

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the interior of a grand, ornate cathedral. The ceiling is a complex, vaulted structure with intricate carvings and several large, colorful frescoes. The walls are also highly decorated with carvings and smaller frescoes. Numerous large, ornate chandeliers hang from the ceiling, casting a warm, golden light. In the foreground, the pews of the cathedral are visible, and a few people can be seen walking through the nave. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and artistic beauty.

Shakopee High School
European Choir Tour
Student Handbook

France 2026

March 26 - April 3 2026

Overview

Every three years, the Shakopee High School Choir Program takes an international performance tour during Spring Break. Singers travel to historic cities, discover famous icons and attractions, interact with foreign people in their native culture, and perform in some of the largest, most beautiful cathedrals in the world. Past tours have included Germany, Poland, Austria, Spain, Italy, France, and the Czech Republic.

Touring abroad with peers is an incredible educational experience that lasts a lifetime. Students learn about history, geography, art, culture, architecture, diversity – and of course music - in a way they never could otherwise. In our past European Tours, one of the biggest benefits has proved to be the social and emotional growth that comes through interacting with tour mates and foreigners alike.

When these singers graduate from high school, most of them invariably agree that the European Choir Tour was the highlight of their high school career. As a director, watching these students discover and grow as individuals has been some of the greatest highlights of my life!

~ Michael Kovic, Tour Director

Important Dates

2024

- o **Monday, January 8** – IMPORTANT Informational Meeting covering:
 - Comprehensive Tour Details
 - Fundraising Opportunities
 - **Parent Chaperones**
 - **Friends & Family Shadow Tour**
 - Safety & Security
 - Organizational Structure
 - Finances
 - Auditions
 - Rehearsals
 - And more...
- o **January 15 thru 26** – Voice Checks for Class of 2028 (during choir class)
- o **Thursday, February 1** – DUE:
 - o **\$100 Deposit** - *Make out checks to 'Shakopee ETC' and write the student's name on the memo line of the check. Submit to HS Main Office or personally to Mr. Kovic in class.*
 - o **[Student Registration and Tour Agreement Form](#)**
 - o **Completed Applications for:**
 - **[Chaperones & Adult Companions](#)**
 - **[Nurse](#)**
 - **Fundraising Committee** - link forthcoming
(Also available at shakopeesabers.com.)
- o **April 1** – Standard Payment Schedule begins (\$173/mo.)
- o **September** – ETC **Monthly** Rehearsals begin

2025

- o **September** – ETC **Twice-Weekly** Rehearsals begin
- o **February 1** – Alternate Payment Schedule begins (for Band students traveling to Ireland & France)

2026

- o **March 26** – We board the plane and fly to Paris, France!

- o **April 3** - Return to Shakopee, MN

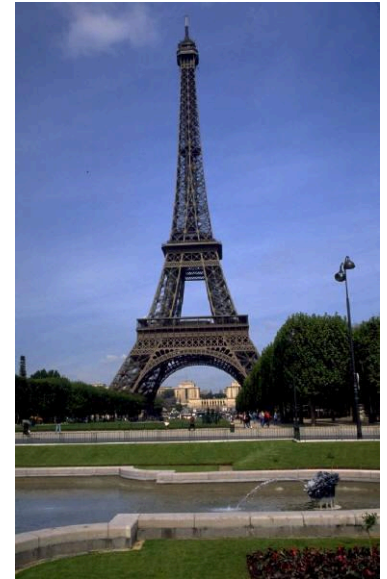
Itinerary Highlights (7 nights / 9 days)



They've all come to Paris. The Gauls, the Romans, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Pablo Picasso, Dwight Eisenhower, the Czar of Russia, Lenin, the Queen of England, Benjamin Franklin and George Gershwin. Some have even tried to capture the city. And now everyone wants to come to Paris -- millions of tourists each year, motivated by the desire to see the most beautiful city in the world. But Paris is more than a city. It is a place that breathes history and legend, a combination of the modern and the ancient.

