

The Antonella project

Eco-Regional design for the Lao River Watersheds



INFO
www.ruralfutures.it
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Program Description:

The Antonella Project is a four-week intensive summer program based in Laino Castello (Calabria), designed as a living laboratory for eco-regional design and architectural restoration within the Lao River watersheds. Through hands-on restoration training, field documentation, and design studio work, participants investigate how rural heritage—buildings, landscapes, and communities—can be conserved and re-activated in response to ecological risk, climate change, and depopulation. The program combines site-based learning in Pollino National Park with guided visits to key cultural landscapes in Southern Italy, fostering a practice that integrates sustainability, resilience, and stewardship of place. All included meals are grounded in the Mediterranean diet and are designed as place-based learning experiences, featuring seasonal local products and curated “slow food” tastings.

Locations:

Location: Napoli, Paestum, Padula, Laino Castello, Laino Borgo, Civita, Pollino National Park, Papisidero, Paola, Pizzo, Tropea, Italy

Program Terms: Summer

Type of Program: Intensive Course Abroad (4 Week Program)

Instructors:

Luca Guido

Clark Stevens

Program Calendar

Arrival Date: June 01/2026

Departure Date: June 28/2026

Students will need to leave on Sunday, May 31st 2026 (or before) from the USA to arrive in Naples on Monday, June the 1st 2026

Program Overview:

Over four weeks, students move between three integrated learning tracks: (1) a Restoration Lab focused on materials, diagnosis, conservation methods, and small-scale interventions; (2) an Eco-Regional Design Lab developing proposals for territorial regeneration and watershed-based planning; and (3) Italian language and cultural immersion. The calendar includes guest lectures and an intensive workshop on photography/landscape/architecture, community meetings with local stakeholders, and curated field trips (Naples, Paestum, Padula, Pollino National Park, the Lao River, and the Tyrrhenian coast villages such as Pizzo and Tropea). The program culminates in a public exhibition and final presentations of student projects.



What Antonella Trout (*Salmo Chigii*) looked like

The Antonella Project takes inspiration from Saint Francis of Paola's celebrated miracle of reviving a trout, using this story as an ethical and territorial metaphor for regeneration. In this spirit, the course invites participants to reflect on "the created world" as a shared responsibility and to develop sustainable, conservation-oriented actions that support repopulation through the safeguarding and re-activation of historic, architectural, and natural heritage.

NOTE: This program will entail a considerable amount of walking in natural, rural and urban environments and is not recommended for anyone who is uncomfortable near rivers, woods or is afraid of heights. Please be prepared and bring with you hiking boots or hiking shoes to wear while walking along hiking trails in the Pollino National Park. In addition, please remember to bring with you other kinds of shoes to wear while in the classroom and visiting the city.

APPLICATION DEADLINE
March 20th

[Click here to download the Application Form](#)

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Tentative itinerary and activities



Naples, the Bay of Naples and Mount Vesuvius in the background

Day 1

Monday, June 1

Arrival Date

Independent arrival at Hotel in [Napoli](#) (airport transfer not included but available on demand)

Meeting at Hotel in Napoli at 6:00 pm

Guided walk of the city

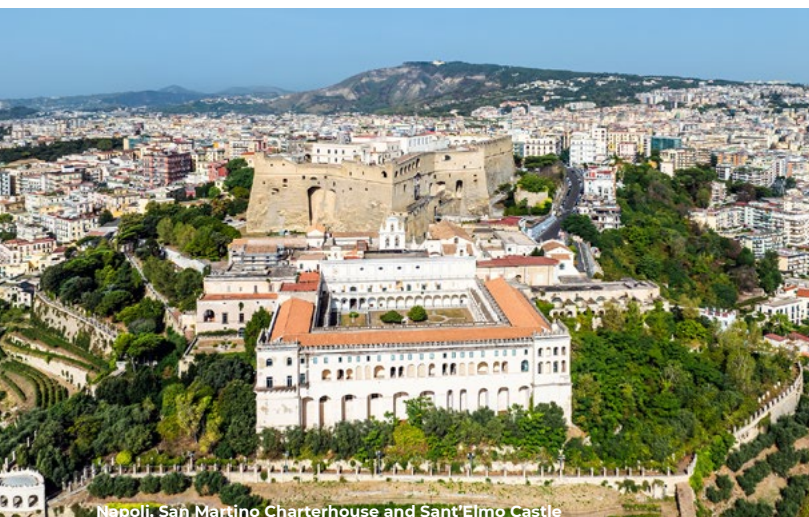
Welcome Dinner at 8:00 pm

Day 2

Tuesday, June 2

Breakfast and Orientation

Guided Tour of the [Historical Center](#): [Santa Chiara Cloister](#), [Piazza Plebiscito](#) and more



