

EPICUREAN INSTITUTE'S

STUDENT MANUAL & GUIDE TO LIVING IN ITALY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

Applying for a Passport and Visa.....	3
Getting Health Insurance and Health Issues.....	4
Travel Arrangements.....	5
Packing.....	6

LIVING IN ITALY

Student Housing.....	7
Italian Culture.....	8
Health and Safety.....	9
Student Code of Conduct.....	9
School Policies.....	10
Accessing your Money.....	11
International Cell Phones.....	12
Important Contact Information.....	13

PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

APPLYING FOR A PASSPORT AND VISA

PASSPORT: A valid passport is required to travel anywhere outside of your country of origin. For U.S. residents only- It generally takes 4-6 weeks to get a passport, therefore it's important to apply for one as soon as possible if you don't already have one. You can apply for a passport at any major Post Office or County Office. For more information or to locate a passport agency near you, go to:

<http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/index.html>.

VISA: To study in Italy, a student visa is required upon arrival. A student visa can be obtained by contacting your local Italian Consulate and making an appointment. It is important to make an appointment at least 3-4 months prior to your departure. Minimum documents required for your visa appointment are as followed:

Valid U.S. Passport

Official Program Acceptance Letter (English and Italian) including Housing details

Proof of Health Insurance

Proof of Sufficient Funds while in Italy (i.e. Bank Statement)

Roundtrip flight details and/or tickets

Official Program Acceptance Letter will be given upon acceptance to the Epicurean Institute and once the deposit has been made in full.

GETTING HEALTH INSURANCE AND HEALTH ISSUES

HEALTH INSURANCE: All students are required to maintain adequate health insurance while attending any of the Epicurean Institutes' programs. Students may choose to obtain their own health insurance policy or take advantage of a low cost option designed specifically for Epicurean Institute students by United Healthcare and Student Resources- leaders in the student health insurance field providing health insurance to more than 1/3 of schools in the United States. This plan is available to all Epicurean Institute students regardless of nationality. Students may choose to purchase this plan or to submit documentation proving that they maintain adequate health insurance and air assistance of their own. Please consult an administrator for the full Schedule of Benefits. The plan is also available on-line at the United Healthcare – Student Resources website. www.studentresources.net.

COSTS: Students have the option of purchasing the policy for only the first trimester (September 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009) or to also purchase the policy for the remainder of the year. The cost of the program depends on the age of the student as outlined below:

For the first trimester (September 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009) costs are:

Under 24 - \$354.00

Age 24-30 - \$401.34

Age 41-50 - \$494.00

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM: Students submit payment for the cost of the plan they have selected along with other fees to the Student Finance Department in the Office of Enrollment Services. The Epicurean Institute will register all policy participants and otherwise administer the enrollment process. Questions regarding claims are handled by the United Healthcare Student Resources customer service line with the additional assistance provided by the health plans and school liaison at Student Resources. Each participant will receive detailed instructions for claim submission and dispute resolution upon enrollment.

OVERVIEW OF PLAN BENEFITS (IN U.S. DOLLARS): The maximum benefit of this policy is \$250,000 per illness or sickness with no limit on the number of incidents covered. It has a \$250.00 annual deductible and pays 100% of the usual and customary charges after the \$250

deductible up to the first \$5,000. From \$5000 to \$50,000 it pays 80% of the usual and customary and then again 100% of the remaining covered expenses up to \$250,000.

HEALTH ISSUES: Your health is a top priority and it's important that all medical visits have been made before going overseas. Any prescriptions or medications should be bought in advance to take with you for the duration of your stay, and should be carried in their original containers. The medicine in Italy is different from that found in the U.S., and is not necessarily approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Therefore, it is highly recommended to speak to your doctor at home prior to taking anything in Italy, and to bring any over-the-counter medication that you may need during your stay in Italy.

We also require that students fill out a medical release form in case of an emergency. All forms will be included in the acceptance package once the deposit has been made.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Students are responsible for booking their own roundtrip flight upon acceptance to the Epicurean Institute. If students are under the age of 26, it is recommended to take advantage of youth deals found through STA Travel: <http://www.statravel.com>. American Airlines, Orbitz, and Expedia are other sites recommended by our staff for booking flights.

