

LAND Summer Abroad in Cortona, Italy – Mackenzie Bourne, 4th year BLA

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Cortona, Italy. I can still remember the sounds, the smells, the faces, the distinct visual memories of my summer spent in this amazing city.

The UGA Study Abroad Program is fortunate to have an established UGA campus in the special little town of Cortona, Italy. Cortona is a small hilltop medieval town with a historical environment and friendly locals. Since it is such a small town, the students are lucky enough to be able to build relationships with these same locals that they see at the café or in that special leather shop every day and truly socially interact with the Italian culture.

My name is Mackenzie Bourne. I am a 4th year in the CED's landscape architecture program, which tags along with the Lamar Dodd School of Art at UGA for the Cortona Study Abroad program. All courses offered in this program are art studios ranging from painting, sculpting, print-making to jewelry-making and interior design studios. Being surrounded by artistic students like myself who all think alike and really appreciate all the truly unbelievable things we saw during our field trips and museum/garden tours was a great way to soak up the most I could during my time in Italy. Interactions with locals and traveling with like-minded art students is what sets the Cortona Study Abroad program apart from all the rest. My life is completely changed forever as an aspiring Landscape Architect after embracing the Italian culture and taking a landscape architecture studio for 2 months during my summer study abroad in Italy. The first 2 weeks of the trip are spent traveling to major cities in Italy including Naples, Rome, Vico Equense, Capri, and Tivoli on our way to the main destination, Cortona, that will be home for the following 2 months.

Seeing some of the most famous pieces of artwork, museums, gardens, historical landmarks and Italian architecture that I have been learning about since I was in elementary school is an unforgettable trip of a life time. As a designer, seeing successful public piazzas and public spaces that were always filled with life, buzzing with human interaction and leisurely afternoon hangouts is something that I feel like we lack in our public squares in America. In Italy, no one was on their phones, no one was complaining, and people seemed to have no worries in the world. The piazzas were always teeming with life no matter what day of the week. Every day in these piazzas a concert, a wine tasting, a street performer, a cooking festival, an orchestra, an antique market, a jazz festival, an art show, etc. would be occurring in Piazza Signorelli and Piazza Republica and all the locals would be out to support it. As a landscape architect those public places and streets filled with life that I spent much of my time observing this summer are what I strive to bring back to America through my designs. I can only hope to one day take the design skills I learned and the layout of these piazzas to influence my layout of a

place and make people want to get outdoors, hang out, and socialize with friends and family.

In the Landscape Architecture studio I had this summer, we were challenged with the task of designing the terrace gardens behind our dorm we lived in on the UGA Cortona Campus. This project was very engaging considering we were making changes to a place where we spent a lot of time, we knew firsthand from our peers what they would like to see in the design, and our master plans had the chance to be implemented slowly over the next few years through donor donations. The UGA Cortona Campus dormitory is a converted ancient medieval monastery and is filled with rich history. I delineated the terraces for specific activities: an event piazza on the main terrace for large group gatherings and hang out area for the students, a classroom terrace for the sculpture and painting studio, a horticulture terrace for the students to be able to grow their own fruits and vegetables, a recreation terrace, and a solitude terrace to relax, sit and look out at the Tuscan skyline. The project was great in improving my landscape architecture design skills and I also learned a lot about how to graphically represent my ideas through perspective drawings in pencil. Your “eye candy” for the client is crucial in selling your design!

Overall, my Cortona landscape architecture project for the Garden Design studio improved my skills for the future. I could go on forever about the Cortona study abroad program and why I would recommend it to any Landscape Architecture student out there. Please feel free to contact me if you want any more details about the program and my experience there! You won't regret going on this trip!