

Monday

We will depart at 8:30 PM. The bus is usually there between 8:00 and 8:15. Once there, we can begin loading baggage under the bus. Everything except one duffel bag, pillow and blanket should be stowed below. We will have a crowded bus, so the more we can do without on the bus, the more comfortable we will be. As we load up the bus, the students usually sit in the back and the adults in the front. I try to sit somewhere midst the students near the front of the class. The bus will be equipped with a bathroom, but I strongly encourage its use be avoided. Not to be overly dramatic, but it can generate a smell that makes sitting in the back of the bus rather unpleasant. We will make stops about every 4 hours at the most to help that problem. Adults should be prepared to be somewhat cold on the bus. The back of the bus is always much warmer than the front and to keep the back relatively comfortable often means the front gets cold. We will wrestle with trying to find a happy median for all concerned. We often watch a movie on the trip out and many will begin asking shortly after we depart about when we will start the movie. Experience has shown that the kids are not ready to settle down and watch a movie for quite a while. I usually wait until we have made our first stop, it is dark outside and after 9:30 PM or some combination of those. The rule will be that when the movie is over, it is quiet time until morning. I will not force anyone to sleep, but they must be courteous of those who do wish to attempt sleep and not talk or make noise.

Tuesday

We will arrive at Gettysburg, PA somewhere around 7:00 AM at a restaurant called The Pike. The restaurant serves a buffet breakfast. Those who finish eating first should work at freshening up right away so we can work the whole group through the bathrooms. Remember throughout our trip, appointments are locked in and force our punctuality. If it is not listed as an appointment, we have more flexibility. When you hear it is time to go, that is not a signal that it is time to visit the gift shops. I know that sounds blunt, but we need to keep a schedule. I will try to give you advance notice of when you will have time to visit gift shops and how long you will have.

We will then head down the road to the Gettysburg National Battlefield parking lot and meet our tour guide for Gettysburg for an 8:00 appointment.. I have worked with Kavin many times and found him very enjoyable. I think you will appreciate him as well. He will join us on our bus and direct us around the battlefield from the bus. We will make several stops around the battlefield and he will provide us with more information than our clouded minds will be able to absorb. At the end of his time with us, we will spend some time at the museum and gift shop found at the visitor's center of the battlefield. We will load up the bus and leave Gettysburg at 11:00 AM.

We will stop for lunch at the Montgomery Mall which has a very nice food court. All our meal locations are designed to try and give everyone as much choice as possible.

Next we have an appointment at the National Cathedral. It is an awe inspiring building and an excellent first stop for our stay in DC. A docent will lead us around the building and I have found they can really add to the tour or not contribute much. There is a gift shop in the cathedral, but it is mostly high end goods and pretty pricey. If you have some money already burning a hole in your pocket, you might find some beautiful things here.

When we leave the Cathedral we will travel down Massachusetts Avenue, also known as Embassy Row. You will have the opportunity to see many of the embassies of nation with whom the United States has diplomatic relations.

We will then stop at the north side of the White House for the group to get pictures of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. This will be our only interaction with the White House. There are tours of the mansion, but I have found that the time necessary for security, manner in which you are shuttled through the mansion and lack of guide information combine to make that option quite lacking in appeal.

Once we finish at the mansion, we head to Old Country Buffet for a buffet style meal. Again, a good variety of food should meet everyone's needs.

After we eat, we head to our hotel and check in. After a bit of acclimating, we gather the students in the hallway to pass out their t-shirts and have them sign each other's shirts. After that is completed, we should have some time for those who wish to swim.

Each evening, I will set a curfew for the students based on our arrival time at the hotel and the time needed to be up the next day. I appreciate parental help in assisting the students in working with curfew times. After the quiet time curfew, I place a piece of tape on each student room. This is as much for the students as any other reason. A security guard will come on duty each evening to watch the hallways for us. I receive a report in the morning on each student room and any problems that needed to be dealt with.

Wednesday

Breakfast buffet is served in the first floor restaurant each morning. They usually are open at 6:30 AM. Groups may want to divide eating and morning hygiene to get all through the process. Parental assistance to make sure students are up and about is greatly appreciated here. We usually leave the hotel around 7:30, but it can vary.

