

# Italian Protohistory, Bostel and Asiago Plateau (Vicenza, Italy)

## Program Information

### PROGRAM SPECIFIC FIELD CONDITIONS

#### **What are the average weather conditions during the time of the field school?**

The field school takes place on the Asiago Plateau, in the municipality of Rotzo, at approximately 850 meters (2,790 feet) above sea level. During June and the first half of July, the climate is generally warm but can be variable, and temperature keeps increasing progressively. Daytime temperatures typically range between 22-32°C (72-90°F) but can occasionally reach up to 35°C (95°F) on hot days. Nights and early mornings are cooler, often dropping to around 15°C (59°F), so students should bring layers. Humidity levels are moderate, and occasional rain and thunderstorms are common, so a waterproof jacket is highly recommended. The excavation site is exposed to the sun all day long, so sun protection (hat, sunscreen, and sunglasses) is essential. Wind conditions are generally mild, but there can be occasional breezes, especially in the late afternoon or the evening.

#### **Please describe the site(s) where the students will work.**

Rotzo is a small, but touristic rural municipality with limited services (compared to an urban area) and lots of potato fields. There is one small food market and a pharmacy, but larger stores and services are available in Roana (not far from the mission house) and Asiago, about a 30-minute drive away. The excavation takes place outdoors in a sunny area, and in case of adverse weather conditions students will also work indoors for lab-based activities such as artifact processing and material analysis. The fieldwork involves excavation and sieving, so students should be prepared for heavy physical activity and varying weather conditions.

#### **Are there special features of the program site?**

The Asiago Plateau offers breathtaking landscapes, from rolling pastures to dense forests, making it an inspiring setting for archaeological work. The excavation area is at hiking reach of the Rotzo waterfalls, the Roana (small) lake, and not far from the Assa Valley rock art complex, that can be visited during free time. The program provides access to specialized archaeological tools, including drones, a total station, and a stereomicroscope, offering students hands-on experience with advanced documentation techniques. The field school team includes experts in topography, material science, archaeozoology, stratigraphy, and archaeological illustration, ensuring a comprehensive learning experience.

### **Will there be other people onsite with the field school or working in the same area?**

Students will interact with a diverse group of participants. In addition to the field school team, there will be some additional students, primarily from Italian universities, along with excavation staff. This provides a collaborative and enriching work environment, with opportunities to engage with specialists and peers from different academic backgrounds.

### **What does an average week look like?**

A typical week includes fieldwork from Monday to Saturday morning, which will be substituted by lab activities in case of adverse weather conditions or specific needs of the mission. On Saturday afternoon, participants are expected to clean and tidy the mission house, including both private rooms and shared spaces. Once this is completed, they will have time to relax. Sunday is free for rest and self-organized excursions.

The daily schedule consists of excavation or laboratory work from 8:45 AM to 1:00 PM. Each morning will begin with a briefing outlining the tasks planned for the day for each group. Work will be organized by sectors, each supervised by a senior staff member, and moments for discussion, reasoning, and updates on the progress with the project directors will take place throughout the day. Activities will be followed by a one-hour lunch break on site; meals will be collected from a local restaurant and eaten on the field. Afternoon sessions run from 2:00 PM to 5:30 PM, with occasional evening lectures and discussions.

As part of the program, students will take part in a guided visit to one UNESCO-listed city, selected by the group among Verona, Venice, or Padua, as well as in one excursion in the surroundings of the site, offering a cultural complement to the fieldwork experience. Food and beverages during excursions or, in general, external to the partnered restaurant's offer will be at the participants' own expense.

### **What are the options for students to access money?**

There is no ATM in Rotzo. The nearest ATM is in Roana (not far from the mission house) or in Asiago, which is accessible by car when we go grocery shopping. Students should plan to bring some cash (at least 100 euros) for personal costs, especially for shared expenses with their peers. Several local activities do not accept cards for small transactions.

