



SPARTAN  
**PATHWAYS TRAVEL**  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI



# ESSENTIAL EUROPE

2025 GRADUATION TOUR

US DEPARTURE DATE: **MAY 7, 2025**

LAND TOUR START DATE: **MAY 8, 2025**

ROME RETURN DATE: **MAY 24, 2025**

ATHENS RETURN DATE: **MAY 29, 2025**

**LAND PACKAGE FROM: \$5,465**

Visit our website [www.aesu.com/msu-gradtrip](http://www.aesu.com/msu-gradtrip) for more details and to book.

# START YOUR ADVENTURE

Dear Michigan State Student:

## **Congratulations on your approaching graduation!**

Have you thought about how you will celebrate this milestone? The Michigan State University Alumni Office is pleased to announce a very special travel opportunity: The Essential Europe Tour. Both fun and fascinating, this trip is a wonderful reward for your years of hard work.

In conjunction with AESU, a tour operator specializing in travel for 21-35 year olds, we invite you on a comprehensive tour of Europe open exclusively to graduating seniors from MSU and select peer institutions.

The 18-day, 9-country trip, with an optional 5-day extension to Southern Italy and Greece, includes all of Europe's 'must-see' sites, such as Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower, and the Parthenon. Past travelers have commented "This trip was amazing - I saw the most beautiful sites," and "Thank you for a great summer. Not only was this a vacation, it was a wake-up call for me to see the world!"

Curiosity doesn't end with your degree; why not continue your commitment to life-long learning through travel, which provides unparalleled opportunities for hands-on education? On this Essential Europe tour, visit exciting destinations, learn more about our world, relax, and unwind on a great holiday, all while celebrating your recent achievement with fellow graduates.

We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you to our Michigan State alumni family.

Sincerely,

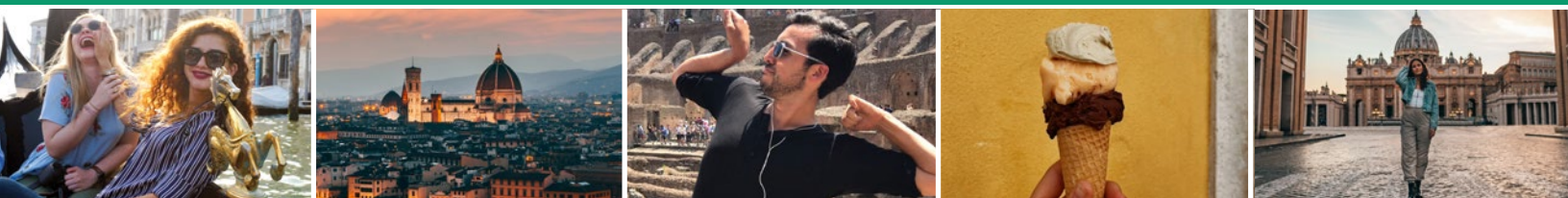


Regina Cross  
Director, Spartan Pathways Travel Program  
MSU Alumni Office

Travel insurance is compulsory. The MSU Alumni Office offers travel insurance.  
Please visit this website for information or to purchase insurance: <https://my.travelinsure.com/spartans>

“ THIS EXPERIENCE CHANGED MY LIFE FOREVER AND I WOULD DO IT AGAIN A MILLION TIMES IF I COULD. ”

FORMER GRAD TRIP TRAVELER



# ESSENTIAL EUROPE

18 DAYS PLUS AN OPTIONAL 5-DAY EXTENSION TO SOUTHERN ITALY & GREECE

## COUNTRIES VISITED



ENGLAND  
FRANCE  
BELGIUM  
HOLLAND  
GERMANY  
AUSTRIA  
ITALY  
VATICAN CITY  
GREECE

## PROGRAM ACCOMMODATIONS

This trip has been carefully designed to feature these fantastic inclusions and highlights:



For a glossary of these experiences, visit:  
[www.aesu.com/aspects-awt](http://www.aesu.com/aspects-awt)



## ACTIVITY LEVEL: MODERATE

For more details, please visit:  
<https://www.aesu.com/activity-levels-awt/>

## WHAT'S INCLUDED?

### 18-Day Land Package Transportation and Lodging

- 16 nights in superior tourist class hotels or better, 2-share rooms with private bath/shower
- All intra-Europe transportation by air-conditioned motor coach
- Eurostar train from London to Paris
- Airport transfers included with purchased AESU group airfare

