

EUROPE

SCHOOL GUIDE

Plan Your Trip



How to Plan the Perfect Student Trip to Europe Brought to you by Evolve Tours

Welcome! Evolve Tours has designed this guide as a helpful resource for those interested in planning a trip for their students to a European destination. In the following pages, you'll discover how to decide on the type of trip for you, the right destination, some of the activities your students can enjoy in Europe, an explanation of travel insurance, travel tips and more! Our goal is to make the trip planning process as seamless and as stress free for you and your colleagues as possible.

Why should my student group visit Europe?

A trip abroad to Europe can be a fascinating educational and cultural experience for students. Considering the various destinations of potential trips can seem overwhelming at first. The best first step is to determining the intended focus of the trip. Once you know what you want to do, then you can see where best suits what you and your group are looking to experience. For example:

History- Are you a history teacher, who would like to show your students WWII battlefields?

France and Germany have the battlefields and monuments to show.

Language - Are you a Spanish language teacher who would love for your students to partake in language workshops? Explore the city of Barcelona and immerse them in the language and culture.

Outdoor Adventure- Do you want your students to experience both ancient history, and outdoor activities? Try a tour of Turkey and the Greek Islands!

Mixed focus – Or perhaps your tour wants to do it all! Try a multi-country tour such as Germany and Poland, France and Switzerland or Croatia and Hungary.



Europe is a fantastic destination for students of the many subjects including: Geography, History, French Language, Spanish Language, Social Studies, History, Philosophy, World Religion and more! Whatever subject your student group is interested in, there is sure to be a European destination perfect for your students.

Regions of Europe

Europe is a massive area, with a large variety of countries and areas complete with their own unique geography, culture, history and travel incentives. Dividing Europe or classifying the locations of countries helps organize and regionalize your trip. Here is a list of great student travel destinations based on a widely accepted United Nations geo-scheme of regions:

Eastern Europe: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania

Northern Europe: Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and Ireland

Southern Europe: Croatia, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain

Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland

What time of the year should my student group visit Europe?

Trip timing depends on the region of Europe your group plans on visiting, but generally the best time of year for student trips to Europe is from March through June. European countries typically have great weather during spring and the early summer as well, allowing the potential to walk around cities, explore comfortably or hit the beach

Check the following links for more information about European weather throughout the year and some tips on deciding when to travel.

Rick Steve's 'When to Go to Europe: Timing your Trip':

<https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/trip-planning/timing-your-trip>

USA Today's 'The Best Time to Visit Europe': <http://traveltips.usatoday.com/time-visit-europe-16032.html>

What are The Best Student-Friendly Activities in Europe?

Check out this list for some of Evolve Tour's favourite and most popular activities for school groups in various European cities:

Czech Republic

Prague:

Prague Castle
 Danube River Cruise
 Chocolate Museum
 Fortress of Terezin
 Divadlo Minor Theater
 Strahov Monastery

France

Chinon:

Fortress Royale Chinon

Loire Vally:

Biking Tour

Marseilles:

Arles Ampitheatre

Chateau D'If

Monaco:

Prince's Palace

Musee Oceanographique

Monaco Cathedral

Paris:

Catacombs

Eifel Tower



Louvre (Pictured)

Seine River Cruise
 La Sainte Chapelle
 Painting Workshop

Germany

Munich:

Deutsches Museum
 Dachau Memorial Tour
 Munich Walking Tour
 Visit the Salt Mines
 Linderhof Palace
 Neuschwanstein

Berlin:

Checkpoint Charlie Museum
 Berlin Wall Memorial
 Currywurst Museum
 Sanssoucci Castle Tour
 Cecilienhof Castle

Dresden:

- Semper Opera house
- Royal Palace
- Zwinger Palace
- Pfunds Molkerei

Greece

- Islands Cruise

Santorini:

- Volcano Tour

Crete:

- Ruins of Ancient Knossos

Italy

Florence:

- The Academia
- Uffizi Gallery
- Cooking Workshop

Rome:

