GUARDARSI INDIETRO PER ANDARE AVANTI
LOOKING BACK WHILE MOVING FORWARD
The style of our magazine reminds us of the historical and cultural undertones that exist here in Firenze, that guides us as we move forward. It encompasses a theme of appreciation, for both tradition, but change. The influence and lessons of the past is something that we can use for the future.

Florida State University
Student Magazine
Issue 14 Summer 2023
FSU International Programs
Florence
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FSU International Programs
Florence
CAMPUS LIFE

Photo by Sophia Schroeder
When I was appointed to be the Director of FSU Florence, my main goal was to improve the communication between faculty, staff, students, and the administration.

I feel confident that great strides were made in improving our communication channels so that we function more efficiently and as a team.

My motto is no individual is more important than the team and our collective goals and our personal success depend on the success of each other.

This philosophy will continue to be fostered moving forward and serve as the pillars on which our program is built.

In addition, a strong emphasis has been placed on the academic rigor and expectations of our program as we climb the national rankings as one of the top public universities in the United States and look to make our international footprint even bigger.

The arrival of President Richard McCullough and Chairman of the Board Peter Collins to our study center this summer is a testament to Florida State’s commitment to higher education on the international stage and symbolic of their support for our study abroad program which they referred to as a crown jewel that sets the standard for excellence.

"Our collective goals and our personal success depend on the success of each other."

- Charlie Panarella, Ph.D
"Studying Italian is an opportunity to familiarize with a new system that makes sense the world around us as well as to learn how to express our wishes and desires. Florence is a stunning city strongly committed to preserving the past. Students, however, are also studying abroad to shape their future, and as they keep in mind the two aforementioned times, the students in ITA 2220 Reading & Conversation found the following expressions meaningful."

- Giacomo Sproccati, FSU Florence Italian Professor

This magazine serves a purpose to showcase the life in and of Italy. Throughout, there will be images that provide a glimpse of Italian culture. Paired are quotes, expressions, and translations of Italian sayings or phrases selected by FSU Italian 2200 students. They hope that these idioms will inspire everyone on the Program, both in their lives and in the motivation to learn Italian.
Florida State University’s President, Richard McCullough, visited the FSU Florence study center on July 17 for the first time since he was appointed as president. McCullough was accompanied by Peter Collins, current Chair of the FSU Board of Trustees, as they traveled to the different study abroad locations in Europe.

Both prominent FSU leaders discussed their love for study abroad programs and explained why they came to Italy.

“My job is to make the university the best that it can be in every dimension,” said President McCullough. “That’s one of the reasons we came over because we want to look and see what’s going on and try to do what we can to improve it.”

They reportedly focused most of their time on touring new housing options to be able to expand the program to more students who have the desire to study abroad.

“The potential residence we showed to the President and Chairman is in the heart of downtown Florence, not far from the Duomo,” Charles Panarella, Director of FSU Florence, said. “This is a prime location for students and would ensure safety and convenience to all aspects of Florence and would therefore enhance their experience.”

Additionally, the FSU President and Peter Collins talked about the prospect of establishing alliances with other U.S. universities for research and educational objectives.

The expansion of the Florence program is at the forefront of multiple strategic discussions. Peter Collins discussed that few universities have a place like Florence’s study center which can make people proud of their alma mater.

Overall President Richard McCullough and Peter Collins underlined the need to showcase such venues, such programs and include such stories as part of the narrative describing FSU.

“If you look back about three or four years ago I would say that the international program was sort of isolated from the University, and since I’ve come in as President and Peter Collins as board chair, we are very involved,” McCullough added.

It is evident both individuals have a lot of passion for the university and their desire to see it thrive in the best ways it can was obvious.

Over the years Florida State has progressed into becoming a ‘Top 20’ University and its growth nationally and internationally continues to be a key objective.
"This idiom ties deeply to the study abroad experience. The student believes all the hard work she did while abroad gave her a significant chance to grow and get better prepared for a victorious life upon returning to the U.S."

- Hannah Norman
"A summer spent studying abroad in Europe is a dream come true for many. Some have even called it a “European girl summer.” In turn, the demand to be a part of Florida State University’s international study abroad program grows by the year from students eager to live in major cities in Spain, England, and Italy.

In past years, summer sessions have offered 6 weeks of classes with opportunities for immersion in a new culture from the university and much more. For the first time this summer, FSU International Program students in Florence are continuing their studies in an accelerated 4-week class session due to limited housing options within the city.

I don’t feel like we’re carrying on the legacy,” Sydney Gardner, an FSU sophomore said “There are no volunteer opportunities offered here over the summer. Volunteering is a big part of feeling connected to the culture, and even a day of volunteering would 100% make me feel more connected.”

Despite a newly shortened term, students are still managing to make the most of their study abroad experience, balancing travel included in the program and extracurricular activities with 6 credit hours of classes. Students in the Summer 2 session had the chance to go on a program-led trip to the Amalfi Coast, while others have made their own travels to different countries throughout Europe, such as Spain and Croatia, for the weekend while finishing the school work within their programs.

“Having taken summer classes online in the past, I found taking classes in a four-week span hard to adjust to at first, especially in a new environment like Florence, but on my days off, I am able to take much needed me-time and walk around to see what I want to see in the city on my own schedule,” said Kate Lowry, senior FSU Florence student.

