Brown in Italy
Bologna Program Handbook
Fall 2019
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When calling Italy from the U.S., remember the time difference. Italy is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 10 a.m. in Providence, it is 4 p.m. in Bologna.

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Bologna Office Hours
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If you have an emergency outside of normal business hours at Brown, please call Brown University Public Safety at (401) 863-3322.

Dismissal Policy

The Office of International Programs, in consultation with the on-site personnel and the program faculty directors at Brown, reserves the right to dismiss a student and require the student leave immediately if in our judgment the student behaves in a manner which endangers themselves or others on the program or the program’s continued operations.

Brown University does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, age, disability, status as a veteran, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other category protected by applicable law, in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, or other school-administered programs. The University is committed to honest, open, and equitable engagement with racial, religious, gender, ethnic, sexual orientation, and other differences. The University seeks to promote an environment that in its diversity is integral to the academic, educational, and community purposes of the institution.
Welcome

Welcome to what surely will be the most exciting time so far in your life as a student. It will be a year or semester of both enjoyment and frustration, but the great times in this adventure will be far more numerous than the minor frustrations you are likely to encounter. This handbook should provide useful information that will help you to prepare for the experience and to relieve anxiety about what to expect. Plan to use it in conjunction with orientation materials provided during the pre-departure orientation and on-site in Bologna.

This handbook is intended both for you, the student participant, and for your parents/guardians. Please take the time to read the handbook from cover to cover well before departure in order to be fully informed of its contents. If you do this, then at least you will know what questions you still don’t have answers for, and you will know whom to contact to find out. It is the nature of a guide like this to advise in strong language about “do’s and don’ts”. Please pay serious attention to these remarks, which are intended for your benefit. If you have any questions or concerns about anything now or while you’re away, please contact the Office of International Programs (OIP) or the Brown in Bologna office at the numbers/e-mail addresses provided.

Welcome to Bologna, la dotta (the learned), la grassa (the fat), la rossa (the red)! You’ll soon find out how the city earned these nicknames.

Bologna stands on a site of ancient origin. The first historic settlers were the Etruscans, who founded the city of Felsina (or Velzna) in the sixth century BC. Felsina was later razed and its territory occupied by the fierce Celtic warriors known as the Galli Boii (whose name meant “Terrible”). The name Bononia (from which comes the modern Bologna), bestowed by the Romans when the city became a Roman colony in 189 BC, is also Celtic in origin. The name of the region, Emilia, comes from the famous Roman road, the Via Emilia (or Aemilian Way), named for the consul M. Aemilii Lepidus, who supervised its construction in 187 BC. The Via Emilia ran in a straight line from Rimini on the Adriatic Sea to Piacenza, through the modern cities of Forlì, Faenza, Imola, Bologna, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Parma and Fidenza. The remains of the original Via Emilia, which runs through the center of Bologna, can be seen in the pedestrian underpass between the modern Via Rizzoli and Via Ugo Bassi, as well as in the basement of Palazzo Lupari in Strada Maggiore.

After the division of the Roman Empire into the Western and Eastern Empires, Bologna declined, while its neighbor Ravenna flourished as the residence of the Exarchs of Byzantium. Bologna acquired importance again in the Middle Ages, especially during the communal period, as a strong Guelph city. The Pepoli and the Bentivoglio families dominated it alternately during the 14th and 15th centuries until 1506, when Pope Julius II conquered Bologna and made it part of the Pontifical State. After Napoleon entered the city in 1796, Bologna became the capital of the Cispadane Republic and a center of liberal social, economic and political thought; it was restored to the Church after Napoleon’s defeat in 1815. It was only in 1859 that Bologna was annexed to the new Kingdom of Italy.

All of the three great epochs in the history of Bologna — the communal, the period of Pepoli and Bentivoglio overlordship, and the period of papal domination — left their own characteristic mark on the appearance of the city. Beautiful structures such as the Palazzo Comunale, the Asinelli and Garisenda Towers, and the magnificent Gothic Basilica of San Petronio bear witness to the power of Bologna and to the artistic taste of its citizens. These buildings can be admired today together with many other works of art — houses and palaces, churches and monuments — along the porticos that line nearly every city street.

Today’s Bologna, with a population of just under half a million, is the capital of the Emilia-Romagna region. A major agricultural and commercial crossroads, the town lies at the foot of the Appennines, in the center of the plain of Emilia, on the left bank of the Reno river. Because of its convenient geographic position, Bologna is an ideal base for short excursions. For example, Bologna is about 90 minutes from Venice, Milan, and Ravenna, and one hour from Florence. During the summer months, a train journey of less than two hours brings one to the Riviera of Romagna, where the famed resort beaches of Rimini and Riccione are located. Trains from centrally located Bologna run down the east coast of Italy to Puglia and down the west coast to Calabria and Sicily.

