

## What You May Not Think of Packing... (But Are Definitely Going to Want to Bring)

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### 1. A Backpack for Weekend Excursions

You won't want to lug your giant suitcase on the trains and buses it takes to get to Rome and Florence. If you're not already bringing something like this as your carry-on, slip a smaller bag in your suitcase and thank yourself later.

*Italia Tip: To avoid luggage problems at the airport, make sure to check restrictions on the Travel Security Administration's webpage ([tsa.gov](http://tsa.gov)) and review your airline's information about carry-on allowances and checked bag policies.*

### 2. Clothes

A. *Versatility* One suitcase full of clothes needs to last you six weeks. Pick practical clothing that can be dressed up or down, paired with multiple outfits and effectively layered to match changes in weather (Assisi's weather can change from cold, to hot, to raining, to sunny, to foggy, all in the same day. The weather is also humid).

B. *Modesty* No trip to Italy is complete without exploring a few religious sites. Because these are still active places of worship, admittance requires covered shoulders and knees (for males too). If you must wear a tank top and/or shorts, bring along a scarf or shawl to wrap around yourself for the duration of your church visits.

For tips on clothes to wear check these web sites.

Men <http://thesavvybackpacker.com/how-to-dress-avoid-looking-like-an-american-tourist-in-europe/>

Women <http://thesavvybackpacker.com/womens-european-fashion/>

### 3. Comfortable Walking Shoes

There is no way around it – you will be walking up hills and through crowded cobblestone streets at multiple points during the trip. You're going to want to choose function over style on this one.

*Italia Tip: Watch your footwear in the rain – the cobblestones in Assisi can become especially slick. It's best to choose footwear with good traction (like running shoes) on those particularly rainy days.*

### 4. A Small, Portable Umbrella

Pick something you can easily keep with you as Assisi's weather is wildly unpredictable. Regardless how sunny the morning is, there will always be a chance of sudden rainstorms.

### 5. A Sturdy, Re-usable Water Bottle

Italy can be hot and humid – hydration is not just a luxury, but a necessity. Bottled water is available but often at prices higher than 2 euro (that's upwards of \$3.00). Take advantage of the free fountains in many of the tourist cities (Assisi included) and bring along your own container.



Amazon.com

### 6. A Travel Adapter and Converter

Because U.S. outlets differ from foreign ones, you'll need this device to plug in your appliances and electronics (read: to charge your phone). The 'adapter' and 'converter' are two separate parts, but are often combined into an all-in-one device (see image left). You can find these at stores like Target or online at sites like

Amazon (cheapest option). Be sure to check the compatible countries (you need US to Western Europe) before purchasing.

### 7. Luggage Locks

Italy's reputation for pick-pocketing is becoming outdated, but you'll still feel a little safer going through the bigger cities and train stations if your luggage is thoroughly secure.

### 8. Personal Medication, Preferred Painkillers, and Allergy Pills

Assisi is well equipped with pharmacies, but these will not always supply your trustworthy brands – it's best to be prepared for anything and bring these from home.

*Italia Tip: Regardless of whether or not your luggage is locked, always keep a close eye on your belongings and surroundings. Keep valuables (like that new iPhone) concealed while walking through crowded public locations.*

### 9. Extra Room in Your Suitcase for Souvenirs

Unless you're planning on keeping all of Italy in memories, you're going to want to bring some trinkets back. Some students choose to ship home a package to ensure their fragile items arrive home safely. You can save money and time by packing with the consideration that you'll leave Italy with more than you came with.

### 10. School Supplies

It's hard to find pencils, pens, and paper in Assisi and if you do find them, they will be expensive in the form of calligraphy pens and paper.

**11. A photocopy of your passport.** It is handy to keep a photocopy of the front pages on your passport (your photo and passport number) just in case. And not a bad idea to have important phone numbers on paper – not just on your phone.

