

# Italy: Food Cultures and Sustainability

## Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Summer 2026

## Country Overview

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Italy is a peninsula located in southern Europe, surrounded by different branches of the Mediterranean Sea. The country is known for its rich cultural heritage, arts and architecture. Italy is a Republic with the government located in the capital city of Rome. The country is divided into 20 regions and each region has its own traditional customs, dialects, and food culture.

The city of Bologna is located in the Emilia Romagna region (Northern Italy), in the plain of the Po River. For centuries, Bologna has been an important commercial, cultural, and educational center and is a thriving and vibrant city.

Within the immediate area are Etruscan ruins, Roman remains, and the remarkable heritage of Renaissance palaces and fountains. During the Renaissance, Bologna was known as "Bologna the Red," for its many red roofs, "Bologna the Fat," for its wealth and cuisine, and "Bologna the Learned," for its university. Bologna is still envied throughout Italy for its cuisine, and its 900-year-old university has maintained a world-wide reputation. Equally important, the city is renowned for its hospitality and the friendliness of its people.

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## CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

The Italian Peninsula, famously known for its long, boot-like shape, is characterized by a diverse geographical terrain. Northern Italy boasts beautiful mountains, such as the Alps, and the famous Lake District, which includes Lake Como, Lake Garda, and Lake Maggiore. The Apennine mountains stretch from the north all the way down the length of the Italian Peninsula. Just below the Alps and Lake District, you find Italy's most fertile land in the *Pianura Padana* (the Padan Plain). Italy is also famously characterized for its extensive coastlines (7600km), the islands of Sicily, Sardinia, Capri, Elba, and Ischia and for its Mediterranean climate.

Bologna, Italy: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)	
JUNE	JULY
65°-95°F	65°-95°F

The weather in Italy can vary from North to South in the different seasons. In general, the weather in the summer is usually hot and humid in Italy with an average temperature of 90°F during the day. Northern Italy has colder temperatures in winter while the south has milder winter temperatures. Spring and autumn usually have milder temperatures and are generally the rainier seasons.

When traveling in Italy in summer, it is very important to protect oneself from sun exposure during the day by using sun screen and wearing a hat. It is also very important to stay hydrated, considering the high summer temperatures.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

Italians may commonly display a strong sense of affection and camaraderie with closer physical contact than you may be used to. People, regardless of gender, tend to greet each other and say goodbye with two to three kisses on alternating cheeks starting with the left cheek. Be careful not to swoop in to the right cheek in beginning your greeting as this may cause momentary confusion! Not every interaction requires such contact – in greeting strangers, a formal handshake will do.

You may also notice a heightened sense of aesthetic awareness and sensibility, especially in the public realm, which may even seem excessive compared to your home institution. Italians tend to take great pride in dressing and presenting themselves in public.

## IDENTITY

SIT creates an inclusive and safe space on our programs for students of all identities. Your experience in various cultural contexts beyond SIT spaces may be influenced by how certain identities are perceived locally. We encourage students to do research and utilize resources available to you to better prepare yourself for your experience abroad. Visit our [Identity Abroad](#) page for resources on how to get started.

## LOCAL DIET

Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in country. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture.

Food is the bedrock of Italian culture and is at the heart of many traditions, holidays and everyday life. Italians generally eat a very light breakfast of coffee with warm milk and a light pastry. Lunch can range from a light panino to a plate of pasta to a meat and vegetables dish, generally between 1-3pm. Dinner is the main culinary event and usually begins between 7:30pm and 9pm. The variety of foods and the depth of gastronomic tradition makes it possible to meet the needs of most diets in Italy. People will be very keen to share many traditional foods including cheeses, cured meats, and a range of local and regional delicacies with you, and their preparation and your enjoyment of these will be a source of pride

It is important to note that while Italians, like most people in the Mediterranean, enjoy wine and have a custom of pairing wine with food, in Italy it is culturally unacceptable to be publicly intoxicated. Some visitors may think that because Italians drink wine so frequently, the cultural norm is to drink a lot. It is not.

Note: if you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform the office of Student Health, Safety & Wellbeing prior to the start of your program ([studenthealth@sit.edu](mailto:studenthealth@sit.edu)). We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context.

## SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is essential to having a successful study abroad experience.

SIT recommends you do research prior to departure about the health, safety, and security specifics of the country(ies) you plan to visit. Consult the [U.S. Department of State](#) website and search their [Countries and Areas Archive](#) for international travel information and current travel advisories for each country. Search the Center for Disease Control [Traveler's Health](#) page to see travel health notices and vaccine requirements and recommendations for any country(ies) you plan to visit.

SIT recommends doing research ahead of time to stay up to date on It will be critical that you educate yourself about the potential health and safety hazards that may exist in your areas of travel and make informed decisions about what preventative measures to take prior to departure. You should also reference the Health, Access, and Identity information on your program's [webpage](#).

Please note that mosquitoes can be present in Bologna in summer, especially during certain hours and in green areas such as parks. We recommend bringing insect repellent and wearing long pants or light layers when needed.

If you have any questions, please reach out to the [Student Health, Safety, & Wellbeing Team](#). Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. For information regarding safety and security, emergency communications, SIT policies, health and personal property insurance, and general program tips, please read the Safety, Security, and Health document and Student Handbook on your program's [predeparture page](#).

## ACCOMMODATIONS

For the duration of the Program, students will be housed in modern studio dorms (double occupancy) with access to a kitchenette, Wi-Fi, utilities, some cleaning services, linens, daytime reception, a night doorman, a laundry room, and common areas. While on overnight excursions, students will be staying in hotels and hostels (sharing double, triple or bigger bedrooms with other students in the Program).

## TRANSPORTATION

Travel by train is a primary source of transportation in Italy. Most train lines that run north-south and east-west in Italy pass through Bologna, which makes it very easy to travel to most parts of Italy from Bologna by train. While in Bologna, it will be possible to move around on foot or by public bus or taxi. The public bus system in Bologna serves the larger urban area and is useful for moving between the historic city center and areas outside of the city center. Students will be able to make their way from their student housing to the Center where classes will be held either on foot or with a short bus ride.

## COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It's important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or to receive a call. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion.

Visit our [Contact & Communication](#) page for practices on program communication, emergency communication, and home institution communication.

## PHONES AND INTERNET

### Cell Phone Policy

As part of SIT's commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working cell phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls, including a data plan so that your phone is operational when you are away from wi-fi. If needed, during orientation SIT staff can assist students in purchasing a local SIM card and acquiring minutes for calls and texting. Failure to maintain a working phone capable of making and receiving calls/texts will be considered a conduct violation and a breach of our student code. Students can obtain a SIM card in Bologna upon arrival. The SIM card will require a brief registration and it will cost you about 20-25euros, plus the amount of money you will decide to charge it with (for, example, you can start with 15 euros). These SIM cards will give you a local phone number and will allow you to receive free incoming calls.

## MAILINGS

Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually **expensive** and **problematic**. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged. Mailing prescription medication abroad is illegal.

For this program, **DHL, FedEx, UPS services are available in country**. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package. If it is necessary for someone to send you mail then posted letters and packages should be sent to the following address:

Student Name  
Centro Poggeschi  
Via Guerrazzi, 14/E,  
40125 Bologna BO

## MONEY

In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board (in the form of food stipends) throughout the program. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary

The local currency is the Euro. ATMs are widely available in all major cities, secondary towns and smaller municipalities. Rural areas may not have readily accessible ATMs and many establishments, especially in smaller locales, do not accept credit or debit cards so always keep this in mind when traveling. Visa and MasterCard are generally accepted while Discover and American Express are not very common.

Check current exchange rates: <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. If you don't inform these companies that you will be away, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

We suggest that you budget between US\$1100 to \$1500 for out-of-pocket costs not covered by the Tuition and Housing Fees. To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program. Please carefully consider your personal spending habits when creating your out-of-pocket expense budget. Some items to consider are textbooks, Field Study Project or Internship-related expenses (if applicable) not covered by the program, interpretation services, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Use the average estimates below as a guide to help you plan for out-of-pocket expenses.

