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ABOUT THE CITY AND COUNTRY

Milan (pronounced “Milano” in Italian) is a northern city in Italy, located in the Lombardy region bordering Switzerland. Although the city has substantial historical significance, so does the entire country of Italy. Therefore, Milan is better distinguished by its (1) fashion & design, (2) wealth, and (3) sheer size. To explain:

- (1) **Fashion & Design:** A “big four” fashion capital, Milan is home to the fashion industry’s most important destinations, shopping districts, and moguls. These include events such as the twice-annual Milan Fashion Week, glamour parties, fashion shows, and exhibits; areas, such as the Piazza Duomo, Carstello Sforzesco courtyard, Milano Unica, and Quadrilatero d’Oro; fashion houses, such as Bottega Veneta, Miu Miu, Missoni, Marni, Moschino, Valentino, Gucci, Versace, Prada, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, and Luxottica; and, a suite of small-to-medium size houses in all sorts of design capacities, particularly architecture, furniture, and interior design.
- (2) **Wealth:** While Milan’s luxury brands constitute 15.2% of the world’s high-fashion industry, their small businesses contribute an impressive 90% of Milan’s GDP, which ranks third in the European economy after Paris and London. Milan also supports 21% of their country’s GDP. To support this economic machine, there are many finance and wealth management options, including the headquarters of many international banks and companies. Italy’s stock exchange is located in Milan.
- (3) **Size:** Milan’s city-to-suburb population is more than 7 million, making it 54th largest metropolitan area in the world. It is home to many gardens, a planetarium, aquarium, museums, canals, palaces, castles, cathedrals, tombs, arches, and antique train stations.

ABOUT BOCCONI

Bocconi University is a private, city-university in the heart of Milan (only a 20 minute walk from Il Duomo, Milan's famous cathedral). They provide undergraduate and graduate programs in economics, management, finance, law, political science, public administration, and business. Their QS rankings in 2019 are as follows:

1. Business and Management: 4th best in Europe, 8th best worldwide.
2. Economics and Econometrics: 4th best in Europe, 18th best worldwide.
3. Accounting and Finance: 6th best in Europe, 18th best worldwide.

Bocconi is to Italy as Harvard is to the United States. Students of Bocconi are extremely disciplined, competitive, keep to themselves, and are used to working long hours on homework and presentations. It will do you well to dress nicely for class every day, but do not give in to the pressure of sitting silently in class; although most Bocconi students are too timid or conservative to participate in class, professors are actually grateful for students who ask intelligent questions, or show any form of engagement beyond staring and note-taking.

As at any school, there are social clubs and activities to join on campus, but the most popular are the student government and event planning committees. In general, Bocconi students are not very interested in sports. They would rather spend most of their time in the library, or attend outside lectures and presentations for extra credit. That said, their library is very beautiful, but very cold and intimidating; the walls and rooms are perfectly white and very square. The corridors echo quite a lot, so do not wear squeaky shoes, or you'll get funny looks. On the topic of style, it is important that any powerpoint presentations are elegant and very well rehearsed, preferably memorized. Milanese students and professors are extremely sensitive to self-presentation and style.

COURSES AND PROFESSORS

As an exchange MBA student, you have a few different options. Bocconi offers courses in English, in both undergraduate and graduate programs. I loved both types of classes, but preferred students and relationships I fostered in the graduate courses. Undergraduate programs tend to have more homework; graduate programs tend to have more lectures and discussion. It is much easier to have an opinion in a graduate class than in an undergraduate class; just make sure that any contributions you make are polished, well-educated, and well-informed.

It is important to pay attention to the attendance requirements per course; some classes do not require lecture attendance as long as you read course materials on your own and pass your exams, of course. Other classes will actively take your

lecture attendance and deduct points for any classes missed. This happened to a few exchange students who were unfamiliar with the formality of the class culture. For the sake of your time management, it is also important to note how many hours a week you are expected to spend on studying and homework. Since Bocconi prides itself on the amount of work it gives its students, you can expect to spend the full amount of time—if not more—indicated on your course syllabus.

In general, the professors are tough but fair. If you take a lecture-style class, keep fastidious notes. In two of my courses, the midterm and final exams covered more class notes than reading materials or textbooks. If you ask any Bocconi student, however, they will say that you should really study everything.

ACCOMODATIONS & VISA

Unfortunately, I do not have much to share in this regard. I found accommodations through AirBnB, and stayed on Asconio Sforza. This is a street on a canal, with plenty of restaurants, trattorias, and cafes, located 20 minutes walk away from Bocconi, and 30 minutes south of the Duomo. It is also east of a long bike path which follows the canal all the way to an IKEA a 1hour walk away. From what I heard from my friends, many students rented apartments through Facebook, via the **closed Facebook group for international students managed by Bocconi**. The international student desk Facebook page is the place to go for EVERYTHING – dates, visa information, legal document help, and more.

