

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Spartan Pathways Travel program?

The MSU Alumni Office (MSUAO) travel program — Spartan Pathways Travel — has been in existence for more than 50 years, offers more than 50 international and domestic tours each year, works with 10 tour operators and has built a clientele of more than 700 travelers annually. The Spartan Pathways Travel program provides fellowship, education and enjoyment for all Spartans — alums, their families, faculty, staff and friends of MSU.

Alumni group travel has evolved into a series of diverse international and domestic programs providing unique travel opportunities designed to serve alums and friends of all backgrounds. The commitment of the program is to ensure that our tours are of the highest quality.

All Spartan Pathways Travel tours are offered by only the most reputable and experienced travel companies chosen to meet the high standards demanded by the MSUAO. Tours are selected to provide variety in travel destinations and cost and are chosen to appeal to both first-time travelers as well as seasoned world travelers. Most tours include high quality lodging and are serviced and accompanied by experienced tour directors. Many of the tours selected are designed for a unique immersion in the cultural life of the region visited. Tours often include special highlights inaccessible to the independent traveler. Most tours have an educational component and include unique learning opportunities throughout them.

Who makes all of the travel arrangements for the tour?

All Spartan Pathways Travel tours, including itineraries and flight details, are designed and managed by tour operators, most of whom specialize in providing trips for alumni associations/offices. Tour operators chosen by the MSUAO are some of the best in class and have met our strict criteria for fiscal responsibility, established reputation, professional staff and quality operations. We require tour operators to carry professional liability insurance.

What is the MSU Alumni Office's role in operating the tour?

The MSUAO and its Spartan Pathways Travel program are not tour operators. The Spartan Pathways Travel program functions as a facilitator with tour operators with whom our travelers make arrangements for completing travel. Though the program works with tour operators to offer tours, Spartan Pathways Travel does not conduct tours, nor does it act as an agent for guests interested in traveling with the MSUAO. Therefore, when signing up for a Spartan Pathways tour, you're signing a contract with the tour operator, not with the MSUAO or Spartan Pathways Travel.

Spartan Pathways Travel strives to make each of our tours easier and more fulfilling for our travelers by being a resource for travel arrangements, supplying travel insurance options, and

creating opportunities to connect with other travelers through the Spartan Pathways Travel program. Some tours include MSU faculty or staff who accompany the group and serve as hosts.

Spartan Pathways Travel can communicate with tour operators on behalf of our travelers to obtain answers to questions and resolve problems, including making arrangements regarding deviations from the standard tour. If you need any assistance, contact us at crossreg@msu.edu or 888-697-2863.

Do I have to be an MSU alum to take a tour?

No. We welcome and encourage all Spartans — alums, their families, faculty, staff and friends of MSU — to participate in the Spartan Pathways Travel program.

Who will be on the tour?

While some of the Spartan Pathways tours are small groups and exclusive to Spartans, for many tours, we partner with other universities and organizations that also have travel programs. Space allotments for these tours are given to each university/organization and after a specified period of time allotted for reservations, available space is opened to all universities and organizations on the departure. Therefore, some departures may have universities/organizations with greater numbers of Spartans on the tour than MSU.

The number of Spartans on a tour can range from a few to over 50, depending on the tour.

Can I take my children/grandchildren on a tour?

Occasionally, we offer tours that are designed especially for families. However, most of our tours are best suited for those 14 or older — especially tours on smaller sailing vessels, those with long day trips, or those that include expert lectures. If you're interested in taking your children or grandchildren on one of our tours, contact us at crossreg@msu.edu or 888-697-2863, or contact the tour operator to find out if a particular tour is appropriate for children.

What's included in the price of a tour? How are tours priced?

Most travel is all-inclusive, covering most meals, internal transportation, guide and entrance fees and gratuities.

Dates, prices, itineraries and tour details are given in good faith and are subject to change and revision and every effort will be made to conduct the tour as planned. All tour prices listed are per person, based on double occupancy, current exchange rates and tariffs at the time the tours are arranged. Single occupancy may be available on a limited basis for each tour at a supplemental charge unless otherwise noted.

Is airfare included in the tour price? If not, how do airfare arrangements work?

Airfare options vary from tour to tour and from tour operator to tour operator, so refer to the specific tour for airfare options that are available.

If airfare is included, routings are at the discretion of the tour operator and are based on flight availability and agreements among the air carriers and the tour operator. All special flight requests (specified carriers, routings, and departure/arrival times) may be subject to a deviation fee. Flight upgrades with frequent flyer miles and/or mileage credit/accrual of frequent flyer miles may or may not be permitted. If you prefer to book your own flight, contact the tour operator.

