatively, you can choose to live in the city center if you prefer to be closer to shops, restaurants, and places where you can walk around easily. Both options have their advantages depending on your budget and lifestyle preferences.

Around Novoli, you'll find supermarkets like Coop and Esselunga, gym, as well as a mall with stores, restaurants, a supermarket, and a cinema, all just next to the school. There's also a nice park nearby where you can relax. The area is very accommodating for students.

2. Find a flat or a room

I found my flat through Roomgo, which was a reliable platform for searching shared apartments. Before that, I recommend trying to apply for a university dormitory, as it's usually much cheaper than sharing apartments or studios.

However, keep in mind that the university does not provide direct assistance with housing. You need to contact DSU Toscana yourself by email, in Italian, to request a room.

I also advise you to look for a rental contract from February until June if you're going in the spring semester. This period is usually enough to cover your entire stay in the apartment without needing to renew or change contracts.

Be careful of scams, especially on Facebook groups. To avoid this, try to connect with student associations like ESN, IC, or Erasmus Generation, and join their WhatsApp groups where students often share trustworthy housing offers.

3. Cost

Housing in Florence can be quite expensive. My flat costs 550 euros per month for a shared apartment with three other people, located just two tram stops away from the Novoli campus, which is very convenient.

You should prepare a budget of around 500 euros per month for accommodation. It's possible to find cheaper options, but they are limited and mostly located in the outskirts of the city, which might mean longer commute times.

You can also try applying for a dormitory room through DSU Toscana, which costs about 320 euros per month. However, availability is limited and there is no guarantee that you will get a spot.

Also, beware of tourist tariffs. I found that my landlord charged me more than other Italian flat mates, so be cautious and try to clarify the terms before signing any contract. You should also ask your landlord if visits from friends or family are allowed and whether they can stay in your flat. In my case, my landlord charged my friend for staying at my place, so make sure to ask about everything upfront.

III. When I arrive at the university

A. Inscription at the university

The administrative process mainly involved filling out various forms, including the Learning Agreement. It was straightforward but requires attention to deadlines and details.

One useful thing to know is that you can change your Learning Agreement even after you arrive, if you decide to switch or add classes. Just make sure to follow the proper procedure and get approval from both your home and host universities.

B. Information on the university

1. Class

I found that I had the best combination of courses related to sustainable business and societal challenges. Here's a breakdown of each class I took for the spring semester:

- **Fundamentals of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics**

This was like an introduction to entrepreneurship. The evaluation consisted of an exam and a group presentation where you create and present your own brand. I found it fun and easy to pass. Attendance was not mandatory, but coming to class helped. The course was useful because it taught how to create a business responsibly. Since I already had management basics from earlier years, this course mainly added the sustainability perspective. I would recommend it.

- **Sustainable Finance and Responsible Investing**

The course was easy to follow and pass, with a multiple-choice exam. It was interesting but required a lot of reading. If you want to learn about responsible banks, especially Italian ones, this is a good opportunity. The professor also invited many experts for online seminars, which attendance was mandatory. Overall, a good course if you're interested in finance and sustainability.

- **Organizational Design for Well-being**

This was my favorite class because I'm interested in HR management. The professor, Sara Lombardi, was excellent, clear explanations and engaging teaching style. Attendance was mandatory, and you needed to be consistent in class to pass the exam. I highly recommend this course for anyone interested in HR.

- **Social Enterprise in Sustainable Food Systems**

This class was supposed to be very interesting, but there was a lack of support from the professor, so you had to do a lot of self-studies. The content about farming systems was new and intriguing. The class could be a bit disorganized sometimes, but the exam was very easy to pass. I recommend it if you are willing to read and learn independently.

- **Psychology of Sustainability in Sustainable Development**

The professor was very kind and had a psychologist's approach. The course was blended (online and offline) and easy to get full marks, I got 30/30. It was cool to

analyze sustainable behavior related to the SDG goals. I honestly recommend this course.

Overall, I highly recommend taking all these courses together as I found they complement each other well without overlap. However, make sure to check if the course schedule or content changes in the future to avoid overlaps.

2. Organization of the Class

Most classes last about 1.5 hours. Be aware that sometimes classes start around 30 minutes late, which is quite normal here.

I didn't have full schedules every week, so I had some free time to relax while studying. The overall workload was manageable.

The behavior of professors was excellent, very respectful and professional, likely because all the classes were international. The environment felt friendly.

One thing to note is that lunch breaks tend to start late compared to what you might be used to, so plan accordingly.

3. List of courses and recommendation

Overall, I found the courses to be easier or at most at the same level compared to the first semester courses at MOMA. Achieving full marks (30/30) is very possible, I felt that the effort required was generally less than what I experienced at MOMA.

What I liked most was the strong focus on sustainable business modules, which made the content very relevant and interesting.

Here is a summary of the courses I took along with my recommendation for spring semester:

- Fundamentals of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics — Easy, fun, recommended

- Sustainable Finance and Responsible Investing — Easy, requires reading, recommended
- Organizational Design for Well-being — Engaging, attendance mandatory, highly recommended
- Social Enterprise in Sustainable Food Systems — Interesting but requires self-study, recommended
- Psychology in Sustainable Development — Easy to excel, blended learning, highly recommended

I recommend taking these courses if they fit your study plan, as they provide a good balance and no overlap.

