

Thinking about organising your next school trip?

Here are a few pointers which will help you think about what is involved.

1. Why should I organise a school tour?

Taking pupils outside of their normal learning environment can involve a fair degree of work but, with the right planning, preparation and support, a school trip should be highly rewarding not only for your pupils but also for your colleagues and YOU!

Many schools view educational visits as an integral part of an effective and balanced curriculum, a view supported by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC). The LOtC website (www.lotc.org.uk/why/school-improvement) sets out many of the ways in which pupils, teaching staff and therefore the school benefit from educational visits.

In the view of UNESCO “Providing students with high quality learning activities in relevant situations beyond the walls of the classroom is vital for helping students appreciate their first hand experiences from a variety of different perspectives. Experiences outside the classroom also enhances learning by providing students with opportunities to practice skills of enquiry, values analysis and clarification and problem solving in everyday situations”¹

2. Where do I start?

If you want your trip to have a real educational benefit, as well as being enjoyable, rather than start by thinking about where to go, why not ask yourself ‘*what do I want my pupils to get out of this trip?*’ Once you know in your own mind what you want to achieve, then begin to think about which are the sites and locations which will best help meet your objectives.

If you need to take advice there are plenty of places to look, starting with the internet but be aware there are companies out there who will try and encourage you to visit an area simply because it is somewhere they are familiar with, rather than giving any real thought as to whether it is the best place for YOUR group. One place to start would be to check whether any potential provider has been awarded the LOtC quality badge, the nationally recognised indicator of good quality educational provision. You can check this on the LOtC website at:

<http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search>. Using a Quality Badge holder not only provides some assurance of quality it should also reduce the amount of administrative work you will need to do.

¹ http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_d/mod26.html



Passports & Visas:

If you are travelling overseas, even if your trip is within the European Union (EU), your students will need a valid travel document and some may well require a visa. Whilst many may already have their own travel document, you will need to allow time for those students who may not have one to apply.

If you prefer, and you are travelling to certain European countries you could consider applying for a collective passport. You need to be aware that there are limitations on who can use a collective passport:

- ✓ A collective passport can cover between 5 and 50 children on.
- ✓ If there are more than 50 in the group, you can split the group and apply for 2 or more passports.
- ✓ Everyone on the passport must be a British national and under 18 by the end of the trip.

The GOV.UK website currently advises that applications, which cost £39, take about 6 weeks. If you choose to submit an application you will need to allow additional time to gather in the relevant information required, so you may wish to consider whether it is preferable to simply follow the current advice given by GOV.UK which is 'Young people should travel on their own passports if possible'².

If you choose to travel with a tour company they should be able to offer advice on visa requirements but if you are organising the trip yourself you can find a list of the countries whose citizens must hold a visa if travelling to the EU at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/apply_for_a_visa/index_en.htm.

You may also want to take a look at British Council website. They can issue a List of Travellers form for school trips to countries in the EU allowing pupils who are of a non-EU nationality to go on the trip without getting a visa. Advice on this can be found at:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/partner/list-travellers>

Don't forget that if, they do not already have one, students will need to register for their European Health Insurance Card. This is free and can be also be obtained via GOV.UK website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card>

² <https://www.gov.uk/collective-group-passports/overview>



6. Do I want to lead this trip myself?

You are the person best placed to know exactly what you want the focus of your visit to be and also how this links in to what your pupils have studied in class. So, if you know the places you are visiting, you might feel it best to lead the trip yourself and to organise the visit and activities which your students will undertake. If this is the option you choose, make sure you speak with your EVC just to be clear on the school's policies and to confirm you have all the necessary permissions.

If the area is new to you or you want to be able to enjoy the trip without having to find your way to each stop and liaise with restaurateurs and hoteliers you could look to secure the services of a guide. A good guide can really make a tour; equally a bad one can have an equally negative impact. No UK organisation offers an independent evaluation scheme, so before making a decision why not ask your prospective guide, or their employers for evidence of customer satisfaction and proof of their having previously worked, successfully, with UK school groups.

7. Summary

Whilst taking on responsibility for organising a school trip will involve additional work, particularly the first time you do it, the benefits which come from providing your students with the chance to expand their horizons and to appreciate the learning is not restricted to the classroom are huge.

We hope some of the advice contained in this document provides you with a few useful pointers and an idea of where to start. As with all things in education, the policies and procedures we have referred to here are liable to change, so please do check with your colleagues and your EVC to make sure you are familiar with the current position.

If we can be of any further help or provide any assistance please do not hesitate to contact us at:

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