

Student Exchanges

Become a Student Ambassador for Saluda!

Applications for Summer 2025 Open January 15
Deadline for Submission is February 20

SSC Student Ambassador objectives:

- *Intercultural knowledge and relationship building*
- *Global awareness*
- *Personal values and language skills*
- *Focus on communities, service and commitment*

By participating in the SSC Student Ambassador program, students will:

- *Become an international ambassador from Saluda to Carunchio, Italy*
- *Study and Learn about Italy, its people, culture and language*
- *Develop skills to deal with future challenges, independence and self-awareness*
- *Expand interests and experiences*
- *Build friendships that last a lifetime*
- *Respect the customs, economic differences, lifestyle and daily routine of the host country and family*
- *Appreciate the time and experiences given to you by the people you meet*
- *Upon return, work with Sister City to help our citizens and students learn about Italy and our Sister City and the positive value of international travel.*

Saluda Sister City maintains an annual student ambassador exchange program alternating years between Italy and Saluda. The first exchange was in 2019 and, except for Covid years, has continued annually.

The exchanges typically send one or two students to Saluda or Carunchio for one to three weeks during the summer break. Students from Carunchio and environs stay with local families and are offered an extensive program of immersive experiences in the general area of Saluda. Students traveling to Carunchio usually stay in the Palazzo Tour D'Eau and participate in all of its programs. Saluda ambassadors to Italy often have additional opportunities to stay with local families or former exchange students. These arrangements vary by year and are coordinated by SSC in conjunction with Massimo Criscio, owner of the Palazzo and the head of Carunchio Sister City.

Requirements

The student is required to be a member of Saluda Sister City, either individually or through a family membership and live in zip code 28773.

The application must be accompanied by an official transcript of high school and any post-high school education.

The completed application must be received by the February 20 deadline and the student must agree to be interviewed by the selection committee. The committee may also want to speak with applicant's parents or guardians,

The age range for participation is generally 17 to 22 with preference given to those 18 or older. Applicants will be evaluated on a variety of criteria including but not limited to:

- *Course of study in high school and/or college
- *Foreign language skills
- *Grade point average
- *Demonstrated community involvement and leadership skills
- *Life goals
- *Active involvement with Saluda Sister City prior to application
- *Commitment to post-trip required activities including written reports, verbal presentations and participation as student ambassador at SSC functions.

What is Expected of Our Ambassador

- *Remember, at all times, that you are an ambassador of Saluda, be polite, and respect the culture, customs and habits of those you come in contact with
 - *Express genuine appreciation for all that is done for you to each person involved
 - *Do not use alcohol or drugs in your host country. If you are of legal age and wine is offered with meals, you may drink one glass
 - *While you are at the Palazzo Tour d'Eau, participate in all activities.
- If you are staying in a private home:
- *Participate in family activities, dinners and outings with host family
 - *Help with household chores with host family
 - *Share culture, language and life experiences with household members
 - *Abide by host family rules, local laws and customs

Issues to Consider

We try to schedule non-stop flights where they are available as this minimizes the possibility of lost luggage or missed connections. If this is not possible, the ambassador or his/her family is strongly encouraged to purchase travel insurance which generally comes at a minimal cost.

All travel locally or abroad has risks. There can be communication failures, transportation issues, accidents, etc. Since our ambassadors usually travel without adult supervision, the individual must be mature, confident and able to handle issues as they arise. Sister City has a standard *CONSENT, RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND COVENANT NOT TO SUE* which must be signed by the student if 18 or older and parents or guardians. Although we do everything we can to ensure a safe trip, there are circumstances that cannot be foreseen, so this release is necessary for participation. Prior to travel, the ambassador will meet with a member of the SSC Board to go over every detail of travel and be sure that all emergency numbers and protocols are in place.

If you currently do not have a passport or your passport will expire within 90 days of arrival, begin applying for or renewing your passport immediately. Usually, this process takes a minimum of 7 weeks. Saluda Sister City is not responsible for any fees associated with obtaining or renewing a passport.

We anticipate that a "Travel Authorization" called "ETIAS" will be required to enter the Schengen Countries beginning sometime in 2025, likely before your trip. Once the program is up and running, travelers to Europe will fill out the form online or via a mobile app and pay a 7-euro charge (about \$7.47, depending on exchange rates). Those under 18 or over 70 are not charged a fee. Approval is expected to be quick (as in minutes) and sent by email or app. But officials warn that approval could take as long as several weeks for some people if more information is required. For example, if your passport number or name changed or if you entered incorrect information such as the wrong nationality, corrections could take up to 30 days. Once issued, it is good for three years or until your passport expires. To apply for the ETIAS you will need a valid passport, credit card for payment and an email address. It is your responsibility to obtain this ETIAS Authorization. Currently, we believe this authorization will be free for anyone under 18 and approximately \$10.00 for those over 18 years of age. However, this information is subject to change as entry requirements are updated.

Planned Exchange for 2025

One, or possibly two, Saluda students will travel to Carunchio, Italy via a flight from Charlotte, NC to Rome, Italy. There, the student will join a group of travelers enroute to Carunchio by private bus or van sent by the Palazzo to pick up at a specified time and place at the international arrival concourse of Leonardi da Vinci airport. Upon return, the ambassador will either return with the Palazzo guests or possibly by separate bus if extra days are planned. It is possible that a night in the area of the airport with taxi transportation will be needed. During the interview process and once the student is chosen, these alternatives will be discussed and decided upon.

As of the publication of this announcement, it appears the trip this year will leave Saluda June 21, 2025, along with the Saludians who are traveling to Carunchio for a week in the Palazzo. The week at the Palazzo will be the week of the annual Flower Festival which will provide a great opportunity for our student ambassador to be involved in the community events. There is the possibility of additional days with local families which is still under discussion as of this writing. In that case, the trip will be two weeks.

Travel Expenses

Each year, Saluda Sister City determines what it will pay toward the cost of the trip and sets the amount the student must earn and contribute. Airfare ranges from \$900 to \$1,300. Sister City provides 100 euros for incidentals. We suggest the students bring an additional \$200 for incidentals, souvenirs and some meals. Most expenses in Italy are generally covered by the Palazzo or the host families through the provision of accommodations and meals. Depending on what the return arrangements are, it may be necessary for the ambassador to spend one night in Fiumicino near the airport to be ready for the next morning flight to the US. This overnight is the responsibility of the ambassador. Sister City will help to identify suitable accommodations.

For 2025, the SSC Board has agreed to pay up to \$2,000 in airfare and provide 100 euros for incidentals. Sister City will arrange and pay for the airfare.

TO APPLY: Click this link and complete the application:

<https://form.jotform.com/250036930726050>

For questions, contact Susan Cannon at saludamoonglass@gmail.com



Benedetta Formisano, our first student from Abruzzo to come to Saluda



Claire from Saluda in Carunchio



Nora and Marta from Abruzzo in Saluda in 2024