

RU in Rome Student Advice for Next Year

To the class of RU Rome, Summer 202X,

First off, welcome to Rome! This city is beautiful, don't be afraid to wander. You will have time enough to find yourself at home. You are here to learn, obviously, but you're also here to find your way, if only for a little while, and make a home away from home. Come as you are; Learning your 'please', 'thank you' and 'another bottle of the water for the table's will serve you well, but this is a cosmopolitan city, and there are no stakes if you try your best and still slip up.

Learn your local grocery stores. Drink the coffee at the nearby cafe or tabacchi, it's always cheaper there. Wherever they've got a standing counter. Find those capital 'T' signs - tabacchi, also - they're like bodegas, but better. Buy your bus tickets there, they're also your metro tickets. Weather permitting, take walks; You will want to get a little lost. The days will crawl by, slowly, but the month will go by quick. Try to live it like you'll never be back, play the neophyte and the tourist. If you're not planning on going for Art History, make a point to visit churches and galleries, drink in the grand facades, gawk at fountains and statues.

And of course, eat well! Don't just eat Italian food, though my recommendation to check off every pasta on the typical menu before you leave comes straight from experience. Drink house wines. Find what the immigrants are cooking, eat that too. Buy fruit in season. The city is best enjoyed over dinner and in museums. Keep an open mind, stay up late, go to clubs. Feel full, a little stressed, tired in the mornings, call your parents and miss them if you can. These feelings will ground you in your new environment, you'll learn to trust yourself as a constant, even in your new environment. With these hedonistic tools in your belt, you'll do fine. The rest is up to you.

Try your best. Enjoy!

This program has taught me a lot about myself and about other people. No matter what I was doing, I feel like I learned more about myself within every minute. I'm leaving Rome with a better understanding of who I am and who I want to be. RU in Rome was easily one of the best decisions I've made in college and I wish I could go back and tell the me that was freaking out, nervous to leave home a month ago, that everything would work out perfectly. I have met some of the most amazing, kind and funny people on this trip and I know they will be around for me even after. My advice to you is to not be afraid to take the first step and to enjoy every moment the best you can. Living in Rome has been

an experience I could never and will never forget, and I am so thankful for the opportunity to study abroad and hope to do it again soon.

I would look into traveling before or after your original program dates. Whether its solo or with a friend, I think it could be a great opportunity to explore and enjoy yourself in addition to the program. It's something that I didn't get the chance to do, but I hope you will.

I would also give you the advice of know yourself. Have an idea of what you want to do and where you want to see, any extra excursions you're willing to take, don't be afraid to reach out to people beforehand and try to make a plan. Lastly, don't be afraid of making friends. I was the only person within the program that goes to a different campus and I knew nobody. I was terrified going in. I reached out to one other girl who mentioned she wanted to travel throughout the program and we talked beforehand. We ended up getting really close over the past month and traveled to other places in Italy.

Overall, traveling while young is an amazing experience and I wouldn't change my decision of going on this trip for the world. I'm leaving with so many memories and overall happiness that I wouldn't have gotten if I didn't take the first step.

Don't be afraid to take the first step

Dear future Ru in Rome student,

Congratulations on embarking on this journey in Rome. It is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience that you will never forget. Your month here will feel like a week, yet the bonds and memories you create will last a lifetime. Say yes to everything (within reason) try new food, wander the city, and talk with the locals. Leave everything you know about home behind and allow your mind to grow. Have fun, but also don't fall behind on your studies. You're here to experience the city and learn about its beauty through language, art, and food. Try every form of pasta, as much pizza as possible, and visit McDonald's at least once. Plan what you'll see beforehand, and do not be held back by others to go where you want. Get to know your professors and peers and take in every moment. You are extremely lucky to be apart of this program, don't take anything from granted.