It is true that the city’s cultural traditions, kept alive by its celebrated University, have earned Bologna the title of dotta (Learned). It is also true that its world-renowned gastronomic specialties, of which the good-natured Bolognese are rightly proud, have earned it the nickname of grassa (Fat). Bologna pork sausage (known locally as mortadella) gave the
English language the slang term “baloney”. In 2000, a 33-year ban on its importation to the US was finally lifted. The city’s third nickname, however, *rossa* (Red), comes not from the political leanings of its previous municipal governments, but from the fact that most of the city’s buildings are in red brick rather than stone. This is a characteristic Bologna shares with most of the cities in the Po Valley and is what distinguishes them from the marble and granite cities on the other side of the Apennine Mountains.
The University Of Bologna

The University of Bologna celebrated its ninth centennial in 1988 and is recognized as the oldest continuously operative university in the world. The year 1088 is conventionally accepted as the date of its founding, though some authorities would place it earlier. Famous students at Bologna include Saint Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Petrarch, and Torquato Tasso. The nineteenth-century poets Carducci and Pascoli both taught there.

Like most other Italian universities, the University of Bologna is a public institution, depending ultimately on the central Ministero della Università e della Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica, whose offices are in Rome. Promotion and advancement of faculty does not occur within the institution or on the “free market”, as is the case in the U.S., but through nationwide, government-run competitions. This means that in theory, all Italian universities are more or less equivalent.

Since the obligation of the faculty is to teach a certain number of lessons annually, without any specified schedule, a professor may prefer to teach his/her course in staggered periods of intense activity rather than teaching 2 or 3 classes per week throughout the entire academic year. The recently introduced ‘semester’ system has meant that many courses have become more intensive, covering in half the academic year what used to take a full year. The vastness of the national system and huge student enrollments (over 100,000 at Bologna) also means that the collegial, almost familial atmosphere that prevails on many U.S. campuses does not necessarily prevail in Italy.

Most university classes are very large. Faculty members are often more remote than in the US. Italian students, previous participants in the Brown program have pointed out, though more politically aware, also tend to be more passive in class than their US counterparts. This should not be interpreted as a lack of enthusiasm and interest. The more conservative older professors do not always encourage dialogue. Fortunately, this is changing and there are many dynamic young faculty members eager to interact with their students.

The Università degli Studi is subdivided into 11 schools, each of which offers specialized training towards a degree. Schools at Bologna include 1. Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine 2. Economic, Business and Statistical Sciences 3. Pharmacy and Physical Education (Scienze Motorie) 4. Jurisprudence 5. Engineering and Architecture 6. Letters 7. Foreign Languages and Literatures, 8. Medicine 9. Psychology and Education (Scienze della Formazione) 10. Sciences and 11. Political Science. The situation is complicated by the existence of a parallel and overlapping structure of dipartimenti more comparable to Brown departments. Italian high school graduates enroll immediately in one of these specialized schools and follow a course of study prescribed by the scuola they have chosen. Brown University’s agreement with the University, however, permits Brown students to enroll in corsi singoli, that is, individual courses chosen across the board from those offered by the various schools.

The organization of the Italian system is very different from the American system. Most courses (e.g. Italian Literature and Social Sciences) are divided into two parts – a so-called “institutional” part, which requires individual reading and general background preparation on the subject, and the “monographic” part (the specific topic for the current year), which is covered by the professor in class. There is rarely any immediate accountability such as tests or written assignments, papers or midterms. The final exams will most often be public oral discussions with a small committee of three professors. You are expected to be much more academically independent and will have to pace yourself to complete the necessary reading for your final exams. The office staff is there to give you all the help you need with this. Take advantage of their aid.

Italian university is structured on two levels of university degree (or laurea). All newly-enrolled students must complete three years of exams to graduate, while students wishing to pursue an academic or professional career can opt to continue studying for an additional two years after that. This reform has led to a complete overhaul of the curriculum and to a breaking down of many formerly year-long or intensive courses into semester courses and smaller units or “modules”. You will need to take note of the number of hours of teaching of the courses you choose in order to determine if you are taking a full-load of courses. The advice of the Brown in Bologna staff will therefore be essential in choosing your courses.
Academic Overview

The Bologna Center Director and Faculty Director oversee all academic matters. Once on site in Bologna, students will meet with the Center Director and Faculty Director to determine which University of Bologna courses they will take.

Students studying abroad for the fall semester or spring semester are required to take the pro-seminar course for 6 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits, along with university coursework totaling 24 – 30 ECTS (typically 3 semester-long courses), for an overall total of 30-36 ECTS for the semester. Academic-year students are required to take the pro-seminar course for 6 ECTS, along with 24 – 30 ECTS during the fall semester; during the spring semester, full-year students will take 30 ECTS at the University (typically 3 – 4 semester-long courses).

Course Modules
Courses at the University of Bologna are taught in a single semester, as either a full-term course or half-term course. If taking a full-term course, students must enroll in both halves of the course. Under special circumstances, with the advanced approval of the Center Director and Faculty Director, one of the semester-long courses can be replaced by two half-semester modules, selected in consultation with the approval of the Center Director and the Faculty Director, and provided that the half-semester courses are not taken at the same time.

One Italian credit (CFU, Credito Formativo Universitario) equals one ECTS credit.

Courses

Required Course
Brown in Italy Pro-seminar, 6 ECTS
The Intensive Language and Culture Pro-seminar is a mandatory course designed to prepare students enrolled in the program to function well within the academic and social context of Bologna and to deepen their knowledge of the environment in which they will be living for the duration of the semester.

