

College Life in Florence

A student's guide to the University of North Alabama

FLORENCE, ALABAMA

Florence sits in the Shoals region along the Tennessee River, home to the University of North Alabama and a music history that put this small metro on the map — Muscle Shoals Sound Studios and FAME Studios are both a short drive away.

Quick Facts

University	University of North Alabama (UNA) — ASUN Conference, Division I FCS
Setting	Small river-town metro, the Shoals region
Known for	Business, entertainment industry / music business program
Nickname / colors	Lions — purple & gold

Housing & Cost of Living

Florence is among the most affordable college towns in the state. As of mid-2026, average rent runs about \$613 for a studio, \$619 for a one-bedroom, and \$850 for a two-bedroom — with a broader range of \$500–\$1,500/month depending on the property. UNA also offers 11 on-campus dorms, with Appleby East, Appleby West, and Covington among the most popular.

- Shoals-area housing runs about 36% below the national average cost
- Muscle Shoals and nearby areas offer additional off-campus options beyond Florence proper
- Small, walkable downtown keeps most day-to-day needs close by

Getting Around

Florence's downtown is compact and walkable, so daily campus life doesn't require a car. For bigger trips, Nashville, Birmingham, and Memphis are all reachable as road trips if you want a change of scenery for the weekend.

Food & Nightlife

Downtown Florence covers real range for a small city — Rosie's Mexican Cantina, Odette, Ricatoni's Italian Grill, Pimentos, and FloBama all draw a regular student crowd. Rivertown is the go-to coffee shop for UNA students doing homework over a latte, and Wildwood Tavern is a popular after-hours spot.

Things to Do

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The Shoals' music legacy is the area's biggest draw beyond campus — Muscle Shoals Sound Studios and FAME Studios, where Aretha Franklin, the Rolling Stones, and Bob Dylan all recorded, are open for tours just across the river. The historic Shoals Theatre hosts live music, theater, and film downtown, and the calendar includes First Fridays, Shindig, and the W.C. Handy Music Festival. Helen Keller's birthplace in nearby Tuscumbia is also worth the short drive.

Staying Safe

Florence's small-town scale generally means a quieter day-to-day experience than Alabama's larger college towns. As always, check current safety resources directly with UNA's Department of Police and Public Safety.

Questions Students & Parents Ask

Is Florence affordable?

Yes — it's one of the most budget-friendly college towns in Alabama, with housing costs roughly 36% below the national average.

What makes Florence different from Alabama's other college towns?

Its music history — Muscle Shoals Sound Studios and FAME Studios are both within a few minutes of campus, and that legacy shapes a lot of the local culture and events calendar.

Curious about housing near UNA or life in the Shoals long-term? I'm happy to help you get the full picture.