Students like Lowry are making sure that they see everything that Italy has to offer. But with busy school schedules and travel bucket lists, learning to value Florence as a home away from home is as crucial for those who choose to live abroad “I feel like with less time comes a greater appreciation for every day, meal, and moment; it’s in these moments that I find it most necessary to slow down and be present,” Grace Callahan, a student in the Fashion and Sustainability program, said.

Florence is filled with desirable tourist destinations that display the city’s historical architecture, art, and culture, but many taking part in study abroad have come to value the parts of the city that are less crowded and offer a glimpse of how local Florentines live. Along with what students learn in the classroom, they have the chance to enrich their knowledge of Italian language and culture by diving headfirst into the Florentine lifestyle, learning to eat and speak like a local to the best of their ability.

Though four-week sessions are not the norm for FSU Florence, students have embraced the opportunities and experiences in Italy. Not only do they flourish in academics but thrive as nomads understanding the cultures in the places they wander. Sure, the statue of David by Michaelangelo is a sight to see, but the people you meet, and the memories made in the process are what remains.
"We put them on a pedestal, but we're doing nothing to build upon that legacy," rising FSU senior Haley Thomasson said. “That’s the only thing we ever hear about in regards to what FSU Florence students did, why don’t we hear more about what modern-day students are doing and how they’re impacting the community?”

1966 was the first time that Florida State University offered a study abroad program in Florence. That fall, on November 4, the historic and tragic flooding of the Arno River occurred, swallowing Florence in up to 22 feet of water. The damage and loss were severe, and have taken decades of ongoing repair work to try to restore the city. When the flood hit that November, the original cohort of FSU study-abroad students all unanimously chose to stay and help the city.

Now, every semester at the FSU Florence orientation, incoming students are reminded of the Mud Angels' legacy. They are told about the original cohort who volunteered their time and effort to help Florentines, even when leaving would have been easier.

The name, Mud Angels, is not exclusive to this FSU cohort though, as Mud Angels, or the Angeli del fango, were composed of both Italian and foreign volunteers who chose to assist the city of Florence in its time of need. Archival sources of the disaster including Robert Clark’s Dark Water, Erasmo D’Angelis’ The Mud Angels, and David Lee’s Triumph from Tragedy all detail the strength of both Italian and foreign youth in stepping up in a time of need.

Still, the impact and lasting impression of the FSU Mud Angels are regaled every semester to inspire new students to carry on the legacy left by those before them. While the students of Summer 2023 may feel as if the story is one to be proud of, they feel as if they are not able to continue on the legacy.

I don’t feel like we’re carrying on the legacy," Sydney Gardner, an FSU sophomore said “There are no volunteer opportunities offered here over the summer. Volunteering is a big part of feeling connected to the culture, and even a day of volunteering would 100% make me feel more connected.”

In the spring and fall semesters at FSU Florence, students participate in The Big Event, a city-wide initiative sponsored by the American Consulate in Florence in which American study abroad students based in the city spend a day cleaning the city streets. No such volunteer opportunities are offered over the summer though.

“We’d love to offer volunteer opportunities in the summer, but due to time constraints we have been limited,” Laura Buonanno, Associate Director at FSU Florence said. “The Mud Angels have always been an important part of our FSU legacy and dedication to helping others within the community. But, volunteer opportunities take a couple of weeks to set up. The places we’ve volunteered with recently - the women and children’s shelter, teaching Italian to families, soup kitchens, etc. need commitment from long-term volunteers, 2 to 3 months minimum, and we cannot provide that with our shorter summer sessions.”
Although the summer schedule is already packed, students still think they could contribute to the tradition. “We could do small things, once or twice a week with a community partner,” FSU junior Sophie Smith said. “Having the opportunity to partake would be better than nothing, even if it’s not mandatory and built into the schedule.”

Other students offered ideas of an on-campus organization focused on volunteering over the summer and having volunteer opportunities built into specific courses. “We will continue to look for alternate possibilities for future summer students - perhaps volunteer opportunities that require only one visit, such as community cleanup days, could be a possibility,” said Laura Buonanno.

“Even if it wasn’t mandatory I think a lot of people would still do it,” sophomore Ava Newcomb said. “Volunteering is a big way to give back, and even if that doesn’t motivate people, we need volunteer hours for ServScript. Not being able to get them abroad sets us back from being able to join different organizations.”

"Organizations such as the Garnet and Gold Honor Society, or the Global Citizenship Certification, require specific amounts of community service hours recorded in ServScript to join. Not being able to obtain these hours while abroad puts these students at a disadvantage compared to their peers on the main campus in hopes of accomplishing these prestigious programs.

Whether for connection or enhancing their future opportunities after studying abroad, there is a clear desire from summer students to have the option for volunteering.

“I think it’s important for us to reflect on what the FSU Mud Angels did, and continue to reflect and preserve the culture here in our own way,” Haley Thomasson said.
CULTURE
I arrived in Florence, Italy on June 18th, 2023 at 3:15 pm, a little over a week early for my study abroad program. I checked into my apartment in Santa Croce and started to roam the city that I would call home for the next five and a half weeks. Minutes later, I was practically on the floor and not on purpose to capture a more aesthetic photo of Santa Croce. As embarrassing as it may read, I simply lost my footing on the uneven medieval cobbles and crumbled to the ground as easily as a cannoli shell after the first bite.

