

STUDENT EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

Harriette Maguire in Italia!



Back in 2018, I visited Italy with my family which was such a memorable experience, so I decided to start learning the language when I came to Merici in year 7. When the WEP overseas exchange experience came up, I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to go back to Italy and be able to use all the language skills that Merici had taught me over the past 4 years. Especially after the pandemic, I was so excited to travel and be able to see new places again. I went into it trying not to set any expectations, which prompted me to have an open mind. This resulted in me having the best experience; more than I could have ever wished for.

The host family I was placed with lived in the town of Lucca, just 1 hour from Florence. I felt so grateful for this location as it allowed me to visit so much of Italy's northern countryside. My host family took me Pisa, Livorno, Viareggio, Padua, Brescia, and even a very small village in the mountains called Rossa, where we went skiing. Going over in November meant I got to experience my first winter Christmas, which was very special. Monday to Saturday was spent going to school from 8am till 12pm. I attended a languages high school which meant that I was learning Spanish, German, Latin and Italian. Once school had finished, we would go to Nonna's house for lunch with all of the family which was my favourite part of the whole trip. Lots of food, laughter and talking. After that we would do homework, sport, and have dinner around 8pm.

The most challenging part of my program was getting used to the loud way of life that the Italian's live. I am an only child so going from no siblings in a quiet household to a large Italian home did take some getting used too. Around the one-month mark, I really did feel a rewarding shift in my language abilities and became a lot more confident in speaking. As I was only there for two months, this left me ending my program not wanting to leave. But when I arrived at Rome airport to come home, I knew the timing was right.

To any other students wanting to go on exchange, my advice is to go learn as much as you can about the country and its language before you go. It makes such a difference when you are there, and it allows you to build stronger connections with your family and friends. If you have any questions about any aspect of my exchange, feel free to email me at maguirhj@merici.act.edu.au!



Harriette Maguire

