FAQs for Independence Day 2026 Trip

1. **How did the trip come about?**
   The Arcadia High School Marching Band was invited to participate in two parades to help celebrate America's 250th birthday in Philadelphia and Washington D.C. While it is uncommon for the band to be involved in any official parades during summer months, this is a once-in-a-life opportunity for our students to be celebrate and be a part of the semi-quincentennial Fourth of July celebrations in the birthplace of America. We hope to provide a trip that students and parents can look back with fond memories for years to come.

2. **Who will be attending this trip?**
   All marching band and color guard students from the Class of 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029 and 2030 (current 8th graders) are invited to join.

3. **How will the 8th graders be learning the music and marching?**
   8th graders (Class of 2030) who sign up for the trip will have an earlier start than previous years to rehearse with our current high school members, and have the opportunity to learn high school level music and parade routines. We will start working with 8th graders in January, and have monthly rehearsals coming up to the parade. A more detailed rehearsal schedule will be provided and sent to students in the upcoming future.

4. **What are the start and end dates for this trip?**
   The trip is from Thursday, July 2, 2026 to Monday, July 6, 2026. See a link to the day-by-day itinerary of events.

5. **How often does the Marching Band & Color Guard have these out-of-state trips?**
   We usually have one big trip every four years. A few recent trips included a Thanksgiving parade in Chicago in 2023, Outback Bowl in Tampa Florida in 2019, Pearl Harbor Memorial ceremony in Hawaii in 2015, and the Presidential Inaugural parade in Washington D.C. in 2005. These trips are an opportunity for our band and color guard students to shine at a big stage with a fun trip during their four years at Arcadia High School. These trips usually involve a lot of planning and can be expensive. We feel that attending one major event once every four years is a good balance between managing costs and an opportunity to have a unique experience.

6. **What if my child plans on enrolling in summer school?**

If your child plans on signing up for an in-person summer class with AEF, they will miss up to two days of school (Thursday, 7/2 and Monday, 7/6) depending on the flight and class schedule. (Friday, 7/3 is a school holiday.) Usually, teachers will be able to accommodate make-up work if a student misses class due to school activities. If your child plans on taking summer school outside of AEF, please work with your child's teacher on a workable solution as soon as you can.

7. **What activities will the students be doing outside of the parades?**
   Students will get to explore Philadelphia's historic district, and visit National Air & Space Museum, U.S. Capitol Building, National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial, and Arlington National Cemetery in Washington D.C.

8. **How do you ensure the safety of the students?**
   As a school trip, the whole program follows the safety guidelines set by the school district. Additionally, we ensure all students have access to a trusted adult chaperone they can contact at all times.

9. **Who can sign up to be a chaperone?**
   We welcome all parents or family members to be a chaperone. Please note that AUSD requires a chaperone to complete a background check with fingerprinting and a TB test. Details will be provided to anyone who is interested in becoming a chaperone.

10. **What are the responsibilities of a chaperone?**
    Chaperone responsibilities include ensuring all the assigned students are accounted for on the bus and on the plane, in their hotel room after lights out, and wake up in time for their activities. Chaperones will work as a team to help students feel supported throughout the trip.

11. **What are the hotel arrangements and room assignments?**
    The current package includes 4-star quality hotels such as Hilton, Marriott, Hyatt or a similar lodging in a safe, convenient, and centrally-located area. A group of four students of the same gender will share a room. Any participating seniors who have recently graduated from high school (class of 2026) will be separated from the rest of the students and rooming together.

12. **What is the estimated cost of this trip cost?**
    The current estimated total cost is $2,242 including: $1,492 ground package provided by Music Celebrations International (MCI); $650 for airfare, and $100 transportation cost

for luggage and music instruments/equipment. To lower the cost of this trip, Arcadia Music Club (AMC) will be handling the airfares and equipment transportation.

13. **Do you have any information on the cancellation policy?**
    Details of cancellation schedule and fees are available on MCI's website.

14. **Can we purchase travel insurance?**
    Travel insurance can be purchased through MCI's website.

15. **Will the students have an option to extend their stay with families after the events?**
    Yes, please make arrangements with Mr. Sherrill ksherrill@ausd.net in advance.

16. **What are the drop off and pick up schedules?**
    Depending on how many students sign up for the trip, we will have two to four different flight schedules. The drop off and pick up times will depend on which flight the student is assigned to. They are usually three to four hours before the departure time and two to three hours after the arrival time. All drop offs and pick-ups will be at Arcadia High School or a nearby location.

17. **Do students have the option to check in their luggage? And how would their instruments be handled?**
    Students and chaperones will drop off their luggage and music instruments in advance to be loaded in a truck. The truck will meet our students at the hotels in Philadelphia and Washington D.C. after their arrival. Details will be sent out closer to the trip date.

18. **When are the payments due?**
    A deposit of $50 to AMC is due on August 22, 2025, and an initial deposit of $200 to MCI is due on September 1, 2025. Please refer to MCI's website or the trip meeting agenda for additional payment schedules.

19. **Why are there two different payment schedules?**
    The payment schedule for MCI covers hotel, food, and activities which is paid through their website. The second payment schedule is for AMC, which covers the cost for airfares and equipment/luggage transportation.

20. **How do I make the AMC payments?**

AMC payments are accepted either by check made payable to Arcadia Music Club Inc. or credit card through our online AMC website (please note this option will incur a surcharge fee).

21. Will there be fundraising for this trip?

Yes, we have planned a couple of fundraising events for this trip. Please feel free to contact us if you have any additional fundraising ideas.

22. Will chaperones get a discount for the trip?

There is no discount for chaperones, as the price is same for all participants.

23. How do I sign up to be a Tag-Along for this trip?

Please let us know if you are interested in being a 'Tag-Along', which means you will join us in Philadelphia and DC with your own travel arrangement. Please note that 'Tag-Alongs' will not be allowed to ride on the same bus with the students and chaperones. However, they are welcomed to join the main group for certain events as allowed by MCI and the event itself.

24. Will you be sharing photos and videos for this trip?

We'll be sharing updates, photos, and videos throughout the trip on different platforms (Instagram, Facebook, WeChat group, WhatsApp group, and our AMC photo site).

25. Who can I contact if I have more questions about this trip?

You may contact our music directors: Mr. Sherrill ksherrill@ausd.net or Mr. Plunkett tplunkett@ausd.net or our parent volunteers: Tiffany Kim and Arlaine Chandra (vp.band@arcadiamusic.org)