

Student Blog Post

Love Was Everywhere

Posted on **August 30, 2019** by **Audrey Celenza**



This week, Loyola Marymount University student Meaghan Wagner reveals how her two-week study abroad program in Rome changed her outlook on life, academics, and her career goals.

Imagine spending two years preparing for two weeks of your life: planning every flight, every museum, every restaurant, even every stop for gelato. Well, that's what I did. I spent two years preparing for —*obsessing over*— this study abroad trip to Rome.

I imagined wearing beautiful sundresses, eating *stracciatella* gelato as I walked along the Piazza Navona, waving to catch the attention of *il Papa*, and drinking a small cappuccino after the most amazing *spaghetti pomodoro e basilico* that I would ever have.

When I arrived, however, I was greeted with ice cold rain and bitter wind.

My first conversation was with a woman who said, “*Benvenuti a Roma*. Welcome to Rome – in fact, the coldest May in Rome since 1958.” I could not believe my own ears. I was absolutely crushed. I stared at the puddles forming between the cobblestones and I wondered if my Italian dream was an impossible fantasy.



As I walked, questioning my decision to come to Rome, the rain above me suddenly stopped. I looked up to see my friend Gaby had shared her umbrella with me. In that moment, I knew

everything was going to be fine. It was this little act of kindness that allowed me to open up my heart to Rome.

As the days passed, the rain stopped, and these little acts of kindness became more frequent. Friends offered umbrellas as we stood in the pouring rain and our feet splashed in the mud in the old Roman Forum. One of my friends held my hand so that we didn't get lost on the bus. The professors stopped lectures so that we could get a cappuccino just as a lack-of-caffeine-induced migraine was setting in. The rain finally let up, and the sun began to shine down on us. We even received free cookies from a waiter who thought me and my friends were "*le donne piu belle*" (the most beautiful women). We began to smile as we walked from place to place – even though we knew we had walked nearly ten miles that day. And our teachers continued to fill our hearts and minds to the brim with their knowledge of ancient Rome.

I soon began to realize how much I enjoyed the city. My classmates and I missed trains or avoided them completely in order to travel the streets and see every corner. We discussed our potential futures in Roma. We didn't travel much (indeed, we never left the city of Rome), but it felt as if it wasn't necessary to see everything – for Rome had everything to offer.

Rome offered one thing, however, that made us all want to stay forever: love.

Love was the smiles on our faces when an old Italian man began to breakdance in a small coffee shop after we mentioned that we were from Los Angeles. Love was the laughter we shared as we played card games in our apartment. Love was the Italian cab driver who did his best to drive us home late one evening, despite the fact that he could not speak English. Love was climbing up inside the dome of Saint Peter's Basilica, praying that we would finally make it to the top. Love was in the waitress who joined us at the dinner table and told us of her crush on the guy down the

street – later she asked him on a date. Love was in our professors as they described their past experiences in Rome and their future hopes for the city. Love was in the classmates of mine who pushed me to explore further, even though we could barely feel our legs. Most importantly, love was in the Irish man who stopped us in our tracks after telling us the secret to life: “You stop, I go,” he said to a car as he crossed the street.



Love was everywhere.

This trip changed the way I view the world, the way I want to interact with others, and even changed the trajectory of my future. I am now learning (or attempting to learn!) Italian so that I can attend graduate school in Rome to pursue a degree in Architecture. Had it not been for this trip I never would have dreamed of moving to a foreign country, and I never believed this trip would convince me to study architecture.

But most importantly, this trip taught me so many life lessons that I will hold onto forever. That friends can truly be your family, and always should be. Missing a train or bus isn't everything,

another one will always come. The best way to start the day is with a cappuccino and someone humming *That's Amore*. Finally, it isn't hard to go out of your way to brighten someone else's day.

Grazie Roma, arrivederci. Thank you Rome, see you soon.



~ *Meaghan Wagner, Loyola Marymount University*

This entry was posted in **Rome, Student Feature, Studying Abroad** by

Audrey Celenza. Bookmark the **permalink**

[<http://www.accentblogs.com/love-was-everywhere/>] .