AquinasAbroad Program
Bracciano, Italy
2015-2016

HANDBOOK SUPPLEMENT
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Dear Aquinas Students,

Congratulations! Welcome to the Aquinas College Study Abroad Program!

As Pope Saint John Paul II often reminded young people of Our Lord’s words, “Do not be afraid!” You are entering into an important mission, chosen by the Lord, to embark on the experience of a lifetime. You will not be alone – you have fellow classmates, Aquinas College faculty and staff, many good Italian people, all the Saints and Angels in heaven, and of course God Himself for companions. Come to think of it, you are in good company, and there are many great moments waiting for you.

This supplement is designed to help you begin the process of getting ready for a study abroad semester, and to follow you through the semester complete with tips for the return home. So, you will want to bring this booklet with you, if not hard copy, then electronically.

Specific forms are included in this supplement for reference, to have them all in one place, even though you will receive separate copies and they will be filled in at different times and turned in to different people. Emergency contact information and procedures are also an important part of this book.

Some information is very detailed, written here so that one does not need to commit it all to memory. Some sections of this supplement provide you with all options available so that you can choose what suits you. Some sections included here are simply suggestions, tips from people who have been involved in other study abroad programs. So those things may or may not be useful to you. You must have this supplement with you in Italy, as well as the Handbook, because of the pertinent information you will surely need, and also because sometimes information does not seem important until you arrive in Italy, and then you will need it.

Good luck with the process. Remember there are many people around to help you. And I await you overseas! May the Lord build our house and guard our city (Psalm 127).

With my promise of special prayers through Saint Thomas Aquinas,

Sister Mary Angelica, O.P.

Sister Mary Angelica, O.P.
Director of the AquinasAbroad Program,
Bracciano, Italy
Checklist

☐ Complete the Application Process
☐ Register for your program courses
☐ If you are a current resident student, inform the Director of Residential Life of your plans to study abroad
☐ Make on-campus housing arrangements for your return, if applicable
☐ Apply for your passport or renew your expired passport. For more information, visit: http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html
☐ Make arrangements for payment of your program expenses
☐ Make medical and dental appointments before you leave
☐ Check with your health insurance provider, or buy separate insurance. Check out http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1215.html for a list of providers.
☐ Apply for an International Student Identity Card
☐ Read the Study Abroad Handbook and Handbook Supplement
☐ Turn in the following forms:
  ☐ Signature Page from the Handbook
  ☐ Immigration Waiver Form
  ☐ Hold-harmless Agreement (notarized)
  ☐ Contract of Residence (notarized)
  ☐ Copy of your passport
  ☐ Health History Form
☐ Learn about where you’re going
☐ Make copies of all your important documents
☐ Prepare a realistic budget
☐ Notify your bank or credit card company of your plans to travel
☐ Find out how to communicate from abroad (See Handbook Supplement)
☐ Participate in the Pre-Departure orientations
☐ Prepare yourself to be an ambassador

If you wish:

☐ Make arrangements to have your mail forwarded
☐ Make plans to pre-register for the semester after you return
☐ Make graduation arrangements, if necessary
Register your trip with at: https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/ with the U.S. government, so that officials can contact you in case of an emergency.

Check out any appropriate travel warnings at www.state.gov.

Register to vote absentee by visiting www.fvap.gov.

Research your plans for independent traveling as concretely as possible.

About Rome and Italian Culture

Before you depart, spend some time preparing yourself by learning about Rome and Italy. Here are some ways you can do this along with some information to help you get started.

Resources

You can spend your free time learning about Italy in several ways:

- Watch some classic Italian films, such as I Soliti Ignoti, The Bicycle Thief, Ieri Oggi Domani, Divorzio all’Italiana, films by Fellini, and newer films like Nuovo Cinema Paradiso, La Vita è Bella, Pane e Tulipani
- Read novels about Italy (I Sposi Promessi, The Betrothed)
- Read Italian history

Useful information about Italy:

Here are some things you should try to learn:

- GEOGRAPHY
  - What are the regions of Italy?
  - What are some characteristics of each region?
- POLITICS
  - What kind of government does Italy use?
  - What is the role of the Italian President?
  - Who is the Prime Minister? What is his role?
  - How is Italy connected to the European Union?
- CULTURE
  - What are the different food specialties of the different regions?
  - How do Romans eat?
  - When is lunch?
  - When is dinner?
  - What Italian-American foods are not found in Rome?
  - How do Romans have fun?
  - How do Romans greet each other?
- HISTORY
  - When was Rome founded?
• What was the difference between the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire?
• What is the significance of the following historical figures: Brutus, Octavian, Constantine, Charlemagne, Cola di Rienzo, Marcantonio Colonna, Garibaldi, Mussolini?
• What has been the role of the Pope in Roman history?
• When did Italy become a country?
• What was Italy’s role in World War II?
• What was the Second Vatican Council?
• What was the Red Brigade?

• LANGUAGE
  • If you have not yet studied Italian, take some time to learn some important phrases.

Academic Culture and Classroom Etiquette

Just like at the Nashville campus, there is no single “standard” or classroom culture abroad, each professor runs his/her classroom with his/her own style and students adapt to the teacher’s requirements. Nonetheless, there are some helpful points to know when studying abroad, especially with non-American teachers.

1. Student learning will be more independent than most American settings. Due to the nature of field-trip and on-site lectures, the teachers rely on class discussions for assessing comprehension and expect that the students will ask for help if they need it. Italian teachers do not seek out the student if his/her work is deficient. The student should not wait until the final exam to ask questions or meet with the teacher.

2. Assessments (i.e. graded papers or exams) are less frequent and therefore each grade may count a heavier weight than what you might consider normal weight. Assigned readings and homework are expected even if not discussed during class time. The material will be incorporated in the assessments. It is assumed that there might not be time for a produced work, but there will be time to read. The student is expected to digest the material and incorporate it into his/her thinking about pertinent themes.

3. In most societies, classrooms are run more formally than in the U.S. Unless told otherwise, here are some basic instructions for classroom etiquette in Italy:
  • No eating or drinking in class. You can have a water bottle in your backpack, but please refrain from drinking it except during breaks.
  • Classes begin and end on time. When classes are in Rome, be sure to budget your travel-time in order to arrive on time (this may mean studying the map the night before). Meeting points and times are included in all of the syllabi and will be announced at each weekly meeting.
• Dress should be appropriate and respectful. Pajamas, slippers, flip-flops and the like are not acceptable for class in Italian culture. Many of the on-site classes will be visiting churches in Rome. There is a dress code for most churches in Rome which requests that shoulders be covered and pants, skirts, and shorts should come to the knee. This is requirement is for both men and women. Good walking shoes will be necessary.

• Remember that on-site classes are classes and not tours. Students may take photos, however not during class explanations, as this may be disruptive. Students are responsible for on-site explanations, and will need to take notes.

• Visiting Monuments: Classes for the Bracciano Campus include studying at very interesting museums, churches and monuments. Please show respect for the art and the displays by not using flash with photos when paintings and/or fresco are present. Always check at the entry of the site to see if photos are allowed. DO NOT lean or touch pieces of art or statuary. Only sit when there are benches or chairs available for the group. Leaning on statues or sitting on the ground will quickly attract the attention of a custodian who will come and ask visitors not to sit or lean.

• It is considered very disrespectful in Italian culture to interrupt another student (or anyone) while speaking, even if you disagree.

• It is not acceptable to shout out an answer without being called upon.

• It is considered disrespectful to put one’s feet up on desks or other chairs.

• Cell phones must be turned off or silenced during class and on-site visits. Just as in Nashville, it is unacceptable to make or receive calls or text messages during class. If there is an emergency or a special circumstance, please speak with the professor before class. Even though we use our cell phones for emergency purposes, they must be turned off during class time. It is expected however to turn them back on as soon as class is over.

• Visitors: Sometimes students have friends or family visiting Rome, and they wish to bring them to an on-site class meeting. Before bringing visitors to class, please obtain the approval of the professor in advance. In order to avoid disturbing the dynamic of the class and to avoid a “tour” feel, a limited number of visitors can be allowed to each class.