Elective Courses
Actual course offerings at the University of Bologna often are not posted until just before the semester begins, and final course registration takes place in Bologna. Because this is a direct enrollment program and because specific courses may not be offered by the host institution each semester, students need to be flexible with their course selections.

Students have access to the full range of academic offerings at the University. Courses for most scuole, or schools, begin toward the end of September or beginning of October for the Fall and end of January/beginning of February for the Spring. Each scuola of the university operates according to its own calendar. There is no common schedule of classes containing all the information about the academic year. Not all classes begin at the same time; the schedule depends on the particular scuola and on the individual professor.

University of Bologna course syllabi typically are not available in advance. Because this is a direct enrollment program, students need to be flexible with their course selections.

Special Course Options
With the advance approval of the Bologna Center Director and Faculty Director, students studying in Bologna in the spring semester may take one studio/visual arts course at the Accademia di Belle Arti (Academy of Fine Arts); students must provide a portfolio of their previous work. Courses taken at the Academy of Fine Arts are worth 6 ECTS each.

Intensive Language and Culture Proseminar

The Intensive Language and Culture Proseminar is a mandatory course designed to prepare students enrolled in the program to function well within the academic and social context of Bologna and to deepen their knowledge of the environment in which they will be living for the duration of the semester.

Format: 60 contact hours, plus guided excursions. The Pro-seminar includes five components:

1. Intensive language and culture: 25 contact hours; grade=30%
2. Italian History: 20 contact hours; grade=30%
3. Guided excursions: attendance required; no grade assigned
4. Seminar “Hidden Bologna” and/or Workshop at the Cineteca of Bologna (15 contact hours)
5. Final project: grade= 40%, includes Seminar or Workshop – see below)

The first 45 contact hours (components # 1, 2, and 3 above) take place during the first four weeks of the program, prior to the start of university courses. The remaining 15 contact hours include activities that take place throughout the semester (components #’s 4 and 5). Students will receive separate grades for each
component (except the excursions). A single grade will be assigned for components 4 and 5. The final grade will reflect a combination or average of all components. Completion of all activities is required in order to receive credit for the Proseminar (one out of four credits for the semester).

1. Language (all language and culture sections are taught in Italian by program staff)

a) Intensive Intermediate

b) Intensive Advanced: The two sections are the equivalent of intensive second-year or third-year language courses. They are meant to provide students with a solid knowledge of the Italian language and equip them with the comprehension, writing, and speaking skills they will need when they enroll in regular classes at the University of Bologna.

Upon arrival, each student will take a language placement exam, the results of which will determine the level of language class and the section to which he or she is assigned. The exam will consist of a written section plus an oral test. The format includes lectures, drills, discussions, reading of an Italian novel, viewing of Italian films, reading of Italian newspapers and magazines, weekly compositions, oral presentations.

2. Introduction to Italian Contemporary History

A survey of the major problems and events in Italian history, from the fall of Fascism to the Berlusconi era. The main goal of this course is to allow students to deepen their critical knowledge of contemporary Italy within a historical perspective that considers the main political, economic and cultural developments of contemporary Italian society. Main topics are: the fall of Fascism and the “Resistenza”; the birth of the “first” Italian Republic; the Catholic hegemony; the economic boom of the 1960s; the transformations of society and culture; terrorism; the passage to the “Second Republic”; Berlusconi’s Italy. The final grade for this component will result from active participation in class, a written test and a final oral exam.

3. Excursions

The Bologna staff will organize guided tours of Bologna and of the neighboring art cities of Ravenna, Ferrara, Verona, and Parma. All excursions take place on a Saturday. This component is designed to familiarize students with Italian art history and local culture. Students are expected to participate as part of the Proseminar course requirements. A more detailed program for each excursion will be provided during orientation in Bologna.

4. Discovering the Hidden Bologna: an exploration of Bologna’s true identity through art and history

Piazza Maggiore, the Nettuno fountain, the two towers and the porticoes are the first things that come to mind when thinking of Bologna. Yet, going through this town, best explored on bicycle or by foot, one immediately realizes there is much more to discover. Bologna is a town which one comes to know bit by bit: behind its gates, monasteries, churches and palaces, under its porticoes, one stumbles upon the true essence of this town, its real magnificence, its undisclosed tribute to the history and the art of Italy. By making detours from the main streets, we will explore the colorful and secret history of Bologna, by looking at unusual places and works of art we will come to know the past and the present of this fascinating town. The final grade for this component will result from active participation, five reaction papers in Italian (one-page each) for each visit and two pages in Italian of your final journal on a place we visited.

5. Final Project

Students are required to keep an individual journal throughout the semester with their observations, impressions, sketches etc. of their neighborhood and the city as a whole. A series of field exercises will help the students recognize differences and similarities among the neighborhoods of Bologna, enriching their local knowledge of the people, art, history, music, customs, products, and values that compose the tapestry of the city.

University Course Load

As previously emphasized, courses must be selected in consultation with the Brown in Bologna program staff. Students can only take exams for courses for which they are registered and which they have attended. Exams must be taken in the exam session immediately following the end of the course. Depending on the semester and academic calendar, one of these courses may be taken at the Accademia di Belle Arti, though admission is limited depending on the semester and restricted to students who can provide a portfolio of their previous work.

