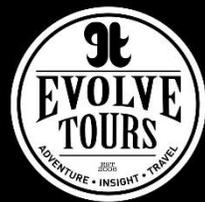


MIDDLE SCHOOL TRIPS

TRAVEL GUIDE



How to Plan the Perfect Student Trip for Middle School Students Brought to you by Evolve Tours

Welcome! Evolve Tours has designed this guide as a helpful resource for those interested in organizing a trip for their middle school students. In the following pages, you'll discover how to decide on the type of trip for you, how to pick activities, where to sleep, where to eat, 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.

A trip can be a great way for elementary classes to experience travel, learn more about the subjects they are studying, indulge in history and enjoy outdoor activities. A grade 7 or grade 8 tour to certain domestic cities are perfect for school graduation trips!

As Canada and the U.S have so much to offer, the first step is to determine the expected focus for the trip. For example:

Educational Focused Trip- curriculum based activities that bring the classroom subjects alive. For this, try organizing a trip to the capitals: Ottawa or Washington D.C.

Outdoor – this would focus on outdoor adventure activities, testing physical strengths inside and out of cities. Try an adventure to Vancouver Island or to the Grand Canyon.

Language- Are you a French teacher looking to get your students to improve their speaking skills? Try a trip to Montreal or Quebec City to have your students immersed into the French Canadian culture.

Arts – Fill your itinerary with museum and gallery visits, theatre performances, live music and more. Try a trip to New York City or Chicago!

Mixed Focus – Have a mix of educational, outdoor and fun activities in numerous cities.



Canada and the U.S have some fantastic destinations for students to learn the following subjects: geography, history, French language, social sciences, philosophy, world Religion and more! Whatever your group of students is interested in, there is sure to be a destination perfect for your group!

Regions of Canada and the United States

Canada and the United States are two large countries with a lot of different regions, complete with their own unique geography, and culture. Different regions to visit includes: the west coast British Columbia and Alberta where you will find the Canadian Rockies, or head down to California. Then there are the Central- east destinations in Ontario where you will find the Canadian capital: Ottawa, the largest city: Toronto, the beautiful Algonquin Provincial Park, and Niagara Falls. Moving lower for some great trips to Chicago, and New Orleans. Then we find Quebec, the French cultural center in the Canada. There is the oldest city: Quebec and the culinary Center: Montréal. Then head lower down the east coast to discover NYC, Boston and Washington D.C. As you can see, there is much to discover!

What time of the year should my student group visit Canada or the US?

Ottawa, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto and Niagara Falls :

The busiest time of year for student trips to Ottawa, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto and Niagara Falls is towards the end of the school year, especially in May and June. Many schools consider this as the graduation trip for their middle school students, and therefore run the trip at the end of the semester. Most trips are 2 to 6 days long, though trip length varies depending on distance from the school and activities planned. These cities typically have great weather during this time period as well, allowing outdoor activities and the potential to walk between destinations around the downtown area.

Click here for some more information on weather in these regions:

<http://www.livingin-canada.com/climate-ottawa.html>

<http://www.livingin-canada.com/climate-montreal.html>

Winter Student trips to Ottawa and Quebec City:

Winter is also a great time to bring your class to Ottawa or Quebec City! You can still visit many of the museums and attractions in the city, and it also becomes a hub for unique outdoor winter activities as well. Consider grabbing a BeaverTail then lacing up your skates and skating down the Rideau Canal with your class! Nearby winter highlights can also include snowshoeing, cross country skiing, winter tubing and dog sledding as potential day activities.

Winter Festivals:

Winterlude *Late January and early February*- Family and student-friendly festival celebrating winter in the capital. Highlights include skating on the Rideau Canal, ice carvings, snow sculptures, Snowflake Kingdom (biggest snow playground on the continent!), pancake breakfasts and more. The perfect excuse for a winter school trip!

<http://www.ottawatourism.ca/en/visitors/what-to-do/festival-and-events/winterlude>



Carnaval (February) – Bring your class to Quebec City for the Carnaval festival. Take a tour of the ice hotel, visit a sugar shack for traditional dancing and dinner and take a ride down the slopes by tubing at the Sports Village. Don't forget to check dog sled races and all the other wonderful sites at the Québec Winter Carnival.

<https://carnaval.qc.ca/>

Algonquin Provincial Park:

Consider a trip out of the city to the Algonquin provincial park. The best period during the year for canoe tours would be from April until October. Spend your days canoeing on the Lakes! Students prepare their own meals and tents by improving their leadership skills in the great Canadian outdoors. These canoe trips are 3 to 7 days, for excursions or mountain bike adventures, hiking, we can plan the possibilities of adventure perfect for any group that seeks to explore this corner of paradise in the outdoors.