**Communication**

There are various means of communication while abroad including land-line phones, cell phones, e-mail, blogs, Facebook, Skype, etc. and the good ol’ fashion snail mail.

Before you leave, create a family emergency plan should something happen to a family member. Be sure to leave contact information with them.
It is also important to think about what to do in the case you are involved in an emergency abroad. It is advised that one or both parents have a current passport. Please discuss with them the risks and responsibilities of you studying abroad. Leave your contact information with your friends and family, include the phone number of the Director in Italy and in the Nashville Campus Coordinator as well.

Bring with you addresses, phone numbers, email addresses and any other important contact information of friends and family. In particular, don't forget parents’ work numbers in case of an emergency and important Aquinas College numbers, found in the Contact Information Section at the end of this Supplement.

As soon as it is convenient, contact home after your arrival in Bracciano. Throughout your study abroad semester maintain regular contact with your friends and family, but remember that internet and phone access is not always as efficient in Italy as it is in the U.S. Be prepared for some adjustment, and perhaps help family and friends to expect less quantity of contact, without losing quality.

**Land-line Phones**

The land-line phone system in Italy is different from the U.S. Direct phone calls are very expensive and service can be poor. Public pay phones are less common nowadays. It is advisable to use a phone card when calling the U.S., which can be bought easily in Italy. The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) card can double as a phone card.

To call the U.S. from Italy, dial 001 before the area code and phone number. From Europe, it is best to call the U.S. on Sundays or evenings.

To call Italy from the U.S., all international calls begin with 011, followed by the country code (39), then a city code (for Rome, 06), and then the number. To call a cell phone in Italy from the U.S., dial 011-39-then the number (06 is only for land-lines). It may be possible for your parents to arrange international long distance service with their long distance provider.

Land-line phones are not provided in each room at the Villaggio Betania, but they are in the corridors and common areas of the houses, and in the school for emergency purposes. If you wish to make a private call on the land-line, you must have a calling card, and you may use the phone provided in the portineria (phone booth) of the school.

**Cell Phones**

As stated in the Handbook, all students must have a cell phone for safety purposes in Italy. It is best to have one with an Italian phone number, but this is not required as long as the American one works. This will be a means of communication with program staff, other students, and others in Italy, especially in the event of an emergency.
Cell Phone Options:

There are three basic options: (1) purchase or bring your own phone and sign up for a pay-as-you-go plan from a local provider; (2) rent a phone or SIM card from a local Italian cell phone service agency and be billed monthly through your credit card; (3) rent or buy a phone from the local store in Bracciano.

Please read all of the following carefully.

The hardware

You will need (1) a phone that works in Italy and (2) an Italian SIM card.

Options

- Purchase a phone in Italy with an Italian SIM card.
- Rent a phone in Italy with an Italian SIM card.
- Bring a 4-band phone from the US that is capable of having a new SIM card inserted (unlocked) and purchase/or rent an Italian SIM card.

Plans

- Pay-as-you-go: You can purchase a SIM (and phone if necessary) from a local provider, like TIM. You will be set up with a pre-pay calling plan, where you add money to your phone periodically to cover the calls you will make. You can utilize their website for assistance (www.tim.it) or you can visit any TIM store. There are many in Rome, and one in Bracciano (near the train station). The disadvantage is that you must add money to your phone account or find yourself without any calling possibilities (but people can always call you if you are in Italy, even if you have no balance).
- Monthly billing: You can sign up with PicCell, a cell-phone billing company, and have them bill you each month for the calls you make. They have a customer service line to help you with any problems. Their rates are competitive with the regular Italian plans. The disadvantage is that you have to be very responsible in your calling so that you don't run up a big bill. PicCell sometimes offers special deals to University students. You can try asking for this.
- PicCell also offers phone rentals.

Italian cell phone basics

- There is never a charge to receive calls or text messages on your Italian cell phone, provided that you are in Italy. Your friends can text or call you all they want and your parents can stay on the phone with you for hours and, provided that they called or texted you, there is no charge to you.
- Italy has only one zone for cell phone calling. It costs the same to call another Italian number no matter where in the country you are, and no matter where the person you are calling is.
- When you are out of the country, you are out of Italy. Thus, you are paying international calling rates to make calls and you are paying international calling rates to receive calls.
It is also not possible to add money to your phone account when you are in a different country, if you are using the pre-pay plan.

• To call your phone from the U.S., the U.S. dialer must add 01139 before your phone number (or +39).

Things to keep in mind

You may wish to use your smart phone in Italy to stay in touch with your parents and to check email. You may still want to get an Italian phone and number for some important reasons:

• A primary way that we communicate with you during the semester is via text messages. While we will be happy to text your U.S. smart phone number, these texts are notorious for not arriving.
• No matter how much these providers promise service in Italy, many still do not work once the person arrives in Italy.
• A primary way of being in touch with your classmates is via cell phone. Calling or texting the U.S. number may be expensive for them and for you.
• Our emergency response plan includes the use of cell phones, and it could cost you more than just a fine if your cell phone is not working.

Finally

• Do not get a phone with a non-Italian European number. These have the same communications problems as U.S. based numbers.

Face-time and Skype

Face-time is now considered the most cost-effective way to make overseas calls. However, skype is also inexpensive. You will need a computer, microphone, and head-set. Visit www.skype.com for more information. Internet capability is provided in the school area, and in the main building using Wi-Fi, and in the common areas of the houses, using Ethernet.

Snail Mail

Sending a good, old fashion letter or postcard is a great, inexpensive way to keep in touch with your friends and family. They are personal, quick, fun keepsakes. And who doesn’t like to get mail! The only drawback is it takes time for the mail to arrive.

Mailing address for receiving letters and packages:

Your name
Aquinas College at Villaggio Betania
via San Celso, 3
00062 Bracciano (RM)
ITALIA

If sending a package, add:
Fax number of the school
Your cell phone number
Your email address
Mailing principles

- Be sure to have your family and friends address their mail to you exactly as given. This will ensure that the mail gets to you in a timely manner.
- The address must include "Villaggio Betania".
- It should be addressed to you, and not to any of the program staff.
- Packages should include your cell phone number, the office fax number, and your email address.
- Some items, such as medicines, cannot be sent to Italy. The U.S. Postal Service has a convenient list.

Important details

Remember that Italy is a different country than the US. Even though this may seem to be common sense, the implications of this for receiving mail are not always clear. Here are some general principles and suggestions.

Shipping times

Average shipping times are as follows

- Simple letter (paper only): 10-30 days
- Shipping envelope: 2-6 weeks, depending on contents
- Package: 1-2 months, depending on contents
- Express envelope: 2-4 days, depending on shipping company
- Express package: 4-14 days, depending on shipping company

Customs

All mail (letters and packages) entering the European Union and Italy must pass through Italian customs. This means (1) shipping times take longer than expected, 2) the recipient may have to pay a customs fee to receive the letter/package, (3) certain items will not be allowed into the country at all or will require extensive paperwork. This is not an Italian particularity, but is the case whenever anything is shipped over international borders. Most Italian customs rules are also European rules.

Customs delay

Expect that any items other than papers and books will be stopped in customs. You might receive in the mail or by fax a form to complete indicating what is in the package, its value, and the fee you will need to pay.

Customs fee

- Italy may charge a 20% tax on the value of any goods coming into the country, and usually they do. If a package contains anything of value, you will have to pay this charge, particularly if the item is or looks new. Also, the value declared by the sender may be used to calculate the customs fee.
For example: if your parents send you a necklace and indicate on the shipping forms that it is worth $200, you will probably be assessed a customs charge of about 50 euro, which includes the 20% tax, plus handling fees. This is above and beyond whatever shipping costs that your parents paid to ship it.

If you are receiving something for your own use that you owned prior to leaving for Italy, it may be possible to avoid a customs charge by having the shipper (for example, your parents) indicate this on the customs form that they fill out when shipping the item: "Oggetto personale usato che appartiene già al destinatario. Sarà per il suo uso personale solo per il soggiorno in Italia e sarà riportato negli Stati Uniti alla fine del soggiorno (28 aprile 2015). Il valore indicato e solo per fini assicurativi." (this object is for personal use for the person who has already arrived at his destination. It will be for his personal use only during his stay in Italy and will return to the United States at the end of his stay (April 28). The value indicated is only for security purposes.)

