



2025 8TH GRADE DC TRIP HANDBOOK

For parents and students

April 23-25, 2025

8th Grade Trip advisors:

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- Itinerary
- Day 1 drop off procedures.
- Meals
- Code of conduct/electronics policy
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- FAQ
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- Prohibited items.

ITINERARY (Subject to change, Times are approximate)**Wednesday – April 23rd – Day 1 – Wear RED t-shirt**

5:20am	Students report to SMS for bag check – please do not arrive earlier than 5:20am
6:00am	Buses depart for Washington D.C.
12:00pm	Approximate arrival time in Washington D.C. Martin Luther King, Jr Memorial FDR Memorial World War II Memorial
1:30 PM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
3:00pm	Arlington National Cemetery, Iwo Jima
5:00pm	Monuments & Memorials or Pentagon Memorial
7:00pm	Dinner TBD
~9:00	Check into Hotel

Thursday – April 24th Day 2 – Dress up day

6:15am	Wake up
6:45- 8:00am	Breakfast at Hotel (Groups will Rotate – check your chaperone instruction packet)
9:15am	Group photo in front of the U.S. Capitol
9:25am	U.S. Capitol Building Tour
10:10am	National Air and space Museum; Group Splits
1:00pm	Smithsonian National Museum of American History U.S. National Archives Museum
3:45pm	White House Picture stop
7:00pm	Dinner and gaming at Dave and Busters, Springfield, VA
9:30pm	Back to hotel

Friday, April 25th – Day 3 Wear GREY t-shirt

6:15am	Wake up
6:45- 8:00am	Breakfast at Hotel, Load luggage and check out
8:15am	Tour Memorials: Abraham Lincoln, Vietnam and Korean War
10:00am	National Air and Space Museum w/Lunch Group Splits
	Smithsonian National Museum of American History
1:00pm	Depart for Home
	Pit-stop: Dinner/Snack en Route Home
7:00pm	Approximate arrival home

****Parents will receive a phone call approximately one hour before our arrival home so you can time your arrival to SMS for pick up.**

Please arrive promptly for pick up! DO NOT BLOCK THE BUS LOOP!

****Drop Off Procedures for the morning of the trip ****

Check In – 5:20am

- Check in will take place at the two entrances on the Fireman's Field side of SMS
- **Students with last names A-K will check in near the cafeteria**
- **Students with last names L-Z will check in at entrance near the auditorium**
- Parents/guardians must come in with their students to check in for attendance.
- We will verify that the cell phone and behavior agreements are on file for each student at that time.

Bag Check

- After check-in, parents must leave **-please do not enter the bag check area.**
- Girls will report to the GYM for bag check.
- Boys will report to the CAFETERIA for bag check.
- Chaperones will inspect all suitcases and carry-on bags.
- We will remove any items that are prohibited (energy drinks, cell phones, medication, etc.)
- ****Pro Tip - Pack all toiletries and snacks in CLEAR PLASTIC BAGS to expedite the check-in procedure.**

Meals

- **All meals are provided with the exception of breakfast & lunch on Wednesday.**
- Please pack a **NUT FREE** BREAKFAST and LUNCH for your child with a drink – this food should be in their CARRY-ON BAG.
- Drinks should be in plastic, resealable containers. **NO GLASS**
- All snacks should be packed in clear, re-sealable bags.
- All energy drinks (Red Bull, Monster, Celsius etc.) are prohibited on this trip.
- Students will receive a cash card from their chaperones for all other meals.
- **If your child has specific dietary needs, please notify Mrs. Pepe and Mrs. Pandolas**

Pick-up Procedures for Friday:

- Announcement on Parent Square that we have departed D.C. and are on our way home.
- We have 1 pitstop for a quick meal on the way back
- Approximately 1 hour from our ETA students will call home using the Go Phones
 - Please answer the call! 😊
- Parents, please arrive early to SMS to avoid congestion when the buses arrive –10-15 minutes prior to our arrival is preferred.
- Buses will pull into the cafeteria side (back) of SMS – students will unload luggage
- **PLEASE DO NOT BLOCK THE BUS LOOP – park in designated spaces in the parking lot and walk over to the sidewalk to meet your child.**

WASHINGTON D.C. ELECTRONICS POLICY

All WIFI enabled electronics, including cellphones are strictly prohibited from being taken on this trip by any student.



Student and parent must sign an agreement stating that the student cell phone will remain with parents at home during the trip. A Student who is found to have a cellphone while in Washington will face the following consequences:

- Cellphones will be confiscated and held by a teacher/admin for the duration of the trip.
- Student will be removed from his/her tour group and tour with a teacher/admin.
- Student may not be allowed to attend the 8th grade dance.
- Student may not be allowed to attend the end of year trips.