If airfare is not included, most of our tour operators offer the option to purchase airfare at an additional cost. You may also choose to make your own arrangements. If you choose to schedule your own flights, you're responsible for arranging your own ground transportation from the airport.

What if I'm only booking for myself? Why do I have to pay more if I'm traveling solo or want my own room?

Tour pricing is based on double occupancy — two people sharing a room or cabin. On most tours, a limited number of single occupancy rooms are available, which provides you with the option to pay a single supplement whether you're traveling solo or traveling in a group, but wish to room alone.

On a few select tours, there is no single supplement. Look for tours that say "Solo-Friendly Pricing" on the individual tour webpage.

Can I participate in a tour if I have an accommodation request?

MSU encourages all individuals to participate in our events. To enjoy the Spartan travel experience, participants should be in good physical and mental health and be able to keep pace with the group. Extreme variations in altitude, temperature and humidity should be considered when traveling in certain parts of the world. Many tour excursions require walking long distances and/or on uneven, steep or hilly ground, uphill terrain, unpaved surfaces or climbing steep and narrow stairs. Many countries are not accessible to the extent that the United States is — ramps and elevators may not be common and walking to a destination is often required. Depending on the accommodation, an individual able and willing to provide all required assistance should accompany anyone who requires this — tour operators cannot provide any ongoing assistance to travelers.

Spartan Pathways Travel and its tour operators reserve the right to decline any person as a member of a tour who requires extraordinary assistance. Spartan Pathways Travel and its tour operators also reserve the right to decline any person as a member of a tour, or to require any traveler to withdraw from a tour, at any time when such action is determined to be in the best interest of the health, safety and general welfare of the tour group or individual tour members.

All travelers will be asked to sign a disclaimer and release from liability prior to traveling.

If you have an accommodation request, we recommend that you contact the tour operator or us at crossreg@msu.edu or 888-697-2863 prior to registering for a specific tour.

Will my tour have an MSU host?

The Spartan Pathways Travel program makes every effort to assign an MSU staff or faculty host to as many tours as possible as it enhances the travelers' experience. A minimum number of travelers is required to send an MSU host. If the minimum number is not met, in most cases the tour will take place, but an MSU host will not accompany the group.

All tour operators provide tour directors, expedition leaders and knowledgeable guides so travelers are well taken care of throughout the tour.

How do I make a reservation?

Reservations are managed by the tour operator. To make a reservation, contact the tour operator directly — you can book online, call the operator or complete and mail the tour brochure reservation form. To expedite your reservation, we encourage you to book online or call the tour operator. You can find the tour operator contact information on our [website](#) on the individual tour webpage. Please do not contact the Spartan Pathways Travel program to make a reservation.

How early should I make a reservation?

We suggest making reservations as early as possible once the tour becomes available as some tours and/or tour options sell out very quickly. It's difficult to predict how quickly a tour will sell and the longer you wait to register, the greater likelihood that the tour will be full. If you'd like to inquire about the status of a tour, contact us at crossreg@msu.edu or 888-697-2863.

How do I know I'm confirmed on a tour?

The tour operator will send you a confirmation email after your reservation is received.

Tour operators also send Spartan Pathways Travel an email when a reservation has been booked, and Spartan Pathways Travel will send you a second confirmation email.

Do I need a passport? What visas, vaccinations, etc. are required for a tour?

The documentation and vaccinations required depends on the tour. All international travel requires a passport, and your passport must be valid for six months beyond your planned return date.

Once your booking is confirmed, you'll receive information from the tour operator that outlines the different requirements for your trip.

Beginning May 7, 2025, the U.S. federal government is requiring all U.S. travelers have a state-issued REAL ID driver's license to be compliant to board domestic flights and access

certain federal facilities. If you do not have a Real ID license, visit your state's driver's licensing agency website to find out what documentation is required to obtain a REAL ID.

I'm not available during the dates that a tour is offered. What are my options?

Many of our tour operators offer the same tours on alternate dates which are available for booking. (Please note that Spartan Pathways Travel doesn't sponsor these trips, which means that they aren't guaranteed to have other Spartans on them.) Contact us at crossreg@msu.edu or 888-697-2863 if you're interested.

Should I purchase travel insurance? If so, how soon do I need to enroll?

We strongly recommend that you be adequately insured against last-minute tour cancellations and other travel-related risks. If you're unable to travel due to illness, family illness, or unforeseen circumstances, purchasing travel insurance will help to recoup payments you've made. Travel insurance will also cover the cost of tour interruption, delays, medical emergencies and evacuation, loss of baggage or baggage delays, and any pre-existing medical conditions that you may have (coverage is based on the type and level of insurance purchased).