Medicines and other Problematic Items in the Mail

Certain items may not be shipped into Italy. It is illegal to send medicines through the mail in Italy. Please bring all the medicine you need with you for the full 88 days, including a doctor’s letter and prescription to prove that they are your medicines (in case you get inspected).

Never should money be sent through the mail. It will not arrive at its destination.

Further Information

Further information about Italian Postal Codes can be found on the Italian Customs website. There is a brochure in English that may be of help.

To Mail a letter to the U.S.A.

Italian mailboxes are red and usually hang on the sides of buildings and say Poste. There are two slots on the top of the mailbox “Per la città” (Rome and the Province of Rome) and “Tutte le alte desinazioni” (For all other destinations, including the US). It costs 2.00 Euro (about $3.00) to send a standard card or postcard to the US from Italy.

Laptops/iPads/Notebooks

Taking your personal laptop or iPad is convenient; however, you might need to consider some things:

- Voltage – check your laptop for a built-in converter or invest in a good voltage converter (almost impossible to find in Italy).
- Electrical plugs are different, so you will also need a plug adapter (easy to find in Italy).
- Don’t forget to take your laptop as a carry-on item! Checking it may cause damage and mailing it will cost you money in customs fees. Always keep your laptop documentation with you, including your receipt proving when and where you bought it.
- The risk of theft of an ipad is very high. If you bring an ipad, never use it in public.
Electricity

The standard voltage in the U.S. is 110 V., while the standard voltage in the rest of the world is 220V. Therefore it is important that you check all your electronics to see if they are compatible. Places to buy adapters, converters, and plugs are Walgreens, Target, Walmart, Radio Shack. Although expensive, you can usually find them also in airports. Adapters can also be bought in Italy for low prices, but converters are very expensive.

Cultural Ambassador, Blending In, & Culture Shock

Cultural Ambassador

You are a cultural ambassador; you are the face of America and Aquinas College to those you encounter abroad. What is a cultural ambassador? A person who is knowledgeable of one’s home country, knowledgeable of the host culture, and has the ability to adapt to the new culture in such a way as to bring out the best of both. Therefore Aquinas will provide you with some knowledge about Italy before leaving, so you can avoid appearing to be the stereotypical, loud American tourist.

Tips on how NOT to be that an American Tourist

When you visit another country, first and foremost, remember you are a guest. It is good to view your hosts with gratitude and respect.

Here are some questions about Italy to consider before you go:

- What does daily life look-like? What are the cultural norms and etiquette?
- Do Italians generally like Americans and/or foreigners?
- What kinds of things are taboo?
- What are some moral and/or religious rules to be followed?
- What are the social norms for friendships, dating, family life, etc.?
- Are there established societal roles for men and women? How will you fit these?

Remember to:

- Have an open mind. Be observant and respectful. Try to avoid being critical or judgmental. Learn about Italy, and learn to love people who are different.
- Follow the local rules, laws, and customs.
- Dress appropriately for certain occasions (especially when going into a church).
- When reasonable, notice the lifestyle, gestures, attitudes, social interactions, and dress of the people in the culture around you.
- Blend in by not drawing attention to yourself or group by being extremely loud or rowdy in public places.
- Learn the language. Italians LOVE it when you speak their language, especially when you thank them or say God bless you (che Dio vi benedica). Don’t worry if you only know a few phrases – use them whenever you can. Invite conversation.
• Be polite. Mind your manners– say please and thank you! In Italy, a smile goes a long way.

Scheduling

In Europe, most places are closed from 12:30-4pm daily for siesta. Stores are closed on Sundays, museums once a week, usually Mondays. Siesta time is a great time for traveling on trains, taking time to eat or rest or be outside, for study, for prayer, and for relaxing. Most shops and buildings, even churches, will not be open. Most restaurants, however, will be open. Be prepared to adjust your daily life. Try to fit into the Italian rhythm of life. Italians like to take time to enjoy the beauty of nature and art. There will be plenty of opportunities if you look for them.

Interpersonal Communications and Culture

Interactions between men and women will be different in many countries and may be difficult to develop. Some women may have a hard time adjusting to the attitudes abroad regarding the interactions between men and women. In some countries, men will openly demonstrate their regard for women in ways that many American women find offensive. For instance, it is common for women to have unwanted attention drawn to them by honks, stares, comments, and even shouts. This may be flattering at first, but it can quickly become upsetting. Also, American women are viewed as “liberated.” This may result in cultural misunderstanding, which can lead to difficult and unpleasant situations.

The concept of personal space, the buffer between you and the person with whom you are speaking, is also viewed differently in many countries. In Italy, people are more comfortable being in close proximity with strangers than most Americans are. If you are uncomfortable and alarm bells go off, you do not have to accept the situation – there are polite and acceptable things you can do to change it. Stepping back in a non-accusatory way is perfectly acceptable.

Tips on Intrapersonal Communication:

• Be careful about the messages you may be unintentionally communicating.
• Try to maintain the perspective that challenges with interpersonal communication is part of the Study Abroad experience and growing in your cultural understanding.
• Educate yourself on gender roles and assumptions for both America and Italy.
• A slight kiss on either cheek is the normal way to greet a person in Italian culture, but if this makes you uncomfortable, it is perfectly acceptable to say, “I’m sorry I’m American and not accustomed to that.”
• Talk with the Program Director or other knowledgeable people about Italy and Europe’s cultural norms.
• A good man will be respectful.

Culture Adjustment

During and after your study abroad experience, you may go through a period of culture shock and adjustment as your orientate yourself to your new environment. The term culture shock
refers to the feelings of anxiety or confusion that one may experience when a person spends a substantial amount of time in a culture quite different from one’s own. It results from being removed from what is familiar and grappling with the unknown. For some, this experience will be brief and unnoticeable; while for others, it can be pronounced over a period of time. It is often mixed with frustration, which can always be traced to a specific action or cause. It should go away when the situation is remedied or the cause removed.

Suggestions for Dealing with Culture Shock

- Keep active – Get involved in campus life
- Explore! Get a sense for Italian landscape and observe people greeting each other, talking with neighbors, waiting in line, etc.
- Cultivate good friendships, especially among your American peers
- Exercise, get enough sleep, eat properly, and do things you enjoy
- Community Activities – volunteering, visiting a friends’ family, help someone with their work, go to a museum
- Try to read local newspapers and books
- “Do as the Romans do” – Don’t expect them to adjust to you, try to adjust to their way of seeing life. Observe their social cues and customs and follow them when you feel comfortable. This of course does not apply to behavior that can be immodest or against Christian principles.
- Realize that Italian culture has different priorities: family, friends, beauty, and food are more important to them than being efficient or on time or producing a product.
- Get to know other international students.
- Be patient. It may take a while to adjust, give yourself permission to feel uncomfortable. Draw on your own personal ways of dealing with stress that have been successful and healthy.
- Keep your sense of humor!
- Pray. Surely the Lord knows how to help, and ask Him what it is that He wants you to learn.

The Stages of Culture Shock

There are five general stages in what is commonly called “culture shock.”

- Honeymoon - Everything is great!
- Shock – There are so many differences, especially at the surface level. You are questioning why you came. You feel frustrated. Some people “shut down,” can’t seem to get anything done, or become reclusive.
- Adjustment – Acceptance of differences on a surface level becomes easier, and eventually integrated into your life. This can even apply to eating foods you have never eaten before. Little by little, things that seemed strange or unpleasant at first, no longer cause anxiety.
- Isolation – You may feel lonely because you have been away from home and cannot express yourself as well as you would like. You start dealing with deeper issues.
- Adaptation and Assimilation – You become accustomed to accepting uncomfortable feelings and you integrate them more easily and quickly, without suppressing them.
Symptoms of Culture Shock: Sometimes visitors in another culture may experience one or more of the following:

- Homesickness
- Withdrawal
- Irritability
- Unexplainable crying
- Lack of appetite
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Boredom
- Psychosomatic illnesses
- Compulsive eating or drinking
- Loss of the ability to work effectively
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Intense loyalty to one’s own culture
- Stereotyping and hostility toward host nationals
- Headaches, upset stomach, feeling ill

If one or more of these take place, there is no need for worry. Talk with your RA or Program Director who can help.