Please budget approximately:

<b>Personal spending (from past student suggestions):</b>	\$500 – 1,100
<b>Books, printing, supplies:</b>	\$50
<b>Up-front medical costs:</b>	\$500
<b>Cell phone:</b>	Varies by student
<b>Estimated total:</b>	\$1,100 – 1,500

Please note that up-front medical costs can vary widely. Though you are completely covered by SIT’s travel insurance GeoBlue, which you can read more about on our [Participant Insurance](#) page, you still may need to pay up-front for medical care and then file for reimbursement.

### VISITORS AND FREE TIME

SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See the [Attendance and Participation Policy](#).

The Program accommodations do not allow for external guests. If a visitor does come while a program is in progress, they must plan their own independent accommodations.

### INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

Please read our full [Independent Travel](#) policy for our definition, guidelines and how to access our independent travel notification form. Please note that independent travel is only allowed during program free time and students will not be excused from program activities to travel. SIT is not responsible for any costs of student independent travel including logistics, preparations, cancelation fees, change fees, and any other costs associated with independent

travel. We highly recommend you wait to book any independent travel until AFTER arriving on program and receiving the final academic schedule from your program.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist.



## CODE OF CONDUCT AND POLICIES

SIT maintains a [Code of Conduct](#) and clear institutional [policies](#) regarding student behavior through a commitment to mutual learning and respect for others. Visit the policy page for detailed policies around academic integrity, alcohol and drug use, anti-harassment and non-discrimination, attendance and participation, credit hours, equal education opportunities, grading, housing, independent travel, prohibited activities, religious holiday observance, sexual harassment and misconduct, and withdrawal among others.

## Packing Guidelines

### LUGGAGE

Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad. We strongly recommend a backpack, which will also be useful for short excursions when on the program.

If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the “General Health Tips” section in the Safety, Security, and Health pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration (<http://www.tsa.gov>) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

### CLOTHING GUIDELINES

While informal dress is acceptable and common in most settings, it is essential to keep a neat, clean appearance. Jeans with holes, sloppy T-shirts and tank tops are discouraged. It is not necessary to be fashionable, just neat and clean. It is very important to have at least one set of clothes for semi-formal occasions and one set of clothes that can get dirty during excursions. You will experience the summer season so be sure to pack accordingly. It is advisable to bring clothes that can be worn in layers to adjust to changing temperatures and mosquitoes in the evening. When visiting churches, shoulders should be covered and it is recommended to avoid shorts and above-the-knee dresses, so be sure to pack accordingly.

### COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is recommended that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. It is recommended that you insure your computer, smartphone, or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft (SIT insurance does not cover personal property).

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. <http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/>.

## WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Many imported (North American) brands of toiletries, medicines, vitamins, etc., can be bought in Italy although local or European made brands can be a more affordable as a substitute. There are local as well as American brand tampons and cups available.

## ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: <https://studyabroad.sit.edu/admissions-aid/application-process/contact-a-former-student/>.

Don't miss the Packing List on the next page!

## Packing List

These packing guidelines are **based** on suggestions from past students and your academic director.

Packing List sample:

### GENERAL

- 1 nice outfit suitable for a social event
- Lightweight clothes including pants, long-sleeved shirts, light T-shirts, opt. medium length skirt)
- Underwear and socks (10-day supply)
- Pajamas or nightgown
- Flip flops (for use inside student accommodations and on excursions)
- 1 pair comfortable walking shoes
- 1 pair nice shoes
- Rain gear (waterproof jacket, poncho, or umbrella)
- 2–4 pairs pants or jeans
- 1 medium-length skirt and/or dress

- 5–6 mixed long and short-sleeved t-shirts
- 2–3 blouses or button-down shirts
- Sweater
- Jacket or fleece
- 1 hat (for sun protection)
- Optional - Bathing suit and beach towel
- Optional - 1 pair sandals
- Optional – workout clothes

### TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa (if applicable)

### HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly
- Small first aid kit (most supplies can be bought in town)
- Bug repellent
- Antihistamine/allergy medicine for pollen
- Extra eyeglasses and/or contact lenses
- Sunscreen (at least SPF 30)
- Students are encouraged to bring a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector