

WASHINGTON D.C

SCHOOL GUIDE



How to plan the perfect student trip to Washington DC Brought to you by Evolve Tours

Welcome! Evolve Tours has designed this guide as a helpful resource for those interested in planning a school trip for their students to Washington DC. 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 Washington DC, 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.

Why should my student group visit Washington DC?

A trip to Washington DC 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 is to determining the intended focus of the educational trip, after which you can then decide which part of Washington DC best suit what you and your group are looking to experience. For example:

Educational Student Trip - Curriculum-related activities that bring to life the subjects of the classroom.

History – Focus on discovering and appreciating some of the U.S.'s most treasured monuments and historical sites.

Arts - Fill your itinerary with museum and gallery visits, theatre performances, live music and more.

Community Service – Want to make an impact with your travels? There are a number of destinations throughout Washington DC that offer a chance to put some volunteer hours to good use while being immersed in a local community.



Mixed focus - A balance of educational activities, outdoor activities, and cultural focus. The variety of geography, culture and history within Washington DC makes for a well-rounded trip.

Washington DC is a fantastic destination for students of the following subjects: Geography, History, Arts and more! Whatever subject your student group is interested in, Washington DC is sure to be a great destination for your group.

What time of the year should my student group visit Washington DC?

The busiest time of year for student trips to Washington D.C is towards the end of the school year, in April, 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. If you are looking to avoid the busiest time of year, head to this great city during the autumn season. Most Washington D.C trips are 4 or 5 days long, though trip length varies depending on distance from the school and activities planned. Washington D.C typically has great weather during this time period as well, allowing the potential to walk between destinations around the downtown area.



Check the following links for more Information about weather in Washington DC throughout the year and some tips on deciding when to travel.

<https://weatherspark.com/y/20957/Average-Weather-in-Washington-D.C.-United-States-Year-Round>

What are The Best Student-Friendly Activities in Washington DC?

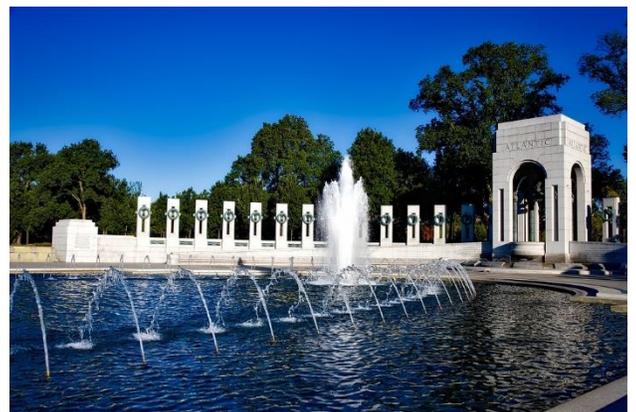
Check out this list for some of Evolve Tour’s favorite and most popular activities for school groups in Washington DC:

Sightseeing tour – See the famous places of Washington DC on a sightseeing tour. Cover the White House, the National Mall, Smithsonian Museums and walk around the US capitol building, and the War memorials.

Biking – Rent a bike and enjoy the city attractions. See the city from a different perspective and admire the old architecture and surroundings.

United States Botanic Garden - This is must for student groups. The botanic garden is visited by more than 1 million visitors annually.

Arlington Cemetery- visit the cemetery of fallen soldiers, and witness the transfer of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.





Gettysburg Military Park – This historical park is a must see! Gettysburg National Military Park protects the landscape of the Battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War in 1863. Explore the Museum and the Visitor Center.

Mount Vernon – Enjoy a tour of Mount Vernon was the plantation house of George Washington, the first President of the United States.

For more information about attractions and more, visit: <https://washington.org/things-do-washington-dc>

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.

<p>✓ 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.</p>	
<p>✓ 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.</p>	<p>✗ Generally, planning with a tour company is more expensive than doing it on your own.</p>
<p>✓ Allergy, food restrictions communicated to all the suppliers (hotels, restaurants and activities)</p>	
<p>✓ Group rates on transportation and accommodation since they work with suppliers year round with many student groups</p>	
<p>✓ Years of expertise</p>	

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 North America 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 or 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 procedure and ensure that the company has emergency protocols and risk management policies in place and that the 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 North America trips 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 student group stay in while in Washington DC?

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

Browse Washington DC a hotels here : https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotels-g28970-Washington_DC_District_of_Columbia-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 have private bathrooms, or shared bathrooms on the floor. Youth hostels can range greatly, from very basic to high quality hotel type accommodations.*

Browse Washington DC hostels, here: <http://www.hostelworld.com/hostels/Washington-DC/USA>

What are the best student-friendly restaurants in Washington DC?

The most important thing 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 is 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 ensure to check with your accommodation when booking. For lunch, we recommend giving students free time in a popular area with many options to choose from.

Browse Washington DC friendly restaurants here : <https://washington.org/visit-dc/family-friendly-restaurants-in-washington-dc>



What kind of transportation should we take while in Washington DC?

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

Plane

Of course, you will be initially travelling to Washington DC on a flight. If you are planning on visiting multiple cities over a long distance, flying is the fastest option and allows the most time to spend in each destination. However, this is the more expensive option. Remember, you will have to arrange inner city transportation as well.

Coach Bus

The most popular option for student groups is to rent a coach bus to travel within the U.S. 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.

Can my student group use Public Transport in Washington DC?

Public transit networks in Washington DC are developed. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) operates both Metro Rail and Metro Bus transportation. This form of transportation can be used once you arrive in Washington D.C. The quality of bus and air travel varies enormously depending on the route, and region. It is not recommended to rely on public transport for moving your student group in the outskirts areas.



For a list of bus services throughout Washington DC, visit: <https://www.wmata.com/service/index.cfm>



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.

Visa and Entry requirements

Many countries around the world have visa requirements and other restrictions on traveling. Before you travel, it is important to do your research. Some countries it may take up to 3 months to get a travel visa, so make sure you check out requirements as soon as you've selected your destination(s)!

Here are a couple of great resources on entry requirements for countries around the world:

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

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).

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

Simply select the country you're traveling to and then read the information provided.

Vaccinations

Depending on the area you're traveling to it may be wise to get vaccinated against disease.

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 like common diseases, recommended vaccinations and tips on preventing common travelling illness. 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.

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!
 - 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 plane 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!

Evolve Tours

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