



guide to living

VOLTERRA

International Residential College

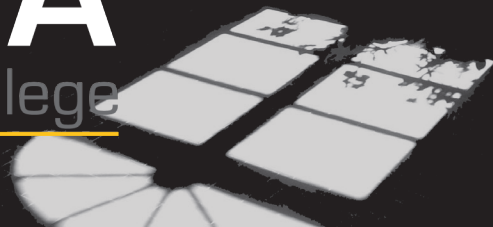




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1. ESSENTIAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Volterra International Residential College address:

Volterra International Residential College
Piazza Marcello Inghirami 1
Volterra (PI) 56048
ITALY

We are available to assist you with any problems or concerns that may arise, before or during your stay in Volterra. Please consult the following list for phone numbers and email addresses.

In the US:

Wladyslaw Fuchs
President of the Volterra-Detroit Foundation
cell: 248.990.3384
email: wladek.fuchs@volterra-detroit.org

In Volterra:

Giulia Munday
VIRC Program Director
cell: (011-39)348.269.0954
email: giulia.munday@volterra-detroit.org

In an emergency, please contact immediately the VIRC Program Director, both for assistance in dealing with the situation as well as for language and communication help.

For Program Faculty information please see your academic program brochure.



2. PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

2a. PERSONAL FINANCES DURING THE PROGRAM:

Personal Budget

In general, Italy is seen as more expensive than the US, but some aspects of daily life can be surprisingly cheap if planned well and with consideration for the unique characteristics of the Italian lifestyle.

The amount each student spends on such things as travel, leisure, meals, and miscellaneous activities varies considerably. Food is naturally going to be a major part of your budget during the program. This is where you need to balance between the convenience and fun of eating out, the simple logic of the prepaid meal plan in Volterra and the potential savings of in-house cooking.

Remember that any supplementary meals, travel, and activities must be paid for separately. If you purchased the meal plan, note that weekend meals are not included. For these additional expenses, a minimum of around \$100 a week, or \$1,200 for the whole program, is recommended.

Currency and Bringing Money

Italy, like most other EU countries, uses the EURO (€) for its currency. When planning your budget please remember that the exchange rate of the euro to the American and Canadian dollars fluctuates, and it may to some degree affect your budget for the program.

As you travel throughout Europe, you will be able to use the same currency in most of your destinations. Notable exceptions are England (uses the English Pound), Switzerland (uses the Swiss Frank), Poland (uses the Polish Zloty).

Most students access their US or Canadian bank accounts through their usual credit or debit cards. However, it is worth exchanging some money before leaving the US or Canada and bringing some euros for the first few days of the program. You should remember though that bringing cash in large amounts is not safe and is not permitted by many countries.

Cash is the most convenient form of payment for typical small purchases during your stay. There are several ATM machines throughout Volterra, where you can withdraw money directly from your American or Canadian bank with your ATM card. There is typically a foreign transaction fee applied; however, its amount will not be displayed on the monitor during the transaction, since it is charged by the US or Canadian bank. Most ATM cards and ATM machines also impose a transaction limit for security purposes, typically €250 or €300.

Credit card usage considerations.

Most places in Volterra and the rest of Italy accept foreign credit cards. As a result, most students will not experience much difficulty in using their credit cards. However, note that most American and Canadian banks charge a fee for the use of cards abroad. We recommend that you communicate with your bank about these fees, as well as to inform the bank about your travel plans, as some US or Canadian banks place restrictions on overseas transactions in order to prevent fraud.

2b. VISA INFORMATION:

Visa information will be provided by Program Faculty.



Via Porta all'Arco descends toward the Etruscan gate (built in IV BC).

2c. WHAT TO PACK

Attire

As much as the image of Tuscany is associated with blue skies and plentiful sunshine, the weather there can also be occasionally unpredictable, even during the summer semester. We recommend that you bring plenty of summer clothes, as well as a few warmer articles of clothing, although typically Volterra only experiences a few cold and rainy days each summer. You may generally expect very warm temperatures both during the day and at night. Temperatures around 75°F-90°F are the norm.

