

Practical information for living in Bergamo

The information on this page has been provided by the students of the 43rd Course, 2003/04 and updated by the students of the 47th, 2007/2008 and 49th, 2009/10 courses for the benefit of future students of F.'C.I.S.M.' and does NOT constitute a part of the Centre's official website.

"Your year in Bergamo is going to be an incredible adventure, for both the intellect and the soul. None of this information is meant to be authoritative nor exhaustive, but is just to serve as a jumping off point so that you can be better prepared. We hope this helps you avoid expensive mistakes and allows you to relax and concentrate on learning Montessori (which is why you're here!)".

A good website for general information about living in Lombardia (Bergamo) is: <http://milan.angloinfo.com/>. Here you will find information on schooling, living, going out, etc.

Getting to Bergamo from the Airport

Taxis anywhere can be pretty expensive, so here are some alternative forms of transportation from the airport. Always remember to ask the general cost of fare before getting in a taxi to avoid surprises. There are additional charges for luggage and night time.

Airport Options Cost

Milan Malpensa Direct taxi to Bergamo 100-120 €

Milan Malpensa Direct bus to Bergamo 12€

*There are only 3 of these buses per day- check www.zaniviaggi.it (ita)

Under: Orari Bergamo-Milano Aeroporto di Malpensa

Milan Linate Direct taxi to Bergamo 80-100€

Milan Linate Bus to Milano Centrale

Then train to Bergamo Less than 10€

Milan-Bergamo (Orio) Bus to Bergamo 2€

Milan-Bergamo (Orio) Direct Taxi Less than 20€

Related websites: Milan (Bergamo) Orio Airport www.sacbo.it (ita, eng)

Milan Malpensa Airport and Milan Linate Airport www.sea-aeroportimilano.it (ita, eng)

If you decide to **get around Bergamo by ATB bus** (the orange bus), a ticket is 1.05€ and is good on all forms of ATB transport for 75 minutes (including the funicolare). We recommend looking into a bus pass (abbonamento) at the ATB office by the train station. If you have your school ID, you can get a discount (youths pay 19€ per month, adults over 30 pay more). DO NOT try to ride the bus without a ticket or without validating- students have done it and the fine if, and when, you get caught is 22€. The officers also don't accept the "I didn't know because I am a foreigner" excuse. Related website: www.atb.bergamo.it (ita)

One **hostel** in Bergamo is the Nuovo Ostello di Bergamo, in Via Galileo Ferraris 1. This is about 4 kilometers from the train station and the cost of a taxi is about 10€. The reception

is open from 7AM to midnight daily. You can e-mail them at hostelbg@spm.it. Book ahead!

Housing

The School is NOT responsible for finding you housing or acting as a go-between for you and your landlord. The following information is only to help you line up something for when you arrive, since waiting until the last minute to find housing can be a big mistake and costly and nerve-racking.

[Monocale](#) is one room, [bilocale](#) is two bedrooms. [Affitti](#) or [affitto](#) means to rent.

OPTION #1: You can find an apartment to rent by yourself or to share. By law, FCISM is not allowed to give out the names and contact information of other students, so you can look into who you are going to share with when you get here. An apartment to rent by yourself is about 500€-650€ NOT including utilities (called "spese" or "consumo"). You can plan on approximately 100€ a month for utilities, depending on the size of the apartment and how much you are consuming (heat, water, etc.). The contact information for known landlords is:

Agenzia Rota (speak English)
Via San Francesco D'Assisi, 6 - 24121 Bergamo
(tel.) 035/232167
(mob.) 348/5168567
(fax.) 035/248357
e-mail: agerota@inwind.it

Doris Schnabel is a friend of the college who has an apartment to rent and also a network of friends with apartments to rent. I have taken her contact details from the notes left by the 43rd student group:

Doris Schnabel (American)
Via Torretta, 29 - 24125 Bergamo
(mob.) 339/7819821
(tel.) 035/241406
e-mail: daschnabel@hotmail.com

The site: www.casa.it may be helpful.

www.EasyStanza.it : this is a free internet service where you can find mostly rooms in shared houses; but it is worth a look as one of us found a one bedroomed apartment in via Pignollo and no sharing which has been brilliant.

