



INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE TOURS: MAKING AN IMPACT

It is important for programs and ensembles to consider an International Performance Tour as another opportunity to impact the lives of our students by exposing them to real life opportunities and experiences that are not available on a digital screen.

They can walk in the footsteps of historical figures like King Henry VIII, William Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Martin Luther, and many others; they can visit historical sites such as the Roman Coliseum, the Eiffel Tower, the Great Wall of China, Westminster Abbey, Big Ben, Saint Peter's Square, the Vatican, Neuschwanstein Castle, Palace of Versailles, and so many others; they can even visit the birthplaces and perform in locations of famous composers like Mozart, Handel, Haydn, Vivaldi, Britten, Byrd, Strauss, Beethoven, and others.

What better way to bring to life the historical, cultural, and human influence

and significance that is a part of our daily teachings, than by experiencing an International Performance Tour?

PARTNERING WITH A TRUSTED TOUR OPERATOR

Whether you are a seasoned traveling ensemble or considering it for the first time, it is important to partner with a Tour Operator. Choosing a trusted partner takes several considerations. You should consider their commitment to your vision and the mission of your program: ensure you connect with someone who takes the time to collaborate with you to design the tour that best meets the needs and goals for your ensemble. Whether you want to be a part of an established festival or competition, or want to share your music and talents as a featured ensemble as part of a custom performance tour, there is a Tour Operator for you.

Trusted Tour Operators are often vetted by your colleagues and are members of various associations like the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), National Association for Music Education (NAfME), and the Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA). Memberships in such organizations dictate a high standard of service and expectations such as Liability Insurance Coverage and Travel Protection options.

You should also consider the Tour Operator personnel, as there is a noted difference between a sales team member and someone that has walked (or continues to walk) in your shoes as a music educator and ensemble director. Having someone who has taught in the classroom, worked with booster clubs and administrators, traveled with their own ensembles, and fundraised for such opportunities is a priceless resource for the seasoned and novice traveling ensemble.



DREAMING AND PLANNING

In preparation for a conversation with a Tour Operator you should consider your destination, your possible travel dates, your performance expectations, and your budget parameters. A dedicated Tour Operator can help you dream by suggesting destinations and inclusions. Major influences on the tour budget are hotel accommodations, group meals, and airfare.

Hotel accommodation prices vary between 2-4 star tourist class hotels; location within a city center or on the outskirts; or branding as a local or American brand. For your group meals, you should consider how many organized group meals you would like, where there is often a single menu available for all, versus meals on your own, in small groups, experiencing more variety of the local flavor.

Typically breakfast is included everyday and then choices can be made, based on your budget or ensemble preferences, as to the number of additional group meals to be included. You will choose whether to include dinner every night or every other night, as well as choose to include some lunches.

Participating in an international tour means experiencing the culture of the country you are visiting which translates into different hotel and meal expectations, which is part of the overall tour experience

GROUP TOURING IN A VOLATILE AIRLINE INDUSTRY

The airline industry is a volatile one when considering a group tour, as it is often the single area, of such a tour, where the Tour Operator does not have negotiating power. This is where your proposed travel dates have the most impact on your tour budget, and one needs to be mindful of the fact that obtaining a group airfare is counterintuitive when it comes to rates.

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We are accustomed to the rule that if you book something as a group you often get a lower rate or entrance fee. This is not the case with the airline industry. With a group booking on an airline, the group is taking up a larger chunk of the inventory and valuable real estate, so the airlines calculate the revenue they could make to get your group rate.

You can often find less expensive individual rates on your online search engines, and you should not assume that this rate is available for groups, as every seat on an airplane is a different fare, and a group is often taking 30-50+ seats. Your travel dates and possible flexibility will assist in securing a manageable airfare.

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AN EXPERIENCE WITH LIFELONG IMPACT

An International Performance Tour is an extraordinary addition to any program, giving real world experiences that have a lifelong impact on each and every participant. An experience of this kind can be, and often is, life changing as some of your students will have never experienced the world as an international traveler and some may never get the opportunity again.

An International Performance Tour experience this allows us to become participants in the larger world by bringing our energy, talents, music, and traditions to other parts and cultures of the world while being exposed to those you visit.



Sean Berg is the President of Sechrist Travel, LLC, and Artistic Director of the Mill Creek Chorale and Conductor of the Norwegian Male Chorus of Seattle. Learn more by visiting www.SechristTravel.com or writing info@sechristtravel.com.

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