



# YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL TRIP



Organising your first school trip can appear to be a daunting process; this guide is intended to take you through each step to run a successful school trip, answering frequently asked questions and providing tips and support along the way.

NST are experts in providing expertly planned school trips which are tailor-made to support groups in getting the very most out of their time away. Safety, value and ease are at the heart of every NST educational school visit and study tour. We've been providing group leaders with tailor-made school trip itineraries suited to their groups' exact needs since way back in 1996.

## Why use a tour operator

It is possible to organise your school trip independently, however, you are then completely responsible for all health and safety aspects of the trip - using a tour operator such as NST you'll have the reassurance of our externally verified Safety Management System (SMS), which exactly matches the Department for Education and Scottish Executive's recommendations. You will also be in the safe knowledge that you'll be covered from the moment you book to your safe return. We are fully committed to providing the necessary financial protection through our ABTA and ATOL bonds.

Should the unforeseen happen whilst you're away NST will ensure your group get home safely. In April 2010, during the initial volcanic ash cloud disruption and more recently the floods in New York – we ensured all our groups got home safely and organised alternative accommodation, transport, meals and much more. If you choose to travel by yourself you'll be responsible for organising and paying for all necessary arrangements required.

If you're looking for more support on your first tour for Music, Geography, History, Religious Studies and Psychology groups we can arrange for your group to be accompanied by a member of our

team who'll travel and stay with you throughout your tour, they'll have great local knowledge and some of our team have specialist subject knowledge too - they'll ensure you get the most out of your time away. We also have on the ground representatives in our most popular cities such as Paris, Berlin, Barcelona, Munich..... who'll be available for you should you require extra support and assistance.

## On tour support whilst you're away

Enjoy your tour, you're in safe hands - We're confident you'll have a fantastic tour but should you need help or assistance while you're away, we're only a phone call away.

We operate a 24 hours emergency cover support should you have an emergency whilst on tour.

## Plan in advance

Give yourself, the students and parents as much time as possible. Planning well in advance will give the parents more time to budget, save their money and pay in smaller instalments. On average, most groups will book their trip 18 months in advance - we recommend you aim to launch your trip between 6 and 24 months.

## Benefits of learning outside the classroom

- Substantial evidence that in outdoor learning learners develop their knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday experiences in the classroom (1)
- Substantial evidence that outdoor learning can impact positively on children and young people's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions – independence, confidence, self-esteem, personal effectiveness, coping strategies (2)
- Significant evidence of the effect of outdoor learning on social development and greater community involvement (2)

1. House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, Education Outside the Classroom. Second Report of Session, 2004-5. HMSO, 2005

2. Rickinson M, Dillon J, Teaney K, Morris M, Cho M Y, Sanders D, and Benefield P, 'A Review of Research on Outdoor Learning', FSC, Shrewsbury, NFER/Kings College London, 2004



## CHOOSE YOUR DESTINATION

Contact one of our Educational Travel Advisors - you'll have access to a wealth of knowledge and experience, not only will they be able to answer your questions, but they might even suggest options you hadn't already thought of. They'll be able to tell you what other teachers have chosen to do on tour and give you an insight into the feedback they've given us too.

We have tried and tested itineraries for most subjects in all of our destinations, which can be adapted personally for you. Decide where and when you want to go, your learning objectives and budget and let us put together a tailor-made quotation. See sample itinerary below for one of our most popular destination, London.

Your quote will then be sent to you detailing all of the inclusions and any additional extras as requested.

Once you've made up your mind and accepted the quotation, give us a call and we'll provisionally book your tour. A provisional booking is a no-obligation commitment which will allow us to check and hold travel and accommodation options for your chosen dates – this will now be held for three weeks to allow you to gain approval and promote your tour.

### Get the most out of your budget

Be flexible with your travel dates, transport options, departure points and your accommodation location, ask us for advice on making your budget go further.

- Consider the length of the school trip - the longer the trip is, the more expensive it will be.
- Consider taking a day trip - low budget and great value, a great option to start with.
- Many visits are free of charge and filling your tour with free visits will keep the cost down.

### Accommodation

We offer the widest choice of group-friendly accommodation to suit different ages, budgets and preferences – selected for its value and experience in looking after the needs of school groups. If you're looking for sole-use accommodation, then we do have our very own château in Northern France which is only open to NST groups.

#### Tips!

Struggling for numbers?

Join up with another subject group, another year group or even another school. The more students, the lower the price per person.

We can create a bespoke itinerary combining a number of subject areas.

### Sample itinerary for London

London	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Day 1	Morning flight from Ireland. Guided tour of London	Science Museum Natural History Museum	Jack the Ripper walking tour
Day 2	London Dungeon Thames River cruise	Flight on the Coca-Cola London Eye Madame Tussauds	West End Show
Day 3	Shakespeare's Globe Tour	Free time for some shopping & exploring	Return flight to Ireland



## GAIN APPROVAL & PROMOTE YOUR TOUR

Once you have provisionally booked with us you now need to launch your trip and gain approval from your Local Authority and/or your Head– this can vary from school to school as to the procedure you will need to follow; this may mean you need to log your trip on the school online system called Evolve.

