

Safety & Security



← **explorica** →
by WorldStrides®

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About *Us*

Founded in 2000, Explorica by WorldStrides helps teachers create educational tours full of authentic, interactive learning experiences. We specialize in connecting teachers and students to new cultures, languages, and people on educational tours across the globe. Our combination of exclusive online tools and personalized service enables us to create tours uniquely suited to provide both the best value and the most customized tours in the industry.

To provide even more best-in-class services for our travelers, we joined with WorldStrides in 2016. As a division of WorldStrides, Explorica travelers benefit from the resources of North America's largest educational travel organization, like \$50 million in liability coverage and an even greater network of global support.

Every Explorica tour includes flights or bus transportation, accommodations, on-tour transportation, most meals, and an expert, full-time Tour Director dedicated to your group. And with our veteran program consultants, customer care representatives, and comprehensive, user-friendly website, we're always here to support you from the moment you contact us to the minute you shout *bon voyage!*

When it comes to safety, our record is exceptional.

Rest assured that when you travel with Explorica by WorldStrides, you're in good hands. With decades of combined experience in travel, we know exactly what precautions to take to keep students safe on tour. Protecting our travelers is our first priority, and we are committed to the task of training our staff in rigorous, safety-related procedures and holding our suppliers to the highest standards of quality and integrity. To do so, we recruit talented staff and partners with reputable suppliers, working out every detail meticulously to exceed the expectations of our customers.

Please take some time to read through this guide and familiarize yourself with our company policies regarding safety and security. If you have any further questions or concerns, please call us at **1.888.310.7120**.

Your *Explorica* tour

We work with you every step of the way to ensure every aspect of your tour goes your way, from the preliminary planning process to your students' safe arrival home. That's why our dedicated staff works around the clock, so that you can get back to doing what you do best: changing lives, one student at a time.

Tour Directors

With Explorica by WorldStrides, you never work alone. Our professional Tour Directors provide 24/7 on-tour support for our travelers, accompanying them every step of the way from arrival to departure. They live and work in the cities our tours visit, are fluent in the local languages and customs, and will advise travelers on how to ensure their personal safety and the safety of their belongings. Each of our Tour Directors is thoroughly trained in safety procedures and how to handle any situation that may arise. We maintain regular contact with all Explorica field staff to provide up-to-date information on local conditions.

Requirements for all Explorica by WorldStrides Tour Directors:

- Regular criminal background checks
- Valid first aid certification
- Intensive annual trainings in safety and security
- References before hire

Tour Director responsibilities:

- Advise students on safety practices, such as keeping hotel doors locked, securing valuables, locating emergency exits, and implementing the "buddy" system
- Liaise effectively with operations and emergency departments

Tour Director department support from Explorica by WorldStrides:

- Designate a child protection officer to ensure the safety of all minors on tour
- Organize annual Tour Director conferences to communicate safety and security updates
- Organize on-tour support visits, sending senior Tour Directors to assist for quality control and emergency assistance purposes

Ground transportation

Our emergency department is available 24/7 and routinely works with other departments to assess and resolve issues.

Public transportation

When traveling via public transit, students are organized into sub-groups with chaperones. Our 6:1 student-to-chaperone ratio supports safety when traveling in this fashion. Every group travels with a Tour Director familiar with cities visited and corresponding public transit systems.

Rail transportation

We only work with the best trains with the highest safety ratings, including Eurostar, AVE, TGV, and a number of other international rail transit lines.

Coach safety features and equipment

- All our motor coaches are equipped with standard safety features to protect passengers.
- Seat belts (when present in the coach) are for the comfort and safety of passengers. Wearing them is compulsory in most European countries.
- Fire extinguishers are usually located at the front of the vehicle.
- Emergency exits include instructions for use in an emergency. Most coaches also have roof hatches that can be used as emergency exits.
- First aid kits are often located in the overhead compartment above the first row of seats. They should be in a container clearly marked with the Red Cross symbol.
- We adhere strictly to current driving hours legislation.

