

"Viva Italiano!"

Cultural Immersion

A Service Leadership Program for Interns



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INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

"Viva Italiano" is a two-week cultural immersion program in the greenest region of Italy and all of Europe. Adult learners will experience life in rural Abruzzo. Far from the crowds of mainstream tourism, this global program offers hands-on experiences that

connect learners to Italy's heritage, traditions, and daily rhythms through food, language, art, and community.

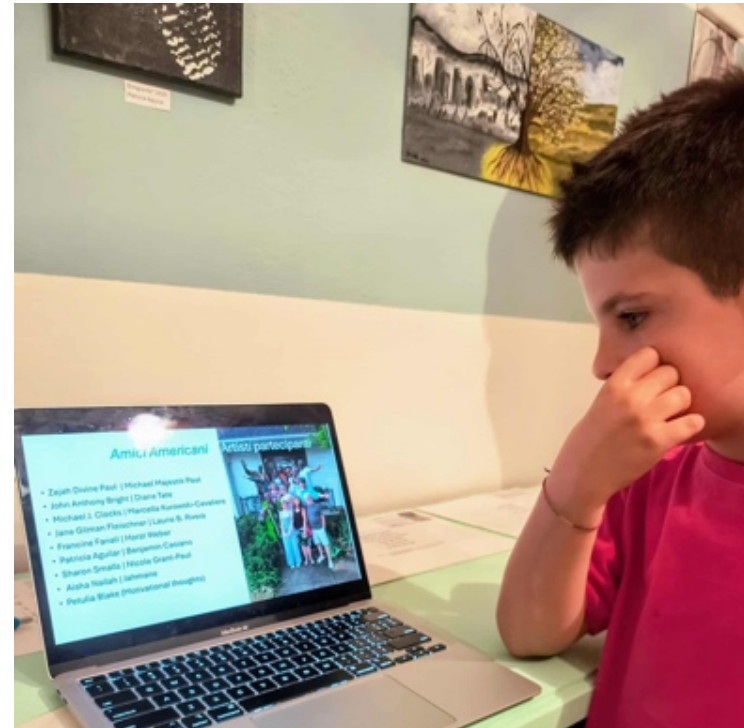
Course Overview

This immersive cultural exploration offers participants rich insight into life in rural Abruzzo, Italy. From learning basic Italian and engaging in everyday activities with villagers to exploring historical sites, visiting local businesses, and participating in traditional activities, learners gain a deeper cultural understanding. Volunteer opportunities and direct interactions with local organizations and individuals further enhance their awareness of community challenges and sustainable practices in small Italian villages. The program concludes with a final project that allows students to synthesize their experiences and contribute a meaningful expression of learning to the host community.

What are the three components of your Community Service Leadership experience:

Cultural Exchange & Education

Paired cultural exchange meetings with local residents: Students will be paired with a local resident for their entire time in Abruzzo and will meet twice weekly. These scheduled meetings



may include practicing each other's languages and exploring local activities to deepen their understanding of Italian culture and customs. It is important that students visit local museums to gain some formal understanding about the Abruzzese history and heritage.

Volunteer Service

Volunteering in cultural, business, or community-related activities: Opportunities may include

assisting in the park, community garden, local museum, senior citizens' home, or café. Volunteer work may also involve participating in community clean-ups or helping to create a community garden with local residents. Students interested in tutoring English to children will meet at the child's home with the parent present.

Project Research & Presentation

Developing an independent project in their field of study and professional interest: This may involve writing a journal or conducting a short assessment to support community development needs. Students will present their work at Casa d'Arte, an art house created by our program to introduce American artists to Abruzzo.

Who You Will be of Service to?

- Young entrepreneurs seeking to improve their conversational English through peer exchange while offering opportunities to experience their creative projects.
- Senior citizens eager to learn about other cultures while sharing their own.
- Young learners interested in authentic cross-cultural connections.
- Community leaders working to enhance the town's appearance and improve the



well-being of senior citizens through a community garden initiative.

- Parents seeking tutoring and support in English language learning for their pre-teens.

Learning Outcome

By the end of this program, participants will be able to demonstrate enhanced cultural understanding, creativity, and personal growth through active engagement with local communities, businesses, and cultural heritage sites. They will apply the insights gained to their field of study, personal interests, and professional development.

