

## Student Spotlight: Juanita Machuca

### My amazing trip to Genoa, Italy, last spring



Juanita Machuca

*Juanita Machuca, a student in Hospitality and International Relations at Florida International University, tells us a little bit about herself and the amazing experience she had participating in the “SIPA Semester in Italy Spring 2024: Global Italy and the European Union”, and discovering Genoa from Jan. 8 to April 27, 2024 last Spring.*

**MFJMCE: Could you tell us in a few words who you are and what studies you are pursuing at FIU?**

I was born in Colombia and raised in Brazil before relocating to Miami. From a young age, I have been passionate about travel and immersing myself in diverse cultures, which inspired me to enroll in a study abroad program. As a student of hospitality and international relations, I am particularly drawn to Italy due to its thriving tourism sector, making it the ideal location for my program!

**MFJMCE: What did you initially expect from the program in Genoa, Italy: “SIPA Semester in Italy Spring 2024: Global Italy and the European Union?” How did it meet or exceed these expectations?**

Initially, I envisioned my study abroad program in Italy as an opportunity to complete some of my UCC courses while exploring the city. However, I never anticipated how profoundly I would connect with the Genovese culture and fall in love with the region. This program far exceeded my expectations, allowing me to study with Italian professors while fully immersing myself in the authentic culture of Genoa. I had the chance to learn about its ancient art, history, and delicious cuisine.

**MFJMCE: Did you have a favorite part of the program? If so, what was it?**

My favorite part of the program was being able to experience life as a student in Italy and bring back home so much knowledge that each experience taught me. This program allowed me to grow completely out of my comfort zone, eventually shaping my career and personal goals.

**MFJMCE: What was the place you visited or the activities you did that impacted you the most (that stood out to you the most)?**

I thoroughly enjoyed exploring the city and visiting the authentic markets and weekly tents filled with local food, clothing, and art that truly embodied the essence of Genoa. This experience allowed me to immerse myself in the local lifestyle, deepening my appreciation for the rich culture and fostering a greater connection with the community. I found beauty in the simplicity of everyday life, which further intensified my love for the region!

**MFJMCE: Did this program change or impact your career goals?**

This program significantly transformed my career goals. Prior to my departure to Genoa, I had recently switched my major to hospitality but was uncertain if it was the right fit for me. Completing the program's courses while abroad allowed me to discover my true passion: connecting with people and learning about different cultures. This experience shaped my career path, leading me to specialize in travel and tourism within the hospitality industry. It also inspired me to pursue a minor in international relations, as I thoroughly enjoyed the courses offered in the program.

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Genoa, Italy

**MFJMCE:** “Genoa is a fantastic city with wonderful people.” Why would you encourage students to go to Genoa?

I highly recommend Genoa to students as it offers an ideal environment to enhance your education while immersing yourself in local Italian life. The city is rich in history and art, presenting numerous opportunities for academic growth. Unlike other cities in Italy that are often crowded with tourists and attractions, I consider Genoa to be a hidden gem. Its vibrant local community provides the perfect setting to learn Italian and engage in an authentically enriching semester. Life in Genoa is simple; the locals are content with little, embrace tourists warmly, demonstrate remarkable hospitality, and are truly present in the moment, which deepened my love for the city each day. I returned home with a phrase I will never forget: *Il dolce far niente*, which translates to the sweetness of doing nothing.

**MFJMCE:** Do you have any last thoughts to share?

I am extremely thankful I was blessed with the opportunity and support from my family to participate in a study abroad program. It is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will change you forever!

By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez



Juanita at the Palazzo Rosso, Genoa

- For more information on the program in Genoa, Italy, [click here](#)
- For Genoa, [click here](#) (Pictures courtesy of Juanita Machuca)



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At the port of Genoa with FIU students



Genoa, Italy



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Juanita sharing dinner with FIU students at a Genovese "Trattoria", Genoa, Italy



Frittura del Golfo; Tiramisù al pistachio di bronte; Fettuccine Verdi con pesto patate e fagiolini