Italy, and Florence in particular, has long been a tourist destination, attracting millions to its Renaissance towns throughout the year. The College’s Summer in Florence program transcends this one-dimensional definition and exposes students to a more authentic experience through language, history, culture, music, and art. Centered at NYU’s Villa La Pietra, a 57-acre Tuscan estate comprising five refurbished villas donated by Sir Harold Acton in 1994, students have access to state of the art facilities and dedicated staff while engaging in summer study.

Our courses offer learning opportunities that take students outside the traditional classroom to engage with the city, its people, and monuments. Students may choose from art history, CORE, Italian language at beginner, intermediate or advanced levels, Italian opera, or a course dedicated to Italian humanist and political theorist, Niccolò Machiavelli. Renaissance Art students study masterpieces in the Uffizi, or in situ at churches like Santa Maria Novella or Santa Croce, while language students partake in cooking classes in Italian to hone a tasty new vocabulary. Our opera enthusiasts enjoy a variety of open air performances while learning about production, libretto and musical composition, and Cultures and Contexts students integrate themes they learn in the classroom with events in the city center. When classes do take place at the Villa Ulivi academic building, students have access to fully equipped classrooms fitted with Wi-Fi, a library, computer lab, and café.

My visit in June coincided with two of the program’s included excursions: a day trip to explore the Val D’Orcia, with its picturesque Tuscan hillsides, and an overnight journey to Verona and Mantua to experience Giuseppe Verdi’s Nabucco and the regional specialties of the Veneto and Lombardy. In 2017, students also ventured south to appreciate the monuments and museums of Rome.

Participants may also take part in NYU Florence’s The Season, an annual celebration devoted to arts, literature, and culture. Open to the wider Florentine community as well, in 2017 the schedule featured readings by internationally acclaimed writers, like Catherine Barnett and Alexander Chee, the debut of NYU Tisch professor Sam Pollard’s Sammy Davis Jr: I’ve Gotta Be Me (subsequently shown at the Toronto Film Festival), and a series of theatrical performances by Tisch students and other artists. With everything on offer during the summer months, Florence and Villa La Pietra inspire as the backdrop for your academic and cultural experience.

Check out Summer in Florence or one of the other unique CAS Summer Abroad programs for your own incredible experience: www.nyu.edu/summer/abroad/cas.