

**Pantheon Institute**  
**Parent's Guide for Study Abroad at Pantheon Institute**

**1. Welcome To The Pantheon Institute**

**2. Contact Information**

- a. The Institute
- b. Your Student

**3. Health and Safety**

- a. Medical Care
- b. Emotional Matters
- c. Safety
- d. Travel Information Form
- e. Emergency Services

**4. Money Matters**

**5. Visiting Your Student**

**6. Alternative Sources of Funding**

**7. What Parents Can Do to Assist**

- a. Insurance and Visa
- b. Making a Budget
- c. Providing Support

**8. Arrivederci!**

## **1. Welcome**

Welcome and thank you for choosing the Pantheon Institute as a study abroad option. It is our goal to make your student's sojourn in Rome the best experience it can possibly be. Our dedicated staff provides each student with individual attention to help make their semester in Rome safe, memorable and enriching.

A semester abroad can seem intimidating, maybe even overwhelming at times, but at the Pantheon Institute we're committed to aiding parents and students as your family partakes in this exciting adventure. In order to make the transition ahead as smooth as possible, we've prepared the following information as a guide for parents. Although this guide documents much of the material covered in your students handbooks, for in-depth information we encourage all parents to read the pre-departure handbook and visit our website as well. We hope you find it useful, and encourage you to contact us with any questions you may have.

## **About the Pantheon Institute**

The Pantheon Institute was founded in 2008 in Rome, Italy, as a center for higher education offering academic programs for students of US colleges and universities. Since then, the Pantheon Institute has grown steadily and developed a well-respected reputation as a provider of consistently high-quality academic programs, becoming an innovative leader in "study abroad" in Italy. Admission to the institute is selective; you should be proud of your student for being accepted into the program. We look forward to providing them a safe and rewarding educational experience abroad.

The Pantheon Institute is recognized by the Ministry of Education in Italy and operates under contract to numerous universities from the United States and Canada. The Institute has research and teaching partnerships with the Accademia Adrianeadi Architettura e Archeologia as well as the State University of Rome, Milano, Palermo, Torino and Genoa.

The Institute offers semester, year-long, and summer programs with a variety of academic programs and special courses to meet the diverse curricular demands of its growing student body.

Today, the Institute maintains five locations in Rome, offers a wide array of courses, and hosts nearly 150 students from more than 20 North American colleges and universities annually. Many students enroll directly at the Pantheon Institute while others participate through cooperative programs accompanied by professors or staff from their home institution. The vast majority of the student body has achieved junior-status with at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA at their home institution.

## **2. Pantheon Institute Contact Information**

The Institute contact information:

The Pantheon Institute  
Via del Pantheon, 57  
00186 Rome ITALY  
Tel: (+39) 06 45426423  
Fax: (+39) 06 45543044  
Email: [info@pantheon-institute.com](mailto:info@pantheon-institute.com)

## Contacting Your Student

If you need to contact your student in Italy and it is not an emergency, email is the best and of course least expensive way to do so. If you need to call, please **do not call the Institute unless it is an emergency**, or if your repeated attempts to get a response have failed. The Institute will not be able to find your student at the time you call. But we can leave them a message in their mailbox, or in the case of emergencies try to find them in class. We encourage all students to take advantage of free cellphones offered at orientation.

To call Italy from the United States, you must first dial 011 (for international), then 39 (for Italy), then the number you are dialing. Therefore, to call the Institute, you would dial:  
011 - 39 - 0645426423

Given that student apartments do not have regular fixed-line phones, the Pantheon Institute believes it is important for each student to have a cell phone while they are in Italy. Cell phone numbers are usually 10-digits long and usually start with the number 3. To call you would dial 011-39-cellphone number.

It is best to use a calling card. There are special calling cards to call Italy – check [www.nobelcom.com](http://www.nobelcom.com) or do a Google search. You can also use an Internet computer to computer phone like Skype ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)) or even a messenger program like Yahoo messenger or Microsoft messenger. Finally from any phone you can save considerably on long-distance charges by dialing **10-10-987** before dialing the number.

