



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

YOUTH SYMPHONY/YOUTH ORCHESTRA SUMMER TOURS

GENERAL INFORMATION – SCHEDULE AND PAYMENT

1. When do YS/YO tours typically happen?

Whenever possible, tours take place in early June (unless there is a specific reason a tour should take place at another time, for example our tour to Washington, DC for the 4th of July celebrations for the nation's 250th birthday).

2. How much do tours cost?

Tour pricing differs for every tour, every year, and is dependent upon a number of factors. AYSP selects a tour destination from among several options presented to the AYSP board of directors with a focus on providing the best educational and cultural opportunities for our students at the lowest possible price.

3. What is included in the tour price?

Typically, the tour price includes group airfare, ground transportation, lodging, scheduled orchestra rehearsals and performances, planned cultural activities, and designated group meals, depending on the specific tour package. Families will receive a detailed tour itinerary showing what is and is not included in the tour price and what expenses are additional.

4. Is it possible to set up a payment plan to make the payments for the tour?

Generally, yes, depending upon the travel company AYSP is working with. For the past several years, AYSP has traveled with A7 Travel (formerly Trvler.com), who has an arrangement with Affirm (www.affirm.com), a third-party financing company that can help students and families with tour payments. Affirm allows you to set up a payment plan that meets your individual needs and allows you to make tour payments to the travel company in full and on time. Affirm does charge a 4% financing fee for this service, which is typical and consistent with third-party financing arrangements.

5. Does AYSP provide financial aid to pay for some or all of the cost of the tour?

Unfortunately, no. All students are responsible for paying 100% of the cost of the tour. We have provided some guidelines and suggestions to students and families about raising money for the tour. If you have any questions about individual fundraising efforts, please contact Norlynn Blocker Price at norlynn@aysmusic.org.

6. Can I/my student register for the tour after deadline?

Yes, but the cost of the trip will likely increase after the announced deadline. The day after the deadline, our tour company will reserve blocks of seats on our outbound and return flights for all students and companions who have registered by the deadline, and that is the date we will be able to lock in our group airfare at the lowest possible cost. After that date, airfare will most likely increase. So, while it will still be possible for students and companions to join the tour after the deadline, we cannot guarantee the same airfare for those late registrations. It is also possible that travelers who register for the tour after the deadline will need to be booked on different flights than the rest of the group, if there are insufficient seats left on flights that we initially reserved for those registered by the deadline.

7. If we register our student for the tour before the deadline and make the first payment, then there aren't enough students to participate, will we get our money back?

Yes. We are always optimistic that we will have a sufficient number of students (and a reasonable balance of instruments) to make a tour, but in the unlikely event there is not a sufficient number (or balanced instrumentation for the music to be performed on the tour) by the registration deadline, the students who have already registered and made a payment will receive a full refund.

8. Should I purchase trip insurance?

Trip insurance is not required, but is recommended to protect travelers from any unforeseen changes to travel plans. Information about trip insurance can be found on the tour portal set up by our travel company. The type and amount of coverage provided by trip insurance varies, depending on that level of coverage is purchased.

9. What are the additional "AYSP" expenses not included in the tour payments that we pay to the tour company?

AYSP will provide all of our traveling students, staff and chaperones with a tour t-shirt. AYSP will also need to purchase liability insurance specifically for the tour. Finally, for students traveling with large instruments or who will likely need to rent instruments in DC, all of our touring students will share any extra costs for transporting or renting those instruments. We do not yet know exactly what those extra costs will be for each student, but typically, it will be around \$100. We will let everyone know as soon as we have all of the information.

10. What about insuring my instrument?

We strongly recommend that students have their instruments insured for the tour. Most homeowner's insurance companies are willing to insure musical instruments with a separate rider made a part of the homeowner's policy that will cover loss of or damage to the instrument when traveling. AYSP does not provide insurance coverage for musical instruments, nor does the trip insurance offered by the tour company.

11. What if I have questions about flights, hotel arrangements or the itinerary on the tour?

Contact our tour company representative directly.

STUDENT SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

12. Whom will students travel with?

Students travel as part of the orchestra and are supervised by designated adult staff/chaperones. Students are expected to remain with the group according to the tour's supervision and buddy-system policies.

13. Will students have free time during the tour?

Yes, when appropriate. Free time will be structured and supervised, with clear boundaries about where students may go, who they may go with, and when they must return.