Napoli, San Martino Charterhouse and Sant'Elmo Castle



Napoli, Piazza del Plebiscito and the church of San Francesco di Paola



Napoli, Santa Chiara cloister

Lunch on your own

Guided Tour of: [San Martino Charterhouse](#) (view of the Bay of Naples), Via Chiaia ([Napoli Art Nouveau buildings](#)) and Napoli Waterfront

Dinner on your own

Day 3

Wednesday, June 3

Breakfast

Bus Departure from Naples to Paestum

Visit of the [Archeological Park of Paestum](#)

Lunch at [Vannulo Farm](#)

Bus Departure from Paestum to Padula



Paestum, Archeological Park



Paestum, Tenuta Vannulo, Buffalo grazing



Laino Castello, the old town and the Lao River



Visit of [Padula Charterhouse](#)

Bus Departure from Padula to Laino Castello

Arrival to Laino Castello

Accommodation and Welcome Dinner

Day 4

Thursday, June 4

Breakfast

Orientation and Meeting with the Mayor and local administrators/stakeholders

Guided Tour of [Laino Castello](#)

Lunch

Restoration Lab

Italian Language course

Dinner

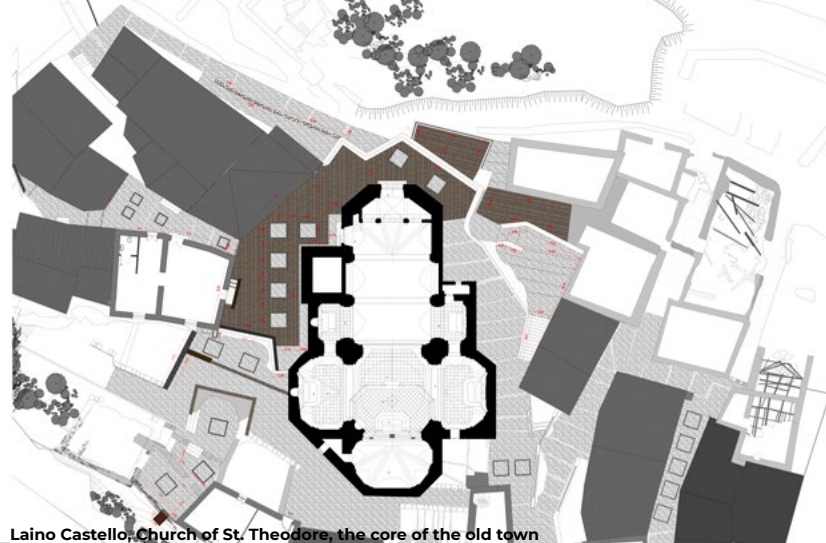
Day 5

Friday, June 5

Breakfast

Guided tour of [Laino Borgo](#) (Historical center, walk along the Lao River)

Lunch





Civita and a portion of the Raganello canyon



Pollino National Park visiting center, La Catasta



Rafting on the Lao River



Pollino National Park, vineyard

Eco-regional design Lab (walking along the Lao River)
weather- and safety-dependent
Return to Laino Castello and Dinner

Day 6

Saturday, June 6

Breakfast

Field trip [Pollino National Park](#)

Guided visit of Mormanno,

Pollino National Park visiting center-[La Catasta](#)

Lunch

Guided visit of [Civita](#) (Raganello Canyon Natural Reserve and Devil's bridge)

Guided tour of Tenute Ferrocinto (vineyard walk, refinement cellar, tasting of wines, oil and local products)

Return to Laino Castello and Dinner

Day 7

Sunday, June 7

Breakfast

Lao River discover: rafting/canyoning activities (weather- and safety-dependent)

Lunch

Lao River discover: rafting/canyoning activities (weather- and safety-dependent)

Return to Laino Castello and Dinner

Day 8

Monday, June 8

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Italian Language course

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 9

Tuesday, June 9

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Italian Language course

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner



Laino Borgo, Santuario delle Cappelle



Civita, Devil's bridge on the Raganello canyon



Day 10

Wednesday, June 10

Breakfast

Invited Lecture / Intensive workshop of photography/landscape/architecture

Lunch

Restoration Lab / Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 11

Thursday, June 11

Breakfast

Invited Lecture / Intensive workshop of photography/landscape/architecture

Lunch

Restoration Lab / Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 12

Friday, June 12

Breakfast

Invited Lecture / Intensive workshop of photography/landscape/architecture

Lunch



Rafting on the Lao River



Lao River



Paola, Santuario of San Francesco di Paola (where the Antonella Trout has been revived by San Francesco di Paola)

Restoration Lab / Eco-regional design Lab
Dinner

Day 13

Saturday, June 13

Breakfast

Field Trip to Papasidero-Paola

Guided visit of the [Romito Cave](#) and [Papasidero](#)

Lunch box

Guided visit of [Santuario di San Francesco di Paola](#)