Flights

Airline partners

We only work with the most reliable airlines to ensure that all of our tours arrive on time and safely in their destination. Our airline partners include most major airlines, such as Delta Airlines, Air France, KLM, American Airlines, British Airways, Iberia, United Airlines, Lufthansa, Swiss International Airlines, Air Canada, and others.

Flight delays and cancellations

Explorica by WorldStrides's emergency department is available 24/7. The Explorica Travel Protection Plan also provides generous coverage for any additional costs incurred due to delays and cancellations.

Activities

Water safety (swimming, kayaking, boating, canoeing, etc.)

Life jackets are provided for all water-based activities by the activity provider.

Adventure activities

For adventure activities such as zip-lining, snorkeling, hiking, circus school, or others, proper safety equipment (helmets, belays, snorkels, etc.) is required for all participants. The activity provider may require participants, or chaperones in the case of minors, to sign a waiver or release agreement. Participants are not required to participate in this or in any activity, and may choose not to do so. Tour Directors should advise their program leaders that if they have any students who are afraid of heights, water, or uncomfortable doing an activity, then non-participation may be the best option.

Meals and accommodations

Food safety

All restaurants are inspected by Explorica staff and must pass safety inspection. All food allergies and requests are noted by the Tour Director and program leader, and all restaurants are notified of allergies in advance.

Hotel safety

All hotels are inspected by Explorica staff and must pass safety inspection. All hotels provided have security staff, and additional security or specific floor supervision can be provided upon request. Nighttime security is included in all our domestic tour packages. Teachers, chaperones, and students will be placed on the same floors to ensure additional supervision when possible.

Communication *on tour*

We promise to keep our student travelers as safe as possible, but we understand that most parents want to check in for themselves. To ensure that student travelers can contact their families as much as possible, we make sure that there are a number of communication options available. This way students can share their adventures with those at home, and parents can personally verify that their children are safe and secure while on tour.

Emergency assistance

We believe it's important to be prepared for any emergencies that might arise while traveling. With our worldwide network, internationally located offices, and 24/7 emergency support, we can help you with any problem, at any time, in any country. If a problem or emergency occurs on your tour, we will respond swiftly and appropriately to minimize any disruption to your trip.

Explorica by WorldStrides Customer Care

Our dedicated 24-hour emergency contact line is always staffed and ready to provide rapid response. If you have an emergency any time during your tour, please call 1.703.933.6143.

Worldwide network

Our health and safety team and Exlog Global, supported by our team of risk management professionals, continually assess all travel destinations and situations. As a WorldStrides organization, we have global staff located on six continents, meaning wherever you travel, we'll be able to support you. While on tour, our international network of offices enables us to react immediately to any situation requiring immediate on-site assistance.

Tour Diaries

Our exclusive online Tour Diaries enable parents to check in on their students' daily activities while on tour without interrupting any of their adventures. Our Tour Directors publish photos and journal entries at the end of each day on tour, so that families at home can keep tabs of their travelers from across the country or across the world.

Calling home

While travelers should be careful about flaunting expensive smartphones, it can be a great safety asset to have a working phone while traveling. On international tours, consider using a prepaid international calling card or international cell phone to keep in touch with your group and your family at home. We recommend purchasing international calling cards in destination countries, as locally bought cards are the most effective.

Travel *protection*

Protect yourself, your belongings and your tour investment with the best insurance in educational travel. We suggest all travelers purchase one of our two travel protection plans so they are covered for lost bags, misplaced tickets or passports, or illness during the tour.

Four out of five Explorica by WorldStrides travelers protect their tours through Trip Mate, our third-party travel protection plan provider. We offer two great plans that help protect your educational travel investment.

