

HARVARD

ALUMNI TRAVELS



Harvard Alumni Travels Frequently Asked Questions

Below are general answers to our most frequently asked questions and may vary for certain trips. The details for your specific program can be found in the program terms and conditions.

General Questions

1. What is Harvard Alumni Travels?

Harvard Alumni Travels is a small team of travel planners within the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) based in Cambridge. The HAA does not itself conduct tours, but instead partners with several different tour operators in order to offer a broad range of educational travel programs. Tour participants contract directly with tour operators, although the HAA is available to act as a liaison with tour operators should participants have any questions or concerns. The HAA is not responsible for performing any of the tour operator's obligations.

2. Do you have to be a Harvard alum to participate?

No. While our trips are designed for Harvard alumni and their traveling companions, you do not need a Harvard affiliation to travel with us.

3. What is a "Harvard exclusive" trip?

This means that Harvard is the only sponsoring organization and there will not be travelers representing other institutions.

4. What are your group sizes?

Our land-based tours can range from 8 to 35 travelers. Cruises generally range from 16 to 150 passengers and are usually cosponsored with other educational institutions and membership groups with common interests. On cosponsored trips, all travelers experience the same program and can interact with each other as part of the same group.

5. Are programs guaranteed to operate?

Each trip has a minimum group size required to operate. If we do not get enough participants, we may need to cancel the program. In that event, registered travelers will receive a refund of their tour payments.

6. What is the role of the Harvard Study Leader?

The Harvard Study Leader, typically an active or emeritus faculty member, not only delivers an engaging lecture program during the trip but accompanies the group on daily excursions and during meals. The Study Leader enhances the educational content provided by the local guide(s) by providing additional explanations and observations relating to their academic expertise and life at Harvard.

7. Who else staffs your trips?

The *tour director* is responsible for logistics while on tour. In each destination on the itinerary, *local guide(s)* discuss history, culture, nature, current events, and everyday life. On larger trips we might send a *host*, usually a staff member from the HAA to support the program.

8. What happens if a Study Leader cancels?

If a Study Leader cancels due to illness or a conflict with other University responsibilities, we will make every effort to find an appropriate replacement. If a replacement cannot be confirmed in time for departure, we may arrange for a local speaker at your destination or ask your local guide(s) to provide additional content. On cosponsored cruises, there will be speakers from other organizations to provide the educational program. In rare cases we may have to pull a Study Leader if we do not get enough travelers. Registered participants are bound to the terms and conditions regardless of whether we send a Study Leader.

9. What is a Family Program?

These trips are especially designed for multigenerational groups of travelers, with a range of interactive learning experiences to engage participants of all ages. These programs are open to all travelers and are designated as “Family” due to the programming offered. The minimum recommended age requirement is five years old.

Tours and cruises not specifically designated as Family Programs may be suitable for older children. If you are interested in taking your child on a nonfamily program, please contact our office to discuss further. Regardless of age, children must pay full price unless otherwise noted.

10. Can you accommodate dietary restrictions?

We are usually able to accommodate most reasonable dietary restrictions if notified in advance of departure.

Reservations and Payment

11. How do I register for a trip?

To confirm your space on a program, please submit a completed registration form and the required deposit (usually \$1,000 per person). You may register by completing an online registration form linked to the trip web page (we will reach out by phone for your deposit information), by mailing a registration form with your check (made payable to Harvard Alumni Travels) or credit card information, or by calling us at 617-496-0806.

12. How quickly do trips fill up? Is there a deadline for booking?

It depends! Since reservations are confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis, we recommend that you talk to us if you are interested in a trip but not quite ready to book. Single accommodations are frequently limited. To check on availability, please email haatravels@harvard.edu or call 617-496-0806.

13. What is a prebooking?

We often publish information about trips that are still in development, allowing you to “preregister.” If we have not finalized the details of your trip at the time of your registration, your deposit is fully refundable. Once the pricing, itinerary, and terms and conditions have been set, we will send you the official program information. After a two-week review window, the regular cancellation policy will apply.