Having a strong sense of personal identity will help you have a successful cultural adaptation and assimilation. Growing in trust that the Lord loves you and is taking care of you will really help with feelings and attitudes that are associated with culture shock.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are my personal beliefs and values? How do they influence my behavior and way of life?
- Have I prepared myself by learning about Italy as well as my own country? Social norms, etc.?
- What is my purpose for studying abroad?
- What am I willing to experience? How will I respond to language barriers and cultural differences?
- Why am I uncomfortable with things that are unknown?
- How do I plan to ask for and receive help from other people and from the Lord?

Health and Medical Insurance

Proof of health insurance is required for participation for the AquinasAbroad Program. The student must provide proof that his/her personal health care provider covers medical insurance overseas. This could be an added charge onto one’s already existing insurance.

In addition to health care coverage overseas, the student will be enrolled in a travel insurance package called FrontierMEDEX. Aquinas College enrolls the group of students each semester. This service provides coverage for medical evacuation and/or repatriation, as well as assistance in cases of emergencies, normal doctor visits, and much more. FrontierMEDEX assists the student and the College throughout any medical emergency. AC students, staff and faculty are urged to consult the FrontierMEDEX coverage details to see if they need additional insurance at www.frontiermedex.com.
Important Documents to Bring with You

- U.S. Passport: Your passport serves as your only legal form of identification while in Italy (US Drivers License and other documents are not valid while abroad).
- The address and phone number of Aquinas College, Nashville Campus and Bracciano Campus.
- The letter of acceptance from the Nashville Campus Coordinator of the Aquinas Abroad Program, confirming your participation and residence at the Bracciano Campus.
- Two photocopies of the picture page of the passport, one to turn in to the Director of the Program in Bracciano and the other to keep for personal use.
- A copy of all ID cards, credit cards, ATM cards, etc.
- A copy of driver’s license, prescriptions, anything important (and leave a copy at home too).
- Proof of Medical Insurance, along with a copy of it.
- Four passport-sized pictures (real photos, not scanned). These can also be obtained at the photo booths in Rome for only a few euros.
- Your Aquinas College Student I.D. card, and (if desired) an ISIC card, should also be with you for any group excursions, especially museums and educational trips. The ISIC card may allow you to receive free admissions and can operate as a phone card.

When you arrive in Bracciano, you will receive a “Dichiarazione di Presenza” (statement of presence) from the government, that has been requested for you by the College. Because Bracciano Campus students will stay less than 90 days in Italy, the Italian Campus will submit immigration paperwork on your behalf to the police department. Along with your passport (or a copy of your passport) you must have a photocopy of this document with you at all times. This paperwork proves that you have taken all of the necessary steps to reside legally in Italy during your semester abroad. When traveling outside of Rome, however, you need to take your actual passport with you and safely guard it at all times.

Important Copies of Documents to Leave at Home

Before you go, leave copies of important documents with family and/or a trustworthy friend at home:

- Passport identification page
- Airline tickets
- Driver's license
- Credit cards
- Your contact information abroad (addresses and phone numbers)
- Emergency contact information abroad
- Health and Medical Insurance information
- ISIC card
Money Advice

You should plan ahead to manage your money well during your time in Rome. What follows is advice based on the experience of previous students from other colleges. Aquinas College takes no responsibility for errors, outdated information, or missing advice. It is your responsibility for informing yourself and taking your own steps for best managing your money.

- **Monitor your finances**
  - Set up your finances in a way that you can continually monitor them.
  - Make sure that you have online access to your bank account and your credit cards so that you can (1) check your balances, (2) see how much you are spending in dollars, (3) keep a close eye on additional fees, (4) catch or stop fraud.
  - It is a good idea to have your parents or another trusted person in the U.S. as a signatory on your bank account and credit card accounts. That way, should there be any problems, they can take care of things in the U.S. for you. Otherwise, you will have to handle anything that comes up through long-distance phone calls from Italy.

**Getting Euro**

- The cheapest way to have your dollars changed into euro is to obtain cash with your ATM card and purchase things via credit card.
- ATMs will give you the best exchange rate and you do not have to carry around large amounts of dollars.
- It is not a good idea to try to open a bank account in Italy. It is very difficult for foreigners to open bank accounts in Italy and very high fees are involved in their use.
- Another option is to come to Italy with pre-paid ATM and credit cards. You can purchase euro-denominated cash cards thorough companies like Travelex.
- European ATMs do not add an additional fee to withdrawals. However, your own bank may have both foreign withdrawal fees and currency conversion fees. **Check with your bank** to see if there is a way to lower these fees, either through a special plan or by using partner banks in Italy and the rest of Europe. For example, some students have found that Bank of America is partnered with the Banco Nazionale di Lavoro in Italy and withdrawals from the BNL ATMs are much cheaper for Bank of America customers.

**Spending Euro**

- Italy is still very much a cash-based economy. Credit cards may be used in many sit-down restaurants, some supermarkets, clothing stores, hotels, and transportation companies. All small purchases—such as coffee, sandwiches—and some restaurants require cash, as well as train tickets and bus tickets.
- Keep track of the euro/dollar exchange rate and monitor your withdrawals and purchases online so that you have an idea of just how much you are spending.

**Protecting Yourself**

- Make copies of your ATM cards, credit cards, ID cards, and passport and keep them, along with the numbers that you need to cancel cards, in a safe place separate from your cards in case of theft.
• Give a copy of the card numbers and emergency numbers to your parents or some other trusted person so that they can cancel the cards for you should they be stolen.

Italian law prohibits foreign students from receiving any payment whatsoever while in Italy for any services rendered. Be sure not to accept any money for volunteer services at the local parish, or any kindnesses that you may give. Any “payments” made from Aquinas College, or reimbursements, etc., must be taken care of on the Nashville Campus. It is strictly prohibited to take any kind of job or work for cash payment while in the Study Abroad Program (this includes things such as babysitting, etc).

**Operation of Motor Vehicles**

Experience has shown that operation of motor vehicles in other countries is the number one reason for death. For this reason, Aquinas College strongly discourages the rental of automobiles, and prohibits the operation of any motorcycles, motorinos, etc. while in the Aquinas Abroad Program. A person must be at least 24 years of age in order to rent a car in Italy.

**SAFETY**

**SOS: Emergency Procedures & Contact Information**

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN (ERP) (STUDENT GUIDE)**

Students should always have in their possession the following items:

1) Original Copy of U.S. Passport (copy ONLY if in Rome)
2) Dichiarazione di Presenza (copy of paperwork)
3) Emergency Contact Card

**Common Accidents and Occurrences**

A detailed section of contacts, addresses, phone numbers, and maps is available in the College Office at the Villaggio to keep staff and students aware of where they can seek medical attention in the case of an accident or emergency. This information includes local doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, legal assistance, legal authorities, insurance providers and the U.S. Embassy.

Students may seek medical attention on their own, but are asked to report any illness or accident to the Director as soon as possible after the visit. **Any serious crime committed against a student OR legal action being taken against a student must be reported immediately to the Director. It is helpful for less serious crimes to be reported as well.**
If a Student has an Emergency

The student first contacts an RA or the Director by cell phone (or in person) as soon as possible for assistance. If the RA needs assistance, he/she calls the Director. The Director will respond to the situation or make the decision to seek additional assistance.

Emergency Response Plan To Notify Students

The Emergency Response Plan consists of a “Safe Place” action plan in conjunction with a divided contact list. The contact list consists of emergency numbers, and staff and student cell phone numbers. This contact list is divided between the Director and the Resident Assistants of the Bracciano Campus. The staff members are responsible for contacting the students on their lists, and will give instructions for the “safe place” meeting location. The students are responsible for contacting their respective RAs to whom they have been assigned. Even if a student is safely with one RA, he/she must still contact the assigned RA to report where he/she is.

In the event of a global emergency, students can expect contact from either the Director or an RA. Three separate ways of communication will be attempted: a) **Telephone call** to cell phone or contact number left on Travel Forms b) **A Text message** will be sent out with a brief message to all student cell phones c) **An Email** will be generated to all Bracciano Campus students with a message and some instruction. Students will be asked to respond to the email or text acknowledging that they received the message, regardless of where they are or what the situation is.

