

Planning and Preparing for Our Tour

Group travel

Since life in Japan is different from life at home, **the success of the trip will greatly depend on your outlook.** You will be exposed to many new places, people, and ways of life. Appreciate the cultural differences and respect their way of life. **Participate fully with an open mind and a willingness to learn.** Traveling abroad will provide you with a different perspective on the world in which you live. Reacting to new situations and unfamiliar surroundings will offer you an opportunity for emotional growth and maturity. Also, **please** be tolerant of others and **don't forget to say please, thank you, and excuse me.**

Passports

Hopefully everyone has applied for or already received his or her passport for the tour, as it can sometimes take weeks to process. U.S. citizens traveling abroad must bring **a passport that is valid for at least six months after the tour's return and has at least three blank pages.** **Additional information on the passport process, requirements, and fees can be found at the U.S. State Department Website (www.travel.state.gov/passport).**

For expedited service you need only mail in the necessary materials, plus an additional \$60. Write "Expedited" on the envelope and include your date of departure (March 31st). To ensure timely delivery (two weeks door-to-door) two-way overnight service is suggested.

Take a picture of your passport and birth certificate. Then email it to yourself. You will have access to these pictures in case your official passport is lost (This will reduce the amount of time necessary to get a replacement should that become necessary.)

Visas

Occasionally, a traveler will need a visa for the tour. Consult the destination countries' and layover countries' consulates for more information and specific requirements. For contact information, visit **embassy.org**. Because the visa application must be

completed by the applicant, EF depends on the traveler to take care of this step. EF will help prepare the hotel list and itinerary needed for the Visa. For your convenience, you can visit visacentral.com for assistance in obtaining the necessary tourist visas, which may require a fee. I will help get you the needed travel documentation from EF for the visa.

Parental authorization forms

We require travelers under the age of 18 traveling without a parent to submit a **signed parental authorization form**. Please email the completed form to your group leader (Mrs. Stender).

Rooming

Student

The rooming policy states that **students under age 21 will share rooms with two or three other travelers of the same gender**. Hotel styles and room configurations will vary among destinations, so students who share a room in one city may not do so in the next. Students under the age of 21 who wish to have twin rooms will be charged an additional fee (\$30 per night).

Adult

The rooming policy states that **adults (travelers 21 years or older at the time of the tour) will be roomed in twin rooms** (with two single beds) with other adults. If any adults wish to have a single room, a single room supplement will be added to their account (\$40 per night). Parents traveling with a child can request a family room.

Hotels

You will be staying in **hotels** that **have been carefully selected for us by our tour company** and are representative of Japan. It is quite possible that the **hotels may be older** and the **rooms smaller** than you might expect. **Your room**, which you will share with two or three other students on tour, **will have its own bathroom**. Occasionally, a hotel may not have elevators, air conditioning, or televisions. We have selected tourist class hotels (similar to Holiday Inn or Best Western) in the city center.

Meals

Breakfast typically includes cereal, bread or rolls, jam, juice, coffee and tea. Lunch is the chance for a traveler to make culinary discoveries of his or her own. Our tour director can provide recommendations regarding lunch. Included dinners will either be regional dishes or local specialties. **Students will be expected to pay for soft drinks and other beverages at dinner. Table water is always provided free of charge.** Please be aware that food and portion sizes are often different than what one is accustomed to at home. Japan is well known for wonderful local cuisine, and the food should be great. All **Dietary Needs or Restrictions** should have been communicated to Mrs. Stender.

Tour Pace

Travelers should **bring comfortable footwear** (and an extra pair). Many sightseeing tours are on foot, so **you will do a lot of walking**. It is possible to walk 3-6 miles (or more) per day. Please be prepared!

Punctuality

There will be a tremendous amount to see and do while on tour – and a limited time in which to cover it! For that reason, most educational itineraries are packed with activities. **It is crucial that everyone makes punctuality a priority**; for wake up calls, sightseeing tours, meeting times etc. It takes just one person showing up late to throw off a whole day's schedule.

Transportation

Flights

Most overnight flight itineraries have one or two layovers.

Ground

We will travel by bullet train from Osaka to Tokyo. Public transportation or a private bus may be used to travel to and from some local activities or destinations. Our Tour Director will lead us when using public transportation.

Insurance

Our tour has a traveler protection plan. This plan is specifically designed to meet the needs of students and parents traveling with EF. This insurance covers a traveler in the event of on-tour medical expenses, baggage delays, tour cancellation, emergency tour interruption and if a traveler must leave a tour prematurely (not if a traveler is requested to leave early).

Money abroad

Please do not bring traveler's checks since they are difficult to cash. **All students must bring a bankcard that can access money at local ATMs OR students can bring Yen OR students can bring USD to convert to Yen.** ATMs are the most convenient way for cash withdrawals since they accept a wide number of bank and credit cards. Students can use an ATM card to withdraw Yen once in Japan. Please check with your bank to make sure your child's card will work abroad and, if possible, have your child complete a transaction here prior to leaving on the tour. Travelers are advised to keep money in a safe place at all times. **Travel pouches that are worn under one's clothes are recommended.** If you are worried about your child losing the ATM card, you are welcome to send a back up card with the group leader (Mrs. Stender). We will sharpie the student's name to the back up card and return the card at the end of the tour.