### 11. Be Completely Able To Carry Anything You Pack

**ONLY** pack what you can carry completely on you own. You will be getting on and off of trains and buses within small time windows and must be able to move quickly. Luggage is usually

stowed overhead on trains, Assisi is built on steep hills, and nobody will be able to help you carry anything, let alone offer, so think twice before bringing more than you can carry by yourself. If your suitcase is on wheels, make sure they are strong and sturdy for cobblestones.

**Remember** that half of the experience is learning to overcome the initial discomfort that comes with living in another country. Keep in mind that forgetting things is both inevitable and usually fixable, (don't stress!) but a little preparation can help make your stay easier. Happy Packing!

## A Basic Italian Dining Guide: How Italian Restaurants Differ from American Ones And \*Where to Eat in Assisi\*

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### *How Italian Restaurants Differ from American Ones*



Zaio.blogspot.com

#### 1. The Hours

Often, restaurants will not keep – or even post – set hours; the restaurants will open and close (frustratingly) without consistency. Breakfast is served only in cafés (usually open around 6 am and stay open all day) and features pastries and coffee. Meal times in Assisi are traditional: 1:00 p.m. for lunch, 7 p.m. for dinner. Almost every restaurant closes from the hours of 3 to 6 pm and then re-opens for

*Italia Tip: To order in Italian, begin with the word "Vorrei," the future, first-person form of the verb volere, meaning to want.*

*Italia Tip: Water in Italian restaurants comes in a large bottle meant to be shared with the table. This bottle will cost you around 2 euro and does not come with free refills.*

dinner until around 10 pm. You will find more flexibility in meal times when traveling in larger places such as Termini Station where there is also much more variety in worldly cuisine than Assisi has to offer.

#### 2. The Cost

Most things in Italy are more expensive; food included. The price of meals will often increase as you travel to tourist spots and the portion sizes may shrink. Always be financially prepared. In Assisi, the average full meal at a sit-down restaurant costs around 25 euro (a little

under \$40).

#### 3. The Pace

If you need a quick lunch, a café or pizzeria is your best option. Restaurants offer a more leisurely alternative. You will never be rushed and you will have to ask for the bill.

#### 4. The Tip

Italian restaurants charge a “service fee” – a 1 to 3 euro charge per customer added to the final check. Sometimes this cost is identified on the menu, but not always. It will always be added to the check. Know that tipping is not mandatory in Italy. If you choose to leave a tip, it should be small.

## A Basic Guide to Groceries: How Italian Grocery Shopping is Different And \*Where to Shop in and around Assisi\*

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### *How Grocery Shopping is Different*



Zaio.blogspot.com

#### 1. The Hours

There are no 24-hour markets. Some stores close completely at mid-day (1:00) and re-open as late as 4 p.m. Most are closed again by 7 or 8 p.m. Get to know the hours of your favorite places.

#### 2. Types of markets

There are various types of markets in and around Assisi. There are two full on supermarkets at the bottom of the hill that are just how you imagine a supermarket being. In Assisi, however, there are only small specialty stores that only sell meat, fruits and vegetables, bread. There are also about three small shops within Assisi that have a limited selection of what supermarkets have to offer. One important thing to remember about shopping at the supermarkets at the bottom of the hill is to only purchase what you can carry; you must carry what every you purchase all the way back up to Assisi. For heavier items such as cases of water, it is a much better idea to purchase these from small stores within Assisi so you won't have to carry such items long distances.

#### 3. Buying and sometimes *weighing* Fruits and vegetables

When you buy fruits and vegetables, you must wear plastic gloves (provided). In some stores you will be expected to weigh your own fruit and vegetables.

#### 4. Shopping bags

You may want to bring along one or two strong reusable shopping bags. You will be hauling groceries long distances. Plastic bags often break. You must also bag your own groceries (plastic bags provided).