- Vatican Museum
- Colosseum
- Roman Forum

Venice:

- St Mark's Basilica
- Glass Blowing demonstration

Pompeii:

- Guided City Tour

Pisa:



Leaning Tower of Pisa (pictured)

Netherlands

Amsterdam:

- Canal Cruise
- Anne Frank Museum
- Jewish Historical Museum
- Bike Rental
- Canadian War Cemetery
- The Liberation Museum
- Canadian War Cemetery

Spain

Barcelona:

- Picasso Museum
- Flamenco Show
- La Sagrada Familia
- Parc Guell

Switzerland

Geneva:

- Tour of CERN
- Tour of Red Cross Museum
- Tour of United Nations
- Hiking at the Salève
- Walking Tour of Geneva

Lausanne:

- Olympic Museum
- Maison Cailler (Broc)

Lucerne:

- Lion Monument
- Walking Tour of Lucerne
- Glacier Garden
- Mount Pilatus

Have one day in a city and looking to make the most of it? In most European cities with a tourism industry, you'd be hard pressed not to find a guide to give you a walking tour. Walking tours are a great way to orient yourself in a foreign place, and learn about the history from a local.

For more information about all of the above attractions and more, visit:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/europe/things-to-do/top-things-to-do-in-europe>



Should I work with a travel company?

Our next step is to decide whether you will plan the trip on your own, or use the help of a student travel provider. Some teachers are used to planning the trip themselves but many enjoy the less stressful and time consuming route of hiring a travel company that will expertly take care of all the pre-trip planning. To make the decision easier, we've made some comparison charts, comparing the pros and cons of doing a trip on your own vs. with a tour provider.

ON YOUR OWN

Pros	Cons
✓ Cheaper	✗ A lot of stressful planning. Organizing the hotels, transportation, meals, activities and more.
✓ Plan exactly what you want, without sticking to a schedule	✗ Missing out on professional, time-tested itineraries.
	✗ No on-ground tour director with local knowledge who oversees the trip.

WITH A TOUR COMPANY

Pros	Cons
✓ Having a guide(s) with local knowledge. As with any form of travel, whether it be museum hopping or outdoor activities, you're bound to learn more, gain a greater understanding of the local community, and just get more out of the whole experience when following a knowledgeable expert.	✗ Set itinerary: although some travel companies like Evolve Tours are flexible and dedicated to customizing their trips, many others offer no customization.
✓ Safety and Security- A travel provider will ensure all supplier companies (restaurants, hotels, activities) are safe, reputable and provide quality services. As well, emergency protocols and first-aid trained tour staff.	
✓ No details to worry about! You're free to focus fully on the ride, and have someone else sweat over the small, yet paramount details.	✗ Generally, planning with a tour company is more expensive than doing it on your own.
✓ Allergy, food restrictions communicated to all the suppliers (hotels, restaurants and activities)	
✓ Group rates on transportation and accommodation since they work with suppliers year round with many student groups	
✓ Years of expertise	



How to choose the perfect student travel company

(Adapted from "How to Choose a Reputable Adventure Travel Company or Guide" at <http://gadling.com/2011/08/05/a-guide-to-choosing-adventure-travel-companies-and-guides/>)

There are many student travel companies nationwide that run Europe trips. Not all are created equal. There are some key things you should look for when choosing a company to plan and run your student trip. Check out the following tips on what to look for and avoid.

Reputation and Safety

A brief online search will bring to light any serious breaches in safety or conduct. Safety doesn't just apply to those who plan to scale the Andes or kayak the Zambezi. Even the tamest "adventures" require guides who are knowledgeable about the area and activity. Make sure you have someone on hand that is currently certified in emergency first aid and rescue procedures and ensure that the company has emergency protocols and risk management policies in place and that they truly value safety over all else.

Client Communication

How clear and accurate is the company's literature or website? How long does it take them to respond to your emails or phone calls? A few days is standard, but if you find yourself having to follow-up repeatedly, move on. A reputable travel company will detail exactly what's included and what's not for the price. All services should be clearly spelled out and agreed upon.