Spartan Pathways Travel's preferred travel insurance partner is [USI Travel Insurance Services \(TIS\)](#) and you'll receive travel insurance information when you register for a tour. Contact TIS at 800-937-1387 or visit their [website](#) if you have questions regarding travel insurance coverage or costs.

Certain insurance plans do require purchase within a certain period of time after making a deposit, while other plans allow you to purchase insurance closer to the tour departure date. Contact the insurance provider for more information. It's important to note if you'd like the flexibility to cancel at will, you should choose the plan that has Cancel-For-Any-Reason (CFAR). CFAR requires you to purchase the insurance within 21 days from the date of paying the tour deposit.

The Spartan Pathways Travel program cannot make any recommendations as to the type of insurance that is right for you.

Do I have to purchase travel insurance with the company you recommend?

Spartan Pathways Travel requests that you research the many options of travel insurance available to you, as each person has individual needs. While we feel [USI Travel Insurance Services \(TIS\)](#) offers the best possible coverage and many of our travelers purchase insurance from TIS, you're not obligated to use their services and you're welcome to purchase insurance from another provider.

The Spartan Pathways Travel program cannot make any recommendations as to the type of insurance that is right for you.

Will my medical insurance be valid abroad?

Medicare and Medicaid do not cover medical costs abroad and most American insurance plans do not provide coverage abroad either, but check with your insurance provider before traveling. Many travelers purchase travel insurance that includes medical coverage which can help cover the cost of emergency medical treatments, including emergency transportation and evacuations.

Prospective travelers should carefully consider their own health, including whether they're at increased risk for illness, and assess their personal risk tolerance.

What happens if I have to cancel my tour? What are the refund policies?

Cancellation and refund timelines and policies vary according to the tour operators. Please carefully read the cancellation/refund clauses contained on the tour operator's website.

Most tour operators charge a nominal cancellation fee from the time of deposit to cover expenses incurred in processing a new reservation and sending preliminary trip information. As the departure date gets closer, cancellation fees tend to become more substantial due to the fact that the tour operator has made more financial commitments to their suppliers, such as airlines, hotels and ground transportation. Cancellation penalties are structured to coincide with advance payments that our tour operators must make to their suppliers, and the penalties are strictly enforced because of these contractual commitments.

In some cases, administrative fees may apply, or monies paid may be applied to a future tour. These monies can only be used with the same tour operator and applied to a future tour within the current calendar year or year following cancellation.

We strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance to cover cancellation fees and protect your monetary investment.

Disclaimer and Release from Liability Waiver

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Prior to departure, all Spartan Pathways travelers are required to sign a disclaimer and a release from liability waiver which acknowledges that neither the MSUAO nor Spartan Pathways Travel is responsible and that you voluntarily participate in the tour at your own risk.

Tour Operator Contact Information

If you have any questions about a specific tour, please contact the tour operator directly and be sure to let them know you're with Michigan State University.

AESU Alumni World Travel

800-638-7640

alumniworldtravel.com/2025/msu.html

Odysseys Unlimited

888-370-6765

odysseys-unlimited.com

AHI Travel

800-323-7373

michst.ahitravel.com

Orbridge, Inc.

866-639-0079

orbridge.com/groups/msu

Conservancy Travel

334-770-1700

conservancytravel.org

Premier World Discovery

310-372-3668

premierworlddiscovery.com

Gohagan & Co.

800-922-3088

gohagantravel.com

Sports & Entertainment Travel

1-888-218-7663

msualumnifantravel.com

Go Next

800-842-9023

gonext.com

Travel Insurance Services

800-937-1387

my.travelinsure.com/spartans

Nature's Kennel

906-748-0513

natureskennel.com

Marketing of the Spartan Pathways Travel Program

Marketing for Spartan Pathways Travel tours is managed by the tour operators. Typically, tour promotion is through brochure mail pieces sent to alumni and past travelers. A few tours are promoted through email and social media marketing.

Tour operator's brochures include individual university branding and messaging, allowing the alumni associations/offices the ability to market the tour as their own. Brochures are mailed 8-11 months prior to the tour departure date. The Spartan Pathways Travel program provides tour operators with a mailing list when requested. By contract, tour operators are only allowed to use these lists for tour marketing purposes.

If you are interested in being placed on the Spartan Pathways mailing list to receive tour brochures, contact us at crossreg@msu.edu or 888-697-2863.