There are no exceptions to this rule and consequences will be enforced. Please make sure your cellphone agreement is signed by parents and student and submitted on Omella. Links to the document can be found on the Washington D.C. tab of the SMS website. **No student will be permitted to attend the trip without a signed cellphone or behavior agreement.**

Chaperones will carry pre-paid cellphones provided by the school district for student use. Each night before bed, a chaperone will give your child a cell phone to call home. **Please make sure your child has both your home and cell phone numbers written down – See the contact card on the last page of this packet.** The pre-paid cellphone numbers and the name of your child's chaperone will be provided to parents prior to departure. **Please use in case of emergency only.**

Conduct, Respect and Responsibility

- Safety is our primary concern on this trip. Although we do not anticipate any problems, it is essential that students and parents are aware of expectations to ensure a safe, enjoyable, and educational experience for everyone. **Therefore, please note, any discipline problems will be dealt with in a swift manner.** The following disciplinary actions may be deemed necessary by the chaperones/trip coordinators and administrator present.
 - **Removing a student of tour privileges.**
 - **Requiring a student to be picked up by parent in Washington D.C.**
 - **Not being allowed on remaining 8th grade trips/experiences (Lake Compounce, 8th grade dance)**
- Students are responsible for their actions towards others. This includes other visitors, students, hotel and museum property. **Parents will be held liable for any property damaged by their child.** Students who are found to have damaged any property will be held accountable financially. There will also be disciplinary consequences as deemed necessary by the trip coordinators and administrator present.
- **By sending your child on this trip, you acknowledge and understand that you may need to travel to Washington D.C. to pick up your child for severe conduct infractions or illness. Attending this trip is a privilege.**
- Directions from all chaperones, drivers, and tour guides are to be followed without question or complaint. We expect students to treat their peers and other travelers with courtesy and respect.

- Students should remain with their groups at all times. Wandering or straying away from the group while on guided tours or throughout the hotel is not permitted and can limit your child's participation in scheduled events.
- Students are not permitted to leave their hotel room under any circumstance. Room checks will be made by the chaperones and hotel doors will be taped. Vetted security guards will be on duty after hours on each floor for added safety at the hotel. Students will have a method to reach their chaperone if necessary.
- Students are not permitted to carry medications, including ALL over-the-counter medications, under any circumstances. Any medical needs should be brought to the attention of Mrs. Bernardi, our school nurse prior to this time.

In Museums and at Memorials

- Always stay with your group, use the buddy system!
- If you get separated, stay where you are. **DO NOT LEAVE THE BUILDING OR AREA.** Don't panic, we will find you! Use common sense, find a security guard or museum personnel to help you.
- Be kind and cooperative. Be polite to all museum personnel. No gum, hats or backpacks while touring. You may bring a disposable camera!
- Be prepared for metal detectors and long lines.....be patient. **No fooling around on line!**
- This is your Nation's Capital...please respect where you are visiting.

In the Hotel

- Never open your windows and keep hotel curtains closed at all times.
- Do not open your door or come out of your room **unless directed by a school chaperone.**
- Remember there are other guests in the hotel. **NO LOUD NOISE!**
- Keep your room clean, no one is going to clean up after you.
- No rough housing, jumping on beds, etc.
- Be practical and considerate with bathroom towels and supplies.
- Be fully clothed while in the hallways. Shoes/slippers must be worn at all times.
- Keep track of your belongings and do not touch other students' possessions.
- Do not leave valuables exposed in your room, or on the bus.
- "LIGHTS OUT" means QUIET.

WHAT TO WEAR – Smart casual attire suggested

*All students are expected to dress appropriately at all times as per the SMS Student Code of Conduct. These are some specific items of clothing we suggest to continue our reputation for looking distinguished, a tradition we have upheld since 1973. **No student is expected to buy new clothing for this trip.** However, we have always maintained a professional reputation while visiting our Nation's Capital. We appreciate your continued support with this fine tradition!*

****If anyone needs assistance with clothing, please reach out to us! We would be happy to help!**

Days 1 and 3 – Casual days (touring)

- School issued t-shirt, khaki pants/shorts, jeans/leggings (preferred without holes or very frayed), light jacket/sweater/sweatshirt depending on the weather. Comfortable shoes/sneakers.
 - **No gym shorts or sweatpants while touring.**

Day 2 – Dress up day

- Khaki pants/slacks/shorts, shirt/tie, blazer (optional), dress, skirt/blouse, comfortable shoes/sneakers.
Please - no flip-flops/sandals/heels. There is no place to change after our picture! Please make sure you have comfortable walking shoes even on Dress Up Day!

PLEASE DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR THE WEATHER. Bring a zip up sweatshirt or fleece for touring. If the weather is forecasted to be rainy bring an appropriate jacket. We will tour outside regardless of the weather. **RAIN PONCHOS ARE RECOMMENDED!**

NO UMBRELLAS ALLOWED

Any questions or concerns please email the trip coordinators.

Thank you for your continued support in making this trip successful, safe and a great experience for your child.

Alison Pepe- aapepe@somersschools.org

Laura Pandolas – lpandolas@somersschools.org

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: **Are students allowed to bring electronics on the trip?**

Answer: ONLY an MP3 music player with **wired** headphones is permitted.

Students may NOT bring any WIFI/Bluetooth/Internet enabled device of any kind
(NO: cellphone, smart watch, Fitbit, gaming device, DVD player etc.)