Paris

Sightseeing of Paris includes Notre Dame, the Champs-Élysées, the Left Bank artists' quarter, Sacré Cœur, Arc de Triomphe, Champs-Élysées, The Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum, exploring in groups and souvenir shopping. Tentative concert at the historic Le Madeleine Church.



Versailles Palace (Pictured on the Handbook cover)

One of the most extravagant buildings in the world. The playground of Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI. About 15,000,000 people visit the palace, park, or gardens of Versailles every year, making it one of the most popular tourist attractions in the world.

Rouen

See this medieval city where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1431. Impromptu sing in the famous Rouen Cathedral. Walk to the Place du Vieux Marché and enjoy lunch.



Utah & Omaha Beaches | Bayeux

World War II history comes alive at the Utah and Omaha Beaches as you perform a brief memorial concert at the Normandy American War Cemetery. Visit the WWII War Museum. Return to Bayeux to see the Tapestry Museum or shop in the quaint Old Town. Tentative formal evening concert at the Bayeux Cathedral.



Bayeux | Mont St. Michel | Blois

Visit Mont Saint Michele, the 11th century Romanesque Benedictine Abbey. The Abbey was a prison during the French Revolution and is now a UNESCO world heritage site. Possible impromptu sing in the Abbey.



Loire Valley | Blois

Visit the Loire Valley, a region known for its chateaux and vineyards. See the fairytale Chateau de Chenonceau—Catherine de Medici's manor house with a possible impromptu sing. Continue to Chateau Chambord.



Chartres | Tours

Chartres, the Acropolis of France. Visit the magnificent Gothic Cathedral, which was constructed in the Middle Ages with towers built in two architectural styles. Possible sing in the Cathedral.

Tours was an important center of trade and administration under the Romans, but is presently most famous for its location in the heart of the Chateaux Country of France — also known as the "garden of France." Kings and courtiers and magnates built famous Renaissance chateaux such as Blois, Chambord, Chenonceau, Azay-le-Rideau and others in this gentle valley.



Travel Company

Grand Tours
Saint Paul, MN

General Information

Who: Auditioned members of the classes of 2026, 2027 and 2028

Eligibility: Members must be a full time student in a high school curricular choir and be a choir member in good standing.

Dates: March 26 thru April 3, 2026

- Note: A 10th day may be added if future realized costs allow.

Where: France - Paris | Rouen | Bayeux | Utah & Omaha Beaches | Mont St. Michel | Loire Valley | Blois | Chartres



Tour Inclusions

- 7 nights / 9 days
- Round trip airfare from Minneapolis to Paris
- Transportation by deluxe motor coach in France
- Professional tour managers to facilitate the program
- 7-nights hotel accommodations in twin/triple occupancy
- Breakfast daily and 6-8-evening group dinners•
- Sightseeing as outlined in the final itinerary
- Admissions as required for sightseeing program
- Visit to the Normandy Beaches and War Cemetery
- Visit to Mont St. Michel Abbey
- Tours of Chateau de Chenonceau and Chambord
- Guided visit to the Louvre Museum
- Formal Concerts with local promotion as outlined
- Impromptu singing opportunities
- Possible collaboration with local choirs• Gratuities to guides | drivers | local escorts
- Travel Guard Group Protection Plan Insurance
- Online tour registration
- Digital Audio Files of the choir's European Performances
- Travel Guard Group Protection Plan

Staff

Administrator: TBD

Director: Michael Kovic

Assistant Director: Bridget Beale

Registered Nurse: TBD

Chaperones: TBD

Personal Attendants/ Required Accompanying Parents



A personal attendant must travel and be present with a particular student at all times on tour if:

- 1) That particular student requires personal assistance in the classroom that supersedes a classroom teacher's regular duties.
- 2) If the tour director or administrator conclude that the student's behavior is questionable in regards to safety or Rule and Regulation Compliance.
- 3) If a particular student requires personal assistance that supersedes the Tour Nurse's assigned duties

Personal attendants and accompanying parents as stated above are not considered Tour Chaperones and are not subject to a stipend. The Tour Director and Administrator will communicate with the parents of any student in question to create an acceptable solution. Final decisions will be made by the Tour Director and Administrator.

