

France Trip Agenda February 5, 2019

Dates: We will be leaving Orlando Florida on June 4, 2019 and returning on June 11 or 12, 2019, but the end date is subject to change, so please keep being flexible.

Activities/Performances

ST. James and Brittany American and Memorial
Mont St. Michel
Pointe de Hoc
American Cemetery at Omaha Beach
Utah Beach Monument
Ste More Eglise
Luxembourg Gardens
Montmartre
Basilique de Sacré Cœur
Arc de Triomphe
Eiffel Tower
Notre Dame Cathedral
Latin Quarter
Louvre

Passports: We need a copy of your passport no later than February 22, 2019. This includes, anyone booking their own flights, but are participating in all the band activities. The travel company need them to book your flights, secure your hotels and all your activities. Please see Jill McAuley tonight to make sure she has your passport or let her know if you are waiting for it to come in the mail. We need your name as it appears on your passport and date of birth.

Currency:

Major credit cards and debit cards are accepted and ATM's are available. The cards with the "Smart Chip" are the best. **Make sure you have a credit card that will not incur international fees.**

The students should plan on \$30.00 to \$50.00 per day for spending money. They will be responsible for at least lunch each day. And they will need money to purchase souvenirs.

Exchange Rate: .85 Euro to \$1.00 U.S. Dollar

Exchanging Euros DOs

- Do go to your bank at home and exchange a small amount of cash (i.e. basic spending).
- Do pay with [credit cards](#) (if that was in your plans, anyway. Don't use this as an excuse to max out your Visa card, though). This is another area in which
- exchange rates are much more favorable. But check with your bank beforehand about their policies.
- Do check out the various [different credit cards](#) you might consider for traveling on the useful [Bankrate](#) site.
- Do check your account more frequently than at home in case of fraud.

Using ATMs in France

Before leaving, check with your bank that your [debit card](#) will work in France and tell them that you will be withdrawing money when you travel. Why? Well, they might just freeze your card if there is a sudden high use away from your home.

- An ATM in France is called a *distributeur*.
- ATMs have English language instructions.
- ATMs are all over France.
- Do use a bank ATM; if your card is swallowed up you can go in to retrieve it. And use a bank ATM as most of them don't charge fees while machines by so-called independent companies will do just that.
- Do check with your bank for the limit you can withdraw each day. However, French ATMs often impose their own limits which you will find out about as you travel.
- Do remember that ATM transactions come with fees. Your bank might charge you a flat fee, anything from \$2 to \$5 each time you use an out-of-network ATM.

They may also charge a percentage for the currency conversion, on top of the usual Visa and MasterCard 1% fee for all international transactions.

- Do withdraw larger amounts of cash if your bank charges a flat fee to avoid unnecessary extra fees.
- Do make sure you know your PIN before you leave by numbers as European keypads have numbers only.
- Do take an extra ATM card in case yours is stolen or gobbled up by the machine.
- Do think of getting a prepaid or stored value travel card. How they work is that you plan what you will need for the vacation, add a little more for unexpected extras and place that in a special account which you access only with the travel card you order.

Exchanging Euros DON'Ts

- Don't go to your bank and exchange all your money before your France or European trip. You will probably pay a higher rate than necessary, and you don't want to be running around with all that cash in your wallet.
- Don't exchange money at the bureau de change or such at the airport or in tourist areas. For one thing, they usually charge an exorbitant fee. For another thing, they might not give you the true going [exchange rate](#), but give you less in euros than your home-country currency is worth.
- Don't exchange money at your hotel; the rate will be better than at the above alternatives, but it's very unlikely to be good.
- Don't depend on traveler's checks. They make some people feel warm and fuzzy, but many French shops will not (and are not obligated to) accept them. In addition, you are at the mercy of the shop owner to give you a good exchange rate if the traveler's checks are in your home currency. And if you want to exchange them at a bank you may arrive when they are all closed. Most banks work on the usual shop hours so are closed for two hours in the middle of the day.

Electricity

Most European countries supply 200-250 volt, 50-cycle electricity, which is nearly twice the strength of the 110-120-volt, 60-cycle alternating current supplied in the United States. At the higher speed and on 50-cycle current, U.S. electrical appliances will not

operate normally and will be damaged or destroyed. Some U.S. stores do sell electrical items for use overseas, but be sure to check the voltage requirements before you buy; don't be misled by "adapters," which only enable you to plug your appliance into a European wall socket (unlike wall outlets in the United States, which accept plugs with two flat prongs, Europe accept plugs of varying styles, often with two or three round prongs). Ask for a transformer or converter, which converts high-voltage current into lower voltage for use with U.S. appliances. For your convenience, take as few electrical devices with you as possible. **Both an adapter and a transformer/converter will be needed to operate an appliance in Europe.**

Cell Phones:

Make sure you check with your Carrier on your international coverage. If the students keep their phones on airplane mode and use them **only when they are on wifi if applicable**, they will not incur any additional charges. Everyone will want their phones to take pictures. **We will not be making any special trips to cell phone stores or other suppliers.** There is an app called "**Whats App**".

What is WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is a popular messaging app with end-to-end encrypted instant messaging that can be used on various platforms, including Android, iPhone and Windows smartphones, and Mac or Windows PCs. The app uses your phone's internet connection to send messages so you can avoid texting fees.

Go to <https://www.imore.com/whatsapp> and it will tell you all about the **Whats App** and how to use it.

Luggage

We are still waiting to hear what airline we will be flying, this will determine the size of the luggage we can take. Most international flights you are allowed 2 check bags and one carry on piece of luggage. Your 2 checked bags will be a suitcase and your instrument. You will have to take your own uniform and it will lay flat in the bottom of your suitcase.

As for your instruments. All flutes, clarinets and trumpets will be part of your carry on bag if you play that instrument.

Medical Release Forms:

Please fill out the medical release form and have it notarized before you leave tonight. We have to have this form by February 8, 2019. Your child should have an insurance card or a copy of their insurance card to take with them on the trip.

We still have students and chaperones that owe money. Please make sure you are current on your payments. If you are not sure please check with Jill McAuley tonight or email her at treasurer@seminolehsband.org.

Lastly: As we get information, we will share it with you. We do not have hotel information or flight information as of yet.

Also, the travel company will not speak to any parents or students. Any questions you may have you can ask Jill McAuley or Candice Vild. If we do not know the answers we will try to find them out for you.