

GUIDE TO VENICE
FOR MEMBERS OF THE
COLGATE VENICE STUDY GROUP

OFF-CAMPUS STUDY/INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

105 MCGREGORY HALL

COLGATE UNIVERSITY

2002

REVISED 2003

The Office of Off-Campus Study would like to extend its thanks to the students and faculty who have helped to develop, write and edit this guide. Rachel Mascetta, a member of the Fall 2001 Venice Study Group, and Professor Ross Ferlito, who has directed the group numerous times, helped with the first edition of this guide in 2002. The 2003 edition benefited from the input of 2002 Study Group members Shailer Barron, Joe Brazauskas, Tara Masters and Renée Shaw.

We welcome your suggestions and any new information you may have to bring this guide up to date. The easiest way for us to make revisions is to receive a marked-up copy of the guide. So if you're willing to help, make notes and corrections during your semester in Venice and return the guide to the Office of Off-Campus Study in 105 Gregory Hall upon your return.

Thanks in advance for your help and best wishes for a great semester in Venice!

PREPARING FOR YOUR SEMESTER ABROAD

DO SOME RESEARCH

The earlier you start thinking about your semester abroad, the more prepared you will be. Begin by looking through as many books, pamphlets, web sites and other sources of literature as you can find. Talk to Colgate students who went on the Venice study group in the past and take their suggestions too.

Surf the Web – You can start by heading to the Off-Campus Study home page on the Colgate website (<http://offices.colgate.edu/ocstudy>) for information about the Venice Study Group and general travel information. Below is a list of other websites worth checking out.

- www.mi.cnr.it/WOI/woiindex.html – The amount of information available on the social, political, economic, historical and cultural aspects of Italy on this site is almost overwhelming, but each section is hyperlinked so it's easy to navigate, and you can read as much or as little as you like.
- www.initaly.com – Has a lot of information about traveling and accommodations in Italy, links to other sites about the country and a section called “Italy at Your House” that has a listing of books and movies about Italy and links on Italian cooking.
- www.beniculturali.it – (Italian Ministry For The Arts & The Environment) Lists museums, temporary exhibitions, performances etc. and keeps you up to date with what's going on culturally in Italy
- www3.mistral.co.uk/latrobe/itindex.htm – Lists free things to see and do in the various regions of Italy
- <http://www.world-newspapers.com/italy.html> – Links to Italian newspapers online and some Italian news sites in English
- <http://europeforvisitors.com/venice> – One of the very best websites for information about Venice

Buy the book – *Let's Go Europe* or *Let's Go Italy*. Students have mixed opinions about these books, but many find them extremely helpful especially if you consider doing any traveling while living in Venice. *Let's Go Italy* is a useful jumping point from which to decide on a location and plan a trip, but perhaps not the best for deciding places to stay or go once you have reached your destination. Some students prefer the *Lonely Planet* series because it is more likely to include “off the beaten path” places to stay, eat and visit.

MAKE A CHECKLIST

There are many things you must do to prepare for your semester abroad in Italy. Here is a checklist of things that you must not forget!!!

1. Passport and photocopies of your passport (more details on this below)
2. Visa – You are required to have a student visa to study in Italy. Your study group director will help you through this process. If you plan to travel to other countries be sure to check their visa requirements **before** you leave for Italy. You can check visa requirements online at each country's Embassy website and the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consulate Affairs website <http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html>. A copy of this document is also available for reference in the Office of Off-Campus Study. If you do not hold a U.S. passport, be sure to investigate carefully the visa requirements for Italy and any other countries that you wish to visit while you're abroad. Also, if you plan on traveling or studying abroad in the spring semester in a different foreign country, be sure to think about how you will obtain the necessary visas for that country, as you cannot always apply for a visa from abroad.

3. Health insurance, medical and dental care, glasses and contacts – If you have any pre-existing medical conditions, discuss continuing treatment, prescriptions drugs, etc. with your health-care provider and study group director prior to leaving the country. If you're on a prescription medicine, you might have to make special arrangements to get a large enough supply to last you the semester. Make sure to keep your prescriptions in their original containers so that they won't raise any questions at customs. The Italian government requires foreign students to carry a special insurance which covers hospitalization (but only in Italy). Colgate will obtain this coverage for you, but as for other health care, you should look into whether or not your medical insurance extends overseas and buy additional coverage if it does not. You should be aware of the procedures you must go through with your insurance company for payment/reimbursement of medical costs while abroad. Colgate also provides what is called Medical Evacuation and Repatriation insurance – a special kind of insurance for you in the event of your death or other medical emergency requiring your evacuation from the country. (Not exactly a happy thought, but better safe than sorry.) If you wear glasses or contacts, you should strongly consider taking an extra pair of them with you, as well as a copy of your eyeglass prescription.
4. International Student Identification Card (ISIC) – This card is internationally accepted and offers students special discounts in some countries. Information on ISICs is available on the STA Travel website at <http://www.sta-travel.com>, and the cards can be purchased at the Colgate Student Travel Office among other places. No one in the recent Venice Study Group had an ISIC, and the consensus was that it was not needed because you can use your Colgate ID; however, the choice is yours.
5. Youth Hostel Association (YHA) membership – For those who plan to do extensive traveling, it is a good idea to buy a YHA membership in Italy at the beginning of the semester as it can save you a significant amount of money on lodging. (It is also possible to buy a membership in the U.S. before you leave, but they cost less in Italy.) This is not an absolute necessity, but it would not be a bad idea to investigate the options if you plan on traveling extensively. Students who stayed in hostels recently found that they did not need the card but once again, if you are planning on staying in hostels often, perhaps it is better to be safe than sorry.
6. Certification letter for Study Group participation – You will need to present this letter that you receive from the Office of the Dean of the Faculty to the immigration officials upon your arrival in Italy. (This is the one that says you're a full-time enrolled student at Colgate and that you're participating in a Colgate Study Group for the semester.) **Therefore, keep this letter on your person when you travel to Italy – do not pack it in your checked luggage!** Also, always take your Certification Letter with you if you travel outside of Italy during the semester. You will need to present it to immigration officials each time you re-enter the country. As with your passport, make a copy of your Certification Letter and keep it in a safe place separate from the original.