TRANSPORTATION

As a walker, I pretty much walked everywhere around the city, but for people who prefer to stay off their feet, there is a metro, an above-ground tram, and MyTaxi (its like Gett, but for Italy). If you download the ATM Milano app, you can pre-purchase tickets to scan at the turntables. Otherwise, you can use debit/credit card that pays via wireless tap, or purchase paper tickets at the ticket booths at the metro station. There is a high speed train (30 minutes) that runs from the train station to Malpensa airport. Otherwise, it takes 1 hour to travel by taxi from Malpensa to the middle of Milan.

INSURANCE AND HEALTH SERVICES

When you register at the international student desk at Bocconi, you are given a health card and presented with insurance options. I never had to use any of them, so I therefore do not know how to use them. If you refer to the International Student Desk Facebook Group, however, you can easily get answers to any questions.

LIVING EXPENSES

FOOD AND GROCERIES - Everyday groceries are expensive around Milan. There are about five major grocery store chains, and Esseluga and Carrefour are the least expensive. The stores that have the best variety of item are the MyAuchans – I LOVED them! Ironically, it is may be less expensive to eat out at buffet-restaurants called osterias. They're designed for families.

CLOTHES – In the autumn, the weather varies from very hot to very cold. If you do not bring the appropriate clothing, you will NEED to buy new items to stay comfortable. Depending on your budget, you can purchase second-hand clothing for very cheap or find something very unique and high end. And as far as shoes are concerned – NEVER WEAR FLIPFLOPS OR SANDALS OR ANYTHING SHOWING SKIN. It is not the Milan way. Your shoes should always be completely closed. Unless you are the beach.

GOING OUT – Friends go out all the time for coffee, drinks, and aperitifs, so if you want Milanese friends, always have a little money with you to join a last minute break from studying.

LAUNDRY – depending on your living arrangements, you may need to take your laundry to a laundromat to be cleaned. Many laundromats in Milan include soap, so you don't need to buy your own. Each load can be as expensive as 5 euros.

NIGHTLIFE

I did not go out partying at all because I was too busy studying! However, there are many bars and cafes and clubs that are worth visiting if you like nightlife, especially because many of them are designed by the fashion moguls in the area. **You will be denied entry into a club if you are not dressed well enough**; make sure you have excellent shoes, wear flattering and nightlife-appropriate clothing, and do your makeup/hair in a flattering style.

TIPS

It is important to note the cultural tensions and realities of the country. Firstly, northern Italians in Lombardy have a rivalry with southern Italians; the northerners are accused of being snobby and cosmopolitan, and southerners are accused of being lazy and hedonistic. Since one is more metropolitan and the other is more rural, there are political discussions of whether there should be an official split, to make it easier for the government to regulate and allocate resources to varying needs and pain points.

The entire country of Italy is also going through a healthcare crisis, an unemployment crisis, and family crisis. Healthcare is too expensive and in rural areas, too difficult to access. Too many Italians are jobless, homeless, or living paycheck to paycheck. Young professional northern Italians fail to find jobs in finance and fashion, so they are earning their degrees at Bocconi but seeking jobs in Tokyo, China, and the United States. Finally, the stress that these factors impose have affected marriages and birth rates, which are in sharp decline.

Italy is also incredibly Catholic; their Church even has its own healthcare system! The mafia is very real with close ties to the government and the Church.

I cannot stress enough that northern Italians are a very conservative people. Compared to Israelis, northern Italians may seem like robots, but in reality, are just more sensitive to following rules, regulations, and the status quo. No one wears sandals or flipflops because the streets are considered too dirty (even though the government cleans the streets every morning). No one shows too much skin (even on hot days) because it is perceived as immodest. The color of one's shoes should always match or nearly match their bag, to show respect to the image that the designers of the shoes and bags were trying to create...everything holds symbolic significance.

Milan is just a train ride away from other amazing destinations such as Rome, Florence, Cinque Terre, and Switzerland. If you have a free weekend, find some friends to join you to go exploring. It's worth it!

GENERAL EXPERIENCE

I loved Milan and Bocconi, but not as much as I loved Tel Aviv. The conservative culture of northern Italy can be felt both in and out of the classroom, and for someone like me, who likes to have conversations about difficult topics or controversies, I had trouble feeling completely comfortable with my Milanese classmates. However, Bocconi attracts students from all around the world, and I became very close with classmates from other countries, and with the professors, who we would talk with after class.

As for the city itself, I walked almost 6 miles a day just to study the beauty of the architecture, and the designs and fashions in the stores. It is truly like walking through a museum. Every day I visited the Duomo and the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. During Christmastime, the city is exceptionally beautiful (see photos).







