

Gonzaga in Florence Parent FAQs

We encourage your students to take the lead with their program, yet the Study Abroad office realizes that you, too, are a part of the study abroad experience. All program related information and tasks will be provided to your student through either the Study Abroad online application or their @zagmail email account. (For non-Gonzaga students it will be the email they give us when they apply).

We encourage study abroad students to use this [guide](#) found on the Study Abroad website. We also hope you will review the [Parent page](#) on the Study Abroad website. The following are some of the most frequently asked questions from parents about the Gonzaga-in-Florence semester and summer program.

When should my student arrive?

Arrival information is listed on the GIF calendar which is posted [online here](#). Students are encouraged to arrive to their destination before 5:00 PM on the date listed. In most cases, students will leave the day prior to arrive in Europe on the recommended day. Each semester's arrival location varies. Students will receive an email once they have paid the \$500 program deposit to the program confirming specific arrival and departure details.

Can my student travel before or after the program?

Yes! Personal travel is permitted before the program begins and after the program has ended. Refer to the calendar for specific dates. It is also your family's responsibility to correctly abide by entry requirements, which in most cases allows students to stay in country for an additional 90 days (for summer, students are permitted 90 days total since they do not use a visa). Use <http://travel.state.gov> to review entry/exit and travel document requirements. *Making arrangements for semester luggage before or after the program is the student's responsibility.* Using the school or housing for storage is not generally an available option.

Is there a group flight?

There is not a group flight. GIF participants are responsible for getting themselves to the program destination. Arrival and departure locations will be provide to the participants once their program deposit has been paid, along with program dates.

Each semester the Gonzaga Study Abroad office will coordinate an optional "suggested" itinerary through a student travel agency. This option is a means for students to fly together. Your student will receive these details once the program deposit is paid. It is NOT required. With permission, our office releases the students' arrival information to the group participants prior to departure so they can coordinate meeting up together at the airport.

How much is the program?

All program fees are listed online on the GIF program page (click [Budget Sheets](#)): https://studyabroad.gonzaga.edu/index.cfm?FuseAction=Programs.ViewProgram&Program_ID=10000 Through the study abroad application portal students will read and sign documentation regarding cancellations and refund process along with information about billing. Please check with your students with regard to specific deadlines, details and responsibilities.

Gonzaga students are billed as if they are on main campus, likewise for scholarships and financial aid. Thus, the \$500.00 Program Deposit is all that students will pay up front. Your bill will be adjusted to reflect the study abroad term and fees; paperwork and deadlines will be the same as it is on main campus.

Non-Gonzaga participants should follow up with their home institution regarding billing, payments, scholarships and financial aid as it varies by institution. Some non-Gonzaga participants will be billed for their program deposit through their home institution, other non-Gonzaga participants will need to mail their \$500.00 Program Deposit to Gonzaga. Your student's acceptance email will state whether they need to pay their \$500 deposit to Gonzaga.

When should the health form be completed? And by whom?

All GIF participants are required to have a physical completed and turn health forms regarding any medical conditions for emergency and safety precautions. The physical can be completed by a primary care physician or on-campus Health Center representative. This information remains confidential and is only used in the events special accommodations are need due to a medical condition or in the event of a medical issue abroad. The form is found within the online application your son or daughter has for the program. He or she must login to the study abroad portal and print the 4 pages.

How does insurance work?

GIF participants are automatically enrolled in [international coverage](#) that the Study Abroad office at GU is contracted with. This coverage is automatic and is included in the program fees. Once enrolled, typically a month prior to departure, students are provided their ID card and details regarding the benefits and reimbursement process.

Students may have international coverage through a domestic insurance provider. It is our recommendation that this coverage is used secondary to the above mentioned coverage. For immigration purposes, students are required to be enrolled in the above insurance and it is included in the program fees.

When will my student find out about housing?

Housing assignments vary based on the term the student will be in Florence. In most cases it will be a month before the end of the term. Students are able to request roommates. The requests must be mutual to be honored. Roommate preferences are NOT guaranteed, but generally we try to accommodate all requests. Additionally, students can NOT request a pensione. Should students have special accommodation needs, please contact Erin Schultheis (schultheis@gonzaga.edu).

What are the Weekend Travel Learning locations? When do students sign up?