Click here for some more information on weather near Algonquin Park
<https://weatherspark.com/averages/27608/Algonquin-Park-Ontario-Canada>

Victoria and Vancouver:

Consider a trip to the West to discover even more Canadian beauty. Within these two extraordinary places, both city and outdoor tours are available. The first thing you will notice upon arrival in Vancouver is the magnificent Rocky Mountains. They welcome you to the geographic gem of British Columbia! Try skiing at Whistler Mountain, or kayaking off the coast of Vancouver Island, Evolve Vancouver offers adventure seekers and nature lovers a wonderful introduction to engaged in the culture of this great western border.

Click here for some more information on weather near Vancouver Island:
<http://www.livingin-canada.com/living-in-vancouver.html>



NYC, Washington D.C, Boston and Chicago:

The busiest time of year for student trips to NYC, Washington D.C, Boston and Chicago is towards the end of the school year, especially in May and June. Many schools consider this as the graduation trip for their middle school students, and therefore run the trip at the end of the semester. Most trips are 2 to 6 days long, though trip length varies depending on distance from the school and activities planned. These cities typically have great weather during this time period as well, allowing outdoor activities and the potential to walk between destinations around the downtown area. We also recommend these destinations in October-November or March- April if you are looking to avoid the busy season.

Click here for some more information for weather in these areas:
<https://weatherspark.com/y/23912/Average-Weather-in-New-York-City-New-York-United-States>
<https://weatherspark.com/y/20957/Average-Weather-in-Washington-D.C.-United-States>
<https://weatherspark.com/y/26197/Average-Weather-in-Boston-Massachusetts-United-States>
<https://weatherspark.com/y/14091/Average-Weather-in-Chicago-Illinois-United-States>



New Orleans:

If your group is looking for an experience out of the ordinary, try a trip to New Orleans. Evolve New Orleans focuses on the city's unique Creole/French foundation, its modern recovery and lasting effects from Hurricane Katrina, the swamp lands and wild ecology that surrounds the low-lying city, and of course, the live music and exquisite food. The busiest time of year in New Orleans is no doubt during the Mardi Gras festival which is held every year 47 days before Easter. This trip is offered all year round.

Click here for some more information for weather in New Orleans:

<https://weatherspark.com/y/11799/Average-Weather-in-New-Orleans-Louisiana-United-States>

California:

Consider a trip to the West to discover the beautiful Golden coast of California. There are plenty of extraordinary places, both city and outdoor tours are available. The first thing you will have to decide is which area you would like to visit. Will it be a city arts trip to San Francisco, or a studio tour in Los Angeles, or a mix and include both cities along with San Diego. Evolve California offers the scenic drive and activities along California's stunning coastline. Trips to California are offered all year round as the weather is always great!

Click here for some more information for weather in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas:

<https://weatherspark.com/y/1705/Average-Weather-in-Los-Angeles-California-United-States>

<https://weatherspark.com/y/557/Average-Weather-in-San-Francisco-California-United-States>

What are The Best Student-Friendly Activities in Canada?

Check out this list of Evolve Tour's favourite and most popular activities for school groups:

Ottawa :

- Canadian Aviation and Space Museum
- Canadian War Museum
- Dog sledding in Montebello
- Canadian Museum of History
- National Art Gallery of Canada
- Parliament Hill
- Bike tour on the Rideau Canal
- Skating on the Rideau Canal
- Supreme Court of Canada





Montreal:

- Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
- Guided tour of the Old Port
- Notre Dame Basilica
- Mont Royal Lookout
- Take the funicular up the Olympic Tower
- Indoor ice skating at the Atrium
- Montreal Biodôme
- Montréal Science Centre
- Disco Cruise on the St-Lawrence River
- Bike tour at Mont-Tremblant

Toronto:

- CN Tower
- Watch a Blue Jays at the Rogers Centre
- Ripley's Aquarium
- Visit St-Lawrence Market
- Royal Ontario Museum
- Science Center of Ontario
- Art Gallery of Ontario
- Canada's Wonderland
- NFB workshop



Niagara Falls:

- White Water Walk on the Niagara gorge
- Niagara Glen hiking trail
- Visit the Old Fort George
- Whirlpool Aero Car
- Butterfly Conservatory
- Hornblower Cruise
- Clifton Hills district
- Niagara Fury Imax Movie

Quebec City:

- Quebec City Aquarium
- Museum of Civilisation
- The Citadelle
- Traditional Sugar Shack
- Albert Gilles Coper Museum
- St-Anne of Beaupré Basilica
- Cayon Ste-Anne
- Workshop at the Plains of Abraham
- Montmorency Falls
- Disco Cruise on the St-Lawrence River



Algonquin Provincial Park:

- Guided Canoe expedition
- Guided paddle and portage
- Guided hiking trails
- Leadership, team building and evening camp activities



Vancouver et Victoria :

- Gastown District
- "Science World"
- Vancouver Aquarium
- Granville Island
- Falls Creek
- Lynn Canyon Suspension Bridge
- Grouse Mountain
- Sea Kayak class
- Skiing at Whistler
- High ropes, climbing and ziplining
- Strathcona Provincial Park on Vancouver Island

New York City:

