

## How to book a tour with History Hitch

Although it seems like a pretty basic question, enquiring about how to actually book a tour is a really good move. Knowing the specific steps simplifies all tasks. In a nutshell, here are the steps required to book your trip with History Hitch Tours:

Did you know that most schools start planning their trip a minimum of 9-months before the proposed departure date? This gives parents time to save so everyone can participate without hardship.

1. **Write or call in and ask us for more information.** If you see a marketing flyer that catches your eye or a destination and program that you are interested in, simply let us know. We can then send you more information and also have someone personally contact you to see how we may assist you. We can help by answering questions you may have, giving you guidance on destinations, processes, the works. If you don't want to speak to someone, no problem. We can email you everything you need for consideration.

**A note on pricing:** Many times, we hear feedback from our teachers that we don't put pricing in our marketing materials so you have no idea whether you may want to consider a potential tour. Yes, this is correct. Pricing usually varies and is dependent upon dates of travel, where you would like to depart from, the number of pupils and staff, mode of transport (flight or motorcoach), etc. You tell us what you want, and we will happily give you a quote based on your needs and your preferences.

2. **Ask us for a quote.** Are you ready to move forward? If so, your next step is to ask us for a personal quote. Your quote will be just for your school, on the dates you need and to your specifications. To request a quote, you will need to supply the following information:
  - a. The number of students and paying adults you wish to bring
  - b. The number of complimentary teachers/staff you wish to include on your quote
  - c. The rooming required for your hotel stay (i.e. will students sleep quad or double occupancy? Do staff need independent rooms or can they share a single room with individual beds?)
  - d. The dates of your proposed travel
  - e. Flight or coach?
  - f. If you have a working budget, that's good to know too!

We know that numbers will change and that's okay. The initial quote is just to give you a really good idea on what costs to expect for planning purposes.

The required rooming is something you will want to consider. Most of our pupils sleep four to a room sharing 2 double/queen beds. This helps keep the costs down because the lodging is an expensive part of your tour. For staff, our general quotes include 2 staff per room with each staff member having their own bed. You will want to take into consideration families or other staff that you may wish to bring as well. Generally, all tours are dependent upon the specific rooms allocated in your quote so if your rooming should change (i.e. you end up with a different male/female break-out and need an additional room), your tour will need to be re-costed to accommodate your revised rooming needs.

Another thing to consider is how many complimentary staff places you desire. We generally quote with one free staff place for every ten pupils, however this may be changed to whatever works best for your school. Please do understand though, all free places are incorporated into student costs so the higher the number of complimentary staff members, the higher the costs for the students. You may also elect to have additional **paying** staff that come along but are not incorporated into the cost of the students. Either way, the choice is yours.

The next thing you should consider is how you will get to your destination. If traveling to a domestic destination, would you like your quote to include airfare or motorcoach transportation? Just let us know what your preferences are.

The final thing to consider are your dates of travel. If you plan on flying to your destination, general airfares can change greatly dependent upon the time of year and also on the demand level for the route. This is why we require specific dates and possible departure airports before we are able to confirm details. Please understand, airlines will not give a group quote without specific dates.

A 'Quote' is valid for 30-days while you consider your options.

- 3. Get the approvals needed to run your trip.** Once you have finalized your quote, the next step is to gain approvals from anyone necessary. This may include your Principal, School Board, Senior Management Team, or Department Head. If you need help, simply tell us what you need, and we will always try to supply you with anything necessary to gain approvals. We have years of experience working with schools.
- 4. Ask us for an Option / Booking Registration.** A 'Booking Registration' is a non-binding agreement that indicates you are moving forward with your trip and that we will hold space and quoted rates for you while you work with your parents to get their students registered and deposits paid. When this happens, we will set up a registration page with all trip details. You will be provided with a link which you can share with your pupils/parents so they may finalize their registration, sign required waivers and pay their deposits. Please note that all quotes are based on a minimum number of paying students so this number must be reached for the pricing to be in effect. Every person going on the trip, both students and staff, must be fully registered for the trip. As the Trip Leader, you will be provided with administrative rights to monitor the registration page, allowing you to see everyone who has booked, see all deposits and any outstanding finances required, view all trip paperwork required and other elements. If you do not get the student interest you had hoped, the option may be cancelled however parents may lose up to \$12 per registration in administrative costs charged by the collection service, plus any fees paid for use of credit card payments. The Booking Registration is typically open for 21-days.