Course Selection

Prior to the start of courses at the university (Term I: Sept/Oct. - Dec.; Term II: February – May), students will have on-line access to the list of courses taught
in the various scuole. Students will be encouraged to contact Bologna professors directly for course information. Students will be advised regarding their choice of courses at the University. Students on the Brown program may register for courses in all scuole at the University of Bologna, as well as for a restricted number at the Accademia delle Belle Arti.

During the orientation period, the program will host a university orientation designed to familiarize you with university registration and processes. You will also meet individually with the Faculty Director and/or the Center Director in order to discuss your academic program, (i.e. your selection of courses taught at the University.)

Be sure to discuss with your advisor at your home institution what kind of academic documentation you will be expected to produce upon your return (course catalogue, syllabus, reading list, bibliographies, papers, corrected exams, etc.). It is important that you know the general requirements you will need to complete for your major and in order to graduate. You should review these requirements with a departmental or college academic advisor before departure.
Sample List of Courses

Below is a sample list of the University of Bologna courses that Brown program participants have taken in the past. Most of the titles are quite generic, since the specific topic is chosen by the professor and varies from year to year. The list of the university courses will be available at the Bologna Program Office during on-site orientation as well as on the University of Bologna website.

**Art**

- Contemporary Art
- Art History
- The Sociology of Art
- History of Architecture
- History and Methodology of Art Criticism
- Phenomenology of Styles

**Film Studies**

- Documentary Cinematography
- History of Cinema
- The Semiotics of Film

**History**

- History of Southern Italy
- The Italian Risorgimento
- Modern and Contemporary History
- American History
- Contemporary European History
- History of Political Parties and Trade Union Movements
- History of Women in the Classical World

**Language and Literature:**

- Theory and Methodology of Literature
- The Literature of Humanism
- Modern and Contemporary Italian Literature
- History of the Italian Language

**Music**

- Civilization of Afro American music
- History of Music
- Musical Dramaturgy

**Philosophy**

- Philosophy of Law

**Political Science**

- Comparative Politics
- History of International Relations
- International Organizations
- History of Economic Theories
- The Science of Politics

**Psychology**

- Psychology of Communication
- Psychology of Cognitive Processes
- Psychology of Art and Literature
- Psychology of Perception

**Sociology**

- Sociology of Groups
- Sociology of Political Phenomena
- Sociology of Development

**Semiotics**

- Semiotics of Media
- Art Semiotics
Health & Safety

**Medications, Prescriptions, and Over the Counter Medications**

*Prescription Medications*
We strongly recommend that students bring enough prescription medication for their entire stay. In general, medications cannot be mailed via international mail. Prescription drugs have the additional problem of brand name changes from place to place. Make sure to keep the medicine in the original containers, which show the prescription number, and have the original prescription with you. This will facilitate customs clearance in and out of the country. Also, if you try to fill the prescription in Italy or need to tell an Italian doctor what you are taking you will need the generic name of the prescription. Brand names may not be recognizable. In most cases a physician in Italy may not fill the prescription provided by your U.S. doctor without first doing an examination and confirming the diagnosis of your condition. Be aware that some drugs commonly prescribed in the United States are considered “narcotics” and highly regulated in Italy. It is best to bring with you the full amount necessary for your stay upon arrival. For more information, please refer to the section on “Taking Medication Abroad” on the OIP website (www.brown.edu/oip). You could also contact International SOS for information and rules governing the transportation of medication in the country (ies) where you will be traveling.

Vitamins are very expensive in Italy and certain brands may not be available. If you take them regularly, bring a supply for your entire stay.

If you wear eyeglasses or contact lenses, it is a good idea to bring both an extra pair and your prescription. If you have sensitive eyes you might want to bring your contact lens solutions with you. Even the same brand may have different ingredients in other countries.

**Contraception**

Contraception is no more difficult to get in Italy than in the US, but if you think you will need birth control while abroad, you may wish to take it with you. If you need information or contraceptive devices during the year, the Bologna office can give you information on how to contact a doctor or the local equivalent of Planned Parenthood.

**AIDS/HIV**

HIV infection, as in the US, is present in Italy. Please protect yourself if you are sexually active, and use condoms.

**Narcotics**

In all European countries penalties are more severe than in the United States. In Italy, possession brings up to three years in prison; trafficking from 3 to 8 years. Persons arrested on drug charges are not eligible for bail. Drug related offenses are subject to local laws - neither the university nor US officials can intervene. Easy drug availability does not make their possession or use acceptable or legal. Hence, do not buy drugs, use them, or sell them.

**Health Insurance & Medical Care**

*Italian Emergency Insurance:* In order to obtain a visa you must provide proof that your insurance coverage (family policy or school policy) is valid in Italy. Upon your arrival in Italy you’ll receive an additional Italian emergency insurance policy (required in order to obtain your residency permit). Italy has an excellent national health system; the medical facilities in Bologna — the University’s Medical School has an international reputation — are among the most modern in all Italy.

