



UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA

This report was written by Aaron Rossi, who participated in the exchange in 2003-04.

Looking over the first students' experience report, I have noticed a few changes with respect to what has been written back in 1999, but, for the most part, many of the paragraphs and bits of information remain the same.

The practical guide from 1999 has proven to be essential as the University really hasn't changed in the past five years. The University, as well as the city is old, therefore it really came as no surprise that procedures haven't been updated or changed to any large degree.

So, what I have decided to do is to go through the practical guide from 1999 step by step adding and deleting information as it applies to 2003-2004, and at the end will provide a few personal thoughts and sentiments about my experience here, sparing those that just want the facts the opportunity to glean what information they are looking for without having to wade through my own personal thoughts.

The Essentials

Pavia is situated on the southern border of the province of Lombardia. The province itself borders Switzerland in the north, and the seasons of this town change as would be expected a town situated somewhat near the northern areas of Europe. One experiences all four seasons here, with a warm, somewhat humid (beware of mosquitoes!) in the summer, a mild fall, a cold (somewhat snowy) winter, and a sunny, mild spring.

For clothes, bring enough warm clothes to stand a considerable winter, but bear in mind that the winter only lasts about three months or so, so try not to over pack. One practical bit of information that was on the original report from 1999, was the inclusion of the fact that many of the streets in Pavia are cobblestone, and it was a daily occurrence watching the women who were natives and experts at doing this as opposed to those who were amateurs. It can't be comfortable.

Don't forget your essentials. Passport, any documentation used to obtain the study visa from the Italian consulate (I made copies of everything, you never know), and documentation from SFSU, bank statements, credit cards for emergencies, and the old

ATM/check card. It is really helpful to bring an English-Italian dictionary; I brought so many other supplemental Italian grammar and verb books that I did not end up using. Daily interaction tends to teach you these things. But it was good to have a reference in the dictionary. Also, a couple of English novels were great, but, if you have a lot of free time, the need of escaping from Italian, can also be provided by internet/CD's. An English travel book was fun to have, even though at this point one in Italian would have the same effect. But, it comes down to how you feel which language you want the book in, and so on.

Getting to Pavia

Pavia is easily reached from both Malpensa and Linate, the airports is Milan. A nice bus (Pullman) service by SGEA (check out their website for schedules, fares, and more information) takes you from the airports to the train station in Pavia. Depending on the amount of luggage, you could also go the airport to Milan train station route, but this can be a bit difficult, since there is really nowhere to stow luggage on the local trains that leave for Pavia. Figuring out the train system has become a lot easier lately, with both the trenitalia website (www.trenitalia.com), and through publications such as the Grippaudo (little yellow book containing all of the train schedules found in the stations and in local newsstands for about euro 3.50). I liked the SGEA buses and used them whenever I had to go to the airport, there was no hassle, and they are usually a few minutes earlier than the predicted arrival times (I don't have the address handy, but use any search engine and type in "SGEA" and "autobus" or "Pavia" and you will be directed to all of the information).

Once from the station, there are taxis waiting, or, if you are familiar with the city, you can hop on one of the city buses that can take you to where you need to go from the station. Taxis are a bit funny. They have different rates fro different times of the day, extra charges for luggage, and all sorts of fees for staying idle and whatnot. They aren't that expensive, because Pavia is a small town, so that is good to know.

If you do not already have a map of the city (one was sent to me in my acceptance package from the University of Pavia before I left) the information office of the city is conveniently close to the train station on Via Filzi between Via Trieste and Piazza Dante.

OK, I am here, now what?

I arrived in September, the week-end before the language class started for all of the Erasmus/Exchange students. It is important to check in with the Ufficio degli Affari Internazionali as soon as possible. They will give you a lot of helpful information. In addition to being able to point you in the right direction regarding problems with housing, they will also help set up an appointment for the Questura to obtain the Permesso di Soggiorno, as well as put you in touch with an advisor who will help you figure out

course schedules and options. There is a whole Erasmus community here, with a lot of students that you will run into a lot, and will probably be taking many of your classes with. There is an Erasmus office that plans all types of parties and other functions, and there are posters put up around the school, information available through the University website, and you will probably hear about them through word of mouth since undoubtedly you will run into another student during the course of the day.

It is rare to find people outside of a few other students who speak English in Pavia, so your Italian skills are going to play a big part of your life. Before classes begin in the first and third quarter, there is a language course offered by the department of languages. At the time of this writing, it was required. The classes try their best to prepare you for the type of environment you are entering, but mostly they are the best way to meet all of the other Erasmus/International students, as the language course happens about a month before the Italian students return.

At the end of September, there was a two day orientation where all concerns and questions that begin to be fully formed by the end of a month are addressed. Questions like those surrounding the Questura, health insurance, and other general questions are carefully answered by people who speak a little English or none at all. It was very entertaining and surprising in that I did not expect any of the people to speak English at all.

Mensa (Cafeteria)

Among the items acquired at these orientations are detailed directions on obtaining the tessera (card) for access to the mensas, which are the University cafeterias. I think everyone but me has their tessera by now. Everything sounds good there, and it is a good deal if you do not have a kitchen or don't feel like cooking/tired of the usual panino lunch in Italy.

Health Insurance

If you have to buy health insurance in Italy (you weren't able to have an American policy translated to obtain your visa, or simply didn't have health insurance), the process is relatively easy. At the aforementioned initial meeting with the International Affairs office, they will give you the requirements in obtaining the health insurance from the post office, as well as other lists of required documents.

Simply go to the post office in Via Mentana, right behind the University, and go to the section of the post office on the left (it is divided into two parts-one part acts like a traditional post office, while the other is there solely paying bills). Lying around the room are blank bolletini. It took me forever to find one, as they are on the window sills, in empty windows, pretty much everywhere except on table or in nice neat stacks. After you pay, you get the receipt and are then instructed according to one of the sheets attained during the two day orientation how to continue on with obtaining finalized documents for

medical insurance. This is a very easy process. The hospital is located at the north end of the city, near the Golgi Collegio, with the actual hospital called San Matteo.

The Hard Part

In all of my time here, only two things have been what I classify as difficult. These two things, obtaining the Permesso di Soggiorno and registering for classes, have tried my patience and continue to be the source of endless wonder during sleepless nights.

The Permesso di Soggiorno, and, really, the entire government interaction has been something of a mystery. Besides the hoops you need to jump through to obtain the study visa, the Permesso di Soggiorno seems to have attached to it a sense of urgency and seriousness. It has these senses, that is, until you pass your first month here. The Permesso is the continuation of the work begun when one obtains the study visa from the Italian consulate in America. The Permesso is basically registering with the Italian authorities and it grants you permit for the desired year without hassle. Even though it is made thoroughly clear at the time of picking up the study visa that the Permesso must be applied for within eight days of entering Italy (which is not the case), the process of actually getting this permit takes virtually the whole year. At the time of this writing, in March, I have just received my Permesso, but now must go back to Satan's lair (the Questura) to be fingerprinted at the end of April, about a month and a half before I leave Italy to return to the USA for good. One may laugh when I call the Questura Satan's lair, but after the first experience there, one will not only agree with me, but will probably say that I have been a little too nice with my description. The Questura is located at the north end of the city, just across the naviglio (stream) in Via Rismondo. You can tell what building because there is at any given time (from about 7 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon) throngs of people standing and hanging out there speaking just about every language known to man. The nice part of this trip is that the Office of International Affairs arranges an appointment for all of the exchange students. Ours was in October, about a full month after the 8 day deadline. Don't worry about the Questura, they are truly on their own time and schedule. The only nice thing about the experience is that the particular officer will give you a slip stating when you can pick up your Permesso. This, along with a little whining and a lot of patience, can pretty much enable you to continue on with the act of getting established.

The only thing that was a bit difficult is registering for classes. But it is a whole lot easier than the Questura experience and proved to be not that bad actually, when all is said and done. Before you leave for Italy, consult the University of Pavia (www.unipv.it) website for the list of class times. Hopefully, with the advising sheet that you completed with your advisor before you were accepted into the program, you can find the same classes and figure out what trimester (quarter) the classes will be offered. The nice thing about this year was that besides doing all of that work, the International Affairs office arranged for each one of us to meet with Professoressa Guerra who had copies of our application and advising sheets ahead of time, allowing her to print up course descriptions and she was also able to tell when and where the classes were offered. She

helped tremendously, and was helpful to other Americans who had trouble finding substitute courses when a class or two didn't work out. Now the only thing left is obtaining the libretto and the rest is fun in the sun in Italy (well, until classes start). To obtain the libretto, one must go to the Segreteria Studenti in Via San Agostino. There will be long lines of students there, but don't fret. As soon as you pass the gates, go into the first door on the left. You will meet a very serious looking guy at pretty much what is an information booth. Tell him (or her, if the person changes) that you want to register for corsi singoli. They will give you a blank application, which you need to fill out and bring back. Once this application is filled out, get in the line that corresponds to what department you are a part of. I was studying under the Lettere e Filosofia department and had to get in that line. After you make your way to the top, tell the woman at the desk that you are Erasmus from America and she will make a couple of calls, ask you for a couple of documents furnished by the International Affairs Office, and she will also ask you for a copy of your Permesso. The slip stating the pick up date will be enough. She will then give you a yellow book, with which you need to fill out all of the information and then give it back to the same woman. In a couple of days, you may pick up your completed yellow book, or libretto, that is where all of your grades are going to be recorded, from the information booth person. After you have completed all of your exams, turn the libretto back into the Segreteria. That is pretty much it for the registering process. It is very important to note that we, as SFSU students do not pay for anything during the registration, except for a stamp called a marca di bollo that costs euro 10.33. That is all, and if there is a problem you should have whoever is telling you otherwise to get in touch with the office of international affairs. That office is the best source of information and direction and any questions can usually be answered there. One last thing about these registering directions: this was exactly how I registered and I was among the first registered. It may seem like a lot, but if there is any doubt, just read these directions carefully again and don't be afraid to ask questions, to anyone. Remember that the most important thing you can do is to get your business done, and not be self-conscious about speaking Italian, because, that is the reason you are there.

Codice

A necessary document to procure is the codice fiscale from the Ministero di Finanzia office in Corso Mazzini (18). Take your passport and go straight to the information desk/secretary which is on the first door to the left. Tell the person that you wish to obtain a codice fiscale and they will give you an application. After filling everything out, you will receive a number and will be issued a codice number. The number is important for a few reasons: one, it is the document that acts as a type of social security number, allowing one to have an identification document in Italy. Some landlords need to be able to write your codice number on the lease. Second, the codice is important for those who have the desire/opportunity to work and/or have a phone service (land line) set up. Also some applications for discount membership cards for stores and or discount services required a codice fiscale. This was a very simple process and took about 20 minutes at the most.

Housing

This year there was an extreme housing shortage. From all sources, the best way to avoid this problem happening to you is to inquire about the housing form upon your acceptance to the exchange program. The form can be found in the Office of International Programs at SFSU. Do this immediately! Many students this year had to spend quite a few days in hotels while the poor student office here was searching every corner of Pavia for rooms. It seems like those who were able to submit the housing form early had either zero or less problems than the others. This, along with obtaining the study visa, is the most important thing to take care of, in my humble opinion. In any case, the Office you need to get familiar with when it comes to housing is the Centro Assistenza Studenti. They will be the ones directly involved in searching and finding apartments. It would even be a good idea to contact them directly as soon as you receive notice of your acceptance to the university, telling them what kind of apartment you are looking for. Any work you can get done as soon as possible on the housing front will pay off. Trust me.

Transit

Transit is easy in Pavia. There are basically two bus lines, the numbers 1 and 3 that go around the city. There are other lines that go in other directions, but these two are the main lines. At the orientation in late September, every student is given directions on how to obtain a bus pass. This pass costs nothing, lasts for the entire year, and gives the students free rides on all lines within Pavia. I still haven't used it seeing as how small the city is, but there are a couple of stores out on line 1a that might be useful (see STORES section).

As I stated before, the SGEA system takes one to and from the major airports in Milan, and operates out of the train station.

Pavia's railway station connects to both Milano Centrale and Genova's Porta Principe stations which serve as good jumping off points for travels. From Milano Centrale one can find trains to every city in Italy and even international trains leaving for France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, and Austria daily. Genova has bit more limited choices with trains departing from the south of Italy and up north to France. I just took a train from Pavia to Genova to Pisa, which was beautiful, and pretty inexpensive. This brings me to this next bit of information, the Carta Verde. If you are under 26 years old, you may buy the Carta Verde either in the train station or at the travel store in Corso Cairoli. The card costs 30 euro, but pays for itself in just a couple of trips, giving the rider discounts from 15-20% on all trains, including the faster Eurostar trains. I just bought the card recently and it has paid for itself after three trips. If I had bought it sooner, I would have saved so much money. Other cards are sometimes offered and withdrawn. Check the website at www.trenitalia.com for information on all of the cards and decide which one is right for you.

Pavia also has no shortage of taxis, but as I stated above, the taxi service has varying rates according to the time of day, amount of people, number of bags, position of the sun, etc. It can be a bit expensive but it is nice to know they are there if needed.

Soldi

Another topic brought up in the late September orientation was the topic of bank accounts and money. It is possible to open a bank account here. They all seem comparable to the banks we have at home. Every ATM and a large amount of stores accept Visa cards here, so I just kept my accounts in the USA and used my ATM/VISA card everywhere. I paid all of my bills online from the computers at school, and never had a problem. If you are bent on having an account here, there are a couple of options, ranging from the post office to a private bank. While at the orientation in September, make sure you pick up all of the materials provided by whichever bank has an agreement with the University in the subsequent years.

Grocery Shopping

It took me a few days to find all of the essentials, including the grocery stores which are plentiful in Pavia. There is a big Esselunga near the train station in Via Filzi, just off the Piazza Dante. The Esselunga, along with the GS on Via Matteotti and the Coop on Via Campari are open seven days a week continuously, with only limited hours on Sundays. These are big grocery stores which pretty much carry everything you need. The smaller grocery stores around the city are open during Italian hours, that is from about 9.30 to noon, and then from about 3.30 to 7.30. Almost every store in Pavia with the exception of a few cafes and bars close at the noon break and it is a good idea to get all errands done before this break happens.

There is an outdoor market during the week in Piazza Petrarca, which sells all kinds of stuff, from shoes to produce. A lot of times they offer items at about the same price as those you will find at the bigger grocery stores. It is not always a better deal to buy from the markets.

Every first Sunday of the month, there is a larger market taking both the Piazza della Vittoria and the Piazza del Duomo that is a bit more fun with local artisans and booksellers on the street selling more interesting things. Sometimes it takes on a bit of a flea market tone, but usually there are a few good things there. The cheese guy sells all the funky goat and cows milk cheeses, and it is a nice thing to do on Sunday mornings, especially when the weather is nice.

One last thing to put down, every large grocery store has a tessera that is like the cards we get at our grocery chains. The GS, Esselunga, and the Coop all have their own types of tessere, allowing the bearer to receive extra discounts and in some cases, build up points to buy things. I recently bought a bottle of 20 year balsamic vinegar and a decent bottle of grappa with my points from the Esselunga card. Simply go to the help desk in each of these stores, fill out the small application, pay nothing, and receive your card immediately. This will end up saving you a few more dollars as well.

Clean Clothes

Some apartments come with laundry facilities, and others don't. I have found one laundry place which is actually conveniently right behind my apartment. It is located on the Via delle Pertiche near Corso Cairoli, and is open from 7 a.m. to about 9 p.m. It costs euro 3.50 a load and you can buy three tokens for 10 bucks, if you know you are going to use the facility frequently. Every time I have gone there has been only one other person there, so usually the problems that I faced with Laundromats in SF aren't really problems here. The directions for working the machines are also posted in English, so I don't think there will be too many problems. There are also dry-cleaners on just about every other corner, if you need those services.

Communication

One of the first things you may want to do is get some sort of communication line set up. In years past, students have shelled out exorbitant amounts of money to receive the ridiculously overpriced land line in Italy from Telecom Italia, which is hardly cost-effective. Just about everyone I know bought cell phones this year. They are cheaper and much easier to use. Everyone here use the SMS messaging system to get a hold of each other. A couple of others and I bought the cheapest phone we could find. It still works. It cost about 60 euro, is able to call the USA, receive calls from everyone and is able to send and receive text messages. I went to the Vodafone/Omnitel store on Strada Nova, but you can get a phone in either the numerous stores in Pavia, through the TIM center on Strada Nova, or even through the Esselunga itself! Most phones are reloading (ricaricabile) and you basically buy more credit when you run out of time/money on your phone. The schede (phone cards) to add more credit are available everywhere, from grocery stores to tobacco shops and some newsstands, and they will have sign saying which schede are available. My Vodafone/Omnitel schede come in three different prices: 10, 25, and 50 euro. The 50 euro card has lasted up to three months sometimes so it pays to have more credit on your phone. I went into the shop completely unaware of everything, so let me pass on a bit on information. I knew something was wrong when the sales girl was trying to sell me the 200 euro phone. Just to test a theory, I bought the cheapest one, which, according to her, would be able to call the US. Well, she was wrong and while I can say that the phone is not the greatest, it works, and that is basically all I ever needed. So, to sum up, even the cheapest, crappiest phone will work. It is up to you how much you want to spend on it. One last thing is that you will need to bring your passport when you buy the phone, or, at least I did.

Lectures and Books

Be prepared to study! Classes here a bit different, but it is all the same when you get down to it. Lectures are conducted in various ways according to the individual styles of the professors, and some professors speak more clearly than others, have handouts, wander off on tangents, etc. Everything is basically the same as SFSU. The nice thing about Pavia is that they do not dumb down anything for the student. You are expected to

do the readings, pay attention, take notes, and, at some point, take the exam. I attempted one exam in the first quarter, failed it, came back in the second quarter and passed it with a perfect score. The system is more or less set up for those who are staying here longer than a year (as was evidenced when I signed up for my Literature exam and saw students taking the exam from academic year 1999!), so we are at a bit of a disadvantage. But things will go smoothly. A good idea is to talk to the professor in the first couple of days of class. They will usually do one of two things. They will either give you a different testing option for the course, or will do nothing and make you take the final exam like the other Italian students. I have had both experiences and can honestly say that the test for the Italian students was not too difficult.

It is also imperative to ask the professors about the books for each class. Each course description gives listed reading materials. Some are essential, others are not. I made a mistake the first quarter in buying a few books that were not necessary. The big heavy volumes will be attractive on the bookshelf but are a bit impractical. Usually, the professors will make it a bit clearer.

Attendance is open. There is no grading on attendance. Grades are assigned as results of the final exams, and that is all. Attendance is proven to be vital though for the foreign students, and at this point I have only missed about two or three classes and am in my last quarter.

