

## **Housing Services**

*The Housing Office is pleased to assist with the housing arrangement process for students. We do not own or lease apartments but work as a facilitator to assist students in finding accommodation during their stay in Florence. The Housing Office's objective is to facilitate the students' study abroad experience. Students will select their housing preference during application process. Housing preference must be submitted by the application deadline. Housing options that we arrange for incoming students are:*

### **Housing Options**

- Shared Apartment Housing
- Italian Family Home stay

### **Housing Assignments and Availability**

Apartments will be assigned on a first come, first served basis according to availability, and assignments are communicated at least 14 days prior to arrival in Florence. Depending on their request, students will be assigned to a single or shared bedroom based on availability. Common spaces will be shared with other roommates.

If a student request cannot be met due to space limitations, the student will be assigned according to availability and notified before arrival. Students will not be able to choose their apartment or change roommates.

All roommate requests must be specified in the housing section of the FUA-AUF application.

### **Rental, Deposit and Check in/out Information**

The rental period begins on the official check-in date of the term and ends one day after the last day of class.

The FUA-AUF housing contract requires a security deposit in the form of a pre-authorization to charge in case of damages. Students will be responsible for any damages to their apartment or its furnishings and will have all damage costs subtracted from their security deposit. If a single student is responsible for the damage, only the individual will pay repairs with his or her deposit. If it is impossible to determine which individuals are responsible, the repairs will be charged to the entire group of students in the apartment.

Check-in information is communicated to students prior to arrival, along with their housing assignment. Keys will be provided at check-in. Students will not be allowed to check into their assigned housing before the check-in date or to check out after check-out date and time. The Housing Office makes every attempt to place students according to any needs they might have.

### **Pick-up Services**

Students arriving in Florence individually and not with pre-arranged group pick-up service, may make a separate request for pick up when submitting their arrival information. Separate requests require an extra charge. Please note: arrival date and time and pick up requests, must be communicated within the deadline indicated in the pre-departure and arrival information email.

### **Health Information Disclosure**

If the student has a medical condition or disability that needs to be disclosed to the Housing Office and which requires specific attention, please let us know either via email or on the housing application form.

### **Housing Assistance During Study Abroad**

The FUA-AUF Housing Office assists students with housing concerns, emergencies or issues throughout their stay in Florence. The Housing Office can be contacted in person, by email, or by phone. After office hours, for immediate assistance, an emergency number is available 24/7. The housing rules provided to all students upon check-in indicate what does or does not constitute an emergency.

Non-urgent and general maintenance requests are communicated by the student following the protocol which will be explained in orientation.

# Shared Apartment Housing

## Apartment Layouts

The apartments are fully furnished and fully functional. A utility budget is included in the housing cost. The standard layout of the apartments consists of multiple bedrooms, multiple bathrooms (the number may vary), kitchen, living/dining room space. The bedrooms range from single bedrooms for one occupant (limited availability) to triple bedrooms, with the occasional quad space. There will also be sufficient storage space to accommodate a reasonable amount of clothing and luggage. Apartments may host from 3 to 21 students, depending on the size and number of rooms in the apartment layout.

Students in any housing option will be sharing the accommodation with other students.

Apartments are of the same standard (see below) and have similar facilities, although no two apartments are alike because of the historical nature of the city center. They are not all located in the same neighborhood, but are all within walking distance of our facilities or the nearest bus route.

## Apartment Location

Students are housed in apartments throughout the historic center of Florence, within walking distance from all FUA-AUF and Palazzi facilities. The Housing Office will fulfill assignments only for students who request housing within the designated deadline.

## What to Expect

Apartments may have different layouts. There are a few living factors in Italy that will require special attention. For example:

- Several historic palaces have thick walls, which may slow down internet speed/connection.
- Elevators are not guaranteed in every building.
- Clothes dryers are not included in apartments, as they are uncommon in Italy. Drying racks are always provided.
- Due to legal regulations on heating during the winter, room temperature in apartments does not exceed 20°C (68°F). This applies to the period from November to the middle of April. During the rest of the year heating is not available.

