

Note: The ELP for Seville is included after the Florence plan in this single document

Experiential Learning Plan

Submitted by: Nancy Stalker, Dept. of History

For: Summer 2026 in Florence, Italy

Background

Florence is the capital city of the Italian region of Tuscany. It has an important history as a center of medieval European trade and finance and was one of the wealthiest cities in the world during that era. Many academics consider Florence the birthplace of the European Renaissance during the 15th and 16th centuries, becoming a major artistic, cultural, commercial, political, economic and financial center. During that time, Florence rose to a position of enormous influence in Italy, Europe, and beyond. Its turbulent political history includes periods of rule by the powerful Medici family and numerous religious and republican revolutions. The city is so renowned for its culture, Renaissance art and architecture and monuments that UNESCO declared the Historic Centre of Florence a World Heritage Site in 1982 and Forbes ranked it as one of the most beautiful cities in the world in 2010. This experiential learning plan uses the city as a classroom, focusing on daily life, streets, markets, buildings and museums. It features reflective, and hands-on activities to explore the city's art, architecture, and cuisine

The following plan incorporates key learning objectives and is structured to provide a comprehensive, immersive experience.

Experiential Learning Plan

Each week students will be given exploratory activities to undertake. A shared, dedicated Google Drive will serve as the repository for students' journaling activities to record their experiences, observations, reflections, along with photos, drawings, or short videos they'd like to contribute. Each week students' will be given a guiding question for them to reflect upon during their activities

Student Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate awareness of own cultural values and biases and how these impact their ability to work with others.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of diversity with a focus on the population or topic of interest in the specific Study Abroad program.
3. Communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups to foster deeper cultural understanding.
4. Demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints

Week 1 Renaissance Foundations

The focus of this week is on the birth of the Renaissance and its lasting impact on art, urban planning, and culture. 1) Students will take a tour of the Duomo complex observing the structural features and climbing the dome for a new perspective on Florentine urban planning.

Journals should discuss how the layout of the city reflects both history and contemporary needs. 2) Students will visit a major art museum, such as the Uffizi Gallery, Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze or Museo Nazionale del Bargello. Instead of, or in addition to, a standard tour, students will focus on Renaissance works and artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michaelangelo, Botticelli, Donatello, Raphael and Titian. They will also spend at least five minutes each closely examining two different paintings. Journals should discuss the emotional and technical differences in these paintings and comparing them to other art they are familiar with. They might also try to copy details from a painting in a small sketchbook, noting brushwork and technique, and include these in their posts

Week 2: Medici Legacy and Tuscan flavors

The focus of this week is to explore how the Medici family and the concept of patronage influenced Florentine life, art, and food. 1) Students will visit the Palazzo Pitti and Boboli Gardens. Journal entries will discuss the shift from religious themes to more secular, palatial art. 2) Students will visit the Mercato Centrale, taste different local delicacies and talk to vendors about their food traditions. Journals will record experiences at the market focusing on sensory details and how the foods connect to Florentine culture. Outside the Mercato Centrale is the San Lorenzo market, that sells leather goods and clothing, mainly for tourists. Journals will reflect on the importance of preserving traditional crafts in a modern city. What role do artisans play in Florence's economy and identity?

Week 3: Modernism and Contemporary Interpretations

The focus of this week is to think about how Florence's artistic and cultural traditions have evolved and are reinterpreted by modern artists and chefs. 1) Students will visit the Museo Novecento to explore 20th and 21st century Italian art. They will also seek out street art and contemporary architecture throughout the city. Journal will identify a piece of modern art or architecture that reinterprets a Renaissance-era theme. 2) Students will visit a contemporary Florentine restaurant for a meal and talk to chefs, managers or waiters about how they incorporate traditional Tuscan ingredients into modern recipes. Journals will document your meal and observations, including a comparison of traditional and modern cuisine.

Week 4: Synthesis and Reflection

The focus of this week is to reflect on your experiences and synthesize your journal observations and photos from the previous three weeks. They will visit another of the museums from Week 1 and revisit Mercato Centrale or another restaurant. Journals will reflect on how their expanded knowledge base and language skills have helped them understand and/or appreciate things about the market, museum, or restaurant that they didn't realize earlier.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric

Learning Outcome	Excellent	Satisfactory	Below Expectations
Demonstrate awareness of own cultural values and biases and how these impact their ability to work with others	Journal entries are engaging, analytical and insightful	Journal entries record student visits and respond to weekly prompts	Fails to submit regular journal entries, or entries lack meaningful intercultural interactions
Demonstrate knowledge of diversity with a focus on the population or topic of interest in the specific Study Abroad program	Journal entries apply classroom and previous excursion learning to new experiences	Journal entries describe activities and cultural differences without applying any analysis	Journal entries do not attempt to analyze or comment on cultural differences
Communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups to foster deeper cultural understanding.	Journal entries analyze interactions with locals noting what was learned or experienced	Journal entries describe interactions with a local	Journal entries show no evidence of interaction with locals
Demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints	Journal entries reflect interdisciplinary thinking to connect Florentine culture, art, and architecture to historical and contemporary practices	Journal entries note different viewpoints but do not analyze or connect to history and culture	Journal entries do not comment on different viewpoints