



To promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation, one individual, one community at a time.

SAN CASCIANO CULTURAL EXCHANGE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What criteria is Sister Cities of Morgan Hill looking for in participating students?

- The program is designed for a teen between the ages of 16-18 who is out-going, flexible, and open minded to an international experience. Participating students aren't required to speak Italian already, but are encouraged to learn a couple basics. A student who is interested in art, classics, perhaps a culinary interest would benefit most from all that Italy has to offer. While we wish to accommodate all interested students, not all applicants may be accepted into the exchange program. Participants are housed with local Italian families during their stay.

How many students can participate for this summer's travel?

- We can accommodate approximately 5-6 students, but it also depends on how many Italian families choose to participate in a given year.

When are participating students scheduled to travel?

- The program is divided into two phases: one summer American teens travel to Italy, followed by those same teens hosting Italian students the next summer. Preparations for the next two year program cycle are not yet scheduled.
- The duration is approximately two weeks.

What is the approximate cost of the trip?

- It is difficult to pinpoint an exact price. The main cost to participating families is air fare for the travel year. It is difficult to estimate what that cost may be until shortly before tickets are purchased. The travel may include staying in a hotel in Rome or wherever the group lands, and costs associated with that overnight, most meals are covered while in San Casciano, individual spending is not.

Will Sister Cities of Morgan Hill host fundraisers to help participants with costs?

- We do not have a fund raising mechanism in place. All costs are covered by participating families.

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Where will the participating students stay?

- Participants are housed with local Italian families during their stay. Families understand the commitment to offer each teen guest the opportunity of living the local Italian lifestyle as a member of the family, as well as group excursions showcasing the local area. Host families also have a teen age student in the home. The intent is to match Morgan Hill teens with Italian families who have a teen at the same age and of the same sex. However, pairings depend on the selected applicant pool in both Morgan Hill and San Casciano.

Will participating students attend school while in Italy?

- No, cultural activities are the main purpose. No excursions to schools or days in school are planned.

Comparing the San Casciano Cultural Exchange to the Mizuho Morgan Hill Student Exchange

What is the Mizuho Morgan Hill Student Exchange Program?

- Morgan Hill already has a very popular and respected educational exchange program with another of its Sister Cities relationships based in Mizuho, Japan. The Mizuho Morgan Hill Student Exchange Program (MMHSEP) has a long history of sending and receiving middle school-aged children between Morgan Hill and Mizuho. It, too, alternates between Morgan Hill kids traveling to Mizuho one year and then hosting Mizuho kids the following year.

What are the similarities and differences between this program and the Mizuho exchange?

- There are three main differences. (1) The Mizuho program has a specific educational component in that participants go to the local school, as well as sight-seeing and group activities. Teens traveling to San Casciano will not visit a school in Italy since none will be in primary session. It is mainly a cultural exchange to give teens a chance to sight see and learn about Italian life from the host family. (2) The San Casciano program does not have a fund raising program in place to help participants earn money to cover the cost of the trip. (3) The Mizuho program is designed for middle school kids and San Casciano is for high school aged kids, 15-17 years old.
- The similarities are that participants will reside with a host family that is committed to entertain and showcase what living in an Italian family is like. Families will also have a chance to connect with the hosting family before travel, to get to know each other before the departure date.

Who are the chaperone(s) that travel with the students?

- Amy Whelan. Amy has lived in Italy and travels back as frequently as possible. She is the program administrator who works with the families throughout all preparations. She has a Bachelor's of Arts both in Art History, Italian Renaissance, and International Affairs. She also has a Master's of Arts in journalism, public relations, and is fluent in Italian.

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About Sister Cities of Morgan Hill

Sister Cities of Morgan Hill, www.morganhillsistercities.com/. Formed in 2002 and currently hosts relationships with five international cities: San Casciano, Italy; Seferihisar, Turkey; Ameca, Mexico; Mizuho, Japan; and Headford, Ireland. Morgan Hill's program is modeled on Sister Cities International, a world-wide organization fostering connections between cities, counties, or states. Most Sister Cities organizations are comprised of volunteers, with the support of their local, elected officials.

About San Casciano

San Casciano in Val Di Pesa is a town within the Province of Florence, Tuscany. It is part of the Chianti region and offers many cultural highlights of its own, as well as being centrally located in one of the most popular and picturesque regions of Italy. It is the birthplace of Machiavelli, surrounded by an atmosphere of the Renaissance, and closely situated about 10 miles south of Florence. San Casciano was chosen as a Sister City with Morgan Hill because of its similarities in geography, agricultural output, and residential size. More about San Casciano can be found at www.sancascianovp.net/ (in Italian) and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Casciano_in_Val_di_Pesa.

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