About a month before the exams (all exam dates are on the website under *didattica*, and through the particular department) you will need to sign up on a list found in the library of the particular *facoltà* you are a part of. All of the literature exam lists were in the *Biblioteca delle Lettere* in the main campus. The lists will be headed with all of the vital course information and simply sign up when you feel you are ready to take the exam. The exam schedule is generally as follows: a couple of weeks after the 1st and 3rd quarters, where each exam is offered once, and an exam period after the 2nd and 4th quarters where every exam is offered about two times. Usually, professors will let everyone know in class whether there are any changes or if there are important changes. The exams are a bit difficult, but all I can say is study a lot, and practice making your points in Italian. It is important to be able to recover and having all of the bigger points ready will be a huge advantage with these tests.

Holidays

The city and country celebrate a few holidays during the week, so sometimes classes can be cancelled. These days are listed on the University website and in every case, the professors have brought it up in class when classes will be cancelled for either personal or religious/national holidays.

Part II; Married experience

That concludes the practical section of the report. I am now compelled to share a few thoughts about my experiences here, since they are probably a bit different from those of a typical study abroad student. I am a bit older than most, am 28 years old and married, and my wife has been with me the whole time here in Pavia. Certain aspects to this study abroad have been made easier, and others more difficult, all of them worthwhile, and they have given me a better insight into to the time here.

It is important to start at the beginning. The considerations we had to make, being married were actually kind of simple. The considerations included money issues, housing, free time/boredom, and all of the legalities.

Money/Exchange

We had been able to save a lot of money before departing for Italy, arrived at a time when the European dollar wasn't so strong (about \$1.10) and we made sure we had an extra \$1500 dollars just as back up/ emergency money, in addition to the amount I received from financial aid for the year. Well, the extra money was essential to our living, especially as the US dollar steadily grew weaker. At this point it has stopped falling at around a dollar and quarter, making everything considerably more expensive for us. We kept wondering where all of the money was going and it was soon no surprise that we were getting killed on the exchange rate, for example, making our rent of 650 European dollars somewhere over 800 American dollars, depending on the daily rates. This phenomenon makes things that every married couple does daily or monthly like budgeting a bit more difficult. Rather, everything from food to side trips and extras became somewhat major decisions to be made. I guess the important thing is to make sure you not so much compensate for the fact there is another person with you as much as you need to compensate for the fact that, at least in times of financial weakness in America, the dollar will only be able to go so far.

Job Prospects

There were a couple of job prospects here. They all entailed teaching English in various capacities, mostly private though. It was pretty much a word of mouth or flier type of approach that brought success to those who found work here and there. We got extremely lucky in that our landlady wanted English lessons and was willing to pay for them. That helped out a lot and was a great experience. The problem with finding a part time job is that a Permesso di Soggiorno is necessary.

The Trouble with Being Married

The Permesso di Soggiorno works eerily like the American government rules for immigration back at the turn of the century. Meaning, that the person who has submitted and received their visa is supposed to go to Italy first, establish him/herself, obtain legal permission from the authorities, have the proposed living quarters approved, and then send fro their spouse. This presents many problems, the biggest being that the person left behind has to apply for a special family reunification visa in America while the other