One more profound alternative is to get a VoIP phone. What is a VoIP phone? Basically it is a house phone that uses the internet to make regular phone calls. For a low fixed monthly fee (currently about \$25-30) you get unlimited calls in the US and to certain countries in Europe including Italy. Visit [www.vonage.com](http://www.vonage.com) for more details.

If your student does not have a cell phone, make sure they stay in contact with you by other means such as the Internet messengers, skype, or email. Our advice... simple, get the cell phone. It's free if it only receives calls and is invaluable in emergencies.

## Mailing Packages

Sending your student real snail mail, especially packages, brightens your student's day. Mail delivery is often eagerly looked forward to. Italy, however, deserves its reputation for a mediocre postal service, and we assure you that the Poste Italiane have no need of help to lose your student's mail. Therefore, follow these simple rules. When writing, do not send mail to your student's apartment's address, but rather directly to them here, care of the Institute. The address should be written **exactly** as shown below (don't move the postal code around, and be careful about the proper spelling):

STUDENT'S NAME  
C/O The Pantheon Institute  
Piazza del Collegio Romano, 1B  
00186 Rome  
ITALY

**NOTE:** When sending packages, be sure to declare a value far below the actual value of the contents, and write in large block letters on the outside of the package and on the actual postal form **“PERSONAL ITEMS FOR PERSONAL USE – NO COMMERCIAL VALUE.”** This will prevent your student from paying customs duties. If family or friends declare the value, it is not uncommon to pay fees as high as \$60 – \$150 U.S. to pick up the package. And yes, we've seen students pay over \$60 US in customs fees for Pringles, peanut butter and Oreo cookies! If you

use UPS or DHL, underestimate the value and keep your tracking number because we can search for lost UPS and DHL packages from Italy. It should be noted that the Italian customs officials interpret the amount for which the package is insured as part of the value of the package. For example, if the declared value of the package is \$0 but the package is insured for \$500, Italian customs officials will consider the value of the package to be \$500.

NOTE: any kind of medicine, vitamins, cosmetics (and some food also) can and probably will be stopped by customs officials for sanitary inspection, and require paperwork and an Italian doctor prescription (in case of medicines). The process can slow down dramatically the delivery of the package.

### **3. Medical Care**

Health and Safety is our first concern. Our Resident Directors and staff abroad have taken or are taking basic life safety courses. All students are given emergency contact numbers for the staff who can be reached 24-hours a day/7 days a week in case of an emergency.

#### **a. Medical Services in Rome**

The Pantheon Institute has special arrangements with local physicians to handle non-emergency situations such as colds, fevers, etc. They may go either to Salvator Mundi Hospital (where English is spoken) or go straight to the doctor's office. The doctor will then prescribe the appropriate medications, if necessary, and students may purchase these at a local pharmacy. Students should keep the receipt to submit to their insurance provider. Most insurance companies cover all doctor visits; check if yours does.

Prescriptions may be filled at any local pharmacy. In most cases, if the ailment is not serious enough to warrant a visit to the doctor, students may go directly to a pharmacy (*farmacia*) and obtain medicine prescribed by the pharmacist. They can enter a pharmacy and explain the medical condition and the pharmacist will suggest the appropriate medication. In addition, it is wise to pack some favorite over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol, Thera-Flu, Robitussin, Advil, Benedryl, etc.

If your student takes prescription medication for a chronic ailment, we strongly suggest that your student bring enough medication to last the semester. The Italian government considers certain drugs illegal (including Ritalin, Cylert, Adderall, Wellbutrin, Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft). Any prescription medication that your student carries with them to Italy must be accompanied by your physician's written description of the medical problem, the dose of the medication and the generic name(s).

If your student has any medical or psychological condition that may require attention from a physician or psychiatrist during their stay in Italy, they should prepare an adequate summary of the details so they may be properly treated by a physician/psychiatrist in Italy. One copy of this should be carried with your student to Italy; one copy should be left with a parent or guardian.

