



October 2011

Dear Parent:

Your son or daughter has been invited to participate in a field trip that is being planned and operated by VISIT CANADA, Ltd.

VISIT CANADA has organized similar field trips for more than 75,000 students from the United States, Canada and various other countries around the world, and would like to take this opportunity to answer a few often-asked questions you might be wondering about.

Who or what is VISIT CANADA? VISIT CANADA is a New England-based operator of carefully crafted, closely supervised, and highly educational tours.

VISIT CANADA employs only mature, professional guides, and offers only meticulously planned and genuinely educational activities. Moreover, our students (your children) are always housed in clean and safe hotels, most of which have been personally inspected and re-inspected by senior, home-office staff.

Our address is 134 Pleasant Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801. We'll be happy to discuss any questions you may have, at any time, Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Feel free to call us at 800/456-5552.

Why should my child go on a VISIT CANADA field trip? For many American students, an educational field trip to Montréal, Québec City, Ottawa, or Toronto can be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit a foreign country and to meet and interact with young people from a distinctly different culture. This can be a tremendous learning experience. Even well-traveled students remember their school trips to Canada for the rest of their lives.

Please visit our web site for a short video on this subject, viewable at the following web address: <http://www.visitcanada.com/parents/welcome>

In short, we think your child will learn (and remember) more in three or four days on a VISIT CANADA field trip than in any other three or four or five days of the school year. Seeing is believing.

Will the students be supervised? Supervision of the students is the responsibility of the chaperones. Generally, VISIT CANADA tour groups take one adult chaperone from your child's school or hometown for every tenth student. Once at their destination, an experienced tour guide will escort the group until its departure for home.

What kinds of clothing should we pack? The two most common mistakes we see students making are not bringing shoes appropriate for walking, or weather, and not bringing rain gear (clothing or umbrellas). Most trips do require some walking, so foul-weather gear and comfortable footwear are essential precautions.

Please remember that "Spring" means "Rain" in much of North America and that "April Showers" have been known to spill into May. Moreover, most trips involve some walking, occasionally in less than perfect weather, so your child should take the suggestion to bring an umbrella or a raincoat as well as weather-resistant shoes seriously.

If the trip is taking place in the winter or very early in the spring, don't let your child be fooled by unseasonably warm weather at home if it should happen to occur during the last few days prior to the group's departure. Indeed, he or she should pack a warm sweater and/or a warm coat or jacket, depending on the season. In short, it is far better to be safe than sorry.

Important Changes in Travel Documentation Requirements (for American groups). All persons who cross a national frontier must be prepared to document their citizenship and identity, and for generations, U.S. and Canadian citizens have been allowed to use birth certificates and drivers licenses for this purpose.

However, **longstanding regulations governing travel documentation for U.S. citizens traveling to Canada are changing.** All persons arriving in Canada by air now need passports to board their airplanes. Students on school field trips, age 18 and under, arriving by land (bus or train) will only need an original or certified copy of a birth certificate. As of June 2009, adults are required to have a passport or what is being called a passport card (which is a wallet-sized, less expensive document that is available at your local passport office).

Please visit our web site at the following web address for details:
<http://www.visitcanada.com/crossing-the-border>

Noncitizens who are permanent residents of the United States should have an *original* U.S. Alien Registration Card (a.k.a. Green Card). Holders of "green cards" (which are no longer green) who are 14 years old or older need to have fingerprints on the green card. Green cards should have a photo.

Foreign students attending U.S. educational institutions must have a valid passport, with an I-20 student visa (issued by U.S. Immigration) and a valid visitor's visa (issued if required by Immigration Canada). To get a complete up to date list of countries from which the citizens need visas to enter Canada, click on the following link:
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp>

Other non-U.S. citizens should ascertain the requirements that apply in their own particular cases.

All non-U.S. citizens should check with an office of U.S. Immigration and Naturalization, before leaving the United States, to make sure they have all the necessary papers to return.

Finally, your child's teacher must now bring a copy of this Permission Slip and Medical Release form with a parent's signature granting permission for any minor child to cross the border into Canada.

All participants in a VISIT CANADA field trip who will be traveling by air should begin the process of obtaining passports early. Long delays in processing passport applications may recur and *refunds cannot be granted to participants in our trips who fail to obtain necessary travel documentation in a timely manner.*

Prices and Refunds. All prices are subject to fuel surcharges imposed by airlines or motorcoach operators, though we do not anticipate that these charges will be frequent or significant.

Prices always depend upon the number of students participating, and thus, all deposits and payments to VISIT CANADA are nonrefundable and nontransferable.

However, **a comprehensive Travel Protection Plan is included in the price of the trip** and this plan includes benefits to cover forfeited deposits and payments when participation in a trip must be canceled due to covered reasons such as sickness, injury, etc. Complete details are available online (see links below).

