

My Bologna has a First Name

Italian



AENEAN IACULIS
LAOREET ARCU
DONEC QUIS NUNC



NULLA RUTRUM
COMMODO LIGULA
NUNC UT LECTUS



MORBI CONGUE
MAGNA NON LACUS
VIVAMUS NEC NUNC

ST.SOMETIMES



Learning Italian

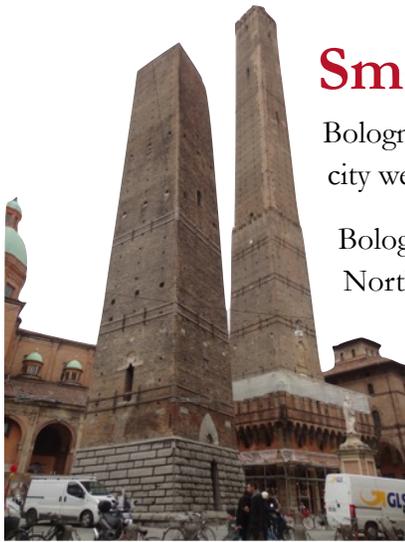
This is another summer of learning for me. I arranged for an extension of my Swiss Visa, called a Schengen Work Visa, in order to stay in Europe and avoid the long trip home to the USA this summer. I wanted to stay and learn Italian. It all started on June 8th, when I took a train to Milan (1hr)

and another train from Milan directly to Bologna (1hr). Within two hours I was once again in Italy. This time I am here for a longer time.

My language school is called ALCE (Accademia Lingue e Culture Europe). Alce in Italian is Moose. They were founded in 1999 and host a vastly international clientele in a small building just outside of the main city center and offer a range of apartments either in their main apartment building a few minutes walk from school or with host families. Since the students are from all over the world and speak all different mother tongues, classes are held only in Italian.

I arrived a week late so I have been behind in class ever since I arrived. That really sucks, but I have a lot more empathy for my own students in Switzerland that are not only behind in English acquisition, but also behind in certain subjects. Some days I just don't want to learn. Hopefully, I will be able to start all over again - a fresh start.





Small City, Several Names

Bologna is just a dot on the Italian map. I still cannot believe I am living in the city we named a sandwich after. I don't even like boloney sandwiches!

Bologna sits just an hour by fast train away from Milan, so it is still considered Northern Italy. It is the capital of the Emilia-Romagna region between the cities most Americans know: Milan, Florence, and Venice. All of these are just a train ride away from Bologna.

Bologna is known as the "City of Towers" with the **Due Torri** in the city center and, in the Middle Ages, more than a 180 towers all over the city. "Bologna the Learned" refers to the University here that was founded in 1088 a.c.e. delegating it as the oldest university in Europe.

"Bologna the Fat" refers to the famous food here. It's not the easiest place to lose weight, but I am going to give it the ol' college try. And finally, the name "Bologna the Red" refers to the color of its buildings and roofs and its leftist government during the 20th and this century.

All the names truly fit the city when you find yourself walking around this amazing city. There are students all over like any of our biggest university cities in the USA. Everyone is looking for the cheapest beer or bottle of wine to drink in the popular *piazzas* (plazas). Every night, the restaurants offer *aperitivo*, which is basically an extended happy hour with a spread of food included with a slightly higher drink price.

All roads lead to the **Due Torri**(the two towers) in the center of town. There is an efficient bus system here which makes it easy to get anywhere you need to go. Our school apartments are located on the circle line, the bus route that circles the entire city with roads feeding do the **Due Torri** like spokes on a wheel.

Daily Life in Bologna

My life here is basically centered around classes. I have been hanging out with students from my classes of A1 (beginner): Rotem from Israel, Alwalid from Saudi Arabia, Verena from Brazil, Mariana from Colombia, Pedro from Portugal, and John from Ireland. Several of them are here for extended periods of time, from 2-6 months for different reasons. Alwalid



Sights of Bologna



(top) Tortellini is one of Bologna's signature foods

(middle) Porticoes are everywhere in Bologna. This is great when you forget your umbrella.

(bottom) Bologna buses are efficient and ubiquitous

is on a break in between medical studies. Rotem is studying Italian so he can gain entrance to the University here. Verena is learning Italian so she can stay here and find work instead of going back to Brazil. I'm just here for Italian and fun. I happen to be older than most of the teachers here.

Classes are from 9:00 until 13:00. The first two hours are for grammar and the next two are conversation. Everything is in Italian. The teaching style is also very Italian - lots of worksheets. I usually wake up early to study and do my homework. My afternoons are spent writing my book, reading, or learning various technologies. This makes for a very busy day. Therefore, my evenings are usually spent at the Irish Pub watching the World Cup games. The games start at 18:00, 21:00, and midnight. I usually don't get to see the midnight games. Waking up isn't easy if I stay out that late. However, I do go out to the clubs once in a while on the weekend.

Walking through Porticoes

Bologna is the city with the most porticos in the world: **53 km long**, and it offers the tourist a view filled with lights, shadows and different perspective. The portico came about as a result of the habit of 'extending' the first floor of houses out over the sidewalk. This extension was then supported with wooden beams resting on blocks of selenite or stone, a bit like crutches. At first considered an abusive construction, it was eventually sanctioned and regulated by the City who then stated that the portico below the extension had to be relegated to public use even though they had been built by individual property owners on private space. Since then, most buildings were constructed with porticos, with exceptions granted only in a few cases for noble families especially during the renaissance 'roman fashion' times. Therefore, finely architected buildings as Bargellini, Bentivoglio, Fantuzzi, Sanuti and the like were built. ([source](#))

Validate Your Bus Tickets!

I take the bus back and forth from the train station and pay my 1.50€. The ticket machine is at the front and back of the bus. Unlike Switzerland, where you pay the driver, Italian bus drivers don't worry. There is a team of secret service ticket checkers. Get on the bus with your ticket validated. Once the doors close, whammo!, four or five normal looking 20 somethings whip out their hidden lanyards with Transportation badges and start checking tickets. This was so funny. Buy a 10 ride pass and validate!



A Week of Professional Development in London

Have you ever heard of **Responsive Classroom**? I had never heard of it. Someone mentioned it at a meeting in May. Soon after that, Pam asked if I was interested. Bam! All of a sudden I was scheduled to attend a PD in London on the TASIS dime. This was the first trip to London since around 2006.

Eleonora, my team teacher in the Italian section of Grade 04, was the only other teacher from TASIS in Switzerland. We met for breakfast every morning in the hotel restaurant and walked a few blocks to the American School in London (ASL) for classes each day. This was the best classroom experience I have had since I graduated in 2001, including my Masters courses but excluding my MSU technology classes.

Basically, Responsive Classroom is a workshop about great teaching. Our teacher kept repeating the phrase “this is not a PROGRAM as much as an APPROACH”. The company offers one day workshops, trains schools or districts for a hefty price, and now travels to London for a week-long workshop that teachers can attend from all over.

“This was the best classroom experience I have had since graduating in 2001.

The approach covers everything from setting up classroom rules to having morning meetings to classroom discipline. Basically it all adds up to great teaching. However, this course was so well put together that we were never sitting for long. Every day from 8am to 4pm we were sharing ideas of what great teaching really looks, sounds, and feels like.

Like most other international settings, the participants made this professional development a great experience beyond the content of the class. There were 18 teachers in each of two classes and we came from all over the globe. I think the farthest was the Kiwi Art teacher that flew in from Hong Kong. Luckily, we all shared contact information and joined a FaceBook group specifically for the class. That way I can keep in touch with these great people.