SIENA, ITALY
ORIENTATION GUIDE
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**Important Contacts Sheet**
The following pages will help guide you to an easy transition to living in Italy.

History
Italy has significantly contributed to the cultural and social development of the entire Mediterranean area, deeply influencing European culture as well. Important cultures and civilizations have existed there since prehistoric times.

After Magna Graecia, the Etruscan civilization and especially the Roman Republic and Empire that dominated this part of the world for many centuries came an Italy whose people would make immeasurable contributions to the development of European philosophy, science, and art during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Dominated by city-states for much of the medieval and Renaissance period, the Italian peninsula was eventually unified amidst much struggle in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Italian province was privileged by Augustus and his heirs, with the construction, among other public structures, of a dense mesh of roads. The Italian economy flourished; agriculture, handicraft and industry had a sensible growth, allowing the export of goods to the other provinces. The Italian population grew as well. Three census were ordered by Augustus, to record the presence of male citizens in Italia. They were 4,063,00 in 28 BC, 4,233,00 in 8 BC, and 4,937,00 in AD 14. Including the women and the children, the total population of Italia at the beginning of the 1st century was around 1 million.

By the late Middle Ages, central and southern Italy, once the heartland of the Roman Empire, was far poorer than the north. Rome was a city largely in ruins, and the Papal States were a loosely administered region with little law and order. Italian trade routes that covered the Mediterranean and beyond were major conduits of culture and knowledge. The city-states of Italy expanded greatly during this period and grew in power to become de facto fully independent of the Holy Roman Empire.

The Italian Renaissance began in Tuscany, centered in the city of Florence and Siena. It then spread south, having an especially significant impact on Rome, which was largely rebuilt by the Renaissance popes. The Italian Renaissance peaked in the late 15th century as foreign invasions plunged the region into turmoil.

Italian Culture
The culture of Italy can be found in the Roman ruins remaining in much of the country, the precepts of the Roman Catholic Church, the spirit of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and the architecture. It can also be tasted in Italy's food.

Roman Catholicism is the major religion: 85% of native-born citizens are nominally Catholic; there are mature Protestant and Jewish communities and also a growing Muslim immigrant community. All religious faiths are provided equal freedom before the law by the constitution.

Italian art encompasses the visual arts in Italy from ancient times to the present. In Ancient Rome, Italy was a centre for art and architecture. There were many Italian artists during the Gothic and Medieval periods, and the arts flourished during the Italian Renaissance. Later styles in Italy included Mannerism, Baroque and Rococo. Futurism developed in Italy in the 20th century. Florence is known all over Italy for its art museums. Music has traditionally been one of the great cultural markers of what it means to be Italian and holds an important
position in society, in general, and even in politics. The music of Italy ranges across a broad spectrum, from her renowned opera to modern experimental classical music; and from the traditional music of the many ethnically diverse regions to a vast body of popular music drawn from both native and imported sources. Historically, musical developments in Italy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance helped create much of the music that spread throughout Europe.

Italian cuisine is extremely varied - the country of Italy was only officially unified in 1861, and its cuisines reflect the cultural variety of its regions and its diverse history (with culinary influences from Greek, Roman, Gaul, Germanic, Goth, Norman, Lombard, Frank, Turkish, Hebrew, Slavic, Arab and Chinese civilizations). Italian cuisine is imitated all over the world.

To a certain extent, there is really no such thing as Italian cuisine in the way that one usually understands national cuisines. Each area has its own specialties, primarily at the regional level, but also even at the provincial level. Italian cuisine is not only highly regionalized, but is very seasonal. The high priority placed on the use of fresh, seasonal produce distinguishes the cuisine of Italy from the imitations available in most other countries.

Cultural Differences
As mentioned before, there are a number of cultural differences between Italy and the US. Here are a few tips to make your transition a little smoother:

The Italian People
- Personal pride and individualism are highly valued.
- Modesty is valued over assertiveness. Flaunting superiority, intelligence, or ability is not appreciated.
- Be patient. Nothing is done in a hurry. Italian trademarks are procrastination and delay.

Meeting and Greeting
- Men may embrace each other when meeting (friends and family only).
- Women may kiss each other on the cheek and embrace.
- Expect to be interrupted when speaking.

Body Language
- Never touch, hug or pat an Italian you do not know well, unless a friendly Italian touches you first.
- Generally, Italians stand very close when talking. (As close as 12 inches!)
- Italians speak a lot with their hands!

Dining and Entertainment
- It is acceptable and common to be late by 15-30 minutes for social meetings.
- Lunches/dinners are vital to establishing a relationship. It is a time to see if the chemistry is correct and to develop trust.
- No bread and butter plate is used. Bread is set directly on the table. Restaurants generally charge for bread by the piece.
- Italians don't waste food. It is better to decline food rather than leave it on your plate.

Dress
- Appearance is extremely important to Italians. They dress elegantly, even for casual occasions.
- Dress conservatively. Provocative clothing makes you stand out in a negative way.
- Shoes are the most important element of dress. Shabby looking shoes can ruin a very nice outfit.
Gifts
- When invited to someone's home, it is common to bring a small gift.
- Give pastries, cakes, chocolates, flowers (red roses connote passion, yellow roses infidelity; give an odd number of flowers, but never 13).

