

Writing Rome Travel Tips

Important Items to Bring

- Prescription medications in original containers, including EpiPens (pack in carry-on)
- Passport and copy of passport or I.D.
- Skidmore College ID
- Printout Travel Seminar Insurance Letter for presentation to Italian Customs Officer if requested
- Comfortable shoes for walking
- Toiletries (your specific brands may not be readily available in Italy)

As the professors have probably advised you the average temperature ranges from 51 degrees Fahrenheit to 81 degrees Fahrenheit during the time period of the travel seminar. Please pack accordingly. Also keep in mind that you will be doing a good amount of walking, so comfortable shoes are a must.

Dress Code:

During the course of the travel seminar the group will be visiting sites which are considered sacred places (i.e. St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican Museum) therefore your dress must be appropriate for these locations. Shoulders of both men and women must be covered. Women must wear skirts or dresses beneath their knees or else long pants. Men must wear pants. No shorts for either men or women.

Electricity:

The voltage in Rome is 220 volts. The voltage in the US is 110 volts.

If you plan on using your own 110-volt appliances, you will need a voltage converter, unless your appliance is designed to also work with 220 volts electricity (dual voltage). For example, most laptops and some electric shavers are designed to work both at 110 and 220 volts. Plugging in an appliance that is not designed to run on 220 volts electricity without using voltage converter will most likely kill it.

Voltage converters might not be always easy to find in Italy. In Rome you can purchase these items at an electrical appliance shop. If you think you will need one, it is a good idea to get it before you leave home. You should be able to purchase the necessary equipment at electronic stores, such as Best Buy or online retailers like Amazon.

Regardless of voltage, if your appliance has flat prongs, you will need a plug adapter: Italian sockets are designed to accept round prongs. Do get one before your leave!

Time Zone:

Rome is in the Central European Time Zone (CET) which is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. Example: If it is 11:00 AM in New York City, it is 5:00 PM in Rome.

Public Telephones:

Public telephones are available throughout Italy. International calls require the use of a phone card (Carta Telefonica) which may be purchased at any newsstand, tobacco shop or "bar"(coffee shop).

To make calls from public telephones (which you can find on the street, in some bars, restaurants, etc. and in shopping centers), you may use coins or phone cards, which can be purchased from tobacconists, news kiosks and telephone shops. Mobile phone reception in Italy is based on GSM technology, which is not compatible with that of a number of countries, including the USA, unless you have a three-band mobile phone.

Both local and long distance calls require the proper area code before dialing the number.

Local Call: To place a call within Rome you must dial 06 + phone number.

Calling cell #: When calling a cellular phone, drop the zero of the area code, ex: 397 + phone number of the cellular.

International call: To call USA from Italy: 001+area code+ phone number.

Telephone:

Prior to your departure, discuss with your family and friends how you plan to communicate during your travel seminar, especially if you will have limited access to phone or internet service or very little free time due to the program's itinerary.

Before travelling to Italy you should contact your telephone services provider to activate the international roaming service (if it is not already activated automatically). You should also inquire as to whether your phone has the ability to remove the SIM lock from your phone, effectively making it possible to then use the phone on any network by inserting a different SIM card allowing usage in the country you are travelling in.

Making international calls from a mobile phone may be very expensive, and it is often advisable to purchase a phone card to call home from a public telephone.

Internet-based phone services such as Skype or Vonage allow users to make phone or video calls for free or at low rates. If you are bringing a laptop, have access to the internet, and have a microphone or webcam, you may want to use a service like Skype. You can download Skype at Skype's website at <http://www.skype.com>. Other options include FaceTime, or the app, WhatsApp (<http://www.whatsapp.com/>) which is a mobile messaging that utilizes the internet.

Exchange Rate:

Italy's currency is the Euro. Currently the exchange rates are as follows, but remember it fluctuates:

Currency Converter USD/EUR

<p>1.00 USD  US Dollar</p>	<p>0.89392 EUR  Euro</p>
<p>1.00 EUR  Euro</p>	<p>1.11853 USD  US Dollar</p>

Example a souvenir that costs €25 (Euros), costs \$27.96 USD. Please budget accordingly. You can utilize currency converters such as www.oanda.com or www.exchangerate.com to assist in calculating your budget.

Travelers Cheques:

Will shops in Italy accept travelers cheques?

In major Italian cities and tourist areas travelers cheques are accepted. The rate of exchange is calculated on the daily rate of exchange shown on the newspapers. Travelers cheques can be cashed in Italian banks. Always remember to keep the record of cheque numbers separate from the cheque for reference in the event of loss.

ATMs and Debit Cards:

Can I use my Credit Card/Debit Card in Italy?