4. Exam

In Italy, there are two categories of students: attending and non-attending. I strongly advise you to follow the guidelines for attending students, as this will help you finish your Erasmus studies earlier and more smoothly.

If you follow the attendance rules and you're doing your studies in spring semester, you will most likely have mid-term exams around April-May, followed by final exams in June.

Exam durations vary depending on the course, usually between 30 minutes and 1 hour. The minimum passing grade is 18 out of 30.

IV. When I life there

A. Safety

Yes, I felt safe during my stay. It's always a good idea to walk with friends, especially at night, but overall, the area and campus are safe. Just use common sense like in any city.

B. Phone and Internet

At first, I thought I wouldn't have any problem using my phone with SFR (my French operator). However, after 3 months, they started charging me extra fees because I exceeded the usual stay outside France.

I had to switch to an Italian operator, WINDTRE. Even though I explained I was a student, I was charged the tourist SIM rate. I paid about 35 euros for 200 GB of data for my last two months in Italy, and I had to change my phone number.

Having an Italian number is important, especially for online shopping or services that require local phone verification, even when using Wi-Fi.

My advice: get an Italian SIM card when you arrive to get better prices and avoid surprises.

C. Events

To stay informed about events, I joined groups like ESN, Erasmus Generation, and IC on WhatsApp, you can find their accounts on Instagram.

Keep in mind that joining different organizations may require paying membership fees, usually around 10 euros per membership. So, it's often better to stick with one organization to avoid extra costs (I recommend IC!)

D. Sports

I went to a gym in the Novoli area called Fit Express. Again, be prepared to be charged a tourist fee, it's quite common and makes the gym membership expensive for students.

The gym costs about 80 euros per month. However, you usually pay upfront for the entire duration you choose (for example, 4 to 6 months), which can total around 260 to 290 euros. This upfront payment can feel expensive as a student.

Also, all sports facilities require a medical certificate. To avoid extra costs, **bring a medical certificate from your French doctor before arriving**. Otherwise, getting one locally can cost around 50 euros in addition to your membership fee.

E. Eating

All the food here is good, but I had a bit of a cultural shock because restaurants often charge extra for water and a service fee. So, it's usually better to cook at home to save money.

The university has a canteen where a meal costs about 8 euros. For me, that felt a bit expensive. If I had to eat out, I preferred Asian restaurants near my flat in Novoli, like Giaogiao, where meals cost around 6 euros, good for emergencies! For a true Italian culinary experience, I recommend these top places: Trattoria Mario, Trattoria Zaza, Osteria Pastella, and Gusta Pizza.

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

Transport here is quite expensive because they don't offer student discounts if you stay less than a year. I bought a 3-month abonnement for 105 euros at the start. After that, I just bought single tickets costing 1.7 euros per journey whenever I needed to travel. Luckily, my school is only about a 15-minute walk, so I often walk. You can also rent bikes, but that requires paying for a subscription.

G. Travels

Italy is a paradise for traveling. Instead of only visiting big cities, I recommend exploring the Puglia region. It's very beautiful and offers a Greece-like experience without having to travel so far. Places like Matera, Alberobello, Ostuni, and Polignano a Mare are stunning and often underrated. My personal favorite!

I also loved Sicily, it was one of my favorite places to visit. Make sure to check flights with Ryanair or Wizz Air around May, as they often have promos for spring vacations. I flew to Sicily for only 30 euros round trip! You can fly from the nearest city Bologna, and there's a shuttle from Firenze Piazzale Montelungo directly to the Bologna airport (Appennino shuttle)

It's best to visit these places at the end of May or June when the weather starts to get warm. I also loved Lake Como and enjoyed traveling around its charming little villages.

Of course, Tuscany itself is wonderful too. The IC student organization arranges bus trips around Tuscany to places not easily reachable by public transport; these trips are worth it for a more local and authentic experience.

Florence is the home of the Renaissance, and many cultural activities are held throughout the year, especially during Easter and other holidays. The architecture is truly awesome, so make sure to enjoy the free museum days, which happen on the first Sunday of every month. Visiting the Galleria degli Uffizi and seeing Michelangelo's David statue is a must. You can also climb up to Piazzale Michelangelo for a stunning view of the Duomo and the rose garden in spring, which is a perfect spot to watch the sunset. Enjoy the rich cultural heritage Florence has to offer!

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

If I could go back in time, I would have found SAIEC (in Montpellier) earlier, they helped me a lot to finish my administrative procedures.

If I had known I wouldn't have my residence card in time, I might have chosen another country or university to avoid administrative difficulties.

Also, bring your medical certificate from France for your gym membership/do any sports practice. It's important because without it, you'll have to pay extra just to get one here.

Financially, it was tough without the Erasmus scholarship because many things charge tourist fees, which makes living expenses much higher.

V. After your semester abroad

A. What are you planning to do?

Next year, I will be pursuing a master's degree in human resource management. I have also decided not to do another Erasmus exchange.

B. Did you apply for master?

I was accepted into two master's programs. The first is the Master 1 in Management des Ressources Humaines et Transformation Digitale at ISM IAE Paris-Saclay, which I will do in alternance. The second is the Master 1 MODR (Management des Organisations et Développement des Ressources) at MOMA.

Be careful that master program selections often take place during your Erasmus semester. You should be prepared to do interviews wherever you are, in my case, I even did mine while on vacation, but I still passed! Don't worry too much and try to stay calm. Just make sure to set aside some time to work on your applications while also enjoying your vacation and studies here in Florence.