Italian Time:
Perhaps because of the benign climate and the long hours of sunshine in Italy, Italians tend to get up later in the morning and stay out later at night than the rest of their European neighbors. Shops and businesses are usually opened from 9-9:30am to 1:30pm and from 4:30-5pm to 8-8:30pm though it has become more and more common for businesses to stay open through the afternoon hours.

Business establishments are usually closed for a day and half per week, most often Saturday afternoon and Sunday, while many shops close only on Sunday. In tourist areas and during the summer, business hours are often expanded to 10-11pm with stores open 7 days a week.

Restaurant hours are varied, with the norm being from 1:30 to 3:30pm for lunch and from 8:30 to 11:30pm for dinner. In summer, these hours are often expanded, with many establishments offering continuous service and still other serving food into the small hours of the night.

Religion:
Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion in Italy and is celebrated in the many churches and cathedrals you will see and visit.

Regardless of your beliefs, experiencing a religious service in your country of study is an important part of understanding the culture. Due to Italy's history, its religious history is solidified by its beautiful cathedrals that blanket the Italian countryside.

Lingua Italiano:
Italian is a Romance language spoken by about 63 million people, primarily in Italy and Switzerland. Standard Italian was strongly influenced by the Tuscan dialect and is somewhat intermediate between Italo-Dalmatian languages of the South and Gallo-Italian languages of the North. Like many languages written using the Latin alphabet, Italian has double consonants. However, double consonants are pronounced as long (geminated) in Italian. As in most Romance languages (with the notable exception of French), stress is distinctive. Of the Romance languages, Italian is generally considered to be the one most closely resembling Latin in terms of vocabulary.
Conversions:

Italy, along with the rest of Europe, uses the metric system. Measurements of clothes and shoe sizes are also different.

Weight

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<tr>
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<td>28.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grams to ounces</td>
<td>0.035</td>
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<tr>
<td>pounds to kilograms</td>
<td>0.45</td>
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<td>kilograms to pounds</td>
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Length & Distance

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<td>kilometers to miles</td>
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Volume

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<td>3.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>liters to gallons</td>
<td>26</td>
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</table>

Temperature

- **C°** to **F°** multiply by 1.8 and add 32
- **F°** to **C°** subtract 32 and divide by 1.8

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<tr>
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<th>Centigrade</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
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<td>41</td>
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<td>104</td>
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</tr>
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<td>212</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Time

- **Italy is on European Standard Time.**

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-6 hours</td>
<td>-7 hours</td>
<td>-8 hours</td>
<td>-9 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5pm in Italy</td>
<td>11am Eastern</td>
<td>10am Central</td>
<td>9am Mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8am Pacific</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Clothes

**Womens’ Dresses**

US: 2 4 6 8 10 12 14
Europe: 34 36 38 40 42 44 46

**Mens’ Shirts**

US: 14 14.5 15 15.5 16 16.5 17 17.5
Europe: 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43

**Mens’ Pants**

US: 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36
Europe: 71 73 76 79 81 84 86 89 91

Shoes

**Womens’ Shoes**

US: 6 6.5 7 7.5 8 8.5 9 9.5 10
Europe: 35 35.5 36 37 37.5 38 39 39.5 40

**Mens’ Shoes**

US: 7 7.5 8 8.5 9 9.5 10 10.5 11
Europe: 40 40.5 41 42 42.5 43 44 44.5 45

**Shopping Advice**

As any experienced European clothes buyer will tell you, be careful on sizes. A size Large with European cut might be uncomfortable for an American. Most of the current styles are well fitted so be sure to try everything on before making your purchase. **Remember** - look for styles and items that you could not buy at home. A *Lacoste* shirt for example after the exchange rate with the Euro is quite expensive in Europe and can be purchased in the U.S. for a better price.

**Bargaining**: Italy is not like Mexico. Most prices are fixed and it is **not customary to bargain for things** except in outdoor markets.
SIENA – YOUR HOST CITY

Siena is a city of contrasts – from medieval treasures found within its historic walls to modern shops and facilities located all around the city center. Siena is built on three hills surrounded by well preserved walls in the heart of Tuscany, about 43 miles south of Florence. It is filled with superior examples of Gothic architecture and has one of the world's most unique public places in all of Italia: the Piazza del Campo (shaped like a shell).

Siena was a proud, wealthy, and warlike independent state during the Middle Ages, until its final defeat by Florence. Medieval Sienese art (painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.) is unique and of historical importance. Sienese people are fiercely proud of their city and their sense of neighborhood and community.

The summer months bring a wealth of festivities and events as this Tuscan city comes to life. The Palio Festival, held twice a year in the summer, is all about neighborhood pride and rivalry. Historic horse races take place on July 2 and August 16 each year - a long tradition in Sienese culture. The festival constitutes the unbroken continuation of a medieval tradition associated with religion, pageantry, trash-talking, and bragging.

