

Tour FAQs

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1. How are tour locations and dates selected?

PEBCC recently moved to a three year rolling tour projection to better allow families to plan. PEBCC tours are different than many other choir tours because we base our tours on personal relationships with other choirs and festivals. Planning our own itineraries and using our tour company partners in limited ways for their travel arrangement connections and expertise provides more immersive musical and cultural experiences with the greatest efficiency of staffing capacity. Over the years, the choir has made many wonderful friends across the country and around the world. We center our tours around visiting these friends and creating new bonds.

Since we tailor the itineraries to those personal relationships, there is a lot of leg work and person-to-person communication involved before confirming the tour location and dates. Also, since our goal is to have meaningful exchanges with choral partners, we have to select dates that will work for the schedules of our hosts. We do our best to confirm as early as possible, and we will let our families know what dates to reserve as soon as we can. If we are unable to pinpoint the exact dates before the start of the season, we will ask families to hold a range of dates. We respect that summer family time is precious, and will always do our best to give you date information early and accurately.

2. How are tour chaperones selected?

PEBCC selects tour chaperones through a process that begins with an application we send out in the fall of the choir season to past tour chaperones and other choir alumni and

members of the choir community. We select tour chaperones based on the skills and experience needed to build the chaperone team, and also bring PEBCC professional staff in varying roles. In selecting chaperones, we consider languages spoken, medical experience and certification, past positions held at the choir (tour chaperone, camp counselor, etc), familiarity with the region we are traveling to, vocal training, energy level, and interpersonal qualities that we feel make good tour chaperones. We then interview applicants to get to know them personally and walk them through hypothetical situations before offering them the position.

Once selected, all tour chaperones undergo livescan fingerprinting, must present Covid Vaccinations and negative TB testing (within 2 years of trip) before they are approved, and receive training about child safety, tour procedures, and the day-to-day plans for their specific tour. All staff and volunteer chaperones must also adhere to all PEBCC Employee, Board, and Youth Protection Policies and procedures at all times.

3. How are accommodations and food selected?

We prefer homestay accommodations wherever possible on all tours, because we have found that homestays are the most significant part of the cultural exchange that make our tours unique and rewarding. The groups we choose to homestay our singers are trusted international partners or have been referred to us by trusted members of the international choral community. If a choir is unable to house every singer in the group, we will assign as many of our singers to hosts, and lodge the rest of the singers in a hotel with the chaperones. If we have to split the group between homestays and hotels, we will make those assignments randomly.

Over the years we have found that homestay hosts treat our singers like members of their own family, and stories of generosity abound each day of the tour from our singers. Many singers keep in touch with their homestay families for years, and some have traveled on their own later in life to visit these friends, or hosted them when they visit the Bay Area. The connections made through homestays are a highlight of our tours and many singers look forward to homestays all year. Also, we feel very fortunate that many of our PEBCC families return the favor to the international choral community by hosting singers during our triennial Golden Gate Festival. The families that host our singers in other places are just like our families here - eager to engage in cultural exchange, and excited to welcome singers into their family for a few days!

If your child is in a homestay, the host family will receive all pertinent medical information you have communicated to us through the medical and registration forms. Each singer's tour group leader will check in with the singers in the morning to make sure that the homestay accommodations are appropriate. Singers will also be provided with phone numbers to contact chaperones using their host's phones if there are any problems. In the very unlikely event that a singer feels unsafe in their homestay, they can call the chaperones and tell them that they "forgot their red shoes". If a chaperone receives a "red shoe" communication from any singer, they will immediately go to the homestay and assess the situation, and, if warranted, remove the singer from their accommodation. Please rest assured, however, that in Ensemble and Concert Choir's decades-long history of touring, no singer has ever needed to be removed from a homestay for a safety reason.

If homestay accommodations are not available, we will ask our choral partners to recommend good hotels in the area, or consult guidebooks for suitable accommodations. We will do the same when selecting food options. When we select restaurants, we will communicate all dietary restrictions and food allergies to the kitchen ahead of time, and check in again when we arrive to make sure the food is safe for those with food allergies.