Students are responsible for making all travel arrangements to and from all airports to the city of Perugia. Although it is recommended that students fly in to the International Airport of Perugia, **Sant'Egidio**, students may choose to fly into Pisa, Florence, or Rome and take local transportation to Perugia or the Epicurean Institute. Regardless of the travel itinerary, students should plan on arriving at the Institute no later than the day before Orientation and should clear travel plans with the Institute's staff as soon as they have been made.

Students can search for trains and purchase tickets online at:
http://www.ferroviedellostato.it/homepage_en.html.

Students should be aware that their train ticket **MUST** be validated before getting on the train. There are numerous validation machines throughout train terminals that are generally yellow and will stamp your ticket with the date and time. Failure to validate your ticket will result in a fine upon presenting your ticket to the train conductor.

Regardless of the train class you have chosen (Class 1 or 2), all train seats are reserved and you must find the carriage and seat number that corresponds to your ticket as soon as you enter the train. Although you may sit elsewhere, chances are you will be in someone else's seat and they will ask you to move. Therefore, it is best to make the effort to find your reserved seat right away.

Taxis are also available from any airport or train station to take you to your destination. Gratuity is not required in Italy but many will give taxi drivers a few Euros for help with luggage (20% is too much!). For longer journeys, it is best to take a train or a bus, although buses can be quite confusing for those that do not speak the language.

Bus information from the Sant'Egidio Airport in Perugia to the main piazza or train station can be found at: http://www.perugiaonline.com/easy/umbria_aereopgus.html. Shuttles to and from Perugia to the Epicurean Institute will be running to pick students up upon arrival.

PACKING

Students should pack appropriately for the local climate and season. Although Italy can be considerably warmer than certain areas of the U.S., the weather in Umbria can still be quite cold during the winter months and heaters may not be as strong as what we are used to. It is therefore advised that students pack to dress in layers for the cooler months. Two pairs of sneakers or casual shoes are also recommended for our excursions. Despite all of this, make sure to pack light! Chances are you will have plenty to bring back home after your stay and shipping can be expensive. You will also be lugging all of your bags during your travel which is never easy when you have too much stuff.

Students should be aware of the voltage conversion in Italy (220v) and bring all transformers or adapters necessary for electronic devices. It is recommended for women to purchase international hair appliances prior to departure as most American-made appliances do not work overseas.

Any books, DVDs, magazines, and other recreational items are allowed but not necessarily encouraged. Aside from free WIFI, the Epicurean Institute will provide its own collection. There will also be plenty of excursions and class trips throughout the duration of the program to occupy students, and we encourage students to explore local towns and major cities when not in class.

It is recommended that all students bring their own laptop computer and camera for lessons and excursions, along with a smaller overnight bag or backpack. Students should also bring books on Italy and the Italian language for references throughout their stay and to aid in their adjustment to Italian culture.

Students should absolutely make photocopies of everything: passport, licenses, credit and debit cards, and other valuable documents. Two photocopies of your passport will also be required for registration at the local Questura (Police Headquarters) upon arrival. Make sure these documents are placed in a safe location.

LIVING IN ITALY

STUDENT HOUSING

Students will be living in a villa right in the heart of Umbria within a short day trip to the larger cities of Rome and Florence. All students will be grouped together in a residential setting to encourage interaction between the students and adventure into the local towns.

Double rooms will be provided for all students unless otherwise requested. If available, single rooms may be provided at an additional cost. All rooms come fully furnished with linens and towels. Fully equipped and modern bathrooms will be shared.

Students will have access to a student lounge area with free WIFI, TV, books, games, magazines, and DVDs. Students will also have a small kitchen area with refrigerator; however, each weekday students will be provided with breakfast, a light lunch snack, and dinner.

Students will have the opportunity to travel on the weekends or take part in activities in local cities or Perugia. Perugia is filled with many restaurants, bars, movie theaters, and gyms. Students may also choose to take a local cooking class or participate in another class of their choosing. Many options are available and students will be given a detailed list upon arrival to the Epicurean Institute.

For more information on housing, please speak with the Program Director or an administrator at the Epicurean Institute.