PASSPORT AND VISAS

Passport

If you are a U.S. citizen you must have a valid passport to enter every country except Canada, Mexico, and certain Caribbean islands. This will be your best form of identification, especially when cashing Travelers Cheques and making travel plans.

If you have a passport, it must be valid for the duration of your study group and for the time you may plan to remain overseas at the end of the program. In fact, many countries require that your passport be valid for at least six months beyond your anticipated departure date in order to enter the country. If your

passport expires before your expected date of return or within the 6 months after that, renew it before you go away.

If you do not have a passport, apply for one immediately. Passport agencies are located in most major U.S. cities. It is also possible to obtain a passport from a federal or state court of record, probate court, or designated U.S. Passport Office. In most cities, information about applying for a passport can be obtained from the county clerk. Some nearby locations:

Colgate: Each semester, Colgate sponsors a passport meeting the week after mid-term break. A photographer and the county clerk are present and the entire application can be completed during the meeting.

Near Colgate: The Madison County Clerk's office is located in Wampsville, about 20 to 25 minutes from Hamilton (out past the Wal-Mart in Oneida). Tel: (315) 366-2261

Syracuse: The Onondaga State Clerk's office is located in the County Court House, 40 Montgomery Street. Tel: (315) 425-2230.

New York City: The Passport Office is located on Vanderbilt Avenue behind Grand Central Station.

To apply for a passport, you need:

- a. A completed passport application;
- b. Proof of U.S. citizenship;
- c. **Original** birth certificate, or a **certified copy** of your birth certificate (original and certified copies can be identified by their embossed [raised] seals);
- d. Two passport-size photographs taken within the last six months;
- e. Proof of identity – photo ID, such as driver's license;
- f. The \$55 fee (plus the \$30 execution fee – paid separately – if you've never been issued a passport before); and
- g. The additional fee of \$65 (fee of \$60 plus \$5 for shipping) if you opt for expedited service.

Once you have completed the application process, the passport will be mailed to you directly in six to eight weeks. If you elect for the expedited service, your application will be processed in three working days from the time it is received at the Passport Agency. Passports are valid for ten years.

VERY IMPORTANT: Make at least two photocopies of the first two pages of your passport and keep the copies separate from the passport itself. Leave one of these copies home and take the other(s) with you, but carried separately from your passport, when you travel. Should you lose your passport, the nearest embassy can process a lost passport application much faster if you can provide a photocopy of the first two pages of your passport.

(It is also helpful to have photocopies of your credit cards and other forms of identification in the event that your wallet/purse is lost or stolen. Make sure to keep them in a safe place and to leave a copy with your parents though. Another good idea is to leave anything that you will not need in your travels at home.)

Visas

Once you have a valid passport, you will have to apply for an Italian visa at least 6-8 weeks before your departure. Your study group director will likely make arrangements to do this, but in any case, she or he will give you more information about obtaining the visa in the semester prior to your departure. If you are planning to travel around in Europe at all, be aware that some countries do require visas if you're going to visit, or sometimes even if you're just planning to transit the country en route to

somewhere else. (See comment above, under #2 of “Make a Checklist.”) In order to find out if you will need a visa to enter a specific country, go to that country’s embassy website to research their visa requirements.

WHAT TO PACK

On international flights there is a limit of two pieces of checked luggage and one small carry-on that must be able to fit under the seat in front of you. These must conform to the size and weight regulations set by the airlines, so make sure you check the regulations of your airline before departing. Remember there are domestic weight limits as well, which are lighter than international limits. When you arrive in the U.S. to make a connecting flight home, you might have to pay for extra weight! These costs generally range from \$50-\$80, but can be a lot more if your bags are really heavy or if you have several pieces of luggage. Take bags that are light and have wheels. Venice is full of bridges with *many* stairs so wheels will not always be that useful, as you will have to carry bags up and down; however, you will most likely be doing some traveling outside of Venice as well, and wheels will be extremely beneficial then!

Most importantly, pack light. Most students who have participated in a study group will agree that they packed too much stuff and ended up really only needing a portion of what they brought. Remember that comfortable, easy to care for clothing will be the most convenient when traveling. Also, you can buy luggage relatively cheaply in Italy. Pack light for the way over and if you find you have acquired too much stuff to go back into your bag(s), purchase another one. Be mindful that things are much cheaper in Rome or Florence, so it may be best to wait until you get there to buy any extra luggage you need. You should be able to find a large suitcase from vendors on the street for around 30 euro that will be just fine for traveling home.

