

MVAP HOUSE RULES



Podere della Vigna. Photograph by Larry Lehman

At the Podere della Vigna you will be living in a beautiful, rural, communal environment. The scenic beauty of Northern Tuscany can be inspiring. The communal nature of our living arrangements may take some adjustment. A few rules, and there are only a few, are necessary to make life more enjoyable for the students, for the staff, and for the caretakers Bruno and Beppina Parigi.

Smoking. There is no smoking allowed inside of the house. The smokers are responsible for emptying outside ashtrays after ***EACH*** use. The smokers are also responsible for keeping cigarette butts picked up off the ground around the Vigna house.

Noise. All radios, portable cassette or CD players, and similar devices must be turned off after 10:30 p.m. unless, of course, you have headphones. After 11:00 p.m. anyone wishing to stay up and talk should move inside. Bruno and Beppina are caretakers for a working farm – Il Podere della Vigna. Like most farmers they go to bed early and rise early. They deserve our respect because it is the right thing to do, because they are really nice people, and because they are such wonderful cooks.

Electricity. Electricity like gasoline is highly taxed in Italy, and therefore, it is expensive. Keep lights turned off when they are not needed. When you are not in a room make sure the lights and the fans are turned off. Please turn off all fans when you leave in the morning. A fan does not cool an empty room.

Shutters. Be sure to close the shutters before leaving each morning. This will help to keep out insects and the heat. The thick walls of these old buildings provide very good insulation. Open the windows during the night to allow in the cool night air, and keep them closed during the day to keep out the heat.

Clothes Washing. Although there is a washing machine at Vigna we do not have enough water to use it for our group. Please do not use it, or you may find yourself without water for a shower or for drinking. There is a basin outside at

the end of the building in which you may wash your clothes by hand. Do not wash clothes in the bathrooms, and please do not use the pottery washing buckets for this purpose. The soap will contaminate the buckets used to wash pottery and it will render them useless. One of the staff members will show you the type of laundry soap to purchase when you visit the grocery store in Vicchio.

Clothes Lines. Space is limited but fortunately most things dry quickly in the dry heat of the Mugello summers. Remove your clothes promptly. If you must remove someone else's clothes, please fold them neatly and place them on the table next to the computer room.

Bathrooms. There are several important issues to consider here.

- Our water comes from a well, so both hot and cold water are limited. Keep your showers short and take what is known as a navy shower. Taking a navy shower means you (1) turn on the water to wet yourself, (2) then you turn off the water and scrub with soap and shampoo, and finally (3) you turn the water back on to rinse off. Please keep your water use to less than four minutes.
- Mop up water in the bathrooms to prevent slips and falls. Also be sure to remove any hair from the drain.
- You will notice that Italian toilets are designed differently than those to which you are accustomed to using in the U.S. Use the toilet brush as appropriate to remove any *skid marks*.

Telephone. The phone line is a party line shared with the caretakers, the Parigis. When the phone rings allow them to answer it first. If the phone rings three times and they have not answered, then we should answer it.

- There should be no incoming calls after 11:00 p.m. local time, that's after 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, or before 7:00 a.m., that's 1:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time. Please be sure your family and friends understand this rule.
- We must pay for outgoing calls. There will be a log sheet near the phone, usually right below the phone meter. Record your name, the date, and the start and finish number from the meter. The House Manager will collect money for the phone bill every two weeks. Direct dialed calls are quite reasonable, however, the price varies from one year to the next. Historically it has been in the range of 12¢ to 20¢ per click of the meter.
- If you take a phone message be sure to get the name of the caller, the date, and the name of the person to whom the message is addressed. Post all messages on the cork board above the phone. You should check that board periodically for messages.

Computer. The staff have priority to use the computer, and only the staff are authorized to go online. Email messages are uploaded and downloaded once each day. Computer use rules are posted in the computer room. So that everyone will have ample time to read and post emails, please limit your sessions on the computer to ten minutes at a time. While it is not polite to read the emails of others, please remember that there is no privacy in our email system. There is a public internet point at the *stazione* in Florence called Internet Train where you can have full internet access without time limits.

House Cleaning. Vigna will be cleaned on Friday mornings by the Parigis.

- On Friday morning strip your bed and put all sheets and towels in a pile in the hall before leaving.
- On Friday morning remove all of your personal belongings from the floor, e.g., shoes, luggage, and the like, to allow your room to be cleaned.
- Excavation shoes must ***NOT*** be worn in the house! Please leave them outside along the wall. Each morning when you put on your shoes, be sure to tap them on the ground to make sure there are no small critters inside.
- Sheets at the other houses will be changed on Monday. Strip your beds and pile the sheets by the front door that morning.
- The houses other than Vigna are all within easy walking distance of a trash dumpster. Regular removal of the trash will reduce odors and will remove a major source of attraction for a variety of interesting local insects.

