

Japan Trip Update #3 – ACTION REQUIRED

December 14, 2016

We are now approaching the first of a few critical points in our trip planning and preparation. This step involves **three action items**:

1. Payment of full airfare (less deposit) to Air Canada through our group agent, the Flight Centre, (less deposit), **no later than January 5th**
2. Submitting passport and name information to me (Jeff) **before December 19th**
3. Signing and returning informed consent letter **no later than January 5th**

In order to assist you in this process, here are a few details you need to know:

Airfare Costs

Because we added several people to the group at the last minute before locking in with our agent, we ended up with three different price points. 15 participants are locked in at \$1266.07, 8 are locked in at \$1347.60, and 2 are locked in at \$1434.60.

While the difference is minimal, we do not want to penalize those who, for whatever reason, were not able to commit fully to the trip before the final non-refundable deposit deadline of November 8, 2016. So, a kind donor has agreed to pay the difference for those in the two higher price categories, bringing everyone's cost to the same amount at \$1266.07.

In practical terms, this may mean that you are one of the 10 people who will see an invoice for more than \$1166.07 (attached to this email message). Please be assured that you will be refunded the difference (i.e. \$168.53 for those charged \$1334.60, and \$81.53 for those charged \$1247.60) on January 6th, or after all payment have been made, whichever comes first. Thanks for your patience (assuming there is some!) on this detail. We know this is expensive and we don't want people out of pocket any more or longer than is necessary.

On the invoice attached to this message, you will see the contact number for the person at the Flight Centre who is handling the payments. Please read the invoice and contact Tara Halupa to complete action item #1 above. This MUST HAPPEN before January 5th.

Action item #2 requires that you send me the proper name (as on passport) and passport number of your child as soon as possible, but **no later than December 19th**. Please send this by email to jeph.hopcins@gmail.com with the subject line "Japan trip info."

Informed Consent

The informed consent letter (attached) outlines the known and possible risks associated with this trip. While Japan is a safe place, there are risks associated with any trip anywhere. More than anything, we want you to know:

- While this trip is being organized for learners who attend PSII and may even fulfill inquiry learning goals for some people, because it is extra-curricular, this trip is not in any way sponsored by or endorsed by the Board that governs Pacific School of Innovation and Inquiry. You will be entrusting your kids to Jeff Hopkins, not the Learningstorm Education Society Board.
- When you sign this form, you are saying that you, as an authorized parent/guardian, are willing to have your child be exposed to those risks outlined in the form.
- While it is virtually impossible to waive liability, this form is intended to protect Jeff Hopkins and adult chaperones, as long as they are not operating in a negligent manner.

Signing this form and returning it (sign and scan or fill-out online and email please) before January 5th is **action item #3**. There will be more action items in the next update, but this is all for now.

Required and Recommended Additional Costs (shared and individual)

Costs besides airfare associated with this trip are mostly approximate at this time, but should be very close to those estimates. Some costs will be entirely individual (i.e. they could vary so much from person to person that we will let people pay as they go to meet their own needs/preferences), and some will be paid ahead of time as a group where this makes sense and is possible.

Group Costs

- **Japan Rail 7-day pass** (activating on day 3): approximately \$380.00
- **Accommodation:** approximately \$600.00 (including all taxes)
- **Transfer from airport to accommodation upon arrival and some minor local travel:** approximately \$25

Because these costs are standard to everyone, and because we need to pay for much of it in lump sums, we will pay as a group. The rail pass will be bought in mid-January (as we watch the Canadian dollar get stronger), as will accommodation, as we confirm exact numbers of participants after January 5th.

Individual Costs

Food: budget approximately \$300

Pocket money: budget varies

Travel/Medical Insurance: budget varies (from \$0 to approx. \$250, depending on parent wishes, on personal benefits programs, on membership to organizations offering insurance, and insurance carrier)

Attractions: We may take in two or three attractions that have entry fees, These are typically quite low in Japan, and not everyone will necessarily want to do the same thing all the time. Budget approximately \$30 (max)

When group and individual costs are added together, we are estimating a total cost at \$2600.00, not including medical/travel insurance (really varies per person) or pocket money. We do not anticipate any need for pocket money for any reason other than gifts, etc. Food is usually the most bought item on these trips!

Fundraising Reimbursement

As fundraising efforts are ongoing, each participant will receive a reimbursement from what has been raised in two parts. What we have raised by February will be distributed before we leave (planning for February 15). Whatever comes in after February will be distributed after our return, but no later than April 15, except for any funds that are raised after that date.

As of today, we have raised approximately \$2700. This will be distributed on the basis of participant involvement in the fundraisers that have taken place, as mentioned in our earlier updates. This will be very transparent, so everyone can see how these decision are made. We recognize that some participants are focusing on their own, personal fundraising (i.e. paid jobs) and may not be participating in the group effort to the same degree that some others might be.

Chaperone Information

While this is not a Board-sanctioned activity, because of recent legal issues with international student trips and liability (e.g. the Nanaimo extra-curricular school trip to Nice, France during which there was an a civilian attack and a subsequent unplanned early return), we have received legal advice on who our chaperon should be in order to limit liability as much as possible. For that reason, the second chaperon will be Helen Hopkins – Jeff’s spouse. Happily, Helen has been to Japan before and can really help our fairly large group get around more

easily. Also, because she and Jeff can share accommodation, costs will be reduced as compared to a female chaperon who would require separate accommodation. Thanks to all those who offered to be or to find chaperones.

Flight Information and Rough Itinerary

You will see this eventually in your Air Canada itinerary, but here is our flight information, as well as a rough idea of where we plan to be when. This is subject to change as we lock down our accommodation and specific activity plans.

- 08 March AC8062 Victoria to Vancouver 11:30am /11:56am
- 08 March AC3 Vancouver to Tokyo (Narita) 1:50pm / 4:40pm (we arrive on the 9th)
- 18 March AC4 Tokyo (Narita) to Vancouver 7:00pm / 11:40am
- 18 March AC8069 Vancouver to Victoria 2:20pm / 2:48pm

NOTE: Because there is a 17-hour time difference between Victoria and Japan (until daylight savings time kicks in on March 12 after which the difference is 16 hours), we do not arrive in Tokyo until 4:40 pm on March 9th. When we return home, we arrive in Victoria on the 18th, actually several hours before we left Tokyo!

Right now, our anticipated itinerary looks like this:

- March 9: arrive Tokyo (Narita)
- March 10: Tokyo
- March 11: Tokyo
- March 12: travel to Kyoto (JR); overnight Kyoto
- March 13: Kyoto
- March 14: day trip to Nara (JR); overnight Kyoto
- March 15: Kyoto
- March 16: travel to Tokyo; overnight Tokyo
- March 17: Tokyo
- March 18: depart Tokyo (Narita)

Planning/Preparation Meeting Attendance

We (the participants and Jeff) have been meeting every Thursday from 12:30 to 1:00 at school. We have had 9 meetings so far. It is absolutely mandatory that each participant attend each meeting, especially from this point on, as we do not want to have anyone in the dark on the actual trip. Part of the reason for this trip is to help participants take responsibility for

themselves to the degree that they are able. We will never put anyone in a situation beyond their ability, but we do expect a minimum level of group involvement before we travel together to the other side of the globe.

Now that we have a few more duck in a row, I will do a better job of sending these email updates as well. Please also look at the school website at learningstorm.org (under "Current PSII Learners -> Japan Trip 2017" for old updates and related information.