14. May I use a credit card for final payment?

Payment terms are set by the tour operator. Some accept credit cards for final payment, others do not.

15. Can you accommodate single travelers?

Yes! Most trips have a limited number of single spaces available on a first-come, first-served basis for an additional fee (single supplement). If you plan to travel solo, booking early is the best way to ensure a space. If you are interested in sharing a room, you may request to be matched with a roommate; however, if no roommate is assigned you will be responsible for the single supplement.

16. Is airfare included in the cost of the program?

Airfare from your home city to the destination is generally not included in the trip price. There are some exceptions where trips include the option of an “air-inclusive” package. Some programs have internal flights within the destination as part of the scheduled itinerary, which may or may not be included in the trip price. Please refer to the trip-specific terms and conditions for more information.

17. Will you help me book my flights?

Harvard Alumni Travels does not have an air coordinator on staff, but our tour operator partners are happy to assist or advise travelers in making flight arrangements. You will receive recommended flight information from the tour operator after registering for your trip. When making airline arrangements, we recommend against booking nonrefundable airfare.

18. What information will I receive to help me prepare for my trip?

You will receive a series of documents for your trip. After tour initial trip deposit, you will receive an email confirmation packet from the Harvard Alumni Travels office including a confirmation letter, a copy of the terms and conditions, and information on trip insurance. You will also receive a mailing from your tour operator with information on arranging flights, making your final payment, and other important tasks and logistics. Prior to departure, you will receive a final mailing with your final itinerary, packing suggestions, and other last-minute details to help you prepare.

19. Can I skip part of the trip?

On most programs, there is some flexibility to opt out of certain activities; however, since trips are sold as a full package, portions cannot be paid for à la carte. If you arrive late to a trip or must depart early, we are not able to provide refunds for unused portions of a trip. We strongly encourage travelers to purchase trip insurance (see below).

Cancellations and Insurance

20. What is the cancellation policy?

The cancellation policy varies by trip but typically there is a fee schedule that increases as you get closer to departure. You can find the full cancellation policy for your trip in the program terms and conditions. Travelers are bound to the published cancellation policy after registering for a trip.

21. Do you provide trip insurance?

Harvard provides all travelers with a basic emergency medical evacuation insurance policy. In an emergency while on tour, this would cover your transport to the *nearest appropriate medical facility*.

We also recommend that travelers purchase trip cancellation insurance. Our recommended provider is Redpoint Resolutions, though you are welcome to purchase from any company of your choice. You will receive an informational brochure regarding Redpoint's services in your confirmation mailing. (Note: If you purchase a trip insurance policy from Redpoint within 14 days of booking your trip, the preexisting medical conditions exclusion is waived, and you are also eligible to purchase the "Cancel for Any Reason" upgrade.)

Activity Levels and Accessibility

22. How active are the trips? And what are the physical and health requirements?

Because of the nature of travel and the inquisitive nature of our travelers, our itineraries can be full and active. As a general guide, in order to enjoy your travel experience, we recommend that your level of fitness, stamina, and overall ability match the activity requirements for each trip. All tours feature varied activities that require a related level of physical fitness. We have assigned each trip with an Activity Level Rating (1–5) along with a description of the trip-specific rigors. You will find an outline of the various activity levels on our [Activity Ratings page](#).

Find detailed information regarding trip-specific activity expectations within the "What to Expect" section on every trip web page. These detailed descriptions explain the rigors of trip activities, as well as provide some specifics regarding the amount of walking, number of hotel changes, terrain, weather and altitude conditions, internal flights, and more. This should be reviewed carefully to ensure you have chosen the appropriate trip matching your capabilities.

23. Are programs accessible to people with disabilities?

Every program varies. Please contact our office to discuss your needs and the details regarding limitations; we will work to determine if the program is right for you.

Many trip itineraries can be challenging for those with physical limitations—rigors can include cobblestone streets, uneven stairs with no railings, getting on and off zodiacs, ships without elevators, etc. Some historic sites have very limited access for those with impaired mobility, providing few benches or rest stops. Anyone requiring significant assistance should bring a traveling companion, who will be responsible for providing support.