4. How are Tour Groups and roommates assigned?

We expect that all singers should be able to room with any other singer of the appropriate gender on tour, and we also expect singers to have a good attitude on tour regardless of who their roommate is or who is in their tour group. However, we also understand that who your singer rooms with on tour will have an impact on their tour experience. With that in mind, we spend many hours assigning roommates and tour groups and take singer preference into account as much as possible.

During a rehearsal early in the spring semester, we will distribute rooming sheets to all the singers where they will be able to give us their preferences for roommates and tour group-mates for tour. We do not permit singers to put down people they would not like to room with, because we do not feel that fosters the team dynamic essential to a successful tour. Once we have received the singers' preferences we put all of that information together and create the tour groups and roommate assignments. We try to make sure that every singer is with at least one person they indicate on their preference sheet in every group assignment. However, this becomes a very complicated matrix, and it is not always possible to make the perfect group assignments for every singer. If we are unable to put a singer with someone from their preferences in one group, we will make sure they are with them in another group.

Tour group assignments will be announced in a tour letter sometime during the month before departure, but rooming assignments will not be announced until we arrive at the hotel or homestay pick up location. All rooming and tour group assignments are final.

5. What on tour is covered by tour fees?

All food, transportation (including airfare), lodging and activities are covered by your tour fees. If you are making a travel deviation (anything that means we have to change your singer's air travel reservation), you will be responsible for the difference between what we would have paid for your singer's ticket and what we have to pay for the one-way flight and any other fees incurred. You are also responsible for providing the uniform items listed on the tour packing list. Everything else is covered unless otherwise clearly stated.

All expenses for the tour are paid for, so spending money is purely discretionary for personal purchases. **PEBCC singers may choose to travel with cash and/or pre-paid debit card for personal purchases.**

Our ACFEA Partners recommend the following: The best approach to money abroad is to have multiple forms of payment available at all times, such as plastic (credit, debit and ATM cards) and some cash. Acceptable forms of payment may vary by destination, or even by purchase. A few points to bear in mind:

- Inform your bank and credit card companies that you will be on a trip by contacting their customer service via phone, website, or app.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash, but consider taking some currency from the first country on your tour. Most banks can order foreign currency for account holders with some lead time.
- Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted; American Express and Discover less so.
- Some cards have a higher foreign transaction fee than others. If you have a choice of cards, check their fees before your trip.
- Credit and debit card verification systems around the world vary widely. Chip and pin, tap to pay, and signature required are all possible within one country.

PEBCC recommends a prepaid visa card, child's debit card, or greenlight card for travel. Please check to make sure the card can be used internationally. **Any cash singers bring MUST ALREADY be exchanged to the international currency of our destination - Chaperones will NOT be able to exchange currency on your singer's behalf.** Chaperones will only carry the equivalent of \$10/day for singers in cash and will not be replaced in case of loss or theft.

If you wish to have your child's chaperone hold all or part of their spending money for safekeeping, please provide this to the choir office. We ask families to sign off on amounts provided, and include cash/cards in a sealed envelope with their child's name written on it and their signature across the sealed flap.

6. Why are technological devices not allowed on PEBCC tours?

PEBCC creates tours that highlight cultural exchange and high-quality music making. Experience has shown that singers build the strongest bonds of friendship both with each other and with the new people they will meet because, without the competition for attention from technology, they are able to fully immerse themselves in their tour experiences. The full immersion atmosphere of the tour also leads to exceptional musical achievements like competition awards and once-in-a-lifetime performances. Technology including phones, tablets, and any other devices that connect to the Internet detract from the tour experience, so we do not allow them. We have also been following recent research on the effects of screen time on developing minds, and feel that choir tours are a unique opportunity for singers to take a break from screens to take time to engage fully with their peers, the music, and the world around them.

If your singer's doctor feels it is medically necessary for your singer to bring their phone on tour, we will need a signed note from the doctor clearly explaining the medical function your singer's phone will play on tour. Once we have received your doctor's note, we will have your singer sign an agreement outlining how they may use their phone on tour. If a singer violates the terms of the agreement, they risk losing other tour privileges.

