

Hooray! You're going to Bologna!

Here are a few tips for anyone navigating the fair for the first time.

Plan Ahead!

There's a lot you can do before you ever leave home to ensure you have a great experience in Bologna.

Some publishers allow illustrators to **request portfolio reviews before the fair starts** (check websites of exhibitors for more info). This will save you (and your feet) some queueing. And don't forget that there are portfolio reviews available at the SCBWI booth as well. This is another review you can register for online, in advance.

Reserve accommodations early. As soon as you know you're going, book your accommodations in order to have the widest selection of prices and locations to choose from.

Go in knowing you can't see and do it all. In addition to the publishers booths, there are workshops and exhibits as part of the fair. **Check the program and exhibit information in advance** to set your priorities for your visit.

Practice your pitch and polish your portfolio! Have current business cards, post cards and other promotional materials with you and be prepared to talk about your work. Develop a concise pitch for your project and/or your unique selling point as an illustrator. When you are at a portfolio review or chatting with someone while you're waiting for a bus, you want to pack as much information as possible into that brief interaction.

Download apps (and maps) that you can access while you travel. My favorite app allows me to download a city map (while I'm at home, on wifi) and place pins at specific locations. When I am in Bologna, I can access that information, including showing my location in real time, without using data so I'm not "roaming."

In Bologna

Wear comfortable shoes! Forget fashion. Okay, you don't have to forget it completely, but seriously, wear the most comfortable shoes you own. You're going to do a lot of walking (and standing in line) and your feet (and your back) will love you for it.

The city bus is the easiest way to get **to/from the fair venue** (in fact it can be hard to get a taxi at peak travel times). Tickets can be bought with coins from a machine at the bus stop, or at tobacconist shops. You can buy a ticket for a single journey, a day card, or a multi-fare card with 10 trips on it. Be prepared for crowds at peak times.

Take a break! You're not going to be able to see or do everything. Have a snack, stay hydrated, and take advantage of the benches placed along the perimeter of the exhibit halls to rest. A few well-timed rests will extend your stamina.

See some sights! The fair may be what brings you to Bologna, but take advantage of the fact that you are in a city with amazing history and architecture and do some sightseeing while you're there!