Question: **How do I know what's going on during the trip?**

Answer: Updates via Parent Square will be sent several times a day throughout the trip. Pictures of the students as well as updates about our arrival and departure to each attraction we visit will be sent.

Question: **How will Go Phones be used?**

Answer: Chaperones will carry Go Phones throughout the day. Students will call parents on the Go Phones each night to check in! Parents will have chaperone Go Phone numbers, but they should only call in an emergency. **The hotel room phones are not enabled to make or receive calls outside the hotel.

Question: **What food should my student bring?**

Answer: All buses and hotel rooms are **NUT FREE**. Students will need to bring breakfast and lunch on Day 1. Students should also bring mostly healthy snacks and drinks for the bus ride and hotel room. Some candy/sweets are permitted, however we encourage everyone to not overdo it with junk food, so they don't get an upset stomach. NO energy drinks of any kind are permitted.

Question: **How much money should my student bring?**

Answer: We suggest students bring extra cash or a pre-paid card to use for expenses beyond what is included in the cost of the trip. Students often purchase souvenirs, extra snacks and shirts/sweatshirts at gift shop we go to in museums etc.

The cost of the trip includes all the following: transportation, hotel, entrance fees, Day 1 dinner, Dave and Busters game voucher and meals (except for breakfast/lunch on Wednesday).

Question: **How are the hotel groups made?**

Answer: Parents return the medical forms on the specified days and receive a hotel room card for their child. The child will turn in their hotel room card with their roommates to Mrs. Pepe and Mrs. Pandolas. Once we have all room cards, we will form the hotel groups into touring and bus groups by chaperone. Bus/tour groups will be posted the week of the trip.

Packing list

Packing Tips:

Don't over pack! A common mistake is taking too many clothes, unnecessary toiletries, etc. Each student must be able to carry their own luggage. Usually, one small suitcase and one string bag/carry-on are sufficient. You must use clear plastic (Ziploc) bags to hold all snacks, shampoo and other toiletries that could leak. Do not overdo it with candy/junk food. Please label your personal items (MP3 player, movies/headphones, camera).

Suggested Items to Bring:

- One (1) small size suitcase/duffle for packed clothing items and snacks for hotel
- One (1) small/personal carry-on string bag for personal items and snacks for bus

Carry-on bag items (on bus with you):

- Glasses, contacts & solution
- ~\$60-\$75 in spending money (cash or card) in a wallet/small purse
- **Home and cellphone numbers for parents on a piece of paper (see attached)**
- Camera (disposable or small digital – no internet capability)
- Snacks (**no nuts**) (packed in clear Ziplock bags)
- Mp3 player/ wired headphones **NO internet, bluetooth or texting capabilities.**
- G, PG, and PG-13 movies for the bus (no Blue-ray)
- Magazines, books, playing cards
- Hat/Sunscreen/Sunglasses
- Regular watch (no Apple watches/Fitbit/smart watches)
- A few band-aids
- **Breakfast/lunch** to take on the bus for Wednesday.
- **Drinks** in resealable plastic bottles (water preferred) -**NO GLASS**
- **Healthy snacks** for the bus and hotel room. **NO NUTS**

Luggage items (not accessible during travel):

- 2 School t-shirts (Provided to wear Day 1 and Day 3)
- 2 pairs pants/jeans/nice shorts/khakis/leggings (no rips pls)
- "Dress up day" outfit (dress, skirt, khakis, dress shirt, tie) (Day 2)
- 1 light jacket/sweater, poncho for cold weather or rain
- Appropriate sleepwear
- Underwear and socks for 3 days (bring an extra pair or two)
- Sweatpants/joggers/gym shorts (in hotel room only)
- 1 Hairbrush, 1 straightener/curling iron **per room**
- Toiletries: shampoo/soap, toothpaste/toothbrush, deodorant, etc. (pack in clear plastic Ziplock bag) **Hotel will have some shampoo/soap but it helps to bring your own.
- Comfortable walking shoes/sneakers (**no flip-flops!**)



***** **Prohibited items list:**

- **CELLPHONES**
- WIFI Enabled Electronics including but not limited to:
 - Laptops/Tablets/IPads/IPods
 - Gaming systems – Nintendo Switch etc.,
 - DVD Players/Speakers
 - Wearable devices:
 - Apple Watch, Airpods, Fitbit, any smart watch etc.
- Energy drinks, tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs, ecigarettes or vapes
- Clothing that violates the district code of conduct
- **Cologne/perfume
- Flip flops /Sandals
- Umbrellas
- Valuables – no expensive jewelry etc.
- **ALL BUSES AND HOTEL ROOMS ARE NUT FREE...please do not send any snack or lunch items that contains any type of nuts.**
- **Bad Attitudes....**

Students are expected to adhere to all rules as outlined in our SMS Code of Conduct.

Parent contact card – Print and put in a zip-lock baggie in your bag.

DO NOT TURN IN – this is for student if needed during the trip.

Student Information Card

Student : _____

Parent #1 _____

Home phone _____

Cell Phone _____

Work Phone _____

Parent #2 _____

Home phone _____

Cell Phone _____

Work Phone _____