Customized Itineraries

A legitimate student travel provider will have European trip itineraries that they have successfully run time and time again. They know what works and have developed what they believe to be a flawless itinerary. However, there is a big plus when finding a travel company who is flexible with their itineraries. Find someone who will work with you to create the best possible custom itinerary for your group's needs.

Guide qualifications

Are their guides knowledgeable about the countries you will be visiting? Do they have experience leading trips there? Ideal guides will have experience travelling in the city be energetic, informative, entertaining and organized.

Ask for referrals

We suggest asking a tour company for referrals of other schools who they have run Europe trips for before. You can also look at reviews on sites like TripAdvisor.com, or search travel blogs.

"In the end, sometimes it just comes down to how comfortable a person feels with the company and their interactions with them."

What kind of accommodations should my student group stay in while in Europe?

When choosing where your group will stay, it's important to keep in mind a few factors – depending on your group, some factors may be more important to you than others. For example: location and proximity to activities, price, room types and sizes, hotel star rating and youth hostels vs. hotels.

Hotels *More expensive. Private rooms, full amenities, around the clock hotel staff. Typically 2/3 students to a room.*

Browse for European hotels here: <http://www.tripadvisor.ca/Hotels-g4-Europe-Hotels.html>

Hostels *Cheaper. Can request private rooms for the school group. Anywhere from 2-8 students in a room, often with a bunk bed setup. May be private bathroom, or shared bathroom on floor. Youth hostels can range greatly, from very basic to high quality hotel type accommodations.*

Browse for European hostels here:

<http://www.hostelworld.com/hostels/europe>

What are the best student-friendly restaurants in Europe?

The most important things to consider when deciding on a restaurant for your student group is making sure the venue can accommodate a large number of people. There should be plenty of options for students to choose from. Ensure the restaurant knows about any allergies or dietary restrictions your students may have. For large groups, it's best to reserve well in advance and not leave it until the night of. Breakfast is often included at hotels, and a light breakfast at hostels. This will vary, so check with your accommodation when booking. For lunch, we recommend giving students free time in a popular area with many options to choose from.



Why not try a special group cooking class to learn how to make some delicious local dishes?



What kind of transportation should we take while in Europe?

The best combination of transportation for your student trip to Europe will depend on a number of factors, such as number of destination cities, distance apart, budget and group size.

How should my Student Group Travel between Cities?

Plane

Of course, you will be initially travelling to Europe on a transatlantic flight. Typically these are scheduled overnight if traveling from North America, as this allows you to sleep on the plane, and arrive in the morning for a full first day in Europe. If you are planning on visiting multiple cities over a long distance, flying is the fastest option that allows the most time to spend in each destination. However, this is the more expensive option. Remember that you will have to arrange additional inner city transportation, such as public transport.

Bus

The most popular option for student groups planning on visiting multiple cities is to rent a coach bus. This is the most economical method for large groups and you can rent a coach for the duration of the tour to use for transportation between cities, and within cities between activities. Standard coach buses have approximately 56 passenger seats, A/C, TVs and DVD players, as well as an on-board washroom.

Some student-friendly bus companies Evolve Tours works with:

Seitz-Reisen – Based in Germany <http://www.seitz-reisen.de>

Vega Tour - Based in Czech Republic <http://www.vegatour.cz>

Irro Reisen – Based in Germany <http://de.irro-reisen.de/>

Siva Travel Services - Based in Greece <http://www.siva.travel/>

For a list of charter bus companies throughout Europe, visit <http://buscharter.org/companies>

Train

Travelling Europe by train is a bucket list item for many, and for good reason. It often provides a beautiful, scenic trip and allows travelers to really admire the scenery of the region. In terms of value, taking the train is often between the cost a plane ticket and using a coach bus. A good tip is to take an overnight train ride if you are traveling a far distance, as many train cars are equipped with overnight cabins – you can save a night of hotel expenses, and spend your daylight hours exploring your new favourite city.