*US Health Insurance:* Please read the small print of your insurance policy carefully as to whether it covers preventive medicine. Make sure that it contains the words: “covered without limitation.” If you visit a private physician, dentist, eye doctor, etc., you are expected to pay for these medical services at the time you receive them and then submit your claim forms to your insurance company for reimbursement. Itemized bills and receipts must accompany ALL claim forms. In addition, your paperwork will be expedited if you have your Italian physician’s signature on all bills and receipts. It is important to file claims promptly and accurately with all necessary receipts translated and attached. It is a good idea to take with you a few claim forms so that you don’t have to wait for them to be mailed from the US if you need them.

REMEMBER: In case of emergency, contact the site coordinator as well.

At the beginning of your stay, minor health problems may arise - gastrointestinal disorders, sore throats, and colds often occur more frequently in a foreign country as a result of change in climate, diet, water
and personal habits. You may wish to obtain professional advice about what to expect before leaving. If you travel to areas away from Bologna and have a medical problem, or an allergy, take your essential medical information with you.

Note: Do not suspend any American or other coverage, since if you become ill, then this may be considered a pre-existing condition when you need to re-enroll in coverage at home.

Reimbursement Forms: Contact your health insurance provider for reimbursement forms and take these forms with you when you go abroad, which will save you time if you need medical assistance. If you are carrying Brown student health insurance, reimbursement forms are available from the Office of Insurance and Purchasing Services. If you have any questions regarding the Brown student health insurance plan, you should contact:

Cheryl Moan
Brown University, Office of Insurance and Purchasing Services
Box 1848
Providence, RI 02912
Phone: 401-863-9481
Email: Cheryl_Moan@brown.edu

Brown Accident & Sickness Insurance Plan

In addition to the coverage provided by their own health insurance, all students are automatically covered by an accident/sickness insurance plan available for students studying abroad. The plan covers students during their program dates only (leisure travel before or after program is not covered), and it is NOT designed to replace the regular health insurance (students will not be able to waive the regular student health insurance plan with this accident/sickness policy). If a student experiences an illness or accident abroad and wishes to utilize the plan, they should contact International SOS directly (referencing Brown’s group membership ID #11BSGC000031). Please refer to the Office of Insurance and Purchasing Services web page (www.brown.edu/about/administration/insurance/) for further information, including a brief description of the plan’s coverage and benefits. Interested students may also purchase a supplemental leisure coverage plan if they anticipate travelling before/after their study abroad program dates.

Emergency Travel Assistance
All students are covered by International SOS Worldwide Assistance & Emergency Evacuation Services. The services provided by International SOS range from telephone advice and referrals to full-scale evacuation by private air ambulance. The SOS network of multilingual specialists operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from SOS Assistance Centers around the world.

It is important to understand that although International SOS will offer you travel, medical and security advice and services, as well as on-line access to information which many insurance companies do not offer, International SOS is not health insurance. Requests for reimbursement for medical care received while abroad should be submitted to your health insurance provider.

International SOS also offers emotional support for students abroad, including a limited number of counseling sessions (available either in person or through internet/phone connection) at no cost. Contact ISOS directly if you wish to use this service.

If you have questions about coverage, please call the Brown University Office of Insurance and Purchasing Services at 401-863-9481 or visit the International SOS website at www.internationalsos.com.

You can access up-to-date reports on more than 170 countries worldwide on health issues, medical care, and vaccination requirements via the International SOS website.

When you contact International SOS, you must reference your Group Membership #11BSGC000031

Please be aware that some International SOS services carry additional charges. Should you request a service which has an additional charge, International SOS will inform you in advance and will require a credit card number in order to activate the service.

If, in the event of an emergency, Brown University provides the financial guarantee to International SOS on your behalf, the University will bill you for this charge upon receipt of the actual amount by ISOS. Please know that such charges may not be billed until after you return from your program abroad.
Money Matters

Program Costs

In order to help you budget appropriately for your academic experience in Italy we have created a cost information sheet that is available on the OIP website. Airfare and living costs are based on our best information, but these costs can change quickly with exchange rate fluctuations and price changes. For the most up-to-date cost information and the OIP refund policy, please visit the OIP website.

The Euro

The official currency in the European Union (België/Belgique, Deutschland, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Nederland, Österreich, Portugal, Suomi + Greece) is the Euro. The following coins are available: 1 cent, 2 cents, 5 cents, 10 cents, 20 cents, 50 cents, 1 Euro, and 2 Euros. The following notes are available: 5 Euros, 10 Euros, 20 Euros, 50 Euros, 100 Euros, 200 Euros and 500 Euros. The different countries mint their own coins.

General Banking

You are responsible for handling your own finances and you should arrive in Italy with some cash and, if possible, credit cards. Traveler checks are extremely difficult to cash. If you plan to receive funds from home, it is best that they be in the form of a bank draft or international money order.

Banks are open only in the morning from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and in the afternoon generally between 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Students often find this a restrictive timetable. Valid identification is always necessary at the bank, even for cash transactions.

ATM Cards

It is very difficult to open up bank accounts in Bologna (though it is possible). Most US ATM cards (called bancomat in Italy) can be used at ATM machines. This is by far the best way of handling your finances. The rate of exchange with your ATM card is usually as good as you can get in any bank. However, be sure to check with your bank to see what they charge for international withdrawals, as some banks charge up to $10 per transaction.