Some suggestions:

- Most students brought sturdy backpacks as one piece of their checked luggage. These were useful for weekend and midterm break traveling. Some students recommend making your second piece of checked luggage something with wheels so that you can wear your backpack and easily roll your other piece of luggage when you have to walk long distances in airports. A good thing to keep in mind when thinking of a book bag is that you are likely to spend most of your day away from your apartment so you’ll probably want something that is comfortable and big enough to carry everything you’ll need. Also, think of a bag that will be usable for a weekend away.
- Pack for maximum efficiency. Remember that you will inevitably purchase quite a few things during your stay, and that you need to be able to bring them back on the plane. Washing machines are available in the apartments, so you won’t need many clothes. There are no dryers though, so it is best to bring clothes that won’t take as long to dry in Venice’s damp weather.
- As for what kind of clothing to bring, dress is as mixed as the people in the city, but Venetian students do dress nicely when they go out. Our experience was that Italians and Americans seem to dress much the same. However, if you *really* want to fit in, buy your jeans 2 sizes too small, especially if you are a male. This is the Italian way! Okay, all jokes aside, most students felt entirely comfortable in our normal Colgate attire, but do bring some dressy clothes for evenings out. And men, bring a tie – you will want it at some point.
- Venice ranges from intensely hot and humid in the month of August to quite cold in the damp late-fall and winter months. Since you will not want to pack too many clothes it is best to bring clothes that can be layered, including a wind-breaking jacket and warm layers for underneath. Students in the past have wished they brought some warmer clothes as well. It may surprise you how cold it can

get in Venice. Also, because of the high cost of electricity, it is difficult to heat the apartments and other buildings, so remember to bring some warm clothes for hanging out at home.

- Bring comfortable shoes. You will do A LOT of walking around the city. Walking around Venice during the day or at night in between bars/restaurants can add up to long distances, so be sure to have comfortable dress shoes as well.
- This might seem trivial right now, but **BRING HEAVY DUTY, AMAZON-STRENGTH MOSQUITO REPELLANT AND/OR NETTING.** We are not kidding here. It is hot in Venice, especially in the summer/fall, and it is sweltering if one doesn't keep the windows open for air. However, the windows have no screens, so you will be inviting our winged friends in for a nice American meal. During the hot months, you WILL be eaten alive, especially night. You will become very used to waking up flailing because you hear mosquitoes buzzing around your ears. This causes not only the usual, itchy bites, but also really grumpy moods because it makes sleeping a chore. It's worst in the fall, but you will probably have annoyances of this sort throughout your stay. Try not to let it color the rest of your trip! Remember, the Venetians are dealing with it as well (and for a lot longer than you are), but you won't hear them complaining.
- A water-repellent coat is a great item to pack. This is a NECESSITY! There is a fair amount of rain in Venice in the winter months, and walking around the city can leave students soaking wet. This is not a good condition to be in when you are far from your apartment! Umbrellas may be purchased for around \$5 and sellers appear on the streets anytime a grey cloud comes overhead.
- Have some method of listening to music and bring some music with you. You may get homesick sometimes and many students say that having music to listen to helps. Either bring a Discman/Walkman with speakers, or buy a cheap stereo when you are there. You will not regret it! If you are bringing a Discman or Walkman, bring an AC adaptor so you can plug it into the wall and not use so many batteries because they are expensive. **Students enrolled in Italian 101Y-102Y: you will need to have a CD player of some sort because you will have CDs to listen to as part of those courses.**
- Portable alarm clock (preferably a battery-powered one that is small enough for weekend travel). Alarm clocks are a must when traveling and useful to have when you need to get up for class!
- Despite what you might hear, it is VERY beneficial to bring a laptop with you! Computers are not easily come by in Venice, and use of them can get expensive. Luckily, each apartment last year (2002) had about two students who brought laptops, so we were able to share with each other for writing papers. Computers are available for one hour a day at the University, but they can be difficult to get to during busy times, as they are shared with all the students in the University. You can also use the computers at the Istituto Venezia, but only in the afternoon, and with time limits if others are waiting to use them. There is a convenient Internet place near the S. Zaccaria apartment, which you will probably become quite familiar with. The 2002 were all regulars there. However, the prices are astronomical! (Three euro for 15 minutes!) This is important: **THERE IS A RESIDENT RATE**, and you are considered a resident. Bring your documents that show your address and purchase a RESIDENT RATE card. You will not regret it – it will save you TONS. If you do choose to bring a laptop computer and/or a portable printer, be sure that it is capable of running on Italian voltage (220V) (most are, check your power supply) and get plug adaptors for whatever you bring. If your computer has a DVD player, that is a bonus, because there are times you will be bored and dying for some English entertainment. One small catch: European DVDs will not work on American DVD players. So bring your own or start downloading movies now! As for the Internet, you will not be able to connect to it from the apartments.
- All the apartments provide you with fitted sheets, pillowcases, pillows, a comforter, and towels. You will probably not need to supplement what they give you, but should you choose to do so, you

can purchase these items in Venice. Few students find it necessary to bring their own sheets; there is an ample supply. We suggest not wasting the precious suitcase-space! If you do decide to go this route, it's best to bring two flat sheets rather than one fitted and one flat sheet, because the beds in Italy are a different shape than most American ones. Speaking from experience, the pillows (at least in the Colonnete) leave a lot to be desired (read: sleeping on a centimeter of rock), so perhaps the purchase of a pillow once you've gotten settled in Venice would be a worthy investment. Students also noted they wished they had brought a beach towel. There will be plenty of time to visit the beach at Lido, especially if you are arriving in August. Washcloths as you probably know them aren't readily available in Italy (they're more of a small, rectangular bath-mitt), so you might consider bringing one of those with you as well.