Rail Europe's Group Department: <http://www.raileurope.ca/group-travel/group-travel.html>

How should my school group travel within cities?

This question is directly related to what city you are staying in, their transit system, where your hotel is etc. A coach bus is very useful if there is limited public transit. However, many European cities have a fantastic and extensive public transit system, limited parking for buses, and heavy street traffic – making hopping on the Metro or Underground an obvious choice.

Cities with great Public Transport

- Paris
- Munich
- London
- Helsinki
- Vienna
- Prague
- Hamburg
- Copenhagen
- Frankfurt
- Barcelona
- Cologne
- Rome
- Bern



Traveling the canals of Venice

For more information on public transit systems throughout Europe, check out:

Public Transit Links by city: <http://mikestravelguide.com/links/public-transit-links/>

European Public Transit Tips <https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/transportation/city-transit/city-transit-tips>

Should we purchase Travel Insurance?

Purchasing the correct travel insurance ahead of time can help in the event someone becomes sick or injured before, or during, a trip. Most travel insurance providers’ coverage includes cancellation, trip interruption, and lost baggage. If families purchase travel insurance and the student falls ill before the trip, they may receive reimbursement for costs paid towards the trip. You can either order insurance for everyone in the group and include this in the trip cost, or provide it as an optional addition to families who would like to purchase.



Visa and Entry requirements

Canadian or American citizens using Canadian passports do not require a visa to enter the Schengen Area of countries in Europe for tourism or business stays under ninety (90) days. The agreement now covers twenty-four countries in Europe, forming a giant borderless zone from Lisbon, Portugal, all the way to Tallinn, Estonia; and extending up from the Mediterranean Sea to beyond the Arctic Circle. The vast majority of student tour destinations are within this zone.

Check out a list of countries in the Schengen zone: <http://visaservicescanada.ca/countries/schengen.php>

That being said, it's important to do your research and check the most up to date visa requirements for your destination. Here are a couple of great resources on entry requirements for countries around the world:

Visa HQ: Select your country of citizenship and then the site will update the country list with requirements for your citizenship. Make sure you click on the country/countries you're visiting to get complete information (such as passport validity requirements).

<https://www.visahq.ca/>

Project Visa: simply select the country you're traveling to and then read the information provided.

<http://www.projectvisa.com/>

Vaccinations

Most heavily visited European destinations don't require vaccinations, however it is important to double check this when planning your student trip. One of the best resources for health-related information and vaccination advice for travelers is the **Centre for Disease Control (CDC) website**. Their site gives country and region-specific information for travelers regarding common diseases, recommended vaccinations and how to prevent common traveling illnesses. For the best and most-up-to date information we recommend you visit a local travel clinic and speak to a doctor about your specific trip details like the areas you are going to and the type of traveling you're doing.

This is a subject that a tour provider such as Evolve Tours would provide information about when deciding on a particular destination.

Your Next Steps to Making this Dream Student Trip a Reality!

1. Deciding on working with a tour company, or commit to organizing the trip on your own
2. Promote the trip!
 - o Send letter home to parents, make announcements, tell you colleagues, put up posters (available from Evolve Tours) and think creatively to get the word out!
3. Hold a Parent information night
4. Distribute a Registration package to students- Waivers, Packing lists, other forms
5. Decide on a payment schedule
6. Collect deposits, registration package and payments
7. Complete rooming lists and other lists
8. Finally, board the bus or train and get the show on the road!

Evolve Tours

At Evolve Tours, we've been running student trips around the world since 2006 and have been perfecting the trip planning process ever since. After deciding you want your students to experience educational travel, there's a lot involved in organizing a trip before hopping on that bus. There's the logistics of accommodations, transportation, meals, activities and more- when planned properly they come together to ensure an incredible and memorable student trip.

If you have any questions about any of the content in this guide, please email us at info@evolvetours.com, or call us at 1.888.222.5066 (Toll Free)

You can also check out sample itineraries of our trips online at www.evolvetours.com

We'd be happy to work together to plan your student trip, or just talk travel!

Happy Travels!

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