Credit Cards

In Italy and in Europe, most major credit cards are accepted in supermarkets, department stores and in most restaurants and smaller shops. Although procedures vary you can arrange to get a cash advance on your credit cards at a bank (provided they carry your credit card company). You can also get cash using a VISA card at most automatic tellers but you will need to apply for a PIN number for your credit card to do so. Check with your credit card company and bank to see what services they offer and where. It is a good idea to have some kind of credit card with a PIN and EMV chip, in case of emergencies.
Arriving and Surviving

Transportation to Italy

There is no one answer to the question of how much a round trip to Bologna costs, and since the major international carriers offer a wide range of competitive fares, it is worth shopping around.

Bologna does have the third largest airport in Italy, although there are no intercontinental flights arriving directly in Bologna. There are flights between Bologna and a number of domestic Italian destinations, as well as between Bologna and major European destinations: Paris, London, Amsterdam, Munich and Frankfurt. We recommend that you fly into Bologna with a stopover in one of these cities or in Rome. It is also possible, although we don’t recommend it, to fly to Milan and take the train to Bologna (2-3 hours). Flying to Rome and continuing on by train is also a possibility, but it takes considerably longer. There are a few very fast and expensive express trains (IC “InterCity” or “Frecce”, the latter requires advance reservations) that make the Rome-Bologna trip in about three hours, but the average train takes considerably more. Consider taking a taxi if absolutely laden down with luggage. (A taxi ride from the Bologna airport into town should cost you approximately €25-30.)

Arrival Information

We recommend that you fly into Bologna. You may wish to consider traveling with another student, just to help one another with luggage, etc. From the Bologna airport you can take an “Aerobus” to the central train station (buses leave at regular intervals and cost €5). From the train station the 32 or 33 service bus will take you to Porta San Vitale, very close to the Brown office. Alternatively you can take a taxi directly to the Brown office (expect to pay around €25-30 from the airport, €10 from the train station). If you take a taxi, ask the taxi driver to wait for you outside the office so that you can get the keys to your apartment and go there in the same taxi. If you change your itinerary at the last minute, please notify the office. If you run into trouble, remember that the office phone number is 051 2960906.

Office Hours on Arrival Day

The Brown office will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on program arrival days. If you plan on arriving after 6 p.m., you should notify the office personnel in advance. You will receive your apartment keys, and important information on housing regulations once you arrive.

IMPORTANT: Please do not plan to arrive in Bologna prior to the specified program arrival date. The Brown Program cannot be held responsible for those students arriving early.

Registering with the Local Authorities

In addition to the visa that you will have secured in the United States before your departure, there is the permesso di soggiorno (residence permit) required for the period of your stay here in Bologna. The office of Brown University in Bologna, with your cooperation, will take care of all this for you.

Upon your arrival in Bologna, be prepared to submit the following to the program staff. Pack items so they are easily accessible:

- At least six (6) passport-size photographs
- Two photocopies of your passport signature pages
- Two photocopies of your visa
- Two photocopies of your passport (Attestato Consolare or consular certificate); this document must be kept with your passport at all times. Please be sure to scan a copy of this document for your records and that you leave copies with your parents in case your passport is lost or stolen.
- All photocopies must be on full sheets of white paper (no half sizes or colored paper).
Housing

You will live in a Brown-rented apartment with fellow students from the program and with one or two Italian university students. You will be assigned to your respective apartments before arriving in Bologna. The grouping of students per apartment is determined by a housing lottery.

Students will be assigned to single rooms in fully furnished apartments rented by the program. All apartments are located in desirable and convenient areas of town. Apartment telephones can only receive incoming calls but can place outgoing calls to emergency numbers, the Brown office staff, and taxis. All apartments have Internet access.

Important information on housing will be provided in the orientation week. After every one has settled in, each apartment will elect a house representative - it need not necessarily be the same person for the entire year - whose task it is to ensure the smooth running of the apartment and to communicate problems to office staff.

All residents of Brown in Bologna apartments are required to abide by Brown’s Tenets of Community behavior policy. A copy of this policy will be given to you during orientation.
What to Bring

The first rule is not to pack too much, especially clothes. Decide what you think you will need and then take half of it. If you can make room in your luggage, however, to bring certain necessities, you can avoid spending unnecessarily when you get there.

Toiletries

Bring only enough toiletries, etc., to get you through the first few weeks. All toiletries are available in Italy, but if you have your own favorite brand bring a good supply with you.

Medications

Do not have any prescription drugs or medicine mailed to you: they won’t clear Customs (see health section above). Vitamins are considered medication.

Linens

Bring at least one set of sheets and a towel. More can be bought in Italy either in department stores or at the open-air market in Bologna. Clothes are quite expensive in Bologna, even in the annual sales.

Electrical Appliances

The electrical current used overseas is 50 cycles A C as opposed to 60 cycles in the U. S. Voltage in Italy is 220-240, while it is 110 volts in the U.S. You will need a transformer and adapter plugs if you want to use regular American appliances. You can also purchase travel irons, curling irons, blow dryers and electric razors and toothbrushes before leaving with built-in adapters for all currents, which is the best way to go. Small items (hairdryers, for example) are inexpensive.