- Many students recommend that you purchase any electronic devices you need upon arrival in Venice, since that will cut down on weight and bulk in your luggage. There are many places to get such things in Venice, as well as larger stores like Panorama in Mestre, on the mainland. However, if you do plan on bringing blow dryers, irons, shavers, or any other electrical appliances, you will need a voltage transformer (unless the appliance(s) can run on dual voltage) and plug adaptors. It is probably easiest to buy a cheap hairdryer in Venice because ones from the U.S. often tend to blow out with the transformer. Also, irons are provided in the apartments, so don't bother to bring one with you. If you do not have an adaptor, they can be purchased at travel shops or hardware stores in the United States or in Italy. The power outlets use two round, parallel prongs.
- While Italy has all the personal hygiene products that we're accustomed to here, you might not find the same brand names, or the actual products may be slightly different. If you're extremely attached to a particular toothpaste, deodorant, soap, etc. you may want to bring it with you. (To quote a member of the 2002 study group, "Italian deodorant is weird.") Nevertheless, they have an ample supply of brands and many are the same as we have in the U.S.. The same thing goes if you wear contacts and use a special contact solution. (Regular contact solution is readily available in Venice.)
- A couple of other things you might consider packing are a small flashlight and a money belt.

You will be able to buy nearly anything you need right there in Venice. Taking into account the currency exchange, the prices are comparable to the U.S.; though prices vary dramatically for items such as clothing. When in doubt, it is usually better to wait and see if you need an item once you're there than bring something you don't need. Keep in mind that some things, like groceries, are expensive, so budget yourself!

Clothing/Accessories Thought to Be Essential

Alarm Clock	Hiking boots/shoes	Sweatshirt(s)
Bathing Suit	Jeans	Sweater(s) (wool is good)
Camera	Large, sturdy backpack	Water-repellent coat
Comfortable shoes	Music	
Discman/Walkman	School bag	
	Sunglasses	

TIME AND WEATHER

Time Difference

There is a 6 hour time difference between Italy and the eastern U.S.

Climate

You will arrive in Venice in the late summer/early fall. The weather changes greatly throughout the semester (80's in August, 60-70's during the day in September and October, and down to even the 30-40's in November and December) but remains thoroughly damp the entire time. It will be warm enough to go to the beaches on the island of Lido upon arriving, so don't forget your bathing suit.

THE MONEY QUESTION

Money for Arrival

You will need money as soon as you arrive in Italy. Some students brought \$100 in U.S. currency and exchanged it right in the airport so that they had cash immediately, but this will result in enormous fees. There are ATMs in the airport that accept major credit cards, which you can use to obtain euros upon arrival (just make sure you have a PIN for your card).

It is also possible to order foreign currency from your bank before leaving. This can take up to three weeks or more depending on your location and your bank, so be sure to plan ahead and place your order well in advance of your departure date. If you have a Chase Manhattan checking or savings account, you can order euros by phone by calling 1-888-CHASE-84.

There are also websites where you can order euros and other foreign currencies online. Just pay attention to the exchange rate you're getting, how much commission you're going to get charged and what the shipping & handling fee is before you go through with the transaction. Also, be aware that there is sometimes a minimum amount that you have to buy. A couple examples of these are:

- <http://www10.americanexpress.com/sif/cda/page/0,1641,16193,00.asp> (American Express)
- <http://www.us.thomascook.com/> (Thomas Cook)

Banking/Getting Cash

The exchange rate generally fluctuates between \$1.05–1.10/€. Due to this variance, and also for simplicity's sake, most students in recent years have chosen to use ATM cards, credit cards and/or Travelers Cheques rather than open a bank account in Italy. ATMs were definitely the preferred method of obtaining cash for the past few study groups.

When using ATM cards from home, most students did not seem to have a problem gaining access to funds in American bank accounts. Many students said that this was a good method to use because they always got the current exchange rate when they took out money. Depending on what bank you use in America and what bank you use in Italy to withdraw money, the charges may be very expensive, but this did not seem to be the experience of most Venice study group students. You must also make sure that you have an international ATM card before you leave. If you call your bank, they should be able to answer this question for you and they may be able to tell you approximately how much they will charge you for international withdrawals. Be sure to keep a record of your PIN with you in Venice (but separate from your card) because if you forget it and punch in the wrong code too many times, the machine will eat your card and it's a real pain in the neck to get it back or to get a new card issued from your bank in the U.S.

If you can work out an arrangement with your parents, you may find that having a credit card is useful. You will get the best exchange rates using your credit card on big purchases (such as plane tickets), and it is also good to have for unexpected emergencies. Some students had American Express cards and said that they were accepted almost everywhere. MasterCard and Visa were accepted everywhere.

Many stores, restaurants, hotels, ticket offices (including the train station) etc. accept credit and/or debit cards, so they're quite a convenience, and it beats having to carry around a lot of cash. No matter what, be sure to have a backup card or some other method in case an ATM eats your card or your wallet is lost or stolen. Because many credit card companies track their clients' purchases for any out-of-the-ordinary account activity in order to safeguard against credit card fraud and stolen cards, it is important to let your credit card company know that you will be out of the U.S. for a time. There have been instances in the past where failing to do so has resulted in a cancelled credit card.

For those who choose to bring Travelers Cheques, there is an American Express office near Piazza San Marco at San Marco 1336 (tel: 041.705344), which is open from 9 am to 5 pm. Cheques can also be changed in banks and other money exchanges (look for the "Cambio" sign). Be careful though – fees and commissions can vary widely from place to place. Smaller denominations, like \$20 and \$50, are more convenient than larger ones. As with all of the important documents you bring to Italy, it is a good idea to photocopy these and keep the copies in a safe place separate from your Cheques, or at the very least, write the numbers down someplace. If you have an American Express card, you can also write checks against your checking account in the U.S. for euros and AmEx Travelers Cheques. You can also get money wired to you from home at the AmEx office.