I could blame being put in charge of directions, thus forcing me to not always pay attention to the ground. The reality, however, is that I tripped and fell because of the imperfect streets of the Renaissance city. Fear not. I am not alone, however. “Nine out of ten medical cases are related to the cobblestones,” said International Health Florence (IHF) representative. In fact, IHF reported that sprained ankles are the most common injury related to the cobblestones.

According to travel websites and guides, Florence is a walkable city. But is it? It is quite hazardous because of big potholes, uneven bricks, narrow sidewalks, and busy foot traffic. So, is it usual for people to hurt themselves while walking in Florence? Is it almost inevitable? Or, is it just the fatal outcome that tourists should expect during their visit to the Tuscan jewel? Are they the only ones falling victim to the Florentine streets? “I definitely have tripped on the cobblestones a few times, you just have to really pay attention where you step”, said Valerie Escobar, a Florida State Student.

Tourists usually have maps pulled up on their phones and are found turning in circles due to repeated wrong turns. Whereas, locals usually speed walk without any hesitation, which may explain how they are able to almost float above the unkept cobblestones.

“I understand the traditional aspects of Florence and why the city chooses to not remodel the roads, but half the time I cannot even appreciate the surrounding art because I’m too worried about falling”, said Ryan Gonzalez, a Florida State student. International Health Florence explained that tourists are usually sightseeing without paying much attention, distracted by the famous hallmarks around them. But, to locals, walking through Florence is a part of their normal routine and not anything out of the ordinary, so the Florence cobblestones and landmarks do not necessarily phase them or make them trip. “I’m used to them (cobblestones) by now”, said Alanah Edwards, a Florence resident that works at the FSU study center cafe.
According to the Centro Studi Turistici of Florence for Assoturismo Confesercenti, tourism has increased by 15.5% in 2022 compared to 2021 such that the population of tourists visiting Florence now exceeds pre-pandemic numbers, which were already historic.

So do tourists enjoy Florence that much? Or are they just satisfying an urge to travel after having felt trapped due to COVID restrictions?

ItaliaNoles decided to investigate this a bit further and figure out if tourists and locals have a similar level of enjoyment. Philosophically, it’s important to preface that enjoyment is subjective. Enjoyment varies from person to person, and individually, people usually know right away whether or not they have enjoyed something. Maybe by the smiles on their faces, or just a feeling. It may have been from seeing a beautiful piece of architecture or eating a refreshing gelato.

What can be harder to understand is where that feeling of enjoyment really comes from.

For Makenna Hagerty, a graduate student in English Education, enjoyment comes from being in a place she learned about and can now experience for the first time.

“I think the culture here is very different from America and it’s been a kind of a shock in some cases, but I do enjoy it,” Hagerty said. “I take a second to think ‘Oh my God, I’m in Italy…’ I’m looking at this historical painting that I’ve viewed online for my whole life. In moments like that I think, ‘I can’t believe I’m here.’ For many, they realize and acknowledge that social media can only go so far. “Obviously, I saw stuff on social media but the pictures and what I’ve witnessed about Italy and Florence does not do it justice,” FSU senior Claire LeCroy said.

Although study abroad students and tourists alike rave about the sights, Florence’s unique architecture, its history and its food, facing record-breaking temperatures well above 100, and at times above 110 degrees fahrenheit, have also influenced the overall experience.

“It’s been extremely hot. We’re from Florida, so we’re used to it, but it’s hot.” said Jackie Cabrera, a tourist from Miami. Jackie’s daughter Madison continues, “I agree. It’s pretty sunny, and it can be exhausting and we’re getting a little sweaty.”

Another tourist, Ina from Romania, believes that the heat has absolutely affected her experience of Florence. “The heat has impacted enjoyment very very much. We have to carry water with us all the time because it is very very hot and it’s been hard for us to go through the city in this heat.”
The heat was not the only complaint tourists and students had, however. Ina confesses that the least enjoyable part of Florence has been seeing trash on the streets, meters away from Renaissance marvels. “It kind of destroys the aesthetic of the city,” she admits. The locals are quick to agree and equally rapid to blame tourists. “There has been a lack of rain, so the sewage pipes lack proper irrigation,” said Francesco Vacante, a landlord in Florence. “The streets have started to smell, and ever since tourists have come back to the city, the trash and pollution has gotten worse.” He further explained that the city doesn't have the means to handle crowds this big and the rotation of tourists has become overwhelming.

Vacante’s comments are common amongst locals: tourism has had a noticeable negative effect on the city, the culture, and the people. In fact, the reasons Florence locals have not enjoyed themselves in the city may simply boil down to one culprit: tourists.

“So, has tourism completely ruined Florence for the locals? Restaurant owners, landlords like Vacante, and even students like Rossi, tend to enjoy tourists and the economic opportunities they offer for them in Florence. Business owners know they depend on tourism to keep a profit.

Florentines have a love-hate relationship with tourism. Although they want to get out of the city to avoid large crowds, not all locals view tourists as a hindrance to their enjoyment. “I try to go to places that aren’t popular. I pass the Duomo almost everyday. I’ve seen all the tourist spots here. If it’s your first time, I always recommend visiting them. But, in order to really enjoy Florence, don’t live like a tourist the entire time you’re here.” Rossi said.

There is an overarching theme to the idea of enjoyment to locals: to enjoy your time in Italy, be Italian. That doesn’t mean constantly struggling to order insalata from the trattoria down the street or abandoning the “must-see” excursions and experiences of Florence. Tourists are tourists for a reason. The ineluctable and inevitable reality is that there will always be a disparity in how locals and tourists enjoy a city like Florence.