1) **Students in Bracciano** – If an emergency happens in Bracciano, students will receive instructions verbally (or by alarm) followed by a cell phone communication.

2) **Students in Rome** – If an emergency happens in Rome, students are instructed to try to make their way back safely to the Bracciano Campus. If returning to campus is dangerous or non-plausible, students should seek out a safe location in Rome, which is usually Vatican City. Students should then contact the Director or an RA by cell phone to inform him/her and to ask instructions.

3) **Students outside of Rome (other Italian cities or foreign)** – a) If an incident happens in the location where the student(s) are visiting, they should contact the Director or an RA, and if plausible, return safely to the Bracciano Campus. b) If a student hears that there has been an emergency in Rome or on the Bracciano Campus, students should stay in their current location and await contact from either the Director, or an RA, or an Administrator from the Nashville Campus.

RAs report the responses from students to the Director. The Director is responsible for sending updates and keeping in communication with the Nashville Campus, with the RAs, with the
students and with the Villaggio Betania. Students should not involve the sisters residing at Villaggio Betania unless told to do so, or if the Director and all RAs are unavailable.

As stated in the Handbook, the following procedures are to be followed in certain emergencies:

**Safety Procedures:** Aquinas College students will follow the safety procedures requested by the Dominican Sisters at Villaggio Betania, and also the requirements of Aquinas College, similar to those used on the Nashville Campus. In the event of an emergency, either the Director or an RA will contact Aquinas College staff and students of the Bracciano Campus via cell phone.

**Emergencies:**

- **Hurricane/High Winds/Tornado/Destructive storm – Phase Grey** – The Director will contact AC staff and students via cell phone. Students and staff will receive a message that says Phase Grey, which means that all staff and student should go to one of the following safe places:
  - the basement of casa 1 (Casa San Giuseppe),
  - the basement of casa 2 (Casa Santa Cecilia),
  - the inner corridor of the first floor of Casa 3 (Casa Beata Stephana),
  - the inner corridor of the first floor of Casa 4 (Casa Fra Angelico),
  - the bathroom hallway near the kitchen (which is the center of the basement of the main building).

Look for the AC staff for any further directions, and check cell phones.

- **Fire – Phase Red** – RAs and students will be contacted by staff and the actual fire alarm. Students will be expected to exit all buildings immediately, and follow the exit procedures that are posted in prominent places in each house, and to wait in the appointed places on either end of the property for further instructions. RAs will have a list of any student not on campus. Look for AC staff, your assigned RA, and check cell phones for updates.

- **Active Shooter/Intruder/Trespasser – Phase Silver** – The Director will contact Aquinas College staff and students via cell phone. Students will receive the message Phase Silver, and will be given instructions accordingly and directed to a safe place (Run, Hide, Fight). The Director or RA will notify students either in person or via cell phone when the emergency has ceased and it is safe to resume normal activity.

*Practice drills will be conducted with both staff and students at the beginning of each semester.

**During the event of an emergency and in the absence of the Director, RA, or Aquinas College Bracciano staff, a sister residing at the Villaggio may take the place of an RA.*
Emergency Contacts and Phone Numbers

Have the Emergency Contact Card with you when you board the plane to come to Italy. During your Study Abroad, you should always have the following numbers handy:

- **AquinasAbroad Program Director**, Sister Mary Angelica
- Resident Faculty
- Resident Assistant(s)
- Aquinas College Administrative Office/fax
- Villaggio Betania (main line) (06) 9980.3870
- Villaggio Betania local administrator’s cell phone 339.688.9044
- Bracciano Local Police (06) 9984.111
- Local Emergency 118
- Taxi in Bracciano
- Rome American Hospital (06) 22.551
- Emergency (in Rome) (06) 113
- Local Embassy (in Rome) (06) 46741
- Taxi in Rome (06) 3570

Aquinas College, Nashville Campus

- Director of Study Abroad Program, Nashville Campus
  - Marisa Quinn 001.615.297.7545, ext. 631
- Vice President of Student Life
  - Sister Mary Cecilia 001.615.297.7545, ext. 412
cell: 615-495-1671

American Embassy or Consulate

It is imperative that you know the location and phone number of the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

American Embassy in Rome
Palazzo Margherita
Via Vittorio Veneto, 121
00187 Roma
ITALIA
(06) 46741
http://italy.usembassy.gov

The American Embassy is located near Piazza Barbarini, one of the stops on the Metro line B.

There are three types of service you can expect from the Consulate:

- **Documentary**: Lost or stolen passport replacement. First file a report with the local police, then visit the Consulate for replacement. Take the photocopy of your passport and other identification with you.
- **Emergency**:
  - **Medical**: The Consulate can arrange for a doctor.
Emergency at home: The Consulate can help you contact your family.

Legal: The Consulate can arrange for legal representation only. The Consulate cannot make waiver arrangements with the Italian government for laws broken or penalties incurred.

**Schengen Agreement Countries**

- Austria
- Belgium
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland

**Suggested Packing List and Tips**

**Clothes**

Tips:
- Bring clothes that can layer, are comfortable, and will match well.
- Neutrals are best as they allow you to create the maximum number of combinations.
- Pack conservatively. Don’t take too many clothes. Take half of what you plan to bring.
- Bring comfortable, but dressy casual clothing as Europeans dress up more and sacred sites do not admit people who are not dressed appropriately, i.e. no shorts or sleeveless shirts.

**Pants**
- Jeans, preferably dark wash
- Dark pants (black, gray, navy)
- Capris, for ladies
- Belt

**Shirts**
- Nice, casual shirts (long and short sleeved)
- Sweatshirt
- Sweaters/cardigans
- Shorts, sleeveless shirts, and flip-flops are not appropriate when visiting places for class as well as churches.

**Dress Clothes - Ladies**
- A few skirts
- Dressy tops and casual tops that can be layered
• Dresses (Suggestion: wrap dress, easy wash)
• Dress shoes (Suggestion: wedges maybe more comfortable to wear than stilettos)
• There is much walking involved, with a lot of cobblestones and steps. Therefore, previous students have strongly recommended not bringing heels.
• It is suggested to bring one very nice outfit for special occasions

Dress Clothes – Gentlemen
• Button-down shirt
• Dress slacks
• Dress shoes
• It is suggested to bring one very nice (formal) outfit for special occasions, and a shirt and tie for the visit to the Italian Parliament

Shoes
• Comfortable walking shoes – already broken in – like Tennis shoes, but with lots of support for walking on cobblestones all day
• Hiking boots
• Closed-toed brown/black shoes

Pajamas/Underwear
• Socks (Suggestion: bring a couple wool pairs for cold weather)
• Pajamas
• Bras
• Underwear (pack enough underwear for 7-10 days)
• Long underwear, top and bottom
• Swimsuit, modest

Jackets/Coats
• Fleece
• Waterproof, warm coat with hood
• Light-weight, dark jacket (ladies) or sports coat (men) (Suggestion: fitted blazer)
• Hat, scarf, gloves

Toiletries
Tips:
• Many of these items will be used or can be thrown away at the end of the semester.
• Pack items in Ziploc bags to avoid leaks.
• Toiletries are less expensive in the US than in Italy, but they are easily available in Italy, with the exception, perhaps, of antiperspirant deodorant. Students have found it helpful to bring a supply of toiletries. This not only saves money but gives extra space in luggage for the return trip.
• Large bottle of Shampoo & Conditioner
• Bar soap/body wash
• Lotion, baby powder, face wash
• Razors and shaving cream (Note: Do not bring an aerosol can as it may explode in the plane.)
• Toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, mouth wash
• Brush, comb
• Hair products, accessories (clips, pins, ponytail holders, gel, mouse, spray, etc.)
• Nail clippers, file
• Cotton balls, swabs
• Cosmetic Bag and Make-up
• Deodorant/Antiperspirant (Note: expensive in Italy)
• Baby wipes and/or hand-sanitizer (Great for traveling!)
• Travel size toiletries for weekend trips
• Kleenex
• Cologne or Perfume