## Benefits of Apartment Housing

Living centrally located apartments help students to gain:

- Independence and familiarity in new surroundings.
- Confidence in daily domestic activities to maintain an independent lifestyle such as shopping, cooking, cleaning.
- Exchange of language, culture, and traditions with locals in the neighborhood.
- The experience of living like an Italian, a citizen of Florence.
- The opportunity to partake in the local culture of walking to explore Florence.

Living in shared apartments will also allow students to:

- Learn how to manage and share a living space with new people.
- Understand the dynamics and opinions of different individuals.
- Build new relationships outside of their comfort zone.

## **Our Standards for Student Apartments**

Several housing questions may be answered by consulting our standard for each apartment as outlined below. For further questions, see our FAQ section or contact the Housing Office.

- Apartments are within walking distance to the school facilities.
- Multiple occupancy room in shared apartment
- Single rooms are limited and subject to supplement
- Air conditioning
- Two full sets of bedlinens, plus a blanket/comforter
- Basic towels are included
- Washing machine
- Clothes drying rack
- Iron and ironing board
- Mosquito repellent plug-in (initial refill only)
- Fully equipped kitchen: Flatware, dinnerware, glasses, pots and pans
- Toilet roll (only supplied for arrivals, for the remaining time students must resupply on their own)
- A basic “set” for cleaning: broom, cloths, sponges. The set does not include detergent and cleaning supplies (which are to be purchased by the student).
- Internet access is available in all apartments.
- The Housing Office is not responsible for connection quality, as it depends on the internet provider.
- For on-campus connections at FUA, wi-fi is always available at no charge during the school’s opening hours.
- All apartments are NON-SMOKING and PET FREE.

## **Frequently Asked Questions for Shared Apartment Housing**

What amenities do the apartments/residences offer?

The apartments come fully furnished, with fully functional kitchens. The typical Italian kitchen comes equipped with stove/oven or microwave and refrigerator, basic pots and pans, and essential kitchen utensils. Additional amenities are dependent on the landlords/housing agencies and not FUA-AUF/Palazzi. Apartments/residences will also come equipped with bed linens, including sheets, pillows and blankets. Basic bathroom towels are included.

**Where are the apartments/residences located?**

Florence is a walking city. Once students get acclimated to the city’s layout, the initial novelty of walking quickly becomes a habit. That said, students should expect to be in an apartment/residence that requires walking. It is recommended to pack light, elevators are not common in the student apartments.

**What if I’m dissatisfied with my housing placement?**

We only house students in apartments which meet our standards and do our best to help students feel comfortable and at home. Most roommate and location issues are typically resolved with mediation through the Housing Office in a timely manner. In the event of a roommate dispute, we ask that the students involved make every attempt to resolve the situation constructively. Part of the housing application process involves the opportunity to make specific roommate requests. As long as the requests are mutual and made in a timely fashion prior to arrival in Florence, we can

typically meet the requests. Housing assignments remain subject to change, but we do our best to alert students of all changes in a timely manner. Any changes are made at the discretion of the Housing Office.

**Is there a deadline to apply for housing?**

Yes - your housing application is due with the rest of your application.

**Can I request co-ed or single-sex housing?**

Housing is assigned on single-sex placements per location.

**Can I request changes to my housing after I arrive?**

While we try to meet requests, it is usually not possible to modify confirmed housing after check-in. If requests can be satisfied without creating additional issues for other students, we're happy to make adjustments. However, this remains at the discretion of the housing department.

**Can I check-in before or after the set program dates?**

Early departure/arrival is not permitted. Please check with the Housing Office if you have a special circumstance that you would like to address. The apartments are occupied prior to or immediately following your arrival/departure.

**Where do I pick up my keys?**

Your keys, along with a map and other instructions on your apartment, will be given to you upon your check-in, either at the school or directly at the apartment/residence as communicated prior to your arrival.

# Homestay La Famiglia Italiana

## Benefits to living with a family

In a homestay, students will live with a host family and be immersed in the Italian culture and language. Evenings and dinner meals are shared together during the week day (Mon-Thu). It should be noted that not all host families have children. Depending on the families, hosts can vary in terms of age and family composition.

Meals with the host family will be served at a specific time and students are required to attend dinner, thus punctuality is important as well as notifying the host family in advance when students wish to dine out.

## Homestay location

Students choosing the host family option live with an Italian family within the greater area of Florence and not necessarily in the historic city center. Although the location will be easily connected, most home-stays require a short ride with public transportation to reach the city center and school.

