Our academic approach to education abroad

Our approach to education abroad is to make Italy your laboratory and classroom. Students enthusiastically say that participating in a Gustolab International program is more than study abroad. It is an unparalleled experience. One of the best decisions they ever made. Not just academically, but personally. Participating in daily Italian life, visiting various neighborhoods, shops, restaurants, and markets, immerses them in a unique environment of constant investigation and discovery. Courses are richly supplemented by field work, special projects, workshops, excursions, and activities. They share that the process of stepping outside of the familiar “comfort zone” of home, adapting to a new international context, allows them to gain valuable skill sets. It is a time of growth, broadening perspectives, and building future professional opportunities. Beyond examining the role of food in the culture at large, while in Rome, they also find themselves evaluating individual choices in regards to how the quality of food reflects on their quality of life. We strive to give students everything: guidance, structure, support, knowledge, and fun. Below, you can learn more about our approach to education abroad.

Place-based experiential learning

During your time abroad, you will learn about cultural particulars and nuances through the study of daily habits to visiting historic sites and buildings to walking old neighborhoods and comparing their layout, functions, and aesthetics with newer ones, to connecting with people working in the food & sustainability industries. In all cases, we encourage students to engage actively with such opportunities and to turn them into moments of discovery – exploring the patterns of local life in a second culture. These kinds of observations are essential to nearly all coursework at GLi and often become the basis of fieldwork carried out in restaurants, markets, factories, farms, and other settings. Gustolab International also keeps students informed of special activities occurring in Rome and elsewhere in Italy and encourages participation. Be sure to bring good walking shoes and a notepad, you will need them.

According to the Association for Experiential education, Experiential education is Challenge and Experience followed by Reflection leading to Learning and Growth. Some of the principles of experiential education practice include:
Throughout the experiential learning process, the learner is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning. Learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully, and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic. The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning. Relationships are developed and nurtured: learner to self, learner to others, and learner to the world at large.

**Interdisciplinary & co-curricular project-based learning**

Our courses are designed to promote interdisciplinary discussion and learning, and practical co-curricular projects are part of course outcomes. These include projects with local organizations to help you learn how to apply your learning, solve real-world problems and improve your intercultural communication skills. Examples include:

- production of a short documentaries
- cooking practicums
- group work with other students from Italian universities
- participation in local events and hackathons.
- involvement in international initiatives such as SDGs for all students.
- participation in local competitions and workshops

**Service Learning**

Our approach to international education includes providing you with service learning and community service opportunities. These are great ways for students to meet new people, immerse themselves in the local culture and contribute to the local economy as well as make a difference in the lives of people.

Recent service-learning activities include:
An inclusion, social integration & autonomy focused project in Rome
A sustainability focused project at Parco degli Acquedotti with Retake Roma.

In the past, students have done community service at:

- La casa di Kim: KIM association hosts sick children who cannot receive medical treatments in their native countries. Usually, one of their parents is hosted with them and stays for the whole duration of treatment.
- Community of Sant’Egidio: Soup kitchen and walking dinners
- Orme in Rome: The association organizes food services where they prepare and make food available for homeless people.

Language learning & cultural immersion

Gustolab International strives to immerse students in Italian culture by informing and creating opportunities around customs, festivals and activities in Rome or elsewhere in Italy. We also organize activities with local Italian students to give students the chance to interact with peers from nearby Italian universities.

GLi students take Italian classes through our partner Scuola Leonardo da Vinci.

As cliché as it sounds, studying abroad really does change your life. For me, Gustolab has opened my eyes to the world of incredible wine, olive oil and food production in general. Sustainability is definitely something I want to implement in my life and in my diet. Come with an open mind and allow yourself to be flown away by the Italian language, food and vital environmental issues.
think the strength of the Gustolab lies in its ability to introduce students to some of the most prominent players in the field of food entrepreneurship, critical food studies, and historical preservation of food culture. Nowhere else do students have the opportunity to discuss the cultural politics of food with the very people who are shaping the field of study on this topic in Rome.

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