

HARDING UNIVERSITY

Answers to Common Questions from Our Guests

At the Florence Bible School
Scandicci (FI), Italy

Is the building like a hostel or hotel? Do you have beds for guests?

This building is like a small, three-floor apartment building. It functions as: (1) our home where *Avanti Italia* workers and overseas students live; (2) the Florence Bible School (FBS; in Italian, *La Scuola Biblica di Firenze*), where English and Bible classes are taught; and (3) as a place of residence for Harding University students. It also (4) provides beds for guests who choose to stay here briefly, as long as they are flexible and not too particular. Harding University manages the beds and rooms which are set aside for guests. To reserve them, contact Harding at international@harding.edu. There are often several guests here at the same time.

Staying at the Florence Bible School might be compared to staying in a hostel. The building is simple, but many people stay in it as they travel. Guests and residents share the bathrooms, each of which are close to the bedrooms. We have several bunk beds and a few double beds. Men and women (even if married) usually sleep in separate rooms, which they sometimes share with other guests. There are two matrimonial private rooms with full sized beds, but these are often the first spaces to be reserved. Harding cannot guarantee you a private room.

What about the bedding and bathrooms? What do we need to bring?

Harding can greet you with clean sheets and towels, and more are available upon demand, but there is not a maid service to change sheets or towels daily. The bathrooms have soap and toilet paper, but you need to supply your own toiletries. Our hot water is limited, so you cannot take long showers.

Is there a curfew? Can I get a key to the front door?

You may come and go as you wish. Please tell Harding if you plan to come in after 11:00 p.m. on your first day of arrival so someone can be ready to let you in. Once there, you will be given a code to allow you to access the Bible School conveniently.

How much do you charge?

The requested amount for sleeping in the Bible School is determined by and payable to Harding University. This amount is thirty dollars per night per person, but subject to change. There is a minimum per-night charge for any stay of up to 10 days. For longer stays, a weekly rate may apply. Again, contact Harding at international@harding.edu. The required payment must be paid in full and in advance. If you change your plans and leave early, we will refund all of the unused portion of your payment.

Can we do our laundry at the Bible School?

Sorry, but we must reserve our laundry machines for the use of our residents. The nearest laundry mat, with coin-operated machines, is a short walk from the School.

Can we access the internet and check our email at the FBS?

Guests with laptop computers may access our wireless network, but we must reserve the school computers primarily for the use of our residents. A computer in the school library is available for guests (no charge) when the room is not needed by FBS workers.

Are there any facilities for food preparation?

Sorry, the workers and students here need to reserve the kitchen for themselves, but nearby (within easy walking distance) there are several good restaurants and small stores where you can buy grocery items such as sandwich supplies.

How can we find the Florence Bible School?

There are two easy ways to get to the Bible School from the main train station in Florence, Santa Maria Novella (SMN):

1. Take a bus. Usually in about 15-20 minutes you can ride bus 27 from the main SMN train station in Florence (Firenze) to Le Bagnese, our neighborhood. Le Bagnese is the eastern part of Scandicci, a suburb on the southwest edge of Florence. It is easy to find your way to and from the center of Florence and the Bible School once you have done it. Of course, you can call us when you arrive for more specific directions, but these should get you here:

To buy a bus ticket at the train station: Go out the south doors on the right from where the trains stop (the exit which leads down steps). You can buy a bus ticket from the news stand there or at some bars and almost any tabacchi store near a bus stop. They cost €1,20 euro each and are good for seventy minutes on any bus in town from the time you validate them in the ticket box (inside the bus). You can also buy bus tickets from the bus drivers at a higher rate.

Find bus 6 from the SMN station.

Exit out the station towards the McDonald and you will enter the bus terminals. Look for bus 6 that is going toward Scandicci. Ask the driver if uncertain.

To get off at the right place: Ride the bus to the end of the line (Capolina) located near the Nuovo Ospedale Torrigalli, it will be a large hospital on the right.

To find the Bible School from the bus stop: Walk away from the hospital towards the AGIP gas station. Once at the traffic light turn left and walk three short blocks (south) along that street, which is Via delle Bagnese. At the end of a grassy area on the right, you can see on your right the Bible School building with a sign above the door: *La Scuola Biblica di Firenze*. NOTE: On the Bible School web site (www.scuolabiblica.it), select *Sede*, then *Stampa la mappa* (print the map), and you will have a map of our neighborhood to carry with you to help you find the School.

2. Take a taxi. From the train station, a taxi can deliver you to our front door for less than €20.00 euro.

From the Florence Airport; give a taxi driver the following directions:

Via Armando Spadini, 24
50018 Scandicci

Vicino all'ospedale di S. Giovanni di Dio (Torregalli). Via Spadini e' una stradina che entra e esce da Via Le Bagnese.

NOTE: Keep our addresses and phone numbers (at the end of this document) with you as you travel our way, so you can contact us when you need to.

Visiting Florence

Is the Bible School convenient to the Florence train station and tourist sights?

Yes. In about forty minutes you can ride (bus 27 and the tramvia) or Bus 6 to/from the main (SMN) train station to Le Bagnese, our neighborhood (or *versa visa*) in Scandicci, a suburb on the southwest edge of Florence. It is easy to find your way to and from the center of town and the Bible School. The main (SMN) train station in the center of Florence is within easy walking distance of most of the major tourist sites.

