

DIRECTOR'S CHOICE®
TRAVEL+LEARN+PERFORM

HELPFUL TIPS FOR GROUP TRAVEL

Selecting the perfect itinerary for your group can be challenging, especially without experience in group travel specifics. Based on more than 3 decades as a travel planner and 12 years as a public school educator, I offer the following suggestions to maximize your group's travel experience. While I would be honored if you chose Director's Choice for your next group trip, these tips are designed to help you get the most out of your journey regardless of your chosen travel partner.

Why Take Your Group On A Trip?

- Organized group travel offers deep benefits beyond the performance or destination. It significantly enhances daily classroom instruction by providing real-world application, cultural immersion, and opportunities to solidify concepts, cultivate critical thinking, and foster an appreciation for the arts and global perspectives.
- A well-organized trip is a powerful tool for organizati onal growth. It's a proven strategy for recruiting new members, as exciting and memorable travel attracts prospective students and their families. These shared experiences also aid in member retention, as collaborative goals, camaraderie, and unforgettable moments strengthen bonds and ensure continued engagement.
- Years after graduation, the memories from a group trip consistently stand out as a highlight of a student's educational experience. These excursions are life-shaping milestones that create lasting impacts, encourage personal development, and forge lifelong associations. Investing in high-quality group travel is an investment in your program's legacy and the personal and intellectual development of every student involved.

Selecting the Right Destination and Scope



- **Align with Program Goals:** Choose a destination that supports your group's objectives. A high-profile venue, such as a performance at the Director's Choice Premier Performance Invitational in New York's Carnegie Hall, might be too expensive or ambitious for your program's current stage and may be better suited as a long-term goal.
- **Suitability and Budget:** Ensure the destination and included activities will be enjoyable for the entire group and align with your community's financial capacity. While Director's Choice can arrange travel anywhere, the financial viability for your community and individual students should guide your decision.

Understanding Trip Costs and Pricing

- **Focus on Total Price:** While a per-person price is useful for participant financing comparisons, concentrate on the overall price for the entire trip, as the per-person cost can sometimes distract from the total financial commitment.
- **Monitor Charges Closely:** Once you commit to a tour operator, continue to supervise all charges. It is common practice for some companies to "bait and switch" the price after a commitment has been made.
- **Beware of Estimated Costs:** Be aware that some initial trip components, like airfare, are estimated. Airfare, for instance, may not be confirmed until about 11 months before the trip. If an initial airfare estimate of $200.00 per passenger jumps to a confirmed $500.00, the trip cost increases by at least $300.00 per participant. This practice is unfortunately common among many group travel suppliers.

- **Not all Tour Operators Are Created Equal:** When choosing a travel partner, it's crucial to select a trustworthy operator. Exercise caution: if an offer seems questionable or too good to be true, don't hesitate to ask detailed questions. Director's Choice maintains competitive pricing because we ensure transparency; our costs are based on the actual payments made to suppliers, plus a modest travel planner fee that is typically less than a standard restaurant tip.
- **Getting Quotes From Multiple Travel Providers:** If you are comparing prices between companies, be sure the quotes are 'apples to apples'. As the group leader, make sure you compare exactly what you want to be on your trip with each company.

Considering A Tour Director

- **Evaluate Necessity:** A tour director is not always required. Destinations such as Orlando, the DFW area, Branson, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, and Galveston/Houston often manage fine without one. However, complex destinations like New York, Chicago, and Washington D.C. can benefit significantly from a tour escort on the trip to manage logistics.
- **Select a Knowledgeable Tour Director:** If you are taking a trip to Hawai'i, do you want a non-Hawaiian resident escorting your group or a Kama'āina (local) who calls the Hawaiian Islands home permanently? Certain destinations can really benefit from the services of an informed and experienced tour director.

Selecting the Right Tour Company for Your Group

- **Understand Company Styles:** Tour providers vary significantly in their business approach. Some may frequently initiate conversations, often driven by upselling extra options. Many prioritize their own convenience over the client's experience. At Director's Choice, we offer a concierge-level service tailored to the unique needs of each client's trip.
- **Determine Your Priorities:**
    - If price is your main concern, choose a company with clear and transparent pricing structures.
    - If support is crucial, assess the company's communication methods throughout the planning phase, during the trip, and after its completion.
    - If experience is a necessity, consider how long the company has been operating.
- **Inquire About Potential Fees:** Ask specific questions to avoid unexpected costs. Does the travel planner charge fees for late payments, changes, or other services at various stages? Director's Choice only charges fees when they are imposed by a chosen supplier, ensuring no hidden company fees.

Exceptional Concierge Service

- **Customer Satisfaction Is Paramount at Director's Choice:** Beyond standard communication channels like email and a corporate phone system, clients are provided with the owner's mobile phone number. The Director's Choice team is readily available for requests and questions, offering response times that are unparalleled in the group travel industry.
- **Pay Less. Get More. Promise:** Director's Choice calculates every quote based on the actual costs paid to each supplier, adding only a modest travel planner fee. This fee is typically less than what customers commonly tip when dining out.



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