

# **STUDENTS**

## **COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Q1: Do I have to hang out with only students in my small group and only the students on my bus for the entire trip?**

You will be with your bus group for transportation. You will be with your small group for headcount purposes, passing out information, small group photos, and during certain places and events in NYC. When we are at various museums and sites, you can walk with anyone from the CMS group. We believe in being inclusive and we want **EVERYONE** to have a great time. With that said, please be sure to listen for **YOUR** bus time and location "meeting spot" because we may have to stagger three buses for different times at various sites.

### **Q2: Once we are in DC, can I switch buses and ride with other people?**

NO! You will be assigned to either bus 1, 2, or 3 and a small group within that bus. Generally speaking all 3 buses will ride in tandem to most locations, so you will get to see those other students on other buses once we arrive at our destinations, but you will always ride your assigned bus for the entire trip. Each student will be assigned a number and we take attendance on all 3 buses frequently every day to ensure all students are present.

### **Q3: When a tour guide, chaperone, or a student is on the bus microphone, can I be on my phone texting, scrolling through social media, and/or playing video games?**

NO! Have cell phones silenced, stop playing video games, stop talking, and listen. This includes when we are off the bus and at various sites as well. This is out of respect for the people that are trying to give you important information. Your family has paid a significant amount of money for this trip and you are here to learn and see sites in DC and NYC. You can scroll social media, make TikTok videos, and play video games all summer long when you get home. Each student will get a chance to get on the bus microphone for a fun activity that we do!

### **Q4: Can I chew gum on the bus?**

No. The bus drivers ask us not to chew gum on the bus. You will want to clean up around you and throw trash away as you exit the bus. Remember the bus is like our home away from home and it is not the bus driver's responsibility to clean up after our group.

### **Q5: Will I ever go anywhere alone?**

NO-NEVER! You will always travel in pairs or packs no matter where you go--this includes the bathroom at a restaurant. We will incorporate the "buddy system" from the first moment of our trip to the last.

### **Q6: Do I really have to wear the School Tours of America lanyard all the time?**

Yes. This lets us know that you are a part of our group and it also has an emergency number printed on the card in case you need that. The lanyard should be worn daily and visible at all times. The lanyard can't be in your pocket or underneath your shirt. If you lose your lanyard, please let a

chaperone know immediately and we will get you a new one.

**Q7: Do I have to wear the lime green School Tours of America wristband for the entire trip?**

Yes. The wristband has School Tours of America's emergency contact information on it should you get separated from the group or are in an emergency situation.

**Q8: What is hotel etiquette?**

Hotel etiquette is knowing that there are other guests in the hotel. Talking loudly, banging on room doors, running in the hallways, jumping/leaping on the beds, and/or cranking music or tv volume is not permitted. You will use "inside" voices. When we are walking in the hallway of the hotel early in the morning and late at night, our voices will be off.

**Q9: Should I bring sunglasses and/or a hat for the trip?**

Yes. DC and NYC are usually very hot, humid, and sunny in June. We are outside all day and it is nice to have sunglasses and/or a hat to protect your eyes and shade you from the sun. Don't forget your sunscreen. There will be times and places that you will need to remove your hat out of respect for what we are touring. (memorials, gravesites)

**Q10: What happens if I get separated from the group?**

You will be wearing the School Tours of America lanyard and wristband 24-7 and there is an emergency number that you can call on the lanyard tag. The operator at the other end of that phone number will contact Kelly Hillier immediately and get you reconnected with the group. If you get separated from the group, stay in a public place (museum, building) and if possible by a security guard. Security guards or building employees are usually at all entrances. You can also contact Ms. Hillier and/or your small group chaperone directly too.

**Q11: Can I hang out in other students' rooms or have other students come in my room?**

**NO! ONLY** your roommates and chaperones are allowed in your hotel room. Under no circumstances are you allowed in anyone else's room, even if they are the same gender.

**Q12: Do I need to wear the DC/NYC CMS t-shirt EVERY day?**

No-only on the first day. This will allow us to identify our group at the airport.

**Q13: What if I don't feel well or I am having a personal issue/problem?**

Please see your small group chaperone right away and advise them of the situation. We are here to help and it is our job to take care of you. While your initial response may be to call/text home and talk with a parent, the teacher chaperones are a better option to help you because we are on-site with you and can address it right away versus a parent who is hundreds of miles away.

**Q14: Are you really going to tape my hotel room door shut?**

Yes. We will check in with you, remind you of wake up time, answer any questions, and then tape the

door. Once the door is taped, you are in for the evening. If you break the tape, a security guard will inquire about the situation, and then if need be, they will wake up one of the chaperones to assist you.

**Q15: If my hotel door is shut and we are loud and jumping around, the chaperones and/or security guards will never know, right?**

The security guards patrol the hallways throughout the entire night. Sound does travel. If the sound is too loud, the security guard will knock on your door and give you a warning. If the behavior persists, they will get a chaperone. Each morning, Ms. Hillier gets a written report from the security guards of the previous night's behavior, sound, activities and from which rooms. Because we have such awesome CMS kids, 90% of the time the reports are very positive.