## A Basic Italian Transportation Guide: How to Travel by Bus, Train and Taxi

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### *How to Travel by Bus*

The following guide is tailored specifically to the buses in Assisi but can easily be applied to most Italian public buses. Whenever you travel by bus, it's important to plan ahead (so read on to become a bus expert).

#### 1. Check the Schedule and Plan your Route

Before loading onto any bus, be sure that you have thoroughly checked the schedule and made certain that the bus you're taking will stop at your intended destination. Failure to do so could result in accidental travel to a different city (and a worried program director).

In Assisi, bus stops can be found by following the blue direction signs throughout the town and are easily identifiable with an orange APM sign (see image to the right). Located near these signs (often on the same post) will be a brief schedule of departure times and a map indicating the routes of each bus.

Assisi has three regular buses (A,B,C) which travel different directions between 6 AM and 10 PM and reach each stop about every 30

minutes. Know which bus you're looking for, when it will be coming, the name of your stop, the name of the stop before it, and the name of the stop you are currently at. Write it down if necessary – you'll need it.

The bus should be clearly labeled with the final destination on the front and in some cases even color coded with the schedule. If you're worried, you can just ask the driver (no Italian necessary) if his bus will be going to your intended stop.



*Italia Tip: Save money by asking for a bus ticket book at the small newsstand in the Assisi train station. You'll get 10 tickets that can be used on any Assisi buses for 9 euro.*

Logering.com

#### 2. Buy Your Ticket

The driver will not always check for tickets, but if he does and you are caught without one, you will be paying a hefty fine (30 euro minimum). Tickets can be purchased from the driver himself for 2 euro or at most local news stands for 1.50 euro. It's best to have exact change or small bills to ensure the ticket-seller will have change.



Wright.edu

### 3. Validate

Simply purchasing a ticket is not enough to avoid the fines – a ticket must be validated by receiving a time stamp. Place your ticket in the small yellow machines located in every bus (see image to left). When the machine ejects your ticket it will have the time at which your ticket is no longer valid. You can use this ticket for any and all public bus rides for 90 minutes after validation.

### 4. Pay Attention and Find Your Stop

Don't doze off or you could wake up very lost! Place close attention to the stops to look for yours. The buses in Assisi do not stop unless a passenger rings one of the red buttons located throughout the bus. This should be done soon after departing the stop before your intended one. Some buses will have the next stop listed on a marquee visible in the front of the bus. If not, you will need to take note of the stops and know which is before yours. If you miss your stop, consider getting off at the next one and walking back or ask the driver if the bus will pass your desired destination again.

### 5. Check the Schedule (again)

As you leave, pay careful attention to where your stop is located and note some landmarks so you can make your way back to this stop (if applicable). Also, take a few seconds to look over the schedules and routes posted here so you know when you'll need to return by and what bus will be quickest back to your original stop.

## *How to Travel by Taxi*

### 1. General Information Regarding Italian Taxis

Taxis are usually only seen in big cities with the exception of a couple taxis you may see near Assisi's train station. Try to avoid taking a taxi from the bottom of the hill back up to Assisi or back down. These rides can cost as much as 30 euro while you can take a bus to the same drop off location instead for only 2 euro. In bigger cities taxis are much more reasonable to take, you can often barter the price of your fare to some degree.

## How to Travel by Train

### 1. Buy your ticket

Trenitalia has schedule information on their website (<http://www.trenitalia.com>) It is best to purchase your tickets at the train station and not online as you will not have access to a printer and Trenitalia does not provide digital ticketing options. Some train stations have machines where you can purchase tickets (See following page left).



*Italia Tip: Stops in most stations are very brief. Be sure to gather your luggage and be waiting at or near the door before arriving at your stop.*

### 2. Catching your train

The station will list the platform number for your train. In small stations more than one train will leave from the same platform only a few minutes apart, so be sure to pay attention and catch the train to your intended destination.

### 3. Validate

Simply purchasing a ticket is not enough to avoid the fines – a ticket must be validated by receiving a time stamp. Place your ticket in machines located in every train station (see image above right). The conductor will check your ticket and charge a hefty fine if there is no validation.