In an Emergency

There is something relatively new offered by AAA called a Cash Passport. It's a Visa card that can be purchased at an AAA office or on the Internet and mailed safely overseas because it requires a PIN and password to activate (which your parents can tell you if they're the ones that buy it). The card can be set up so that it is attached to a bank account and more money can be added to the card from that account via the Internet or a toll-free phone call. See <http://www.aaa.com/prepaidcards> for more information.

Planning a Budget: Typical Costs

Books

You will already have bought most of the necessary books at the Colgate bookstore before leaving for Italy and the rest will be provided upon your arrival and charged to your fall tuition bill. Bring a few books for pleasure reading – you will be glad you did. There are places to buy English books, but they are expensive. If everyone brings a few, then you can swap books within the group during the semester.

E-mail

You will be able to use the Istituto Venezia computers for email free of charge, but only in the afternoons, and with time limits if others are waiting. The University of Venice computer lab can be used as well (also free), but there is a limit of one hour per day and there can be quite a long wait just to get onto a computer. Most people just end up going to one of the Internet cafés in Venice, even though they can be a bit expensive. Remember to get the Resident Rate card mentioned earlier in the guide.

Entertainment

There are all kinds of things to do in Venice for entertainment. There are museums, churches, palazzos, bridges and all sorts of other places to visit; cafes, restaurants and bars galore where you can sit and have a coffee, taste some of the local cuisine and people-watch; arcades and markets to browse around and shop in; concerts, festivals, regattas and other events to attend, and just about anything else you can think of. How much money you spend on entertainment can vary widely, depending on where you go and what you do. Venice isn't wildly expensive, but just like almost every city, it's more expensive than what we're used to in Hamilton. Always check to see if there's a student price/fare when you go places, because the money you save on those reduced rates can really add up over the course of the semester. In the fall, there are English movies played once a week at Giorgione Movie d'Essai, near Campo Ss Apostoli that you might want to take advantage of. You really have to make your fun in Venice at times; the nightlife is slightly lacking.

Film

All brands of film are available in Italy; disposable cameras as well. If you plan to take many pictures, keep in mind that film and developing is usually more expensive in Italy than it is in the U.S.

Food

Lunch is available for around \$5 a meal at the two University dining halls (la mensa), but these meals may not appeal to everyone and the dining halls can become insanely busy once school begins for Italian students. Few study group members in the past have chosen to eat at the dining halls, mostly because of their distance from home and the quality of the food. There are many cafés, pizzerias and snack bars near the Istituto, near the apartments and throughout the city where you can get a simple meal without spending a lot, and of course there are countless restaurants where you can eat really, *really* well, but those will cost you more.

The apartments you'll be living in are quite well-equipped, so you might want to cook some of your own meals. (After all, eating out all the time can get expensive.) There are open-air markets throughout the city where you can get tons of really nice fruits, vegetables and even dairy products. There are markets and specialty shops where you can buy meat and fish as well. If people in your apartment want to do a big grocery run, your best bet is to go to one of the supermarkets in Venice such as La Standa or at Panorama (the Italian equivalent to Wal-Mart), which is in Mestre. There is a free bus service to Mestre (the mainland) that leaves about every half an hour from Piazzale Roma. Students shopped most frequently at Standa, Billa or Punto, right near school. Of these, Billa has the best selection. Get a shoppers club card to save money! Be aware that many grocery stores are closed on Sundays, Wednesday afternoons and during the lunch hour(s).

Health Clubs

There are a few gyms on the island, but the gym most used by students in the last study group (fall 2002) was Fitness Point, near S. Maria Formosa. According to some students, it cost about \$100 for two months. Remember that Colgate will reimburse you up to \$100 for a fitness/health maintenance membership. The facilities are small but new as the gym was recently renovated. There are stair machines, treadmills, bikes, free-weights and machines. The staff is friendly and helpful, but not everyone speaks English, so be prepared. There is also a pool on Giudecca but no one from the 2002 study group used it.

Mail

Mailing letters to and from the United States can take varying lengths of time. Letters seem to take about 1.5 weeks to get to Colgate from Venice. It costs \$.75 to send a postcard and \$1.50 to send a letter from Italy to the U.S.

You will be able to receive mail at your apartment address, which the study group director will give to you sometime over the summer. However, packages and any letters requiring a receipt signature should be sent to you % Istituto Venezia, since you most likely won't be in your apartment when the mail is delivered. The address should be made out as follows:

Your Name
Colgate University
% Istituto Venezia
Dorsoduro 3116/A
30123 Venezia
ITALY

Phones

The direct-dial access code to call the U.S. from Italy is 001, followed by the area code and number.

To call Italy from the U.S., dial 011 + 39 and then the number. (011 is to get an international line, and 39 is the country code for Italy.)

Telephone calls to and from the U.S. have become relatively cheap. Many students signed up for MCI WorldCom before they left the U.S., which enabled their parents to call them for about 10 cents a minute. Parents should check with different long distance carriers to obtain the best rates to Italy. Students who purchase cell phones may receive calls from the U.S. free of charge.

