

Travel Guidelines & Procedure Manual

I. Purpose:

The objective of this guideline is to provide clarity on the safe and secure travel plan itinerary for the AFS participants on all programs as well as host families, Chapter volunteers & Staff members. An effective travel plan itinerary is essential for maintaining the ability to negotiate well collaterally with all parties, keeping in mind the travel plan restrictions for International participants residing in India. .

II. Scope

- Travel with respective host families is strongly suggested only after 1st month of arrival.
- No travel will be permitted on the last month of the exchange. All travel plans will be declined for the last month of the exchange. The objective of the same is to let the student have enough time to spend with the host family, host friends and host school and wish them goodbyes. This is a bond, they will carry forward and it is important to spend this time in the host family.
- Travel plan with Chapter volunteers is permitted only with necessary approval given by the AFS India National Office (NO).
- Individual optional travel itinerary for attending additional event such as partner school activities or individual travel plan apart from the program requires full permission of the Travel Waiver and consent of the partner country & natural parents. This travel plan is permitted only after 3 months of stay.

III. Restricted Areas of Travel for International Participants Residing in India

- No Host Student can travel to the states of Goa and Jammu & Kashmir or certain areas under conflict in North Eastern Region. AFS India has the right to decline the travel plan assessing the location of the proposed travel itinerary at any given point in time
- Prior permission of minimum 20 working days has to be taken towards any Travel Plan Itinerary on **Restricted/Protected areas**. Note: AFS India has the right to decline the travel after evaluating the location in discussion This is referred to the Eastern States of India & near Chinese & Pakistan Border.
- High volatile places of political unrest, the travel consent will be cleared based on case to case basis, depending on the mode of travel and other vitalities.
- ¹Specific areas of certain states, requires to seek approval for travel to any portion of these states. Travels to these states are likely to be accepted, as long as the students are not visiting areas which require special permission of the Indian authorities.
 - ☐ Border areas of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan & Sikkim
 - ☐ Tension areas of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana.
- ²Beyond the threat from terrorism and insurgencies, demonstrations and general strikes, or “bandh,” often cause major inconvenience and unrest. These strikes can result in the stoppage of all transportation and tourist-related services, at times for 24 hours or more.

¹ <http://www.travelindiasmart.com/restrictedareas.php>

² <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/india.html>

Note: Foreign nationals are urged to obey such curfews and travel restrictions and to avoid demonstrations and rallies as they have the potential for violence, especially immediately preceding and following political rallies, elections, and religious festivals (particularly when Hindu and Muslim festivals coincide). Tensions between castes and religious groups can also result in disruptions and violence. In some cases, demonstrators specifically block roads near popular tourist sites and disrupt train operations in order to gain the attention of Indian authorities; occasionally vehicles transporting tourists are attacked in these incidents.

IV. Guidelines:

- A travel plan must be informed to AFS India National Office (NO), **through chapter volunteers**, at least **7 working days** in prior. If the travel plan has been organized by the host family, it does receive the consent approval from AFS India; however the concerned travel plan has to be intimated.
Note: The understanding in regards with, to be informed in prior, is to ensure that the concerned natural parents and partner country share the necessary travel plan approval & consent.
- **Travel Waiver:** If any travel waiver is not received on time by the partner country, it will lead to the decline of the travel of the student on the last moment or hour as well. Also, the travel plan itinerary needs to be shared with specific details such as emergency contact, mode of travel, place of stay & the places ought to be visited in the concerning travel plan itinerary.
Note: The host participants will submit plans in advance and will not pay for any travel which has not yet been approved. The management of risks of illness & injury will be done by AFS Medical Plan.
- **Activity Waiver:** If the participant is participating in high risk outdoor activities, whether on any travel plan with school/host family/individual plan requires an activity waiver in prior from the partner country. If there's a delay in receiving the activity waiver, then the concerning activity will **Not** be permitted on the same.
(Examples: Paragliding, skydiving, diving, trekking, rafting, river side backpacking, water craft, Mountain Biking, Rock Climbing, Expeditioning etc. This is in regards to any activity which is beyond the normal regular activities.)
- **Unauthorised** travel will lead the student in issuing a warning letter. Medical insurance coverage needs to be explained to the students before participants travel, with the understanding of travel and activity waivers.
- AFS India is not responsible for any loss of personal belongings of the student while travelling with the staff/host family/school/volunteers etc.
- The participant must carry Passport and FRRO copy while travelling within India. Students will be solely responsible in keeping Passport and FRRO documents safely. This acts as a valid identify proof in India for the host students.
- One day intimation before any travel plan will not be considered for approval.

Disclaimer: In case of any unforeseen instance, travel permission can be declined without notice. National Office will not bear any cancellation charges with regards to the trip costing. Also, anything which is not mentioned in this document needs to have clarity with the National Office.

V. Guidelines for Independent Travel

- Host students are **strongly discouraged** from taking more than **4-5 independent travels** in a year. This includes travel for **optional** national/regional educational, excursion and cultural activities offered by AFS India
- Background:
 - During a hosting year, a host students have many opportunities to travel with their host family, host school, and other events of AFS India
 - Usually, there are opportunities for the host student to have- AFS India optional tour, host school tour, 1 or 2 AFS India offered educational events + Taj trip in the end of the program, thus, there are plenty opportunities for the student to also explore the country other than their host city. Additionally, a small 1-day excursion is arranged during the mid-point orientation as well
- AFS India will have the right to decline a travel assessing the support, chapter / host school performance and safety and security of the host students
- No long independent travels would be permitted – independent travels more than 1 week are discouraged
- Travels with a strong learning objective such as some educational opportunity or symposiums, or some specific cultural events are encouraged over just “outing” independent travels

VI. Guideline for Natural Family Visits

- Natural Family visits are discouraged in the first six months of the exchange
- AFS India will assess the on-going performance of student in host community before permitted natural family visit
- Natural family visit in the last month of exchange is strongly discouraged
- Natural family will not expect the host school or host family to host them during the time period
- Natural family, if they plan for an independent travel and want to take along their child, will have to check for the child’s availability with the host community in advance
- It is strongly discouraged that the natural family first books the tickets and then informs the National Offices of AFS. Such requests are highly discouraged and natural parents should follow proper line of communication and permission should be sought in advance before securing the tickets. If the same is not followed, there is a high possibility of the travel getting declined
- **Program Release at the end of Program:** In case the natural family want to have a program release and extend the stay of the host student and then plan for their own natural family travel, this can be done on the very last day of the camp held by AFS India. The natural family member, above the age of 20 years, must come personally to pickup the student at the venue of the camp at the suggested timing by AFS India.
 - **Note:** the resident permit of the host students is for a specific period, this is called FRRO in India. Even visa is for a specific period of the student. In case of program release at the end of the program, it will be the responsibility of the natural family and student to get the extension procedure done and they will bear the extra cost for the same
 - The host family is not obliged to host after the end of the program

Note: AFS India will have the right to evaluate the situation, the safety and security and likewise decline or permit any travel plans included in this document.