House Security. We are located in the country near the end of a rural road which in itself provides a certain level of security, however, it is still a good idea to close the house at night. If you are the last one up, close the outside doors.

Kitchen.

- Space in the refrigerator is very limited. Do not purchase too much food at one time that requires refrigeration. We will make two trips to the local grocery stores each week, every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon.
- Excavation food has priority in the ice box. Your food items may be removed if



Vigna Kitchen. Photograph by Larry Lehman

necessary. Wine, beer, and sodas will be removed first. Only one shelf, the lowest, will be available for student use.

- Please do **not** place wine bottles in the door of the refrigerator. This is an important safety consideration. In the past wine bottles placed in the door of the fridge have toppled out upon opening, burst, made a mess, and injured one of the students. Any wine found in the door of the fridge will be removed and immediately thrown out as trash.
- The freezer is off limits and is not to be used by the students. European freezers are not as efficient as American appliances. We need the blue ice packs to be frozen hard each day to protect the picnic lunches. Even a few openings and closings of the freezer door will prevent this from happening. If you purchase ice cream bars at the local store, plan on sharing them with your friends and consuming them quickly.
- Excavation food and the leftovers are not for general consumption. If you want or need additional food, snacks, or specific foods, please purchase these items at the local grocery stores. Italian stores offer some foods we can't easily get in the U.S. and often at what we would consider to be reasonable prices. One thing Italian stores do not have is variety. Choices will be limited and many of the foods you are accustomed to purchasing in the U.S. are simply not available.
- If you use the kitchen, you must clean up after yourself. We are living in a communal environment, so when you use the kitchen clean it immediately in order to leave it clean for the next person. Additionally, remember that we are in the country in a house that is very open. Any food left out will quickly, very, very quickly, attract ants and other small, crawling critters.
- Please be certain you are familiar with the use of a European gas stove before using it. There is no pilot light. You must turn on the gas to the stove prior to using it, and you must turn it back off again once you are finished. If you use the stove, be sure you clean it afterwards.
- Never leave the glass top to the stove up after you have used the stove. Clean the stove, put the glass top back down, and turn off the gas. Wind can easily cause the glass top to slam down onto the stove and shatter.
- The dishwasher operates differently from those in the U.S. Be sure you know how to properly load and start the machine. If not, find someone who does have that knowledge.
- When washing anything be sure to use **HOT** water and plenty of soap. We are living in a warm climate that is very conducive the growth of germs. Much of what we eat will have olive oil as an ingredient, and you must remove this oil completely from the surface of the dishes and flatware. If

you do not, you may find the lines at the bathrooms becoming long and unpleasant.

- In the mornings please fill your personal water bottles from the outside spigot at the north end of the house. This will help clear the kitchen in the mornings, and you'll find that the water flow from the outside spigot is much better than the one in the kitchen.

Breakfast. We will provide the delicious Tuscan bread, sweet butter, and a variety of local jams for your breakfast. For those who like to eat cereal for breakfast, we will provide the milk and you may purchase cereal at the local grocery store. Use of the kitchen for breakfast ends promptly at 6:30 a.m. If you wish to eat breakfast, be sure you get to the kitchen in time. Each morning from 6:30 to 6:45 a.m. students on duty for the day will clean the kitchen.

Chores. All students will be assigned chores. The daily assignments will be posted on the refrigerator at Vigna. Each day a team of three people will be responsible for all of the chore duties that day at Vigna, and a team of two people will be responsible for supper duty at Guardia. We have tried various systems, and this one ensures you come up on the duty roster less often. The Vigna duty team for the day should report to the kitchen at Vigna at 6:00 a.m. on their assigned day. If you are staying in another house, e.g., Amalfi, Guardia, or Giottino, allow enough time to arrive at Vigna no later than 6:00 a.m. Following are the chores:

- Empty trash. Each morning the trash from the rooms throughout Vigna should be consolidated into one or two bags in the kitchen. We recycle so cans and bottles should be rinsed and reserved. The trash will be removed by the staff from the Vigna house daily.
- The outside area should be checked for empty bottles and dirty ashtrays. The empties should be placed in the recycling containers. The ash trays should already be emptied and wiped clean by the smokers. The outside tables should be cleaned.
- Lunch preparation. Each morning we will slice bread and tomatoes, and we will prepare the lunch packs that will be taken to the sites.
- Water. Each morning plastic jerry cans will need to be filled half full of water for use at the site during the day. Why only half full? Ask that question after you've carried a jerry can of water to the top of Poggio Colla.
- Breakfast cleanup. Access to the kitchen ends at 6:30 a.m. From 6:30 to 6:45 a.m. you will clean the kitchen. One team member will wash the dishes, one will dry, and the third will clean the table and sweep the kitchen floor. Finally, one team member will damp mop the tile floor.