Spending money

EF recommends that a traveler plan on **\$20 to \$40 per day for spending money**. This covers lunch, soft drinks, postcards and stamps, snacks and/or souvenirs. We have an example budget on the tour website. Please use this to help determine the appropriate budget for your student.

Keeping In Touch

Phone Cards

You can purchase an international phone card prior to departure or have your child purchase one while on tour. When using a calling card abroad, it is usually

better to use public phones (in the hotel lobby). Some hotels charge a connection fees that can be expensive if you make a call from a phone in the room.

International cell phones

There are a number of companies that provide international cell phone service. **It is your choice whether or not to provide your child with a cell phone while on tour.** Please keep in mind that it could be rather expensive to make an international call. Students will have access to Mrs. Stender's phone should they need to make an international call home.

Internet Access

You can stay connected with your child via the internet. All of our hotels will have internet access for no fee or for a small fee. They will also have WiFi access. Whats App is a great app to use for in Japan communication.

Packing

Travelers are responsible for carrying their own luggage, so **pack light**. We recommend **one suitcase and one small carry-on per person**. There are no luggage fees for international travel. Travelers will be responsible for taking luggage on and off buses and into hotels, and possibly up or down stairs. **Please review the Packing List that is provided on the tour website.** **Please do not lock your suitcase.** It is possible that with tighter airport security, your bag may be opened and searched.

Be careful what you place in your carry-on bag. Recent security guidelines restrict items and limit the amount of liquid products that can be taken aboard the plane in a carry-on bag. **When packing your carry-on please remember the 3-1-1 rule - - - - 3 ounce bottle or less; 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-locked bag; 1 bag per person.** Remember to **clearly label any necessary medicines or keep them in the prescription bottle in which they originally came.**

Clothing

Please bring clothing that allows you to **dress neatly, appropriately, and practically**. Remember, **“a comfortable traveler is a happy traveler”**. Some locations may require covered shoulders.

Gratuities

Based on our previous tour experience, we know that the **success of this tour will largely depend on the knowledge and experience of the TOUR DIRECTORS, MOTOR COACH DRIVERS, and the LOCAL TOUR GUIDES**. It is customary that **each tour participant shows his/her gratitude and appreciation by providing these very important individuals with a service fee**. The tip for our tour director, local guides and bus driver was not included in the price of the tour. We will collect \$10 per person per day, or \$100. This payment, **in the form of venmo or paypal** should be submitted prior to departure. The links are on the tour webpage.

Prepare your child for a safe experience abroad

As at home, being safe abroad is a matter of using common sense. Please discuss safety precautions with your child prior to departure. Here are some tips you might like to cover with your child:

- Don't wear expensive-looking clothes or jewelry.
- Don't walk around alone, students are required to stay with their group.
- Be aware of your purse/wallet and keep it in a safe place, especially in areas with a lot of tourists.
- Keep your money in a safe place at all times. Travel pouches that you wear under your clothes are recommended.
- Keep important phone numbers with you, including the hotels and the EF emergency number.

EF's Rules for the Road

Because we're committed to your child's safety while abroad, EF has established the following "rules of the road" to help the tour run smoothly and safely. Please remind your child that he or she is acting as an ambassador of the United States while abroad.

Every tour participant needs to be punctual and attentive to the group leader, who is responsible for everyone in the group. Travelers must also demonstrate respect toward the tour director, who will handle all of the trip logistics. Please reiterate to your child that failure to adhere to the following could result in being sent home from the tour.

All EF travelers must carefully adhere to the following regulations while on tour:

- All scheduled activities are obligatory. A participant unable to attend due to a physical ailment must inform his or her group leader, who should notify the EF Tour Director.
- Parents may elect out of activities for themselves and their student(s). However, the parent must coordinate their own transportation
- If students wish to visit friends or relatives in a destination country, the group leader must be informed before the tour begins. This information will be conveyed to the EF Tour Director upon arrival.
- Visitors or group members of the opposite sex are not permitted in students' rooms. The group leader and EF tour director may establish a curfew. Students are expected to respect the nightly curfew for their own safety and security. Room checks will be conducted each night.
- Smoking is not allowed on buses, during meals, in hotel rooms or in any other shared, enclosed space.
- Rules for alcohol consumption vary in other countries. Students who are of age for alcohol consumption in other countries must submit parent approval for moderate consumption. Moderation is expected. Students may be sent home (at their expense) should any student drink to excess.
- Shoplifting, possession of illegal drugs and all other illegal activities will not be tolerated and are punishable by immediate dismissal from the tour. All costs to return home are at the participant's expense. Should the local authorities be involved, participants will be subject to the laws of the country they are visiting.
- Participants are required to pay for any phone calls or incidental personal expenses incurred at hotels. These will be payable the evening before departure at each hotel.
- Compensation for damage done to hotel rooms or to buses is the responsibility of the participants.
- Participants not conforming to any of these regulations risk disciplinary action and possible dismissal from the tour, returning home at their own expense. This

decision is reached in consultation with group leaders, the EF Tour Director, and the student's parents.