



## Benefits to Student Travel

*by Joyce E. Pennington*

Precision Dance Teams are really traveling often these days. It seems like every team is planning a special trip to New Orleans, Santa Fe, NYC, Disney, a cruise or California. Why go through all of the hard work for fund-raising, record keeping, planning and parent questions? The answer is simple: traveling is one of the most educational and inspirational experiences you can offer to your team. You may not be going to a destination full of history and museums (although this is a great reason to travel!), but you will be implementing simple lessons of life skills through travel.

Many students have never stayed in a hotel, however, knowing the procedures to check in and check out can be part of their learning curve. Each student will have to take the time to organize their packing list, prepare for the weather and for the various activities noted in the itinerary. The preparation for travel alone will stimulate each team member to think independently and assume personal responsibility.

Next, the students will have to prepare for meals and personal expenses that are not included in their package. They will have to budget their money so that it will not be depleted before the end of the trip. They will need to figure tax and gratuities at each meal and make wise food choices (we hope!).

As they prepare for the contest or performance day, they must pack their day bags with all costume and prop pieces and inventory each item as it is going in and coming out. They will also need to remember hair care items and makeup that will be required for their performance. If they are wise, they will also pack a backup to tights, bobby pins, safety pins, sports bras, and more. This way if an item is lost or misplaced (as it can do in a room of four girls), there will be a backup. A good idea is to put their initials with a permanent marker on the tag of each item (since their roommates will have the same items).

Students will also learn courtesy and poise as they are introduced to new people and greeting those who are in charge of the event. They should speak confidently when introduced and extend the courtesy of a handshake and eye contact when meeting special persons.

They will also learn not be so co-dependent on parents or others when they are away from home. Wifi in some hotel rooms will be an additional fee and will incur daily charges. Remind them that most hotels will offer free Wifi in their lobby area.

Directors should try to plan a special educational stop on the trip. This could mean a performance at a children's hospital or nursing home, a visit to a historical site, or a special dance or theater related workshop with a local artist/instructor.

As the students check out of the hotel, they will assume responsibility for personal charges such as room service, wifi or movies. Some hotels will allow the directors to have these services blocked on the rooms as the bill could soar to un-affordable heights!

When students return, have them write down ten things they learned that they did not know or experience prior to the trip. You will be amazed at the invaluable lessons learned through travel. Choose a destination that will motivate your team to work harder throughout the season and reward them with a delightful and interesting performance or contest trip.