You should also make sure to pack the following items:

- comfortable walking shoes/sandals – You will do a lot of walking while in Europe. Additionally, in Volterra and in other cities that you will be visiting, the terrain is not flat.
- modest attire – Part of the history and grand architecture of Italy is contained in its churches. Entry to these is often restricted to those who are dressed modestly. That means shoulders should not be uncovered, and women should not wear shorts but rather skirts of an appropriate length.
- clothes that can get ruined – Consult the curriculum of your program to check whether any of your planned courses or activities include those that may dirty your clothes to a point that they may not be salvageable.

Bed linens, bath towels and all kitchen utensils will be provided at the VIRIC without additional charge.

Electronics

Italy (like all of Europe) uses a different electrical current (220 Volt/50Hz) and different power outlets/plugs than the US/Canada. Therefore most US or Canadian electronic devices (hair driers, phone chargers etc.) require a special adapter. These converters are widely available, especially at airports. Some electronics have power transformers which are flexible, and they automatically switch to a different current, but they will still need a different plug/cable (as is usually the case with laptops). A suitable replacement cable can typically be purchased in almost any electronics store in Europe.

Your cell phone will generally work in Italy, however it will be through European service providers, and therefore special international charges will apply. Please check with your cell phone company on how to minimize your international cell phone usage expense.

Art Supplies

There is a store in Volterra that carries a large selection of paper and graphic products that you may require for your design courses. However, there is no professional art supply store.

Small format B/W laser printing will be available at the VIRIC. Color printing and large format plotting for architectural design studio will be available for an additional charge through the local professional engineering and/or architectural offices.

2d. HEALTH AND TRAVEL INSURANCE

Your health insurance during the program in Volterra is covered by the Residency Fee.

In case you need medical assistance, you will receive care at the local hospital in Volterra:

L'Ospedale (Hospital) "Santa Maria Maddalena"

Pronto Soccorso (First Aid) telephone number: 0588 91701

You should consider purchasing separate insurance for the period of your travels. Please contact your own health insurance provider to find out the extent of the cost of the coverage. Please also ensure that your vaccinations and annual appointments are up to date prior to arrival in Volterra, and that you have all necessary medication for the duration of your stay.

2e. COMMUNICATION

You will be in a country whose primary language is Italian, and you cannot expect everyone to speak or understand English. However, note that most of your contacts in Volterra do speak English, including the Program Director and the owners of the dining locations. If you experience any communication problems while in Volterra, contact that Program Director for assistance.

3. YOUR STAY AT THE VOLTERRA INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

3a. GETTING TO VOLTERRA, ARRIVAL DAY, DEPARTURE

You will be responsible for getting to and from Volterra on your own. Below are directions to Volterra from the major airports and/or train stations. If your route is not listed below, please contact the President of the Volterra-Detroit Foundation or the Program Director for directions to Volterra from your point of arrival to Italy.

If you are flying into Pisa:

There is a train station right at the airport in Pisa. Check the train timetable upon your arrival in Pisa. There are several trains throughout the day which will take you directly to Pontedera, otherwise you will take a train just to Pisa Central station. All trains from Pisa Central in the direction of Florence stop in Pontedera.

You will take a bus (CPT Line 500) from Pontedera to Volterra. The bus station in Pontedera is just outside train station. Additional cost: around €10.00 Travel time: approximately 2-2.5 hours

If you are flying into Rome:

Take a train from the airport to Rome Termini (the main train station in Rome). When you buy your train ticket at the airport you may buy it for the entire trip to Florence or even Pontedera.

From Rome Termini take a train to Florence Santa Maria Novella.

From Florence you can go to Pontedera by train, or to Colle Val D'Elsa by SITA bus. Trains from Florence to Pontedera go every 30 minutes. There are four busses to Colle Val D'Elsa from Florence each day (see SITA website).

From Pontedera take CPT Bus Line 500 to Volterra.

From Colle take CPT Bus Line 770 to Volterra.

Additional cost: €30-50 Travel time: approximately 4-5 hours.

Arriving by train in Florence:

If you arrive by train in Florence take a train to Pontedera (any train in the direction of Pisa).

You will take a bus (CPT Line 500) from Pontedera to Volterra.

The bus station in Pontedera is just outside the train station.

Additional cost: €10-15 Travel time: approximately 2.5 hours

You will arrive at the bus stop in Volterra, which is located in Piazza Martiri della Liberta (see plan). The VIRC is only a 5 minute walk away from this location (see attached map).

There is an option of taking a taxi to or from Volterra, however the fares are usually very steep and only recommended if you are traveling with one or two other students with whom you can split the cost of the taxi.