Dear Future RU in Rome Student,

While leaving what you know for an entire month may sound extremely scary, this experience is one that people say you will remember forever. This program is not for the weak since it is intensive, with classes crammed into four weeks. However, in the end, it only changes you for the better. Nothing I've ever done could've prepared

me for this trip, which is a good thing. It pushed me so far out of my comfort zone that I feel like a better-developed version of myself. I pushed past boundaries I never thought were possible. While a good night's sleep is not on the itinerary for this trip, what you get instead are countless memories and unforgettable adventures. If you allow yourself to embrace every challenge, reward, emotion, and experience, you will have the best opportunity to discover who YOU truly are. I would never say this trip was easy, but I didn't come to Italy to have it easy. I got to do so much in four weeks that I never would have thought possible. Honestly, this trip gave me a completely different perspective on life. It made me realize that anything I want to do, I can do. There are endless possibilities and chances for you to create your own story. I did the internship track and could see parts of Rome in the tourist's eyes. Rome started to feel like home, especially when I would travel on the weekends. I got to see Rome, Naples, Pompei, Florence, Venice, Sorrento, Capri, and Positano, all while working, doing school, and having a good time experiencing everything Italy offers. This program is structured to throw you right into the Italian lifestyle, and you pick up on it very quickly. You are so busy that you don't have time to be homesick.

Knowing that this program is only a month makes you appreciate being here because, in a short time, you are going to be gone. I can't believe I'm writing about my experience because that means it has come to an end. Coming here felt like I had an eternity, and now it is time to go home. I have met the most incredible, gracious, and unique people on this trip. The friends I have made in my RU in Rome program are people I will be bonded with forever. We all are the only ones who know what our experiences were like, and that alone keeps an invisible string connecting everyone forever. This isn't a trip but a journey of discovery in yourself and the world around you. Now take every chance and be whoever you want because this is for you. Ciao! <3

Studying abroad in Rome was such a surreal and indescribable experience. Prior to studying abroad, I was never able to truly define what Italian culture is, for in America we only think of the concepts of food and family. So, I was always determined to formulate that definition for myself and my desire to travel to Italy and to Rome fit in perfectly. Previously, I could have never foreseen the amount of beauty, culture, and history within this city. After four weeks, I feel as if Rome is my

home. Within the second week, I found myself referring to Rome and this apartment building as my home because that was how much Rome really touched me within and welcomed me in a multitude of ways. Not only have I become comfortable with the Italian language, but being immersed within an Italian environment simultaneously to learning allowed me to become more efficient. In regards to the art history aspect of Rome, I have seen and appreciated so many extravagant works of art. Between the Colosseum, Trevi Fountain, Sistine Chapel, Basilica of St. John, Vatican, and more, I have seen the impact of religion, power, and love on historical works of art. However, I have to say that some of my favorite things about this trip are the smaller moments. It's seeing the smile on a waiter's face when I try my hardest to order in Italian. It is the streets packed with people smiling, eating, dancing and singing to music at any and all times of the day. It is the way you can visibly see Italians valuing their life and appreciating the beauty of their home everyday. Because of all of my experiences in Rome, I now am able to explain what Italian culture is. That being said, Italian culture is appreciating life's gifts, filling your days with adventure, and connecting with the joyful and loving community. I advise any future student who takes on this adventure to truly embrace the ups and downs of Rome and to allow yourself to form connections with the Romans for even the smallest moments.

Dear future student,

Welcome to Italy! It's going to be a crazy ride. The next month is going to simultaneously feel like five years and five seconds.

If you're like me, you'll probably be going into this blind, by yourself. Don't be scared! Remember everyone else is here for the same reason: to have the best summer ever.

Don't be shy - be friendly to everyone and invite everyone to everything. This is an amazing opportunity to create a forever community. I write this at the end of my trip excited to go back

home because I know my senior year at Rutgers will be filled with new forever friends.

Remember to work hard, and try everything! If you're in the food track, try the weird stuff (if you're not allergic)! People have been eating this stuff for millennia and they are fine!

Be bold! Get comfortable doing the uncomfortable!