## **ACTIVITY LEVEL & ACCESSIBILITY**

**Please provide information about the physical requirements of the program. Please comment how accessible your site is for people with mobility challenges.**

Excavation at Bostel of Rotzo requires **high physical effort**, including lifting, bending, kneeling, crouching, and carrying equipment. Students should be prepared for **physical exertion**, as fieldwork can be tiring and involves working **under the sun** for long hours. The site is located in an elevated area, and while most of the archaeological instruments and materials will be transported to the site using an off-road vehicle, participants will possibly need to walk about 10 minutes slightly uphill from the parking lot to reach the excavation area. The path from the parking lot to the archaeological park is made of concrete, and accessible to wheelchair users. Unfortunately, entering the excavation trenches is not possible for wheelchair users and people

with reduced mobility due to security and logistic issues. Individuals using a wheelchair or assistive walking devices may, however, fully participate in lab activities.

## **PROGRAM COUNTRY & CULTURAL INFORMATION**

### **What do you love about the country and area you work in? What do you think students will be most excited to discover?**

The Asiago Plateau is a unique place where nature, history, and archaeology come together. The landscape is breathtaking, with wide fields, dense forests, and open pastures. Beyond its beauty, the area has a deep historical significance, with settlements dating back to Paleolithic times in Marcesina (Enego) and a rich cultural heritage linked to both prehistoric and historical periods. Students will likely be most excited to discover the thrill of hands-on excavation, uncovering artifacts that haven't been touched in millennia. They will also experience the distinctiveness of the local Cimbrian culture, a Germanic linguistic minority that has shaped traditions, food, and folklore. Local cheese and potatoes are a must-try.

### **How large is the community where students will be staying? Will students have opportunities to interact casually with local residents? Please describe.**

Rotzo is a small rural municipality with a few hundred residents (ca. 600 people), but the broader Asiago Plateau hosts around 20,000 people, mostly concentrated in Asiago town. Students will have the opportunity to interact with local residents, on a daily basis, if desired. A key moment for engagement is the *Mercatino Cimbrio*, a traditional market showcasing local crafts, food, and traditions, where students can experience the local community firsthand.

**Primary languages spoken by people in the area:** The primary language spoken in the area is Italian. Residents also speak the local Veneto dialect, and a few are proficient in Cimbrian, a Germanic linguistic heritage, which is however not used in everyday conversation. English is not commonly spoken outside tourist settings, so students should be prepared for limited English proficiency among locals.

### **What are some things students may find surprising about the local culture?**

As Italians, it's difficult to predict exactly what might surprise American students, but here are a few aspects they might find unexpected:

- **Language Barrier:** Many locals, especially older generations, do not speak English fluently. Students may need to rely on basic Italian phrases or gestures for simple interactions.
- **Breakfast Culture:** Traditional Italian breakfast is sweet, consisting of coffee/tea, cereals, Nutella, jam, and biscuits rather than savory options like cheese, eggs and bacon. This might take some getting used to.
- **Pace of Life:** In small mountain towns like Rotzo, life moves at a slower pace. Shops close for lunch break, and the work-life balance is generally more relaxed than in the U.S.
- **Mealtime Structure:** Meals are an important social event, often lasting longer than in the U.S. Restaurants do not offer continuous service throughout the day, and dinner typically starts later, around 7:00-8:00 PM.

- **Public Transport & Mobility:** Unlike larger cities, public transportation in the Asiago Plateau is very (very!) limited. Locals rely on cars to get around, which may be different from what students are used to in urban environments with extensive public transit.
- **Italians tend to be expressive and make frequent use of gestures while speaking.** Personal space may therefore feel smaller than in the U.S., and light, casual touches on the arm or shoulder are common in friendly conversations.
- **Humor can also differ significantly across cultural contexts and, at times, jokes or comments may unintentionally come across as inappropriate or offensive to different sensitivities.** In such cases, participants are strongly encouraged to share their concerns openly.
- **More generally, some local social attitudes may be less progressive than those people may be used to in the U.S.;** while this can feel uncomfortable, it should not be taken on a personal level. Open communication and mutual respect are considered essential to maintaining a positive and inclusive working environment among the team.

**Are there cultural aspects that students should be aware of before they come, particularly behaviors that could be offensive or misinterpreted (for example, eye contact, dress, gestures)?**

- **Dress Code:** While casual attire is the norm, in religious or formal settings (such as churches), modest dress is expected—covering shoulders and knees is a sign of respect.
- **Gestures:** Some common American gestures may have different meanings in Italy. For example, the “OK” hand sign is not offensive, but the “horns” gesture (index and pinky finger extended) can carry an insult.
- **Eye Contact:** Direct eye contact is generally seen as a sign of confidence and engagement, not aggression. Avoiding eye contact may be perceived as disinterest.
- **Volume & Conversation:** Italians can be loud and animated when talking, even in casual conversations. This is not a sign of anger or confrontation but just part of our culture.

**What cultural enrichment opportunities are students likely to have outside of the program?**

On Sundays, students will have various opportunities for autonomous or shared cultural enrichment. The Asiago Plateau offers beautiful natural landscapes, making it ideal for hiking and outdoor activities. There are several museums in the area, including the local Archaeological Museum in Castelletto di Rotzo, that we will visit during the first days of the campaign. The Military Memorial of Asiago, which commemorates World War I soldiers, is another important historical site nearby. Visits to battlefields, war cemeteries, trenches, forts can be arranged because some team members specialize in the Archaeology of the First World War.

Students can also experience local culture through events such as the *Mercatino Cimbro*, a traditional market where they can interact with locals and explore regional crafts, food, and folklore. Additionally, the archaeological museum regularly organizes public events where students can decide to engage with the community and learn about heritage conservation. While Rotzo is a small rural town, Asiago (a 30-minute drive away) offers cafés, restaurants, an ice rink, a bowling alley, and small touristic shops where students can relax and socialize.

**Will students have opportunities to explore other areas of the country? If so, what options are available to them (such as available transportation or unscheduled time for exploration).**

Students will have structured opportunities to explore other parts of the Veneto region through an organized visit to one UNESCO-listed city. These include:

- Venice: Famous for its canals, Venice also houses important archaeological collections, such as those in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, which displays artifacts from the Egyptian, Roman, and Greek worlds.
- Verona: A city rich in Roman and medieval history, featuring the well-preserved Arena, an ancient amphitheater, and the Archaeological Museum at the Roman Theater and the City Archaeological Museum.
- Padova/ Este: Home to the Scrovegni Chapel with Giotto's frescoes, the oldest University Botanical Garden in Europe, and the Eremitani Museum, which showcases local pre-Roman and Roman artifacts. In addition, the Este Museum hosts the most important exhibition related to the protohistoric cultures from Veneto, with relevant comparisons in Bostel.

These visits provide students with a broader understanding of Italian archaeology, history, and cultural heritage beyond the excavation site. Additionally, Sundays are free, allowing students to explore nearby towns (es. Vicenza, Bassano) with other colleagues, if transportation is available.

**ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS**

**Please describe student accommodations.**

Casa Elica, located in Mezzaselva di Roana (Vicenza), ca. 20 minutes by car from the archaeological site. Rooms may host 3 up to 6 people and each has a private bathroom, with toilet, bidet, sink, and shower. Large and spacious hall, perfect for feeding large groups of people and working together; one big kitchen, with professional equipment. Outdoor field for soccer, volleyball, or tennis. Table tennis and foosball on the veranda. Website: <https://www.elicacoop.org/casaelica>

**Please describe how/how often students can do laundry.**

A washing machine is available at the mission house. To ensure fair access, participants are asked to organize laundry on a rotating basis, with each person using the machine approximately once per week. No dryer, clothes should be hung up and left to dry in the sun.

**How are room assignments made? If rooms are assigned according to gender, how will you assign rooms for non-binary, trans and queer students?**

Room assignments are usually based on gender identity, but the program is committed to creating an inclusive and respectful environment for all students. Non-binary, trans, and queer students will be assigned housing in consultation with them to ensure their comfort and safety. Any specific preferences can be discussed before arrival by contacting us at our email addresses to accommodate individual needs as much as possible.