- Lunch cleanup. When we return from the excavation you will need to remove any leftovers from the lunch bags, and you should carefully clean the lunch bags and the containers in those bags.
- Supper preparation. We dine at 8:00 p.m. each evening. Starting at 7:30 p.m. you will need to carry the plates, flatware, glasses, condiments, and napkins out to the dining area which you see in the photo to the right. Water pitchers should be filled with water and distributed to the tables. A large trash container with a trash bag should be set out near the dining area.



Photograph by Larry Lehman

- Supper cleanup. All diners will scrape their plates into the trash bag then take their plates, flatware, and glasses into the kitchen. You will rinse these items and fill the dishwasher. Items that will not fit into the dishwasher will have to be cleaned by hand.
- Leftovers. The House Manager or Operations Manager will assist you in dividing and storing the leftovers for the lunch meals of the following day.
- At the end of evening you will check the outside area for empty cans and bottles which should be placed in the recycling container.
- Guardia supper duty. Each evening sixteen people will dine at the Guardia house, the building where most of the trench supervisors and assistant supervisors reside. The Guardia duty team should arrive by 7:45 p.m. to set out the plates and flatware, and to make sure the trash container has a fresh bag. There is no dishwasher at Guardia, and the hot water is limited. After the meal you will wash and dry the plates and flatware, you will clean the tables, and you will take the bag of trash to the dumpster just down the road. Any leftovers should be placed in plastic containers and taken back to Vigna and placed in the refrigerator.

Illness. If you do not feel well, please let the House Manager know immediately. If you must stay down and not work, you will remain at Vigna for the entire day. Remember, attendance at the site and at the lectures will affect your final grade. Irresponsible behavior, e.g., excessive drinking in the evening, is not an excuse for staying down and not working. Do not share water bottles or drinking glasses. Do not use your bare hands to take food from a communal container, instead use the utensils provided for that purpose.

Injuries. For minor injuries there is a first aid kit at the Podere Funghi and on Poggio Colla. The Operations Manager has a first aid kit in his vehicle. More severe injuries can be handled at the hospital in Borgo San Lorenzo or by a private physician in Florence by the name of Stephen Kerr (www.dr-kerr.com). If you are cut be sure to **immediately** wash the wound with plenty of water from any convenient water bottle before applying an antiseptic and a bandage. Even minor wounds can become quickly infected if not treated promptly and properly. Report any potentially serious injury to a senior staff member immediately. As soon as you arrive in Vicchio be sure to increase your salt intake to compensate for living in a warm environment without air conditioning; in other words, to compensate for your increased level of perspiration.



Photograph by Larry Lehman

Insects. Some of the local insects are interesting and pretty, e.g., the Mugello bug pictured here on the left. Others aren't. Look carefully where you are walking if your feet are bare. Remember that you are living in a rural environment. We do have scorpions and other unpleasant creatures which from time to time take shelter in the house, and occasionally inside of one's shoes.

Weekends. Weekends are made for traveling. You may remain at the house if you wish, or you can take advantage of your time in Italy to visit some wonderful places that are quite close to Il Mugello. Travel by train in Italy remains a great bargain.

- A current train schedule will be posted on the Vigna refrigerator. Please note that there is a different schedule for workdays, i.e., Monday through Saturday, and for Sundays and holidays.
- Normally we will arrange to take students on Friday afternoon to the Vicchio *stazione* in time to catch the 5:00 p.m. train to Florence which arrives there at 1800 (6:00 p.m.). This provides ample time to catch trains to a wide range of places throughout central Italy. Most of the senior staff members have traveled extensively in Italy and will be happy to make suggestions.
- On Sunday evening we will arrange to pick up students at the Vicchio *stazione* at 7:00 p.m. This train arrives in Vicchio at around 7:00 which means it leaves Florence around 6:00 p.m. In Florence be sure to take the train to Borgo San Lorenzo that stops at Pontassieve. If you miss this train you will have to walk back to Podere della Vigna, so be sure you have a flashlight with you just in case you miss your train for some reason.

- Most Italian transportation strikes are announced in advance – most, but not all. Such strikes may affect an entire region, e.g., Tuscany, or they may be very local. If you are delayed, please contact the House Manager or Operations Manager and inform them of your status.
- If you are traveling on the weekend, you will need to complete the form posted on the ice box in Vigna and list where you are going, where you plan to stay, the phone number, and whether you will be eating with us on Friday evening. Be sure to take the staff phone numbers with you in the event of an emergency.
- If you do remain at the house over the weekend, be sure to purchase food to cook when you go to the grocery store on Thursday afternoon.



Vicchio Stazione. Photograph by Larry Lehman