Returning students often report that the host family experience was one of the best aspects of studying abroad. By living in a homestay, you will:

- Interact daily with locals.
- Become a member of the family and build lifelong bonds.
- Experience firsthand the customs you will learn about in Italian classes.
- Practice a foreign language with native speakers in their day-to-day lives.
- Have meals provided by your host family (breakfast and dinner Monday through Thursday).
- Laundry provided by the host family, typically once a week.

## Challenges

Despite the many benefits of living with a host family, it can also be challenging, especially if students have lived on their own in college and are used to being independent. Students will be living in someone else's home, and the host may have rules that should be respected. Also, there will be cultural differences but that is the point and beauty of choosing to live with a host family. Please also note that single rooms are not guaranteed.

## What to Expect

Host families live in either apartments or single-family houses. Students are guaranteed a room shared with another student (although single room options are available, they are very limited). Facilities such as the kitchen, bathroom and laundry room are shared with the rest of the family. The standard of living is comfortable. Breakfast and dinner are provided Monday through Thursday. In-house laundry facilities are available (Laundry provided by the host family, typically once a week), and all homes have internet access. Students should expect to be tidy and clean up after themselves, or be asked to help with household tasks.

## Dietary Concerns

In Italy certain special diets, such as vegetarian, are not common. Not eating the food the host family prepares, even for dietary reasons, may be considered impolite. If, for cultural, religious, or personal reasons, a student does not eat certain types of food, we ask that he or she inform the

study abroad program administrator from the home institution before finalizing their application to ensure that the host family can accommodate them.

### Tips

The host family will probably share a similar cultural curiosity towards the student and his or her home country. Please remember that, even if you share cultural heritage with your host family, you should not expect them to be just like you. Being open-minded about every aspect of studying abroad will ensure that you gain the most from your experience.

### Quality Family Time!

The student becomes a real adult member of the family, not just a boarder. Italian host families are liberal and down-to-earth. Students are free to go out with friends during the week or to travel over weekends but the host family must be kept informed. This is considered being responsible and polite. Also, most host families have a curfew. Host families are genuinely interested in introducing students to the Italian culture – they seek to meet your desire to be integrated into Italian culture.

### Benefits of the homestay accomodation

- Want to immerse yourself into Italian culture and traditions.
- Are willing to spend time getting to know the family and balance this with hanging out with your friends.
- Are prepared to do a short commute.
- Are happy to tidy after yourself and occasionally help with household tasks.

### Challenges of homestay accomodation

- Balancing an active social life with friends during the week with family time.
- You may not live in the historic city center and may not be able to walk to your class.
- Accommodating strict dietary needs including allergies and/or a strict religious diet.

An alternative option to the host family stay is the Italian Family Club offered by the Student Life and Development Department (SLD), through which you have the opportunity to interact with an Italian family in the historic city center WITHOUT living with them.

### Diversity of Host Families

The Housing Office offers a great diversity of host families, including nuclear families, single-parent families, and various other combinations, including families of other nationalities residing in Italy. They may have young children, grown-up children or none at all. They may be young, middle-aged or retired, and some hosts may be single. We will do our best to find a compatible family based on availability.

### Frequently Asked Questions for Homestays

#### Who are the host families?

As mentioned above, host families may be diverse; some with young or teenaged children and others with none at all, or from different ethnic backgrounds - though they are Italian citizens or permanent residents. This usually only enriches the cultural exchange between family and student. The Housing Office does its best to find you a compatible family. All host families choose to join our program because they value the intercultural exchange that occurs between them and

the student, and because they enjoy spending time with you - their new family member. All approved families have been screened and carefully selected by our staff. Homes/apartments are visited regularly by school staff members.

### Can I choose my host family myself?

Yes and no. The Housing Office will match you with a compatible family based on the homestay questionnaire, so please be as honest and clear with your descriptions and requests as possible. We receive the same kind of information from our host families and match you accordingly. Our families are as different as the students who join them in terms of lifestyle, interests, routines, age and composition. Therefore, please understand that we're not able to accommodate all requests.

### Will staying with a family limit my freedom?

The family will treat you as a grown-up and they will be your friends and allies. You are of course free to go out with your friends during the week or to travel on weekends. However, the intercultural exchange is the whole point of the family stay, so you should be prepared to spend some weekends and evenings at home with the family as well. Many families have a curfew.