Required Practice

Singers will receive written music and practice tracks for choral songs that will be sung on tour. For rehearsal preparation, participants are expected to practice at home using the rehearsal tracks for their voice part. Rehearsal tracks will be posted on the choir website (www.shakopeesabers.com). Students may save website tracks to a personal electronic device if desired. Singers not showing adequate progress may be placed on probation and subject to a follow-up evaluation, upon which their tour status will be assessed.

Rehearsal Schedule

It is each participant's responsibility to attend all rehearsals unless excused before-hand by the director. Students are expected to maintain a 90% attendance record for rehearsals. Students whose attendance record is not acceptable will be placed on probation and, if necessary, dropped from the tour.

- **For the 2024-25 academic year**, rehearsals will be held one Wednesday morning per month (7:30-8:10AM).
- **For the 2025-26 academic year**, rehearsals will be held every Monday evening 6:30-8:00pm and every Wednesday morning 7:15-8:10am with a few exceptions.

Participation in HOME CONCERTS as well as the FAREWELL CONCERT is mandatory. Each singer is responsible for the performance of all concert music, by memory for the tour.

Performance Attire (Included in Tour Package)

All touring students and chaperones will be sized and fit for the following items:

- Men: Vest, Dress Shirt, Pants, Tie and Shoes
- Women: Corelli A-line Dress, Tights, Shoes and Necklace

Boys will provide their own TWO pair of BLACK DRESS Socks.

Tour Choir Support Structure

Community is the bond that allows a major tour to be successful. Many different entities contribute to the whole.

- High School Administration & School Board
- The ETC Core Committee plans, delegates, and helps administrate fundraising
- Parents:
 - Provide encouragement, reassurance, guidance and support
 - Help with fundraising & time management
- Choir Families:
 - a) chaperones
 - b) 6-8 students
- Tour Director and Administrator
- Registered Nurse



Tentative \$3,899 - Student Tour Package

Currently, we are budgeting for a student cost of \$3,899. This price is an estimation until the large ticket items such as airfare and bussing are locked in six months ahead of the tour.

If there are less than 60 participants, the total cost may increase due to fixed costs that would be divided into a smaller number of travelers.

Student Travel Cost (based on 60 participants)		Expenses paid with Deposit	
Expense	Per Person	Expense	Per Person
Deposit	\$ 100.00 >>>>>>>>		
Airfare and Land Costs	\$3,699.00	Airport Transfer	\$ 20.00
Performance Attire	100.00	Tour Sweatshirt	\$ 25.00
		Director/Chaperone Stipend	\$ 49.00
		Contingency Fund	\$ 6.00
Total -	\$3,899.00	Total -	\$ 100.00

The price is based on double/triple occupancy. Tour costs may vary, depending upon the total number of paying participants sharing certain fixed overhead costs which include *chartered motorcoach*, *Tour Manager*, *guides*, *concert costs*, etc.

United States Passport Book (Not included in Tour Package Cost)

All travelers are required to have a U.S. Passport Book that is valid until six months after the scheduled return date. The passport expiration date should be no earlier than October 4, 2026. New Passport Book and processing costs are: under age 16: \$135; age 16 or older: \$165. This includes a county photo and execution fee.

Individual Spending Money

Participants should plan to bring approximately \$15-20 per day for daily lunches and discretionary shopping.

The Deposit (\$100)

The \$100 deposit should be submitted to Mr Kovic via the HS Main Office, in class, or mailed to:

Shakopee High School
c/o Michael Kovic
100 West 17th Avenue
Shakopee, MN 55379

Monthly Payments (\$173)

Can be made by check and either mailed to the tour company (Grand Tours) **OR be changed to a credit card.**

Note that there is a surcharge for using a credit card. Families that plan to pay ahead OR make larger payments at longer intervals **should communicate with the Tour Director, Michael Kovic.** If there are one or more missing payments, it will cause concern about your status. Details for registration and payment to Grand Tours will be forthcoming.

Suggested Standard Payment Schedule

February 1, 2024 - \$100 Deposit

April 1, 2024 thru
December 1, 2025 - \$173/month (Monthly Payments are due on the 1st of each month.)

