World Explorers' Club: '25/'26 – Japan

Trip: April Break 2026

Club Proposal

Mr. Whitehead is seeking to establish an after-school club that focuses on a particular country or region each school year (or every-other-year), culminating in a trip through the student travel company ACIS in the spring. The trial year, 2025 – 2026, would focus on Japan.

If approved, Mr. Whitehead would immediately begin to advertise the club in the spring of '25 and hold an information night for families in April so students/families can start planning & saving.

World Explorers' Club (2025/2026): Japan

-Advisor: Bill Whitehead

-No stipend

-Open to high school students

-Any high schooler may join the club—the trip is not mandatory.

-Google Classroom will be established for members & families

-Meetings:
- -~26 meetings starting Week of Sept. 15th (dates posted ahead of time)
- -~2-3 meetings after the trip in April
- -Special movie/event nights may be offered (not mandatory)

-After the trip, students will host a presentation night at school that is open to their families and community to share their experience. (May)

-For a student to attend the trip, regular club attendance is required. They must attend 90% of the meetings held before February vacation. For students involved in sports or have other commitments that would prohibit them from attending the regular meetings, make-up meetings will be held during designated lunch times each week.

-The club will hold fundraising events to lower to overall cost of the trip, thus reducing the individual cost per student. ACIS also provides payment options and tools to help kids raise funds individually.

Meeting Topics (some may be covered over the course of more than one meeting)

The Origins of Japan – Mythology, Shinto beliefs, and early civilizations

The Samurai Code: Bushidō – Ethics, loyalty, and the way of the warrior

Feudal Japan and the Shogunate – The rise and fall of the samurai era

The Meiji Restoration – How Japan transformed into a modern power

Castles of Japan – Architectural marvels and their role in history

Japanese Folklore and Yokai – Myths, monsters, and spirits in Japanese tradition. Themes & Motifs in Japanese Literature

The Rise of Zen Buddhism – Influence on art, lifestyle, and philosophy

World War II and Japan – Impact, aftermath, and rebuilding

The Tale of the 47 Ronin – A legendary story of honor and revenge

The Evolution of Japanese Art – Ukiyo-e, calligraphy, and contemporary art

The Tea Ceremony – Aesthetic, philosophy, and significance

Kimono and Fashion Trends – Traditional wear vs. modern styles

Japanese Festivals (Matsuri) – Seasonal celebrations and their origins

Traditional Japanese Theater – Noh, Kabuki, and Bunraku

The World of Anime and Manga – Its history and global influence

Japanese Cuisine: More Than Sushi – Regional specialties and food culture

Shinto Shrines and Buddhist Temples – Their roles in society today

Japanese Work Culture vs. Western Work Culture – The salaryman life and work-life balance

Technology and Innovation in Japan – Robotics, gaming, and future trends

Cultural Differences and Social Etiquette – Understanding Japanese manners and norms

The Trip

Why travel…?

Traveling...broadens perspectives; boosts independence & confidence; enhances learning beyond the classroom; encourages adaptability & resilience; develops a sense of responsibility; inspires future career & study choices; promotes a love for lifelong learning.

Company: ACIS (American Council for International Studies)
-9 Days
-April 17 – 25, 2026
~$6,400 (could be less if registered by a certain date)
-18 spots initially available (I would consider opening more if the demand is there—this is a starting point)
-1 Chaperone: 6 Students
-Registration window/payment deadlines:
-Manual Payment Plan: April 15th 2025 – (Paid-in-Full by) Dec. 8th, 2025
-Automatic Payment Plan: April 15th, 2025 – ??? Each person determines plan that works best for them, which adjusts the deadline. Latest date for any option is 45 days out from the trip.