person in the foreign country obtains and sends back documents which are necessary to the other. The whole time before I left for Italy, everyone at both the San Francisco and Los Angeles consulates told me that there would not be a problem. This process is easy and just a formality. It got to the point where I figured I could take care of everything if we came home to California during the holidays, we would be able to go to the Italian consulate and I thought for sure that I would have all of the supporting documents from the Italian government. It is now the end of March, and I still have not received all of my supporting documents. My wife has been with me here the whole time, making that about 2 months more than the amount of time allowed in this country on the regular tourist visa that is an automatic condition of an American passport. At the end of our stay, she will have been here about four months past her allowed limit. The frustrating thing is that virtually nothing can be done before you leave for Italy, making it so that everything must be done when you arrive. You have to deal with the infamous Questura which makes simple tasks such as asking questions more like an all day wrestling match. Then, after you have submitted all of the paperwork, you must go to another foreign office to have the apartment approved. Supposing you receive these approved documents all in time, then your spouse must apply in person at an Italian consulate in America. It is next to impossible, if you ask me, unless your spouse happens to have to dual citizenship, which mine does not. The consulate has been no help. Their suggestions have been ridiculous, and have really been a bust. Maybe the rules will change, but probably not for awhile. It is funny because my younger brother was in the same situation in Italy only last year, only his wife was the one studying here and he was here "illegally." I kept asking him about why he isn't scared about the consequences and vowed that I would have everything covered because I did not want to run the same risk. But now I am starting to see why he wasn't scared. Admittedly he did enter the US quite a few more times during his stay in Italy and he was able to break up his stay so his time here wasn't months upon months consecutively like our situation, but more or less the situation is the same. As soon as you enter the Questura for the first time, everything will make sense. Questions start to be answered, such as those pertaining to the fact that it doesn't make a difference if your spouse is here illegally, because, who is going to notice, and even questions start arising such the one I continually ask myself, what if I never registered with the authorities?

The main point I am trying to convey is this: unless your spouse will be searching for a formal job, in 2004 it is completely unnecessary to stress about procuring the family reunification visa or any visa really for them. The only way it is going to happen is if the person already granted the study visa in America comes over to Italy first, somehow obtains these documents from the Questura, and then sends for the other person. That is how it is done, regardless of what others, even those in the Italian consulates, will tell you. At a certain point even they will start to change their tune to match that what I have just said. If you are a married couple and can be apart for the first semester, then it will work out fine, but if this is not the case, I suspect your experience will be somewhat close mine.

But Seriously

The only trouble really with having a spouse here were those involving the government procedures, the rest has been great. Anyone who is married or older won't be going out every night to the bars and pubs, and can appreciate a lot of the other things about living and studying abroad.

Small trips and even longer ones take on a whole new significance. You are able to share in some great moments and make a few new lasting memories. It is nice to be able to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries in cities that one would normally only go for a vacation. Having the experience of a foreign country together also helps bring out different traits maybe not seen too much before. While one is at school, the other has a lot of time to function in a foreign country, and it is interesting to see how the increase of courage continues over time. The whole question of the foreign language is one that inevitably addresses both people, and even by association, those who did not speak too much Italian previously pick up a working knowledge of the language.

There is a lot of down time. The classes are demanding which meant for me, I had to devote a lot of time to study. This sometimes came into conflict only because for the other person, it gets a little difficult after the novelty of living in Italy has worn off and it just becomes living, which is cooking, cleaning, shopping, and all of those other things that happen in day to day life. It is not practical for one to waste away a good part of the day doing household chores, which is just crazy. There is almost too much time for thought, which can make one go a bit insane. It makes the having a purpose for the person not here to study helpful so that these situation can be avoided or at least battled from time to time.

Having my wife here with me has been essential to the overall experience. Like I have said, I am no longer a young kid anymore and my priorities have changed. Had she not come along, I know I wouldn't have done have of the things we have together, not only trips and going to the numerous events offered by the city and other close by towns, but I wouldn't necessary take the time to enjoy what it is I am a part of. Sometimes I forget that when it is a sunny day, you need to just take a break, go to the outdoor café, sit on the steps of the Duomo and people watch with a gelato, or explore a part of town not yet discovered. Funny enough it is really these times that studying in Italy has been appreciated, my opportunity here put back into perspective, allowing me to see just how lucky I am being able to spend a year here, taking classes at one of the oldest universities in Italy, and fulfilling childhood dreams, such as traveling to mythical cities, visiting relatives, playing and watching soccer with new friends that will hopefully last for years to come, as well as having a particular time in my married life when my wife and I were able to live together in Italy. It is then that having one's spouse becomes essential to the experience and I honestly could not imagine it any other way.