

**10 months
full of Italia**

**FUN WITH FRIENDS
FAMILY LIFE
SCHOOL TIME**

To fly means...

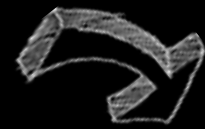
Volare è...
my exchange year in the land of the sun

Listen to our stories and start your **JOURNEY** in Italy

it's the word
that represents...



○ **#Volare**



... my whole experience in Italy,
a **DREAM** that lasted one
year long

○ **is a dream.**

#Volare
is a song.



○ **#Volare**
is a mission.



The one that has brought an
Italian AFS returnee, Luca Parmitano,
into space for 6 months.

In July, during our
last day in this beautiful country, we
"phone called him"
on the International
Space Station.

representing Italian
TRADITION
in the whole world



Feel the blue Italian sky



I shot this picture during my exchange week in Naples last March. As we were visiting Castel Dell'Ovo, Ignacio, a Chilean student staying in Florence, agreed to "pose" for me. This is because this picture, where Ignacio looks strong and powerful, perfectly represents my year experience in Italy. We have flown away from our home countries and now we have become stronger and free. We will be changed and more enriched people when we go back home, no doubt about it!

Wanda, from **Germany** to Venice

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ARRIVEDERCI ITALIA



**Fasten your seatbelts
and let's LAND in... Italy!**



MY NEXT STATION

Railway stations: the opening of the train doors ready to reveal our destinies. This warm September afternoon represented the best way to begin my long journey in Italy.

Marcela, from *Argentina* to Bologna



Our arrival in Italy
SEPTEMBER





Where the hell is Matt?

At our first orientation camp, we were inspired by Matt's crazy dance to have fun and start meeting each other. Dozens of different nationalities following the same path...



My beginning

First days with my **new family**

SAVE THE DATE Last Thursday of September.
IDD (Intercultural Dialogue Day)

A welcome party in my **classroom? Nice!**



On the stage, in a theatre in the South of Italy, to tell the audience about my experience... in my very limited Italian!

Kornrawee, from *Thailand* to Catania



School plays a fundamental role in your experience in Italy.

But is not only a place to study



Before coming to Italy... start learning a few words with "Ro-

setta Stone". Intercultura provides Year Program and Semester Program students with an online language course, during the months before their arrival in Italy.

Life in my classroom



OCTOBER




By the end of October, relationships with the **NEW CLASS MATES** have been fully established.

Here I am with my friend Marco at the high school named after the two judges that have become a symbol of the Italian struggle against the Mafia, "Falcone Borsellino".

Jenny, from the USA to Arese, near Milan





ZOOM discover the Italian culture

SCHOOL

How many lessons should
I attend and for how many hours?

Here are some basic tips
on the Italian school

Facts and general information about Italian Schools

- The *scuola media superiore* (high school) in Italy lasts for five years.
- The school year starts in mid September and ends in June.
Some one day civil holidays are spread over the school year and in some regions, the School Authorities may foresee a few other days of vacation.
- School days are Monday-Saturday (some schools may have a "short week" – Monday to Friday).
- The day usually starts about 8.00 and finishes about 1.30.
- There are normally 5-6 periods a day – each about 50 minutes long.
- A typical class has 20-25 students.
- Students are of the ages 14-19.
- Lunch is not served in the Italian schools.

- Almost all INTERCULTURA/AFS students are placed in public schools. There are however many private schools and host brothers/sisters may attend them.
- There is a 10-15 minute break (*intervallo*) half way through the morning, when the *campanella* (school bell) rings, students leave their classes and meet each other in the school hallways, or they use this break to have a snack.
- *La valutazione* (evaluation): Oral and written tests are given for all subjects. The grading system is based on the scale of 0-10, but the extreme values are never used (3/4=very poor, 5=insufficient, 6=sufficient, 7=good, 8/9=excellent).

For example, when you finally receive your *pagella* with your *voti* and you have received one or more scores of 4 or 5, you should decide to work harder.

NOVEMBER

We're ready to cook



YES, IT'S TRUE!

We discovered the Italian culture by meeting around the dinner table. I loved it so much!

Hilde, from Norway to Bolzano



and **DON'T FORGET** in Italy all lunches end with a good cup of "espresso"...