January 1, 2026 - 166\$ or remaining balance (based on variable air fees and any other cost contingencies)

Cancellation Policy

- Until 90 days prior to departure = Full refund
- 89 to 60 days prior = 75% of payments refunded
- 59 to 30 days prior = 50% of payments refunded
- 29 to 0 days prior = No refund for any reason

Parent/ Guardian Financial Liability

- If a student cannot put forth a required cash payment at the indicated time listed on the Payment Schedule, the Parent/Guardian will be responsible for making the payment.
- Participants will be dropped from the tour if it is evident that their account balance does not have sufficient funds to cover the cost of any pertinent individual cancellation penalties.

Contingency Fund

In the event that there is a medical emergency, or if a student/adult needs to be sent home for health or other reasons, high school contingency funds will be used to cover the costs. If such an occurrence takes place,



the student's family will immediately reimburse the amount spent on behalf of the student to the European Tour Choir Fund.

Cancellation & Attrition Policy

Should GrandTours receive a written program cancellation notice from an individual traveler or Shakopee High School, certain cancellation penalties will apply. Details will be forthcoming.

Financial Notes

- Fundraising
 - A hard working student that participates in most all of the provided tour fundraisers can expect to raise a maximum of \$800 toward their tour cost.
 - Individual fund-raising dollars may be used toward scheduled payments only after they have been processed and deposited into the tour account. For each fundraising activity, there will be a temporary delay in crediting earned fund-raising dollars due to processing time. Example: Money earned in September may not appear on a student's monthly tour statement until October.

- Excess Cash Payments
 - Due to tax laws, If the student's total balance (cash payments & fund-raising moneys combined) exceeds the Tour Package cost, the excess dollars **cannot** be used by the student and will be placed into the general Tour Fund Account.

- Account Balances
 - Will be accessible at any time on the Grand Tours Portal website.

- Interest Earned
 - Any interest earned on payments or fund-raising dollars will be used to pay for administrative costs. Any remaining money earned on interest will go toward the group pool and will be used to defray all participants' costs.

- The Right to Fundraise/Abstain
 - If a particular family chooses not to participate in the group fund-raising opportunities, they will forfeit the right to accrue funds from the group revenue sources.



Communications

During the summer, communications are especially important for fundraising. It is important to check you email daily.

Parent Involvement

In order to manage the many fund-raisers offered, parent involvement is crucial. Help is needed supervising individual events.

Responsibilities

For each fundraising activity, participants are to report promptly for the dates and times that they agreed to work. If a participant cannot carry out their responsibilities, they will be expected to find a substitute to fill their position.

Parent Chaperones

When filling chaperone positions for the tour, high school and district licensed staff will have first priority. If any open positions remain, parent applicants will be considered.

- Chaperones are paid \$300 (per chaperone couple) which is paid by the student participants and deducted from the chaperones' total package cost. Spouses/Companions are invited and may team up with their husband/wife to help supervise their chaperone family (maximum of 5 or 6 students) and will pay the full adult cost.
- All chaperones will be expected to perform all supervision and tour responsibilities for \$200 compensation.
- Must be at least 21 of years of age
- Opportunities for chaperoning will be limited based on the number of students participating.
- As per district policy, adults not employed by ISD #720 may be subject to a background check.

Tour Nurse

- The Tour Nurse will be expected to perform all duties and tour responsibilities for a 1/2 financial package (\$1,850).

Fundraising Staffing

- The Fundraising Chairperson will be expected to perform all duties as articulated in the Fundraising Staff Application for \$450, which will be applied to their student's tour account.
- The three Fundraising Committee Members will be expected to perform all duties as articulated in the Fundraising Staff Application for \$125 each, which will be applied to their student's tour account.
- Fundraiser Coordinators - will earn 3% of the proceeds for each coordinated fundraiser amount. Funds will be applied to their student's tour account.