One question we often hear from singers on tour about the no technology policy is what they should say if their homestay host offers to let them use their computer or phone to contact their families. We are happy for singers to reach out to their parents if their host offers; however, we also want to make sure that singers do not withdraw from their host families and spend all of their homestay time on a screen or on the phone. Homestay families are very excited to spend time with our singers, and we want our singers to be the best ambassadors they can be for the choir and for their region. In that spirit, we ask that if parents receive a call from their singer from a homestay, they keep the conversation brief so your singer can engage in cultural exchange.

7. How can you communicate with chaperones during the tour?

The best way to reach chaperones on tour, especially on international tours, is via email to the tour manager. You will be provided with a contact email for the tour manager in the Tour Letters. The tour manager will check their email at least once a day, most likely in the evening after activities are done. During the day, the tour manager's first priority is always the safety and well being of the singers, followed by the successful running of tour logistics. If it is a particularly busy day, it may not be feasible for the tour manager to check their email until all the singers are asleep in the evening. We kindly ask for your patience.

If you need to contact the tour manager because of an immediate emergency, you will be provided with a phone number to contact them in the Tour Letters. Please text the tour manager before attempting a call, so that the tour manager can have a moment to find someone to cover their immediate responsibilities with respect to singer safety before turning their attention fully to your emergency.

8. How will chaperones communicate with you during the tour?

Each day, the chaperones will post a tour blog entry. The tour blog will be located in the parent portal of our website <https://www.piedmontchoirs.org/parent-portal-cover> and will include a summary of what the group did during the day accompanied by a link to pictures from the day. The chaperones will endeavor to post as many pictures as they can, but will be limited by the quality of the wifi where they are staying. If the wifi quality is very low, they will post only text, with no pictures and try to post pictures when they have better wifi access. If wifi access is non-existent, the chaperones will post the tour blog as soon as they can, and we ask that you be patient. We understand that some parents may be very nervous and that a missed tour blog can cause anxiety. However, please rest assured that if there were a true emergency, chaperones would find a way to contact all parents to let them know the nature of the emergency and the plan to alleviate the situation.

If the tour staff needs to reach you to relay a behavioral or medical issue concerning your singer, they will either reach out via email or by phone depending on the severity of the situation.

9. What insurance does PEBCC carry to cover the tour?

PEBCC carries two insurance plans that cover all participants for all activities on our tours. The first is a Nonprofits Insurance Alliance of California plan that covers medical expenses on all domestic travel. The second is a Chubb plan that covers international travel including medical coverage, security services, and emergency assistance. If you have specific coverage questions, please email our Executive Director, Jill Dineen at jdineen@piedmontchoirs.org.

10. Reminder of Tour-Specific Rules

In order to ensure the safety of singers on tour, we have a set of rules that we require singers to follow. You and your singer agreed to these rules when you filled out the choir year registration form. Please reacquaint yourself and your singer with these rules (listed below):

1. Each singer will be responsible to their group leader at all times. Singers will not be allowed to depart from the group without the express permission of the leaders.
2. Each singer will be assigned to an adult leader who will be responsible for their well-being, including daily health checks and monitoring of nutritional needs.
3. Phone calls to and from home are allowed only for emergency situations.
4. Singers may not have candy, gum, or caffeinated drinks.
5. No video games, cell phones, computers, tablets, or other media players are to be brought to camp or on tour. Smartwatches are also not allowed, unless medically necessary to track health data.
6. All medications will be administered under the direction of the staff/chaperones. Please be sure to update the office ASAP on any health conditions or ways we can best provide care to your child.
7. Being overly affectionate at choir creates an environment that is not conducive to concentration and learning. Therefore singers should refrain from inappropriate, intimate behaviors at rehearsal or at choir related events & activities. Singers are expected to

show good taste and conduct themselves respectfully at all times.

8. For additional Tour Behavior Standards, please [CLICK HERE](#) to refer to the Tour Behavior Standards for PEBCC Singers.