Siena’s architecture is well preserved. It is a requirement that new buildings within the city walls be built to look medieval, in order to maintain the city’s quaint character and beauty. It is a small city but has a large student population which creates a studious environment for learning Italian. It is also home to one of the oldest universities in Europe, which ensures a vibrant Italian student atmosphere throughout the academic year. There are plenty of places to go and things to do in your free time - from restaurants and pizzerias to cafes and shops; from theaters and cinemas to museums and art galleries.

Siena has it all!

Siena's cathedral, the Duomo, begun in the twelfth century, is one of the great examples of Italian Romanesque architecture. Its main facade was completed in 1380. It is unique among Christian cathedrals in that its axis runs north-south. This is because it was originally intended to be the largest cathedral in existence, with a north-south transept and an east-west aisle, as is usual. After the completion of the transept and the building of the east wall (which still exists and may be climbed by the public via an internal staircase) the money ran out and the rest of the cathedral was abandoned.
Inside is the famous Gothic octagonal pulpit by Nicola Pisano (1266-1268) supported on lions, and the labyrinth inlaid in the flooring, traversed by penitents on their knees. Within the Sacristy are some perfectly preserved renaissance frescos by Ghirlandaio, and beneath the Duomo in the baptistry is the marvelous baptismal font with bas-reliefs by Donatello, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Jacopo della Quercia and other 15th century sculptors. The Museo dell’Opera del Duomo contains Duccio's famous Maestà (1308-1311) and various other works by Sienese masters.

More Sienese paintings are to be found in the Pinacoteca. The shell-shaped Piazza del Campo, the town square, which houses the Palazzo Pubblico and the Torre del Mangia, is another architectural treasure, and is famous for hosting the Palio horse race. The Palazzo Pubblico, itself a great work of architecture, houses yet another important art museum. Included within the museum is Ambrogio Lorenzetti’s series of frescos on the good government and the results of good and bad government and also some of the finest frescoes of Simone Martini and Pietro Lorenzetti.

On the Piazza Salimbeni is the Palazzo Salimbeni, a notable building and also the medieval headquarters of Monte dei Paschi di Siena, one of the oldest banks in continuous existence and a major player in the Sienese economy. Housed in the beautiful Gothic Palazzo Chigi on Via di Citt is the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena’s conservatory of music.

The Medicean Fortress houses the Enoteca Italiana and the Siena Jazz School, with courses and concerts all the year long and a major festival during the International Siena Jazz Master classes. Over two weeks more than 30 concerts and jam sessions are held in the two major town squares, on the terrace in front of the Enoteca, in the gardens of the Contrade clubs, and in many historical towns and villages of the Siena province. Siena is also home of Sessione Senese per la Musica e l’Arte (SSMA), a summer music program for musicians.

Few geographical areas in the world can boast the variety of environment that surrounds Siena. To the north, we have the richness of the Chianti landscape, woven with vines and olive trees throughout the hills. Here also are beautiful towns like San Gimignano and Monteriggioni with old walls, winding streets and incredible views. South of Siena, the Arbia valley leads to the hilltop town of Montalcino, home to the famous Brunello wine. And the area La Crete stretches out, amazing visitors with its harsh rock formations and unique landscape. As you head west toward the coast, you can visit captivating coastline towns like Castiglione della Pescaia, and nature reserves like the area called Maremma. With such natural beauty within easy reach by car or public transport, Siena is a good place to base yourself for a Tuscan experience. The Chianti area, between Florence and Siena, is one of the most beautiful countrysides in Italy and a famous wine production area.

**PALIO FESTIVAL**

Palio is a race which lasts less than 2 minutes is the subject of debate and competition all year round. It is the greatest traditional festival in Siena!

Siena is divided into seventeen contrade, or areas of the city. The Sienese people belong first to a contrada and
Then to the city. Each contrada competes against one another in the Palio, and rivalry and competition are an integral part of the preceding months before the event. Ten contrade are selected for each race, each contrada is assigned a horse, and the horses compete in la corsa of Piazza del Campo while thousands of people come as spectators and participants, transforming the main piazza into a teeming sea of people.

There are two Palio races each summer; one on the 2nd of July, and the second on the 16th of August. The festivities start three days prior to each Palio, although the anticipation is already evident weeks before. During this time, there are banquets, parades, blessing of the horses and celebrations of all kinds. During these days, there are events such as the assigning of the horses to the ten contrade, the first, second, third and fourth trial, and the Prova Generale, followed by the dinner of the Prova Generale for each contrada. Contrada colors are worn by Sienese people, and music, singing and drumming can be heard on the streets at all times of the day or night.

On the day of the Palio, spectators crowd into the piazza from noon on, willing to bear sun, heat and sweat to witness this traditional event. The limited stadium seating around the edge of the piazza is usually sold out eight months in advance.

The piazza is sealed off minutes before the Palio starts, and eventually (after a few false starts), the horses are off, and it is over before the dust settles. The winning contrada feasts and celebrates for weeks afterwards, with banquets, replays and much discussion, and the losing contrada can only hope that with much preparation, plotting and luck, they will fare better in the following race.