Locals are not too concerned with maximizing their time in Florence like tourists. They live here all year round and have much more time to appreciate their city. Relaxing, casually meandering through the markets, making their way to the free gardens when they get a chance. Some of the most enjoyable places are known almost solely by the locals. The best restaurants, views, and experiences are those that don’t fill up Instagram pages. Sometimes a sandwich shop across the bridge is just as good as the one across the study center.

As long as people are making efforts to see Italy in every-day life, and taking time to relax and wind down like a real Italian, people can truly enjoy their time here.
Cogli l’attimo
"Seize the day. Life is short, so let’s take advantage of what every daily gift."
– Hannah Harring
Every evening hordes of tourists walk up to the Piazzale Michelangelo to experience a picture-perfect moment, a sunset over the Renaissance city. However, on June 29, 2024, there will be a different motive to come visit the piazza.

For the first time in its history, Italy will be the stage of the Grand Départ of the Tour de France, the world's largest and most grueling cycling event, arguably the most important sporting event after the Summer Olympics and the Soccer World Cup.

Florence has previously hosted world-renowned cycling events such as the 2013 UCI world road championships. The Tour de France is however a step higher.

Ever since its beginning in 1903, the Tour de France has often started outside of France with the recent notable Grand Depart in Denmark in 2022 and Spain this year. But Italy, a country with multiple cycling champions and a prolific cycling culture, had never been selected to host the Grand Depart.

“There is an obvious link with the legend of Italian cycling and its champions,” race director Christophe Prudhomme told EuroSport.

Past racers like Gino Bartali, a Florentine cycling hero, and Fausto Coppi were a huge influence to Italian culture and cycling. They were adored by Italians and ultimately shaped cycling into what it is today in Italy. According to the Italian Cycling Federation (FCI), Tuscany contained one of the highest numbers of cycling clubs in 2020.

“There is no other place better in the world than starting in Florence for the Grand Depart,” said former professional rider Eros Poli, the 1984 Olympic road cycling champion who now directs cycling tours with his company InGamba.

“Italy has always been part of the competition but has never started it.” Poli says.

So, will Florence be able to rise to the occasion and what does it mean for a city like Florence to host this event?

To be able to hold such an event requires much planning and restructuring. “The official announcement of the departure of the Tour de France from Florence was made in December 2022 and from that moment the Municipality of Florence started working hard to prepare for the event,” said Matteo Morandini, who works with the Communications Office for the Municipality of Florence.

In order to prepare for the race, the city, known for its cobbled and narrow streets, will also need to adhere to cycling guidelines for road quality put forth by the Tour de France organizers.

“They’ll likely redo a lot of roads because the roads have to be in pretty good condition. When they did the Giro d’Italia they had a massive road redoing campaign,” said Alan Pascuzzi, a Florence resident and Art History professor.

“The roads will certainly be resurfaced and made safe, and all local cyclists will benefit”, added Ilaria Bianchi, owner of Cicli Sergio Bianchi, a bike shop in Florence.
The city of Florence, currently advocating for environmentally friendly transport with the development of tram lines, could also benefit from the event. “Hopefully this event will bring more lanes for cyclists,” said Marika Sconzo who works with a local bike shop.

Economically, data suggests that the city will vastly benefit from such an occasion. For the 2023 Tour de France, Bilbao, Spain host of the Grand Depart, is now expecting €100 million in return. Most of the restaurants and hotels in Bilbao had reached full occupancy.

“The event will cause more bookings,” said Sandra Petrone, an employee at a 5-star luxury Hotel Bernini Palace in the city center.

Owner of a popular gelato shop here in Florence, Vivoli, anticipates a huge flux in business, “It’s exciting, it’s going to bring in a lot of work” says Giulia Gori.

Hosting the Grand Depart of the Tour de France represents a unique opportunity to showcase the city of Florence. “It’s a small city, it’s like riding through Disneyland, it’s all about marketing and image and it’s good for Florence’s image,” said Pascuzzi, “they want to start and finish at the most picturesque places because that’s what people are going to remember.”

In less than a year, the world will turn its attention to Florence for the world’s largest cycling event. “I’m incredibly proud about that because it never happened in all the history of the Tour de France. It’s a pleasure and an honor,” said Lorenzo Nigi, a member of the local ASD Veloclub.

The city is aiming to drive a sense of excitement for the viewers, cyclists, and the city of Florence as it embarks on the occasion.

“On 29 June 2023, exactly one year before the start of the Tour, the Communication Office published on the social channels of the Municipality a video with original content to start the countdown,” said Morandini.

Hopefully for all cycling enthusiasts, time will now fly until Tour de France riders arrive in Tuscany in June 2024.
“Look at life through a rear-view mirror. As we make progress every day, let’s keep in mind our past.”

- Tre Pepper
MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA?

By Kemper Bernstein

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, today one in five Americans struggle with a mental illness. Mental health knows no geographical boundaries either. It impacts people in the USA and in one of the world’s most beautiful and artistic cities. “Mental health refers to the well-being of all aspects of the self besides physical. This can include our emotional and psychological well-being,” American Psychotherapist Alannah Brown says.

Discussions about this highly stigmatized topic have become more and more commonplace in American culture.

Nowadays, mentioning therapy or struggles with anxiety and depression is rarely met with shocked expressions and uncomfortable glares. However, mental health remains very much in the closet in Italy, Ms. Elizabeth Connolly, a psychologist living in Florence explains.