14. How will AYSP keep track of my student during the tour and keep students safe?

Several members of the AYSP staff will be attending the tour, and we also expect to have male and female chaperones from among the parents of participating YS and YO students. Each student will be assigned to a specific chaperone; there will be a maximum of 10-15 students assigned to each chaperone. The chaperones will be in regular and frequent direct contact with their assigned students throughout the trip. Typically, chaperones and their assigned students will create chat groups on WhatsApp or a similar texting app so that they can be in regular contact at all times on the tour. For the majority of the time during the tour, students will be together in a single, large group. During the few times students are on their own, they will coordinate with their chaperones about logistics for meeting up, etc. Students and parents will be able to meet their chaperones right after the Farewell Concert at the AYSP building prior to tour departure.

15. What if my student has dietary restrictions, allergies or medical needs?

AYSP will send out a form that must be completed and returned before we leave for tour that captures all relevant information about a student's particular health/medical needs or restrictions. We will provide information about dietary restrictions to our tour company, and they will endeavor to have all of our provided meals address any student restrictions or limitations. The AYSP staff will be apprised of any medical or health needs and will have information about what to do in case of an emergency. Typically, the tour company also collects information of this sort during the tour registration process; it is critical that students/families provide all relevant information to both AYSP and the tour company to make sure important information is where it needs to be to be most helpful.

16. What happens if a student becomes sick or injured during the tour?

Tour leaders will contact the appropriate parent/guardian and arrange appropriate care according to the student's submitted health and medical information.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

17. What music will the students perform on the tour?

The tour concert program will likely consist of a selection of pieces that YS and YO, respectively, performed during the immediately preceding season at Popejoy Hall. The YO selections will, of course, be familiar to the YO students but will be new to the YS students traveling on tour. Similarly, the YS selections will be familiar to the YS students but completely new to the YO students. Tour music will be distributed to all touring students in the spring semester, and the combined YS/YO tour orchestra will have several tour-specific rehearsals to prepare the music for the tour.

18. Will there be rehearsals just for the tour music?

Yes. Following our season finale concerts at Popejoy Hall, the tour orchestra will continue to rehearse weekly for a few weeks until we depart for the tour. These rehearsals are vitally important because the tour orchestra is composed of musicians from both the Youth Symphony and the Youth Orchestra, and these musicians collectively have not worked together as an ensemble before. Moreover, roughly half of the music on the tour program will be unfamiliar to half of the orchestra (the combined orchestra will be performing some selections from YS' previous season repertoire, and some selections from YO's repertoire, so all of the students will be learning new music). It is important that before committing to join the tour, every musician is aware of the tour rehearsal dates and times and avoids scheduling other activities that conflict with those times. *A student's registration for the tour amounts to a commitment to (a) practice and prepare tour music individually outside of tour rehearsals and (b) attend all tour rehearsals.*

19. What if my student must be absent for one or more of the tour rehearsals listed on the schedule?

Missing one rehearsal will likely not be an issue, but it is important for all of our traveling YS/YO students to understand that there are only **a few dedicated tour rehearsals with the entire tour orchestra**, and as stated above, the tour orchestra is a newly formed ensemble that has not worked together as a group before. We will work with the students as much as possible with unavoidable absences, but in order to present a polished program on tour, we need for every student to be present for every rehearsal to the extent possible.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS

20. How will hotel room/cabin assignments work for students on the tour?

Typically, when students will be staying in hotels during the tour, we will ask the touring students to form groups of two or four for the hotel room assignments. Students in groups of four generally will sleep two to a queen-sized bed, and groups of two students will each sleep in their own queen-sized bed. The cost of the hotel room is likewise split among either two or four occupants; thus, a quadruple-capacity room will cost less than a double-occupancy room. We do not allow students to have a single room to themselves, just for buddy-system purposes. Often, students will sign up and register for, say, a quad room and then for one reason or another end up in a double- or triple-occupancy room, and the cost of the trip will be

adjusted accordingly by the travel company. On some trips, where triple-occupancy rooms or cabins are the norm and allow for each of three students to have their own bed, we will ask the students to form groups of three students, and all three students in each room will share the cost of a room or cabin.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

21. Will students be able to take their instruments onboard the plane with them, as opposed to having to check the instruments as baggage?

It depends upon the instrument, the dimensions of the case, the airline, the aircraft and possibly other factors. Typically, students are able to take smaller instruments (*e.g.*, flute, clarinet, oboe, trumpet, violin and viola) into the airplane cabin with them, but it is always best to pack the instrument – particularly violin or viola – as if it will end up being checked as baggage.

22. I/my student play a large instrument. What are the plans for getting the larger musical instruments that we'll need for the tour?