### Evolve

Evolve is an online tool for schools and colleges to plan and run educational visits, on-site activities, after school clubs and sports fixtures. It is currently in use in over 19,000 schools and colleges across the UK.

Dependent on your school you would need to do at least the following:

Complete a general form with information about the trip:

- Name of group leader
- Number of children
- Name of external provider i.e. NST
- The learning objectives
- Names and addresses of all the students
- Copies of the letters being sent to the parents
- Copies of all the risk assessments – these would need to be for every element of the trip, such as coach, hotel, visits, destination

Once all the information is completed it will then be checked, including your risk assessments, by your local authority and approved and sent to your head of school to approve. This would generally be completed over a period of a few months leading up to your departure.

### Get promoting... We can help you to do this!

Our team of specialists will support you throughout the planning and approvals stages and provide everything you need to promote your school trip in the school and to parents.

- We have a range of A3 posters to promote your trip around school.
- We will provide you with destination specific Power Point presentation templates which you can tailor to your own needs.
- We can provide you with pre-printed parents' leaflets covering how NST manage safety, financial protection and details of our travel insurance.

### Source funding

To assist with funding the school trips you could encourage your students to fundraise through various means. Sometimes it may be possible to obtain sponsorship from equipment suppliers.

### Preview visit

Now would also be the ideal time to consider whether you'd like to take a preview visit to be sure you're getting exactly the right tour before you travel. We can arrange a two night complimentary stay for two people in your chosen destination. This will provide you with an opportunity to try out your chosen accommodation and confidently complete your own risk assessments.

### Tip!

Use all of the promotional resources to organise a launch evening, this will help increase interest and confirm numbers.



## CONFIRM YOUR BOOKING

Once you've generated enough interest amongst students and parents and have decided to go ahead, you'll need to collect deposits and send them to us as soon as possible.

In your booking confirmation we will provide you with a payment schedule and you can order student payment cards to help you organise the collection of payments. Your first initial deposit secures your booking, followed by a second deposit eight weeks later and a final payment ten weeks prior to travel.

All your final paperwork will be sent out once full payment has been received.

**Remember, the earlier you plan in advance the easier it will be for parents' to budget.**

### Tips!

This would also be a good time to ask for key information, if not already held on school systems, such as any specific requirements - dietary / allergies / illnesses / medical information and medication. You would need a doctor's note to carry certain medicines on a plane, or you may need to carry specific food or request a hotel that can cater for dietary requirements / allergies.

If you're flying to your destination get a photocopy of each student's passport, you'll need the details.

Advise parents / guardians of their responsibilities – they'll need to obtain an EHC card, check visa requirements for non-Irish nationals and the validity on their child's passport.

Some countries require a minimum validity on passports after the date of travel – this can be checked at [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)



## TAILOR-MAKE YOUR TOUR

Once you have booked your tour, you'll work closely with your own dedicated Educational Tour Co-ordinator who will be a school travel expert in your chosen destination. They'll work closely with you over the following months to discuss your tour objectives and work with you to build and arrange a programme of visits that meet your exact learning objectives – helping you to make the most of your time away.

Your Educational Tour Co-ordinator will take care of everything for you:

- They will pull together your itinerary so that it runs smoothly
- Plan the right balance of visits every day with realistic timings
- Pre-arrange and pre-book your visits, entrance tickets, passes and meals

### Tips!

Your Educational Tour Co-ordinator will help and advise you on the details and logistics of your tour and cover areas such as:

- Are you happy to travel on public transport with your group?
- Are you happy to have some free time or keep to structured evening activities?



## COMPLETE YOUR RISK ASSESSMENTS

By choosing NST as your travel partner, you will save a considerable amount of work, be able to show due diligence and demonstrate good practice. This is of particular importance if you are considering organising residential tours yourself, even in Ireland and the UK.

### What do we cover?

To manage safety effectively, the following aspects of your tour should be assessed:

- Accommodation
- Transport
- Excursions

Worldwide, and even throughout Europe, there are no consistent sets of safety standards. Additionally there are no guarantees that local standards aren't being compromised by poor management. With our experienced auditors and regular safety training, NST's team is able to make accurate and informed decisions on the suitability of your tour components, which means you don't have to.

### What you need to do:

What are the basics of risk assessment?

Within the context of school travel, a risk assessment is consistent with a Group Management Plan. In other words, the means by which you will 'steer' your group through to the objective of arriving home safe and sound.

The concept is quite simple:

- Somebody identifying a hazard
- Recognising somebody is at risk from the hazard
- Putting some judgement on the potential likelihood and severity of the harm that might befall them
- Then crucially putting in place the necessary control measures to rectify the problem

A hazard is the potential of an activity to cause harm. A risk is the likelihood of the activity causing harm and is linked to the severity of that harm. It is important to recognise that you already risk assess many, many times in an average working day.

### Why can't we do everything for you?

Much as we would like to do everything on your behalf, there are very sensible reasons why we can't. Good safety management depends on assessing the risk. Somebody needs to consider who will be affected then take appropriate control measures. Therefore, a good knowledge of who is in your group is essential. For example, think of who is best placed to decide what to do to protect Victoria with her chronic asthma. Please see page 6 for sample risk assessment.