So how do American students feel about discussing their mental health in Italy?

FSU student Keelyn McAnarney answers this question. “We were having a conversation with my Italian II class today and the teacher was basically saying...how a lot of Italian people are kind of just like ‘Oh you need to go outside more or you need to change part of your routine’ and are not necessarily addressing that this is a mental faculty problem and not just a lifestyle problem.”

She goes on to explain that she is now more wary of discussing her mental health in Italy than she would be in America. “If I were to need to go to a therapist while here, I probably just wouldn’t.”

Her reasoning related to her concerns regarding Italian perspectives on mental health such as the tendency to brush things off. “If I had a doctor tell me that, I wouldn’t feel great,” McAnarney continued.

Do students feel the same way when discussing mental health back home in America?

“In America? I feel pretty good about it.” McAnarney said. “Especially in front of my friends and parents, there is an understanding and it’s very supportive, which I love.”

It is clear that mental health stigma in Italy and America affects students differently. “I feel like in America it’s almost expected for people to see counselors or to struggle with certain mental health issues,” she finished. “I should consider not talking about this to an Italian person just because they will have a different reaction than an American therapist would have.”

This is very possibly true, according to Connolly, as she reaffirms how mental health concerns are not taken as seriously or addressed in the same way as they might be in America.

If students struggle with mental health concerns, they can reach out to the free therapy services provided by Florida State University. Listed below is the contact information for English-speaking therapists covered by CISI international insurance.

Elizabeth Connolly: connollycounseling@gmail.com
MaryAnn Bellini: mmsmaryasan24@gmail.com
Silvia Giani: silvia.giani22@gmail.com
Silia Passeri: siliapasserit@gmail.com

By Kemper Bernstein

Photo by Lauren Stevens
TEMPORARY HABITS OR LEARNED LIFESTYLE?

By Alinna Aspiro

Studying abroad made me realize that there is an entire world out there that I have yet to discover. It made me want to continue pursuing opportunities to travel to new places and meet new people. The life and culture in Florence pushed me to go to Madrid and complete an internship. It was growth within myself and a deeper appreciation of other cultures, which forever changed the way I look at life”, says Karla Soberon, a Florida State Florence alumni.

Study abroad participants often comment that studying abroad changed them for the better, but in what ways?

Sometimes it is through habits, sometimes it is through mindsets, and sometimes it is through lessons. But, will these changes transfer over to their daily life or will they be forgotten upon leaving Florence? Does studying abroad create temporary habits or learned lifestyles?

“While I was studying abroad, I found myself more likely to try new things - especially foods and drinks. Since being home, I have cooked some authentic meals I enjoyed while abroad. I haven’t tried as many new things as I tend to stick to certain dishes and drinks I know I enjoy”, said Hannah Moore, an FSU Florence summer session one student. Living in a foreign country makes it easier for many to say “yes” to trying new things, like meeting new people, exploring new places, and stepping outside your comfort zone. It gives you the chance to learn more about yourself, your interests, and the surrounding world without the common constraints faced back home.
CUISINE

Photo by Alyssa Thomassy
FLORENCE’S PAST

By McKinnon Bell & Kate Lowry

Maria Raidy’s first hour in Florence was not spent queuing in front of the Duomo. She did not run to a gelateria. Nor did she book a cena for some bistecca.

The 28-year-old from Australia looked up Babae on her phone and dragged her boyfriend along for a coveted photo of a wine window she had been dreaming about for weeks.

“I remember liking one Instagram reel, then you know, you like one and you see many,” Raidy said. “I know that they’re unique to Tuscany, and it’s something I want to experience and take photos of.”

Her boyfriend, Elias Massif, shrugged. “I just repost what she posts,” Massif said.

The Australian tourist is not alone. Hundreds continuously crowd the tiny sidewalk of Via Santo Spirito waiting in anticipation for their wine glass to pop out of the ancient wall.

Built into the side of the city’s historical wall sits a buchette del vino, or wine window. Crafted just big enough for a wine glass to be presented by a lone hand extending from the hole.

Buchette del vino originated in Florence and the Tuscan region during the 1600s. As the bubonic plague devastated Italy from 1629 to 1631, buchette del vino found a new purpose when used to stop the plague’s spread. Matteo Faglia, president of the Associazione Buchette del Vino, told BBC that they have recovered more than 180 wine windows in Florence.

Since Babae and others reopened their windows, tourists have flocked to them as a must-see item while visiting Firenze. Like Maria Raidy, other tourists hailing from Sweden, Spain, and America, all echoed the sentiment of having seen wine windows on social media and wanting to see this distinctive part of Florence themselves. Yet, when asked, nobody knew the history behind them.
COFFEE MEETS GELATO

By Hannah Angelo-Walker

The oldest gelateria in Florence has become an overnight sensation with something that has been on the menu for over fifty years. “It has always existed in our shop, but now we sell a lot more of them,” said Lorenzo Vivoli, an employee at Vivoli.

In May 2023, content creator @samyoukilis posted an Instagram photo of Vivoli’s affogato al caffe; the rest seems to be history. The specialty drink is the gelateria’s number one request this summer.

The post received over 150,000 likes and had people from around the world coming to Vivoli’s. “As soon as I saw the drink on my ‘for you page’, I knew I had to try it,” said Haley Thomasson, an American tourist.

“First it would just be Florentines ordering our affogato, but now everyone drinks one,” said Vivoli.

