

PARENTS

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: Can my child bring their cell phone on the trip?

Yes. We encourage students to bring their cell phone so they can take pictures and we have a way to send out texts to the group if we have any changes to the itinerary.

Q2: Can my child use frequent flyer miles for the airline ticket? Can they accumulate miles?

No. In regards to accumulating miles for the trip, usually the airlines we travel on do not allow students to accumulate miles on a reduced group rate ticket.

Q3: My child wants to pack his/her gaming console. Can he/she bring that?

This is not recommended because we are constantly on the move. When we get back to the hotel, the kids are usually exhausted and don't have time or energy for gaming. Gaming consoles and/or games are expensive and we would not want to have the student lose or forget the equipment at the hotel.

Q4: How many bags can my child bring?

They will be getting a School Tours of America cinch-cord backpack, which we suggest they use as their bus bag with the essentials they will need for the day. (snack, bottled water, money, etc.) Students can also bring a larger backpack if they want. Students usually pack a suitcase for their clothing, shoes, etc. If we are flying Southwest, all students will be checking their suitcase for free. If we fly Delta, AA, or UA--students will have the choice to check a bag for a fee or do a carry-on as long as it is the correct size.

Q5: How much money should my child bring?

This is up to each individual family. All of your child's needs (food, hotel, transportation, entrance tickets) are included in the price of the trip. Extra money would be for bottled water, snacks, and/or souvenirs. The best thing to do is to have a conversation with your child and ask them what they want to buy. It is typical for students to bring \$25-\$100.

Q6: Will the chaperones/bus driver have a first aid kit?

Yes. We have a first aid kit on each bus stocked with band-aids, gauze, ointment, etc. Have your child bring Tylenol, Dramamine, Tums, Benadryl, feminine products, Gold Bond, sunscreen, etc.

Q7: Will my child be able to call or text me while they are away?

Yes. We are very busy during the day so please understand that if they don't call or cut conversations short, it isn't you---it is just how busy we are each day. We get back to the hotel late each night and they may be too exhausted to call. Don't be surprised if the first time you hear from them is in the airport on the way home.

Q8: How do you ensure that kids stay in their hotel room at night and are safe?

School Tours of America includes night-time security at our hotel on our floor and usually our group is the only one on that floor. After a chaperone checks in with each room, and gives them any necessary information about the next day, the door is shut, students lock the door, and then we tape the door. The security guards monitor the hallway until 6:00 a.m. allowing chaperones to get a little rest before another busy day. Students are aware that the only reason they break the tape in the middle of the

night is if someone is sick or injured. Safety is STA's and the chaperones' number one priority.

Q9: Will students be required to wear a mask?

As of right now, there are no masking requirements at any of our locations in DC & NYC. Depending on what Covid looks like in June of 2023, if there are masking requirements, students and chaperones will follow the state and/or facility's masking rules.

Q10: We had a fundraiser in the fall. Will there be another fundraiser in the spring?

We can certainly have another fundraiser in February/March. If you are interested in coordinating a fundraiser, please email me. While I think fundraisers are great, I will not be coordinating one, so a parent(s) could coordinate a spring fundraiser if they would like.

Q11: What happens if my child shows COVID symptoms prior to travel?

As mentioned in the live presentation in September and/or the promotional video, if your child has COVID symptoms 7-10 days prior to the trip, it is highly encouraged out of the respect of other students and chaperones, you have your child tested. (Covid guidelines are outlined on the medical form that you filled out.)

Q12: How will I find out important information about the trip from now until June?

We have several different ways that we communicate information with you: the Remind mass text system, Shutterfly page, reminder notes sent home with students, and mass emails from Ms. Hillier.

Q13: While on the trip, what does the behavior policy look like?

If your child exhibits inappropriate behavior, we will follow a four-step process.

1. One-on-one conversation with the child which will serve as a warning
2. A call home to parents
3. Child will be a "buddy" with one of the chaperones for a certain period of time. (This means that they will be required to be within 5 feet of the chaperone for a couple of hours.)
4. If behavior still exists, the child is flown home at the parent's expense. A parent would need to fly out and meet our group to escort the child home. This would also be at the parent's expense.

Q14: Will the teacher chaperones give my child instructions on where to go and when to meet back with the group?

Absolutely! But it is VERY important that they listen to the instructions that are given at ALL times at EVERY location. They will want to be aware of their surroundings, pay attention to group announcements, group texts, always be with a "buddy," and before they break away from the group to explore, they NEED to know meeting time, location, how/where to exit the building, etc. The teachers will give clear instructions on what to do, and it is their job to pay attention to those specific instructions. It may be helpful to reinforce this talking point at home.

Q15: Will my child see homeless people in DC & NYC, and if so, can they give them a monetary donation to help them?

