

Amy Carlton
Santa Clara University
Florence: September – December 2012
2012 Scholarship Recipient

Dear Santa Clara County Sister Commission,

The past four months I spent in Florence, Italy were the best of my life. I was able to see and do things that would only have been possible in Europe. On September 3, after over 24 hours of traveling, I arrived in Florence, extremely sleep deprived, but very excited for my upcoming adventures abroad. The first week was a blur of settling into my new home in Italy, learning the ropes of being a student abroad, and meeting the woman that would end up becoming the best part of my experience: my host mom, Margherita. Not only was Margherita the best chef in Italy, but she also made the experience of adapting to Italian culture seamless. She included me in all her daily routines and truly helped me embrace the Italian lifestyle. My first weekend with Margherita was spent traveling to the coastal town of Castiglioncello. We lounged on the beach, talked about our lives, and started forming a wonderful relationship. After our first weekend together I knew we would be great friends. She made Florence feel like home and shared with me her experiences of traveling all over the world, her favorite spots in Florence, and so much more.

In addition to exploring Florence with Margherita, I adventured out on my own and saw all the nooks and crannies that the average tourist wouldn't see. One of my favorite spots in Florence was a gelateria called Badiani, which was near Campo di Marte. Not only was the gelato out of this world, but it was also the perfect place to hang out and observe local Italians. Florence is a beautiful city rich with

history, art, and architecture and quickly became my home. I chose to take an art history class while in Florence, which was an ideal selection. I was able to see first hand the works of art that I had been viewing in classes and reading about it in books. The experience of discussing a painting or sculpture in class and then being able to walk down the street and see it live made the Italian Renaissance come alive. I saw everything from Michelangelo's *David* to Andrea del Sarto's *Madonna of the Harpies*. I am truly going to miss being able to walk down any street in Florence and be able to pop into a museum or church and explore the many masterpieces covering the walls and ceilings.

By the end of October, I was starting to feel like an Italian. I started having Italians and tourists coming up to me asking for directions, I didn't have to use a map to find my way around, I knew when stores would be closed, I drank coffee at least twice a day, the vendors at my favorite market (Sant'Ambrogio) started to recognize me, and my Italian language skills were becoming perfected. I would have never been able to have these experiences if I hadn't been able to study in Florence and live with my wonderful host mother. **Thank you so much County of Santa Clara/Province of Florence Sister County Commission for making these experiences possible.** Studying abroad in Florence was the best thing to have happened to me and I wouldn't change a single thing. I am looking forward to returning to Italy and falling in love over again with the city that opened my eyes to a new and amazing culture.

Many Thanks,

Amy Carlton