



Free Spirit Gap Year

An international experience of adventure and growth

- ✓ Community based living with immersive and diverse intercultural experience
- ✓ Individualized strength-based programming, addressing one's interests and needs
- ✓ Guided group dynamics, encouraging self-exploration, social engagement, and participation
- ✓ International travel in Israel and Italy – History, arts, food, sailing, and other outdoor activities
- ✓ Volunteering, internship, and training opportunities in Israel and Italy
- ✓ Collaborations with Education Consultants for college preparations

Free Spirit offers a full gap year (September to May) designed for Young Adults, ages 18-24 who wish to have a successful transition into young adulthood. It is mostly geared toward students who have graduated high school, but need and wish to be better prepared to step into higher education or other independent living settings. Free Spirit gap year can also fit teens who are graduating from the residential-program world and would like to transition more smoothly into much less structured settings.

We invite Young Adults to join our community, build and maintain relationships, and have an opportunity for self-exploration and an in-depth therapeutic process. Our emerging young adults gain and develop self-regulation and executive functioning skills, independent daily living and social skills, and various hard-skills. They often describe this experience as filled with life-changing adventures.

Throughout the year, the participants alternate between our main campus in a Kibbutz environment in Israel and various facilities and internships around Israel and central and northern Italy, around Rome and Tuscany.

Free Spirit Gap Year: Program overview and roadmap

Step 1: Arrive, Adjust, Assess: An eight-week session in Kibbutz Hazorea, Israel

The first step is designed to facilitate group forming and a successful launch into the entire year.

Through mutual learning, we assess each participant's needs, wishes, and strengths while allowing them to acculturate into our program and culture and set their goals and expectations. Another main focus is independence and responsibility, learning and developing executive skills such as time and budget management. This period includes a week-long hike through Israel, and our traditional sailing expedition to Cyprus. The therapeutic aspect is focal and ongoing.

Step 2: Explore, Experience: A five-week session in and around Rome, Italy

Starting with short crash-courses in the fields of outdoor activities, arts, cooking, language, and yoga and mindfulness, we focus on exposure to opportunities and potential interests for pursuit. The rest of the time is dedicated to a personal development defining more clearly the longer-term individual internship plan. The therapeutic aspect slowly becomes background-supportive depending on need.

Step 3: Review, Reflect, Re-commit: A three-week session in Israel

Summarize and reflect on the first semester. During this period, after a week-long hike through the beautiful Israeli desert, participants have a chance to look back on the past few months, and also to look ahead for the next step, individually and within the group. This session includes a workshop in Israel, in the areas of awareness and self-development, helping the participants take action and commit for their 2nd semester.

Winter break and holiday - We encourage our participants to spend time with their families in this 2-3 week holiday season. It is a great opportunity for a family session, led by our staff, either in Israel or in Italy, as well as the chance to travel together as a family.

Step 4: Work at it! Individual internships or trainings (12 weeks)

Think of what you always wanted to learn or to do, and do it! We offer a variety of options in Israel: Participants can take advantage of our start-up nation and find an internship that incorporates technology, business, basic training, etc. We also offer a wide range of options around Rome, the eternal city: From learning the beautiful Italian language, through exploring the history and arts, to learning culinary arts in one of the world most famous cuisines.

This part is mainly about autonomy, as we encourage participants to direct their own lives and make healthy choices more independently. Our familiarity with each participant allows us to guide and structure each internship according to various needs and levels of support. It is also about finding a purpose and living through your decision, making the most out of this experience. We support the participants throughout this time, both locally and from a distance.

Step 5: Summarize and goodbyes: A two-week session of reviews and emotional goodbyes.

Summarizing the entire year experience and gearing up to the next year is an important part of the process, as well as saying goodbye and bringing closure to the year. This process includes much self-reflection and mutual feedback among staff and participants.

Cost and logistics – Please contact our directors at info@FreeSpiritExperience.org for further info