You are expected to arrive on the day before your program begins. Please communicate with your program instructor regarding your expected time of arrival so that we know when to expect you. Note that early arrivals cannot be accommodated. Anyone who arrives early should find lodging in a hotel in Volterra. Should you experience delays in your travel, please communicate with the Program Director so that we are aware of your delayed arrival on site.

You are expected to leave Volterra the day after the end of the program. Departures after this date cannot be accommodated, and any student who has to stay an extra night will have to find lodging in one of the local hotels.



A CPT bus at the bus stop in Volterra.



Entrance into the city from the bus stop in Volterra.



Upon arrival at the bus stop in Volterra you will be greeted by one of the most magnificent views in Tuscany.



The Volterra International Residential College building holds a prominent location in the Piazza Marcello Inghirami.

3b. ACCOMMODATION IN VOLTERRA

General description

The Volterra International Residential College is located near the west end of the medieval city walls of Volterra, facing Piazza Marcello Inghirami, and was originally built in 1850 as the first art school in Volterra. The two cartouches on the front elevation feature famous local artists, Daniele Ricciarelli and Baltasare Franceschini. The location has excellent exposure in the city and offers great views of the city and of the surrounding countryside. The building is only a short distance from the Piazza dei Priori, the center of Volterra.

The renovation of the building for its current function as the Residential College was finished in 2013. The first two floors of the building house the academic facilities and common spaces, and the top floors contain the resident faculty apartments and the students' dormitories.



One of the student bedrooms and a typical bathroom (right)

Student Rooms

There are 11 rooms (3 singles and 8 doubles), arranged in 6 suites. Each suite includes one bathroom and 1 – 3 rooms and houses a total of 2 – 6 students of a single gender. Rooms and suites are to be chosen by students or assigned by their home university prior to arrival in Volterra.

Each room is equipped with a bed, closet, table and a chair per student. Linens and towels will be provided for all residents. Like in a dormitory, students residing at the VIRIC are responsible for cleaning their rooms. Cleaning supplies, a broom, and a vacuum will be available to students free of charge. They are kept in the storage room and they should always be returned there after use.

No food should be kept in the bedrooms.

Each bathroom is equipped with a sink, toilet, shower, mirror and a wastebasket. Students residing at the Residential College are expected to clean the bathrooms and empty the trash cans regularly. Cleaning equipment and supplies will be kept in the storage room on the top floor.

Please report any problems in the rooms and bathrooms immediately to the Facility Manager.

Common Areas

General Considerations

According to fire regulations, circulation spaces must be kept clear of any obstacles. Please do not keep items such as luggage or any pieces of your room furniture in the common areas. Anything kept there for more than 24 hours will be removed.

Common spaces will be cleaned once a week by the VIRIC staff person. However, you should always clean up after yourself, pick up rubbish and place it in the trash cans. Recycling bins are in the kitchen, please deposit all recyclables there. The city of Volterra plans to become waste-free, 100% recycling by 2020. We should do our part, starting now.



Exhibition Space and Classrooms

While the classrooms will be available to the students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the exhibition space will only be open during the building's open hours, provided that there is no current exhibition.

Kitchen

There is a student kitchen on the second floor of the building, equipped with a set of appliances: refrigerators, cooktops, sinks and dishwasher. The kitchen is for all the students, and therefore everyone should clean up after their use of the furniture and equipment.

There is enough space, utensils, and storage containers in the kitchen to store your food and cook your meals. We anticipate that, given the size of the facility and the students' creativity, each group will quickly and efficiently develop its own community policies on sharing space in the kitchen area.

Student Lounge

The student lounge is located on the second floor of the building, across the hall from the kitchen.

Storage Room

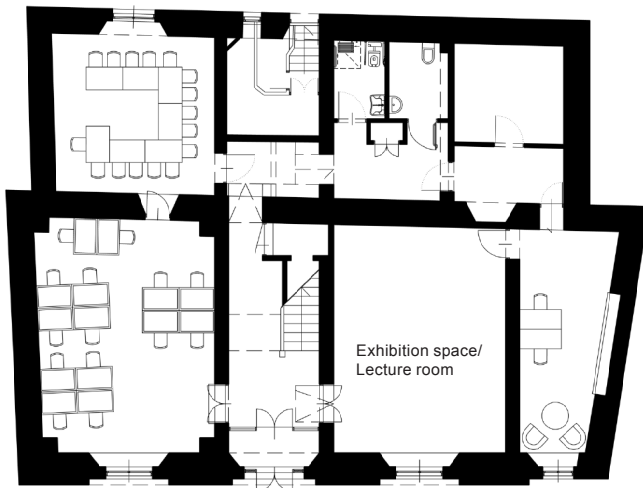
Students can keep their luggage in the storage room on the top floor. Make sure that anything you keep in the storage space is clearly labeled with your name. The room will remain unlocked at all times and should not be considered for storing anything valuable.