We begin the day with a lecture in the Supreme Court building. They are very sensitive about noise in the one waiting area, so your help in maintaining quiet there will be very helpful.

We will then cross the street, to the Capitol to meet with Congressman Mike Pence. We will have a photo with the Congressman, have a chance to talk with him a bit and then he will take us on a tour of the Capitol.

Lunch is at Pentagon City. It is a very nice mall with many food court options.

After lunch we head to Arlington National Cemetery and tour the cemetery. This will include visiting JFK's grave, his family, as well as his brother. Also we will visit Arlington House which sits on the hill and once served as the mansion for grounds and Robert E. Lee's home. We will proceed to the Tomb of the Unknowns to watch the changing of the guard ceremony. After the guard changing ceremony, Wyneken's wreath-laying ceremony will follow. We will then wind our way back down the hills of the cemetery and board the Metro, which is the DC subway system, for a ride back to Pentagon City mall. We will eat supper at the food court of the mall and then get picked back up by our bus for a ride to the Twilight Tattoo.

Weather permitting, we head back into the city to watch a military pageant at Ft. McNair. This event can get rained out, so we will evaluate conditions and possible alternatives as needed.

Back to the hotel, curfews established and Wednesday is over.

Thursday

The same routine is followed each morning at the hotel.

We have an early appointment to ride to the top of the Washington Monument. We will get a wonderful view of just about every place we have visited or will visit during our time in Washington. We won't all make it up at once as the elevator only holds so many, but once we are up at the top, we can stay as long as we want. I'll start rounding people to head down as needed.

We will cross back over to the other side of the Capitol (I don't know if we will be walking here or board the bus), for our group picture.

A visit to the FDR Memorial follows our time at the monument. It is a large walk through memorial, much different than many typical memorials. And then we visit the Pentagon Memorial, dedicated to the victims of the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon.

We then go back to the Capitol for our group picture. This is a quick on/off drop location.

Lunch could be at the Reagan building, the OPO or Union Station, which all have nice food courts.

Our afternoon starts at the Newseum. This is a museum to news and the media. It has extensive information showing how significant events in our history have been documented. The tour starts with a 4-D movie which the kids all love.

World War II, Vietnam and Korean War Memorials are visited after the Newseum. These memorials all circle the Reflecting Pool between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial.

After some serious thought about the sacrifices made for us, we end the day at ESPNZone. Everyone will be given a card with play time on it for the various sports-oriented games in the lower level. At some point, they will direct us to a room where our evening meal waits. This meal is usually mini-cheeseburgers, chicken tenders, meatless pasta, tator-tots, salad and dessert. We will leave once the game time is done or we are exhausted.

Back to the hotel with Thursday in the books.

Friday

We will take a ride out to Mount Vernon and spend the morning touring George Washington's home and estate. There will be a line to get into the mansion, but it will only get longer so if we want to see the mansion, we start the day here in this line. There is an excellent educational experience building with a good movie that should be factored into the time spent on the grounds.

We then head back into DC for lunch at either the Reagan building or the OPO. Once we are in the building where we are eating, the students are to hook up with an adult willing to go where they wish to go for the afternoon. We have the afternoon (approximately noon to 3:50) to visit the various Smithsonian museums along the Mall. Groups may also visit the National Archives or the Holocaust Museum at this time. I will give you maps to help you find your way around the area. We need to meet at the Air and Space Museum (one of the Smithsonians) at 3:50 to line up for our IMAX movie at 4:00.

After the movie, we head back to Pentagon City for our evening meal. Then we board the bus for our night tour. We will head to the Air Force Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Kennedy Center and Iwo Jima Memorial. That will conclude our time in DC and we will head home.

We have a few options for changing into sleeping attire. We can either change into such clothes at the mall and be set, or we can alternate changing at the back of the bus with adults holding blankets up for privacy, or we can wait until we get to the first stop and change there. We will discuss this more as we approach this part of our trip.

Saturday

We arrive back at Wyneken around 7:00 our time, tired but I hope awed and overwhelmed by what we have seen.