### 4. Seating & amenities.

Some trains have open seating; others are assigned. Check your ticket for seat assignment. Be sure to purchase water and snacks ahead of time; they are not sold on trains.

## A Basic Technology Guide: Wifi/Phones/Data Plans/Laptops/Tablets

### 1. Free Wifi

Most restaurants will offer free wifi to their customers. Finding out if a restaurant has wifi is as simple as purchasing anything and then asking if you may use their wifi, consider it a fair trade for the table space you're occupying while using your device.

### 2. Portable Pre-Paid Wifi

In Italy, there are devices called *pocket wifi* (hot spots) that are essentially portable Internet access points. You must purchase a data plan before use that only lasts one month from the date of purchase in order to operate the device. However, these devices may be reloaded at any time. An important thing to remember is that these devices will most likely not work within your apartment due to the thick stone walls. These devices also overheat with too much use and are not ideal for Skype and Facetime because of the large

amounts of data those applications use.

*Italia Tip: In a large train station like Termini, you will have the opportunity to buy a phone and a wide range of other technology.*

*Italia Tip: If using an iPhone, put your phone into airplane mode and connect to wifi. Doing so will allow you to use iMessage for free. It is important to also remember that iMessage only works between other iPhones.*

### 3. Italian Phones vs. International Phone Plans

These phones can only call other phones within Italy and users must also purchase a data plan with a set number of minutes and/or text messages the phone will be able to use. Most phones start at 40 euro and plans start at about 20 euro. An international data plan will allow for calls and text messages to be sent and received from your existing phone while in Italy. International phone plans are around the same price as an Italian phone.

### 4. Laptops and Tablets

It is important to bring a laptop or tablet on the trip because there will be several writing assignments that must be emailed to your professor while abroad. These devices are also great forms of entertainment for if there is a rainstorm and you are unable to explore Assisi. DVD's or

pre-downloaded movies are also an excellent extra to have just in case. Netflix is impossible to use; the apartments do not have Internet.

# Safety While Traveling Abroad

## 1. Travel in Groups

Traveling in groups is not only safe but also smart. Instead of making the long trek to the supermarket or laundromat down the hill by yourself, ask for a friend to join you. Chances are your friend will also need to go wherever you are going and traveling with friends is always fun.

## 2. Trip Plans

Planning a weekend trip with friends to another beautiful Italian city? Awesome, go for it. Just be sure to remember these rules before going.

- Inform your instructor in writing as well as in person of when you're planning on leaving and heading back and where you're going
- Don't let trip plans overlap with class
- Always plan out how you're getting from one place to another before going; train and bus schedules change.
- Travel in a group
- Use a hidden money fanny pack or a cross-shoulder bag when traveling abroad to prevent the chances of theft.

## 3. Important Phone Numbers and Emails

Dr. Giraldez can be reached at all of the following:

Italian Phone: 339-675-6551

Emergency Only: 001-209-915-1448

Email: [s\\_giralde@u.pacific.edu](mailto:s_giralde@u.pacific.edu)

Pacific's Public Safety can be reached at:

001-209-9463911

## 4. The American Embassy

Via Vittorio Veneto, 121, 00187 Roma, Italy

Phone: +39 06 46741

## 5. La Accademia

Via Tiberio d'Assisi, 10, 06081 Assisi, PG, ITALY

## **A Basic Hotel Guide: Check-Ins/Check-outs/City Taxes**

### **1. Checking-In**

Hotels will require you to leave your passport at the front desk upon checking-in. Don't panic; you will get your passport back once your information is recorded.

### **2. Keys**

Unless you are staying at a very modern place with card-swipe room keys (The Airport Hilton is Rome, for example) you will find that many hotels have large old-fashioned metal keys and they expect that you will leave them at the desk when you leave your room and pick them up from the desk upon your return.