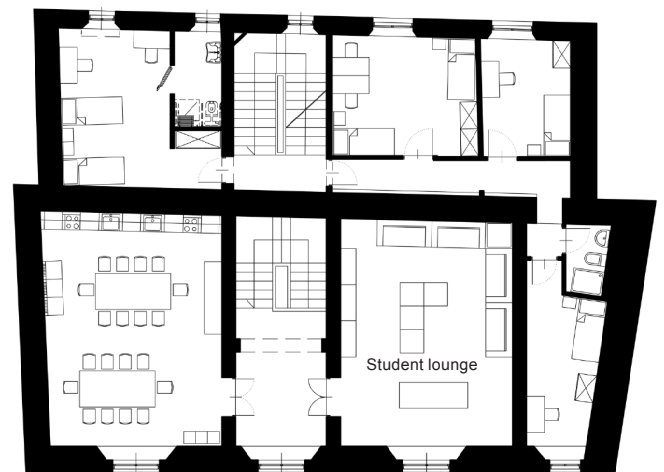
The entry hallway of the Residential College

Wi-Fi

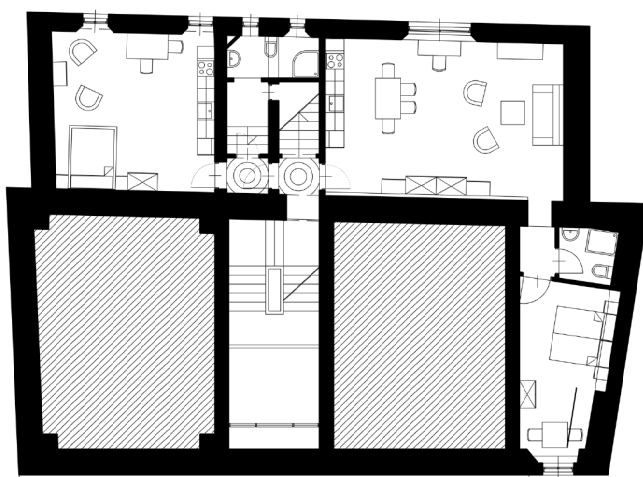
Unsecured, free Wi-Fi access is available throughout the building. Because of the structure of the building, some areas may have interrupted service. Please keep in mind that, though there will be Wi-Fi in the VIRC, it is not usual for restaurants and other public spaces in Volterra to have Wi-Fi or other free internet access.



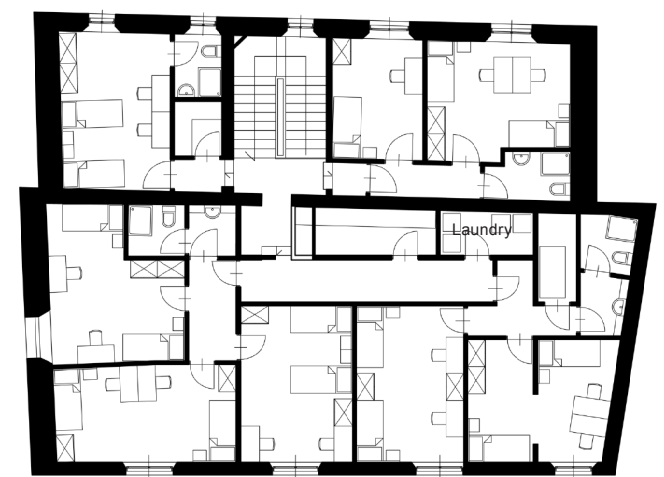
First floor: classrooms, exhibition space and office.