**Q16: Will I be able to meet up with some other CMS kids in the hotel and walk around the hotel lobby or pool area?**

No. We will truly be at the hotel just to sleep. We get up early and stay out late. When we get back to the hotel and after we've had our large group meetings in the evening, we will all head to our rooms for the night.

**Q17: Can I bring my swimsuit? Will we have time to swim and just hang out at the hotel?**

No. Remember this is a very active trip and we are sightseeing and having fun for the entire day. There is not a lot of rest on this trip. There is so much to see and we only have 5 days. We will be walking around a lot and having fun! You can leave your swimsuit at home.

**Q18: What do I wear to the dinner cruise?**

The dinner cruise on the Potomac is super fun! Students like to dress up a little for this event. While we've had students wear suits/ties for the event and/or homecoming-type dresses, you don't have to get that dressed up if you don't want to. Khaki or black pants, with a collared shirt, nice dress pants and shirt is great. If the weather is extremely hot, some students have also worn khaki cargo shorts with a collared shirt or a sundress. Please do NOT feel like you have to buy something new for this evening. You might think dressing up is not fun, but wait until you see our entire group all SPIFFED up...it is pretty cool!

**Q19: Will I get to sit by my friend on the plane?**

If we fly on Delta, American or United, you will need to sit in the seat that is assigned to you on your boarding pass. The flight is short and it is fun to talk with someone new or catch a few ZZZZ's so you are well rested when we arrive. If we fly Southwest, the boarding process is a bit different and you most likely will get to sit by your friend. If we fly Southwest, prior to boarding, we will ask everyone to get in a big, long line to get on the plane. The person to your left and right would be people that you want to sit by. When we board the plane, we will ask that you go **ALL the way to the back** and fill the plane from back to front. Sometimes you and your friend may be split by a row, but that is okay! The flight is not that long. You can't hold seats on the plane when you board because it holds up the boarding process.

**Q20: Will our entire CMS group (120 students and 9 chaperones) all be on the same flight**

### **outbound and return?**

Probably not. We've only had one year that we've had that happen and that is rare. Most likely we will have to take two (maybe three) different flights out and return. You will be flying with your bus group along with your small group/chaperone. Some students may be flying out of Terminal 1 and some students out of Terminal 2. Regardless, STA's flight department tries their best to get flights that all land within 15-20 minutes of each other, so we can all see the same things around the same time.

### **Q21: Is it okay to cheer loudly and/or scream during takeoff on the plane?**

No. We need to remember that there may be other passengers on the plane that are not part of our group. "Inside voices" will be used while we are on the airplane.

### **Q22: I am a picky eater. I am afraid I won't like the food. Is it good? Will I get enough to eat?**

The hotel **breakfasts** are GREAT! It is buffet style with pancakes, waffles, sausage, bacon, fruit, toast, muffins, bagels, cereal, oatmeal, etc. Our **lunches** are at mall food courts that offer a large variety of foods for you to choose. For **dinner**, we usually eat at places that offer a variety of food. (chicken, pizza, pasta, hamburger, hotdog, etc.) The dinner cruise usually has a wide variety of food (tacos, chicken, rice, mac&cheese, salad, bread, brownies, cookies). Let us know if you have dietary needs, rather than go a whole day without eating much and then not feeling well.

### **Q23: Why are there so many guidelines for behavior?**

It is important to follow our trip guidelines because you are representing CMS, Lakeville, and Minnesota. We also want to make sure **everyone** in our group stays safe and has fun. You don't have to be best friends with every CMS student on the trip, but you can definitely be **friendly** to everyone. We usually get compliments about our group's behavior from complete strangers. That is our goal --- to make a positive impression wherever we go!

### **Q24: Will I be able to text and take pictures with my phone?**

YES! Take lots of pictures. Pictures are a great way to capture memories and share with your family. When we are in "green" zones, you will be able to do those things. There will be times when you will not be able to take photos/text when we are in yellow and red zones. We will explain the GREEN-RED-YELLOW coding system at our May meeting.

### **Q25: Can I bring my Ipad, headphones, and other electronic devices on the plane?**

Yes, although you are responsible for keeping track of them, along with the chargers. We have had students leave them on airplanes and hotel rooms, so it's important to keep track of your belongings. The flight attendants will announce when you can have them on during the flight and when they need to be shut off. If you use these items on the bus, it is expected that they will be off and put away when someone is speaking on the microphone.

### **Q26: If we stop for lunch at a food court in the mall, how much money will I get?**

\$20. We will hand you money as you exit the bus. If you don't spend it all, you get to keep the change. If you want more than a \$20 lunch, then you would need to pay the difference with your own money.

**Q27: Even though we are going in the summer, should I still pack a pair of pants, sweatshirt/light jacket?**

Yes. We may get a rainy day where you will want the sweatshirt or it may get a little cooler at night where an extra layer might be nice.