### Meals

- 24 meals: 16 breakfasts 1 lunch, 7 three-course specialty dinners

### Activities & Admissions

- London welcome orientation and pub crawl
- 1-day group tube pass in London
- Guided tours in London, Paris, Florence, and Rome, led by local experts
- Seine River cruise in Paris
- Travel cards with unlimited access to public transportation system in Paris, Amsterdam, and Rome
- Biking in the Dutch countryside
- Visit to wooden shoemaker and Edam cheese farm
- Cruises on the Rhine River and Amsterdam canal
- Medieval Rothenburg
- Heidelberg Castle
- Visit to salt mines
- Murano glass blowing workshop and demonstration
- Roma Pass (Book early to secure your spot. Spaces may not be available on short notice.)
- See St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City

### 5-Day Optional Extension Transportation and Lodging

- 5 nights in superior tourist class hotels or better, 2-share rooms with private bath/shower — including overnight on ship from Italy to Greece (4-share cabins)
- All intra-Europe transportation by air-conditioned motor coach and overnight ship as per itinerary

### Meals

- 8 meals: 5 continental breakfasts, 3 three-course specialty dinners

### Activities & Admissions

- Guided tours in Pompeii and Athens, led by local experts
- Admission to Pompeii archeological site
- Bike rental on the Isle of Poros
- Greek Island stay
- Toga party
- Admission to Acropolis

### Optional Excursions

(not included in land package price):

- Paris, France: Fragonard French Perfume Museum visit, French cabaret show
- Austrian Alps, Austria: Whitewater rafting
- Florence, Italy: Chianti excursion
- Poros, Greece - Watersports (23-day tour only)



# ESSENTIAL EUROPE ITINERARY

## About the Trip!

Treat yourself to the ultimate post-grad adventure! The Essential Europe grad trip offers 23 days of pure adventure, with a mix of exploration, excitement, and cultural immersion in some of Europe's hottest destinations.

This tour has something for everyone. Starting from mingling with the locals on a lively London pub crawl, to snapping some envy-inducing photos of Il Duomo in Florence, and yes, you can even channel your inner Julie Andrews and dance through the Austrian hills before getting your adrenaline fix in the Greek Isles.

The best part? This trip strikes the perfect balance between thrilling activities, free time to do your own thing, and eye-opening experiences in history, architecture, and stunning European landscapes. It's your chance to embrace your inner adventurer, enjoy a well-rounded journey, and create memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

So why wait? Join this unforgettable adventure.

- DAY 1 FLIGHT TO ENGLAND**  
Embark on your overnight flight to London.  
**Meals:** In-flight
- DAY 2 LAND TOUR START DAY: LONDON**  
Take advantage of a leisurely afternoon to kick back before joining fellow travelers and your tour director for a lively welcome orientation, followed by a fun London pub crawl.  
**Meals:** In-flight  
**Inclusions:** Transfer from airport to hotel included with purchased AESU group airfare | Welcome orientation | Welcome cocktail | Pub crawl
- DAY 3 LONDON**  
Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, and Westminster Abbey: These familiar names become familiar places on our morning tour of London. During an afternoon at leisure, browse the many food, craft, and clothing stalls at popular Camden Market, walk in the footsteps of Harry Potter at Leadenhall Market aka Diagon Alley, or take a ride on the London Eye for a birds-eye view of the city and the opportunity to take great photographs. After dusk, consider taking in some Shakespeare at the Globe Theater by the Thames River or attending a West End show.  
**Meals:** Breakfast  
**Inclusions:** 1-day group tube pass | Tour of London guided by a local expert | Personal audio headset | See Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, Tower Bridge and more
- DAY 4 LONDON - PARIS**  
Travel through the "Chunnel" below the English Channel to Paris. Our local expert shows us the Arc de Triomphe, Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame Cathedral and Place de la Concorde, where the guillotine once stood. Tonight, dine on French specialties at our bistro dinner. Afterward, we take a romantic cruise down the river Seine.  
**Meals:** Breakfast | Dinner  
**Inclusions:** English Channel Eurostar train | Tour of Paris guided by a local expert | See the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame Cathedral, Place de la Concorde, Arc de Triomphe and more | Paris-by-night illuminations | French bistro dinner | Seine River cruise