Friends & Family Shadow Tour (F & F Tour)

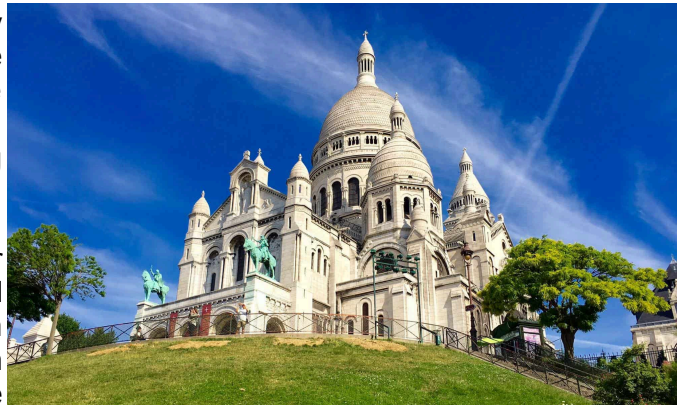
Friends and family members of our touring students have the opportunity to experience the trip itinerary, see all the student concerts, **but have their own hotels, restaurants and unstructured travel time.** The F & F Tour members will be able to get together with their student singer during the student's unstructured time, and may have a common restaurant meal or two with the student group if circumstances allow. This is the perfect opportunity to see France with your own family and still have some contact with your student singer. For those who do not get the opportunity to chaperone, the F & F tour is a way to still experience the trip. **Note:** Student singers are required to attend all student scheduled activities on the Choir Tour Itinerary. Shadow tour registration will open after chaperons have been selected.

Total cost for a F&F tour usually runs \$200.00 higher than the main tour because more expensive air space is reserved for them, saving the best fares for the kids, and we upgrade the hotels. We would need a minimum of

30 passengers to operate an F&F tour to make the European coaching work on a tour of this routing and length. Anything less pushes the tour price up significantly per person.

Student Code of Conduct

In order to proudly represent our choir, school, community and country on our upcoming performance tour, some guidelines and expectations for responsible behavior have been established. The most effective discipline an organization can have is one that comes from accepting directions with cheerfulness and with the understanding that it is in the group's best interest. The director, school administration, and parents expect students to do their best in this regard for all who are involved. Students and parents should read the following information and then sign the agreement form (included in the registration form), which indicates your understanding and acceptance of these guidelines and expectations.



1. All students who participate in the European Tour Choir will follow all policies and regulations of the Minnesota State High School League and Shakopee High School. Violators will be subject to the consequences outlined in the **“Consequences for Non-Compliance”** which is included in this handbook.
2. All students on the tour will be expected to participate in all planned activities unless excused by the nurse. This includes evening time at the hotel and all scheduled engagements. Students will follow the itinerary and plans set for that day.
3. Yelling, whistling, or other attention-getting behavior from the bus, hotel, or on the streets is prohibited. A touring choir must demonstrate maturity when traveling.
4. The changing of rooms by anyone is discouraged. Any changes must be approved by the director/administrator and have the agreement of all affected parties. Rooms may be checked at any time.
5. The bus and hotel rooms must be kept clean. Our bus driver will judge us by how we keep “their” bus. Be helpful and keep your things organized.
6. Be courteous and respectful at all times. We do not want to offend our hosts or anyone else we come in contact with. Patience and considerate manners will be our most prized attributes as we travel.
7. Students should make sure to get their sleep. Being sick or tired on tour can greatly diminish one's enjoyment as well as waste much of the work that has gone into preparing for this trip.



8. Students will be expected to be in their rooms 30 minutes before “lights-out.” Those who fail to follow curfew will be considered non-compliant, and subsequent consequences will apply as stated in the **“Consequences for Non-Compliance”** form. Rest is absolutely critical in making our concerts and tour a success.
9. The tour management must know where everyone is at all times. This will be handled through the family chaperone. When there

is free time, your chaperone will be available to help you plan the independent activities you wish to take part in. Some activities (i.e. shopping, walking, eating, etc.) will be done in teams or other small groups. There should always be at least one boy in each group, if possible.

10. In case of injury or illness, your chaperone and the nurse should be notified immediately.

11. Public displays of personal affection are not appropriate on tour. There will be absolutely no girls in boys' rooms or boys in girls' rooms without an open door or an accompanying staff member. There will be public places available for socialization. Genders may mix in a hotel room if a chaperone or administrator is present.