The Value of this Program:

This education experience operates in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Its aim is to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to address global challenges and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable world. By engaging with diverse communities, the course fosters a sense of global citizenship and shared responsibility in technological and business development.

Where is Abruzzo and why is it a place for learning?

Abruzzo is a region in **central Italy**. It is nestled between the **Adriatic Sea to the east** and the **Apennine Mountains to the west**. It's often called "*the greenest region in Europe*" because nearly one-third of its territory is protected as national parks and nature reserves.

Because the region is less tourist-saturated, students can engage directly with locals — farmers, artisans, and small business owners. Students practice **real-world intercultural communication**, gaining insights into how business decisions are influenced by culture and tradition.

Here's why Abruzzo is such a remarkable place for a cultural immersion experience:

1. Undiscovered by Mass Tourism:

Abruzzo remains authentic and less commercialized. Visitors experience genuine Italian traditions, family-run businesses.

2. Medieval Hilltop Villages:

The region has many ancient stone villages perched on mountain ridges. Many of these towns have festivals, artisans, and traditions that have endured for centuries.

3. Culinary Heritage: Cooking alongside local *nonnas* (grandmothers) or attending village food festivals offers a powerful connection to Italian culture.

4. Living Traditions and Festivals: Every town has its own *sagra* (local festival) celebrating food, saints, or harvests—complete with music, parades, and dancing.



5. Art, Craft, and Creativity: Abruzzo has a rich artistic tradition—from ceramics to lacemaking.

7. Warm, Welcoming People: Part of immersion in Abruzzo is the people. Locals are proud of their heritage and eager to share their stories, traditions, and hospitality—inviting visitors not just to observe but to *belong*.

How long does the course run?

The course runs for two-weeks in the months of April, May, June, July, September October, and November.

How can you register for the cultural Immersion program?

You can register for the course through your college or university as part of its study abroad or experiential learning program.

Good news: Students also have the opportunity to join the program for a **four-week period** to advance their cultural and service leadership experience.



Two-Week Program: Dates for 2026

- April 5 – April 19
- April 26 – May 10
- May 17 – May 31
- June 7 – June 21
- June 28 – July 12
- July 19 – August 2
- September 6 – Sept 20
- September 27 – October 11
- October 18 – November 1
- November 8 – November 22

WEEKLY PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Sunday (Arrival in Abruzzo): Welcome

First Monday: Orientation & Introduction

- The Program Director and Intern Supervisor will lead the welcome and orientation, provide assignment briefings, facilitate pairings, and prepare students for their roles.
- Students will complete a daily written reflection to document their first impressions and learning experiences.

Monday – Wednesday – Friday (12 hours weekly): Volunteer Service

- Students will perform their assigned volunteer work supporting local cultural, business, or community initiatives.
- Students will complete a daily written reflection to document their experiences and learning.

Tuesday & Thursday (4 hours weekly): Cultural Exchange and Education on Abruzzese Heritage

- Students will meet with cultural peers to deepen their knowledge of local culture, customs, and daily activities. Social interaction is an important part of Italian life. Students will be fully immersed by shadowing locals, cooking together, shopping for groceries, and visiting the coffee shop.
- Students will also visit local museums to learn more about the culture and history of Abruzzo, guided by the

Program Director.

- Students will complete a daily written reflection to document their experiences and learning.

Sunday (4 hours weekly): Project Research

- Field observation: Students will spend time observing the community to identify challenges related to their field of study or interests. They will develop potential solutions for the community. Students will submit their findings to the Program Director by the end of the first week for evaluation and discussion.

Second Saturday: Presentations & Award Ceremony

- Each student will present their project.
- Students will receive a certificate acknowledging the completion of the Cultural Immersion Internship Program in Abruzzo.

Next Day (Sunday): Departure



(Photos are of actual local citizens in Abruzzo who are benefitting from the program).

A few thoughts from the local people

“This is very important for our community.”

– Simona

“Thank you for your service to our community.”

– Mima

“I am inspired by this program.” – Loredana

Maximum students: 12 per course

2-Week Program Fee: \$2,300 per student

2-Week Boarding Cost: \$1,000 (for 2) & \$1,800 (solo)

We will arrange accommodations with a family-owned hotel and agritourism stays, with breakfast included.