## PRE-TOUR CHECKLIST

4-6 weeks before departure you will receive your final paperwork which will include your final itinerary and all relevant tickets and passes.

### Tips!

Organise a parents evening to go through the full itinerary of the trip. NST can provide a power point template for you to use. Try and cover all of the following:

1. The tour basics
  - Getting there
  - Returning home
  - Accommodation
  - Meal arrangements
  - Travel tips – money
  - Travel tips – packing
2. Why are you going
  - Itemise the tour objectives
3. What will you see and do
  - List the visits and their location
4. About the travel company - NST
  - Established 1996
  - Government recommended health and safety policy
  - ABTA and ATOL protected - your payments are insured
  - Insurance cover and 24-hour medical assistance cover



# SAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT

## Excursions

### Areas to be considered for your risk assessments

NST has identified the following areas which should be considered as part of the overall risk management process, these areas need to be considered and supplemented where necessary with the specific knowledge of the students and adults and once at the excursion.

Area	Who may be affected	Controls to be considered
Traffic flow	STUDENTS & ACCOMPANYING ADULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise group before disembarking of traffic flow differences</li> <li>• Advise group of traffic flow conditions when in busy city centres and crossing roads</li> </ul>
Swimming / water edge work		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to your employing authorities guidelines</li> <li>• Staff to student ratios</li> <li>• Gradient of swimming pool or beach to be checked on arrival to ensure no sudden drops</li> <li>• All accompanying staff to be aware of non-swimmers</li> <li>• Designate a distance from the waters edge at which non-swimmers are not allowed to pass, also do the same for able swimmers</li> <li>• Check pool or beach information boards to see if lifeguards are present</li> </ul>
Free time		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement an agreed pupil code of conduct</li> <li>• Clear time and place information</li> <li>• Ensure 'no go' areas are defined and understood</li> <li>• Buddy system in place</li> <li>• Agreed meeting points if remote supervision used</li> <li>• Monitor purchases for alcohol, tobacco and dangerous objects</li> </ul>
Weather		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider any weather critical visits and plan a wet weather alternative in advance</li> </ul>
Minor accidents		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If your employer or risk assessment deems it appropriate, ensure a leader is trained in first aid and a first aid kit is carried</li> <li>• Knowledge of local emergency numbers</li> <li>• NST travel insurance covers medical attention</li> </ul>
Specialist skills		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders to be competent if self-leading their own visits/excursions that require specialist skills</li> </ul>
Getting lost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed supervision and information on what to do</li> <li>• Implement a buddy system</li> <li>• Clear time and place information</li> <li>• Agreed meeting points if remote supervision used</li> <li>• Accommodation address cards</li> <li>• Mobile phones (consider no UK use)</li> <li>• Wristband identification system</li> </ul>
Unfamiliar building or venue		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarise yourself with the emergency exit routes and a safe place to meet in case of fire or emergency</li> <li>• Read any information displayed at the venue regarding what to do in the event of an emergency and brief your group on the procedure</li> <li>• Implement a code of conduct for the safe use of lifts or escalators if present at venues</li> </ul>
Petty crime		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed supervision and information on what to do</li> <li>• Buddy system</li> <li>• Report all crime to local police for insurance purposes</li> <li>• To be vigilant when in crowded places</li> </ul>
Inappropriate attention		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed supervision and information on what to do</li> <li>• Buddy system</li> </ul>
Self arranged visits or excursions arranged whilst out in resort		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These visits have not been arranged by NST and are not included as part of the package</li> <li>• You must satisfy yourself that the visit or excursion meets your safety requirements and your employing authorities' guidelines</li> </ul>



## BON VOYAGE!

### 24 hour duty office

Enjoy your tour, you're in safe hands - We're confident you'll have a fantastic tour but should you need help or assistance while you're away, we're only a phone call away.

We operate a 24 hours emergency cover support should you have an emergency whilst on tour.

### Medical emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency, our insurance should be advised within 48 hours. It is a condition of your NST insurance policy that all costs are specifically authorised by the insurers or their Emergency Service. Failure to obtain prior authorisation could prejudice your claim.

### Contingency fund

We recommend that Group Leaders carry a small float and credit card to cover any unforeseen events. Please refer to your Booking Confirmation details for information on items not included in your tour price but which will need to be budgeted for.

### Pocket money

It is advisable for group members to take pocket money (in local currency) with them on their tour to purchase items such as soft drinks, snacks and souvenirs. Using a banking system will also allow students to budget their money and prevent them from spending it all during the first day or two.

### Security deposits on arrival at your accommodation

You will be advised in advance if your hotel requires a security deposit and your accommodation description will provide details of the required payment method. This will be refunded at the end of your stay provided there is no damage or disruption caused to other guests by your group. It is a good idea to check and agree any existing damage on arrival with the hotel's management.



## QUICK REFERENCE TIMELINE



Contact us  
01 894 0300  
info@nst.ie  
nst.ie