Retecasa has some listings online.

In via Pignolo itself there seems to be lots of apartments to rent. If you are still looking and are coming over a few days before the course starts then you might just want to walk up and down and get the phone numbers from the outside of the buildings.

Or, find an English speaker in one of the walk in agencies. Here are some agencies with English speakers: (From experience it is better to phone than to email)

- IHC : <http://agenzie.casa.it/IHC.htm> IHC: Marco Tacchini – efficient from our experience in 2007. Phone number: Italy – 035217955. Now in via Garibaldi
- Eleonora Capronii : www.eleonoracaproniimobiliare.eu This agency is in via Pignolo. Eleonora has some English. Her phone number is: (Italy) 035-235160. She is on holiday from 11 to 24 August 08. She currently has 2 flats in Bergamo for rent, in the Zambonate region. You will find these on the website but not the prices. The monolocale is E450 a month, the bilocale is E500 a month. She seemed really nice
- Affiti Service: www.affittiservice.com This agency is in via Guiseppe Verdi off of via Pignolo. The owner from experience last year has very good English. They are currently closed until 28 August for holiday

There is another estate agent in via Pignolo (no 93) which had details of 2 places for rent in the window, in Bergamo. It was mostly a sales agency; but the number is (italy): 035 249869. The name of the agents is: Consulenze & Intermediazone.

OPTION #2:

You can (if you are a woman) live in a convent. You do not have to be catholic or religious. It is like a boarding house. Of the 43rd session, there were 5 women who lived at the convent of Caterina Cittadini on Via Rocca in Citta Alta. The rent is between 475€ and 550€ depending on if you get a single or double and if you have a bathroom in the room. This is a deal considering you have laundry facilities at the convent, linens and utilities are included, and they feed you all three meals Monday through Friday. You can eat out or cook for yourself on the weekends. You can get a key if you will be coming back after the curfew of 10PM. The contact information is:

Suor (=Nun) Elena or Signorina Tina (they don't speak English, but they'll work with you)
 Convitto Pensionata Caterina Cittadini
 Via Rocca, 10 24129 Bergamo Alta
 (tel.) 035/243911

*There are other convents in the area who take boarders, but they have a strict curfew.

OPTION #3: You can board with a local family, which one student did in the 43rd session.

Accommodation Tips

Sharing bedrooms: Our recommendation - don't do it - other than with your life partner (and even then think twice if you are studying!). Also, don't use a living room as a second bedroom. Your work schedules are likely to be different. If you are handing in albums at different times, one of you will be working round the clock to get things printed while the other wants to relax. Don't go there!!

If you want to stay out of the black market in terms of rent you should have a receipt of some sort every time you pay your landlord/lady

Make sure you read your contract! One of the students almost lost 500 euros due to a misunderstanding in it on the return of the deposit.

If you can, find an apartment where you can control the heating independently. (This is not very easy to do). You will have potentially a higher fuel bill but you will have heat when you want it.

Gas and electricity bills can be combined E150 a month. Ask your landlord if the bills are an estimate. One of us got a bit of a shock with having to pay E360 in July because the previous bills were an estimate and not on actual usage.

School Work

You need to factor in the materials you will need for note-taking (pens, notebooks, paper, colored pencils and/or watercolors). For the best results on your charts, we recommend that you bring Prismacolor or Caran D'Ache or Derwent brand colored pencils and that you bring two or three extra pencils of yellow, blue, brown, green, and red.

Many people also wanted to buy plastic sleeves to protect their album pages. It costs about 4€ for 100 (albums can total 700-1000 pages). Please take all of this into consideration when planning your budget and what to pack. Also, it is advised to bring a small school supply box/bag with you containing basics (protractor, scissors, glue, tape, ruler...).

You will also need paper and binders to turn in your album submissions. If you are going to be typing your albums, YOU NEED A PRINTER. Do not plan on going to Kinko's and paying to print out. MANY students this year bought the Epson Stylus C42UX printer for about 60€ at Auchan (like a Walmart) but there is no guarantee that Auchan will carry this printer in the future, so if you decide to buy your printer here, you could have the cartridges mailed to you from home.