-Students must attend 90% of the club meetings (or make-up times) by February break to still attend

Itinerary

Day 1: Friday April 17: Overnight Flight/Depart from the USA.
Day 2: Saturday April 18 and *Day 3*, Sunday April 19: Tokyo
Day 4: Monday April 20: Mt. Fuji Area
Day 5: Tuesday April 21: Nagoya
Day 6: Wednesday April 22: Kyoto
Day 7: Thursday April 23: and *Day 8*, Friday April 24: Osaka
Day 9: Saturday April 25: Departure

How Students Can Raise Funds

How can students afford the trip?

Short answer, individual students probably can't—their *family* may be able to afford it outright, but that should not be counted on. All students, regardless of their family's financial situation, has the exact same *opportunity* to raise money to go on the trip—but it takes planning, commitment, and work on their part.

Goal ~$6,500 = $541.66 per month / $125 per week

Group Fundraising

The World Explorers' Club will be holding several carwashes to pay for the bus to/from the airport and to reduce the overall cost for all students.

Individually

(Possible) Calendar Raffle: If everyone puts in the work, the group can seek donations in the form of gift cards and/or items to be used in a calendar raffle. Students then sell tickets to the raffle and use the money toward their individual cost.

Part-Time Job ($10-$15/hr)
10-15 hours/week at $12/hr = $480-$720/month

Sell Items Online (eBay, Facebook Marketplace, etc)

Offer Tutoring Services ($15-$30/hr)
5-7 hours/week at $20/hr = $400-$560/month

Babysitting or Pet Sitting ($15-$20/hr)
8-12 hours/week at $15/hr = $500-$700/month

Do Odd Jobs (Car Washing, Lawn Care, Snow Shoveling, etc.)
5-10 jobs per month at $25 - $50 each = **$125 - $500/month**

Save birthday/holiday money specifically for the trip

Have multiple sources of income—don't simply rely on one!

(Some) Frameworks Addressed in Student Travel & The World Explorers' Club

While the World Explorers' Club is not associated with a specific academic class, it certainly maintains a Humanities' spirit. Standards aside, there is inherent value in traveling to a new place and experiencing life in other parts of the world. In this case, it creates a knowledge and appreciation for how Japanese culture has influenced American culture in terms of art (be it movies, tv, literature, music, etc), technology, and food (to name a few).

In general, it is also important to encourage students to set a goal, develop a plan, take action-oriented steps forward, and complete a project. What seems like a pipedream can become a tangible reality—they need to see that there are many experiences out there waiting for them…they just need to take the initiative & necessary steps to get there.

In terms of the MA Curriculum Frameworks, the following would be touched upon through the club.

ELA

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that:
- Listeners can follow the line of reasoning.
- The organization, development, vocabulary, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Comprehension and Collaboration
1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and
teacher-led) with diverse partners on discipline-specific topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, vocabulary, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

5. Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to
enhance understanding of findings, claims, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when
indicated or appropriate.

World History & Social Science

WHI: Topic 3. Interactions of kingdoms and empires c. 1000–1500 Kingdoms and empires based in Western, Central, and East Asia
f. The Kamakura Shogunate (c. 1185–1333 CE) in Japan, feudal military rule, invasions of the Mongol Empire, restoration of temples destroyed in war, Buddhist sculpture, calligraphy influenced by Zen Buddhism

WHII: Topic 3 The global effects of 19th century imperialism
3. Analyze the impact of Western imperialism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
Clarification Statement: In addressing Standard 18, students should gain an overall view of what modern imperialism was and be able to relate that to their knowledge of earlier empires from World History I. Students may study in depth imperialism on one continent, choosing a former colony to research, and using maps, images, literature, and other primary and secondary sources to

create a case study of the area before, during, and after the colonial period, explaining the process of decolonization, and evaluating the success of the independent nation.

Japan
a. the Meiji Restoration and the opening of Japan to the West
b. the rapid modernization and industrialization of Japan
c. the emergence of a growing Japanese empire in Asia by the early 20th century

WHII: Topic 4. Philosophy, the arts, science and technology c. 1200 to 1700

Supporting question: How did increasing global connectedness in the world lead to the developments in philosophy, arts and sciences in the early modern world?