The Palio is a unique phenomenon, one that arouses much emotion, an event that the Sienese people hold dear to themselves, and is a strong authentic tradition that is a once in a lifetime experience to witness and enjoy.
The School: Dante Alighieri

ITALIAN CLASSES
The Dante Alighieri school you will attend is officially recognized by the Italian Ministry of Education. Classes will be held Monday-Friday in the mornings for four hours a day including breaks. Directors will inform you of exact class schedules upon arrival. It is important to come prepared for class each morning and to take advantage of each intensive, yet fun, class. The teaching method is unlike what is used in your U.S. classroom. All classes - grammar, culture, and conversation - are focused on improving your speaking and understanding of the language. A placement test will be administered on the first day of classes to place students in the appropriate class levels.

GRADING AND PARTICIPATION
Once classes have started, it is your responsibility to attend regularly and to take advantage of all learning opportunities by participating actively. No matter how much you already know, you will learn exponentially more Italian in your classes. These are college level classes and you are expected to behave in an appropriate manner.

You will be evaluated on your participation and graded on exams. Grades will not be reflected on your diploma but you must not miss more than one day of class to receive full credit.

IMPORTANT
It is important to save all of your coursework, including exams. Most colleges and universities require students to show the work they did while attending a foreign school.

Directions to School
Your host family will help guide you to school on your first day.

Address:
Dante Alighieri Scuola d’Italiano
Via T. Pendola,
37 – 5310 Siena - Italy

Tel. +30577 49533
EXCURSION GUIDE

SORRENTO
Sorrento is a small city in Campania, Italy, with some 16,500 inhabitants. It is a popular tourist destination due its picturesque and breathtaking scenery. Sorrento’s high cliffs overlook the bay of Naples, as the key place of the Sorrentine Peninsula, and many viewpoints in the city allow sight of Naples itself (visible across the bay) and also of Mount Vesuvius. Sorrento's sea cliffs are impressive and its luxury hotels have attracted famous personalities including Enrico Caruso and Luciano Pavarotti.

ORIGINS OF SORRENTO
The Roman name for Sorrento was Surrentum. Legends indicate a close connection between Lipara and Surrentum, as though the latter had been a colony of the former; and even through the Imperial period Surrentum remained largely Greek. The oldest ruins are Oscan, dating from about 600 BC. Before the Roman supremacy, Surrentum was one of the towns subject to Nuceria, and shared its fortunes up to the Social War; it seems to have joined in the revolt of 90 BC like Stabiae; and was reduced to obedience in the following year, when it seems to have received a colony.

The most important temples of Surrentum were those of Athena and of the Sirens (the latter the only one in the Greek world in historic times); the former gave its name to the promontory. In antiquity Surrentum was famous for its wine, its fish, and its red Campanian vases; the discovery of coins of Massilia, Gaul and the Balearic Islands here indicates that extensive trade occurred.

The position of Surrentum was very secure, protected by deep gorges. The only exception to its natural protection was 300 yards on the south-west where it was defended by walls, the line of which is necessarily followed by those of the modern town. The arrangement of the modern streets preserves that of the ancient town, and the disposition of the walled paths which divide the plain to the east seems to date in like manner from Roman times. No ruins are now preserved in the town itself, but there are many remains in the villa quarter to the east of the town on the road to Stabiae, of which traces still exist, running much higher than the modern road, across the mountain; the site of one of the largest (possibly belonging to the Imperial house) is now occupied by the Hotel Victoria, under the terrace of which a small theatre was found in 1855; an ancient rock-cut tunnel descends hence to the shore. Remains of other villas may be seen, but the most important ruin is the reservoir of the (subterranean) aqueducts just outside the town on the east, which had no less than twenty-seven chambers each about 270 by 60 cm. Greek and Oscan tombs have also been found.

HISTORY
According to the Roman historian Diodorus Siculus, Sorrento was founded by Liparus, son of Ausonus, who was king of the Ausoni and the son of Ulysses and Circe. The ancient city was most likely connected to the Ausoni tribe, one of the most ancient ethnic groups in the area. In the pre-Roman age Sorrento was influenced by the
Greek civilization: this can be seen in the presence of the Athenaion, a great sanctuary, also, according to the legend, founded by Ulysses and originally devoted to the cult of the Sirens, whence Sorrento’s name.

MIDDLE AGES AND MODERN ERA
Sorrento became an archbishopric around 420 AD. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, it was ruled by the Ostrogoths and then returned to the Eastern Empire. The Lombards, who conquered much of southern Italy in second half of the 6th century, sieged it in vain.

In the following centuries the authority of the far Byzantium empire faded, and Sorrento became an autonomous duchy. It fought against the neighbor/rival Amalfi and the Saracens, and in 1133 it was conquered by the Norman Roger II of Hauteville. From this point, Sorrento’s history followed that of the newly created Kingdom of Sicily. On June 13, 1558 it was sacked by the Ottoman navy under the command of Dragut and his lieutenant Piali, as part of the struggle between the Turks and Spain, which controlled the southern half of Italy at that time. 2,000 captives were reportedly taken away. This struggle was waged throughout the Mediterranean and lasted many decades. The attackers were not "pirates"; some may have been mercenaries from North Africa. The campaigns were conducted on direct orders of Sultan Suleiman. The attack led to the construction of a new line of walls. The most striking event of the following century was the revolt against the Spanish domination of 1648, led by Giovanni Grillo. In 1656 a plague struck the city. However, Sorrento remained one of the most important centers of the southern Campania.

