

LA DOLCE VITA:

Exploring Ireland and Italy in Search of the History and Future of Sustainable Food Systems



25-day program exploring sustainable food systems across Ireland and Italy

La Dolce Vita: Exploring Ireland and Italy in Search of the History and Future of Sustainable Food Systems is an early fall start program exploring food in both Ireland and Italy using systems thinking, readings, dialogues, tours, and experiential learning to understand how factors, such as history, culture, policy, diet, lifestyle, trade, and market structure/economics, interact to drive sustainability across environmental, economic, health, and social outcomes.

The program begins in **Ireland**. Over the first 10 days of the trip, we will visit many different areas of the country learning about the diversity of regional food systems and delving into how geography should be considered when thinking about food system sustainability. We will visit a variety of farms (beef and dairy farms, an artisanal grain farm, oyster and seaweed farms) and engage with a range of experts in Irish food and history as we strive to understand Irish food culture, regionality, and history, and how they might differ from those of the US and Italy.

We then proceed to **Bologna**, considered Italy's "City of Gastronomy," where we will explore how its food system developed from its agriculturally rich geography and historical power structures (e.g., rulers, nobility, papacy). We will tour food processing facilities that make economically important and renowned regional products such as parmesan, parma ham, and balsamic vinegar to understand how present-day food labeling protects production techniques and regional producers and influences price and profit. Next, we will stay on an organic working farm on the **South Tuscan coast**. At this farmstay, we will learn about sustainable agriculture and EU agricultural policy, try a variety of dishes of cultural importance, tour a large-scale food processor who exports widely, including to Costco, and learn from and cook with a local farm to table restaurant.

Then, we will travel to **Northern Tuscany**. We will explore the region and learn about its rich food culture and history that is often underrepresented in common conceptions of Italian food. We will explore Livorno, Florence, Lucca, and the small town of Lari through a series of day trips, visiting a chocolate factory, an intergenerational mozzarella-making operation, an olive oil producer, Europe's second largest indoor market, and more. The region boasts fertile soils and productive coastal waters that result in a unique diversity of food. Throughout the trip, we will connect with locals and scholars to discuss how the past and present role of history, policy, and food culture affect food systems and the important role food is playing in embracing a more sustainable future. We will consider a variety of retail outlets, contrast production methods and policies in the E.U. and the U.S. and discuss what hinders and helps systems to learn from each other.

We end with 2 days in **Rome**, tying together our learnings from the trip in the capital city.

Sustainable Food Systems in Ireland and Italy - 5 credits

Jennifer J. Otten, *PhD, RD* | Alan Ismach, *research coordinator*

Sponsored by: UW School of Public Health and UW Study Abroad

EARLY FALL START 2026

INFORMATION SESSIONS

***Dec 11, 1-2:30 pm, Raitt 229**

***Jan 21, 4-5:30 pm, Raitt 229**

***Feb 2, 10-11:30 am, Raitt 229**

***If you cannot make these dates, email co-director Alan Ismach at ismaca@uw.edu**



@uwladolcevita



DATES: Aug 24-Sept 18, 2026

TERM: Early Fall Start

CREDITS: 5 credits

LOCATIONS

Ireland: Dublin, Galway, Counties Claire, Louth, and Laois

Italy: Bologna, South Tuscan coast, Northern Tuscany, Rome

Apply by Feb 15 // www.washington.edu/studyabroad