

MADE Pre-Departure Packet

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MADE On-Site Staff Information

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Passports & Visas

Do I need a passport?

- You will need a passport in order to travel to Italy. If you do not have a passport, make sure to begin the application process immediately. In order to get a passport, you will need to provide a variety of documentation. For more details, visit the official government passport site here: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html/passport_1738.html
- First-time passport applicants must apply in person, at places like post offices, clerks of court, public libraries, or local government offices. Find your local options [here](#).

- If you have a passport, make sure that it is valid for at least 6 months beyond your program end date. If not, you must begin the process to renew your passport immediately. For more details, visit the official government passport site here:

https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html/passport_1738.html

What is a visa?

- A visa is an official stamp or seal that the Italian consulate adds to the inside of your passport. A student visa certifies that you are allowed to spend more than 90 days studying in the Schengen zone. Your visa will be valid for a specific time period, typically in accordance with the start and end dates of your academic program.
- In order to receive a student visa, you must submit a number of different documents and materials to the Italian consulate in your jurisdiction. The labor intensive process to compile your visa application materials and for your visa to be processed, approved, and returned to you can be time consuming. Make sure to research the process early and start as soon as possible. While MADE can help advise you about the student visa process, obtaining a visa is the responsibility of the student.
- Learn more about the visa process in the [MADE Student Visa Information guide](#).

Flights

How do I go about booking flights?

- You will be responsible for booking your own international flights to and from Sicily for your MADE study abroad program. We strongly encourage you to begin researching flight options as soon as possible. Booking early tends to allow for a wider variety of options and less expensive flights.
- In your "Travel Plans" onboarding form, MADE will provide arrival instructions for when you should get to Sicily. You should plan to fly into the Catania Fontanarossa Airport (CTA), landing on your program start date.
- Please share your flight details on your "Travel Plans" form so that MADE staff can keep track of any delays. If any travel disruptions cause you to miss the MADE airport pickup, make sure you are prepared with a backup plan. Research the public transportation options that are available. Buses regularly run between the Catania airport and Siracusa, about once an hour. Be sure to communicate with MADE on-site staff.
- Sites to consider when booking your flights:
 - StudentUniverse
 - Google Flights
 - Skyscanner
 - Kayak

Health & Safety

What do I do about the prescriptions I take now?

- You should work with your healthcare provider to secure enough of any prescription medications you currently take for the entire length of your program. Do not plan to have medications shipped to you or to fill a US script while in Italy. Make sure to keep your medications in their original packaging and bring a copy of the prescription or a letter from your doctor.
- We also recommend that you pack any other medications that you take regularly, such as migraine medication, allergy pills, antacids, etc.
- The CDC has a guide for health/wellness packing [here](#).

What about my mental health?

- It is important to take care of yourself while you are abroad, especially as you get acclimated. You will likely experience jet lag and culture shock upon arrival. We recommend that you think about the ways you maintain your health and wellbeing at home and bring some of those strategies abroad with you. If you exercise regularly, talk to a therapist, or participate in hobbies/activities, try to keep up with as much as you can while you're abroad. Adapting to a new country, culture, language, time zone, school, living situation, and new people can be stressful. Make sure to speak up and alert MADE, your home institution, loved ones, etc. if you need help.

What happens if I get sick? What do I do for insurance?

- Your MADE program includes international medical insurance. Contact MADE staff for recommendations through our vetted local medical network.

How can I accommodate my health conditions, dietary restrictions and/or food allergies?

- Learn how to explain your needs in Italian and/or print out a description in both Italian and English.
- Selectwisely.com is a helpful resource about managing allergies and health conditions abroad
- www.celiachia.it is a great resource for gluten-free dining in Italy
- Share as much information with MADE before your program as possible so that we can help you as much as possible on-site
- Have a plan of action in case of any exposure or emergencies

What can I do to stay safe?

- It is very important to be mindful of your safety throughout your study abroad experience. Stay alert and aware of your surroundings. Stay on top of local news so that you're aware of any emergency situations.