Second floor: student suites, kitchen and student lounge



Mezzanine level: faculty apartments



Third floor: student suites

Volterra-Detroit Foundation Italia Membership Card

Before your trip you will be provided with an ID, which is also your Volterra-Detroit Foundation Italia membership card. You should carry this ID with you at all times. If you lose your ID, contact the Program Director. You will also be charged a fee for the replacement of your ID.

Several local businesses are offering a 10% discount to all residents of the VIRC, and they will be recognizable by a VIRC sticker they will have in their front window. Please present your VIRC ID to receive your discount.

Access to the Building

Each student will receive a key to his room, his suite, and the building. The loss of any of these keys should be immediately reported to the Facility Manager, and the owner of the key will be charged a fee for the replacement of the key. Should you lose your key and need to be let into the VIRC after hours, please contact the Program Director or the Facility Manager..

Building Security

As a key-holding resident of the VIRC you will have 24-hour access to the building, your suite, and your room. The building will remain open during the day until 8 p.m. After hours, however, you will be responsible for locking the main entrance every time you enter or leave the building. You are also advised to lock the doors to your suite and room when you leave. In addition, for the safety of your belongings, please do not leave anything unattended in the common or public areas of the building.



Volterra from a distance

Guest Policy

The VIRC does not allow overnight guests, in accordance with Italian fire and safety regulations. Failure to abide by these laws can have serious consequences for the legal status of the VIRC, and can result in the closing of the facility by local authorities. There will be no exceptions. Should your family or friends like to visit you in Volterra, please contact the VIRC Program Director, who will assist you in finding suitable accommodation at one of the local hotels.

Additional considerations:

Please be aware that the VIRC is located in the center of a dense city. Please do not disturb local residents with excessive noise at the facility.

Due to its hilltop location, Volterra has a long tradition of conservation of resources. Please use the water and electricity with respect for the environment.



A view of Volterra from the windows of the Residential College

3c. FOOD and MEAL PLAN:

There is a prepaid meal plan available for all residents of the VIRIC. This meal plan includes lunch and dinner at two locations, five days a week (Mon – Fri). Meals will be served at the following locations (see corresponding numbers on the map):

- (1) Caffè dei Fornelli
Address: Piazzetta dei Fornelli, 3
lunch hours: 12:00 - 2:00 pm
dinner hours: 7:00 - 9:00 pm
- (2) Cantine Palazzo Witi
Address: Via dei Sarti
lunch hours: 12:00 - 2:00 pm
dinner hours: 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Dining in the city

Students are encouraged to try more of the Italian cuisine by exploring the city and dining at other cafés and restaurants. On the map you will find some possible locations, but there are certainly many, many more in the city.

Grocery shopping

For those who wish to purchase food or snacks, or for those who wish to try their own hand at cooking Italian food, there are several grocery stores nearby which will prove very useful (see map)



Students' kitchen and dining room at the VIRIC

There are also two larger self-service markets in Volterra: COOP and CONAD. Both of them are outside of the medieval city walls, within 10 minute walk (see the map at the end of the brochure). Their prices are generally a little lower than the stores inside the city walls.

Please note the hours of the stores on your first visit. They are typically open from 8am until 1 or 2pm and then again from 5pm until 8pm. Most Italian stores, though usually this does not include supermarkets, are closed during siesta, which is typically somewhere between 2 – 5 p.m. Also keep in mind that there is no 24-hour grocery store or convenience store in Volterra, so you will have to plan accordingly.

Saturday Market

Every Saturday between 8:00 am and 1:00 pm there is an open market in Volterra. It takes place just outside of the medieval city, in the Roman Theater Parking lot and in the Viale Francesco Ferrucci.

Dietary Restrictions

Please inform the Program Director as soon as possible about the nature of any dietary restrictions (especially food allergies and their severity), so that special provisions can be made at the dining locations.



Stylish interior of the Caffè dei Fornelli



There are plenty of bars and restaurants in Volterra which offer excellent selection of food and great coffee.



4. STUDENT LIFE

4a. THE CITY OF VOLTERRA

Volterra is one of the finest hilltop towns tucked away in the heart of Tuscany, and is only a short distance from Florence 72 km (43 miles), Siena 50 km (30 miles), Pisa 64 km (38 miles), S.Gimignano 29 km (17 miles) and the Tyrrhenian coast. Volterra, 545 meters above sea level, dominates and divides the Cecina and Era valleys. The hill upon which the city stands has been continuously inhabited for more than 3000 years. The city has significant architectural monuments dating from the fourth century BC, onward. The current image of the city is still defined by the medieval layout, with winding streets and well preserved defensive walls. These walls offer dramatic views of the surrounding landscape, on a clear day reaching as far as Pisa, or even the island of Corsica (70 miles away).