The Weekend Travel Learning Program is coordinated and managed by the GIF staff in Florence. Details about the destinations, costs, policies, and registration will be emailed to participants prior to departure (typically about 2 months before they leave). It is a lottery process: students will give their trip preferences in their study abroad application, and then will be notified which trips they can sign-up for. Students register for the trip by paying online. Students are given information about the policies, process, and basic trip details visa email, and then have a period of time (a few days) where they are able to sign-up for the trips they were selected for. Waitlists for trips will be maintained. If a waitlist is exhausted, a trip moves into open registration, where anyone can sign-up for the trip by payment online.

We're hoping to visit our son/daughter while s/he is in Florence. When should we go? Do you have any recommendations about arranging travel, accommodations or activities?

Planning your visit abroad to GIF is up to your family preferences but we ask you avoid mid-terms and finals as students will need to focus on their academics. [This](#) document will also provide information about visiting.

Starting Fall 2018, Gonzaga in Florence hosts a Family Weekend in Florence. These events occur the weekend before Thanksgiving break and Spring break. See our Family Weekend in Florence [website page](#) for continuously updating information. Details will be provided in Parent Monthly Updates.

What is the Opening Tour?

The Opening Tour takes place at the beginning of the program. For the Fall, it is typically a 10-day excursion in Europe with destinations varying each year; students will arrive to the beginning location and at the end of the tour travel together to Florence. For the Spring and Summer, Opening Tour is typically held in Rome; specific details will be provided once accepted and can also be viewed on the GIF Calendar. Opening Tour is mandatory for participants. Students studying with GIF for the academic year will participate in just the Fall semester opening tour.

What does the Estimated Personal Expenses include (listed on the Budget Sheet)?

Estimated Personal Expenses are again, *estimates*. These expenses can include but aren't limited to: meals not included in the Room & Board fee, personal weekend travel, miscellaneous living expenses (laundry, communication, transportation, toiletries), and entertainment. One of the major contributors to this number is personal weekend travel. Students that spend more time in Florence and within Italy should generally spend less than those who are travelling to far distances most weekends.

Additionally, it's important to consider the exchange rate and cost of living. During the semester prior to departure, students will be given resources and information to make a budget.

How should I plan to stay in communication with my son/daughter?

Over the past couple of years, more and more students are utilizing smart phones, tablets, and laptops to regularly communicate with family and friends while abroad. Families can also inquire with their cell phone carrier to explore an international plan for calling and data, and mobile hotspots. Additionally, there are international cell phone companies that are affordable for a semester abroad. The GIF staff can help your student purchase an Italian cell phone (if desired) once they arrive to Florence. Some GIF alumni would comment that they mainly used email, Skype, Facebook, and software applications that use Wi-Fi or the Internet to communicate with family and friends at home. Other students prefer having an Italian cell phone with texting and calling capabilities usable without Wi-Fi. If bringing a smart phone look into the following popular apps: [Viber](#), [WhatsApp](#), [Skype](#)

The GIF center in Florence has computers for student use and Wi-Fi. Wi-Fi services in the housing residences varies: it is not a required service as part of the housing contract. If a pensione has Wi-Fi available, it is considered a "gift" to the students.

Where should I mail packages and letters while my son/daughter is abroad?

Students should plan to receive mail and packages at the GIF center. GIF contact information (school address, mailing address for your student, important phone numbers) will be provided in an email to both parents and students prior to departure. For privacy, the Study Abroad office does not publish the GIF address.

When sending packages, it's important to be aware any package (regardless of contents) are subject to an import tax that the recipient would have to pay before the package is released. Sometimes no tax is levied, but if the items in the package are new and are worth more than €10-15, usually some tax is owed (the more the package is worth, the more is owed). Students will be provided additional details about receiving mailed items during the pre-departure sessions, and in weekly emails through the semester prior to departure.

Does my student need to pack anything special?

GIF participants are provided a recommended packing list in the months prior to their departure via email. Throughout the semester before they leave they will also have opportunities to receive tips and advice from past participants and online resources & suggestions from our staff. Students should use the [Textbook page](#) to determine how to get their books to Italy, and will be notified in their weekly emails when this page is live for their semester. Some textbooks are available at the school for checkout from the library, others will need to be bought in the U.S. before travelling to Florence, and still others will be bought from booksellers in Florence. School supplies and some toiletries/hygiene items can be purchased in Florence.