**Q28: How do I sign up for the REMIND group text?**

Send a text to 81010 with the following text

**@fdaakd**

If you have a cell phone, you **must** be a part of this REMIND text system so that we can send out important information to everyone while we are on the trip.

**Q29: Do I ALWAYS have to hang around my adult teacher/chaperone?**

No. There are times when you will be able to wander through a museum with a small group of friends and you will meet back up with our large group at a certain time. During certain times, we will conduct a headcount to make sure everyone has returned and it will be necessary for you to go to your small group chaperone so that we can count people quickly and then move on to the next activity. This will become easy and a habit after day one. You will have a number assigned to you and when we yell, "Count off..." Students follow suit by yelling out their number in sequence. It is a quick and easy way to check that everyone is there. This will also become a habit and a fun way to keep track of everyone.

**Q30: Will the teacher chaperones give me instructions on where to go and when to meet back with the group?**

Absolutely! But it is VERY important that you listen to the instructions that are given at ALL times at EVERY location. You will want to be aware of your surroundings, pay attention to group announcements, group texts, always be with a "buddy," and before you break away from the group to explore, you 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 **YOUR** job to pay attention to those specific instructions.

**Q31: Will I see homeless people in DC & NYC, and if so, can I give them money 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, we ask that you do not engage with, or give any money to homeless people. Instead, if your heart is moved to help, when you return to Lakeville, talk with your parents about a way that you can donate money or time to a local organization or charity.

**Q32: Is this trip going to be exhausting? Everyone talks about how tired I will be. Is that true?**

YES and YES! ABSOLUTELY!!! We will have a lot of fun, but we do try to squeeze in as much as we can in 5 days, so you get a fantastic glimpse at DC and possibly want to go back again someday.

When you head back to your hotel room in the evening, it will be in your best interest to get as much sleep as you can before the next busy day. When we ride long distances on the bus, feel free to catch some “ZZZ’s” as long as we aren’t giving instructions or someone is on the mic. Just think of it this way--you will have lots of time to catch up on sleep when you return home. Remember your parents have spent a lot of money for you to go on this trip and you want to get the MOST out of the trip, by seeing as much as you possibly can. Enjoy the sites and time with friends and think about sleep later.

**Q33: Is this trip going to be fun? Are we going to be “learning” the whole time?**

ABSOLUTELY!!! This is an awesome experience and so much fun to travel with friends and teachers that you’ve worked with throughout the year. You will be learning a lot of fun/interesting things around our nation’s capital and the Big Apple! You’ll talk about this trip and the memories for years! The main thing to remember with group travel is that you will LOVE most things and there will be some things that you may not care for, so flexibility, along with a positive perspective are key. There will be a lot of people around you that know a lot about the various places we are going that want to share some fun/interesting facts/stories with you. Be grateful for such an incredible experience because many people don’t get to travel and see parts of the United States like this.

**Q34: Will I 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 requirements.

**Q35: What if I have COVID-type symptoms PRIOR to departure?**

As mentioned in the live presentation in September and/or the promotional video, if you have COVID symptoms 7-10 days prior to the trip, it is **highly encouraged**, out of the respect of other students and chaperones, to get tested and then advise Ms. Hillier if it is a POSITIVE test.

**Q36: When we arrive in DC--are we going to start touring right away?**

Absolutely! We usually take an early morning flight out of Minneapolis and we want to make the most of our time in DC, so when we land, we will go to lunch first and then start touring/sightseeing right away!

**Q37: Can I bring my gaming console for the hotel room?**

This is not recommended because we are constantly on the move. When we get back to the hotel, you will be exhausted and generally don’t have time or energy for gaming.

**Q38: 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 YOU can help with that are always wearing your lanyard, always having a travel buddy, never going off anywhere alone, listening to instructions, staying with your small group when instructed by a chaperone, and watching your surroundings. We will say/remind YOU of these steps/strategies **many** times on the trip. It is important you keep your eyes up and look around as you are walking—not looking at your phone. It is also important to remember that you 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 you to pay for the photo you are taking of them. YOU will be instructed to not engage/talk/take flyers/handouts from strangers on the street. When you buy souvenirs, you 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. YOU will be given clear and specific directions on how we will use the subway and it will be required that you are with your small group chaperone and NYC guide at **ALL** times.

**Q39: Will I have a direct contact number for my 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 students and Ms. Hillier will share her cell number with the entire group. You will be connected to your small group chaperone and Ms. Hillier by cell phone and you will be connected to the large group through the Remind Text group.

**Q40: Will I be able to buy souvenirs on the trip?**

Yes! We have a specific day/times set aside when we will go souvenir shopping. You will NOT be able to buy laser pens/pointers, handcuffs, or snow globes for security reasons. If you 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 you'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. You will also not be allowed to buy any apparel that have inappropriate phrases or pictures of illegal substances on them.

**Q41: Does the trip have any political message or agenda?**

No. While we are in the heart of our nation's capital and you 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 you along with the purpose of the various monuments/memorials. Students find these facts and figures fascinating, much like a trivia feel.