

## 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:

<http://www.gonzaga.edu/Campus-Resources/Offices-and-Services-A-Z/Registrar/Florence/default.asp>.

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. Use <http://travel.state.gov> to review entry/exit and travel document requirements.

### **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.

In addition, each semester the Gonzaga Study Abroad office will try to coordinate an optional "suggested" itinerary through the student travel agency STA Travel. This option is a means for students to fly together. It is NOT required. With permission, our office releases the students' arrival information 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](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. 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 your home institution regarding billing, payments, scholarships and financial aid as it varies by institution.

### **When will my student find out about housing?**

Housing assignments vary based on the term the student will be in Florence:

- Fall/AY: pensione assignments will be finalized in late summer.
- Spring: room & pensione assignments are pre-assigned due to the visa process and finalized in mid-October.
- Summer: pensione assignments will be finalized in mid-April

Students are able to request roommates. The requests must be mutual to be honored. Roommate preferences are NOT guaranteed. Additionally, students can NOT request a pensione.

Should students have special accommodation needs, please contact Alisha Lombardi ([lombardi@gonzaga.edu](mailto:lombardi@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 2-3 months before they leave). Registration will be online. Students are given the information about the policies, process and basic trip details and then registration typically opens a week later and is available for approximately a week, or when the trip is full.

### **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. You can also refer to the [GIF Calendar](#) to see holidays and other events during the semester.

The Study Abroad office does not provide specific recommendations for hotels, restaurants or activities, but GIF parents are provided a Program Guide in the semester prior to your student's departure which includes some general resources for visiting Florence.

Parents can also join the GIF Parent Facebook group; this is a resource that may provide useful information about visiting. An invite with a link to join the closed group will be sent to parents a few months prior to your student's departure. *Note: due to [FERPA](#) and privacy policies, if your son/daughter does not give the Study Abroad office permission to communicate with his/her parent, the invite will not be extended.*

### **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 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.

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

Estimated Personal Expenses are again, *estimates*. These expenses can included 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. Additionally, there are international cell phone companies that are affordable for a semester abroad; however, most 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.

The GIF center in Florence has computers for student use and wi-fi. Wi-fi in the housing varies based on the location. Students should plan to pay an additional fee to the pensioni to use wi-fi.

If bringing a smart phone look into the following popular apps: [Viber](#), [WhatsApp](#), [Skype](#)

### **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. In the Program Guide students & parents are provided in the semester prior to departure, the GIF contact information is provided: address and important phone numbers. For privacy, the Study Abroad office does not publish the GIF address and only shares it with students.

When sending packages, it's important to be aware any package (regardless of contents) is 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.