Return to Laino Castello and Dinner

Day 14

Sunday, June 14

Breakfast

Field Trip_ [Pollino National Park](#) (weather- and safety-dependent)

Trekking activities

Visit of [Giardino degli Dei](#)

Lunch box

Trekking activities

Return to Laino Castello and Dinner

Day 15

Monday, June 15

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Italian Language course

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 16

Tuesday, June 16

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Italian Language course

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 17

Wednesday, June 17

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Italian Language course

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 18

Thursday, June 18

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Italian Language course

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 19

Friday, June 19

Breakfast

Bus Departure to Pizzo -Tropea

Guided tour of [Pizzo](#)

Lunch on your own

Bus Departure to [Tropea](#)

Hotel check-in

Students are free to enjoy and discover the village

Dinner on your own





Day 20

Saturday, June 20

Breakfast

Guided tour of [Tropea](#)

Students are free to enjoy and discover the village and its beaches

Lunch and Dinner on your own

Italian Language course

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 21

Sunday, June 21

Breakfast

Students are free to enjoy and discover the village and its beaches

Lunch on your own

Students are free to enjoy and discover the village and its beaches

Return to Laino Castello and Dinner

Day 23

Tuesday, June 23

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 24

Wednesday, June 24

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Italian Language course

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 22

Monday, June 22

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Day 25

Thursday, June 25

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Lunch

Eco-regional design Lab

Dinner

Day 26

Friday, June 26

Breakfast

Restoration Lab

Italian Language course

Lunch

Exhibition set up

Dinner

Day 27

Saturday, June 27

Breakfast

Graduation day

Exhibition set up

Lunch

Presentation of projects and activities

Celebration party/dinner

Day 28

Sunday, June 28

Breakfast

Free time in Laino Castello

Lunch

Apartment check-out in Laino Castello

Bus Departure from Laino to Napoli

Hotel check-in in Napoli

End of program and Dinner on your own

Day 29

Monday, June 29

Departure Date

Independent departures (airport transfer
not included)

Laino Castello, the old town





The Lao River and its estuary



The Lao River exiting the Pollino Massif

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

March 20th

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Program Fee:	\$ 9500
Due March 20th, 2026	\$ 800 Advance Payment
Due April 15th, 2026	\$ 8700 Final Payment

All payments are non-refundable unless declined admission or program cancels for unforeseen reasons.

Included in Program Fee:

In-country transportation by private van/bus and driver
Guides for all scheduled excursions
Expert guide/resident specialist fees and entrance fees to all sites
Scheduled activities
Accommodation in double to quadruple occupancy in private apartments or Hotels with private bathrooms
Breakfasts, lunches and dinners as described in the calendar/program
On Call Emergency Assistance

Not Included in Program Fee (Approximate):

Round-trip airfare: \$ 1500
2 Airport transfers: \$ 80
Spending money: \$ 500
Meals not specified in the itinerary: \$ 150 (lunches/dinners on your own as described in the calendar/program)
Visa and Passport
Any extras not detailed in the "included" section

Housing and Meals:

Students will be provided rooms in hotels and in friendly run establishment apartments located in the historical center of Laino Castello. That informal, cozy atmosphere makes them feel relaxed and at home while they will experience living in an ancient village not affected by mass tourism, pollution or other modern issues. This unique opportunity will allow the students to reconnect with the natural environment and the beauty of an enchanted, ancient rural village. The apartments are spartan but equipped with all necessary appliances and benefit from the views and fresh air of Pollino National Park. Cleaned daily and fresh bedding and towels provided. Students will have time to explore the closest villages and will be accompanied to local stores, pharmacies and grocery stores/supermarket. The on-site restaurant will be serving breakfast, lunches and dinner. The variety of dishes served represents the famous Mediterranean Diet, prepared daily with local fresh products.

Is a visa required for US citizens?

American citizens are not required to have a visa for this program. Students of other nationalities should confirm visa requirements on the Italian Embassy website.

Rural Futures is an international study abroad institution that develops academic and research programmes in Italy for foreign students and universities. We design courses and summer schools, promote conferences, exhibitions, and cultural initiatives, and support partner institutions in the development of tailored educational pathways.

Rural Futures

Learning from the countryside to improve the future of cities

Rural Futures is grounded in the vision that Italy's rural areas constitute a crucial laboratory for rethinking the relationship between the built environment and nature, and for testing new approaches to the stewardship and transformation of places. Our mission is to advance knowledge, research, and education on historical-artistic, agricultural, and natural heritage by fostering dialogue among students, researchers, institutions, territories, and local communities. We work to develop replicable models for landscape protection and management and for heritage enhancement, thereby contributing to the creation of cities and human settlements that are more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Through international educational programmes and field-based experimentation, we translate design ideas and conservation practices into tangible pathways capable of integrating cultural, ecological, and social dimensions.

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