Students should also inform us of any special needs, including dietary restrictions and/or preferences, physical concerns or learning disabilities, allergies and strict religious observances BEFORE their arrival. It is much easier for us to help if we know about special needs ahead of time.

#### **b. Emotional Matters**

It is important to remember that all students regardless of previous experience, maturity, disposition, or knowledge of the country in which they will be living, experience cultural adjustment to some degree. As parents, you are more likely to hear from your son or

daughter during the low periods than during the high periods as they seek your support. Above all, keep in mind, that a period of mild disappointment, homesickness or depression is a normal part of the study abroad experience and one that passes quickly for most students.

Students affected by home sickness are immediately convinced that they have made a mistake and they want to go home; little can be said to change their minds and usually, words of encouragement from others does very little to change their feelings. These feelings are common so don't let them get the best of your student – they will not last. By the end of the program, most students want to stay on for a second term and many cannot believe that they ever wanted to return home so shortly after having arrived.

Culture shock is the mental, physical and emotional adjustment to transferring to and living in a new foreign environment. Signs that could indicate culture shock include, but are not limited to, the following: homesickness, fear, boredom, negative feelings, lack of appetite, irritability, crying uncontrollably, outbursts of anger, and physical ailments such as frequent headaches or stomach aches.

If your student begins to feel anxious, be supportive, and/or suggest that they talk to someone at the Institute. After all, this experience certainly deserves a fair chance and your student – like most students – will get through this very temporary “crisis”.

In addition remind them that they are not alone. Countless numbers of students have studied abroad and have weathered these "growing pains". Indeed, they are stronger and more confident as a result of these experiences. Although others may not show it, nearly everyone will experience some moments of culture shock. Student can beat homesickness and culture shock if they are aware that it is a normal part of studying abroad.

### **c. Safety**

In light of current events in the world, it is more important than usual for students to remember that they guests in a foreign country. Safety is our foremost concern, and the Pantheon Institute is committed to ensuring, above all, that your student has a safe and rewarding study abroad experience.

Being safe is often a CHOICE. Students risking their own safety by walking alone at night, drinking excessively, and letting down their guard too easily with strangers can bring harm to them and those around them. It is more important than ever that students assume responsibility for their safety and remember that the decisions they make on a day-to-day basis can have a major impact on their own health and safety while abroad.

The Pantheon Institute is a member of AACUPI - the American Association of Colleges and Schools in Italy - and maintains regular contact with the US Embassy and Consulate General in Italy. The Pantheon Institute is also on the list of schools in Italy registered with the US Embassy. Any and all communication provided by the Embassy including public announcements and travel warnings will be promptly communicated to students.

### **d. Travel Information Forms**

The Pantheon Institute has both online and paper-format forms which the students must complete if they plan to travel outside of Rome for an overnight stay. All students are required to complete one of these Independent Travel Form before they leave on their excursion. Unfortunately, at times these requests are ignored. Therefore, encourage your student to fill out one of these forms every time s/he leaves so that the Institute can get in touch with them while they are traveling. It will also provide you with up-to-date information on where you students is and how s/he can be reached in case of an emergency.

#### **e. Emergency Services at the Pantheon Institute**

Upon arrival, students are given a list of general emergency numbers (fire, ambulance, police, etc.) as well as a Pantheon Institute student ID. We encourage students to carry this card with them at all times and also to program our numbers into their cell phones. At any given time, one or more members of the Pantheon Institute staff are available to help students with emergencies. Every weekend, there is a specified Pantheon Institute staff member on call 24/7 to handle student emergencies.

We encourage students and their families to discuss and establish a contact system that can be used in the event of a crisis on either side of the Atlantic, especially since communication today is virtually instantaneous and relatively convenient. In most crisis situations, parents should attempt to contact their child first before they attempt to contact individuals at the Pantheon Institute in order to gain reassurance of their student's safety. The Institute does its best to know where students are, but it is the responsibility of the students to inform the Institute and their families of their travel destinations and their contact information.

### **4. Money Matters**

The euro is the official currency of 15 member states of the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain. This means that you will be able to buy your pizza in Naples and your crepes in Paris with the same money - no more exchanging or dealing with multiple currencies and exchange rates.