Standard Travel Protection Plan

Our standard protection plan covers you for the following events:

- Theft of passport or visas
- Loss of luggage and personal effects
- Trip cancellation or trip interruption due to covered reasons such as a covered sickness, injury or death
- Trip cancellation or trip interruption due to terrorist acts, as defined

Travel Protection Plan PLUS

For everything else, there's our Travel Protection Plan PLUS, which includes our exclusive Cancel For Any Reason waiver benefit in addition to our standard insurance. This means that no matter *what* your reason, if you cancel your trip at least 2 days prior to departure, you will be reimbursed for 75% of cancellation fees in *cash*, an option not available anywhere else.

Comprehensive liability coverage

Our liability insurance is the largest in the industry at \$50 million. This policy extends coverage to the program leader and chaperones, as well as the school and school board. You and your academic organization can rest assured that you are protected while traveling with Explorica by WorldStrides.

The Explorica *safety plan*

Our approach to safety and security is to be prepared. We always plan not to have a crisis, but we prepare for everything just in case. Explorica by WorldStrides has a very comprehensive internal response plan (including a major incident response plan) regarding the many emergency situations that may occur while on tour. The following major incidents are considered in this plan:

- Flight, bus, train, cruise, or ferry accident
- Fire
- Terrorism
- Natural disasters
- Injury or death of a tour participant
- Overnight hospitalization
- Criminal charges
- Lost student or adult
- Allegations by participants
- Pandemics

All levels of the company are involved in order to resolve any situation. This includes the direct involvement of the Tour Director, their communications to the Tour Director supervisors, the Emergency Department, the Operations Department, and our Customer Care Department. There is a corresponding priority and escalation process, with senior executive involvement only a mobile phone call away, 24 hours per day.

Emergency *management*

Tour Directors are trained on how to address emergency situations at the onset of every travel season. Explorica by WorldStrides provides an emergency phone number to all participants, parents, chaperones, Tour Directors and anyone else associated with the trip. Our emergency and operations staff conduct drills and trainings on an annual basis, to test all processes and procedures.

Minor incidents

Tour Directors report any minor accident to our operations team at the onset of the incident. Depending on the situation, appropriate personnel are informed via an internal communication system, which alerts multiple departments of minor accidents, allowing them to work quickly and efficiently to resolve the issue. Incidents are not resolved until labeled as closed in the system.

Major incidents

Similar to a minor accident, all information regarding a major accident is reported via our internal communication system. In a major accident situation, our safety and security officer is contacted immediately to ensure the situation is communicated accordingly to all parties. Tour Directors and ground representatives work with the program leader to ensure all parties are safe and taken care of for the remainder of the tour. We will contact the insurance provider when necessary.

Extreme weather or natural disasters

In the case of extreme weather or natural disasters, the Tour Director will report the situation via our internal communication system and notify our safety and security officer. Arrangements will be made to ensure the safety and satisfaction of the students on tour.

Allergies

Explorica by WorldStrides advises the Tour Director and all relevant suppliers of allergies provided by the traveler online or by the program leader through allergy forms. The Tour Director will work with chaperones to ensure students' safety.

Prevention and action plan for missing students

Head counts are performed at each meeting point on tour, and each time the group boards a bus or other form of transportation. All students receive the hotel's name, address, and phone numbers. In the event of a missing student, our emergency procedures would be activated and all parties on location would support efforts in finding the student. Teachers are also accountable for assisting in these efforts.

Lost or stolen passports

In the event of a lost or stolen passport, your group's Tour Director and the operations team will assist you in the proper procedures for obtaining a new one. Explorica by WorldStrides is not liable for lost or stolen passports. For coverage in such an event, please purchase one of our travel protection plans.

Proactive *security steps*

Our Safety & Security Guide is available to all program leaders before their tour, and we have emergency contingency plans in place on all travel programs. To ensure the highest level of safety for our travelers in every scenario:

- We have a global presence with operation centers around the world to monitor situations and assist in the event that safety issues arise.
- Our health and safety team, supported by our 24/7 team of dedicated risk management professionals, continually assesses all travel destinations and situations.
- We partner with Exlog Global, a leading worldwide security and risk management organization, for assistance in evaluating global conditions, and we actively monitor any security issues with them.
- Our Tour Directors live and work in the cities our students visit and are available at all times to support their groups. We are in regular contact with all of our staff on the ground to provide up-to-date information on local conditions.

If a terror event or natural disaster occurs in your city during travel (if group is together with the Tour Director):

- The Tour Director and program leader should determine whether to shelter in place, to return to the hotel, or to move to a safer location.

If a terror event or natural disaster occurs in your city during travel (if group is together without the Tour Director):

- If you are at a location/activity, determine whether it is best to shelter in place, return to the hotel, or move to a safer location.
- If you are at a restaurant/other public location, you can consult with locals for their recommendations.
- Contact Explorica as soon as is practical (as well as your school). Use the 24/7 number listed below.

If a terror event or natural disaster event occurs in your city during travel (if during free time):

- During free time, it is likely your group will be fragmented and in multiple locations. Your top priority as program leader is to determine the safety of your students.
- All group participants (students, chaperones) must understand that if there is an incident in the city at time of travel, they must either immediately return to the hotel for headcount, or contact you indicating they are safe but unable to safely return to the hotel at the time.
- You may choose to share a secondary meeting location if your hotel is unsafe for return.
- If participants assess that it is not safe for them to return to the hotel, they can shelter in place. They should then reach out to you via phone/text, email, or through social media posts. Students without phones may need to borrow one from local residents.
- Contact Explorica as soon as is practical (as well as your school). Use the 24/7 number listed below.

How to reach Explorica in an emergency:

- › Phone **+1.703.933.6143** (24/7 Emergency Contact Line)
- › Please program the above number and your school's number into your phone prior to travel.

The purpose of this document is to serve as a preparatory guide for program leaders and Explorica by WorldStrides team in-country in the event of a terror incident/natural disaster in the city in which a group is traveling. This document is not intended for distribution to students. It is based on the best knowledge and recommendations of the Explorica by WorldStrides Risk Management team. Note that situations on the ground may dictate a different course of action, and participants should use their judgment about the safest course of action in an emergency.

Liability

We understand that many school officials are concerned about allowing their students to travel, but we assure you that safety is Our number one priority. We have taken all precautions to protect students and other tour participants, and we have policies in place to protect the school, school board, teachers and participants involved with our tours.

Explorica by WorldStrides has an exceptional safety record, but in the unlikely event of injuries or damages resulting from our negligence, we have a \$50 million liability policy with Zurich Insurance Group that protects third parties such as the program leader and chaperones, as well as the school and school board. For additional information on our liability insurance, or to receive proof of coverage, please contact your Explorica program consultant or call **1.888.310.7120**.

Health and *mental health*

Explorica by WorldStrides has access to vetted health providers throughout our global network, and has assisted travelers with a wide variety of both emergent and pre-existing health needs.

AXA Behavioral Health

Our relationship with AXA Behavioral Health provides traveling participants telehealth access to a mental health professional from anywhere in the world.

- 24/7/365 telephonic access to provide confidential and immediate support no matter the global location
- Experienced, U.S.-based healthcare professionals (masters and doctoral-level clinicians) when traveling
- Coordination with local professionals for referrals to provide additional support, if needed

Doctors on Call

Our exclusive relationship with The George Washington University Medical Faculty Associates provides 24/7 access to medical care for all traveling participants. Through telehealth consultation, medical professionals are available to evaluate health related concerns and make recommendations for treatment accordingly.

- 24/7/365 telephonic access to provide medical consultations no matter the global location
- Dr. Sikka*, Chief of Innovative Practice at the George Washington University Department of Medicine, is part of our team as Medical Director

*Dr. Neal Sikka, The George Washington University Department of Emergency Medicine, and The George Washington University Medical Faculty Associates are independent medical providers. WorldStrides is not a medical service provider and its employees do not render medical care or treatment, nor does WorldStrides control the selection, training, or supervision of any medical provider.