This popular coffee order is a standard menu item throughout Italy. Typically the warm espresso shot is poured over a scoop of cream gelato for a refreshing summer treat. Vivoli’s unique spin on the affogato al caffe is served with the espresso poured only in the middle of the gelato, not directly over it. This allows the “bitter espresso to counteract the sweet gelato,” said Vivoli.

“Social media has changed our family shop,” said Vivoli. “When my grandma put the affogato on the menu fifty years ago, I don’t think she thought it would be so famous.”
Go with the flow. Life holds surprises every day, relax and enjoy the unexpected as much as possible.

- Kassidy Gaw
“It’s so cringe,” said Dr. Victoria Bartels, a Florentine Renaissance professor at FSU’s Florence campus. Typically, this is not the language used to describe Botticelli’s iconic painting *The Birth of Venus*. But, the Venus that Dr. Bartels is alluding to is not who she once was.

“I’m not opposed to using cultural icons outside of their context, but this is too far,” Dr. Bartels added. “The objective and manipulation of the image is too different from its origin. It becomes unrecognizable and becomes a caricature.”

Looking over the Piazza del Duomo hangs a giant advertisement launched in early April 2023 as part of a campaign by Italy’s Ministry of Tourism in partnership with the Italian National Tourist Board. The international advertisement campaign known as “Open to Meraviglia” (Open to Wonder), encourages tourists to travel throughout Italy.

At the forefront of this €9 million project is a re-imagined image of Botticelli’s painting of Venus, one where she looks more modern. For this campaign, Venus was re-purposed as a social-media influencer traveling throughout Italy. Venus’s only recognizable characteristics are her face and hair, as her outfits and posing have now taken on the glamor of a social media star.

While the billboard next to the Duomo features Venus in a sleek ensemble and making a heart with her hands, the rendering of Venus across different advertisements varies. In some promotions, she is seen eating pizza, while in others she rides a bike past iconic Italian landmarks or taking selfies.

The campaign also features an online component on Instagram (@venereitalia23), with Venus taking to social media and sharing “Hi there, everybody. My name is Venus. But that’s something you probably already know. I’m 30, ok maybe just a wee bit more than that... And I am a virtual influencer. What does that mean? Well, I’ll take you with me on a journey around Italy to visit its most fantastic places and venues.”

When this campaign first launched in early April of 2023, art critics and historians were quick to express their disdain.

In each of these stories, different prominent figures shared their disapproval of the modern interpretation of Venus. Dario Nardella, the Mayor of Florence, where the original Botticelli's Venus is exhibited, even weighed in. “We’re fighting against commercial exploitation that ridicules our artistic jewels,” he said.

“That’s stupid, she doesn’t even look like Venus,” said Lexi Mavilla, a tourist visiting Florence for the day from Pennsylvania. “Why would they spend all that money instead of using an actual influencer people would know?”

When first asked, Mavilla did not know who the woman featured on the billboard was. Mavilla was not alone, as only 5 out of 20 tourists asked for this story were able to correctly identify the figure. Many of the tourists explained that removing Venus from her original painting and changing her looks were the reason for not immediately recognizing her, as all eventually admitted knowing *The Birth of Venus*.

“I would have never known that was Venus,” Claudia Alves, a tourist visiting from Brazil said. “But I think it’s great. Art is alive and changing, and the person who changed her like this is an artist too.”

“I think it’s clever and cheesy,” Sophia Fernandez said. “Plus she has the look.” Sophia Fernandez and Vivien Figueredo who had arrived in Florence that day from Florida both agreed that using Venus that way was a fun concept for an advertisement.

The controversy that this advertisement has caused in the artistic community has made international headlines in a way that most advertising campaigns do not, hence causing more attention to be drawn to the campaign.

ITALY’S UNLIKELY NEW INFLUENCER
By McKinnon Bell
It’s sometime between seven and eight in the evening. The golden hour in the summer, when the sun fully illuminates the basilica, but the buildings keep Piazza Santa Croce covered in shadow.

Santa Croce, the fourteenth century church is not the sole spectacle that evening. A few meters away stands a middle aged man singing “O Sole Mio”, his guitar case open in front of him with a sticker that reads Arte di Strada.

The man is a busker, an individual who makes his living by playing on the streets with an instrument. They typically have a hat, a jar, or a case where people can drop cash and coins to thank them for their contribution to the life of the street. Buskers are not a very common sight in Florence outside of the piazzas and private restaurants. One might expect a city this enchanting to have a street performer on every corner, yet this is simply not the case.

The reason for this seems bureaucratic in nature. Florence caps the number of buskers for any given day at 24, forced to play at specific spots in public spaces. The permit costs 50 euros a week. Additionally, sitting down while playing, adds an extra 3.50 euros.

Due to the limited availability, acquiring a permit may take a month or longer to obtain. Moreover, if you’re a musician studying abroad this summer who would like to be one of these street performers, you’re out of luck. According to the Arte di Strada and immigration policies, “It is necessary to have a residence permit for a non-EU citizen and not a simple visit visa.” To perform without authorization includes the risk of a hefty fine and confiscation of the instrument. The best chance to play for tips would be playing on the grounds of a private restaurant with their permission. These tips are not in the form of cash, however. According to Jamie Marie Lazzara, a violin maker who occasionally busks, “Tips need to come in the form of food or drink if you aren’t a European citizen.”