A Travel Insurance Certificate providing a complete description of the plan will also be available from your child's teacher. For immediate information, please type the following addresses into your web browser for the online versions:

<http://www.tripmate.com/wpF434C/tic.htm> (HTML version), and
<http://www.tripmate.com/wpF434C/F434C-WEB-09-10.pdf> (printer friendly)

Failure by a student to meet academic or disciplinary standards is never grounds for a refund, at any time, even with the Travel Protection Plan in place.

Finally, please note that one single group, in more than 20 years that VISIT CANADA has been operating these trips, decided to extend its stay in Canada by a day due to weather, but this is always a theoretical possibility for any group. In the unlikely event that your son or daughter will be extending his or her stay for this reason, we reserve the right to charge him or her (or more likely you) for the cost of meals and accommodations. The decision to depart, or not to, always rests primarily with school chaperones, and secondarily with the bus driver, and *both* the chaperones and the driver would have to deem it safe to travel before a trip home would commence in inclement weather.

Insurance. VISIT CANADA currently carries \$2,000,000 in Professional Liability and Errors and Omissions insurance underwritten by Zurich, a part of Steadfast Insurance Company. The comprehensive Travel Protection Plan, referenced above (and included in the price of the trip) also provides coverage for medical expenses resulting from sickness or injury while on the trip. Again, group leaders will be provided with a Travel Insurance Certificate for each trip participant.

If your son or daughter will be participating in a band or orchestra performance tour and will be taking an expensive musical instrument along on the trip, we recommend that you check with your insurance agent to make sure that the instrument is insured against loss or damage in your homeowner's insurance policy, as is typically the case. This is not part of the foregoing coverage and VISIT CANADA cannot insure such losses.

Hotel Etiquette. One of the hallmarks of a VISIT CANADA field trip is the use of *only* clean and safe, first-class or deluxe hotels. **This is extremely important to us.** Our groups are welcome in these properties *only because, and only as long as, the students on our trips are consistently well-behaved.*

Please note that many such hotels now offer their guests a 100% satisfaction guarantee and will give them refunds if they are not satisfied for any reason. Thus, a hotel guest whose sleep is disturbed needs only to complain about noise in the hallways or an adjacent room to collect full refund.

One occasionally-cited reason for refund requests is noise made by members of student tour groups, and as a condition of granting space to large groups of students, tour operators such as VISIT CANADA must agree to indemnify the hotel for any refunds made because of unreasonably noisy or otherwise inappropriate behavior on the part of the group members.

Thus, **we ask for your help in maintaining our good hotel relations, by discussing with your child the importance of observing the four simple rules of hotel etiquette, and by asking him or her to enter into an agreement, with you, and with us, to observe them.** The four simple rules of hotel etiquette are as followings:

- No running;
- No shouting;
- No slamming doors; and,
- No bare feet or pajamas in the hotel's public areas.

We find that most students are quite willing to comply with any reasonable rules, if they are acquainted with, and understand the need for them. Through years of experience we have found that a reminder from parents shortly before departure day markedly improves the experience for everyone.

Although VISIT CANADA has been asked to reimburse a hotel only rarely, we must reserve the right to charge your son or daughter for any *clearly inappropriate behavior or room damage* that results in a claim. We hope you will understand if there is such a charge, that it will be assessed only in the interest of preserving the long-term quality of our programs for future generations.

Safety. We pride ourselves on the attention we devote to trying to keep the students on our trips at least as safe (or more so) than they would be if they stayed at home.

The organizer of your trip will have a copy of our *Field Trip Safety Manual*, and we ask that one of the school's adult chaperones be assigned the responsibility of monitoring students' compliance with the safety rules for their particular trip.

We would appreciate it if you would also discuss the basic safety rules enumerated below (that apply to *all* trips) with your son or daughter, and ask him or her to agree to observe them throughout the duration of his or her field trip. Some of this may sound like kid stuff, especially to high school aged students, but we want them to take it very seriously.

- *No Running* (no kidding) indoors or out. We think it's far less likely that your son or daughter walk into harm's way than run into it;
- Cross the street only in a *crosswalk*;
- Cross the street only with the *pedestrian signal*; and,
- The hotel swimming pool is off limits (unless otherwise stated in your itinerary).

Use of Photographs of Students. We occasionally take photographs of students involved in various activities on the trips, and we have used the images of perhaps 25 students of the more than 75,000 that have participated in our trips over the years in our promotional literature and/or web site. Your child's participation in our trips constitutes an acknowledgement that his or her image may also be used in this way.

An important word about your child's teachers. Your child's teachers have selected this VISIT CANADA field trip on the basis of its quality and content, and not on the basis of any gratuities paid back to them for selecting our company to plan and operate it. We empathize with the teachers who lead our trips. We know that some parents think of the field trips as free vacations for the teachers who organize them. This is grossly unfair.

Taking your child on an educational field trip is a big responsibility. Teachers typically devote days and weeks to pre-trip planning and record-keeping, and long, long hours supervising the students while on the trip. In short, the trips are *no vacation*, and they're *hardly free*!