ITALIAN CULTURE

“Culture shock” affects many who leave their home to live in a new culture. Although it is scientifically categorized into 4 stages (the Honeymoon Stage, the Hostility Stage, the Humor Stage, and the Home Stage) it is, in essence, an on-going process of adjustment. Although Italian culture can be very different from our own, there are still many similarities that may help ease each student into absorbing the culture.

Italy is a very traditional and historical country. Italians are proud of their past accomplishments and highlight them in the various exhibitions, museums, and ruins preserved all throughout the country. Cultural identity is important and many Italians are adverse to significant changes in their lifestyle, whether it be preserving small specialized stores or preventing American food chains from expanding in Italy. Even though there are some McDonald’s scattered throughout the country, students will not find much of a presence of American-made food items. Instead, Italy is full of butcher shops, bakeries, fruit and vegetable vendors, pasta makers, and so on. Larger grocery stores can now be found as well, but many still choose to shop from store to store, and we encourage students to take advantage of the high-quality food items available in Italy that, in turn, are not available back home.

Due to tourism, many Italians speak English, but this does not mean that all do. Students will take a beginner’s level of Italian but it is up to each to make the effort to learn the Italian language and culture during their stay. At the Epicurean Institute, we hope to facilitate this learning process and cultural adjustment and make each student’s stay as comfortable and fun as possible.

Other Cultural Facts:

Many shops in Italy close daily between the hours of 1 and 3pm so that shop owners can return home to eat. Make sure to plan your shopping before or after these hours. On Sundays, most shops are closed.

Gratuities in Italy is not necessary, whether at a restaurant, in a taxi, or at a hair salon. However, due to tourism, Italians are now getting used to giving and receiving gratuities and depending on the situation it may be kind to leave a tip. The usual 20% in America is still way too much, so it’s best to use your own judgment.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Your health and safety is very important to us. Our staff is always on call in case of an emergency and a local doctor is available for any need.

Students should always be aware of their surroundings and exercise caution when going out at night. Avoid any poorly lit streets and walk in the company of others. There are many gypsies and foreigners in Italy and although street mugging is not prevalent, it is still common.

Students should be aware of their behavior. What may seem acceptable to some in America may not be in Italy, or may convey a different message.

Be smart! Do not put yourself in dangerous situations and trust your instincts. Make sure to always have your cell phone with you.

Ultimately, your behavior in Italy reflects upon you as a person and the Epicurean Institute, and it is our hope that students will respect and embrace the new culture that they are exposed to while studying in the beautiful region of Umbria.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT: At the Epicurean Institute, we pride ourselves on our professionalism and we expect our students to uphold our standards in and out of the classroom. Although drinking will be permitted, particularly for those in the Sommelier Program, we ask that students drink in a responsible manner. Failure to attend class as a result of irresponsibility will not be excused under any circumstance.

Students are free to come and go as desired, however, during weekdays there will be quiet hours beginning at 10pm. During the weekends, quiet hours will begin at midnight. It is important that quiet hours are respected and also enforced by students as we all will be living in a small community. Any continual disruption may result in the student leaving.

Absolutely no drugs of any kind will be permitted at the school or villa. The presence of drugs will result in the expulsion of the student without any refund of tuition. Smoking cigarettes is permitted outside only but is discouraged due to its interference with the tasting of wines.

Students are to treat one another and their professors with respect and professionalism. If any disagreements, problems, or concerns should arise, please speak with the Program Director. It is important that we resolve any issues as your health and safety are our top priorities.

SCHOOL POLICIES

STUDENT DRESS CODE: Students will be provided with two sets of pants and jackets as the school uniform and will be required to be in uniform while attending all classes. Students are expected to clean and press the jacket and must also wear a pair of clean and polished dress shoes in good condition. Students are allowed one small piercing per ear, but no other piercing should be visible. Beards or mustaches must be neatly trimmed, long hair should be pulled back or restrained in a neat fashion and very little cologne or perfume should be used as they interfere with the wine tasting and evaluation.

During excursions, students may wear more comfortable clothing suitable for that particular day. It is important to remember that students, even during field trips, represent our school and therefore must exhibit professionalism at all times. Clothing that may appear offensive or risqué are not permitted. Covered shoes or sneakers must be worn while participating in the harvest.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE: It is expected that all students attend every lesson and excursion. Our programs are conducted in such a short, intensive period that by missing one class, students will fall significantly behind. If an absence is excused we may find a way of making up the missed class, via lecture notes and speaking with the professor. Ultimately, the exam at the end of each level determines your certification, so it's important that you take all necessary steps to ensure that you are well prepared for each test.