Sorrento entered into the Neapolitan Republic of 1799, but in vain. In the 19th century the economy of the city improved markedly, favored by the development of agriculture, tourism and trade. A route connecting Sorrento to Castellammare di Stabia was opened under the reign of Ferdinand II (1830-1859).

In 1861 Sorrento was officially annexed to the new Kingdom of Italy. In the following years it confirmed and increased its status of one of the most renowned tourist destinations of Italy, a trend which continued into the 20th Century. Famous people who visited it include Lord Byron, Keats, Goethe, Henrik Ibsen and Walter Scott.

CAPRI

Capri is an Italian island off the Sorrentine Peninsula, on the south side of the Gulf of Naples. It has been a popular vacation spot and resort since the time of the Roman Republic.

The main features of the island are regularly portrayed on postcards: the Marina Piccola (Small Harbor), the Belvedere of Tragara, which is a high panoramic promenade lined with villas, the limestone masses that stand out of the sea (the 'Faraglioni'), Anacapri, and the Blue Grotto (‘Grotta Azzurra’). Above everything are the ruins of the Imperial Roman villas.

HISTORY
According to the Greek geographer Strabo, Capri was once part of the mainland. This has been recently confirmed both by geological surveys and archaeological findings. The island has been inhabited since very early times. Evidence of human settlement was discovered during the Roman era; according to Suetonius, when the
foundations for the villa of Augustus were being excavated, giant bones and 'weapons of stone' were discovered. The emperor ordered these to be displayed in the garden of his main residence, the Sea Palace, and this is now considered one of the first displays of fossils. More modern excavations have showed that human presence on the island can be dated back to the Neolithic and the Bronze Ages.

In January 1806, French troops occupied the island. The British ousted the French troops in May of the same year; Capri was turned into a powerful naval base, but the building program caused heavy damage to the archaeological sites. Joachim Murat re-conquered Capri in 1808, and the French remained there until the end of the Napoleonic era (1815), when Capri was returned to the Bourbon ruling house of Naples.

In the second half of the 19th century, Capri became a popular resort for European artists, writers and other celebrities. John Singer Sargent and Frank Hyde are among the prominent artists who stayed on the island around the late 1870s.

The Villa San Michele was built around the turn of the 20th century by the Swedish physician Axel Munthe, on the ruins of the Roman Emperor, Tiberius' villa, on the Island of Capri. Its gardens have panoramic views of the city of Capri and its marina, the Sorrentine Peninsula, and Mount Vesuvius. The villa and its grounds sit on a ledge at the top of the Phoenician Steps, between Anacapri and Capri, at 327 meters above sea level. San Michele's gardens are adorned with numerous relics and works of art dating back to ancient Egypt and other periods of antiquity.

The Blue Grotto (Grotta Azzurra) is a noted sea cave on the coast of the island of Capri. The grotto has a partially submerged opening into the sea, as do other grottoes into the island. Roman emperors with villas on Capri reportedly used the Blue Grotto as a private bath. In modern times, it has become a popular tourist attraction, with visitors touring it by boat.

Depending upon the tide and the size of the swells pounding the entrance to the grotto, the guides will have passengers lie down while they pull the boat and sightseers into the grotto with a chain permanently attached to the cave entrance.

Inside the grotto the sea seems to be lit from under water. It is a magnificent fluorescent blue color, hence its name. This is due to another opening to the grotto, completely submerged, and the limestone bottom. It allows in sunlight to truly light the water from below. The underground passages leading to the grotto are partially sealed and supposedly once were connected to catacombs of Roman tombs.
**FLORENCE**

A visit to Florence (Firenze) is a must for any art lover. UNESCO estimates that 60% of the world’s most important artworks are in Italy, with over half of them located in Florence. Situated in the northwest of Italy, surrounded by the wine-growing hills of Chianti, the city attracts rapture and frustration in equal proportions. Few can dismiss the image of Brunelleschi’s cathedral dome bursting through the morning mist: a terracotta balloon hovering above the medieval rooftops. But once the visitor drops down to street level, the profusion of traffic and tourists can remove all sense of tranquility. It seems every building holds a masterpiece, demanding attention and often gobbling up funds.

Often called the cradle of the Renaissance, Florence owes much of her wealth to the Middle Ages. Banking became big business on the back of the city’s profitable wool trade and, in 1235, Florence minted the florin, the first gold coin to become standard currency across Europe. Bankers commissioned some of the finest art and architecture in the city. The names Strozzi, Rucellai and Pitti can be found all over Florence, but it was the Medici family (who led the city for over 300 years, off and on) that nurtured the greatest flowering of Renaissance art.

