

Safety and Security

JSIS Rome 2018

In terms of personal safety in Rome, it is important to use common sense about where you go and what you do. There is no need to be scared – violent crime is rare, with the most common problem being robberies and pick-pocketing especially in train stations, near crowded public sites, on buses used by tourists (number 64 and 40 are infamous) and on large streets. Pickpockets are pros, and many work with accomplices to distract you. When you are out in a crowded social environment at night you will be vulnerable.

People who look like tourists are magnets. (This applies to many other large cities in Italy and elsewhere!) Try to void the typical US college look with jeans, College sweatshirts and backpacks. With this in mind, conduct yourself in a smart manner. If you are walking in a group of US students talking loudly in English and laughing you will attract the kind of attention you may not want. And walking around the Piazza at night with open bottles of beer or wine will make you an attractive target. Acting responsibly in public is a health and safety issue for everyone.

Some tips:

- Carry only the essentials and enough cash for the day (passports, credit cards, etc. should be stored in a safe place – preferably secured in your apartment!). Carry a photo ID such as a UW ID Card and a copy of your Passport. Be mindful of your backpacks/bags, in particular the position of zippers, which can be opened, and exposed straps, which can be cut.
- Always be aware of your surroundings, and, if possible, always travel in groups, particularly if you are out after dark. If you are out late in Rome and enjoying the bar scene, the risk of bad things happening increases tremendously.
- When you are traveling outside Rome ALWAYS travel in groups. This provides a separate safety measure in case of illness or other unplanned difficulties.

Lost Items:

In case you should lose your passport or essentials, it is important to keep a copy of your passport, or any other ID cards you carry, along with a record of your credit card numbers (including customer service numbers) in a secure location in your apartment. That way, if something should get lost, you can act quickly to replace your documents and reduce the stress that such a loss can toll.

Dress

Italians dress fashionably. Dress is informal but never sloppy, so leave your sweats and flip flops at home (or, at least in your Roman apartment!). Wearing jeans will help identify you as an American. That being said, make sure that you pack for comfort, with shoes that can withstand hours on cobblestones and a wardrobe that accommodates rainy weather and cool evenings. Layering is always a great option (remember, you always must keep your shoulders covered when entering a church!). Invest in shoes that will last. Everyone needs to bring some smart dress clothes, jacket and tie for the gents and business wear for the ladies. This will be needed for some places that we visit (the NATO Defense College or a local Embassy) and making formal presentations during the exercises and evaluations at the end of the program.

Packing

When packing, try to bring as little as possible overseas. A lot of shampoos, soaps, cleaning supplies, etc. can be found in our Roman neighborhood, so unless you are in need of a particular product, save yourself some suitcase room for souvenirs and “buy local.” At the local weekend markets you can buy some very inexpensive clothing, so you don’t need to bring 20 sets of underwear.

Siesta

Traditional business hours are mornings and evenings with a 3-hour midday break from 1 to 4 PM. Most stores close Saturday afternoon and Sunday except where there are tourists, so keep this in mind if you are in need of any particulars. For this program our regular schedule will normally give you a two hour break starting about noon every day of class, including time to go back to your apartment to make lunch.

Managing Money

- Use ATMs, called Bancomats in Italy. They have much better exchange rates. Using the money exchange offices in airports is very expensive. Before you leave be sure your bank knows you are traveling in Europe so they don’t think it is suspicious activity on your ATM Card. If you can get a bank card with the new electronic chip before you leave that could be important, some countries no longer take the traditional “swipe” card for point-of-sale transactions in stores and restaurants.

- Determine if your bank has partner banks and use them. They will charge you no international transaction fee, or a very low one. Take out a lump sum on your way home to your apartment, perhaps 200 Euros. Keep it there and only take with you the cash you need for that day. This will cut down on banking fees.
- Here are some helpful tips from a travel expert. <https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/money/cash-tips>
- Do not carry large sums of cash around with you! Have a back-up credit or debit card that you keep at your apartment. Loss or compromise of a credit card in Europe can take time to replace.

Mail

- If you forget your camera or some other important item, don't plan to use the postal service to receive it from friends or family in Rome. The Italian authorities are likely to charge import duties on incoming electronics, and a lengthy paperwork process will be involved. More detail on receiving and sending mail will be provided by the Rome Center.

Emergency Calls: Everyone must have a mobile phone with the ability to call the police in an emergency, and the Program Director as necessary. Check the phone periodically to be sure it is in working order. More detail will be provided on arrival in Rome.