Please please please prioritize your friends! I know this may seem like the perfect place to start a romance, but it isn't! Be young and free!

You're here for a month - enjoy it!

Dear future RU in Rome student,

Ever since I was a little girl I dreamed of the day that I would study abroad in college. I grew up listening to my mom and her stories of when she studied in Cortona, Italy, where she met some of her best friends. I am so grateful that I decided to embark on this journey, I went into this program completely alone and I am so happy to say these same strangers I now consider close friends. If I could give you some advice going into this experience, I would say to make a tremendous effort to put yourself out there, and the world will be receptive in the most unexpected ways. Do your very best to soak in the art and culture around every street corner, and don't let the small things go unnoticed. At first, you may experience some culture shock in the way Italians live their day to day lives. No one is in a hurry and the New York and New Jersey mindset might fight this ease, leaving you feeling like the world should be moving faster. I encourage you to sink into this, and move at an Italian pace, because when you return home, it will be just as you left it. I am really happy that I pushed myself to go out at night as much as I could despite feeling tired and run down from class. I met some wonderful people and I'm leaving with some crazy stories, so I am happy that I maximized my time here. Overall, this has been such a

rewarding experience, and I am leaving feeling so enriched by this unique place and the people I have met on this journey.

This program is one of the most immersing and enlightening experiences I have ever had. Not only have I been exploring and navigating a culture and world that I have only read about, but I have been doing the same for myself. Throughout the trip I have been challenging my notions about myself and my outlook on life through the myriad of new experiences I have had the opportunity to experience. Appreciating life for its inherent beauty, doing things I would usually be too nervous to do, living with the mission to make the most of every day that comes... and I feel that being in this new place with new people has allowed me to grow into a better version of myself, and that is invaluable to me. Aside from the beauty of Italy and the freedom this program has given me to see and eat almost anything I could think of here, it has allowed me to see to my ability to assert myself into the world in a way that being at home has not. I share all of this with you to try and open your mind to the breadth of learning that a program like this offers, and that it is so much more than just coursework. Enrich your mind, but also enrich your soul.

I had thought that a month away from home would feel like a lifetime, but I had never experienced so much in such a short amount of time. This trip to Italy was the first time I had ever gotten on a plane or even left the country. Being in Rome (and a few other cities) for a month with a whole bunch of strangers I had never even talked to is definitely something that I never really planned on doing, though I am very grateful for this experience. Make sure to do as much as you can, but also give yourself some time to recharge and reflect. For me, the first two weeks hit me like a truck lol. I was constantly doing something every day [from 8 am to 8 pm](#). I recommend taking photos of everything or maybe even journaling. But enjoy every single day.

If I can tell the RU in Rome Class next year anything... it would be this.

- When you get here, explore but prioritize your sleep! You will be in a new place, probably homesick and exhausted. Grab a bite with your new friends and recharge to start the trip well. I wish I prioritized sleep the first day.
- While spending as much time as possible with your new friends is also essential to have some alone time. Try taking walks throughout your new neighborhood and exploring! Familiarizing yourself with the environment will make you feel more at home.
- Please make a list of everything you want to do and check it off when you complete it. You will realize how much stuff you can do in one day!
- Eat out for dinner, and save money by eating breakfast and sometimes lunch in the apartment.
- Try and speak the language as much as possible, this is the best way to get a better
- If you are homesick, remember that this is the time for YOU. Not anybody else. Know that family and home will always be there, but you can't study abroad daily with your college friends! Allow yourself to be selfish!
- Have access to a clock back in America, so you can know when you call your family/freinds
- Ask your family/friends to send videos, photos, and voice memos if you feel homesick. It's a reminder that all of those things are still there and waiting for you. Which will ultimate remind you that you are in ITALYYYYYYY!!
- Don't take days off, but take a 12 hr break ([5pm-5am](#)). It is impossible to never take a break and enjoy every part of Rome. Your body will choose a time to rest if you don't allow it too.
- You will walk everywhere. So bring a good pair of walking shoes that match every outfit you can wear.
- Leave extra room in your suitcase so you can bring stuff home. Bring toiletries that you can throw away in Rome and buy toiletries here to come back home with
- Take so many pictures. Of everything, even the mundane stuff. You will be able to relive them.
- If you are in AH, read as much as possible about everything you will see. It is the best way to appreciate what you are seeing truly.
- Be open to new experiences. Don't stay in the room all day, go out and see the city. There is truly nothing like it in America.
- Make as many friends as possible.
- Plan excursions to explore, but dont spend the whole month traveling. You will spend more time than you realize going from place to place and not absorbing it.