There are no telephones in the apartments so many students have determined that buying a cell phone (minimum of \$75) is the easiest and most convenient way of keeping in touch with family and friends back home and also with the other students in Venice. (If you already have a cell phone in the U.S., don't bother bringing it because it won't work in Europe, unless it can operate on multiple frequencies.) Text messaging is a convenient and cheap form of communication and is helpful when meeting locals. Students purchase calling cards to charge up their phones so there is no billing involved. There are many phone/calling plans, so before you purchase a phone, have an idea of whether you plan on making more calls within Italy or to the U.S. Different plans may work better for different students.

There are also pay phones everywhere, including right outside some of the apartments. When buying a card to use in pay phones, look for the **Happiness** card. As of 2002, this card had the best rates by far. And you will be surprised – even cards that cost the same amount of money give vastly different numbers of minutes.

Transportation

Venice can be a difficult city to navigate at first, so it is a good idea to buy a detailed map when you arrive if you have not already done so. The best map, we think, is the *Streetwise: Venice Map* (*Streetwise* also has maps for many other cities as well). These are laminated, easily foldable and very detailed. Lamination is GREAT for drizzly Venice! You can order these from www.amazon.com or lots of other places. Plan on getting lost a lot and give yourself plenty of time; there are an infinite number of ways to arrive at wherever you are heading in Venice. You will be getting student passes for the Vaporetto that cost around \$15 per month and must be purchased every month from any of the biglietterie. Be sure to carry the pass with you at all times as you will be asked to show proof that you have purchased a ticket. After three months you will be able to pick up a permanent student ACTV ID card at the ACTV office near S. Marco. The Vaporetto is useful in that it cuts down on walking but is very slow and often takes longer than it would to go someplace on foot. The ACTV passes also work for all of the ferries traveling to the islands around Venice such as Burano or Murano.

Trains can be taken directly from the island. Buses to the airport and to many cities leave from Piazzale Roma regularly; average cost: \$0.75. There is also a ferry from San Marco that goes to and from the airport for about \$7.00.

Travel

Many of the costs for group travel are included in the tuition paid to Colgate, but there will be other opportunities for you to travel on your own which will be out-of-pocket expenses. Depending on your class schedule, you may choose to leave regularly on the weekends. You may also decide to stay in Europe after classes are over and travel for a while. Students in the past have stayed for as long as two months after classes ended. The amount students spend on traveling varies significantly, so be sure to think about where you might want to travel even before your semester in Venice begins. It's a good idea to research both travel expenses and the general cost of life at your destination(s) to get an idea of how much you should expect to spend.

ONCE YOU'RE IN VENICE

ARRIVAL

Once you arrive in Venice, the Director will most likely be there to meet you and help you get to your apartment via water-taxi. If you don't have euros on you already, be sure to get to an ATM or change some money in the airport before heading to your apartment. Try and take in your surroundings. This will be your home for the next five months, so really try to notice the differences, but appreciate them.

APARTMENTS

The two apartments that students have lived in for the past couple of years are the San Zaccaria and the Colonnette. As was mentioned earlier in this guide, the apartments come equipped with kitchen and cooking utensils, linens and a washing machine. They do not have telephones or Internet hook-ups. Below is a quick run-down of both apartments.

The Colonnette – located about a two-minute walk from Piazza S. Marco in a touristy area, but fortunately the apartment is on a side street that itself gets little traffic. It has four bedrooms, with a double on the first floor and a double and two singles on the second floor. The double downstairs is a nice size; the double upstairs is slightly cramped, but definitely livable, and has a desk, which is a plus. The two singles are on the small side, but perfectly fine. One of them only has a curtain for a door, which doesn't work extremely well at blocking out noise, so the others in the apartment will have to respect this, especially at night. There are two bathrooms: one small one upstairs with a shower and a washing machine, and a full bath downstairs. There is a large open room upstairs as well, which you might use to hang your laundry to dry. Downstairs there is a reception area and the kitchen/living room, with a table, two couches and a TV. There are lots of nice windows overlooking a (slightly rundown) courtyard.

The San Zaccaria – also fairly close to S. Marco, and to the Grand Canal as well. It too is located on a quieter side street in a touristy area. The San Zac is roomier than the Colonnette, but older and more worn. There are four large bedrooms, a small kitchen (where the washing machine is located), a separate dining room with a large table, a living room area with several comfy chairs and two full bathrooms of a very decent size. There are some quite good places to eat near the San Zac, mostly sandwich and coffee bars, but they are better quality than some of the others you can find, and nicely priced. There is also a decent fruit market and an Internet café right near the San Zac.

A third apartment which is sometimes used is **Croce di Malta**. It is smaller than the other two apartments, and is on a courtyard in a quiet, residential area. It has a living/dining room, nice kitchen, bathroom with washing machine, and two bedrooms. The apartment also has many windows, so lots of light finds its way inside. Croce di Malta houses 3-4 students.

The current and electricity is different in Venice than you are probably used to. Energy is expensive in Venice, and thus apartments are not as well-equipped as those in the U.S. For instance, if you are living in the Colonnette apt. you will quickly find out that you cannot have the washing machine and the stove on at the same time, or else the fuse will blow. Plan out your washing and cooking accordingly and try to be flexible and understand that not everything works the way it does in the U.S.; you will have to adjust.

One suggestion: Set up a cleaning schedule among everyone in your apartment upon arrival and stick to it. This is possibly the only way to make sure everyone is doing their part and keeping the place nice.

Otherwise, you could end up with a few people doing everyone else's work or a nasty apartment! Either way, this WILL cause tensions, so get on it early.

Most importantly, **communicate** with your apartment mates. If something is bugging you, talk about it. Not discussing it will lead to many more problems, even though it might seem like a better solution at the time. And there will be squabbles... so learn to forgive and forget; it will be a great asset.