- Be careful of your belongings - try not to flaunt any valuable items and keep them close to your body. For example, don't hang your purse over your chair, keep your wallet in your back pocket, or leave your phone on a cafe table.
- Don't carry a lot of cash with you and try not to keep all of your money in one place. For example, leave an extra credit card in a safe spot in your accommodations.
- Try to keep a low profile and fit in with the local culture through your attire and behavior as much as you can.
- While you're out at night, try to maintain sound judgment. Drug use and alcohol abuse are prohibited. Always try to utilize the buddy system and look out for your friends.
- Keep MADE, your loved ones at home, and friends on-site informed of any travel plans you have. If any emergency situation should arise, it is imperative that MADE knows how to get in touch with you.
- Inform yourself of local laws and be mindful of the [MADE Code of Conduct](#).
- Driving is strongly discouraged. Take advantage of the European public transportation and utilize trains, buses, and metros as well as budget airlines.
- Make copies of all of your important documents, including your passport, visa, credit/debit cards, insurance information, etc.
- Come up with a plan for how you would handle an emergency situation. Register with [STEP](#), the Smart Travel Enrollment Program. Save 112 and local emergency contact numbers to your phone.
- Should an emergency occur, contact local authorities right away. Also, when safe, update MADE, your emergency contacts, and your host institution if applicable/appropriate.
- Most importantly, always speak up if you need help.

Packing

What are some tips for packing for a study abroad program?

- Packing for a study abroad program can be overwhelming, but the most important thing to keep in mind is that less is more. You will be responsible for carrying your own luggage throughout airports, transportation, and up any stairs in your accommodations. Make sure that you are able to manage on your own whatever you plan to bring with you.
- Leave a little room in your bag for any items you may acquire or purchase during your time abroad. You will most likely want to bring home souvenirs and gifts.
- Don't forget that you will be able to get just about anything you may need or forget in Italy!
- Before your flight, make sure that you have your contact information on luggage tags, both outside and inside of your suitcase.

- Prepare for the chance that your checked luggage may be delayed or lost. Pack any essential items that you can't live a day without in your carryon bag.
- Review TSA guidelines and your specific airline's baggage restrictions ahead of time.
- Weigh your luggage before you get to the airport so that you can adjust accordingly and avoid any overweight fees.

What should I make sure to bring with me?

- Research the local climate and weather patterns in Siracusa as well as any other destinations you plan to visit.
- Try to pack clothes that are easy to layer and mix and match. Interchangeable, basic items are your best bet.
- Pack:
 - Copies of important documents
 - Passport
 - Visa
 - Passport Style Photos
 - Insurance Information
 - Credit/Debit Card(s)
 - Acceptance letter from MADE
 - Converters/adapters for Italy as well as for also any other country that you plan to visit
 - Portable charger
 - Comfortable walking shoes and a nicer pair of shoes
 - Basic clothing items that can mix, match, and layer
 - Toiletries
 - Prescription medication
 - Glasses/Contacts, Solution & Case
- Don't Pack:
 - Leave your valuables at home. Don't bring anything that you would be devastated to have lost, stolen, or damaged.
 - Leave hair styling tools, like blow dryers or straighteners at home. They will not work properly due to different voltages.

Finances

What do I do about money?

- Make a budget! How much do you want to realistically spend throughout your program? Consider exchange rates and any personal travel you are hoping to do.
- The local currency in Italy is the euro. We recommend obtaining the equivalent of \$100 in euro prior to departure from your bank or AAA. Once you are

on-site, we do not recommend exchanging dollars for euros. The rates are much more affordable when withdrawing cash directly from an ATM.

- Credit cards are widely accepted in Italy, but some markets and smaller shops may only accept cash. We encourage you to research credit/debit cards with minimal foreign transaction rates. In Europe, Mastercard and Visa are the most commonly accepted credit cards. It may be more difficult to use other options, such as American Express or Discover cards.
- Don't forget to inform your bank of your travel plans prior to departure.
- It can be helpful to research the exchange rate and cost of living prior to departure. Check out sites like Expatistan.com and/or numbeo.com.

Technology

How do I use my cell phone abroad?

- Research the different options:
- Review the plans that your current US cell phone provider has for international coverage. Commons plans:
 - AT&T: additional \$12 per day
 - Verizon: additional \$12 per day or additional \$100 per month
 - T Mobile: \$50 per month
 - Another option that is popular with students on long term/semester programs is to utilize a local Italian SIM card on their current phone. One popular provider in Italy is [TIM](#)
 - Finally, since MADE campus and accommodations will be equipped with WiFi, you could consider using WhatsApp when on WiFi.
- The Italian country code for phone calls is: +39
- Useful Apps:
 - Google Translate: Very helpful app to help as you adjust to using the Italian language, reading menus, navigating, and more.
 - WordReference: Another helpful tool for better understanding Italian vocab, phrases, and conjugations.
 - WhatsApp: Many Italians use WhatsApp as their primary mode of communication with friends.
 - Splitwise: Many Europeans use this app to help manage splitting expenses among a group of friends. This can be especially helpful when taking weekend trips or going out to meals.
 - Venmo: If you don't already have it, download Venmo ahead of your travels. Venmo is not commonly used by people from outside of the U.S., but it can be helpful among your American friends to divide up expenses.
 - Deliveroo, Glovo, Just Eat, or Uber Eats: These are meal delivery apps to take advantage of if you're in the mood for takeout.