Visit [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) for current currency rate changes.

#### *Euro Coins*

There are eight euro coins:

€ 2.00 € 1.00 € .50 € .20 € .10 € .05 € .02 € .01

#### *Euro Banknotes*

There are seven euro banknotes, each one of them is a different color, and their size increases with their value.

€ 5 € 10 € 20 € 50 € 100 € 200 € 500

It is suggested that your student brings the following five forms of money so that you can access cash at all times and under a variety of circumstances:

#### 1. ATM Bank/Debit card

ATM's are the fastest and by far the best and most popular method for obtaining cash. The rate of exchange is very favorable and networks are safe and reliable. Usually you can withdraw the equivalent of \$250 per day, which is more than enough for daily financial needs. There are rare occasions, often on Monday mornings, or after a long weekend, that bank ATM machines are "OUT" of money and often state that the "link service" is down.

If your student's bankcard also acts as a Visa or MasterCard, then it can be used for purchases at any store or shop that has the Visa/MasterCard symbol. However, the bank account in the U.S. is debited immediately and often a small surcharge is added for exchange rates. You may want to notify your bank that the card will be used abroad as banks sometimes block out-of-the-ordinary (i.e. foreign) withdrawals.

Note: ATM cards must be linked to a checking account only. Use only a FOUR DIGIT PIN because there are some machines without letters to correspond to numbers and long entries are not accepted. Check with your home bank to obtain bank information regarding international withdrawal access and fees.

## 2. Traveler's checks

This is still the safest method for carrying large sums of money into a foreign country. Students should remember to keep the numbered receipts separate and make a photocopy of the receipts for someone at home to keep safe. Traveler's checks can be easily converted into cash, however some money exchange shops charge high fees. It is best to change traveler's checks at the local bank. Having a few on hand will allow for quick and emergency access to cash.

## 3. Credit Cards

For cash advances (with PIN number), relatively large purchases, and emergencies, the Visa and MasterCard credit cards are widely accepted. It is suggested that purchases for items such as trips, clothes, gifts be done with a credit card. It is safe and the monthly statement itemizes spending. In addition should your student require a refund, they can dispute the unwarranted charge.

## 4. \$100 worth of Euro

Your student should arrive in Italy with some Euro (\$100 worth or so) so that they can make small purchases immediately upon arrival: a quick bite to eat, some groceries, or other incidentals. They'll also need 10 Euro for the paperwork registration during Orientation. Always carry a small sum of the currency of the country of arrival. Do not rely on changing money or finding ATM machines immediately upon arrival.

## **Personal Information File**

The Personal Information File is a file your student can create, before departure, for him/herself which contains copies of important documents that they leave with you, the parents or guardians. These documents are both for legal and financial purposes.

Items to include in this file are everything you would need to replace if your wallet was stolen, as well as:

- A copy of the pre-departure handbook.
- A copy of: Insurance letter, Financial Support letter, Passport Photocopy, Photocopy of your Visa.
- Personal bank information including account names and numbers.
- Credit card information including account names and numbers.  
(\* It is a good idea to photocopy your credit cards and other items in your wallet in case they are lost.)
- Telephone numbers for lost or stolen ATM and credit cards.
- Names and phone numbers of your dean and academic advisor at your home institute.
- Social security number.

In an emergency situation, your student can easily phone the person to whom they have entrusted this file at home, and they will be able to provide the necessary information to help resolve the issue.

## **Sending Money from Home**

### *Recommended:*

- It's recommended that students give family members and friends their checking account number allowing them to deposit directly into the student's account so that they can access easily with their ATM card (see ATM section above).
- American Express Gift Checks or American Express Money Orders are efficient ways to send money as the family or friend can purchase a desired amount in check form made out in your student's name. Students can take the check to the local American Express office to cash the check. You do not have to be an American Express cardholder or member.

### *Not Recommended:*

- For reasons of counterfeit and terrorist activity, it is illegal to send cash through the mail; this includes Federal Express and other private carriers.