EATING OUT

Here are a few places to check out. Remember that dinner is late, beginning at 7:00 and going till around 11:00. Don't try to eat at 5:30! There is no such thing as the early bird special.

- Pizza al Volo – Near school... you will love it for a quick, delicious and cheap meal for lunch. We all miss it.
- Al Vecchio Canton – Can't remember the address, but this is a great local joint with tons of great pizzas! One of our favorites! Look it up in the phone book and go. It is close to both apartments, but tricky to get to for the first time. Don't give up if you can't find it right off!
- Frari's – Great Middle Eastern-Greek restaurant right near S. Maria Dei Frari. Yummyyyy.
- Vini da Gigio – Expensive but worth it. We went for a banquet that Colgate paid for. Great choice!
- Gobetti – Wonderful bakery near school, you will know it well because it is Professor Ferlito's favorite. Great pastries!

FLOODING

Yes, it will happen, and you will probably be excited for it the first time. The novelty will soon wear off though! 2002 was an extremely bad year; the worst they've had in at least 15 years in terms of flooding. Hopefully you will be luckier. Colgate provides knee-high rubber boots for when the "acqua alta" comes. Make friends with those boots because they may become your constant companions. And don't feel embarrassed about wearing them because you'll soon see that everyone else wears them as well and it's not a big deal. In fact, you will look stranger and more like a tourist if you don't wear them, not to mention how unhappy and wet you will soon become. Acqua Alta is NOT nice water. You do not want to touch it if at all possible... judging from the smell, there are things in there you wouldn't want to touch with a ten-foot pole. But it is an interesting cultural experience, and as annoying as it can get, remember that you are living in a completely unique city and love it!

GOING OUT

- InisShark – an Irish pub that some past study group members have frequented. Nice atmosphere and close to the apartments.
- L'Olandese – Near InisShark.
- Casanova – Dance club near the train station, best place to go dancing in Venice. The others, like Piccolo Mondo, are total slimeball magnets! Beware.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES

Emergency

To contact the police in an emergency dial 113 from any telephone. For mobile phone users, the European emergency number is 112

Consulate General of the United States

in Florence:

Lungarno Vespucci,

38 - 50123 FIRENZE, Italy

Telephone: (+39) 055.239.8276 (switchboard)

Fax: (+39) 055-284-088

E-mail: Florencecec@state.gov

The Consulate is open to the public from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

in Milan:

Via Principe Amedeo

2/10 - 20121 MILANO

Telephone: (+39) 02.290.351 (switchboard)

Fax: (+39) 02.2900.1165

Public office hours are 8:30–17:30 Monday through Friday.

The Consulate General Milan provides the full range of U.S. Government services from consular to political, economic, commercial, information, liaison and administrative support within its consular district, which includes the regions of Lombardia, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Piemonte, Trentino Alto Adige, Valle d'Aosta, **Veneto** and parts of Emilia Romagna (Piacenza and Parma).

in Naples:

Piazza della Repubblica

80122 NAPOLI, Italy

Telephone: (+39) 081.5838.111 (switchboard)

Fax: (+39) 081.7611.869

Public office hours are 8:00–13:00 and 14:00–17:00 Monday through Friday.

Embassy of the United States

in Rome:

via Vittorio Veneto 119/A

00187 Roma, Italia

Telephone: (+39) 06.4674.1 (switchboard)

Fax: (+39) 06.4882.672 or 06.4674.2356

Mission's working hours are 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM.

Pharmacies

The easiest way to find a pharmacy is to look for a GREEN CROSS. It is that simple. There are pharmacies all over the place in Venice. Most pharmacies are closed on nights and Sundays. However, there are always a few open all night and on Sundays. The duty to stay open on these days passes from pharmacy to pharmacy, each taking its own shift. If you need a pharmacy during these off-hours, look on the door to any pharmacy and the name, address and phone number to the ones that are open will be posted. It is a pretty good system and works well.

Police Stations

Here's the info for some of the police stations in areas that you are likely to frequent:

Station	Address	Telephone
Commissariato di P.S. San Marco	Castello 5056	0412705511
Commissariato di P.S. Margheravia	Cosenz, 11	0412580911
Commissariato di P.S. Mestre	via Cà Rossa, 5	0412692511

Commissariato di P.S. Chioggia	Corso del Popolo, 55	0415533811
Commissariato di P.S. Iesolo	via Acquileia, 83	042138581
Commissariato di P.S. Portogruaro	via Cadorna, 12	0421284311
Posto Fisso di Polizia del Lido	via Dardelli, 54	0412207911
Ufficio Sanitario Provinciale	Santa Croce, 500	0412715628/5524

Public transport

[ACTV](http://www.actv.it/) tickets (open 24 hrs) – tel 041/238 1510 <http://www.actv.it/>
[Vaporetto timetable](http://www.actv.it/) (open 24 hrs) – tel 041/238 1520 <http://www.actv.it/>
 ACTV information service – (weekdays 0800-1430) tel 041/528 7886
 Buses at Lido (open 24 hrs) – tel 041/238 1540
 Port of Venice – tel 041/520 5600

Water taxis

Consorzio Motoscafi Venezia (airport) – tel 041/522 2303
 Cooperativa San Marco – tel 041/523 5775
 Cooperativa Veneziana – tel 041/716 124
 Cooperativa Serenissima – tel 041/522 1265
 Cooperativa Bucintoro – tel 041/523 2473
 Cooperativa S. Giorgio – tel 041/522 8777

ISTITUTO VENEZIA

You will become very familiar with the Istituto. This is a large school for Italian language and cultural studies for foreigners and is where your classes will be held during the semester. Colgate also keeps a small library of books for the study group here. Take advantage of talking to people at the Istituto and becoming acquainted with the teachers and students.