Although rare, several quality performances are in the city. A Romani jazz trio plays in the Piazza Repubblica in the evenings, a violinist plays classical music by the Uffizi gallery, and youth orchestras often perform in Piazza Signoria several times a month. To learn more about when and where to see these performances, the full schedule is posted on magentaflorence.com.
LIFE AFTER STUDYING ABROAD

By Hannah Angelo-Walker

“I love creating FSU art but I am often limited concept wise with this art,” said Nikki Ackerman, a Tallahassee-based artist and Florida State Alumni. Best known for her drawings of Florida State landmarks, such as the Westcott Fountain and the Unconquered Statue, Ackerman decided to create a limited collection inspired by her summer abroad.

In 2018, Ackerman studied abroad in Florence, Italy through FSU’s International Programs. During her time in Tuscany, she visited Florence’s spectacular landmarks as well as Italy’s coastal cities such as Positano and Capri. Since graduating from FSU with a bachelor's degree in studio art in 2019, Ackerman has opened her own business artxnikki where she sells her art online and at her shop in Tallahassee’s art district, Railroad Square.

Ackerman’s “Italian Summer” collection includes original artwork displayed on postcards, keychains, towels, tote bags and even a watercolor painting set. “My favorite item is the postcard,” said Ackerman. “A classic symbol of travel and adventure.”

The collection transports her audience to the feeling of spending the summer strolling through old Italian roads and absorbing all of the beauty the country offers. Her watercolor painting set even allows her audience to create their own version of an Italian summer by sketching in any manner they choose.

“I would take me on walking tours of the city, teaching me about the art, architecture and history.” Ackerman feels that without her study abroad experience, she wouldn't be the artist she is today.
Leonardo Da Vinci once said, "The artist sees what others only catch a glimpse of." A photographer can have incredible equipment and technical skills, but without a heightened sense of observation, images will fall flat. Developing the ability to appreciate the overlooked and ordinary will expand a photographer’s world tremendously, making life richer and full of infinite possibilities. Our aim was not to just take pictures of FSUIP Florence experience but to capture its heart and soul.

- FSU Florence Photography Professor
Michelle Eccles
The morning sun makes the oil on the canvas look like it's about to drip, so much so I can almost see my reflection. The museum is quiet, which I appreciate, as my thoughts can expand as I witness, stare, and look back on the art that fills the Palazzo Strozzi. I wouldn’t know it yet, but what I'm seeing and hearing will not be an opportunity for some soon.

I look up and see her face, unable to blink at the sfumato smile so many have come to recognize. But... she is different here. The brush strokes are not clean, they are messy and chaotic. The background is dark and mesmerizing, and the addition of two panels to each of her sides act as wings to resemble her death. There is a clear contrast that yearns to be heard. The lack of stillness in life, how we are ever moving and changing, strives to balance with the inevitable: our end.

"The funeral of Mona Lisa is to bury
Mona Lisa. Mona Lisa is a mystery, like death itself.”

- Yan Pei Ming

Mona Lisa is not alone in his story, as Pei-Ming’s father is illustrated on the left wall to her, having his final moments on a hospital bed. Pei-Ming is across from him, reconceived as his younger self, that Pei-Ming describes as being “arranged [in] his own imaginary funeral.”

In this specific work of his, Pei-Ming redirects the Mona Lisa to provide her own commentary on his relationship with his father. His own imaginary funeral is unnatural to us, just as Mona Lisa enlarged and harsh can compare. The trifecta of him, his father, and Mona Lisa may feel silent in this room, but there is so much to be said. His private interjection provides a sentiment towards the circle of life.

The exhibit itself adds to the conversation Pei-Ming wishes to share. The installations temporarily reside in the Palazzo Strozzi, a previously notable residence for the Strozzi family during the Renaissance.

“Pei-Ming utilizes the accessibility and pervasiveness of known, iconic pieces, to create new meaning that apply to the environments that we are present in now,” says art historian Sarah Mathiesen. “When we analyze and begin to understand why these works have been reimagined, we can appreciate the visual culture he exudes to continue to help us understand the meaning in pieces as time continues to pass,” she adds.

Pei-Ming’s exhibit is a lesson itself. The artist recommends using what is known, what people witness, and the lessons taught throughout history as an influence for a more expressive and creative future.
TRAVEL

Photo by Lauren Stevens
FOREN DEI MARMI:
THE PERFECT SUMMER DAY TRIP

By Kate Lowry

Instead of fleeing to the beaches of Italy’s neighboring countries on cramped buses or expensive airplanes, the perfect getaway from Florence’s crowded city streets awaits just an hour and a half train ride away in Forte dei Marmi. “Call it just ‘Forte,’” Alice Cheron, a Florence-based lifestyle blogger says, “it’s more cool.”

Soft sandy beaches, picturesque rolling mountains, and the bright aqua and teal sea are just a few of the things Florence’s locals love to visit time and time again in this serene seaside town.

Set off for Forte dei Marmi from, Santa Maria Novella Train Station

A one-day round-trip ticket costs 25 euros. While this train trip does stop frequently, most notably in Pisa, you’ll arrive in Forte just an hour and a half after you left Florence.