### How do dining and meals work?

Breakfast and dinner are provided Monday through Thursday. All other meals are the responsibility of the student. The typical Italian breakfast consists of tea/coffee (or cappuccino) with bread, butter and jam or a simple pastry. Any concerns or requests regarding breakfast should be directed in advance to the Housing Office. Most Italian families eat dinner together and consider this an important time for discussion, laughs and bonding. Dinner is, therefore, a good time for you to spend time with the family. Lunch is on your own and many families do not allow cooking in the kitchen. Please ask before you decide to use the kitchen on your own and don't be surprised if you are not allowed to.

### Will I have internet access during my family stay housing?

All homes have internet access. However, neither FUA-AUF nor the families are responsible for connection quality, as it depends on the internet provider. For on-campus connections at FUA-AUF, wi-fi is always available at no charge during the school's opening hours.

### How much time will I spend commuting?

Expect at least a 15-20 minute commute to campus by public transportation and walking. This may be a big change from life at your home campus, but commuting is a natural part of European life, and Italy has a strong public transportation system. Studying with us means living as Italians, and getting around the city as they do. Once you get adjusted to your short commute, you will start enjoying the ride and be able to use the peace and quiet on the bus/train for naps, catching up with homework, or chatting up a conversation with an Italian commuter.

Note: The cost of commuting from your host family to school and within central Florence is NOT included in the program cost.

### Do Italians speak English well?

Italians generally speak English, though fluency varies.

### If I don't consume some meals with the family, can I have a refund?

Families plan weeks in advance for their meals and shop accordingly so no refund will be given for missed meals.



### **If I want to change my housing option once the program has started can I do so?**

Keep in mind that families host students because they are interested in knowing more about a different culture and to help students wanting to know and immerse in the Italian culture. Families prepare well in advance of your arrival to accommodate and make your stay as comfortable, interesting and memorable. Changing your housing option, if possible, will be time and energy consuming, not to mention costly. Please be very responsible when choosing the Italian host family housing option.

## **Frequently asked questions for accommodation**

### **What kind of visitation polices are in place?**

FUA-AUF permits guests, regardless of gender from 9:00am until 11:00pm. However, based on respect for others, each resident is expected to abide by the following guidelines:

- Overnight guests are not allowed. Guests after 11.00pm will be considered overnight guests.
- The right to sleep, study and have privacy supersede all other rights, including visitation.
- All guests entering the building must be escorted by their host/hostess at all times when they are in the building. Residents are directly responsible for the actions of their guests and are responsible for informing them of rules and facilities. Residents may face disciplinary action and be held financially responsible for any behavior of a guest that results in property damage. The institution reserves the rights to deny access to any guest if it has been determined that the guest has disturbed, endangered, or disrupted residents or institution activities.

### **Can students stay in their rooms during vacations or breaks?**

Rooms must be vacated according to the program calendar regardless of the breaks.

### **What kinds of appliances are allowed in the room?**

Radios, stereo equipment, personal computers, typewriters, hair dryers, razors and clocks are permitted, providing they are plugged in within the room and do not exceed the amperage limits of the circuits within the room. Use of irons is permitted only in designated common areas. Cooking is prohibited in any area within the residence halls except the kitchen area, which is specifically designed for such use. Students may request additional cooking tools, however additional appliances must be approved of in advance by the administration and in any case may only be used in the common kitchen area.

### **How does a resident get a room change?**

Residents may not change rooms without the prior approval of the Office of SLD and Housing. Residents requesting room changes may contact the SLD department. The SLD and Housing office will evaluate the request/s and might request more information on the reason for the request/s. Any student changing rooms without the written approval of the SLD and Housing office may be subject to FUA-AUF disciplinary action and disapproval of any subsequent requests to change rooms.

### **Can I decorate my room?**

Residents may not damage any surfaces of furniture when decorating their room. The room and furnishings may not be painted or permanently altered in any way. Nails and hooks are prohibited

in the Residence Halls. If the room or furnishings are damaged in any way, the resident will be billed and may be subject to student conduct action. The rooms abide to the general FUA-AUF housing policy in terms of decorating the walls.