**Are there options for single rooms?**

There are no options for single rooms. All participants will share rooms with other students, as accommodation is arranged in group housing suitable for the excavation setting.

**Will the program provide meals? If not all meals, please specify which meals students will be responsible for, and what facilities are available for them to get groceries and prepare meals. Please describe typical meals that are offered by the program.**

An Italian (sweet!) breakfast will be provided, featuring coffee, milk, tea, juice, jam, Nutella, bread, cookies, yogurt, cakes, and more. Participants will organize shifts to prepare hot beverages each morning. Breakfast will be served at the mission house, with ingredients supplied by the organizers, who will also handle grocery shopping at the supermarket in Asiago. All participants are expected to wash their own used cups, flatware and utensils before leaving for the excavation.

Lunch will be take-away from a restaurant in Roana and eaten on site. It will include, on a rotating basis, either a first course (such as pasta, rice, ravioli, or lasagna and similar) or a second course and water. Coffee, drinks and additional snacks can be purchased at the restaurant on-site if desired, but are not included. Dinner will consist of a full meal, including both first and second courses, selected from the daily menu, accompanied by water, and will be served at a restaurant in Roana located five minutes' walk from the mission house. Additional food and beverages beyond these meals will be at the participants' own expense. However, drinks and snacks will be available at the mission house for participants, provided by the organizers. All meals feature home-made Italian cuisine; vegetarian options will be available daily.

Weekly cleaning of shared facilities and final room cleaning are compulsory, and participants are required to contribute equally.

**If the program can accommodate different dietary needs, please indicate:**

The program can fully accommodate vegetarian diets. Other dietary needs will be considered whenever possible, but cannot be guaranteed.

**Comments:**

Due to limited kitchen facilities, we cannot accommodate special food requirements that need separate cooking spaces. The remoteness of the village also makes it difficult to fully guarantee the presence of very specific foods/ ingredients at local restaurants or supermarkets. Once a week, we sometimes dine in Asiago (the largest town in the area) at a restaurant serving pizza, hamburgers, local food, or similar meals. On these occasions, which are not compulsory to attend to, as well as during visits and excursions, students will cover their own meal expenses. Standard meals at the Roana restaurant or the mission house are already included in the participation costs. Different dietary needs (including allergies and intolerances) should be discussed in advance with us by writing an email to the directors, to make sure that we can accommodate the requests based on the facilities and ingredients locally available.

## **VISA AND PERMIT REQUIREMENTS**

US citizens do not need a visa for stays in Italy of less than 90 days for tourism, study, or business purposes. Since this field school falls within that timeframe, no student visa is required. However, students must have a valid passport that remains valid for at least three months beyond their planned departure date from the Schengen Area (Europe). Upon arrival, they may be asked to provide proof of accommodation (IFR documentation will suffice), return flight tickets, and financial means for their stay. It is always advisable to check the latest entry requirements with the Italian consulate before traveling.

Read here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/schengen.html>

## **TRAVEL (TO AND DURING THE PROGRAM)**

### **If students will fly, what airport should they fly into?**

The most convenient airport for students is Venice Marco Polo (VCE) or Treviso Canova (TSF), both of which offer a direct bus transfer to Padova every 30–40 minutes from just outside the arrival's terminal. A 1-hour ride will take students to the bus station of Padova, which is adjacent to the train station. This is the most straightforward route to the meeting point.

Other options include Milan Malpensa (MXP), Milan Linate (LIN), and Rome Fiumicino (FCO), but these require additional travel time. From Milan, students must take a shuttle or train to Milano Centrale (ca. 1 hour from Malpensa, ca. 30 minutes from Linate) and then a high-speed train to Padova (approximately 2 hours). From Rome Fiumicino to Termini the travel time is ca. 30 minutes, then the high-speed train from Roma Termini to Padova takes around 3,5 hours (connection required in Rome Termini).

### **Where will you meet students?**

Students will meet with the organizers at Padova train station, Arcella-side exit. Padova is a major transportation hub in northern Italy, with frequent train connections from Venice, Milan, and Rome. See above for info on how to reach Padova. The Arcella-side exit is on the opposite side of the main exit and of the bus station and will be the designated meeting spot for student pick-up. We will share our Italian phone number with the students, and we will create a WhatsApp group to exchange news about travel delays or any other details for the meet-up organization.