*Travel Tip: Take an early morning train to allow for as much time at the train station to find a taxi into the town center. Taxis are few and far between during the early afternoon hours, so pack your patience with you for this trip.*

Enjoy a late breakfast or early lunch in Forte’s town center

Once in Forte’s beautiful town square, take some time to find a cafe for a quick bite and to window shop along streets laden with countless luxury fashion outposts. Caffe Principe is a fantastic choice for pastries, sandwiches, salads, and delicious beverages of all kinds. This Forte staple reopened in early July 2023 under the new ownership of the Prada Group (yes, that Prada). It features stunning design and decor inspired by the Italian seaside with rich colors of navy blue, teal, and bright orange. As for shopping, you’ll find that many of its stores close for a mid-day siesta during the week, so expect your window shopping to truly remain at the windows.

*Travel Tip: Aim for your trip to fall on either a Friday or Sunday, on which Forte holds its open-air markets for locals and tourists alike. Check out the @visitforte Instagram page for their weekly posts on upcoming events.*
Make the trek to your beachside bagno and enjoy the peaceful coast

According to Cheron’s online city guide, Forte dei Marmi does not have any free public beach access. Instead, dozens of beach/bathing clubs, or bagno, line the lengthy shoreline for beach-goers to enjoy. These bagno are available for pre-booking online at all kinds of price points, with the most expensive ones boasting the greatest amenities and proximity to the town center.

The town of Forte, however, does own and operate two of its own bagno at a reduced rate for both tourists and locals: Alle Boe and Le Dune Del Forte.

At Alle Boe, for instance, 35 euros during the high season gets you and your guest(s) an umbrella, two beach chairs, a sunbed, clean bathrooms, an affordable dining area, and all-day beach access.

*Travel Tip- While the town center is certainly walkable from many of the farther away bagno, renting a bike is an extremely popular choice. There are many low-cost bike rental shops in town.

*Travel Tip- Book a late train back to Firenze if you want to enjoy a nicer dining experience. This will give you as much time as necessary to enjoy your meal when Forte’s restaurants open for dinner without fear of not finding a taxi in time to make your train.*

Head back into town to explore Forte’s shopping and dining experiences

With most stores opening back up in the late afternoon for their evening hours, this is the ideal time for daytrippers to bid their farewells to their bagno and head back into town before departing Forte. Da Valè, a local focacceria, offers takeaway pizza slices, salads, and cocktails along with their famous schiacciata scones (small foccacia rounds). While the margarita pizza was pretty standard, their Hugo Spritz was very refreshing and flavorful, especially after a long day in the sun. After dinner, treat yourself to a scoop of gelato to cool down from the heat. Cervino, located right next to Caffe Principe, is one of many gelaterias in town with many flavor options to choose from, even including a gelato-cookie sandwich and Japanese bubble tea. While this establishment may be more gimmicky than other traditional gelaterias, their biscotto, strawberry, and lemon flavors hit the spot.

*Travel Tip- Book a late train back to Firenze if you want to enjoy a nicer dining experience. This will give you as much time as necessary to enjoy your meal when Forte’s restaurants open for dinner without fear of not finding a taxi in time to make your train.*

Depart from Forte dei Marmi-Seravezza-Querceta Train Station and arrive back home in Firenze

On your train ride back home, reflect on the rest and relaxation you were able to have during your time in Forte. Luckily, the train carriages should be less crowded, allowing you to nod off peacefully after being in the bright summer sun all day long with hopes of returning to Forte’s seaside soon.
Almafi Coast and Positano
"Decrease your frequency to increase your effect. By reducing the pressure we may put on ourselves, we could increase the quality of our performance."

- Will Pepper
THE CRAZE OVER

CB POSITANO

By Alyssa Thomassy

Viale Pasitea is steep. Its dark cobblestone reflects the scorching summer heat of the Italian coastline. The narrow street stood high on the priority list of Cooper Callahan. The 21-year-old from Sarasota, FL, had been dreaming of this moment for months.

“I found out about the CB store from a video on social media,” she said. “The video highlighted the beautiful aroma of the store and all of their items. I noticed their unique patterns and fabrics. Ever since I saw that video, I knew if I ever went to visit Positano, I would visit the CB store!”

CB by Kore, located in Positano, Italy, is a handmade dress and accessory store drawing in Cooper and what looks like the rest of the FSU female study abroad students visiting Positano.

The store went viral on TikTok from other woman posting about shopping there during their time in Italy. Then, some of the reels the store posted on their Instagram page also helped them to amass 56.3K followers as of July 19th, 2023.

CB by Kore was established in 1980, it is run by two sisters and one brother who did not wish to disclose their names. They don’t have a website, but if one searches the store on Google, their website link will take you to their Instagram (their only social media page). The owners spend all their time running the small business and explained how they have no time to do other things like run more social media pages, create an online store, or physically expand the store.

The hand-made, colorful, floral-patterned dresses are eye-catching. Every piece is different with colors varying from blue to pink, flowers from tulips to roses, necklines from square to sweetheart, some with a mix of colors and patterns, and many more details that make each piece unique. “Fabric comes from all over the world,” the owner said over direct messages on Instagram with a smiley face emoji. Being that these dresses are very intricate with a lot of individual work put into them, pricing is definitely high. A short dress runs around one hundred sixty euros and a long one is over two hundred.

Moreover, the question remains if the boutique’s products are worth the value they’re priced at. To Gen Z women shopping, the store being a viral sensation is reason enough to make a purchase. But, from learning how much the store owners put into their business and each individual item sold, it seems the products are of great quality and distinctiveness. It is a store to consider stopping in while exploring the long streets of Positano. But it’s up to the individual to decide if they must have something from the Italian boutique.
ITALIANOLES

Summer 2023