Shyra, from Costa Rica to Bari



ALEPH

"El Aleph": it may sound curious, but I decided to name this picture "El Aleph" because it perfectly shows that particular moment in which time meets place, giving birth to a complete sense of peace. El Aleph is that gram of happiness that you can reach at the end of the path you have undertaken. It's like the railroad tracks: you can see their beginning, but not the end and you can get off at any stop thinking that is your final destination. You'll soon realize, however, that there is still a long way to go. There will always be a new person, a new place a new thing to get to know... there will always be an aleph waiting. Mine is here, in Italy.

Nicole, *from Bolivia to Milan*

Into the Italian winter

Follow your way



FUNNY XMAS!

In Malaysia, I didn't even know about the existence of skis... at the beginning I thought I could never move... but then something had changed...

Khairin, from *Malaysia* to *Matera*



the first snow
DECEMBER



Winter greetings in all the languages... to the world!

PLAY

DANCING WITH AFS

"It can make me feel the AFS spirit, friendship, understanding, empathy, love"

Alyona, from *Russia* to *Cagliari*

LIVING IN ITALY

The culture of spending time together

Italy. A lot of history, but take your time to have fun

At the beginning, your arrival will arise a lot of curiosity and with it lot of questions about both you and your country – some of them could be rhetorical or seem like stupid questions. In other moments, it's possible that you become overwhelmed with confusion and linguistic difficulties. You will meet groups of friends that have been together for a long time: not all of them (perhaps none) will know your language and they will have shared the same experiences, the same friends, the same pace and habits which are completely new to you.

To become part of a group, other than talking about yourself, you need to try to understand what the others are expressing both verbally and non-verbally. Therefore, it is important to observe what

they are doing. Young people usually get together at the house of a friend, or in places where one can play sports or do other activities. Foreign students who have been on the program have noticed that young Italians talk a lot in the afternoon about what they are going to do at night, but rarely ever do what they had planned earlier. In fact, they usually prefer to “stare insieme”, just to stay together. They tend to go to a bar (Italian bars are completely different from American bars, they are more like snack bars), a pizzeria, or a birreria, a discoteca, a “festa” (party).

In small towns and cities, both young people and adults traditionally go to the main piazza, park or street in the afternoon or on Sunday morning to walk and meet their friends.

We were there: check with **LUCA PARMITANO!**

JANUARY

TO FLY, TRULY

I'm excited, it's doesn't happen every day to meet an astronaut ready to fly into space"

Christian, from **Brazil** to Rome

In 2010, 6 astronauts have been chosen out of 8.000 applicants to be part of the European Space Agency 2013-14 missions. Two of them were former AFSers: Luca Parmitano and Samantha Cristoforetti. Samantha Cristoforetti is preparing for her mission that will start on December 2014 and will last 5 months. Luca Parmitano set off for the ISS (International Space Station) in May 2013. All Intercultura, especially the AFS foreign students, followed his whole mission, and had the chance to meet him. In January, various students met Luca in Turin, Roma and Naples as he was presenting his mission and Luca was enthusiastic to share his short stay in Italy with those young people that were then living that part of his experience that gave birth to his successful career. As a matter of fact, Luca's host father in the US was in the Air Force and introduced him to this reality that has brought him into the space, twenty years afterwards.

Then in May, many AFS foreign students were invited on the stage, together with Samantha Cristoforetti to the great event organized by the Italian Space Agency to follow the launch of the spacecraft with which Luca was "traveling" towards the ISS where he remained until October 2014.

Finally, on 7th July, the very last day of the foreign students' stay in Italy, as they were gathered all together near Rome, together with the Italian Space Agency, they made a special call into outerspace and spoke with Luca, who was 400 km above their heads. An experience they all will bear in their hearts for a long time.

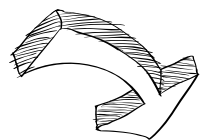


PLAY

Elena, from Romania to Vicenza for one year, on TV

I WAS ON THE NATIONAL TV

... and this was my question that went into space. "Are you more afraid now or when you went on your school year abroad at 17 with AFS?"



During Carnival every joke counts

ON A SPECIAL MARDI GRAS

My Italian friends invited me to participate in their city's Carnival, saying that it would be a Medieval "battle of the oranges"...


Carlos, from Peru to Turin



Carnival

FEBRUARY



A person is kneeling on a sandy beach, working on the rear wheel of a bicycle. The bicycle is silver with a blue mirror and a yellow water bottle. The background shows the blue sea and a clear sky.

