

Washington D.C. FAQ's

What do students have to do to qualify for this trip of a lifetime?

Simply stated, maintain good behavior throughout the school year. This is a very fast-paced trip which involves touring places of major interest in and around Washington D.C. We keep very busy showing our young people their nation's heritage and treasures. Time spent dealing with students who have behavior issues is not fair to those who are behaving well. We ask that those who don't feel they can demonstrate the behavior necessary to participate successfully on this trip, not sign up. Plus, most schools have a rule in place that those who do not qualify for their end of the year class trip, will be dropped from this trip also.

Who sponsors the tour?

This trip is sponsored by Countryside Tours, Inc. It is not a school sponsored trip. The schools we work with are anxious to share this great experience with their 8th grade students and work with us to make sure that the students who go on this adventure experience a week of fun and education beyond what they are able to do during the school year.

Who are our chaperones?

Our chaperones are educators from the schools. Many of them have been on this trip in the past and know the trip inside and out. We only use educators or school employees since they are used to dealing with students in a group situation. The chaperone ratio is 1:10.

What are the buses like?

Countryside Tours uses only "top-of-the-line" deluxe highway motorcoaches. Each coach is climate controlled and is equipped with a DVD player with monitors throughout the coach. We always have ice water on board for the passengers. There are restrooms on board but because of the pace of this trip, it is for emergencies only. We stop every two hours bathroom breaks.

Do we stay in nice hotels?

The hotels we stay in are chosen with safety in mind first, but cleanliness, expert staff and management is a must as well. Many of the hotels are used every year - a credit to the groups and how well they behave. The chaperone rooms are placed among the students rooms. Each night a list is placed in each of the student rooms noting where all the chaperones are. That way they do not have to leave the room to reach a chaperone, they can simply call their chaperone's room should they need anything.

The meals are almost all included, how do you handle that?

Several years ago, we decided to include the meals in the cost of the trip. At a lot of places, the students get a voucher to use for their meal choice or if there is no voucher system at a certain place, we give them cash just before arriving. At other places, they have either made their meal entrée choice at the time of registration or a buffet is offered. The kids always get a choice. They always seem to get enough to eat and have not had to worry whether their spending money is holding out or not.

Can students choose their own roommates?

Yes, a form will go out in March which you are to fill out, sign and send back to the Countryside Tours office with the names of the four students who want to room together. If you cannot find a group of four, we will work with you at the Spring Mandatory Meeting to make final rooming arrangements. The cost of the trip is based on four students sharing a room with two full size beds.

When are payments due?

A \$100.00 deposit is due at the time of registration. Space is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Buses are filled one at a time. All those signing up at the Information Meeting in the Fall are guaranteed a space. You may make payments throughout the year and final payment is due on or before March 31. Students are encouraged to earn as much of the trip cost as possible.

How much luggage am I allowed?

One suitcase per person is allowed plus a carry-on piece for on the motorcoach. Each student is responsible for their own luggage handling. Suitcases with wheels are a big help. The carry-on for the coach is used to hold your snacks and entertainment or personal items. This carry-on is to be kept on the coach during the day and can be taken into the hotel at night. You will not be allowed to take it off the coach during the day due to security reasons.

Are Cell Phones allowed?

Yes they are! We ask that discretion be used in their use but enjoy the security they afford. The chaperones will ask for the cell phones numbers and share their cell phone numbers with the students they are in charge of. Countryside Tours, Inc. is not responsible if a cell phone or other equipment is lost.

What if I have to cancel?

Please read the Terms and Conditions on the brochure carefully before you sign up. We need these restrictions in place due to the large amount of bookings and reservations we must make to accommodate the group far in advance of the trip start date. We adhere to the cancellation policies. If there are special circumstances such as an illness, you need to call the office and discuss it with us. A decision will be made after that conversation.