Ink cartridges

Let it be said that you will go through many ink cartridges- we experienced that for each album submission you will need about one ink cartridge. These cartridges cost about 17€ each. Let it also be said that you could maybe pick up the needed cartridges for less money at home (depending on where you live). Basically, anything having to do with technology will be expensive in Italy, so come prepared with your surge protectors, etc. In our experience, some cartridges do not like air travel and burst.

There are several places to buy cartridges i.e. at the bottom of via Tomasso - on via Navarro Sauro; and also in the big technical shop next to Pam supermarket. A good place that does refillable cartridges, so therefore the content of ink is a lot greater for the price is the: Eco Store: via Verdi 1/D (www.ecostore.it) They give a discount if you take in an empty cartridge and also have a 10 or 9 system when you get a card from them.

Observation Weeks

Another cost associated with school is the cost incurred when doing observations. In the 43rd course year, two of our three observation weeks were in Milan, so you will have the cost of taking the bus or train (about 30€ per week and there is a special pass you can buy

at the bus station that discounts the second week), plus any lunch costs (which can be about 10€ per day). The third week of observations is spent in Como. You will need to stay in a hotel and pay for all your meals and local transportation there. The cost of that week was approximately 250€. The hotel we stayed at was Albergo Teatro Sociale, which is centrally located and inexpensive.

You will also have the opportunity to observe abroad. The centre will provide a list of schools that have participated in the past. Most are linked directly from the Bergamo airport by www.ryanair.com. There are places where we would highly recommend that you observe and we have left this list with the college.

Some schools have their half term holidays at the same time as observation weeks. Whilst you may not want to organise your final observations until nearer the date, you might want to find out when the half term holidays are (for example, Ireland could only accommodate 1 week of the 3 and that was for the first week of observation, so we all missed going there!)

Computers and IT ‘stuff’

Your computer

Know your computer and what it can do for you i.e. how to construct a table of contents (if you are not doing page numbers)

Be able to type quickly. If you cannot type quickly, some of us took notes by hand and then inputted them into the computer later. This worked well and is quite acceptable.

Take care of your wrists early! Hand and wrist fatigue sneak up quickly with so much typing. At least 2 students had trouble with painful wrists towards the end of the school year through typing. Maybe bring a rolled up small towel into class as a rest/means to raise your wrists to a good level when typing for a long period on a laptop.

Battery life

We recommend that you have a good computer battery that lasts 4-5 hours and/or a second, external battery. This has to be compatible with the voltage of your pc so we recommend that you bring it with you.

You cannot re-charge your computer or your phone at the college. If you are not going home at lunchtime to re-charge your computer and do not want to borrow other people's computer notes, then you are likely going to need an external battery for your pc.

Internet access and phones

Buy a cellular phone when you arrive if you plan on talking with people at home. Getting a fixed phone in your apartment is difficult. Pay phones are inconvenient and expensive. Incoming calls on cell phones are free!

It is possible to purchase a WiFi internet USB from the phone carriers. Wind: 15 euro for 100 hours/month. It is advisable to purchase one SIM card for the phone and one for the internet as it is more convenient.

Internet and cheap phone shops:

- At the bottom of via Tomasso on the junction with via Nazario Sauro: phone and internet shop
- In via Pignolo: a phone and internet shop
- Internet only: in and outside of the library in Citta Alta (need the Wifi code which the library will give you)
- Internet only: Cafe degli Artisti in san Tomasso provides wireless access. The manager, Francesco, knows and is sympathetic to Montessori students!

Health

Dress warmly in the winter! You spend a lot of time walking to and from school and around town running errands and you don't want to get sick (obviously). It would be a good idea to pack a few things that you know you'll probably need for health, such as aspirin, cough syrup, Pepto Bismouth, and all your prescription drugs that you'll need for a year (don't think you can just get those here or that you can have them mailed to you if you run out- bring all prescriptions you will need for 12 months and talk to your doctor at home about how to talk to your insurance about the cost associated).

In the event you need the services of a doctor, you can make an appointment to see:

Dr. Maurizio Bartolini
(tel.) 335/8310286

*Bring your Italian dictionary with you so that you can be specific about your symptoms. Their English is limited.