Student *Code of Conduct*

Educate yourself about the culture you're visiting. Before you jet off across the world, do a little research. How do they dress? What do they eat? How do they say "hello"? This will help you adjust to the new environment and keep you from looking like a tourist.

X marks the spot. Be where you need to be when you need to be there. Always come prepared with local maps, essential phone numbers, and a watch, so it's easy for you to get to designated meeting spots on time. Scheduled activities are mandatory. If you need to be excused from an activity for any reason, please ask your program leader for permission in advance.

Pay attention to your surroundings. In a new environment, there's a lot to take in, but you need to stay alert. Be mindful of your safety and belongings at all times, so that you can avoid any mishaps while traveling.

Listen to your program leader and Tour Director. Your program leader is responsible for your safety, and your Explorica by WorldStrides Tour Director is an expert in every aspect of your destination. It is important that you listen to them and do what they say at all times. This means getting places on time, respecting curfew, and following all rules in place, so everyone can have a fun and safe experience.

Organize your free time responsibly. Throughout your trip you'll have periods of free time. During this time, you should always be with a small group, and never stray too far from your meeting place. Be sure to wear a watch, carry a map, and allot plenty of time to get to your meeting place early, so the rest of your group doesn't have to wait.

Respect the people and the culture. When you travel, think of yourself as a guest in someone else's home. Even if foods, clothes, or behaviors seem strange to you, be understanding and accepting of the culture.

Illegal activities will not be tolerated. The laws abroad may be very different from the laws back home, but no matter how strange they may seem to you, follow them! If not, you are subject to the legal consequences and immediate dismissal from the tour.

Consumption of hard alcohol will not be tolerated. We do not permit excessive drinking on our tours. The allowance of a glass of wine or beer at meals is up to the discretion of your program leader if you are over 18 and of legal drinking age in the country you are visiting.

Offer help and support to your peers, program leader and Tour Director. You're all in this together! Whether a friend needs a hand lifting a suitcase, your program leader needs to get everyone quiet to call roll, or your Tour Director needs help learning someone's name, lend a helping hand to whoever needs it.

Damages are your own personal responsibility. If you break it, you buy it. If you damage anything in your hotel or bus or incur any additional fees (e.g. phone calls, room service, etc.), you will be held responsible and required to pay for it. If you notice any damage upon arrival, notify your Tour Director immediately.

Experience the world and have fun! These rules are in place to keep your entire group safe, healthy and happy on tour. Now it's your job to get out there and enjoy the experience of a lifetime. *Bon voyage!*

Contact *information*

Emergency information

Explorica by WorldStrides emergency line +1.703.933.6143

General information

Teachers or program leaders 1.888.310.7120

Participants and parents 1.888.310.7121

Trip Mate Insurance

U.S. and Canada 1.800.888 7292

Outside U.S. and Canada +1.603.894.4710

Associations and *partners*

Associations

We're proud to be members in good standing with some of the top travel associations in the industry.

- United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA)
- Student Youth Travel Association (SYTA)
- National Tour Association (NTA)
- European Tour Operators Association (ETOA)
- The Better Business Bureau (BBB)
- International Air Transportation Association (IATA)
- World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation (WYSETC)
- British Educational Travel Association (BETA)
- Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA)

Partners

We partner with Exlog Global, a leading worldwide security and risk management organization, for additional assistance in evaluating global conditions. Exlog Global delivers intelligence-driven, integrated risk management solutions that enable multinational organizations to operate globally with confidence.

We also work directly with the best suppliers in the business, communicating with them constantly to ensure that the accommodations, activities, transportation and meals for our student groups are second to none. We collaborate with United Airlines, Marriott, Hard Rock Cafe and more to bring you the highest quality meals, transportation and accommodations available.