As I was walking along the seashore,
I bumped into a man bicycle racing
all on his own in that beautiful spot
in the Mediterranean Sea. I shot
this picture in order to never forget
what I learnt that day: it is not im-
portant always to say a word...but
to remain on our own for a while to
think over our life.

Karla, from Guatemala to Palermo

A spring full of new sensations

Thoughts and rides over the Mediterranean sea

MARCH



Inside the depths of my new homeland

"exploring these caves helped us to discover a new hidden aspect of Italy"

Dexter, from the *Philippines* to L'Aquila



ACROSS TO THE ITALIAN PENINSULA

Thanks to a small trip I took,
I finally got to know a new
face of Italy, a country full
of differences in the land-
scapes, the people, the food

Maria, from *Paraguay* to Milan



To tell the truth...the water was a
bit chilly, but it was so inviting!



Discovering Italy



SÌ PIZZA, NO PIZZO

I will never forget the week I spent in Palermo. I knew that the capital city of Sicily suffers from the presence of the Mafia, but I wasn't aware of the thousands of people that fight against it daily.

The leitmotiv of our week, organized by the local volunteers, was concentrated on allowing us to meet many people that are involved in movements against the Mafia...

Well, all of you know what pizza is. The pizzas I ate in Sicily... were superb! There I learned the meaning of "pizzo": it is the money the Mafia illegally asks shop owners to pay, so the Mafia will "protect them". Now many courageous shop owners refuse to pay. We met some of them, and they presented us with these great t-shirts: "cut the pizzo"!

Sandra, from the USA to Verona

APRIL

time to meditate

An afternoon at the lake

I discovered that Italians spend a lot of time with their family. During work days, the parents are devoted to their jobs and are quite tired, but on the weekends they love playing and “chatting” with their children. This makes me think that families in Italy are much more united than ours in China.

Fan Li, from *China* to *Ivrea*



TO LOVE

We cannot do this thing
in Japan! Emi, from *Japan* to *Genova*

FOOTBALL: a real passion

This number one passion in
Italy has indeed affected us, too!

Moritz, from *Austria* to *Como*



Here is **my new home**

This picture represents Noto, the little village that I consider my new hometown. After spending five months here, I can truly say that I feel "netina" (i.e. a citizen of Noto). In my picture, the sunset colors highlight the warmth I have been greeted with, making us feel really at home.

Maria Isabel, from *Bolivia* to *Siracusa*



Thus we see Italy

THE PHOTO CONTEST

CLICK



Italy pictured in its daily perspectives: habits, folklore, landscapes. Anything that may stress the Italian cultures' characteristics. Every year, foreign exchange students in Italy can enter this contest with three pictures each month. Here's what I've seen.

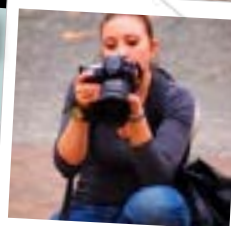


MAY

I'M THE WINNER!

I left my country full of stereotypical ideas about Italy. For example, I thought that all Italian mammas were housewives... especially the Sicilians which I was about to meet... I soon changed my mind: my Sicilian host mother is full of interests, she's a teacher at school and of yoga classes!

read
it



I did an interview
for an italian news-
paper!



DIE HARD BELIEFS

Some clichés about Italians

People abroad often seem to think of Italians along certain lines and expect certain stereotypical behaviors to be always true, although that is not always the case.

1. **ITALIANS ALWAYS EAT PASTA:** It is true that Italians love pasta and miss it when they are abroad, but foreigners should know and understand that Italians do not always eat pasta. Actually, this habit changes from family to family.
2. **ITALY'S ECONOMY IS BASED ON ART:** Italians are really proud of their artistic inheritance, masterpieces left by inimitable artists and their important history; however, art isn't the only driving force behind Italian economy.
3. **ITALIANS ARE CATHOLIC:** The Church plays an important role in Italian society, however, some clarity is needed. First of all, being Catholic for some Italians is often a habit or a tradition passed on by their families more than a personal belief.

4. **ITALIANS LIVE FOR FOOTBALL:** Football (soccer) is certainly the most popular sport in Italy. While Sundays in the U.S. are often reserved for that other kind of football, in Italy many people, especially men, start watching soccer in the early afternoon and finish the evening with sports news programs like the *Domenica Sportiva*. Still, there are indeed Italians who don't like football, as well as, those who prefer other sports, from F1 racing and basketball to bike racing and rugby.