In conclusion: Common sense and good manners should be the overriding factor in all that we do.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS: If you have any reason to believe that your son or daughter will be unwilling or unable to follow these guidelines we would ask that you reconsider their participation in the tour. The success of this very special experience must be built upon a mutual trust of the director, students, and the families involved.

A tremendous amount of time, money, and effort will go into making this concert tour a success. We are going as singing ambassadors of goodwill that will represent our local community, Minnesota, and The United States of America. We should not underestimate the lasting influence we can have as we visit these foreign countries. Our music is of primary importance now and during the tour. We must work with determination as we prepare and must stay healthy and rested during the tour so that we can give outstanding, meaningful concerts. The concerts will prove to be the foundation upon which we build a life-changing experience.

Secondly, we want our behavior and appearance to be at the highest level possible. We want to show them that American young people are considerate and present themselves with class - which is par for the course when it comes to Shakopee students!

Thirdly, we want everyone to have a great time! Not a mindless "joyride," but a meaningful, enjoyable, educational experience which will be remembered and talked about for the rest of their lives.

CONSEQUENCES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE EUROPEAN TOUR CHOIR CODE OF CONDUCT

I. Alcohol / Tobacco / Illicit Drugs- possession or consumption

A. First offense

1. Unless the offense happens in the last two days of the tour, the student will be sent home from the nearest airport. If there is not a direct flight, the parents will be consulted about permission and the feasibility of sending the student home alone, or if the parents prefer to fly to the airport that is closest to the tour group and bring the student home. If the offense happens within the last two days of the tour, the student will be placed on 'tour suspension' and brought home with the rest of the group.

II. Other conduct demonstrating that the student is not willing to accept the guidelines set for the tour

A. First offense

'On tour restrictions' that are appropriate for the offense will be put into effect. Parents will be notified.

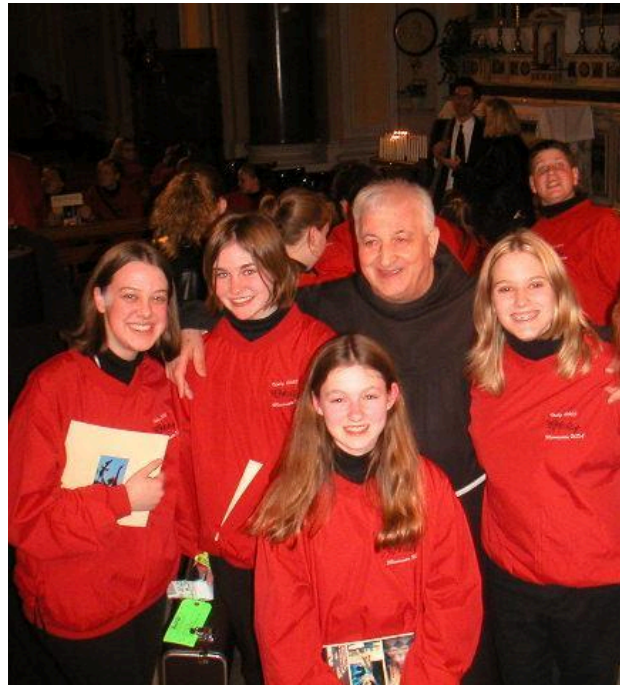
B. Second offense

Parents will be notified and consulted to determine if there will be additional tour restrictions, or if the student should be sent home. If the student is to be sent home, the procedure in Section I will apply and school officials will be notified.

C. Third offense

1. Parents and school officials will be notified.

2. Unless the offense happens in the last two days of the tour, the student will be sent home from the nearest airport. If there is not a direct flight, the parents will be consulted about permission and the feasibility of sending the student home alone, or if the parents prefer to fly to the airport that is closest to the tour group and bring the student home. If the offense happens within the last two days of the tour, the student will be placed on tour suspension and brought home with the rest of the group.



III. If a student violates any of the regulations and guidelines of the Minnesota State High School League or Independent School District 720, he/she will be subject to all High School and MSHSL Rules/Consequences.