Prescriptions/Medicine
• Prescription medicine in original containers
  o Bring enough for the entire trip; you cannot have it shipped due to customs regulations.
  o Bring a letter from your doctor for customs allowing you to carry your prescription.
  o Bring copies of your prescriptions.
• Vitamins, cold medicine, pain reliever, motion sickness medicine, anti-diarrheal, etc.
• Band-aids, Neosporin, thermometer
• Glasses, contact lens, contact case, contact solution (bring your glasses prescription)

School Supplies (Sr M. Angelica suggests that you buy what you need in Italy for small school supplies)
• Notebooks
• Folders
• Writing utensils (pens, pencils)
• Other supplies: scissors, tape, paperclips, rubber bands, stapler and staples, white-out
• N.B. all these things can be found in Italy for reasonable prices - and may be a kind of “keepsake.”
• Laptop, optional (remember to carry it on the airplane)

Miscellaneous
• Money pouch/belt
• Many students recommend a cross-body pouch/bag for day-long trips
• Umbrella or raincoat (but can be bought in Italy inexpensively)
• Ear plugs and eye mask
• Travel alarm with extra batteries
• Addresses, stationary, envelopes
• Pictures of family and friends
• Sunscreen, sunglasses, insect repellent
• Pocketknife with corkscrew (Remember to pack this in your checked luggage!)
• Ipod/mp3 player (do not put in your checked luggage, but make sure it is in your carry-on)
• Journal
• Ziploc baggies (impossible to find in Italy)
• Safety pins, mini-sewing kit
• Guidebooks and maps
• Travel games (deck of cards, UNO, Phase 10)
• Camera (Don’t forget extra batteries, memory sticks, and charger!)
• European plug adapter
• Voltage converter, may be needed as to not destroy your electronics
• Tide-to-go pens

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS
• Passport & Copy
• Airplane Ticket Copy
• Flight Itinerary Copy
• Copy of prescriptions
• Doctor’s letter for prescriptions
• Medical ID bracelet or card, if you have one
• Health and Medical Insurance Card & Copy (front and back)
• ATM/Debit Card & Credit Cards**
• List of contents of your wallet/purse
• Acceptance Letter from program provider/university
• Directions, Phone number and address for your program in Italy
• Emergency Contact Numbers (your family and Aquinas College)

*Keep a copy of all documents in a secure location.
**Leave a copy of these documents with your parents at home.

Luggage
Tips:
• Check with airline for specific size and weight regulations
• Make sure your covered luggage tags are labeled with your name, address, and telephone numbers.
• Place your contact information also inside each piece of luggage.

• 1 large suitcase (not more than 50 pounds) to check
• (A second suitcase to check (not more than 50 pounds) will cost about $100)
• Include inside your luggage a backpack, good for weekend trips or if you pack light
• 1 carry-on suitcase (not more than 50 pounds)
• 1 personal bag – small enough to fit under the seat in an airplane (this may be a purse or a backpack)

Money
Tips:
• Have a back-up plan for money should you lose your debit/check card.
• Keep receipts separate from the Traveler’s Checks.
• Contact your banking establishments to notify them of your travel.
• Know the credit limits on all your credit cards as well as how to contact those companies from abroad.
• Take out large sums of money at a time to lessen the fees.
• Majority of money on debit/check card – plan for approximately $2000-$3500
• Traveler’s Checks, additional debit/check card
• Some cash
• Emergency Funds (credit card, etc.)

Advice from Past Participants in Other College Programs:
• Do not be afraid! You are not alone, and anything is possible with God.
• This time is a gift from the Lord to you, and He has great plans for you and wants to be with you.
• Try to love your study abroad friends. After a while, spending so much time together, you can get on each other’s nerves. Try to always think the best of each other and love each other, even if you don’t really like each other for a while (just like family!).
• Keep a journal. One student had a journal where she put all the tickets, maps, business cards, etc. and wrote regularly; she found that it really helped her to cope with all the emotional ups-and-downs, being overwhelmed, reflecting and relishing great experiences, and making the most of her experience abroad. It helped her when she was in Italy, and also after she got back. When
people asked what they should do/see/eat in Rome/Florence/Paris etc., and she was able to tell them about it and give specific restaurant recommendations.

- Download whatsapp to your iPhone. You can text in any wifi zone.
- Use the airbnb website: www.airbnb.com. It is your best friend for traveling.
- Bring a medium sized backpack. There are size restrictions on cheap flights for carry-ons.
- Leave room in your suitcase. You’re going to want to buy things there and bring them back.
- Bring a few comfort foods with you. There are some things that are hard to find/really expensive in Europe: peanut butter, sugary cereal, Oreos, etc.

Tourism

Tourism Websites by Country

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td><a href="http://www.austria-tourism.at">www.austria-tourism.at</a></td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
<td><a href="http://www.visitbelgium.com">www.visitbelgium.com</a></td>
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<td>Britain</td>
<td><a href="http://www.visitbritain.us">www.visitbritain.us</a></td>
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<td>Croatia</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Hungary</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gotohungary.com">www.gotohungary.com</a></td>
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<td>Ireland</td>
<td><a href="http://www.discoverireland.com">www.discoverireland.com</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.italiantourism.com">www.italiantourism.com</a></td>
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<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td><a href="http://www.visitluxembourg.com">www.visitluxembourg.com</a></td>
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<td>Norway</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
<td><a href="http://www.visitportugal.com">www.visitportugal.com</a></td>
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<td>Turkey</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tourismturkey.org">www.tourismturkey.org</a></td>
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<td>Europe</td>
<td><a href="http://www.visiteurope.com">www.visiteurope.com</a></td>
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Country-Specific Travel Information

- Germany – Munich Metro – www.mvv.muenchen.de/en
- Ireland – Dublin Light Rail – www.luas.ie
- Netherlands – Amsterdam Metro - www.grb.nl

- Barcelona Metro - Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona – www.tmb.net

Other helpful websites:
● www.sacred-destinations.com
● www.travel.it
● www.ricksteves.com
● http://travel.state.gov
● Hostelling International – Organization overseeing thousands of youth hostels around the world. www.hihostels.com
● www.hostels.com
● World City Subway Maps – www.reed.edu/~reyn/transport.html

Guidebooks can also be helpful, and some are provided at the Villaggio

**Trains, Planes & Automobiles: Travel in Europe**

An inservice on Trains, Buses, and Metro will be given when you arrive. But some other travel information and resources are listed here for personal travel during your free time in Italy, and for any advance planning that you may wish to consider.

**Italian Trains**

- **www.trenitalia.com**. This is the official website for the national trains in Italy. They have an English translation page. All schedules, all trains, between most of the major Italian cities can be found here. You will also find information about upcoming train strikes here. Note: It is possible to reserve electronic tickets online but only if you have a compatible credit card. Do not rely on online purchasing to book tickets. Tickets can be purchased in Bracciano at the train station.
- **www.italo.com**. This is the competing company with Trenitalia. A new high-speed train company in Italy, Italotreno offers discounted ticket prices to major cities like Florence, Venice, Salerno, Naples, Bologna and Milan (among others). The trains leave from the Rome Ostiense (which is the end of the line for the Bracciano train – very convenient) and Rome Tibertina stations only. Note: It is possible to reserve electronic tickets online but only if you have a compatible credit card. Do not rely on online purchasing to book tickets. For a few dollars more their service is better and the trains are excellent.