Some of the instruments we'll need on tour are not easy, or even possible, for us to take with us – including large percussion instruments (bass drum, timpani), double bass, tuba, cello, and harp. While some larger instruments may be able to be checked as baggage on our flights (such as trombones, bass clarinets, bassoons, horns and euphoniums), our plan is to rent the largest instruments from a source at our destination. Our tour company will arrange all of this for us, and the collective cost of renting and transporting all of those instruments during the tour will be shared by all of our student musicians – not just the students who play those large instruments. If you have a question about whether your instrument is considered “large” such that we'll want to rent one for you for the tour, or if you want to see whether you can somehow bring your own large instrument with you on tour (generally not recommended because of the risk of damage to the instrument in transit), contact Mr. Whisler (dan@aysmusic.org).

23. How can instruments be protected if they have to be checked as baggage?

We do expect to be able to get violins and violas onto the plane as carry-on items, but occasionally musicians are asked to check these or other instruments as baggage, particularly in the event there is no remaining overhead bin space in the cabin of the airplane. In the event a stringed, brass, or woodwind instrument must be checked as baggage, the instrument needs to be packed in a rigid, TSA-approved hard-shell flight case, with all internal spaces around the instrument padded tightly with soft clothing or bubble wrap so the instrument cannot shift or rattle inside the case. Bows for stringed instruments should be loosened, and strings should also be loosened a bit in case they contract at high altitude.

It is also advisable to wrap the exterior of the case with straps, tape or bubble wrap to prevent the case's latch from popping open in transit. Also place a “FRAGILE” sticker or label on the case to alert baggage handlers that the item is to be handled with care.

FAMILY MEMBERS AS COMPANIONS ON TOUR

24. May our student's family members travel with the orchestra on the tour?

Yes! The student musician's entire family is welcome and encouraged to join us on the tour! Every family member will need to be registered as a traveler with our travel company on the tour portal so that all travelers will have a seat on the tour flights, ground transport, hotel accommodations and provided meals. Companions will also be able to attend all YS/YO performances and other activities on the tour, typically at no cost.

25. We have friends or relatives planning to join us at the tour destination and attend one of the tour concerts. May our guests also participate in group tour transportation, activities and meals?

Tour performances at public venues are generally open to the public, and tickets are usually available for sale at the venue (online or at the box office). However, if the tour orchestra performs at a local school or other non-public location, you will need to check with the tour company about whether outside guests may attend the performance. All other tour activities (especially ticketed events or activities), ground transportation, and included meals are restricted to registered travelers only.

26. I plan to travel with the tour orchestra as a companion. May my student musician stay in my hotel room with me?

We strongly encourage students to room with other students, rather than with family members who are accompanying the ensemble on tour. Sometimes a student might have a health condition or other unique personal situation that prescribes the student being housed with a family member and not with fellow students, but such circumstances are rare.

An AYSP tour should not be viewed as a family vacation, but rather as a privilege earned by the student musicians because of their hard work and dedication to their music education, affording them the opportunity to represent themselves and the Albuquerque Youth Symphony Program before audiences across the country or around the world. Having conducted numerous performance tours with AYSP and other organizations over several years, we have observed that performance tours offer student musicians a unique opportunity to build friendships and to enjoy a fully immersive musical experience. Having students stay and work together also allows them to practice independence and responsibility in a safe, structured, and supervised environment, encouraging and supporting each other as they share responsibility for managing their mutual daily scheduled activities, abiding by curfews and call times, being at the right place at the right time in the correct attire and having everything they need with them.

Perhaps more importantly, we believe that the tour experience for a young musician is greatly enhanced, and can in fact be defined, by the quality of his or her interactions with other student musicians, both on and off the stage. We want to maximize the times and circumstances in which the students are able to spend time together while on tour. For these reasons, we want students to room with other students to maximize the tour experience for themselves and others.

If there is a compelling reason or situation of which we should be aware that would suggest that a student musician should not be housed with other students on tour and should stay with a family member instead, let us know and we can discuss the situation with you and make any appropriate adjustments.

27. Our family is planning to travel with the tour orchestra, but we may want to remain at the destination or travel elsewhere as part of our summer vacation after the group returns to Albuquerque. Is it possible to make those arrangements with the tour company?

Typically, yes. You will need to contact our tour company representative directly and let them know your family's specific requests, and they should be able to make whatever additional arrangements you and your family would like. *Please avoid making arrangements that take your AYSP student away from the group prior to our departure date for Albuquerque.*

28. May I sign up to be a chaperone for this tour?

Yes! The more, the merrier! Chaperones, just like other companions traveling with the YS/YO students, are responsible for paying their own way for the tour. We'll send out a chaperone application form to get some information about you; we will need for you to undergo a background check. Email Norlynn Blocker Price at norlynn@aysmusic.org with any questions about chaperone responsibilities or eligibility.