The economic status of the city has been built on the local health institutions serving the entire province, on schools, on the location of the state prison and, most of all, on the tradition of the local arts and alabaster industry. Based on its economic success, Volterra has developed a very dynamic cultural program, which peaks every year during the events of the Teatro di Volterra, an international theater festival, with performing groups and visitors coming from around the world. Other annual cultural events include the Medieval Festival, alabaster sculpture symposiums, local and international art exhibits, etc. Volterra continuously combines the tradition of fine artisanship with a strong interest in contemporary arts.



Most of the civic functions of the city are located around the main square: Piazza dei Priori.



One of the main streets in Volterra: Via Antonio Gramsci.

4b. LOCAL RESOURCES:

Below is a list of other resources in the city of Volterra that may prove useful during your stay. For more details on any of these please contact the Program Director. The locations of each resource are marked on the attached map.

Tourist Information

Piazza dei Priori

hours: open daily 10 – 1 p.m. & 2 – 6 p.m.

tel: 0588-87257

Bus ticket sales point and tourist information

Associazione Pro Loco Volterra

Piazza dei Priori, 10

tel: 0588-86150 fax: 0588-90350

e-mail: info@provoltterra.it

Facebook: ProVolterra

Movie theater

Cinema Centrale

Via G. Matteotti, 62-64

tel. 0588.86447

(Note that many American and English films are subtitled in Italian, not dubbed. You should check this at the ticket office.)

Public swimming pool

City pool Fontecorrenti

Loc. Fontecorrenti

tel: 0588- 88091

ATM Machines

Nearest ATM is in Piazza dei Priori (next to the bank Cassa di Risparmio di Volterra)

Open 24 hours

Nearest bank (Cassa di Risparmio di Volterra)

Piazza dei Priori 18

hours: 8:20 am – 1:20pm and 2:35 pm – 3:35 pm

4c. LOCAL EVENTS

During your stay, there will be several holidays and celebrations in Volterra that will show you the vibrant culture of this city. We hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to experience some of these events. In Volterra it is hard to miss anything; you will see posters around the city. Please see your program brochure for a list of events. We will also have a list in the building of cultural events taking place in Volterra during your program, so you can plan your trips and activities accordingly.

4d. GETTING AROUND

While all of Volterra is accessible by foot, reaching destinations outside of the city does require some other form of transportation. Fortunately, you have several options. In most Italian towns a bus terminal and the train station are either together or in close proximity.

Buses are the essential mode of transportation to and from Volterra. They are your connection to other transportation hubs: train stations and airports. The primary routes of CPT buses from Volterra are in three main directions: to Pontedera (for Pisa and Florence, and all subsequent train or air travel), Colle Val D'Elsa (for Florence and Siena, and all travel from these cities), and Cecina (for excursions to the beach and for destinations along the Tyrrhenian Sea coast). Beyond these three destinations you will need to switch buses, or switch to a train to continue your travel.

The bus schedules will also be posted inside the VIRC.

Trains will be your primary mode of transportation within Italy, especially traveling to Rome, Milan, Venice, La Spezia etc. There are four train stations you will likely use for different destinations during the program: Pontedera, Pisa, Florence and Cecina, all accessible by bus or a bus/train combination from Volterra.

The ticket system in Europe is somewhat different from that of the US. You will purchase a ticket for a particular route but not a specific time, and must validate the ticket, by using one of the validation machines on the platform, before boarding the train. Passengers with a ticket that has not been validated are considered to not have a ticket and are charged steep fees. *Consider this: The distance between Rome and Florence is 230 km (or 140 miles). The EuroStar and Italo trains travel between these cities almost every 30 minutes, with an average speed of about 100 miles per hour, reaching maximum speed of about 200 miles/hour.*



Car

There is also the option of renting a car, for those who feel brave enough to attempt driving with a manual transmission on the winding Italian roads. Both International and uniquely Italian car rental companies have their branches at the airports in Pisa and Florence. Their rates vary greatly throughout the year; check the websites for current information.

There is also a local car rental company in Volterra – Bacci Travel.