The Fine Print. VISIT CANADA acts only as an agent for hotels, airlines, bus contractors and ground operators providing accommodations or other services and, as such, is responsible only for the acts or omissions of its own employees.

VISIT CANADA cannot be responsible for events beyond its control, such as (without limitation) acts of nature, war, terrorism, strikes or government restriction; nor is VISIT CANADA liable for personal injury, death, or loss or damage to property, or delay caused by persons not controlled by VISIT CANADA, such as (without limitation) airlines, bus companies, railways, ground operators including step-on guide services, and hotels.

In the event of a bankruptcy of an airline, bus charter operator, hotel or other vendor resulting in the need to make alternate travel or accommodation or dining arrangements at higher fares or rates, VISIT CANADA reserves the right to pass these additional costs on to tour participants. In the event that the *group* elects not to proceed with its tour at the adjusted prices, VISIT CANADA will refund all payments less any nonrefundable deposits already paid and a \$100 per person service charge.

In the event that a group is prevented from returning from its destination because of an act of nature including snowstorms, hurricanes or other weather phenomena, trip participants will be responsible for the cost of additional bus charter or hotel expenses and/or meals and guide and security services if requested.

No responsibility is incurred by VISIT CANADA for loss or theft of airline tickets or other travel documents, or for loss, theft or damage to luggage or any other belongings or property of participants, or for consequential damages such as (without limitation) lost wages.

Though we have never needed to do so, and never expect to, VISIT CANADA reserves the right to cancel any participant at any time for activity which appears to involve drugs or alcohol, or if participants have engaged in any illegal, destructive or disruptive conduct.

In the event your child accepts the invitation to participate in a VISIT CANADA tour, please complete and sign the attached Medical Release and Acknowledgment Form and send it in along with the initial deposit.

For additional information about VISIT CANADA, we invite you to visit the parent section of our web site, www.visitcanada.com/parents/welcome. If you have any specific questions about any of the foregoing information, or any other aspect of your child's trip, and would like to discuss them with us, please feel free to call any Monday through Friday at 800/456-5552, between 9:00am and 5:00pm Eastern time.

We always enjoy talking with the parents of the students on our trips.



J. Michael Donovan
President



MEDICAL RELEASE & ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

Please detach and submit this form with initial deposit.

SECTION I

The responsibility for your child's medical treatment, in the event of an illness or injury, lies with his or her chaperones, and not with VISIT CANADA or its guides or escorts. For this reason, you should directly inform your child's chaperones of any special medical issues pertaining to him or her. This is necessary and appropriate because of the chaperones' more intimate familiarity with your child and their first-hand knowledge of your wishes.

VISIT CANADA, will do its best to pass on to our guides any significant information provided below about **pre-existing medical conditions (including allergies)** that might be useful in assisting the school's chaperones if medical care becomes necessary. You may also indicate if your son or daughter has a serious dietary restriction, or if he or she is a strict vegetarian. In most cases, special meals (including vegetarian meals) can be ordered for your child, if prior notice is given, but it may be impossible to change the menu at the restaurant once the group arrives for dinner.

Medical Condition(s) _____

Serious Dietary Restriction(s) and/or Food Allergies _____

(Attach a statement with additional details if necessary)

Your Daytime & Evening Phone Numbers _____

SECTION II

I have read and understand the "Dear Parent" letter, and the travel documentation requirements, and I agree to all terms and conditions herein, and hereby release VISIT CANADA and my child's teacher and/or group organizer and/or school system from liability for any loss or damage arising from events beyond their control (including but not limited to those cited in the "Dear Parent" letter). Additionally, VISIT CANADA has my permission to use my child's photograph in its promotional literature, and I hereby grant permission to the group organizer or its chaperones to authorize a dentist, physician or hospital to perform any medical, surgical or dental work necessary to ensure the health of my child while on this tour.

Finally, I have discussed the rules of safety and hotel etiquette with our son or daughter, and by affixing our signatures below, we acknowledge the importance of these rules, and our child hereby agrees to observe them.

Student's Name _____ Age/Sex _____

School _____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Print Parent/Guardian's Name _____

Email Address _____ Parent Home Phone _____



If paying your **Final Payment** by credit card, detach this portion, complete and submit it to your child's teacher by the final payment deadline. Your final payment is nonrefundable.

Participant's Name: _____

School: _____

Method of Payment (check one)

_____ MasterCard _____ Visa _____ American Express

Account Number:

Expiration Date

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Cardholder Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Billing Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

I authorize the charge of \$ _____ to my credit card account.

Signature _____

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If paying your **Initial Payment** by credit card, detach this portion, complete and submit it to your child's teacher by the payment deadline. Your initial payment is nonrefundable.

Participant's Name: _____

School: _____

Method of Payment (check one)

_____ MasterCard _____ Visa _____ American Express

Account Number:

Expiration Date

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Cardholder Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Billing Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

I authorize the charge of \$ _____ to my credit card account.

Signature _____