If you need a vet, you can contact:

Daniela Perniceni
Ambulatorio veterinario
Via Liguria, 2 - 24030 Mozzo (BG)
(tel.) 035/460024
(mob.) 333/3459104

There is a gym on Via Baioni (18) called Centro Sport Piu' if you are someone who needs regular exercise.

Things to bring with you

Layers of clothes:

the temperature can vary considerably: between days; and between the outside temperature and the inside temperature of college. It gets cold in class and many of us were working in our coats at times.

Long underwear and a hot water bottle:

Most heating in apartments is controlled by date (also the college) not by outside temperature. Some students were very cold in their apartments because the heating is not switched on until mid October. Feeling cold is miserable and distracting – a hot water bottle is comforting and we could not find them in Bergamo.

Index cards:

If you use index cards for making notes, we could not find them in Bergamo. All other office supplies we could find here, so we recommend buying it here and not hauling it with you.

Miscellaneous Info

Shops are usually closed all day Sunday (ALL the shops in Citta' Bassa) and also one other morning or afternoon per week. Shops also close for a few hours for lunch.

PLAN AHEAD! Do not wait to go to the grocery store until you are out of food. Do not plan on taking the very last train home- there may be a strike- you never know.

Don't get dehydrated. There are **public fountains** all over the city. Drink, drink, drink.

Some students this year opened **bank accounts** and found that it was very expensive to do so (there are many fees associated with transactions). The alternatives are to use the ATM or to bring all your money in travelers' checks. It is very expensive to have money wired to you or wired to an Italian account. It is much better to have money put into your checking account and then you just access it from the ATM (there is a about a \$300 limit per day from the ATM).

In Italian culture, you generally do not **tip** for services.

If you can, **learn some Italian** as you will use it outside of the college. The shopkeepers and bar staff are very friendly and will help you learn more and help you to be understood.

To **pay bills**, you need to go upstairs in the post office building on Via Locatelli (the one with the big clock tower). You need to bring the bill itself and cash to pay with. To pay your tuition, you need to use an international draft, which can be obtained from Bank of America or Citibank (if you have an account with them). You can also try BB&T, or ask at your local bank for their recommendation.

Take care of all your **visa** business WELL IN ADVANCE.

If you need to change your **return flight**, do it EARLY!! Availability is limited in the summer.

Post office

The post office at the bottom of via Masone is open until 7pm and on Saturday mornings. Tabacchi shops also sell stamps (Franco Bollo). The post office also has an ATM machine.

Receiving Post

From our experience, it seems that letters in ordinary sized envelopes get delivered to home addresses here in Italy very easily and quickly. If you are being sent an outsized envelope (i.e. A4) or package, we recommend that you have it delivered to the college; even so, these can take a lot longer to receive.

If you receive a package of clothes from home, you may have to pay a rather large fee to the Italian customs department (some students have been asked to pay 100€ or more for one package).

Pharmacies

There are plenty around. Mrs Vavassori at the college recommended the pharmacy in via Torquato Tasso, off of via Pignolo, which several people used. A doctor works there, who speaks English and is able to give some medicine, (in our case antibiotics for a chest infection), without the need for a prescription. The staff in there are very helpful too.

Shopping

Markets:

- There is a Monday morning market just beyond Bergamo rail station which does food, clothes, household items (bus route 1C if you don't want to walk).
- There is a Saturday farmer's market one Saturday per month and Mrs Grazzini has the details of this.

Supermarkets:

- Pam: (its smell seems to be part of its ongoing history) on Via Gabrielle Camozzi
- Pellicano: on Viale Vittorio Emanuele 11 (by the junction with Via Brigata Lupi) and on bus route 1 if you live on or near that route
- Essaylunga: A big supermarket, 30 minute walk from via Pignolo. This also does a delivery service. It's easy, fast and only 7.90 euros extra to your door (they also deliver some office supplies)

Small shops, some examples and you will find your own:

- A good vegetable shop in via Pignolo
- Via Masone: 2 vegetable shops, 2 meat shops (1 very expensive and 1 that does cooked chicken), 2 delicatessens
- Via Pignolo: a small corner shop just before via Tomasso for emergencies