**European Trains**

- **www.eurail.com**. This site is useful for finding out the approximate price for various train tickets. Their site is not very detailed, but prices are given in U.S. dollars to give you some idea of what you will be spending on tickets when you book them at Termini. You cannot book tickets through this website while you are in Europe. You buy them at Termini.
- **www.bahn.de**. This is perhaps the most comprehensive listing of European train schedules that is available for free on the internet. It is also easy to use. You can enter beginning/ending cities from any country in Europe, and you will get plenty of options. You will not be able to book online, but the information is very helpful. You buy the tickets at Termini.
- **www.raileurope.com**
European Rail Timetable Book:
  ● Published by Thomas Cook and can be purchased here or abroad.
    ○ www.thomascookpublishing.com/series.htm?series=Timetables

Metro and Buses in Rome
  ● Maps and information will be provided.
  ● Google maps provides public transit information that is usually correct regarding buses and subways when traveling from place to place around Rome and other Italian cities. You have to know the addresses of your starting point and place of destination.
  ● ATAC S.p.A. is the Roman public transit system. Their website is www.atac.roma.it. Although a little difficult to navigate, it usually provides up to date information. This website can help you arrive at any destination by entering your current address and the address of your desired destination. This site is in Italian, but can be changed to English by clicking on the top right hand corner. The “route planner” allows you to type in your street name (i.e. Via San Celso) and the number (i.e. 3) as well as your desired street name/number destination. Click ‘public transport,’ and various options will be given.
  ● Termini Train Station is located above the Metro system (above ground). Termini handles both national and international train routes, as well as a direct train service to the Fiumicino Airport. The station is always very busy and full of people. Much like other large cities, this center train station can also be unsafe, especially in the evenings/at night. Always keep track of your luggage and belongings here, and watch out for pickpockets!
  ● Good maps can be bought in Rome. And Google provides an excellent map of Rome.

www.atac.roma.it
This website can help you arrive at any destination by entering your current address and the address of your desired destination. This site is in Italian, but can be changed to English by clicking on the top right hand corner. The “route planner” allows you to type in your street name (i.e. Via Nazareth) and the number (i.e. 400) as well as your desired street name/number destination. Click ‘public transport’.

After having clicked ‘submit’, you will be able to see a map, along with specific directions on how to arrive to your desired destination in Rome. Just like other programs (like MapQuest or Google Maps) you can customize your search by fastest route or least number of transfers, etc.

www.muovi.roma.it
This website can be accessed online and/or with your Smartphone with very accurate and current bus waiting times in Italian and English (click “Languages” for English under “Other”). Under “Public Transport” click on “Bus waiting times and routes”. See image on right.
Tickets 101 & other info:

- For buses and metro in Rome (and in all Italian cities), tickets must be bought ahead of time. You can NOT buy a ticket on the bus or metro. Metro tickets are sold at the entrances however. But tickets can be bought at machines or at bars or at Tabachi stores (see image).
- For buses the ticket must be validated on the bus, and it is good for 100 minutes (with unlimited use and any combination of busses and metro rides). For the metro, the ticket is validated when you enter the subway station, and is also good for 100 minutes of travel on any bus or metro. So it is always recommended to notice the time that you stamp your ticket.
- For trains, make reservations a couple days in advance online or at the train station. Some credit cards may not be accepted online, so be prepared to go to a train station to buy tickets. The Bracciano train station will give any tickets for Trenitalia, but not for Italo.
- If you do not make a reservation, you will have to buy your tickets on the train, which is more expensive because there is an additional surcharge.
- You may need to validate your ticket before departure at the entrance of the platform. Failure to do so will result in a heavy fine.
- Check the news for strikes (sciopero).
- Make sure you board the correct train and carriage. This information will be printed on your ticket along with your seat number.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes is advance. Sometimes it takes a while to find the correct track.
- Bring bottled water and snacks.

Metro in Rome

The train from Bracciano has a stop just before San Pietro at VALLE AURELIA, which intersects the Metro line. This is convenient for going to a location near a metro stop.

Termini is the intersection of the two metro lines, and the main train station for national and international trains.

The train from Bracciano ends at ROMA OSTIENSE, which is convenient for taking a train or a metro to certain locations.
Planes

Inexpensive airlines:
- **Ryanair** – [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com). Ryanair is an Irish budget airline. They currently fly from Rome (Fiumicino and Ciampino) to 22 destinations, including London, Liverpool England (Stansted & Luton); Edinburgh and Glasgow, Scotland; Baden, Germany; Brussels, Belgium; Frankfurt, Germany; Barcelona, Spain (Girona and Barcelona); Paris, France; Stockholm, Sweden; and Santander and Zaragoza, Spain; Krakow, Poland, etc. Booking on website is required. Ryanair also now offers one Italian domestic flight from Rome to Venice.
- **Easy Jet** – [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com). Easy Jet is a UK budget airline. They offer flights daily from Rome (Ciampino) to 12 cities including Milan, Venice, London (Gatwick); Belfast, Northern Ireland; Dortmund, Germany; and Geneva, Switzerland. From London, you can reach nearly 50 European cities. Booking on website is required, so you must have a credit card in your name.
- **Air One** – [www.flyairone.it](http://www.flyairone.it)
- **Meridiana** – [www.meridiana.it](http://www.meridiana.it)
- **Smart Wings** – [www.smartwings.net](http://www.smartwings.net)
- **German Wings** – [www.germanwings.com](http://www.germanwings.com)
- **Budget airlines** - [www.flybudget.com](http://www.flybudget.com). Flybudget.com is a search engine used to find budget airlines that fly the route you are looking for. You can also check which routes a specific airline flies.

Other Airlines in Europe:
- **www.airberlin.com**. Air Berlin is a charter airline that offers discounted fares to 18 cities in Germany, as well as Warsaw, Poland; London, UK; and Vienna, Austria. Plan ahead, as their routes are not as frequent or convenient as some other airlines.
- **www.transavia.com**. A discount Dutch airline offering service in and out of Amsterdam’s Schipol airport from the following Italian cities: Naples, Pisa, Venice (Treviso), and Verona. Service to Rotterdam is available from Rome’s Fiumicino Airport (FCO).
- **www.wizzair.com**. Wizzair is a Polish airline that flies from Roma Ciampino (CIA) to Katowice, Poland; Budapest, Hungary; Bucharest, Hungary; Sofia, Bulgaria, Transylvania, Romania. Online booking is required.
- **www.norwegian.com**. Norwegian airline flies from Rome (FCO) to multiple Scandinavian countries and Poland.
- **www.vueling.com**. A Spanish budget airline that flies from Rome (FCO) to most popular destinations in Spain, direct to Paris, and connects to other European cities through Spain.
- **www.skyscanner.com**. Airline search engine. The page can also be changed into English. Information is also available on the site for hotels, hostels, B&B’s, ferries, etc.
- **www.sterlingticket.com**. Sterling Airlines is a Dutch based airline specializing in Scandinavia. From Rome they fly to Billund and Copenhagen in Denmark; Oslo, Norway; and Stockholm, Sweden.
- **www.alitalia.it**. This is Italy’s national air carrier. This may not be the cheapest option for many destinations, as the budget airlines are constantly adding routes from Rome,
but Alitalia does have competitive prices, and they fly to some great places that the budget airlines do not serve directly from Rome, such as Athens. Plus, you will get full meal and drink service on board, unlike the bare-bones budget flights. Use their Italian language website to obtain the best possible deals.

Remember to pack light. Have a small carry-on.

Automobiles

Taxis
- Use official taxis only. They will have a taxi sign on roof and have their license number clearly displayed.
- Pick up taxis at a stand or make a reservation by calling.
- Be aware that they can be very expensive.
- Taxi in Rome – they are found at taxi stands only (you cannot wave them down as in the olden days). Info can be found at www.3750.it.
- In Rome, two handy numbers are 065551 and 063570. When you call a taxi, there is an additional 3.50 euro charge.

Rental Cars
- One must be at least 24 years old to rent a car in Italy.
- One must have a credit card in one’s name, a driver’s license and passport.
- They are not really as cheap as they are advertised.
- The price is not usually worth it unless you are traveling in a group of at least 4 people.
- They are almost always stick-shifts (manual).
- If your insurance plan does not cover rental cars abroad, you will need to pay extra for insurance.
- *AquinasAbroad* students are prohibited from renting a car during the *AquinasAbroad* Program. But this information can be helpful for visiting family members, or subsequent trips.