Yes. Most reputable establishments will accept major credit cards. Those establishments accepting credit cards will post the logos in their front windows, just as they do in the USA. If you pay by credit card you will be asked to show an identity document.

Are there ATMs in Italy? Will I need to know Italian to use the ATMs?

Yes. The ATM (Automatic Teller Machines) in Italy are known as Bancomat. There are many to be found in the large cities and even in small towns. The machines operate just as they do here; at the beginning of the transaction, it prompts the user for the preferred language.

Using a credit card, a debit card or your local bank ATM card is very easy. One must first locate either the Cirrus or BankMate symbol (on the Bancomat and on your card) to insure the card is usable on that particular unit. Cirrus and BankMate are the two most popular and widespread banking systems in the world so they are the best to have. If you are unsure about the compatibility or the banking systems, contact your Credit Card Company or local bank.

After discovering the system is compatible, simply withdrawal money as you would at home. Of course, in Italy the money will be dispensed as Euros, but when you return home, your bank will have converted the Euros into dollars using the most beneficial exchange rate possible. Be careful though when using credit cards, as many banks are now charging large fees of 2.5% to 4% for cash advances which negate any advantage of using the Bancomat in the first place. One's best bet is to use your regular ATM card and simply withdraw money from your account just as you would do at your local bank.

You should check with the issuer to make sure your numerical PIN number will work abroad and that you know the daily withdrawal limit. Also make certain to notify your bank where you will be traveling to prevent any disruption in usage due to a fear on the bank or credit card company's part of fraudulent charges.

Banking Hours:

Banks in Italy are open Monday through Friday from 8:35 a.m. to 1:35 p.m. and from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.; in many tourist areas they are open no-stop from 8.30 a.m. to 4p.m. and closed all day on Saturday and Sunday and on national holidays. The afternoon one hour opening may vary from city to city. Travelers checks can be exchanged for Italian currency at most hotels and shops and at the foreign exchange offices in main railway stations and at the airports.

Credit Cards:

Major credit cards, Visa, MasterCard and American Express, are accepted in Italy, although for small expenses local stores may not accept them.

How to Get Euros:

Prior to Arriving in Italy

Most major banks have Euros available for exchange or can order them for you as well. If you are a member of AAA, you can order Euros through that organization.

Once in Italy, how do I convert my dollars in euros?

You can obtain Euros through any bank, ATM machines, or exchange office (Ufficio di Cambio) at airports and railway stations in the main cities.

It is advisable to keep receipts of currency exchanged in case it be necessary to reconvert euros back into dollars before leaving the country.

Money Belt:

Maybe. Crowded tourist sites all over the world are at pickpocket risk and Italy is no exception. One should always be on alert for these petty thieves, but a good offense is the best defense. Keep your money hidden preferably in an inside pocket or money belt.

Tipping for service:

Tips are not compulsory and in Italy there are no generally established rules, although it is common practice to leave a sum amounting to around 10% of the bill if you are satisfied with the service you have received.

Smoking:

Smoking is prohibited in public areas within Italy – this includes all bars, nightclubs and restaurants.

Property Insurance:

If you will be traveling with a laptop, digital camera, smart phone, iPod, iPad or other valuable equipment, make sure it is properly insured.

- Check your parent/guardian's homeowners insurance policy. Coverage for such valuables typically extends from the homeowners policy when travelling.
- If coverage isn't available under your parents/guardians' current homeowners insurance policy, there may be an option to add a rider to provide for such coverage. Have them check with their insurance agent/company.
- Purchase a personal articles insurance policy. The following companies are a few which offer plans. You should research companies that will fit your specific needs.
 - Gallagher (<https://www.gallagherstudent.com/students/student-personal-property/>)
 - State Farm (<http://www.statefarm.com/insurance/other/personal.asp>)
 - College Student Insurance (<http://www.collegestudentinsurance.com>)

Rome-specific tips

- Ride in authorized taxis only, marked by official signs and identification. Ask for the driver's cost estimate for your route in advance, read rules and regulations posted inside taxi, and maintain an eye on the cab's meter from beginning to end of your journey. Remember that any transport of baggage usually guarantees first bag free of charge. Always ask for an official receipt for the price you pay.
- Do not purchase tickets of entry to museums or archaeological sites from unauthorized sellers or persons without official tour guide accreditation, and do not trust promises to advance your place in line. Remember that access to public spaces is always free.
- In restaurants, pizzerias, fast food and take-away establishments, always look at the menu with prices, remembering that table service usually costs more than counter service or take-away. Restaurateurs are obligated to exhibit all costs for both service and menu items.
- Excepting some cases, bathroom use is free in bars and restaurants. Some establishments ask for payment or a tip. Railway and bus stations often require coins for payment.
- The water in public fountains is potable, unless otherwise indicated, and a glass of tap water at the bar is always free.