MEETING LOCALS

It is difficult to meet Italians at times, but try anyways. Ladies, you WILL get hit on, a lot. And you stand the chance of coming across some scummy guys. But overall, women on past study groups have felt safe and have learned how to fend off their “undesired suitors.” (Basta! Lasciami in pace!) (Enough! Leave me alone!) Also, take your cues from the Venetian women. Observe how they act as they’re walking down the street or sitting in a café and see if their comportment causes them to get hit on or not. Oftentimes just making eye-contact or smiling at someone is enough to spur on advances from guys. That said, do make the effort to meet people, however difficult it may be, and don’t be completely turned off to meeting people by the annoying ones that approach you. There are some normal people out there!

RESEARCH FACILITIES

It is hard to do research in Venice, especially since computers are hard to come by. Libraries are completely different than we are used to. For example, at the Art History library, one must look books up first in a card catalog, and then may request one book at a time, by handing a slip of paper to the librarian who will be lurking somewhere. Next, one will wait however long the librarian decides until you get your book... prepare to sit for a good half hour at least. And, if you want to photocopy anything, you’ll have to give your book to the photo-copying specialist and come back in a few days to pick them up! So as you see, research can be a daunting task. However, there is an up-side to this... all

your professors know how difficult it is and hence you will be required to do less research than at Colgate, and the research you may be assigned will be “controlled.” That is to say it will be limited to books owned by Colgate or known to be available in the local libraries.

SHOPPING

Explore! There are places to shop everywhere, and you just have to go out and find them!

STUDYING

Studying can be difficult if you are particular about where you study. You will no longer have Case or its equivalent to escape to; your apartment is pretty much it. As long as everyone respects one another, it should be okay. Some students did study at the libraries, so look into that if you’re interested, but don’t expect a Case environment!

TOURIST SITES AND ATTRACTIONS

As for sights in Venice, exploration is the only way to go. Obviously S. Marco is a big one, but just walk around as much as possible; you will find the best stuff this way. Be sure to take your camera with you!

Take a vaporetto to the Lido, Murano (known for its glass), Burano (known for its lace and colorful houses), Torcello (first settlement of Venice), and S. Michele, the beautiful cemetery-island. Hop a vaporetto and just get off at places to check them out, or hoof it all throughout Venice. You may be in the middle of nowhere one minute and then all of a sudden you’ll arrive at a place you recognize; it’s funny how often this happens in Venice!

Other sites in the Veneto: Check out Verona, and Padova. Padova is quite close; consider going out on the weekend there, where the nightlife is better.

Other sights in Italy: You are likely to visit Rome and Florence with the study group. Cinque Terre is beautiful and rather close, on the Ligurian Coast. There you’ll find classic Italian scenery. The Dolomites provide some mountainous fun, and a strong Austrian-German influence. Assisi is a beautiful little town with fun shops and a strong religious influence (St. Francis of Assisi). As with Venice, explore! Try to make it down to Sicily with a group... no one was able to in 2002 for several reasons, the eruption of Mt. Etna being one of them, but it is supposed to be amazing.

TRAVEL

Travel Agents

Check out *Marco Polo Travel*, near S. Zaccaria. They have been used for several years by Colgate students, so there is a good rapport. Also, everyone has been happy with the service and help, which is a plus.

Travel by Air

Look into some of the independent little airlines in Europe, like Ryanair. Many people use them and they seem to be safe and incredibly cheap. We’re talking flights for \$20! Just be aware that one of the

ways these airlines are able to offer low-cost airfares is by cutting out some of the “frills,” like food and drink service, so you might want to bring a snack of your own.

Travel by Rail

The train station, Ferrovia, is about a 10-20 minute vaporetto from S. Zaccaria or Rialto. It is also walkable, as is everything in Venice. Get tickets at the station. Take advantage of cheap train travel!

VENETIAN EVENTS TO ATTEND

Check out the *Regatta Storica*, the historic race and parade the first Sunday in September. It will be crowded so get there early! Also, the *Festival Delle Salute* in November is an interesting cultural event. You will hear much more about it from your teachers when the time comes.

IF I HAD KNOWN THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW I WOULD HAVE...

- “...packed lighter.”
- “...been more active in the beginning. Visiting important places in Venice, meeting Italians (especially students), traveling, etc. You will get busier as the semester goes on, and time will run out faster than you think.”
- “...appreciated life in Venice more. Yes, you will get bored at times, and annoyed at all the tourists. You will hate walking or taking the vaporetto to school sometimes. But, you WILL miss it once you’ve left. Every once and a while, remind yourself how lucky you are to be there and sit back and enjoy the ride!”

FINAL NOTES

This guide is meant to be used as a starting point and a tool to help get you oriented when you first get to Italy. Don’t rely on the guide too much – half the fun of being in a different country is exploring and discovering things on your own! You are in for an amazing semester; just don’t expect things to fall into your lap. You’ll need to get out there and make the effort to do things and meet Italians!

Be aware, too, that other countries have different ways of doing things and part of the education that comes with studying abroad derives from experiencing how other cultures operate. Italy is no exception. Things will be different, whether it’s how they cook their pasta, how they greet each other, what they do in their spare time, or whatever. You’re going to be expected to adapt to the Italian way of life, not the other way around. Remember: “When in Rome (or Venice!)...”