- Explore as if you will never come back, but don't be hard on yourself if you can't do everything on the list. You will be able to come back, we just don't know when.
- GO TO VENICE! Take every opportunity to go since it is sinking. My friends and I went after the Florence trip since we were already there. That is the one thing that I would say is the most important thing.
- Journal!!!!!! DO NOT force it, just have something besides your phone to capture.
- Have fun!!!! - Natalie

Dear future RU in Rome student,

Welcome!!!!!! you're gonna have so much fun here. Rome in the summer can be brutal in a lot of ways, but from personal experience all of the hardships and obstacles just make the good times that much more worthwhile. In true Rutgers fashion, the work will be hard. You'll be constantly moving and walking (lots of walking) but with every new place you go will be something new scholars have been studying for centuries or a sculpture that was one of your history textbooks years ago or something someone out there (maybe even you) has been dying to see their entire life. So soak it all up, pay attention to every lecture your instructors give to you because everything will actually come up at some point while being here, and use every single moment as a learning opportunity. You may choose to travel around which obviously was amazing every time I was able to do it here, but also don't forget to maximize all of the time you have in Rome too, because it's huge and you'll never be able to reach every single destination within its borders, and there's always more. It's an incredible city and there's always something to do. In my opinion, the people make the place. Even if you find yourself hating Rome and not wanting to ever be here again (which I think would be very difficult) spend your time making connections and getting to know everyone in your study

abroad group. even the ones not in your classes and the ones you didn't immediately feel drawn to. i could've been placed in any city in the world and i would still be able to have fun with the group of people i've met on this trip. surround yourself with people that want to make the most of the trip, and the rest will fall into place. that's my biggest piece of advice, become as close as you can with the most people you can from this trip. the days will feel crazy long, trust me it can sometimes be grueling, but this month as a whole will feel like it flew by. four weeks is really, on the grand scheme of things, teensy tiny amount of time in your life. and it's safe to assume that you'll never be in rome at a time like this, young and in college with limited responsibilities to fully immerse yourself in the culture and people that you're with here. enjoy it, i wish i could do it all again!!!!

Dear next year's RU in Rome student,

If you're nervous about being here, that is totally understandable! I know it might sound cliché, but this truly will be a life-changing time for you. I did the Art History track, so I got to see so many parts of the city, but if you're taking a different course, give yourself enough time to explore. Also, you will sweat like never before, so keep that in mind too. The people you meet here will be ingrained in your memory forever. I came with my best friend and am leaving knowing more of the most amazing people I have ever met. Do not take making those personal connections for granted.

Don't freak out when you're in a taxi...all Italians drive like that; it's like a puzzle. Go out with your friends, you'll sleep later, and you'll have a great time. Travel on free weekends!!!! The trains are so nice here, and the sights are worth it. At the same time, give yourself some time to slow down because you'll always be on the go from the minute you wake up to when you go to sleep. I rarely sit down in my room.

The month will feel like it's passing by slowly while you're in it, but once you look back on it, you'll realize how much happened in such a short amount of time. Always live in the moment. This trip truly changed my life for the better. No matter the inevitable drama, the people you go with become your family, and the city becomes your home (even for just a short while). I will miss being here so much, but I am so excited to retell these memories for the rest of my life. And I'm excited for you, whoever you are, that you get to have this experience for the first time. Enjoy it!!!!!!