Computers

A two-current laptop computer, if you possess one, might prove useful although it is not absolutely necessary. If you do bring your computer, buy a reliable surge protector when you arrive — do not rely on a cheap one — your computer could be burned out. For those students who use Apple products, there is an Apple store in the center of town, on Via Rizzoli. There are two computers available at the Brown Center, and several places in Bologna offer Internet access services. All of the apartments have wireless Internet service.

Luggage

On international flights, passengers are limited to one piece of luggage to be checked through and placed in the cargo section of the aircraft. In addition, you are permitted one carry-on bag and a purse or ‘personal item’. The regulations regarding weight and dimensions of the two pieces can vary from airline to airline.

Take only luggage that you can personally carry. Excess luggage may be refused and/or subject to fines. Be sure that your luggage is sturdy enough to take abuse - it is advisable to bring a backpack (airlines treat backpacks as one piece of luggage). Your luggage need not be expensive to be sturdy. Just make sure that clamps, handles and zippers are sound. Don’t put anything crushable in the outside pockets. Do not pack money or valuable jewelry in your checked luggage. All sharp objects must be packed in your checked baggage. Label your luggage with your name, home address and destination abroad (you should label them with the Brown-in-Bologna office address). You may also wish to protect your luggage with personal property or luggage insurance. Because of security regulations, do not leave your luggage unattended while traveling.

Shipping

Shipping goods in advance can be much more trouble and expense than it is worth. If there is no way to avoid having to ship goods, the usual way is through the U.S. post office, international freight forwarders or cargo services of international air carriers. Be aware that customs duties and shipping service fees paid upon receipt of the package in Italy can be quite high.

You must be present when your shipped luggage arrives. Office personnel cannot be held responsible for collecting luggage shipped in advance, and staff cannot pick up any luggage that must be claimed at a customs office or dock.

If you plan to take a number of books, the least expensive way to mail them is at the book rate, with the packages marked “Used personal books”. It is also possible to fill your own mail sack with packages of books. It is called the M- bag and is very cheap but takes forever. The same service exists from Italy too.
With the rise of Internet commerce, Italian customs authorities have become very severe on imports, particularly from the U.S. Have your parents or friends specify on the package “USED PERSONAL EFFECTS” and have them assess the contents at a low dollar value. Above $25 you will start to pay a 30% customs fee. One student whose parents sent him his used tennis racquets, quoting dollar value of $500, found himself with $150 customs duty to pay.
Life in Bologna

Weather

Summers in Italy are very warm and very humid, with temperatures reaching the mid-nineties. September and October are often ideal. From November through March, the weather is usually cold and damp. Bologna has a rainy autumn and a cold, damp winter (the average temperature in January is 30 degrees F), so a warm winter coat and rainwear will be necessary. Look forward to an early spring compared to New England.

Mail

It is best to have your correspondents send letters and packages to the address of the program offices in Via Belmeloro. This is because there is someone there to receive them during office hours, whereas there is no such guarantee at the apartment you are assigned to. Remember that the mail must always be addressed with the student’s name and c/o Brown University.

Past students recommend that if you have packages sent via courier, you should use DHL to avoid extra duty and delivery charges. To avoid customs duty, ship only used goods, keep the declared value low, and label all parcels “Used Personal Belongings”. Even so, charges paid when the package arrives can be very high due to new mail systems between Italy and the USA. Generally, you may take in cameras, personal computers, cassette recorders, radios and other similar items duty free provided they accompany you at the time of entry.

Wifi Access

All apartments have wireless Internet connection. Don’t expect to find the same computer facilities you have in the US. Hours of the University computer center will be more limited, and you may have to wait in lines for access to a machine. You can also use computer facilities at several Internet cafes and at the Brown office.

Food

The food in Bologna is among the best in all of Italy. It is rare to walk out of one of the 437 (count them) pizzerie, osterie, trattorie or ristoranti dissatisfied with the meal. The cheapest and most filling place to dine is at one of the several mensas (student cafeterias) located in the vicinity of the University. Each one offers a different atmosphere. A full meal costs about € 6. Quality-wise, it is your average college cafeteria, Italian style. The mensa opens September 15, though the exact date is very tentative. Hours of operation are: lunch from noon to 13.30, dinner from 19.00 to 21.00, closed Sundays.

Until you get settled and oriented, check out the “self-service” and fast-food restaurants; they are the cheapest places to go for lunch before the university mensa opens.

Pizzerie are everywhere and are generally moderately priced. There are also osterie, trattorie and ristoranti everywhere. There is a hierarchy among them, reflected in the title an establishment adopts. A ristorante offers better service and more comfortable and attractive surroundings, and is correspondingly higher priced. There are several good vegetarian restaurants in Bologna: Clorofilla, in Strada Maggiore is one of them. If you are using credit cards, check first that the restaurant accepts your particular card.

Italian “bars” are not dark cavernous places that sell beer and whisky to people who have been duly “carded”. The Italian bar is a coffee shop/snack bar and a meeting place for the locals. They do sell beer and whisky (and wine and other alcoholic drinks), but mostly they sell coffee. They also sell sandwiches and pastries. You can cut the cost of your order in half by standing rather than sitting while you eat.