**DAY 5****PARIS**

Enjoy a free day in Paris today. Join your tour director this morning on an optional visit to a French perfumery and museum. Afterwards, consider visiting the Palace of Versailles, Louis XIV's residence with the stunning Hall of Mirrors, the world-famous Louvre, housing the Mona Lisa, Musée d'Orsay, or the Musée National Picasso. Your Paris travel card will provide unlimited public transportation throughout the city (zones 1-3.) This evening you may opt to see a can-can cabaret show at the world-famous Moulin Rouge.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Inclusions:** 24-hour Paris travel card with unlimited access to public transportation system

**Optional activity:** Optional visit to French perfumery and museum | French cabaret show

**DAY 6****PARIS - BRUSSELS - AMSTERDAM**

Motor to Belgium and stop in Brussels to see the Grand Place, a perfect medieval square, and the statue of naughty Manneken Pis. Continue to Amsterdam, known as the 'Venice of the North' because of its 165 romantic canals, impressive architecture, and diversity. Tonight, discover the fascinating history of Amsterdam as we cruise under some of the 400 bridges linking the 90 islands that make up the city center. Later, consider eating at one of the many world-class restaurants or a local pannekoeken huis, then explore the lively nightlife or a low-key, sultry jazz club. Take advantage of your included 2-day Amsterdam travel card with unlimited access to local transportation.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Inclusions:** See Brussels' Grand Place, Manneken Pis and more | Amsterdam travel card | Amsterdam canal cruise

**DAY 7****AMSTERDAM**

Today, we'll go biking through 13th-century Dutch fishing villages along the IJssel Lake beaches, watch wooden shoes being carved and sample Edam cheese at a cheese farm. Free time this afternoon in Amsterdam will allow time to tour the Van Gogh or Rijksmuseum or visit Anne Frank's house. This evening we invite you to a scrumptious Dutch-Indonesian rice table dinner, a specialty in Holland as Indonesia was once a Dutch colony.

**Meals:** Breakfast | Dinner

**Inclusions:** Bike riding in the Dutch countryside | Visit to wooden shoemaker and Edam cheese farm | Amsterdam travel card | Dutch-Indonesian rice table dinner

**DAY 8****AMSTERDAM - COLOGNE - HEIDELBERG**

Cross the German border into Cologne, famous for Northern Europe's largest gothic cathedral. Embark on a cruise along the fabled Rhine River, passing steeply sloped vineyards, ancient castles, and the legendary Lorelei Rock. Continue to Heidelberg, the "City of the Student Prince" and climb to the ruins of the Castle of the Palatine Elector for a bird's-eye view of the city and the Neckar River.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Inclusions:** City of Cologne and its Cathedral, largest Gothic church in Northern Europe | Rhine River cruise | Heidelberg 'City of the Student Prince' | See Heidelberg Castle

**DAY 9****HEIDELBERG - ROTHENBURG - MUNICH**

Germany's Romantic Road takes us to Rothenburg ob der Tauber. This medieval city is celebrated not only for its well-preserved gothic and baroque buildings and walls, but also for its unspoiled picturesque setting. Enjoy lunch at a local Gasthaus before continuing our journey to the fun-filled Oktoberfest city of Munich. Tonight, you'll have a free evening to check out the oompah-pah bands at the famous Hofbräuhaus.

**Meals:** Breakfast | Lunch

**Inclusions:** Drive along Germany's Romantic Road | See Medieval Rothenburg | Gasthaus lunch | See the Oktoberfest city of Munich

**DAY 10****MUNICH**

This morning we visit Dachau Memorial site, established in 1965, twenty years after it was liberated by American forces. During afternoon free time, consider visiting the BMW museum, seeing the Glockenspiel Chimes at the Marienplatz, visiting the 1972 Olympic Village or

shopping for Bavarian beer steins and lederhosen on Maximilianstrasse. Tonight, we'll dine on authentic Bavarian fare.