- Personal checks, International money orders or International Checks cannot be cashed.
- WIRING MONEY INCLUDES COSTLY TRANSFER FEES and, given the time differences, more time and money is wasted than necessary.

### **Expenses Upon Arrival**

The first few days of registration and Orientation require an initial outlay of money. Any Institute items such as textbooks, course fees, excursion fees can be paid usually using the student's Pay Pall account. Although the larger stores all accept credit cards, many smaller shops will require cash. Students should be prepared for the following expenses in the first days upon arrival:

#### *Groceries/Incidentals (cash)*

Students will want to stock their apartment with some groceries upon arrival so that they do not have to pay for restaurants or fast food. Groceries may be purchased (in euro) from the local shops and bakeries, etc. in the neighborhood. Often students forget that a part of living in an apartment in the city, is venturing off to "survive" by using their newly acquired Italian language skills to buy necessities for their home and housemates.

#### *Purchase of Textbooks (credit cards accepted)*

Students can expect to spend between \$150-300 U.S. dollars, depending on the courses selected. Since books in English are expensive abroad, and orders are placed well in advance for prompt arrival, the Institute has made a commitment for them on your behalf. Therefore, all students are required to purchase the textbooks that have been assigned by their professors. Each student is responsible for the purchase of his/her books and full payment. Expenses are noted on each student's account. Credit cards or the equivalent in euro will be accepted as payment.

#### *Excursion Sign-Up (cash)*

Extra-curricular trips organized by the Pantheon Institute cost approximately €250-300 per weekend and €20-30 per day trip, but depends on the number of students participating. See the Travel section while in Italy for additional information.

Curricular field trips are part of the courses offered and require no additional costs for travel and accommodation.

#### *Course Fees*

Some courses require lab fees for travel, excursions and museum visits. In particular, some of the art classes (€95), food cultures (€95) have fees for such activities. In courses such a photography, painting, drawing and sculpture, students will be required to purchase materials and supplies for the course.

### **Preparing a Budget**

As you can see thus far, there is a lot to organize in terms of money alone. We recommend that your student prepare a budget for their semester abroad using the template provided in the pre-departure booklet your student received, taking into account all the items we have mentioned above, plus any additional expenditures which may be unique to your student's lifestyle (such as joining a gym for the semester, etc.).

Expenses included in the program fee:

Tuition, Housing, Airport Transfers in Italy (on specified dates and times only), Resident and Student Services Coordinators, Orientation, Institute & Università Facilities, Transcripts.

Expenses NOT included in the program fee:

Airfare, Meals, Optional Excursions, Cell Phone Service, Textbooks, Course Materials, Travel and Museum Fees.

## **Other Expenses throughout the Term**

In addition to the budget worksheet supplied (which your student should complete), students may also want to allocate some additional money for personal items. Some examples include gym membership, gifts, souvenirs and personal purchases (the amount here could vary greatly), photocopying (about €0.10 per copy), faxing (about €1.00 per fax), and telephone cards (between €5 and €30 each), laundry/dry cleaning services (some apartments do not have washers), healthcare/doctor's visits (must be paid for at the time of visit), entrance fees for museums and galleries (the amounts charged vary by place, but are normally below €10.00). On average, students spend between \$4,000 and \$5,000 above and beyond the program fee. However, some students spend considerably more than this depending on lifestyle. Independent travel and the purchase of expensive personal items (such as clothes) are usually the largest items.

## **5. Visiting Your Student in Rome**

Visiting parents, friends and relatives are always welcome at the Pantheon Institute. And of course we fully appreciated the desire for students to dedicate time to friends and relatives who make the long journey and visit them during the semester. However, students at the Pantheon Institute are also required to respect our academic policies and faithfully attend and participate in all classes, course field trips and excursions, exams, and other co-curricular class activities and events. Therefore each semester the Pantheon Institute provides week-long break, usually just after mid-term exams, during which time no classes are held. This way students can travel independently, and dedicate time to friends and relatives who visit and not worry about missing any portion of the academic program.