5. **ITALIANS ARE POOR:** Some foreign cultures think that Italians are poor. Actually, it is important to understand that the economic situation and conditions of Italians change considerably from place to place. There is a considerable gap between the North and the South of Italy, but the average Italian population is far above the poverty line. Italian AFS host families generally fall into the middle to upper-middle class social economical level.

CLICK



6. **ITALIANS GESTICULATE** (click to see a gallery on facebook): Italians often like to use body language to express themselves; however, it must be noted that Southern Italians tend to talk more with their hands than Northerners. Neapolitans are the most famous for gesticulating when talking.

The background of the page is a photograph of a sunset over a vast, flat landscape, likely a body of water. The sky is a deep orange, and the sun is a large, bright yellow circle on the right side. The horizon is a straight line across the middle of the image. In the distance, a small, dark boat is visible on the water.

my exchange year
is coming to an end

Flying over the horizon

Where cultures meet

Thus I've seen Italy, full of diversities, a place where cultures are as many as you can imagine and each culture is nurtured by the others. I've found an "open place", capable of hosting not only people, but also other people's cultures.

Maria Belén, from *Paraguay* to Rimini

JUNE

my pictures from Italy

END OF THE SCHOOL! My books are stored... it's time now to gather all those "hidden" pictures that tell my Italian story.

Evelyne, from Belgium to Florence



Naples, walking in the city centre. This picture represents a precious memory of my stay in Italy, because it depicts this country as it is perceived by most people: lively, warm, cheerful. Moreover, the motorbike, and traffic more in general, are two characteristics connected to Italy. Other stereotypes remaining in many people's minds are good food, the "dolce vita", people's kindness, but also messiness and disorder. As I look back at this picture, I can see the true Italy.

Christopher, from Australia to Naples

JULY

Arrivederci Italia!

VOLARE VIA

The hot July sun is shining high in the Italian sky... It's time to say goodbye. Hugs, tears and smiles: something new has happened that will affect my entire life...

Aimee, from South Africa to Brescia

A PRESTO!

I'm sure I'll come back... and right at that moment there will be someone waiting for me: another family in my other homeland

Damir, from Bosnia to Lecce

The Core Values and Attributes of AFS

AFS enables people to act as responsible, global citizens working for peace and understanding in a diverse world. It acknowledges that peace is a dynamic concept threatened by injustice, inequity, and intolerance.

AFS seeks to affirm faith in the dignity and worth of every human being and of all nations and cultures. It encourages respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion or social status.

AFS activities are based on our core values of dignity, respect for differences, harmony, sensitivity, and tolerance.

ATTENTION!

Intercultura is not a travel agency and the programs offered must not be considered as tourist packages. Intercultura is an educational institution; therefore, the basic components of the hosting programs offered, which are guaranteed, are the placement in host families (who host voluntarily with no compensation) selected by the organization, orientation sessions, language training (for Year Program and Semester Program students), enrolment in a public high school, insurance coverage, and support by volunteers. Other activities of a more recreational nature (trips, excursions, local activities, etc.) are not guaranteed, given that the programs offered by Intercultura in Italy are not touristic.

Please note that for students coming from countries who are not part of the European Union, the costs related to the visa for studying purposes and the staying permit are students' responsibility.



AFS is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world.

▶ www.afs.org



Intercultura

Incontri che cambiano il mondo. Dal 1955

Intercultura is the Italian representative of AFS Intercultural Programs. You can participate in an AFS Program in Italy by applying to the AFS Partner of your country. You can find the complete list of the AFS organizations that are present throughout the world at www.afs.org Whether you take part in a short program that lasts for a few weeks, or live with someone from another culture for a full year, our exchange programs provide you with a personal growth experience that will last for a lifetime.

Volunteers and Local Chapters

There are over 4000 AFS-Intercultura volunteers throughout Italy and they are divided into 150 local chapters (centri locali) which are located in nearly every province. The local chapters do many things: promote our programs, select students and host families, organize orientation sessions for students and host families during the program, assist and support exchange students and host families, maintain and develop contacts with the schools and local authorities. Furthermore, our volunteers are provided with numerous training sessions organized on local, regional and national levels.

The volunteers are supported by a small body of professionals. The people who work in the national offices (the main office in Colle Val d'Elsa near Siena, and smaller offices in Milan and Rome) coordinate the various aspects related to the following areas: Sending programs, Hosting programs, Development and Marketing, Administration (including travel), Volunteers, School relations and Public relations in general.

▶ www.intercultura.it