- Guggenheim Museum
- See a Broadway Show
- Museum of Modern Art
- Brooklyn Street Art tour
- Top of the Rock
- NBC Studio Tour
- Metropolitan Museum of Art
- Central Park



Chicago:

- Millennium Park and the Cloud Gate
- Visit the Art Institute
- Live Jazz Performance
- Tour Wrigley Field
- John Hancock Observatory
- Gangster Tour of Chicago
- Shedd Aquarium

Boston:

- Guided tour of the Freedom Trail
- New England Aquarium
- Live theatre Productions
- Science Museum
- Salem Witch Museum
- Harvard University
- Quincy Market
- Red Sox Game at Fenway Park
- Minuteman National Historic Park





Washington DC:

- Washington Monument
- US Capital Building
- Smithsonian Museums
- Guided walking tours of Capitol Hill & National Mall
- Whitehouse
- U.S Holocaust Museum

New Orleans:

- New Orleans Jazz National Historic Site
- Canal Street at Jackson Square and the French Market
- Go behind the scenes at Mardi Gras World
- Steamboat Diner and Dance cruise on the Mississippi
- Swamp Tour



California:

- Walk along the famous Golden Gate Bridge
- Ferry and tour of Alcatraz Island & Prison
- Tour The Aquarium of the Bay
- Santa Monica Pier and 3rd Street promenade
- Improv acting workshop
- Guided tour of Hollywood



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

<http://www.ottawatourism.ca/en/visitors/what-to-do/museums-and-galleries>

<http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/blog/fr/category/attractions/>

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

<https://www.niagarafallstourism.com/>

<http://www.quebecregion.com/fr/>

<http://www.algonquinpark.on.ca/>

<http://www.vancouverisland.travel/>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/new-york-city>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/chicago>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/boston>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/washington-dc>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/new-orleans>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/california>



Should I work with a travel company?

Our next step is deciding 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 that run Ottawa 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. Here are tips on what to look for or avoid when choosing a company or guide.

Reputation and Safety

Even 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. 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 is included and what is not for the price. All services should be clearly spelled out and agreed upon.

Customized Itineraries

A legitimate student travel provider will have trip itineraries that they have successfully run time and time again. They know what works and 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 region you are visiting? Do they have experience leading trips there? Ideal guides will have experience travelling in the cities you are visiting and will be energetic, informative, entertaining and organized.

Ask for referrals

We suggest asking a tour company for referrals of other schools who they have run Ottawa 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."

Where should my student group stay in Canada and the U.S?

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

Hotels – Centrally located, with amenities and around the clock hotel staff

Browse these Canadian and US cities hotels, here:

<https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Hotels-g153339-Canada-Hotels.html>

[https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Hotels-g191-United States-Hotels.html](https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Hotels-g191-United_States-Hotels.html)

Residences - Cheaper, dormitory style accommodations but are only available during the summer months.

What are the best student-friendly restaurants in Canada and the US?

When deciding on a restaurant for your student group make sure the venue can accommodate large student groups. There should be plenty of options for students to choose from, or a buffet. Ensure the restaurant knows about any allergies or dietary restrictions your students may have.

Breakfast

Hotels will often include a breakfast with room bookings, or offer one for an additional charge. They can range from a continental breakfast to a full hot breakfast buffet. Having breakfast at the hotel can save a ton of time, as you don't need to travel to another restaurant and can head straight to activities after leaving the hotel.

Great places for Lunch and Dinner

If giving students free time for lunch, choose an area where there are plenty of dining options to suit everyone's taste and diet. Many market places and shopping centers are perfect places for lunch as it offers plenty of options.



For diners, buffets or family style restaurants with plenty of options are a great choice for student groups with allergies or food restrictions.

On beautiful summer days, Evolve Tours loves to organize BBQ dinners in a local park.



What kind of transportation should we take to various destinations in Canada and the US?

Plane

Taking a flight to your destination within Canada or the US will be faster means of transport, except it is going to be the most expensive. It also depends on what region you are going to or you want to visit. Canada and the US are large countries and sometimes a flight and the most reasonable way to travel.

Train

Via Rail train network extends across Canada from the east coast to the west. There is also Amtrak that runs coast to coast in the US. Although this may be a comfortable and scenic way to travel, it can be very expensive, especially for large groups. Another disadvantage is that transportation once you arrive in your destination will need to be additional.

Find more information on the train here:

<http://www.viarail.ca>

<https://www.amtrak.com/home>

Coach Bus

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



Should we purchase Travel Insurance?

Purchasing the correct travel insurance 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.

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!



Additional resources for planning the perfect school trip to Canada or the US:

<http://www.tripadvisor.ca> - Helpful user based review site. Check here for honest reviews of attractions, museums, hotels and travel companies.

<http://www.yelp.ca/> - A great resource for checking out restaurants without having to have a meal there first. User based reviews.

<https://weatherspark.com/> - for weather

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/canada>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa>

- A helpful list and descriptions of popular Canadian and American attractions and activities



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!

Evolve Tours

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