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How to get the most out of your study tour to Reggio Emilia



Sonya McIntyre on April 10, 2016

“ No one in Reggio wants to teach others how to “do school.” What we seek to do rather is to try and deepen our understanding, together with others, of why it was possible in Reggio Emilia for an (educational) experience

build a better tomorrow.” Amelia Gambetti

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To **help you with your preparations for this trip**, here is a list of ideas that I discovered during my time in Reggio. There are also suggestions from educators around the world who have travelled to Reggio. These tips and tricks will help you **get the most out of your time in Reggio Emilia**.

- **Study the culture and how it is reflected in the program.** The philosophy is deeply respectful of cultural mores. Beauty, history, art, family, relationship – all in which the child is embedded.
- If you are gluten-free, travelling to Italy can be a little tricky. In Reggio, at the Piazza Cammilo Prampolini, you will find a pharmacy (Farmacia) that sells **gluten-free** pasta, crackers, bread and other staples. Some restaurants have to pre-order their gluten-free supplies, but we found one that was happy to cook the pasta we provided.
- Consider taking a **voice recorder**. You are unable to take photos in the schools that you visit, and recording notes takes your eyes away from the many things to explore. Having a voice
- **Take money to buy resources.** The shop at the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre has a large range of resources for purchase. Individual schools you visit also sell their own resources.

The resources are fantastic, and will enable you to share with your colleagues upon your return to your learning service. They will inspire you and remind you of what you learnt for years to come!



- If you are not travelling as part of a group, consider one of the hotels that 'Reggio Children' has special agreements with.
- **Talk to locals!** It was so interesting to hear their opinions on the exclusive schools versus the other schools in the area and how they view the educators and people who come through their city. The locals love the international study tour participants, you will be hard pressed to find any other tourists in this small city.
- Engage with people from other programs. Make sure to **reach out and network** so you have a reliable support group when you get back and are trying to process all that you have met.
- **Do your prep work** before you go, read and read and read! When you are there, there is so much to look at and absorb. You want to be able to really understand what you see so you can process things, take notes, and be able to **adapt those things into your own practice**.
- Take a notebook big enough to **draw sketches and floor plans** of what you see in the schools. Without photos, it is easy to forget exactly how the layout of the schools looked.
- Grab a copy of "Making Learning Visible" before you go and read about the routines and daily practices. This way you can really **concentrate on looking for the core components** that the lectures discuss, when you visit the schools. The time goes so quickly when you visit the schools and you need to know what you are seeing and understanding to make the most of it.
- Expect to **come away with more questions** than answers. There is so much to take in, and every educator will take something different from their experience. Some educators are fortunate enough to travel to Reggio Emilia more than once, and say that they take something different from their experience each time.





- Write down all of your wonderings before you go. There is so much to see and it's hard to absorb everything in such a short period. The schedule is pretty intense, you might get over tired if you don't **remind yourself what you want to focus on**.
- **Ask lots of questions**, talk to people and learn from each other's expertise. It is a fantastic opportunity to learn not only from the educators in Italy, but to **network and engage with educators** like yourself from all across the world.
- Consider jotting down the email addresses of other educators while you are there. When you return back to your learning service, and reality hits (that is a whole other blog post!) it helps to have the support of others who have also experienced the "Reggio experience". Plus, you can never do enough networking!
- When visiting the schools, it is tempting to wander around and explore all the resources and
- Ask your teaching team if they have any aspects of the Reggio philosophy they would like you to explore while you are there. It is easy to forget that we are **all on different learning journeys**.

- Don't miss the opportunity to visit the weekly markets (held on Tuesday and Friday). You can pick up some bargains, taste a range of street foods, and soak up the atmosphere of a traditional lively, Italian marketplace.
- Be sure to take part in the 'Friends of Reggio' tour of the city. It really helps to **understand the history of Reggio Emilia**, when contemplating the beginnings of such a complex educational approach. You will also get to see sights that you may not otherwise discover.





- **Be ready to feel overwhelmed** by the amount of information you will meet in the lectures. Many of the presenters do not speak English, and translators are used to communicate with the study tour participants. Focusing for such long periods of time in this way is tiring. In saying that, the best translators are employed at the International Centre, they are fantastically fast and easy to listen to. And who doesn't enjoy listening to Italian whilst waiting for the English translation!
- Each evening, be sure to head into the city for dinner. There are so many lovely restaurants and cafes, and it is **a great opportunity to discuss your day of learning with other participants**. Unpacking your day in this way helps you to **consolidate and reflect on what you encountered**.
- Finally, **be prepared to feel very emotional** while you are there. It is an exhausting time, you are far away from home, your mind is filled with new information, new questions and new ideas. It hits you that you are in a place you have only ever dreamed of, and the enormity of it all can make you a little emotional.





Enjoy every second of your time in Reggio Emilia, it truly is an amazing place! And don't forget to ride a lion while you are there.

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Tagged in: early childhood education, Philosophy, professional development



Posted by Sonya McIntyre

Sonya went to Rata street kindergarten and Petone kindergarten, before gaining her bachelor of education at Victoria University. As well as working with Storypark Sonya works as an ECE teacher.

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Martha Dueñas

APRIL 10, 2016 AT 1:10 PM

If i want to attend to this program in the summer where do i register?

Reply



Sonya McIntyre

APRIL 12, 2016 AT 7:37 AM

Hi Martha, depending on where in the world you are based, it would be useful to get in touch with your closest Reggio network. There is more information if you follow this link 😊 <http://www.reggiochildren.it/network/?lang=en>

Reply



Valerie

APRIL 10, 2016 AT 8:51 PM

Thank you. Attended the conference before Graduate school. Great preparation. Also, remember navigating to places by following people carrying "The Hundrend

Languages... DOOK.

Reply



Sonya McIntyre

APRIL 12, 2016 AT 7:35 AM

That is a great tip Valerie 😊

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