We kindly ask all students, relatives and friends to visit during the break so not to interfere with the student's responsibility to participate fully in the Pantheon Institute courses. Students will not be excused from class or class-related activities to spend time with visiting friends and/or relatives.

In order to help coordinate travel, please visit our website for a list of dates when classes will not be in session [www.pantheon-institute.com](http://www.pantheon-institute.com)

## **6. Alternative Sources of Funding**

### **Financial Aid**

In general, all federal financial aid, excluding Federal Work Study, should be available as long as students are earning credits toward their degrees while abroad. This includes Pell Grants, guaranteed student loans, and PLUS Loans. Some states also allow state financial aid to go with students abroad, however you should talk to your study abroad or financial aid office about policies with regard to state and institutional aid.

Questions about financial aid eligibility and individual consortium agreements can be addressed to the International Programs Office of the Home University or the Pantheon Institute.

If you are looking for additional funds to finance your study abroad experience, you may also want to check out the following websites: International Education Finance Corporation – [www.iefc.com](http://www.iefc.com) – a reputable organization and the only one we recommend.

## 7. What Parents Can Do

The Pantheon Institute encourages parents to take an active role in supporting their son or daughter's interest in studying abroad. Support and encouragement from parents can make all the difference in how a student goes about the process and how well-prepared s/he is to undertake a study abroad.

To help you participate in your son or daughter's exploration and experience, we offer the following suggestions:

### Prior to Departure

- Familiarize yourself with the philosophy of the Pantheon Institute's program.
- Talk about your son or daughter's goals and expectations in studying abroad.
- Talk about any fears or apprehensions they may have before they embark.
- Discuss issues of safety: how to conduct oneself as a foreigner in another culture, how to ward off theft, how to be wary of one's environment and surroundings, the importance of maintaining a healthy and responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption, and how to stay in control of oneself and one's belongings at all times.
- Ensure them that they have your full support.
- While offering assistance and support, encourage them to take responsibility for pre-departure logistics and paperwork.
- **READ ALL PRE-DEPARTURE MATERIAL ESPECIALLY THE PRE-DEPT HANDBOOK**
- Help them make a budget in order that they can organize their finances while abroad.
- Make sure they have adequate health insurance coverage.
- Confirm as soon as possible that their passport is valid and extends at least six months beyond the end of the program.
- Check in periodically with them to confirm that they are gathering the necessary paperwork to secure a visa, if required.
- Keep copies of all their important documents, credit cards, etc to use in case of theft while abroad.

### While Abroad

- **Do not** accompany them to the host country at the start of the program.
- Encourage independence and self-reliance.
- Understand that all students will experience culture shock and that this may have a significant impact on what they are communicating to you about the experience at the beginning.
- Allow them the time and space to develop a support network abroad rather than relying totally on the one back home.
- Avoid communicating too frequently by e-mail or phone; this can interfere both with integration into the host culture.
- Avoid visiting while the academic program is in session; instead, visit during semester break or after the semester is over.

### Returning Home

- Recognize that they have had a life-changing experience and that, while you may have remained more or less the same, they are probably not the same person they were before going abroad.
- Let them share the experience with you as much as they want.
- Understand that they may experience re-entry culture shock and that this can be even more intense than the original culture shock on arrival abroad.
- Gather information for yourself and them regarding the re-entry experience. The website [www.sit.edu/STUDYABROAD/parents/docs/parent\\_reentry\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.sit.edu/STUDYABROAD/parents/docs/parent_reentry_handbook.pdf) offers a free downloadable pdf that addresses this issue, and it offers an excellent starting point.

## **8. Arrivederci!**

We hope you've found this information beneficial as you help your student prepare for a study abroad experience. There is always more that could be said, but we've tried to condense all the essential information into this guide to give you a better idea of what to expect and the ways in which you can assist your son or daughter. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you need additional information or have any questions not answered in the Parent Guide. Studying abroad will undoubtedly be an incredible experience for your student, and your support and encouragement will mean a lot as they embark on one of the greatest adventures of their lives. We at the Pantheon Institute are happy that we can offer this opportunity and look forward to getting to know your student.