- FREENOW: not yet available in Siracusa, but for any travels in other areas of Italy, this is similar to Uber or Lyft.
- VPN: You may want to subscribe to a VPN service for the length of your program if you want to have access to all U.S. sites or keep up with certain U.S. TV shows.
- Google Maps: helpful for all navigation in Siracusa and throughout your travels.
- Trainline: get tickets for trains within Italy and Europe
- DropTicket: get tickets for public transportation
- Your bank's app - manage your account, cancel quickly if cards lost/stolen

Should I bring my laptop?

- We recommend bringing your laptop to complete your school work. We encourage you to look into insuring your laptop and any technological devices you plan to bring.

Housing

Where do I live?

- Shared apartments located within the center of Siracusa
- Apartments are fully furnished and include bedding, linens, and towels
- Apartments equipped with WiFi
- Students will have access to a washing machine and a drying rack

Can I request a single room?

- You may request a single room on your housing questionnaire.
*Subject to availability and may require an additional fee

When will I receive my housing assignment?

Can I request a roommate or housemate?

- Yes. As a part of the onboarding process, you will have to complete a [housing questionnaire](#) where you can list any roommate or housemate requests. MADE cannot guarantee that all requests will be honored, but we will do our best to accommodate them as long as they are mutual.

What should I expect from my MADE housing?

- MADE vets all housing for safety, quality, and comfort, but your accommodations might be different from what you're used to in the U.S.
- MADE apartments are located within the center of Siracusa, so you will be able to reach MADE and everything you may need on foot. Siracusa is a very walkable city.
- Each apartment will be a little bit different, as they are in existing buildings and were not built specifically as student housing.
- Be mindful that while you will live with other MADE students in your housing unit, the neighbors in your building might not be students. Be courteous of locals, families, and working professionals who may live above, below, or beside you. Try to keep your volume down, especially late at night.
- Elevators are very uncommon in Italy, so you may need to climb a significant number of stairs to get to and from your housing unit.
- Utilities in Italy are very expensive. Please be mindful of your electricity, heat/AC, and water consumption. You may also need to be careful about using numerous appliances at the same time.

- Your housing may not have air conditioning or the same level of central air conditioning that you might be used to in the U.S.
- You will likely want to open up your windows to let fresh, cool air into your apartment. This can also help to prevent mold from developing in your bathroom. Just be aware of mosquitoes if you keep your windows open. You can buy plug-in repellents to help manage mosquitoes from the grocery store. The most popular brand is VAPE.
- You will most likely not have a clothes dryer in your housing as they are very uncommon in Italy. Most Italians hang their clothes to air dry, so you may need to adapt your routine to allow for drying time.
- You will be responsible for taking good care of your apartment. Make sure to keep up with cleaning, taking out the trash, and be patient with older appliances/systems. You will be held financially responsible for any damage inflicted on your apartment.
- Speak up if you have any housing or roommate concerns!

Cultural Adjustment

What are small everyday differences that I might notice between the U.S. and Italian cultures?

- In Italy, the ground floor is considered floor 0 while in the U.S., the ground floor is considered floor 1.
- In Italy, dates are typically written Day, Month, Year while in the U.S., dates are typically written Month, Day, Year.
- Business hours are often different than you might be used to in the U.S. Local shops, restaurants, and businesses often close for a few hours during the afternoon. In addition, you may find that things are closed on Sundays or close earlier in the day on Sundays.
- Dinner time tends to be later in Italy than you might be used to in the U.S., generally starting at 8pm or later.
- When dining out in Italy, your server will not bring you your bill unless you ask for it.
- Tipping in Italy is a bit of a debated topic. When dining out in Italy, you will typically be charged a service fee and tax. Tipping is not always customary and it is not expected as it is in the U.S.. With that said, some people do round up their bill or leave their server extra change if the service was good.
- In Italy, clothes dryers are not common. Most people hang their clothes to air dry.
- Italians typically tend to dress for the season and in general, dress more formally than you might be accustomed to in the U.S.

What can I do to better adjust to culture differences?

- Practice patience and try to keep a sense of humor as you adjust to the local culture.
- Try to learn and utilize as much of the Italian language as possible.
- Research the Sicilian culture, politics, news, current events, etc.
- Learn more about the climate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in Sicily. Explore some resources [here](#)
- Talk to people who have been to Sicily and/or Italy before
- Get involved, explore, try new foods, keep busy, and remember to try to make the most of your time in Siracusa - it will go by quickly!