In nearly all sit-down eating establishments (except for the mensa) there is a cover charge of between € 2-3, which is added on the bill - calculate well. In some places there is also a 12-15% service charge as well. No tips are necessary. The law requires that you obtain a receipt (ricevuta fiscale) before leaving the restaurant. Otherwise, you may be fined for conspiracy with the owner in tax fraud.

A health note: tap water (except on trains) and the local pasteurized milk are safe to drink; fresh fruits and vegetables may be eaten raw after they have been washed. Do not be surprised, however, if you have occasional intestinal upsets when you first arrive. This is due to a change of diet and will clear itself up as your body begins to adjust. If you do have this problem, it would be wise to avoid fried foods and heavy sauces for a while. Most Italians, incidentally, prefer to drink bottled mineral water, which comes in two varieties: carbonated (frizzante/gassata) or non-carbonated (naturale).
Shopping

There is nothing you can’t buy in Italy, but many items are relatively expensive. Synthetic fabrics, film, cosmetics, facial tissue, foil and plastic wrap, coffee and tea, for example, all cost more in Italy. The price of gasoline is exorbitant (four times the U.S. price). By contrast, wine and fresh fruit are relatively cheap.

Bologna has a large number of grocery and department stores: Coin (department), Upim (department) and Pam and Coop (grocery). The Coop and Pam are probably the cheapest grocery stores, though some products are not as fresh as at the numerous fruit and vegetable stands. For items like soap, milk, cheese, wine, pasta, etc., however, the prices tend to be better than in small shops. There are many street markets that have good buys on fruits, vegetables, fish, etc.

The names of the small specialty shops are generally self-evident: alimentari, salumiere, fornaio, pescevendolo, frutta e verdura, oli e vini. But don’t confuse the drogheria with the farmacia. The former sells groceries, coffee, sugar, delicatessen and house cleaning items. The latter dispenses prescription drugs and medical needs but does not stock the variety of products you find in an American drugstore. For the first few days it will be a case of trial and error.

Hours of store operation vary, but are generally from about 8.30 to 12.30, closed for lunch, reopening at around15.30 or 16.00, and closed for the night by 19.00 or 19.30. Unless you adopt the Italian lifestyle, in which lunch is the main meal of the day and is followed by a siesta, you will find the midday closing quite a nuisance. There are no 24-hour groceries but supermarkets tend to be open through lunch/siesta time and also on Thursday afternoons when all other stores are closed. All stores (except flower and pastry stores, large department stores and a few grocery stores) are closed on Sundays.

Since most refrigerators and freezers are small, you should expect to go shopping every other day or so (every day if you like fresh bread), rather than once every week. Make sure you stock up for Sunday and holidays. Things like meat, cheese and vegetables are sold either by the hectogram (etto = 100 grams) or kilogram. Grocery bags must be purchased in most stores. Taking along a tote bag will save having to buy them each time.

Pharmacies are open 8.30-12.30 and 15.30-19.30. Selected pharmacies remain open at night and on Sundays in various parts of the city. Information as to which pharmacies will be open outside of regular hours is available in the local Sunday newspaper (Il Resto del Carlino or in the Bologna section of La Repubblica) or is posted on every pharmacy door. More detailed practical information on daily life in Bologna will be provided to you during Orientation week.
A Final Note

Needless to say, no matter how well prepared you are for the occasion, your departure from the States and your arrival in Italy may be stressful but hopefully not strewn with disasters. There is a special bus (called the Aerobus) that takes passengers from the airport to the central railroad station in about 20 minutes. Tickets can be purchased on board for 5 euros. To help minimize difficulties, however, we strongly recommend that you take a taxi to the program office at Via Belmeloro 7 (051-2960906) so that you can get the keys to your apartment and get rid of your luggage as soon as possible. You should have the taxi wait for you outside the office so it can take you to your apartment when you get the keys. The cab will probably cost between twenty and thirty euros.

An important practical tip, we repeat, is to bring with you only the amount of luggage that you can personally carry. At least one of your pieces of luggage should be a backpack to make transferal from airports to buses to trains that little bit easier. A backpack will also come in handy if you want to travel around Europe. Suitcases are impractical.

City bus tickets are inexpensive at 1,30 euro and are valid on successive buses for a full hour from the time of purchase on board or from the time you insert the ticket you bought before boarding in the date- and-time-machine. You can also purchase a “City Pass” at a newsagent for 12.00 euros. It is good for 10 rides. If you are caught by the inspectors traveling on a bus without a ticket or with an unstamped ticket, you will be fined 50 euros on the spot, no explanations accepted. If you don’t have 50 euros, you can pay 50 within 5 days, after that the fine is increased to 150 euros.

If you collapse along the way in dire need of a cup of coffee, remember to go to the bar’s cashier first, order and pay for your food and drink, and then present the receipt at the counter (this is not as complicated as it sounds).

We look forward to meeting you upon your arrival here in Bologna. Till then, be alert and address everybody you come into contact with in the polite Lei form.

Buon Viaggio e A Presto