The paintings of Botticelli, the sculptures of Michelangelo and the rusticated palaces of Michelozzo all flourished under Medici rule. Then, as now, most of the action in Florence took place between Piazza del Duomo and Piazza della Signoria, the city’s civic heart. Here, in the historic center, Dante (forefather of the Italian language) first glimpsed his muse, Beatrice. Here, the Florentine Republic rose and fell. Florence is a walking gallery of art, architecture and true Tuscan culture.

**PIAZZA DEL DUOMO (CATHEDRAL SQUARE):** Brunelleschi’s gravity-defying dome dominates the Florence skyline and defines the city. The dome that sits atop the city’s candy-colored Duomo (cathedral) was an architectural breakthrough, since Brunelleschi invented an entirely new way of counteracting the weight of the dome, thus building the largest self-supporting dome since classical times. The cathedral (built under the proviso that it be the largest house of worship in Christendom, a feat eventually claimed by St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome) took 15 years to complete. Its original facade was pulled down on the orders of Ferdinand I in 1587. The Duomo remained faceless for nearly 300 years, until 1887. Described by Ruskin as a Chinese puzzle, the lavish pink, white and green marble frontage belies a cavernous interior that is surprisingly free from decoration. Once inside, most people look heavenward, pausing to admire Giorgio Vasari’s recently restored frescoes in the cupola before climbing the 463 steps for a spectacular view over the city. Tall, slender and straight-backed, the Campanile (bell tower) is the graceful sidekick to Brunelleschi’s stout Duomo. Built according to Giotto’s designs in 1334, the Campanile was completed after its creator’s death, by Andrea Pisano and Francesco Talenti. The tower is decorated with two garlands of bas-reliefs, strung around its rose-tinted facade. Higher up, sculptures of the Prophets and Sybils, carved by Donatello, look down upon the city below. The original pieces are now in the Grande Museo della Opera del Duomo (Cathedral Museum). Visitors can climb the 414 steps of the Campanile for rewarding views over the piazza, which afford a closer inspection of the Duomo and Brunelleschi’s rusty crown,
once described by the architect Alberti as large enough to shelter all the people of Tuscany in its shadow. The adjacent Baptistery completes the trio. This provided the inspiration for both the Campanile and Duomo facades. Originally believed to be a pagan temple, the octagonal building is the oldest in Florence. It is famous for its gilded bronze doors, particularly those on the east side, dubbed the Gates of Paradise. Executed by Lorenzo Ghiberti (with the greatest diligence and the greatest love) over a period of 27 years, each of the bronze bas-reliefs tells a story from the Old Testament, with astonishing realism and compassion. Nowadays, most are copies, the originals having been moved to the Cathedral Museum for restoration and safekeeping. Ghiberti, the most self-satisfied of artists, preserved his own balding image in the frame of the door, fourth in from the left hand side.

GALLERIA DEGLI UFFIZI (UFFIZI GALLERY): The most important art collection in Italy and one of the richest in the world is usually heralded by the burr of foreign tongues from the queues of tourists that snake across the courtyard. Located in Vasari’s majestic Uffizi Palace, the Uffizi Gallery houses the Medici art collection bequeathed to Florence in 1737, on the condition that it never leaves the city. The impressive sum of Italian and in particular Florentine art is arranged to illustrate how evolving techniques and ideas influenced the artists. The huge collection is really too big for one to tackle at a single sitting, however, visitors with limited time should ensure they take a peek at rooms seven to eighteen. These include some of the city’s biggest draws: Botticelli’s mythological masterpieces, The Birth of Venus and Primavera (Spring) and Leonardo Da Vinci’s Annunciation. The first few rooms concentrate on medieval art with a particular bent towards the Sienese school, exemplified by Duccio, Martini and Giotto. The latter end of the gallery features work from the Umbrian and Venetian schools, including Titian, Tintoretto and Raphael.

GALLERIA DELLA ACCADEMIA (ACCADEMIA GALLERY): While Florence offers a montage of artwork, most people associate the city with just one masterpiece: Michelangelo’s David. The huge statue occupies pride of place in the city’s Accademia Gallery, dwarfing the multitude of chattering tourists who stand in awe before him. The statue was carved from a single block of marble in 1502, when the artist was just 20 years old. Its exaggerated size and musculature is a symbol of the new-born Republic that briefly cast out the Medici, the city’s Goliath. Also in the gallery are Michelangelo’s unfinished Slaves, which stand captive in blocks of marble, from which their forms seem to struggle to escape.

PONTE VECCHIO (VECCHIO BRIDGE): Even the dogs of war could not bring themselves to destroy the Ponte Vecchio—the only bridge to survive the Nazi bombing of Florence during World War II. Nowadays, the famous 14th-century bridge is literally paved with gold (home to Florence’s gold and silversmiths) and is a prime shopping trap for the city’s affluent tourists. It was Cosimo de Medici who first created the mood for change, when he ordered the previous occupants (a motley crew of butchers, accustomed to throwing their bloody leftovers into the River Arno) to make room for a more genteel trade. High above the shops, a secret passageway known as the Corridoio Vasariano links the Uffizi Gallery to the Pitti Palace. Built by Vasari, it was intended to shield the powerful Medici family from the Florentine riffraff, as they journeyed from one palace to the other. Lined with portraits of the city’s greatest artists, the passage reopened to the public in 1997.
ROME

FORUM ROMANUM AND PALATINE HILL
The heart of the ancient city embraces this vast archaeological site, dating from the period of the kings to the emperors. Important buildings include the Curia, the temples of Vespasian, Antoninus and Faustina, the House of the Vestals, the Basilica of Constantine and the arches of Septimius Severus and Titus.

