



Education Support

The Big Trip

By Linda Fountain, Owner of ATS Tours and Travel, the drill team travel specialists

Everyone is anxious to take a big trip, or any trip these days. Many directors are elated to motivate their team members and generate teamwork through planning and traveling to an exciting destination. But, many times there are stumbling blocks waiting in the wings when you are seeking to gain administrative approval for your big trip.

First, plan at least a year in advance to narrow down your choices of destinations to two or three that you think will provide the most fun for your team, be feasible to raise the funds and make sure that the destination will provide the educational stimulus that will interest your administrators. Once you have narrowed your choices, it is time to get to work and follow through with important research so that your presentation will be complete and approval will be an easy goal.

Make sure that you are familiar with district policies on travel (ex., traveling out of state, out of the country, etc.) and avoid putting in a lot of work on a trip that may not meet district specifications. Have at least one of your Booster Club board members present to answer any questions regarding parental involvement and support.

Choose a parent to assist you with researching and compiling the details. Make sure that you are very specific on what information this person is to obtain. Make it clear that they are not to speak on behalf of you regarding any decisions that may need to be made. They should be ready to give a report on their findings at regular meetings or deadlines.

Here are some other helpful hints to help you plan your trip:

- Choose a travel agent that deals mostly or solely with student groups. You will find that the agencies who are unfamiliar with students will not choose the right hotels that are "student friendly" nor the activities that will interest them. They may also be unfamiliar with your fund-raising and payment schedule and may not see the need to be close to shopping facilities or McDonalds!
- Check out the credibility of any company that you are working with whether it is the travel agency or the contest company presenting the event. Talk to other directors that have traveled to these destinations and see what they recommend.

- Type out your payment schedule with deadline dates that will fall at least a week ahead of the dates that the travel agent issues. This will give your team members a week of 'grace time' to meet their payment deadline before having to send payments to the travel agency.
- If this is your first big trip, make sure to choose a package that will not create a fund-raising strain to where the majority of your team will not be able to afford to go. Also, make sure that when you are comparing bids that you are comparing 'apples to apples.' There may be hidden charges once you arrive on your trip that are not evident in the bid. Beware of bid prices that sound 'too good to be true.' Chances are that it is too good to be true! You will want to also know how many 'comp' packages for chaperones will be included in their bid price and if there will be an on site contact person when you arrive.
- Have a set itinerary that is pretty full and complete. Remember that you do not have to have expensive activities but you do need to have your team occupied most of the time so that they are not distracted. You should also include educational values for each trip as this will be important for administrative approval.
- Have a fund-raising strategy in place. . . one that will be realistic and that will really work. You will need to meet with your Booster Club executive board members or fund-raising committee to be assured that they are ready to meet the needs of raising the funds for your trip. They will also need to have a bookkeeping method in place that will log funds raised by each individual on the team.
- When it comes time to make your final presentation to your administration, make sure that your material is organized and complete. Make a list of questions that you think they might ask and be ready with answers. If you are unsure of what might be asked, seek advice from a veteran director who has traveled several times.
- Lastly, don't burn any bridges. Leave an open door and learn from any mistakes that may be made in your very first presentation. Do your homework and have your details in place and your trip will be sure to be a success both for you and your team.
Bon voyage!

Sample Itinerary

Trip to Santa Fe, New Mexico- Santa Fe Dance/Ski Festival

Day 1

- Morning arrival at Albuquerque Airport
- Load buses for immediate departure for hiking and picnic lunch in the mountains. A guide will give us the history of the area as we visit ancient cliff dwellings and pueblos.
- Afternoon check in at deluxe hotel or condos.
- Evening dinner at a local Native American restaurant.

Day 2

- Breakfast in hotel
- Competition Day-depart for competition site



- Evening celebration pizza party!

Day 3

- After breakfast in the hotel depart for skiing on the mountain, or opt for shopping in town on the plaza.
- Ghost Tour and dinner in an enchanted house in the mountains.

Day 4

- After breakfast, load buses and check out of the hotel.
- Take the tram up to the top of Sandia Peak for lunch prior to departing for home, or visit the University of New Mexico for senior college visit.
- Departure for home from Albuquerque airport.

Package should include:

- 3 nights hotel accommodations in deluxe hotel
- All land and air transportation
- All excursions as per itinerary
- All meals as per itinerary
- All tips for meals and guides
- One day ski rental, lift ticket and half day ski lesson
- One comp per 40 persons paying
- On site travel coordinator