29. Can family members traveling as companions on tour purchase a tour t-shirt?

Yes! We'll let you know when we are ready to place our t-shirt order with the vendor, and you can purchase a shirt for yourself or any family members. Some families purchase an extra tour t-shirt for their student musician as well, just to have a fresh spare on hand. (We'll ask the students to wear their tour shirts on at least the outbound trip, and probably at least one other time during the tour, so some students may want an extra shirt.) We will not be ordering extra t-shirts beyond what orders we receive by our deadline, so if you'd like to purchase one or more tour t-shirts in addition to what we are ordering for our student musicians and our staff, make sure to place your order by the deadline!

30. I am not able to accompany AYSP on tour next summer. How can I hear the group's concert?

Please plan to attend our Farewell Concert, which will take place at the AYSP building a few days before we depart on tour. We'll perform our entire tour program. The concert is free and open to the public (although seating will be limited). We may or may not also be able to have one of the tour orchestra's performances on tour professionally recorded. If we do record the concert, we'll make that recording available to students and their families after the tour. Such a recording typically takes a month or longer to arrive.

PASSPORTS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

31. What travel documents will I/my student need?

All travelers (students and companions) will need a valid passport or visa (for international travel) and/or a Real ID driver's license or other acceptable photo ID (for domestic travel). Some destination countries may have additional documentation requirements. Requirements vary by destination and can change, so

families should check the specific requirements for the tour destination(s). For example, some countries require that a passport be valid for several months following the end of the trip, and some airlines may apply similar requirements. Families should verify the destination's current requirements rather than assume that an otherwise-valid passport is sufficient. The US does not require this, but some destination countries may also require a notarized parental consent letter for a minor leaving the country without a parent or legal guardian.

It is also recommended that families keep copies of passports and other travel documents, insurance information, emergency contacts, and any required consent/custody documentation.

PACKING

32. What will I/my student need to pack for the tour?

We'll send out a suggested packing list as we get closer to our departure date. Students and companions will want to bring comfortable shoes (lots of walking!) and some light layers for cooler temperatures. Students will, of course, need their tour t-shirts, instrument and any accessories, music folder with music and pencil, and concert black clothing for tour concerts.

MONEY AND SPENDING

33. How much spending money should my student bring?

The appropriate amount depends on what meals, activities, and transportation are included. The tour company will provide an estimated budget for optional activities, souvenirs, snacks and other personal expenses. Students should not carry large amounts of cash.

34. What about foreign currency?

It's a great idea to take a relatively small amount of local currency on international trips. Check exchange rates to find the best deal; it is usually advisable to obtain currency in the US before traveling. The destination airport is usually NOT the best place to exchange US currency for local currency, but often the hotels where we stay offer a competitive exchange rate. Since most places will take debit or credit cards, foreign currency will mainly come in handy for small shops or local independent vendors.

35. Will US credit/debit cards work internationally?

Many do, but families should contact their financial institution before departure to confirm international use and understand any foreign transaction or ATM fees.

FOOD, PHONES AND EVERDAY LIFE

36. Will students be able to use their phones?

We encourage students to bring their cell phones on tour, and we'll be using WhatsApp to communicate with students and chaperone groups during the tour. Otherwise, we will encourage students to use their phones only when needed. For international tour destinations, families are encouraged to check with their cell phone service provider about arranging for international coverage during the specific dates of the tour.

37. Will students have access to WiFi?

WiFi is not guaranteed, particularly on international travel. While some hotels and destinations will offer free WiFi, other locations will not.

38. What about electrical outlets?

For international tour destinations, travelers may need to bring either an **outlet adaptor** or a **voltage converter** – or BOTH - in order to plug in US-based appliances and devices on tour. An international **outlet adapter** changes only the physical shape of the plug so that it can fit into a foreign wall socket. A **voltage converter** changes the electrical voltage itself (stepping 220V-240V down to 110V-120V). Adapters do not alter the amount or flow of electricity. Many US devices are designed for a 110V-120V flow of electricity; if these devices are plugged in to a foreign wall outlet that puts out 220V-240V, they will likely be damaged or destroyed. It is important for travelers to know what types of outlets and voltage they will encounter on tour and to plan ahead by bringing the necessary adaptor and/or converter for their appliances or electronic devices.