Deposits and payments are submitted by individual parents, direct to our online portal. Checks may also be accepted via ACH in the online portal. Another important thing to understand is that all deposits are



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non-refundable because as soon as we have received these from you, we in turn pay them out to our various suppliers to hold your places. Loss of deposits is one of the reasons why we mandate **travel insurance** which will generally cover independent cancellations for appropriate causes.

This will also be the time period to confirm your travel protection/insurance. All traveling parties are required to carry travel protection and most insurance companies require you to purchase it within a specific time frame of registering for your trip and paying your initial deposits. To assist and as a convenience, we have partnered with a well-known and widely-used travel insurance company called Trip Mate which you are happy to use if you would like. The choice is completely yours on who you would like to use, we just mandate that a travel protection plan is in place prior to the time of travel. Unfortunately though, Trip Mate is only available to groups departing from the USA. If you are departing from outside the USA, please let us know if you need a recommendation. A copy of your policy must be submitted prior to travel.

If you desire to utilize Trip Mate insurance, during our student/staff registration, passengers may elect the travel protection plan as determined by their group. Two plans are available: F560S is for the “standard” travel plan and F560E is for the “enhanced” travel plan. Before making a decision, please review the differences in plan options and if you have specific questions, contact the insurance provider directly. Please know that while we are happy to offer travel protection to you during our registration process, we do not sell, nor operate, travel insurance. **Best Practice:** If selecting Trip Mate travel protection, the best practice is to mandate the “standard” plan be purchased by all group members at a minimum, and then allow independent parents to upgrade to the “enhanced” plan if desired.

We have had many schools that do not understand the purpose of travel insurance. It’s actually very simple... It not only protects parents before the trip – if a child breaks a bone playing sports and is not allowed to travel, or if someone comes down with an illness or a family emergency - it covers this so the parents do not lose their funds. If while on tour there is an accident that causes a traffic delay and you miss your flight, it protects you. Then finally, if any child is sick or gets hurt while on tour, it also covers medical aspects. Travel insurance is very important to protect your pupils and your parents; hence why it is mandated for every group. You should look for a policy that covers health/medical, travel loss, interrupted travel and cancellations. We also suggest you purchase an “enhanced” or “cancel for any reason” policy. It is a more expensive policy but, in the end, it may turn out essential.

5. **Confirm your booking.** Once your deposits have been paid, your booking is confirmed! You will also be assigned a specific contact in our Operations department to work with so you know that every question can be answered. They will then take over as your chief contact for anything needed up until your tour departs. Deposits schedules are as follows:

- An initial deposit of \$500 per paying passenger is due when confirming the trip. Please know we cannot confirm air seats nor hotels until we are in receipt of this payment.
- Your second deposit of \$300 per paying passenger will be due approximately 2 months after your initial deposits have been received. The specific due date for this deposit and remaining payment will be sent to you by our finance team. If you need a date change, please ensure you are requesting it far enough in advance to be effective.
- Your final balance will be due approximately 12-weeks prior to departure.



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Notes:

- 1) Deposits may be paid via online bank check (ACH) at no cost. If someone elects to pay via credit card, a 3% processing fee is assessed by the card processing firm. If you wish to pay via group check (in one check for all group members, per deposit), this is also available, either mailed to our corporate office or via bank transfer.
  - 2) Please remember that all deposits are non-refundable as they are immediately sent out to hold specific elements of your tour.
  - 3) Please remember that if a refund for any element of the tour is required, this excludes credit card processing fees.
  - 4) Please know that due dates and payment amounts may vary dependent upon your departure date.
  - 5) If you have a situation that requires a change in payment terms, please contact us.
6. **Messenger/WhatsApp with your Ambassador prior to departure.** After you receive your full itinerary and about 2 weeks prior to departure, you will be assigned a Trip Ambassador. They will contact you, usually via email, and ask for you to set up a call with them. Skype and WhatsApp are totally free to use, you just need a good internet connection and then to download the program. You can call on your computer, your tablet or your smart phone. Your Ambassador may then review general items, take your suggestions as to anything extra that your group might want to participate in, and even do things like start to set up birthday celebrations which may be happening. They are here to serve your school.

Your Ambassador will meet you in your destination and will be there to ensure you are set up for success. Your Ambassador is not a local guide, but instead is an expert at making sure everything is just right on your tour so you, the trip leader, can enjoy your travels along with your students. Your Ambassador is also highly trained from an emergency management standpoint. You just need to let them know what you need, and they will ensure it is taken care of.

7. **Ready, set, go!** Let us know how we may serve you!



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