### **3. City Taxes at Check-out.**

In Italy, there is a city tax that must be paid at the end of every hotel/hostel stay that is charged for every day you stay. This tax is about 7 euros a day and may only be paid in cash so it's important to keep cash on hand while traveling.

## **A Basic Living Guide: Check-In/Apartments/Comfort/Mailing**

### **1. Check-In**

Your landlord will show you around your apartment upon arrival and request a copy of your passport to keep.

### **2. Rooms**

In most cases there will be two people to a room within an apartment. These rooms tend to be small so be sure to be mindful of your roommate's space; you will be sharing this room for six-weeks. Every room will have enough beds for how many people are assigned to each room and there will be extra blankets and one towel provided for each person. There are no desks.

### **3. Communal Kitchen**

The apartments in Assisi have one small kitchen. These kitchens come equipped with some pots and pans and cooking utensils. Don't expect to find spices, sugar, or simple items such as salt and pepper. The need to buy these items to cook most things can become expensive relatively quickly so think carefully and buy some of the basics together. Some students found that buying plants for common herbs like basil and oregano was less expensive. In Assisi you will not find a wide variety of international spices for cooking

*Italia Tip: Before shopping for groceries, see if your apartment comes equipped with any cooking spices; most do not.*

ethnic foods. Learning a few basic Italian recipes is helpful. Students learned to rely on meals that can be made extremely easily and found that careful menu choices made eating out at cafes, pizzerias and certain *ristorantes* surprisingly affordable. Apartments do not have dishwashers.

#### **4. Living Room/Dining Room**

There will be a communal area usually connected to the kitchen featuring a table and chairs for eating. Some apartments may even have a small couch as well. TVs are rare in Assisi's apartments; of last year's eight apartments, only two had TVs.

#### **5. Air-Conditioning and Heat**

The landlords within Assisi usually control an apartment's heating and cooling. If the apartment becomes too hot or cold, just let your landlord know and they will be happy to do their best to accommodate you within reason. Keep in mind that weather may be cold when we arrive and Europeans tend to keep heat set low (60s) so layering is a good plan.

#### **6. Laundry**

Washing machines are a rare find and dryers are nonexistent in Assisi's apartments. Not to worry, there is a laundromat just down the hill and a store that will wash, dry, and fold your laundry within Assisi.

#### **7. Mailing to Letters and Packages to Assisi**

If you or your parents plan to have anything mailed to La Accademia to have while you are abroad, send these items as early as possible. Mailing things from the United States to Assisi is a very slow process. It can take weeks for a letter or small package to arrive –even FedEx seems to slow down in Assisi. You or your parents may even ship letters or small packages to La Accademia before you for your trip abroad. If doing so please be kind enough to let La Accademia know in advance. Please keep in mind that the office is very small so packages should be small.

## **A Basic Guide for Returning Home: Apartment Check-Out/Currency Exchange/Customs**

### **1. A week or two before you leave...**

Start thinking about how you are going to use up the food you have and stop buying anything that is not absolutely essential. Apartments are to be left as they are found which means throwing out everything in the fridge. So be sure to attack that block of cheese or the kilo of carrots in plenty of time.

### **2. Checking-Out**

Before you can checkout of your apartment, it must be completely clean and back to how it was upon your arrival. Upon checking-out you will need to pay a utilities bill in cash to your landlord.

### **3. Notify faculty director of your departure.**

A post on the group facebook site or a quick email is essential to let your Pacific faculty director know when you leave Assisi.

### **4. Currency Exchange**

Currency Exchange windows will not convert euro *coins* back to United States Dollars when coming back to the United states so make sure to spend or save any remaining euro coins you may have as souvenirs.

### **5. Customs**

Don't purchase anything that the United States Customs Department won't allow you to take back with you. And keep in mind that California has specific restrictions on fresh produce so if you packed some fresh fruit or veggies for the plane trip, you need to discard them prior to disembarking.