**Meals:** Breakfast | Dinner

**Inclusions:** Visit Dachau Memorial Site | See Munich's Glockenspiel chimes, Marienplatz and more | Traditional Bavarian dinner

**DAY 11 MUNICH - SALZBURG – AUSTRIAN ALPS**

On our journey to Austria, we stop at a salt mine and enjoy a ride down slides, dressed in miner's clothing. Afterwards we continue to the city of Salzburg, Mozart's birthplace, and the site where the classic movie, "The Sound of Music" was filmed. Explore the narrow streets lined with colorful wrought iron signs and shops before we continue our journey to Europe's largest Alpine sports region. Be our pampered guest for two nights of fitness and fun while nestled in the snow-capped Austrian mountains.

**Meals:** Breakfast | Dinner

**Inclusions:** Visit to salt mines | See Europe's largest Alpine sports region | See Mozart's city of Salzburg | Hearty Austrian dinner

**DAY 12 AUSTRIAN ALPS**

All day today is at our leisure; go for a hike in the Alps or opt to join the fun and excitement of whitewater rafting. A hearty Austrian dinner awaits after all of today's activity.

**Meals:** Breakfast | Dinner

**Inclusions:** Hiking in the Austrian Alps | Alpine dinner

**Optional activity:** Whitewater rafting

**DAY 13 AUSTRIAN ALPS - VENICE**

The picturesque landscape of the Austrian Lake District makes way for sunny Italy's Venice — "The Sinking City in the Sea." Our private boat takes us to Murano Island, Venice's glassmaking center since the 13th-century, where we visit a workshop and watch famous Venetian glass being made. Back in Venice, we walk along the narrow maze of back streets and bridges that take us to St. Mark's Square with the Campanile, Doge's Palace, and flocks of friendly pigeons. Consider a romantic gondola ride gliding through the intricate maze of canals beneath arched bridges and passing by 12th and 18th-century marble palaces.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Inclusions:** See Venice's Doge Palace, St. Mark's Square and more | Private boat to Murano Island | Glass blowing workshop and demonstration

**DAY 14 VENICE - FLORENCE**

Through the fertile Po Valley we approach Florence, Golden City of the Renaissance and home of the famed Italian sculptor, painter, architect and poet, Michelangelo. Our Florence art tour includes the Gates of Paradise, the marble Santa Maria del Fiore Cathedral, and Giotto's bell tower. Afterwards, there's free time for shopping and museums. Tonight, enjoy our dinner of traditional Florentine fare.

**Meals:** Breakfast | Dinner

**Inclusions:** See the Duomo, Ponte Vecchio, Giotto's Bell Tower and more | Tour of Florence guided by a local expert | Personal audio headset | Traditional Florentine dinner

**DAY 15 FLORENCE**

Today is a free day to explore the Uffizi Gallery and see the collections of Giotto, Botticelli, Raphael, and da Vinci. The Galleria dell'Accademia houses several sculptures by Michelangelo including his famous David (advance reservation required.) Opt to join us for time under the Tuscan sun starting with a picturesque drive through the vineyards of one of the best-known wine growing areas, Chianti. Our excursion includes a tour of the winery and a tasting of a selection of local wines.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Inclusions:** Florence city sights

**Optional activity:** Chianti Tuscan excursion

**DAY 16 FLORENCE – ROME – VATICAN CITY**

This morning we continue our travels south to the capital of Italy. Get ready to soak up Rome’s dolce vita lifestyle as we explore the city’s picturesque streets and piazzas with our local expert. Ancient icons such as the Colosseum or Caesar’s Roman Forum remind us of the city’s golden age as the capital of the world. Vatican City with St. Peter’s Basilica towering over the square, and colossal cathedrals throughout the city, tells stories of its history as seat of the Catholic Church.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Inclusions:** Tour of Rome and Vatican City guided by a local expert | Personal audio headset | See the Colosseum, Circus Maximus, Pantheon, Vatican City with St. Peter’s Basilica and more | Roma Pass with access to Caesar’s Roman Forum and Palatine Hill | Unlimited access to local transportation

**Important information:** Most museums and sights, such as the Colosseum require advance reservations when using the pass. Book early to secure your spot. Spaces may not be available on short notice. The best day for museum visits is day 17 of your itinerary, the free day in Rome and Vatican City.