The archaeological area known as the Forum is only one of a number of imperial fora, or meeting places, to be found in Rome. In its midst lies a small column, the Umbilicus Urbis, the navel of the city that marks the geographical center of the ancient urbis as well as the Forum's heart. Corresponding to the modern piazza, every aspect of daily business took place here - from religious ceremonies to the vegetable market to the running of the government of the Roman Empire. Political enemies brought Caesar's body here to lie in state after his murder on the Ides of March in 44 BC. Mark Antony delivered his famous speech in Shakespeare's play beginning, “Friends, Romans, Countrymen...” from the Rostra platform. By the end of the second century, the city fathers decided that Rome needed a more dignified center. The food stalls were removed and law courts and business centers were added. As the Empire expanded and the population boomed, the Forum became too small. New forums were built to relieve congestion, but the Roman Forum remained the symbolic heart of the city. With the fall of the empire and the rise of Christianity many marauders and rebels pillaged buildings or used as quarries for ready building materials. By the 13th century the Forum had entirely disappeared under meters of rubble and earth so that by the Renaissance the area was known as the Campus Vaccinus or Cow Pasture with the tip of an occasional tall column thrusting upward through the grass. Systematic excavation only began in the 19th century. Today, it stands exposed, a multi-layered skeleton of 1000 years of civilization.

PALATINE HILL
Conveniently close to the Forum, the Palatine Hill became a fashionable residential area during the Republic. Cicero, Mark Antony, the emperor Augustus and many other important statesmen and aristocrats lived here. Established as the elite area of Rome, succeeding emperors continued to live on the hill until the emperor Domitian ordered a vast imperial residence to be constructed over the whole site. The term Palatine became synonymous with the palace that dominated the hilltop and thus the word palace was coined to indicate any abode where a sovereign lived and ruled.

COLOSSEUM
Within the arched tiers of the Colosseum, audiences of 55,000 were entertained by gladiators fighting to the death and by the mass slaughter of wild animals. Begun by the Emperor Vespasian in 72 AD on the site of an artificial lake in the grounds of the assassinated Nero’s Golden House, it was a constant reminder of the excesses of the Empire. His successor, Titus, continued construction. What was formerly a
tyrant's delight is now the delight of the people, publicized by Vespasian's public relations campaign. The slaughter of men and beasts, known as munus, had begun as a ritual intended to appease the gods and train soldiers, but by the late Republic such spectacles had become mere entertainment. At the inaugural games in 8 AD, 9,000 wild animals and hundreds of gladiators were killed by men and common women. Both Pliny the Younger and Cicero, writing a century apart, thought that the gladiators' fights exemplified the great Roman virtues of discipline, self-sacrifice and fortitude, although Cicero did oppose the wild beast hunts. Only Seneca attacked the spectacles outright. “It is pure murder,” he wrote.

PANTHEON
The majestic Pantheon has presided over its busy piazza for almost 2000 years. Its marble columns and pediment, bronze doors, and soaring domed interior make it one of the most harmonious and best-preserved monuments of antiquity. This circular temple dedicated to All the Gods was rebuilt by the emperor Hadrian in 11AD and transformed into the Christian church Sta. Maria and Martyres in the Middle Ages.

ORTI FARNESIANI
Originally the site of the Emperor Tiberius' palace, the Renaissance Farnese Gardens preserve much of their original design. They were laid out in c.1550 by Vignola for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520-1589), nephew of Pope Paul III. Set with exotic plants, a maze, two aviaries and a casino, the terraced pleasure gardens provided a cool retreat from the Roman summer. Two flights of steps descend to the nymphaeum decorated with the Farnese fleurs-de-lis.

BASILICA JULIA
Basilicas, inspired by the main hall of Greek royal palaces, were originally general meeting places used for business or administration. Rectangular in plan with a central nave, these large halls were the models for the first Christian churches. The Basilica Julia, built in 54 BC as part of the renovation of the Forum by Julius Caesar, was the site of civil law courts. On the steps in front of the portico, games, resembling draughts, snakes and ladders, can still be seen incised into the marble to entertain those waiting.

HOUSE OF ROMULUS
Because the Iron Age inhabitants built their huts out of wood, only the circular foundations dating to the mid-8th century remain as testimony to their presence. Until the end of the 4th century it was believed that the dwelling of Rome's founder Romulus was located here. Nearby was the Iupercale, the cave shrine of the she-wolf that suckled the abandoned twins Romulus and Remus.

