

chiragpatel

Florence, Italy

CHIRAG'S MAJOR(S): biochemistry, Spanish and LAMP

YEAR/TERM ABROAD: summer 2003

FAVORITE CLASSES: Renaissance Florence—the instructor was amazing, really enthusiastic and got you excited about the class.

DESCRIBE THE HOUSING SITUATION: Everyone lived in a pensione, which we shared with one other person. It was excellent. We had a balcony that overlooked the city. The staff was really helpful. The location was great—everything you wanted to do or see was within walking distance.

BEST MEMORY: The Michelangelo gardens. I would go jogging and end up there. It's on top of a decent steep hill. You could see the city, but you were away from it. It's very serene up there, very quiet. It was cool to be up there and take it all in.

BIGGEST SURPRISE: How well-preserved everything was because things have been around for centuries, and how the city modernized but held on to its roots.

WHAT I WISH I KNEW BEFORE I LEFT: How important it is to travel on the weekends. The transportation is efficient and affordable. You can take the train to anywhere. I went to Paris, Pompeii, the Amalfi coast, Venice, Rome, Naples. My favorite was Rome; it was like a 4-day history class. The excursions were cool, too, because you go to

towns that people haven't heard of; you see the side of rural Italy. And the best meals I had were on the excursions.

EXPERIENCES WITH CULTURE SHOCK OR REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK: The completely laid-back atmosphere shocked me. I'm very used to being stressed out. There, you live life at your own pace. They say if you don't get it done today, you'll get it done tomorrow, which is the complete opposite of what I'm used to.



While exploring the city, Chirag Patel and Matt Zipse, another IU participant on the Florence program, rest for a moment. Patel emphasized how important it is to be open to new experiences and to take advantage of every cultural opportunity possible while in Italy.

"I don't think I had ever learned more or relaxed more in six weeks. You learn through experience—you can go out and see what you learned. It's a great way to earn credits if it fits with your plan."

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE: IF I COULD DO IT OVER, I WOULD ... have tried to meet more Florentines, learned more Italian before I left and packed lighter.

WHAT YOU KNOW NOW THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE GOING ABROAD: You can see how dynamic history is, how civilizations of the past definitely have influenced the present.