

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EXCEL OXFORD-TUSCANY 2008

WHAT ARE THE DORMS LIKE?

At the Oxford/Tuscany program, we stay in student dorms at St. Hilda's College, some older and charming, some more modern and updated. Laundry facilities are available on campus, and there are several common rooms, one with a pool table and other games. The accommodations in Paris are at a typical student residence with bunk beds and a shared floor bathroom. In Tuscany, our villa features double rooms, each air-conditioned, and with bathroom en suite. Laundry service is available, but is very expensive. Students should plan on bringing Woolite in order to hand-wash clothing. There are some opportunities to go to a laundromat in town, but students should be aware that they will have to plan for this.

WILL I HAVE A ROOMMATE?

The rooms in Oxford are singles. In Paris and Tuscany some of the accommodations are shared and rooming assignments will be made during the course of the program. An important part of the value of the Excel experience is the new friends you will make and the community the staff and students create. Excel is a very active program, and you will spend very little time in your room.

DOES EVERYONE ELSE ON THE PROGRAM ALREADY KNOW SOMEBODY?

A small percentage of our students come to the program with friends from home or from previous summer experiences, but the majority of participants come on their own. One of the best parts of the Excel experience is making new friends, which is often easier to do if you come on your own.

HOW DO I CALL HOME? ARE THERE PHONES IN THE ROOMS?

In order to encourage students to engage actively in the community, Excel does not provide in-room phones at any of our campus locations. Hall and dorm phones are available in all locations. Parents may call the campus office number provided and leave messages for their child, specifying a time for the student to call back, or call the hall or dorm phone at a pre-arranged time. Students can either bring the phone company charge card number that comes with their phone service at home (ATT, Sprint, etc.) and their access number for the country they are visiting or they can buy a phone card once they have arrived in country. Pre-paid phone cards purchased in the U.S. generally do not work internationally.

DO WE HAVE INTERNET ACCESS OR EMAIL ACCOUNTS?

On the Oxford/Tuscany program students may use local Internet cafes in Oxford and Florence for access. E-mail is a reliable and consistent way to keep in touch with family and friends back at home.

CAN I/DO I NEED TO BRING MY LAPTOP?

Students can bring laptops with them. Students should be aware, however, that they will be responsible for carrying and maintaining possession of their own belongings when they travel from place to place. Students will not have access to computers at our Oxford/Tuscany locations. Homework or class assignments are not required to be done on a computer.

A program of Putney Student Travel

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CAN I BRING MY GUITAR?

Students are encouraged to bring musical instruments; cameras, art supplies, sports equipment, or anything else that will help them enjoy their summer. Everyone is encouraged to share his or her talents with others.

WILL I BE ABLE TO GET SOME EXERCISE IN EUROPE?

Sports in our European programs are organized informally. Soccer, frisbee, cricket, and basketball games are usually organized by staff and interested students. Many students start their own running groups which meet before or after class. There are many opportunities for swimming, biking, and hiking. A gym is available for a small fee in Oxford, but not in Tuscany.

HOW MUCH HOMEWORK DO WE HAVE?

Excel is not school, but some out-of-class assignments are necessary to enrich discussions, debates, and field excursions. Depending on the course, students should expect to spend around an hour a day outside of class either working on group projects, reading or completing written assignments.

WHAT IF I DON'T LIKE MY COURSES? CAN I SWITCH?

We encourage students to attend the classes they chose for at least a few days in order to decide their preferences. In many cases, making a switch will not present a problem. Some courses have very strict course limits, and while switching out of one of these classes will not be a problem, it may be impossible to switch into one. The campus director must grant approval for a switch.

I'M A VEGETARIAN/LACTOSE INTOLERANT/OBSERVE KOSHER RULES- WILL THE PROGRAM BE ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE ME?

Students should let program staff know of their dietary needs in advance if possible. Vegetarian options are generally available, and all other dietary needs should be brought to the attention of the directors so that provisions can be made.

DOES EXCEL STORE MY PASSPORT OR CREDIT CARDS?

Learning to be on one's own is an important part of the Excel program, and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own belongings, including passports and travelers' checks/credit cards. Money belts or concealed money pouches are recommended. The Excel staff will assist students in obtaining a new passport if one is lost or stolen.

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