'Out of town' shopping on a grand scale that is cheap

- Auchan: a huge store that sells food and everything else, including pcs and printers. (bus #2) Some of us brought Christmas presents for home here
- IPER: a huge store in the Orio centre by Bergamo airport (bus route IC: blue bus ticket for zone 1c) – sells food and everything else except for printers and pcs (or at least not in August 2007)

Fairtrade shop

- A wonderful, friendly shop at the end of via Zambonate on the corner with via Giacomo

For young children

Schools/daycare

- Scuola Montessori from age 3 on - Zari was happy there - what can I say? She learned some letters, drew some pictures.... aftercare is 6 euro per day.
- Avia (from 10 months' old when she started) went to Scuola Alice - it is a nido - they take very small kids, and we were happy with her care - don't know about the older children.
- Another option: the Swiss School - we can put you in contact with someone who could answer questions about that. They take young ones - 2 or so. The contact seem happy with it for her child. It is on the other side of citta alta - the north east.

Parks

- Parco Suardi is great.
- The park on the way up to citta alta is also magical and fun.

Food

- The pizzeria in piazza saint anna has a children's room with toys - we discovered it our last night in Bergamo!
- The people at Donizetti in citta alta are great and the food is good.
- A lovely outdoor bar that requires a bike ride, or bus ride, but is extremely child friendly is Bacaro - see www.bacaro.org - they're on facebook too. This is managed by Francesco from Degli Artisti.
- For anyone living in or near via Toretta: Trattoria Caironi is also great for children, and the bar Oasi on the corner of Toretta and Noli has an outdoor play area for children. Food there is mediocre
- Borgo is a good one for a date - great food and nice ambience.
- La colomb on top of citta alta, past the 2nd funicular and then heading downhill – very, very good food! They are somewhat child friendly and have a cat there too.

(Winter) indoor fun:

I would recommend the Orio Center and Auchan for winter time fun (nightmarish, but fun) - there are play areas for children in both places.

Other information

Bed and Breakfast places for visitors

- Excellent, private B&B at I Ghiri,: just above Città alta on Via Beltrami. Not central but lovely. About €65 per night, double room: contact Christine 3387198216
- Entra la Mura in Citta Alta www.bedandbreakfast-elm.it
- B&B website: <http://en.bbplanet.it/>
- La Toretta B&B is right on the square by the funicolare in Citta Alta and is a good price. www.latorrettabergamoalta.com

Good **photocopy** shop: follow Via S. Tomaso down past Cafe degli artisti and Carrara Academy to end, cross main road, straight ahead on frontage road.

Good swimming:

- either at the Centro Sportivo in Città bassa (bus line 2, Ospedale stop)
- or at the seminary in Città alta, entry from Colle aperto, up a long stone driveway. Cost €5-6
- outdoor pool downtown in summer.

(Ladies need swimming hats which can be brought at the pool)

Lovely choir: at the little catholic church on the corner of Vias Galgario and Suardi - Chiesa dal Galgario. Loosely organized, they sing at mass on Saturday eve / Sunday morning. No one speaks much English, but they love enthusiastic singers.

Good happy hours: (i.e. where the price of a drink includes food and is often a good, cheap option if you don't want to cook or want a treat for a Friday night)

- El Tropico Latino has one of the only spicy salsas in town and a cook from Louisiana if anyone wants to ask for something special or speak English. (on via tasso off of via Pignolo)
- Café in the piazza at the top of the Funicolare
- Cafe degli Artisti on Via San Tomasso
- Rossi Antico near the fountain at Via Pignolo and Via San Tomasso

Bike Purchase:

Our bike from Zambelli in via Toretta served us well and was a good price – about E300 euros new.

Getting out of Bergamo: Ideas for half day and day trips:

- Verona: 3 hours by train
- Lake Lecco: ½ hour by train
- Venice: 3 1/2 hours by train
- Lake Iseo: 1 hour bus and then 1 hour boat trip for good swimming.
- Sorisole: 20 minute bus ride up into the village then a 15 min walk outside of the village into the hills for walking

Link to the **student facebook group** for networking, finding roommates, etc.
www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=24546304866&ref=ts

"Have fun! You will be learning all sorts of interesting things and will have access to all sorts of great art exhibits and cultural events that you never would get to do at home. This is going to be an amazing year, so enjoy it!"