HOUSE OF LIVIA HOUSE OF AUGUSTUS
It is believed that the first wife of Augustus had this house, with its vestibules, courtyard and three vaulted living rooms, connected to the imperial palace, the House Of Augustus. Built by Domitian (81-96 AD), it was used by subsequent emperors as the headquarters of the empire. The exterior walls, even as ruins, are so tall that modern archaeologists are still unsure how they successfully installed the roof. The rooms around the house’s dining area are elaborately decorated with frescoed wall paintings in the second Pompeian style, depicting a variety of mythological scenes. In the House of Augustus the Triclinium, or dining room, hosted imperial banquets.
between a set of twin oval fish ponds.

**VATICAN CITY**

The Vatican City State, sovereign and independent, is the survivor of the papal states that in 1850 comprised an area of some 17,000 square miles. During the struggle for Italian unification, from 1860 to 1870, most of this area became part of Italy. By an Italian law of May 13, 1871, the temporal power of the pope was abrogated, and the territory of the papacy was confined to the Vatican and Lateran palaces and the villa of Castel Gandolfo. The popes consistently refused to recognize this arrangement. The Lateran Treaty of February 11, 1929, between the Vatican and the kingdom of Italy, established the autonomy of the Holy See.

The first session of Ecumenical Council Vatican II was opened by John XXIII on Oct. 11, 1962, to plan and set policies for the modernization of the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Paul VI continued the council, presiding over the last three sessions. Vatican II, as it is called, revolutionized some of the church's practices. Power was decentralized, giving bishops a larger role, the liturgy was vernacularized, and laymen were given a larger part in church affairs.

On Aug. 26, 1978, Cardinal Albino Luciani was chosen by the College of Cardinals to succeed Paul VI, who had died of a heart attack on Aug. 6. The new pope took the name John Paul I. Only 34 days after his election, John Paul I died of a heart attack, ending the shortest reign in 373 years. On Oct. 16, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, 58, was chosen pope and took the name John Paul II. Pope John Paul II became the first Polish pope and the first non-Italian pope since the 16th century.

On May 13, 1981, a Turkish terrorist shot the pope in St. Peter's Square, the first assassination attempt against the pontiff in modern times. The pope later met and forgave him. On June 3, 1985, the Vatican and Italy ratified a new church-state treaty, known as a concordat, replacing the Lateran Treaty of 1929. The new accord affirmed the independence of Vatican City but ended a number of privileges that the Catholic Church had in Italy, including its status as the state religion.

On April 2, 2005, John Paul II died. He was the third-longest reigning pope (26 years). A champion of the poor, he is credited by many with hastening the fall of Communism in Poland and other eastern bloc countries. His vitality and charisma energized the world's 1 billion Catholics. His rule was characterized by conservatism regarding church doctrine, particularly on issues such as birth control, women's roles in the church, and homosexuality. The pope also remained circumspect about the U.S. church's sexual abuse scandals in 2002. He was the Vatican's greatest ambassador, traveling to 120 countries. John Paul II canonized 482 saints and beatified 1,338 people, which was believed to be more than all his predecessors combined.

On April 19, cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was named the new pope. Pope Benedict XVI is known as an accomplished scholar of theology and is considered an archconservative in his religious views. He served as Pope John Paul II's closest associate and is expected to continue the policy of a strong Rome. In Sept. 2006, Pope Benedict XVI
apologized after angering Muslims around the world by quoting medieval passages that referred to Islam as evil and inhuman.

Important Contacts:

**On-Site Director Cell Phone Numbers** (will be provided on arrival)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Director</td>
<td>SPI Main Office (24 Hour) From U.S. 1-866-502-7505 From Italy 001-512-502-7505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asst. Director</td>
<td>Dante Alighieri Scuola d’italiano Director Luca Buonomi From US 011+39+0577 49533 From Siena 0577 49533</td>
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**Emergency Numbers**

**General Emergency 112**
(similar to our 911)

- Police 113
- Ambulance 118
- Policia Municipal Office 0577 292550

**Tourist Info Center**

Piazza del Campo, 56 Tel. 0577 280551
[http://www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it)
infoaptsiena@terresiena.it
Mon. – Sun 9.00am - 7.00pm

**Hospitals**

Azienda Ospedaliera Senese
Viale Bracci Mario, 16
0577 585111

Azienda Ospedaliera Senese
Il Campo, 1 (Located in the Center of Town)
0577 247586

**Post Office**

Piazza Matteotti Giacomo, 37

**U.S. Embassy Florence**

Lungarno Vespucci
38 50123 FIRENZE
Tel. 3055 266 951
Fax 3055 215 550

**Train Stations**

TRENO Main Station
Piazza Fratelli Rosselli
Tel. 892021 [HYPERLINK](http://www.trenitalia.it/www.trenitalia.it)

**Public Transportation**

TRA-IN (Public Buses of Siena)
10 Ride Tickets are cheaper

**Main Bus Station (long routes)**

Piazza Antonio Gramsci
Sena Autolinee [http://www.sena.it/](http://www.sena.it/)
SITA [http://www.trainspa.it/](http://www.trainspa.it/)

**Taxis**

Look for a taxi stand before trying to hail one down.

**To call a cab:** 0577 49222 OR 0577 289044
[http://www.comune.siena.it/taxi](http://www.comune.siena.it/taxi)