The VIRC itself is not reachable by car. Cars rented overnight must be left in one of the parking lots outside the walls of the old city, approx. 5-10 minutes away on foot.

Manual transmissions are predominant in European cars, and renting a car with an automatic transmission is often difficult and more expensive. Please be careful and responsible in the assessment of your own driving skills, particularly when it comes to driving with a manual transmission. Italian roads are not easy to navigate and should be approached with caution.

Plane

The airport in Pisa, easily accessible from Volterra, provides an excellent gateway to other destinations throughout Europe. Several “cheap” airlines offer flights from Pisa to major European cities, including Paris, London, Berlin, Barcelona, etc. Round trip fares for these flights can be as low as €60-80 if purchased well in advance. Please consult the Pisa Airport website (<http://www.pisa-airport.com/>) for a flight schedule and individual airline websites to purchase your tickets.

The following major “cheap” airlines fly from Pisa:

Ryanair - <http://www.ryanair.com/en>

EasyJet - <http://www.easyjet.com/en>

The airport in Pisa can be reached from Volterra by bus to Pontedera and train from Pontedera to Pisa/Pisa Airport. When planning your trips please remember that Sunday and Holiday bus service to Volterra is very limited.



4e. DAY TRIPS FROM VOLTERRA

Volterra is located in the heart of Tuscany, with easy access to several beautiful cities as well as to the beach on the Mediterranean Sea. The following are locations are within 1-2 hours from Volterra.

Pisa

The visit to Campo Santo with its famous leaning tower is a must for every tourist in Italy. You will have the convenience of choosing your own day and time, since it is only two hours from Volterra.

Transportation: bus to Pontedera, and a quick train ride to Pisa.

Siena

Siena is in the opposite direction from Pisa and with an entirely different feel. It is home to one of the most famous public squares in the world, Piazza del Campo, featuring the annual traditional horse race Palio, and some of the most elegant streets and shops in Tuscany.

Transportation: bus to Colle Val D'Elsa, then a bus from a different company to Siena (see the website

<http://www.trainspa.it/home.html>)



San Gimignano

One of the most famous small towns in Tuscany, always crowded with tourists, always busy.

Transportation: Since there are no direct buses from Volterra to San Gimignano it may be the most convenient for the entire group to rent a minibus for this trip. Otherwise you need to take a bus from Volterra to Colle Val D'Elsa, and then a bus run by a different company (see the website <http://www.trainspa.it/home.html>) from Colle to San Gimignano. If you match the schedule well you will be there within two hours, while a direct car ride from Volterra is no more than half an hour.

Trip to the beach: The Mediterranean Sea can often be seen from the city walls of Volterra, and it is in fact only a short bus ride away. The beaches of Marina di Cecina offer an excellent moment of relaxation after a week of classes during the warm season. You can also take a train from Cecina to San Vincenzo, a little further south, to experience the spirit of a true Italian seaside resort.

Transportation: bus to Cecina, short walk to the beach. A train ride from Cecina to San Vincenzo is only another 20 minutes and costs €3.50.

4f. WEEKEND TRIPS

Your program may include some organized weekend trips, which will include some of the destinations from our list below. You will be informed by your Program Faculty of the dates and itineraries of these trips prior to your arrival in Volterra. But we would like to encourage you to explore more of Italy on your own. The following locations are well worth visiting, though they require more than one day to explore fully.

Florence

It is technically within reach for a day-long visit, but one day is not going to be enough. Maybe several one day trips or an extended weekend, but you need more time to experience this city. As the birthplace of the Renaissance, Florence is unlike any other city in the world.

Transportation: one of the two routes is possible. The first option is a CPT bus to Colle Val D'Elsa, and then SITA bus from Colle to Florence. The second is a bus to Pontedera, and then a train to Florence. There are many more connections through Pontedera, although it is technically faster through Colle.

Cinque Terre

One of the most beautiful jewels of Italy. There are five villages along the rugged sea coast which you will want to see: Monterosso al Mare, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, and Riomaggiore. The most popular way to visit Cinque Terre is to take a train to the furthest one from LaSpezia, and then work your way back. One train ticket allows you to take multiple rides between the villages, or just hike. The entire area is a national park and a UNESCO World Heritage site.



Cinque Terre - Vernazza



A schematic map of Tuscany around Volterra. For comparison, an outline of Metropolitan Detroit in the same scale.

