

Tips for Travel presented by NEMO

1. Be aware that for some of your students this may be their first time traveling, or first time traveling without family members. Chaperones need to be watchful of students who might not understand travel procedures, who may never have flown on a plane before, never stayed in a hotel before, roomed with others, etc.
2. Have a mandatory team meeting with all parents/guardians in advance of travel. Be explicit concerning behavior rules and consequences and enforce them on the trip! Discuss airline security procedures and what you cannot bring on board the plane.
3. Make yarn pompoms in team colors for your team's luggage. Only a few people need to stand at the airport baggage claim area and grab off the entire luggage for your team.
4. You may have better options booking airfare as a "school sports travel team", than as a regular "group". Ask your airline for this option.
5. If you have trouble finding flights to accommodate your size group, see if you can split it into smaller groups - as long as your school board approves, and you have enough chaperones, it's much easier to find flights to accommodate a smaller group.
6. Have a team leader collect all boarding passes/airline tickets from each person upon takeoff. You *really* don't want to have to chase across an airport to retrieve one that has been left behind in a seat back on a previous flight!
7. Bring some snacks for your team in a carry-on bag. It's not uncommon to get stuck on a runway for an hour or more, and not be able to exit the plane in order to eat.
8. Be sure to have the hotel and your airport transfer bus company phone numbers to call in case you are delayed.
9. If traveling by bus, ask to find out if you need to pay for your driver's expenses. We find it's nice to have the bus at our disposal for the entire time we're at a Regional, and request the same driver each time. We've had him come with us to the competitions and he loves FIRST!
10. Busses come in several sizes, and costs may vary according to the time of day your travel. Check around for prices.
11. If you can't fill your bus, check if any area teams have a few members that would like to attend the event. This can help pay for the bus and create relationships with other teams.
12. Bus drivers can often locate local deli's which will deliver food right to the bus. If your competition venue allows it, you can pre-order and eat on the bus, it saves time and money.
13. If traveling early in the morning, have someone bring a large cooler filled with breakfast items such as juice boxes, individually-wrapped danish, granola bars, etc. A "bag breakfast" to hand to each team member as they board. Be aware of food allergies (especially nuts). Bring several garbage bags to clean up your mess.
14. Make a spreadsheet of all team members who are traveling, alphabetically by last name. Include a column for each time you will be boarding the bus so you can check it off quickly and make sure you have everyone. Or assign a student a number and have them count off every time you are leaving a stop and DO NOT leave that stop until every student is accounted for!
15. Make ID cards for each team member traveling. Make an extra card with all the emergency info on it. Laminates and hang both from a lanyard. If someone gets separated from the team they will have adult cellphone numbers and the hotel name with them at all times. Give the card to parents staying behind as an emergency contact card for them.
16. Public transportation is pretty darned good, make use of it.
17. Be aware of your surroundings when choosing a hotel. If you don't know the area, call the local police department and explain that you are bringing a group of students to their city and ask if the area is safe. USE CAUTION - don't leave valuables out in the open, don't use the door catch to leave the door unlocked while you run next door, travel in groups, etc.
18. Look for hotels that offer free continental breakfast. It's easier, faster and cheaper to eat those than to go out to breakfast in the morning. Just be sure to alert the hotel way in advance that

you would like it opened early in the morning in order to get your whole group fed and out the door in time. Sometimes they have to order extra food and bring employees in earlier than usual, especially for Saturday mornings.

19. If you stay in a hotel with the breakfast area, ask if you can use that area one night to bring dinner into the hotel for your team. It's usually an unused space after breakfast time. Hotel managers can recommend a local restaurant or caterer who can deliver food for you. This is easier than finding a restaurant that can seat all of you at the same time.
20. Be sure to request that your rooms are all on the same floor if possible! It's a chaperone's nightmare to have to monitor rooms on several different floors. Or, put males on one floor and females on another. Be pleasantly persistent with hotel staff in terms of all of your rooms in one place, etc. Organize, plan, arrange room assignments, etc. EARLY to avoid the mad scramble if at all possible.
21. Be sure to make sure the hotel knows a group of high school students are coming. Have rules and boundaries set up. If you have a really rowdy group, lights out is a pretty good idea.
22. We put 4 students to a room (they can rotate sleeping on the floor or bring an air mattress, etc.). We suggest they choose roommates by sleeping habits (early to rise or night owls) and choose a schedule for showering so some shower at night so we can get out early in the morning. If you can get a hotel with suites, you will have more space for a group of four including two televisions sometimes, a frig and a microwave.
23. Prepare a rooming list with copies for each room in advance that lists who is in that room. Upon arrival at the hotel (or earlier if you can get the manager to let you know earlier) as you hand out room keys, write the room number next to the names and then have another NEMO help you fill in all the copies. Deliver them as soon as possible to all rooms so everyone has a copy (especially the chaperones!).
24. Upon check-in, ask to meet the manager and security supervisor. Introduce yourself so you establish a good relationship with the hotel from the start. This will help if you have any problems, and will also help them if your students act up.
25. Upon check-in, have a chaperone escort each group to their room and take a quick look around for anything that might be broken or missing or not up to par prior to the students settling into that room. If the management is alerted to the missing items at check-in, then you cannot be assessed damages upon check-out. Have the chaperone inspect the room before checking out as well.
26. Ask if there is a room where the team can meet each day for a quick meeting. Establish that the team will meet each night at a certain time, and announce wake-up times, etc. for the following day.
27. If you are going to Atlanta and staying near Centennial Park, throw in a football or some squishy foam balls (they will flatten and take up less room in your suitcase) to burn off student and adult energy at night and you'll be enjoying some springtime fresh air!
28. Pack an extra suitcase of board games – they actually get used!
29. Ask parents to make up “goodie bags” for each room – you can include face paint in team colors, candy, microwave popcorn, disposable cameras, etc.
30. If your school board allows, try and get a hotel with an indoor pool. It will help to burn off student energy at the end of the day.
31. Bring some extra "hospitality" items with you and let students know you have them available if they have forgotten anything (which they might be embarrassed to admit to someone else).
32. Look for alternatives to standard hotels. There may be corporate apartments in the area that will rent for a few days. These may be less expensive for your group.

Thanks to the following NEMOs for these travel tips: Ed (Team 191), George (294), Rich (PA Sr. Mentor), Judy (84), Kathie (173).