### **If the field site is not close to student accommodations, how will students get there? How long does it take?**

Since the excavation site is in a rural area, students will be transported from Padova to the Asiago Plateau using private and rented cars. The drive takes about 1 hour and 30 minutes, with the last stretch involving 17 hairpin turns as the road ascends to the plateau. Students should be prepared for this winding mountain drive, and anyone prone to car sickness is advised to bring appropriate medication.

## **Are there any other aspects of the program, site, or location you want students to be aware of before they arrive?**

Travel is long and can be frustrating, so we suggest buying all the required tickets (including train and bus to Padova) online in advance, so they won't face any language barrier.

### **PACKING LIST**

#### **Required**

Next to their personal effects, students are expected to bring the following essentials:

- Passport, valid for six months after the scheduled date of departure from Italy
- Any medications or prescriptions needed, to cover the full period of the stay
- Laptop
- At least €100 (100 Euro) in cash (credit cards are generally accepted, but it's always better to have some cash at hand).
- Comfortable clothes to work in the field, ideally with long pants (temperatures might range from 10 to 35+, plan accordingly)
- Steel-toed safety shoes (compulsory, you can't enter the excavation sectors with standard shoes!)
- Personal gloves
- Notebook (paper) and pens
- Umbrella and light rain coat
- Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
- Mosquito repellent
- Bed pillow, linens and/or sleeping bag
- Hand/ Bath towels - quick dry is best
- Power outlet adapter(s): Italy has different plugs from the US. In Italy, we use either a plug with two circular metal pins, or a rectangular plug with three thin pins, that operate on 220V 50Hz. If you want to connect your laptop/ cell phone or any American electronic devices, please bring multiple adapters or a single adapter plus an extension socket with multiple outlets.

#### **Recommended**

- Rain/ waterproof/ fishing boots (example <https://www.decathlon.it/p/stivali-uomo-donna-land-100-impermeabili-verdi/338399/c49c32m8735637>)
- Camera
- Personal trowel (pointed and sharpened, 5.5 x 2.5") – remember it can only be brought in the checked baggage (example: <https://marshalltown.com/pro-1654-archaeology-pointing-trowels?variantItemId=1694>)

For excavation work, mountain sportswear is ideal. Students should wear long pants to protect against kneeling on stones, sunburns, and insect bites. Lightweight, breathable, and moisture-wicking fabrics are recommended for comfort, as excavation involves physical effort and exposure to the sun. A wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen are also fundamental.

For the lab and mission house, comfortable casual clothing is appropriate. There is no need for formal attire, but students should bring something suitable for excursions, visits to Asiago, and guided tours, such as jeans, casual trousers, or similar.

#### **Specific Packing Considerations:**

- **Formal or nicer clothes?** Not required, but one slightly dressier outfit might be nice for special outings, e.g. the final dinner.
- **Hard-to-find items?** Essentials like tampons and sunscreen can be found locally, but US students might not find their preferred brands. If they have strong preferences, they should bring their own supply.
- **Shower shoes or indoor shoes?** Shower shoes are recommended for hygiene in shared spaces. Indoor shoes or slippers/ flip-flops are appropriate to move around the mission house.
- **Hiking boots and socks?** Sturdy hiking boots are a must for eventual surveys, and moisture-wicking socks are helpful.
- **Swimwear?** There is a small lake in Roana at hiking distance, but it's not a major activity, so only bring swimwear if desired, knowing it might not be used.
- **Laundry, how often?** Bring enough clothes to last at least 7-9 days.
- **Items they should not bring?** Avoid expensive jewelry, unnecessary electronics, or excessive amounts of luggage: space in the cars during the transfer from Padova to Roana (and back) is limited and the environment is rugged.

#### **MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

[https://www.instagram.com/stempa\\_project/](https://www.instagram.com/stempa_project/)

<https://progettostempa.com/>