**DAY 17 ROME - VATICAN CITY**

A free day in Rome may find you exploring Piazza Navona, climbing the famous Spanish Steps, and tossing a coin into the Trevi Fountain to ensure your return to Rome. Try numerous flavors of the fabulous gelato ice cream or find yourself window-dreaming on Via dei Condotti, one of Rome’s fashionable shopping streets. This evening, we cross the Tiber River to Trastevere, one of Rome’s oldest neighborhoods, for our fun Italian Pizza Party. Toppings range from a simple drizzle of olive oil, rosemary, and salt, to mushrooms, prosciutto ham and artichokes. Buon appetito!

**Meals:** Breakfast | Dinner

**Inclusions:** See Piazza Navona, the Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain and more | Unlimited access to local transportation | Pizza Party in Trastevere

**DAY 18 TRAVEL HOME – OR CONTINUE TO POMPEII & OVERNIGHT SHIP TO GREECE**

For some of us the celebratory tour of Europe ends in Rome this morning. Bid farewell to friends and “arrivederci” to Italy before jetting back home with memories to last a lifetime. For the rest of us - sunny olive groves line the way south to Pompeii. Under the shadow of Vesuvius, the volcano that buried this ancient city in 79 A.D., explore the excavated wonders including homes, markets and temples that remain intact, and streets that still bear the marks of chariot wheels from 2,000 years ago. Afterwards, we cross the Italian “boot” and board our overnight ship to Greece.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Inclusions:** Tour of the Pompeii excavations guided by a local expert | Personal audio headset | Scenic overnight ship from Italy to Greece | Transfer from hotel to Rome airport included with purchased AESU group airfare

**DAY 19 ISLE OF POROS**

After cruising through the enchanting aquamarine waters, our ship arrives in Patras. From there, we’ll embark on a breathtaking journey along the stunning Corinthian Sea, ultimately arriving at Galatas and the charming island of Poros. Get ready to embrace three days of pure Greek god or goddess living. Start the adventure with a welcoming drink, then dive into exploring this idyllic island paradise. Tonight, prepare for a Greek culinary extravaganza at a charming local restaurant. Afterward, you might just find yourself dancing the night away, Zorba-style, at a lively local tavern.

**Meals:** Breakfast | Welcome cocktail | Dinner

**Inclusions:** Relaxing pool and beach time | Enjoy iconic Greek sunsets | Traditional Greek dinner at a local taverna

**DAY 20 ISLE OF POROS**

Today is all about having fun on your own terms. Dive into the sparkling waters for a refreshing swim, soak up the glorious sunshine, or get your adrenaline pumping with optional watersports like waterskiing, wakeboarding, parasailing, banana-boating, or tubing.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Inclusions:** Explore the white-washed village center of Poros | Beach and pool

**Optional activity:** Watersports

## DAY 21 ISLE OF POROS

During free time today, get ready for some fantastic shopping in the old town center or, more adventurous souls may embark on a thrilling journey to the 6th-century BC ruins of Poseidon's Temple perched atop the island's highest peak. We'll have bicycles at our disposal, opening up new avenues to discover the island's treasures. And as the sun sets, get ready to join the fun at our epic toga party.

**Meals:** Breakfast | Dinner

**Inclusions:** Bike rental on the Isle of Poros | Beach and pool | Toga party | Greek island farewell dinner

## DAY 22 ISLE OF POROS - ATHENS

This morning, we hop on a ferry to Athens. Once we arrive, we'll be in for a treat with visits to the awe-inspiring 2,400-year-old Parthenon, the Temple of Olympian Zeus, and Constitution Square. During free time this afternoon, you might find yourself wandering in the footsteps of legends like Plato, Socrates, and Sophocles, or honing your bargaining skills at the vibrant markets of Monastiraki. And as the sun sets, follow the irresistible sounds of traditional bouzouki music and join us for a spectacular farewell taverna dinner in the Plaka District – Athens' oldest neighborhood, right at the foot of the iconic Acropolis. It's bound to be an unforgettable night of fun and feasting.