Lakeville is a very giving community and we have many students who have generous hearts that want

to help homeless people. In this case though, we ask that students do **NOT** engage with, or give any money to homeless people. Instead, if their heart is moved to help, when they return to Lakeville, they can have a discussion with their parent/guardian about a way that they can donate money or time to a local organization or charity. It may be helpful to reinforce this talking point at home.

Q16: Is Time Square and/or New York safe?

Obviously, there is an inherent risk anytime you travel anywhere in the world. We will do our very best to ensure our group is safe. Ways that your child can help with that are always wearing their lanyard, always having a travel buddy, never going off anywhere alone, listening to instructions, staying with their small group when instructed by their chaperone, and watching their surroundings. We will say/remind students of these steps/strategies **many** times on the trip. It is important they keep their eyes up and look around as they are walking—not looking at their phone. It is also important to remember that they will see a lot of interesting people and events happening in Times Square. It is not advised to take pictures of people dressed up in character or people who are performing in front of a small/large crowd. People that are doing this want money for their talent and oftentimes will want your child to pay for the photo they are taking of them. Students will be instructed to not engage/talk/take flyers/handouts from strangers on the street. When they buy souvenirs, they will buy items in a store and **NEVER** from street vendors. We have specific souvenir stores that are student friendly and have lots of cool items. We will have 3 NYC guides with our group to help us navigate the sites we are going to see. We will be using the NYC subway on the last morning of our trip to go to and from the Statue of Liberty. We will be on the subway for only a short time at 9:00am. Students will be given clear and specific directions on how we will use the subway and it will be required that they are with their small group chaperone and NYC guide at all times. It may be helpful to reinforce these talking points with your child at home.

STA oversees every element of the trip, including planned and unplanned events. (Flight delays, macro events, emergency situations, medical, etc) STA's local staff, including guides and on-site coordinators, communicate needed alternatives to transportation or itinerary items. This allows STA to be proactive in maximizing safety, security, and sightseeing. Even though it is impossible to predict isolated events that may impact a tour schedule, STA will proactively oversee the tour program details and engage the emergency management protocols when necessary. Safety is **ALWAYS** STA's primary focus.

Q17: Does the trip have any political message or agenda?

No. While we are in the heart of our nation's capital and students will be immersed in learning about and seeing various monuments and sites, there is no political agenda from the chaperone staff, bus drivers, or local guides. Travel, no matter what city in the world, always allows students to learn, observe, experience, grow, and form their own opinion about different ways of life. The monuments, sites, and buildings we will see provide a rich history of our past—good and bad. General (very cool/interesting) facts about the construction and engineering/design of these structures (cost, why it was built like that, what it is made of, when it was built, etc.) will be shared with students along with the purpose of the various monuments/memorials. Students find these facts and figures fascinating, much like a trivia feel.

Q18: How does a PARENT sign up for the REMIND text group?

Send a text to **81010** with the following text

@894d88 (be sure to do the @ symbol or it won't work)

We will not bother you with texts while we are on the trip. This mass text system will only be used to let you know when we arrive in DC safely, and if there are any flight delays or cancellations.

Q19: How does a STUDENT sign up for the REMIND text group?

Send a text to **81010** with the following text

@fdaakd (be sure to do the @ symbol or it won't work)

Q20: Will my child be able to buy souvenirs on the trip?

Yes! We have a specific day/times set aside when they will go souvenir shopping. They will NOT be able to buy laser pens/pointers, handcuffs, or snow globes for security reasons. If they do buy these items, the snow globe and handcuffs will have to be thrown away prior to going through security on the way home. If we notice that they've purchased a laser pointer, a chaperone will keep that for the remainder of the trip. DC/NYC hotels are very strict with the use of laser pointers for obvious reasons. They will also not be allowed to buy any apparel that have inappropriate phrases or pictures of illegal substances on them.

Q21: Will I be able to watch the Arlington wreath laying ceremony live?

Yes! This is a very powerful and once-in-a-lifetime experience for our 8th graders. Two students will be chosen to represent CMS and lay the wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier during a special ceremony. One of the chaperones will go on Facebook Live so parents can view this from home. At the May meeting, we will let you know the exact day and time of the ceremony, so you can set a reminder on your phone.

Q22: Will I be able to see pictures of the group and places you are seeing while they are on the trip?

Yes! We have a Facebook and Twitter page for the trip. We will be posting pictures while we are on the move. Due to time and our immediate jobs/duties chaperones have, we will not be posting every single picture in real time. When we return home, we will post all pictures on our social media platforms as well as on the Shutterfly page.

Q23: Will I have a direct contact number for my child's small group chaperone and Ms. Hillier as well?

For sure! At our May meeting, the small group chaperone will share their phone contact with parents and Ms. Hillier will share her cell number with the entire group. We ask that you only contact us for emergency reasons only because our group will be very busy seeing as many things as we can see in a short amount of time.