



Gonzaga in Florence Parent FAQs



While we encourage your students to take the lead with their program, the Study Abroad office understands 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 students from partner institutions, we will use the email given in the student's GIF application.

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](#) within the “Dates, Deadlines, and Application Process” tab. In most cases, students will depart the U.S. 1 day before the official arrival day in Italy, due to time changes. Students will receive an email once they have paid the \$500 program deposit & submitted their Accommodation Needs questionnaire to the program confirming specific arrival and departure details.

Can my student travel before or after the program?

Personal travel is permitted before the program begins and after the program has ended. Refer to the GIF academic calendar (linked above) for specific dates. It is 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, and watch for new information in the parent monthly email updates. *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. Florence, other European cities, and airports often have “left luggage” services for storage.

The Gonzaga Study Abroad office will keep students and families informed regarding COVID-19 requirements and any program modifications.

Is there a group flight?

Historically we have not arranged a group flight (i.e. designated flight for all participants with reserved seats and a discount), but the Study Abroad Office will produce a suggested itinerary and recommended flights. Program participants will also have the option to book their flights with the Gonzaga Travel Agent, for which contact information will be provided in monthly email updates. GIF participants are responsible for getting themselves to the program destination by the arrival time. Arrival and departure locations will be provided to the participants once the student has committed to the program.

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 or in transit.

How much is the program?

All program fees are listed online on the [GIF program page](#) (navigate to the Costs & Finances tab). Students will read and sign documentation regarding cancellations and refund process along with information about billing in their study abroad application portal. Please check with your student with regard to specific deadlines, details and responsibilities.

For the semester, Gonzaga students are billed as if they are on main (Spokane) campus, including their GU financial aid package. For summer, Gonzaga students typically do not have scholarships or financial aid remaining to apply to the term. The \$500 program deposit is all that students will pay up front. The student's 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 program deposit to Gonzaga. Your student's acceptance email will provide further details.

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

All GIF participants are required to have a physical completed and turn in 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 event special accommodations are needed due to a medical condition or in the event of a medical issue abroad. The form is found within the online application your student has for the program. Your student must login to their study abroad application and print the pages to give their health care provider.

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?

Two housing options are available for the semester—homestay and pensioni. Homestays are not available during the summer due to the short duration of the program. A homestay involves the GIF student living with an Italian family, typically with another GIF student. Pensioni is an Italian word meaning "student accommodations," which our program interprets as family-run hotels. Housing assignments vary based on the term the student will be in Florence. Students are able to request roommates, and 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 specific pensione. Should students have special accommodation needs, please contact Erin Schultheis (schultheis@gonzaga.edu).

Where are the GIF Travel Learning program locations? When do students sign up?

The GIF Travel Learning program is coordinated and managed by the GIF staff in Florence. Details about the destinations, costs, policies, and registration for trips will be emailed to participants prior to departure (typically in June/July for Fall semester students, November/December for Spring semester students, and March for Summer term students). For semester students, 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 via 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. For summer students, students register for the trip by paying online (i.e. no lottery).

We're hoping to visit our student while they are 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. Our [Visiting document](#) provides more information, including accommodation recommendations.

Gonzaga in Florence typically hosts a Family Weekend in Florence during the fall term. This event occurs the weekend before Thanksgiving break. See our Family Weekend in Florence [website page](#) for continuously updating information. Details will be provided in monthly email updates.

What is the Opening Tour?

The Opening Tour takes place at the beginning of the program. For the Fall, it is typically a 6-day excursion in Italy 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, Opening Tour is typically a 4-day excursion in Rome. For the Summer, students split a 4-day trip between Rome and Assisi. Specific details will be provided once accepted and can also be viewed on the GIF Academic 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 Personal Expenses include (listed on the Cost Sheets within the Costs & Finances tab on the [GIF program page](#))?

Personal expenses are simply 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 student?

Phone options include utilizing Wi-Fi only messaging apps ([Viber](#), [WhatsApp](#)), an international plan with your student's current cell carrier, purchasing a European SIM card upon arrival to Florence (GIF staff assist), or purchasing an Italian cell phone upon arrival to Florence. In recent semesters, the most popular option has been utilizing a European SIM card with your student's current cell phone.

The GIF school building has computers for student use and high-speed Wi-Fi. Wi-Fi services in the housing residences varies: it is not a required service as part of the housing contract. The currently contracted pensioni have Wi-Fi, with varying degrees of speed and quality. Upgrades were made during the 2020-2021 academic year while no students were attending GIF.

Where should I mail packages and letters while my student is abroad?

Students should plan to receive mail and packages at the GIF school building. GIF contact information (school address, mailing address for your student, important phone numbers) will be provided via email to both parents and students prior to departure.

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 details are [available online here](#).

Does my student need to pack anything special?

GIF participants are provided a recommended packing list via email in the months prior to their departure. 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. A textbook list will be shared with students via the monthly update emails. 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 toiletries/hygiene items can be purchased in Florence.