**Meals:** Breakfast | Dinner

**Inclusions:** Tour of Athens guided by a local expert | Acropolis admission | Greek tavern farewell dinner | Greek music and dancing

## DAY 23 TRAVEL HOME

With a heavy heart, it's time to bid adieu to Europe and our amazing new friends. As we jet back home, we let the excitement of planning our next alumni adventure fill our thoughts! The world is our playground, and there are countless adventures waiting for us to explore.

**Meals:** Breakfast | In-flight

**Inclusions:** Transfer from hotel to airport included with purchased AESU group airfare

## TOUR DIRECTORS

Your land package tour includes the services of a professional tour director, who knows this is a trip of a lifetime for you. They are young professionals; multi-lingual and carefully selected graduates from major universities. They are eager to show you the world through the eyes of an adventurer, sharing with you their vast knowledge, as well as interesting little-known facts.

Our qualified tour directors and staff of local experts mean a trouble-free journey with the added security of group travel. We are very proud of our tour directors, therefore it is customary to include gratuity.

Show the tour director and driver your appreciation with a tip. We suggest \$6-7 per person/per day for your tour director and \$4 per person/per day for your driver.

## HOTELS

We stay in superior tourist-class hotels or better, all with private bathrooms in 2-share rooms. Our hotels have been specially selected for their European atmosphere, friendly hospitality, and cleanliness. They are centrally located or within a short walk of public transportation, taking you to the landmarks of your choice in the city you are visiting.

All land package rates are based on two people sharing a room. You can book a single-room by paying an additional single supplement of \$1,675 for the 18-day land package or \$2,170 for the 23-day land package. Please note that single cabins are not available on the overnight ship.

If you are a solo traveler and don't want to pay the single supplement, AESU will attempt to arrange a share with a same-gender traveler. If we are unable to arrange a share, the single supplement will be added to your invoice.

By booking your trip with AESU, you are agreeing to all the terms and conditions as outlined on our website:  
<https://www.aesu.com/terms-conditions-awt/> | For details on our payment plan, please visit: <https://www.aesu.com/payment-plan-awt/>



# University Disclaimer

## **Michigan State University Alumni Office Disclaimer Spartan Pathways Travel Program:**

The Michigan State University Alumni Office (the MSU Alumni Office or MSUAO) and the Spartan Pathways Travel Program is not the Tour Operator. The MSUAO is not responsible for the changes of flight times, fare changes, dishonor of airline, hotel or motor coach transportation and car rental reservations, delays, losses, injuries, inconveniences, cessation of operations, airline or tour operator bankruptcies, acts of God, or any other event beyond our control.

The MSUAO acts only as a sponsor with respect to the travel services, and it shall not be responsible for changes to flight times, fare changes, dishonor of airline, hotel or other reservations, injury, damage, loss of baggage, accidents or for the acts or defaults of any person or entity engaged in providing services to participants or in carrying out other arrangements of the tour.

Further, the MSUAO shall not be responsible for losses or additional expenses of the participant due to sickness, weather, strike, civil unrest, acts of terrorism, pandemic, epidemic, quarantine, acts of God, governmental intervention, or other causes beyond its control. The MSUAO shall not be responsible for alteration in the itinerary as deemed necessary for carrying out the tour and the Tour Operator may substitute hotels of similar quality. The Tour Operator may postpone or cancel any tour prior to departure.

The MSUAO or the Tour Operator may decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of the tour should such person's physical or mental health, actions or general deportment impede the operation of the tour or the rights or welfare of the other participants. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour. By embarking upon travel, the participant voluntarily assumes all risk involved in such travel, whether expected or unexpected.

Participant is hereby warned of the above risks as well as possible travel industry force majeure, bankruptcies and medical and climatic disruptions, and the possibility participant may be unable to travel as scheduled because of personal emergency. Participant is advised to consider obtaining appropriate insurance coverage against these risks. Applicants for participation on this tour accept in full all the conditions set forth above.

The MSUAO partners with other universities and alumni from other universities will be on many departures. While some of the Spartan Pathway's tours are exclusive to just MSU alumni, on many of the tours we partner with other universities/organizations that have travel programs. Space allotments for these tours are given to each university and after a guaranteed time allotted for reservations, available space is opened to all universities/organizations. Therefore, some departures may have universities with greater numbers of alumni on the tour than MSU.