Rome

If you could only see one place in Italy (other than Volterra, of course), it could have to be Rome. The Eternal City does not require any further recommendation.

Transportation: All roads lead to Rome so you can plan your trip there through Florence or through Cecina. From Cecina a Regional train will take over three hours to arrive at the Termini Station in Rome. From Florence you can take the EuroStar train (although it is more expensive) and be in Rome in an hour and a half (see the chart in section 4d).



Venice

Just a two hour train ride from Florence and you can be in Venice. This city is a legend and an absolute must see.

Transportation: Go to Florence (through Pontedera or through Colle Val D'Elsa). From Florence take a train to Venice Santa Lucia train station.

Milan

The capital of fashion and design of Italy (and maybe of the world, too). You just can't miss the Cathedral in Milan, or the Galleria Vittorio Emmanuelle (which is arguably the first shopping mall in the world – but so different from what we think of as a mall).

Transportation: Go to Florence (through Pontedera or through Colle Val D'Elsa). From Florence take a train to Milan.

Please contact the Program Director if you need help with trip logistics. The Program Director also has information about many other worthwhile destinations in Italy.

Beyond Italy

You're in Europe! Italy is in the Schengen area, which means you can travel to several European countries without much hassle. In particular, several cheap European airlines fly out of the Pisa airport, which is accessible by bus and train. Please check the website of the Pisa airport (<http://www.pisa-airport.com/>) for a complete list of airlines that fly to Pisa, as well as the websites of Ryanair, EasyJet or Wizz Air, and to examine a list of possible destinations.

Important! - Signing Out

In order to ensure the safety of all VIRC residents, we ask those who choose to leave Volterra for one or more nights to register this with the Program Director, and to contact them should any travel complications arise.

5. YOUR SAFETY DURING THE PROGRAM

Our concern with your safety is intended to ensure that you return back home with only wonderful memories. Remember though that during international travel you should always exercise extra caution and vigilance to ensure that you and everybody in your program group is always safe. Ultimately, you are responsible for your safety, but we ask you to always follow these guidelines:

- Be aware of the culture and treat everybody with respect.
- Remember, that when you travel internationally you are not in your backyard anymore. You don't know if a particular street or a bar is safe for you to go to. And typically you don't know who to ask. When you explore new territories use your common sense and your personal experience to recognize the signs of a less than perfectly safe locations.
- Tourists, particularly in large cities, attract attention of pickpockets. Be aware of the pickpocket tactics. While you are travelling keep your valuables in the safest possible locations.
- Leave a photocopy of your passport, visas and any other travel documents at home as well as have an extra copy on hand just in case your documents are misplaced or stolen.
- Don't carry large amounts of cash. Limit the amount of cash you carry to what you plan to spend during one day.
- As much as possible, always travel in groups. If you go out together, remain together and always go back home together. Do not ignore it when someone in your group feels uncomfortable in a particular location, senses or signals danger or is an object of unwanted advances or any form of abuse. Return home immediately.
- Be aware of your surroundings and if you ever have a feeling that a situation is not safe, be smart about it and try to get out of it as soon as possible. Your instinct is almost never wrong! Know your boundaries and limits.
- Never allow yourself to lose control of your environment. Do not use alcohol excessively, which may severely impair your judgment. Don't ever use narcotics; it is illegal and of course extremely dangerous for you, as you may become a victim of another crime when under influence of drugs. Don't accept drugs from anybody.

There is plenty of general advice and information for the students travelling abroad on this US government website: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/index.php>

In the most extreme situation, if you in fact suspect or witness that an act of crime has been committed against anybody in your program group, please contact the following people as soon as possible: your program professor, VIRC Program Director and local police. You will be helped immediately.

US Consular service provides a lot of useful information on its website for victims of crime in Italy (and elsewhere). Use it as the essential reference in case anything happens to you or your friends during your program:

<http://italy.usembassy.gov/acs/emergency/emergency-crime.html>

Ultimately, when traveling internationally, remember that safety is always first but don't forget to relax and have fun! Enjoy the sights, walk the road less travelled and taste new flavors!

Volterra - Center



Post Office



Bank



ATM Machine



Tourist Information and Services



Cafe



Restaurant



Hotel



Grocery/Produce Store



Hospital



Soccer Field



Swimming Pool



Bus stop



Parking

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