Travel Tips & Helpful Planning Guide

Individual Travel may be an additional part of your study abroad experience. For some of you, this semester is your first time out of the country and your first real travel experience. Others are already seasoned travelers, or at least seasoned tourists. Study abroad allows for many opportunities for further travel, but it may seem there are so many choices it can be difficult to make decisions. It could be helpful to read guidebooks, especially about the different areas in Italy. Consider what is important to you and how you want to make good use of your time. Be sure to factor in that you must have a companion, and try to plan ahead so that your time in Italy is not wasted.
Balance

There are usually two extremes when it comes to individual travel plans. Some students choose to spend all of their free time and travel time in Rome. Some students travel to a different country for every free weekend. Expenses will usually strike the needed balance. Feedback from students of other colleges very often includes the overwhelming regret for not spending more weekends in Rome and getting to know the city better. Take advantage of your easy access to Rome, where the only cost is food and the religious, artistic, and cultural resources are inexhaustible. There will never be another time in your life when you have free travel to Rome!

Travel Planning for Rome:

- Extensive maps, guide books, etc. will be waiting for you at the Villaggio Betania.
- But you can do some advance planning through the internet by searching for sights, catacombs, basilicas, saints, and other places that interest you. If you arrive with some ideas of things that you want to see, AC staff can start helping you right away.

Travel Planning for Other Cities:

- **Planning ahead will make your trip cheaper.** By planning at least a week in advance, you can expect to pay cheaper rates on hotels and airlines. Trains and buses are usually at fixed rates. Airline tickets are usually priced by the following rules: 21+ day advance purchase (cheapest), 14 day (cheap), 7 day (not as cheap as cheap), 3 day (expensive!). Planning really will not only help secure cheaper rates, but also availability. The AquinasAbroad semester schedule is published well in advance of your arrival, so that you can take advantage of pre-semester planning.
- **Use your travel guides.** There are many helpful hints in travel guides that will help you take advantage of your time and money. *Lonely Planet* and *Let’s Go* are designed especially for young travelers on a budget. They will often give you great information on hostels in cities. They also give helpful information on museum openings and availability. Many times they will tell you when museums will be open for free and other helpful information.
- **[www.travel.yahoo.com](http://www.travel.yahoo.com).** To see prices and get an idea of what type of flights are available on major airlines, check out Yahoo’s flight search function. This will give you an idea of what the current prices for tickets are. You will have to purchase these tickets from a local travel agency. **DO NOT PURCHASE these from yahoo**, since they do not ship tickets internationally.
- **[www.skyscanner.com](http://www.skyscanner.com).** Airline search engine. The page can also be changed into English. Information is also available on the site for hotels, hostels, B&B’s, ferries, etc.
- **[www.tripsandcruises.com](http://www.tripsandcruises.com).** Tripsandcruises.com is owned and operated by Classic Travel and Tours in Pittsburgh, PA. They have a link on their website called “Hotel Discounts”. Click on this link to see standard hotels at discounted prices. You must book on the website and pay up front. There is a charge for canceling or changing your reservation. Also, you can look up normal priced hotels and air tickets in the main menu of this website.
- **[www.hostelworld.com], [www.hostels.com], and [www.backpackers.com].** Check out these sites for hostel listings in almost any location in Europe. There are also budget hotels listed on these sites as well. You can book your hostel online by paying a small
deposit by credit/debit card, and then paying the balance in cash when you arrive. Remember to book early.

- **www.tripadviser.com.** Trip adviser is a hotel search engine with reliable feedback from travelers. It is a good way to find and or book accommodations based on recommendations by people who have stayed there.

- **Always research Hotels vs. Hostels.** Hostels and Hotels come in many shapes and forms. We have found that many times you can stay in a hotel and split the cost between three or four people for just a few euros more than a hostel. In a hotel you have many more amenities, no lock out times, breakfast, etc. The cheapest hostels usually are for rooms of 10-15 people. You have to share bathrooms and lock up your bags for security. Sometimes it is worth the extra few dollars to have a nice, secure place to stay.

### Vatican Events

If you want to obtain tickets for papal events at the Vatican, plan ahead! This is especially necessary for Christmas and Easter. Provide the number of tickets and dates when you make the request. For College-sponsored events, tickets will be requested by the College. But for personal requests, the students will need to request the tickets themselves, and pick them up at the Casa Santa Maria. Not all events require tickets. The Sisters can help.

Requests can be sent by fax or email to the Bishop’s Office for U.S. Visitors at the Casa Santa Maria (North American College) at [www.pnac.org/pilgrim-information/bishops-office-for-us-visitors-to-the-vatican/](http://www.pnac.org/pilgrim-information/bishops-office-for-us-visitors-to-the-vatican/).

Pick up the day before the event at:

Casa Santa Maria  
via del’Umita, 30  
00187 Roma  
(06) 6900.1821

### Returning Home

#### Jetlag

Tips to avoid jetlag:

- Keep yourself hydrated with water and fruit juice.
- Stretch during your flight.
- Sleep. If there is an empty row, lift arm rests and stretch out.
- Some people benefit from a head pillow.
- Set your watch to destination time zone and attempt to eat meals accordingly.
- Establish a regular sleep pattern by going to bed at the appropriate time in the new time zone. It may take a few days to adjust completely. For generally healthy people, it takes about 7 days to feel “back to normal.”
Reverse Culture Shock

Returning home to the U.S. after your AquinasAbroad experience may be both exciting and sad because you are returning to all you love in the US and leaving all you have come to love in Italy. Leaving this new home makes things a bit more complicated than taking a flight back.

Reverse culture shock is the experience of feeling out of place or disoriented in your home country. While everything is familiar, you, personally, feel different. You have changed because of your experience. No one will fully understand what you have gone through. Transitioning back may be frustrating, uncomfortable, or lonely. Remember to keep everything in perspective, each country has strengths and weakness.

Tips to make your return a bit easier:

- Talk to others who have participated in AquinasAbroad, with those who went with you, and with students who look forward to studying abroad someday. Sharing your experiences is an integral part of studying abroad.
- Keep in touch with your friends abroad.
- Continue to foster cultural interactions – get involved with International groups or clubs or local ethnic organizations.
- If you find that you miss Italy, go see Italian films, eat Italian food, speak with someone in Italian, or listen to Italian music. Also, you may wish to look at your photo album again and again and re-read your travel journal.
- Be patient with yourself during the transition.
- Ask the Lord for His advice and consolation. All graces received were from Him, and He has a plan for you. He knows you and wants to be involved in every moment of your life.

Completing Your Experience

Sometimes the following items can help re-entry discomfort or loneliness. These suggestions are also ways to express thanksgiving for a wonderful experience, and to keep the memory and gratitude alive.

- **Program Evaluation.** Please complete a program evaluation (found in the “Forms” section of this Supplement) and return to the Director of the AquinasAbroad Program in Bracciano, or the Coordinator in Nashville. Try to fill it out within 30 days after you leave Italy. It can be emailed or mailed.
- **Reflective Essay.** Write an essay of no more than one or two pages that summarizes your experience and reflects on what you have learned while away from home. Please indicate if you give permission for this essay to be used in Aquinas College publications.
- **Exit Interview.** Schedule a half hour appointment for a brief interview with the Director of the AquinasAbroad Program in Bracciano, or the Coordinator in Nashville, either in person or over the telephone. It will give you a chance to ask any questions and to provide feedback regarding the program and the services received.
- **Watch for a reunion.** Most study abroad students want to get together again after coming home. The Nashville Campus Program Coordinator will contact you with dates and times for Reunion get-togethers.
Works Consulted

- Austria Program Handbook, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville, OH
- Belmont Abbey College Study Abroad Handbook, Belmont College, NC
- CUA Study Abroad Program
- Duquesne University Study Abroad Handbook, Duquesne University, PA
- Education Abroad Handbook 2010, Maryville College, Maryville, TN
  - [www.franciscan.edu/studyabroad/austria/details/](http://www.franciscan.edu/studyabroad/austria/details/)
- Rome Program Website, University of Dallas, Irving, TX
  - [www.udallas.edu/academics/undergrad/romeprogramhome/preparationforrome](http://www.udallas.edu/academics/undergrad/romeprogramhome/preparationforrome)
- Study Abroad Guidebook 2009, St. Ambrose University, Davenport, IA

Other Resources

Europe: Monasteries & Convents


Appendices

The following Forms will be given to each student separate from this document, so that they can be signed and, if necessary, notarized. These documents are included here solely for the convenience of the student. They are appended here as reminders of legal documents related to the Handbook.

**Appendix I: Hold-harmless Agreement**

**Appendix II: Immigration Waiver Form**