What can we see in Florence?

It would take many trips to Florence to see all of her sights, but within one day you can walk around the center of town and enjoy most major sights. Florence has Europe's greatest collection of Italian Renaissance art – paintings, sculpture and architecture, and was at various times the home of Dante, Leonardo di Vinci, Machiavelli, Michelangelo, Raphael, Galileo and many other important folks. Ask if you want us to tell you more. The Bible school has tour books you can borrow.

You can avoid as much as a two-hour peak season wait for the Uffizi museum (Florence's greatest art collection), and a shorter wait at the Academia (where Michelangelo's statue of David is), by making advance reservations. Call (011.39) 055-294-883 for both the Uffizi and Academia (you can do it in English). All other sites are relatively easy to get into. You are not obligated to use these reservations if, when you arrive at the museum, you find that its line is not long.

What is the best time to visit Florence?

If you have a choice, we recommend early spring (February, March, April) or fall (late September, October, November), to avoid tourist lines and enjoy cooler weather.

Could we take day trips into Rome or other cities from Florence?

Yes. Italy has a train system connecting all cities, and every city on the mainland is easily accessible by train from Florence. For example, from Florence a Eurostar (the fastest train) can take you to Rome in about one and a half hours. Less expensive, slower moving trains take you to Rome in about three and a half hours. You can go all the way (south) to Pompeii on a Eurostar in about four hours or so from Florence. Visit <http://www.trenitalia.it> for more information.

Cities close to Florence include Siena; Assisi (home and burial place of St. Francis); Vinci (home of Leonardo); Arezzo, where the movie "Life is Beautiful" was filmed; Pisa (perhaps you have heard of its tower); Lucca, a small city with a perfectly preserved medieval wall; and San Gimignano, a popular medieval town noted for its picturesque towers. Venice is about three hours away. There are many more. We also recommend Cinque Terre, a popular region of small villages along a beautiful, rugged coastline on the western edge of Italy; and Fiesole, the ancient town on the hill above Florence.

Traveling in Italy

What is the weather like and how should we dress?

The weather is unpredictable, so plan to dress in layers. Bring an umbrella.

How is the best way to exchange money while we travel?

We believe using ATM machines (Bancomat) is the best way to get money here as you need it. You can get as much as you need, when you need it, exchanged immediately into euros directly from your bank account. This is much easier than using travelers' checks, which fewer places now accept. ATMs give you good exchange rates, charging a small fee, and are as numerous here as in the States.

Any suggestions on how to estimate expenses?

Make sure to adjust your estimates according to the dollar/euro exchange rate. Of course, no one knows how the rates will change. Estimate paying at least 30% more for items than you are used to. Money goes fast here.

Are the trains a good way to get around Italy?

The train system works well throughout all of Italy and it is easy to travel by train. Go to www.trenitalia.com to answer your questions. It may be cheaper to buy a Eurail pass instead of individual tickets (<http://www.eurail.com>) but, even if you have a Eurail pass you will be required to pay extra for the Eurostar (fastest) trains. You can find out exactly how long the different trains take by looking at the schedules: www.trenitalia.it/it/index.html.

Can we leave our belongings at the Bible School and return after a few days?

Yes. We do not assume responsibility for personal belongings, but so far we have had no problems when people do that. The situation as to which beds or rooms are available can change between your visits, so you may not be sleeping in the same place when you return, but we will be ready for you on the nights you reserve.

Church

How can we worship with the Florence church or participate in Bible studies?

- The Florence Church of Christ meets for worship every Sunday morning in an old family chapel (Capella Demidoff), near Piazza Puccini, at Via San Donato, 15, in a section of Florence known as Novoli. We can help you find the location. Currently, Fellowship time (often only in Italian) start about 10:15 a.m. and worship (with some English translation) 10:45a.m.

How can we find the Florence Church of Christ building?

You can easily get there by either public transportation or taxi. Two ways:

- Bus. Take a bus numbered 17, 30 or 35 from the main (Santa Maria Novella, or SMN) train station to Piazzini Puccini (often abbreviated as Pz Puccini on maps). Follow your progress on a map to determine when to get off, then walk west across the bridge. Take the first right onto San Donato and follow it as it curves left. The old chapel we worship in is easily distinguished by its large columns outside.

- Taxi. Simply give the church address to a taxi driver: Via San Donato, 15 (near Piazza Puccini in Novoli). Taxis are not very expensive in Florence.

Here are the address and phone numbers for the current Avanti directors:

David and Debbie Woodroof
Directors, *Avanti Italia*
Scuola Biblica di Firenze
Via Armando Spadini, 24
50018 Scandicci (FI)
Italy

Office phone: (011.39) 055.257.1389

Workers' phone: (011.39) 055.25.34.12

David Woodroof's cell phone (011.39) 345 218 8347

011 is the international phone access; 39 is the country code for Italy. (In Italy, ignore the first 5 digits.) Call us when you want to.

About *Avanti Italia*: www.avantiitalia.org (English)

About the Florence Bible School: www.scuolabiblica.it (Italian)

About the Florence Church of Christ: <http://firenze.chiesadicristo.org> (Italian and English)

About churches of Christ in Italy: www.chiesadicristo.org (Italian)

We look forward to seeing you!