GRADUATION AND RECEIPT OF SOMMELIER CERTIFICATE: Upon the successful completion of all three levels and the passing of each of the three exams, students will be awarded with an AIS Sommelier Certificate and will participate in the National Graduation. Becoming a member of AIS will connect you not only into the largest Sommelier organization in the world and with WSA (World Sommelier Association), but will give you the valuable experience and knowledge necessary to excel in the field. Graduates will be able to participate in all AIS food and beverage activities, seminars, and dinners.

Those who do not pass the exams will be awarded with a Certificate of Participation. Students will have the option to retake the exams in the future.

ACCESSING YOUR MONEY

Before leaving, students should notify all credit and bank cards that they will be traveling and living in Italy for the specified duration of the program. Failure to do so will result in most cases of the card being shut off due to theft protection. As already mentioned in the section **Packing**, students should also make photo copies of all of their cards and keep these copies in a safe location. It is wise to give this information to a trusted family member back home as well in case of a card being lost or stolen.

Students should make sure their pin number for their debit card is no greater than 4 digits. Most ATM machines in Italy will not accept a pin number longer than 4 digits, and although one may enter a bank during the week to request cash, using an ATM is much more convenient and one can avoid the long lines generally found in Italian banks. Most American banks will charge a percentage fee for the amount of Euros withdrawn from the ATM. Students should inform themselves of such details before departing. It is important to remember the currency conversion as well. Your bank will use the rate that day to make the conversion and deduct the amount of Euros you withdrew to U.S. dollars. The daily rate can be found at:

<http://finance.yahoo.com/currency-converter#from=USD;to=EUR;amt=1>.

American Express, Visa, and MasterCard are widely accepted at most ATM's, restaurants, and clothing stores. The use of debit and credit cards are not common for smaller purchases in Italy, and many shops and coffee shops (bars) do not have card machines. As a result, it is wise to carry some cash, but never carry a large amount.

Traveler's Checks are accepted in Italy, but they not as common and most places charge a small fee for use. They are, however, safer to use and most are replaced if lost or stolen. You can purchase Traveler's Checks in any bank or through American Express.

Students should take note of any International bank numbers in case of a lost or stolen card, as toll-free numbers do not work in Italy. Students should also switch to online services for bills, or have family members take care of money matters while away.

INTERNATIONAL CELL PHONES

Students are required to purchase an international cell phone to study in Italy. It is important that both your family at home and the Epicurean Institute can contact you at all times in case of an emergency.

It is recommended that students purchase their international cell phone prior to their departure for Italy, especially since it will help them during their travel. If you already possess a blackberry or internationally-capable cell phone, inform your phone company that you will be going overseas and that your phone needs to be 'unlocked' if it has not already been. Once your cell phone is unlocked you can purchase an Italian SIM card with an Italian phone number to temporarily replace your American SIM card while in Italy.

SIM cards or international cell phones can be purchased or rented online at:

<http://www.telestial.com>.

SIM cards and cell phones can also be purchased in Italy upon arrival. Staff members at the Epicurean Institute can help when making the purchase.

Most Italian cell phones are prepaid and can be refilled through cards bought in phone stores or in local "*Tabaccherias*" (shop that also sells stamps, local bus tickets, cigarettes, and lottery tickets).

If students decide to rent a cell phone, they will receive either a monthly bill or a larger bill at the end of their stay.

It is up to the student to decide which cell phone option is best for them. Students are required to give their phone number to the Epicurean Institute's staff prior to departure or upon arrival. Important phone numbers, found on the following page, should be registered in each student's cell phone as well.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Epicurean Institute-

888-983-3948

Morgan Morano, Program Director-

U.S. (1) 347-210-4933

Italy (39) 328 461 8695

Perugia Taxi Service-

(39) 075-500-4888

State Police, Perugia-

(39) 075 505 2987

** Italy's Country Code (39) should only be dialed when calling outside of Italy

** A more detailed list of contact numbers will be given to students upon arrival to the Epicurean Institute