Life in Siracusa

How do I get around Siracusa and Sicily?

- Closest Airport to Siracusa:
 - International Airport Fontanarossa "Vincenzo Bellini"
 - Via Fontanarossa - 95121 Catania
 - www.aeroporto.catania.it
 - info@aeroporto.catania.it

NOTE: InterBus runs between Siracusa and the Catania Airport hourly

- Siracusa train station:
 - Railway station FS of Siracusa
 - www.trenitalia.com
 - Piazzale della Stazione Centrale 21, 96100 – Siracusa.
- Bus Companies in Sicily:
 - InterBus
 - www.interbus.it
 - €6.20 from Catania Airport to Siracusa
 - 55 mins
 - Etna Trasporti
 - www.etnatrasporti.it
- Taxi:
 - Consorzio Taxisti Siracusani
 - +39 06 99 33 05 55

What should I see, do, and eat in Siracusa?

Visit:

- Explore the beautiful [island of Ortigia](#)
- Visit the city's main cathedral, the "[Duomo di Siracusa](#)"
- Check out the Archeological Park "[Parco Archeologico Neapolis](#)" to see an ancient Greek theater, ancient ruins, and more
- Explore Ortigia's incredible outdoor market "[Antico Mercato di Ortigia](#)"

- Visit the Temple of Apollo "[Tempio di Apollo \(Apollonion\)](#)"
- Check out the "[Castello Maniace](#)" fortress on the tip of the island
- Visit the "[Fonte Aretusa](#)" spring

Typical Local Dishes:

- Savory Snacks:
 - Arancini: fried rice balls
 - Caponata: salty/sweet eggplant appetizer
 - Scaccia/Schiacciate di Siracusa, Cucche da Ancucchiare, Pastizzetta, : different varieties of stuffed savory breads/snacks
 - and many more!
- Fresh Seafood
 - Pesce Spada: swordfish
 - Sarde: sardines
 - Seafood meatballs "Puppetti i muccu"
 - and many more!
- Delicious Pasta:
 - Fresh pasta shapes, like cavatelli, gnocchi, maccheroni, and more
 - Pasta alla Norma: pasta with eggplant, tomato sauce, fresh basil, and ricotta salata
 - and many more!
- Incredible Sweets:
 - Cassata: traditional cake with pistachio, fresh ricotta, and candied fruit
 - Cannoli: traditional dessert, cookie shell filled with fresh ricotta
 - Granita: traditional frozen treat, similar to sorbet
 - and many more!

Where else should I visit in Sicily?

- Noto
- Ragusa
- Modica
- Mount Etna
- Taormina
- Catania
- Agrigento
- Palermo
- Cefalu
- Aeolian Islands
- Scala dei Turchi
- Riserva dello Zingaro
- Caltagirone (ceramics)
- Trapani

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Sicily:

- The Rocky Necropolis of Pantalica (Siracusa)
- Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto (South-Eastern Sicily)
- Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalú and Monreale
- Mount Etna
- Archaeological Area of Agrigento
- Isole Eolie (Aeolian Islands)
- Villa Romana del Casale

What's the weather like in Siracusa?

- [Average monthly forecast here](#)

What is some helpful Italian vocabulary?

- Greetings/Goodbyes:
 - Ciao = hi/bye
 - Salve = hello
 - Buongiorno = Good morning
 - Buonasera = Good evening
 - Buonanotte = Good night
 - Buona giornata! = Have a good day!
 - Buona serata! = Have a good evening!
 - Arrivederci = Goodbye
 - Manners:
 - Per favore = Please
 - Grazie / Grazie mille = Thank you
 - Prego = You're welcome
 - Mi dispiace = I'm sorry
 - Mi scusi / scusami = Excuse me
 - Permesso = Excuse me (to get through a crowd)
- Dining:
 - Il menù = Menu
 - Il conto = The check/bill
 - Contanti = Cash
 - Carta di credito = Credit card
 - Scontrino = Receipt
 - Le posate = Utensils/cutlery
 - Forchetta = Fork
 - Coltello = Knife
 - Cucchiaino = Spoon
- Directions:
 - Dritto = Straight
 - Sinistra = Left
 - Destra = Right

- Dietro = Behind
- Davanti = In front
- Accanto = Next to
- Travel:
 - Biglietto = Ticket
 - Bancomat = ATM
 - Entrata = Entrance
 - Uscita = Exit
 - Chiuso = Closed
 - Aperto = Open
- Questions:
 - Chi? = Who
 - Che cosa? = What
 - Quando? = When
 - Dove? = Where
 - Perché? = Why
 - Quanto = How much