

Road trip

School trips can be a handful, Jo Caird explains how touring companies can give you a helping hand

Organising a school trip can be a stressful process – from researching and arranging travel and accommodation, to taking advantage of group deals on theatre tickets, organising meals in restaurants and booking additional activities for your students – there are an intimidating number of factors to take into account.

Fortunately, there are companies out there prepared to take the stress away and manage it all for you. With someone else to take care of the nitty gritty, you're free to spend your time preparing your students for the trip: ensuring that everyone gets the best out of their experience.

NST has been organising schools tours since 1967 and sends 100,000 students on trips each year. Nowhere is out of bounds for an educational tour, but the most popular destinations for young people studying drama unsurprisingly are: London, home to the West End; Stratford-upon-Avon, headquarters of the Royal Shakespeare Company; and Manchester, Northern England's theatre hub. The company also organises school trips to New York for teachers wishing to introduce their students to the bright lights of Broadway.

NST's standard two-day UK package (though tailor-made trips can be arranged) includes coach travel, to and from school and throughout the stay, one night in bed & breakfast accommodation and group travel insurance. Prices start at £95 per person for London, and £89 for Stratford and Manchester – although between loyalty rewards and a free place ratio of one to eight on all coach trips, there are additional savings to be made.

Teachers then add a package of activities to suit their students, either opting for NST's suggested itinerary (from £23 for the Shakespeare's Globe package and increasing for the West End, Manchester and Stratford) or building their own.

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Suggested two-day itineraries include a show, a workshop, an evening meal (which can be pre-paid if required, to save teachers hassle on the day) and some free time, but there are lots of different options available within this format.

Students attending a performance of *War Horse* in London, for example, might enjoy the workshop 'Puppetry Now', while those visiting Stratford-upon-Avon for a performance by the RSC might benefit from a curriculum-linked workshop such as 'An Introduction to Shakespeare'. NST Stage School workshops are delivered by teaching artists and, in the case of those taking place in London and Manchester, include a 30-minute Q&A with a performer.

In London a further programme of workshops devised by the Central School of Speech and Drama are available. Taking place at the acclaimed drama school itself, these workshops have the potential to truly inspire your students, as well as help them explore some more challenging techniques such as the Stanislavski method.

In addition to workshops and theatre performances, NST can organise backstage tours at theatres including Theatre Royal Drury Lane and the National Theatre and visits to leisure attractions such as the London Eye and Old Trafford. Walking tours are also an option and the company can arrange for a Blue Badge Guide to join you on your coach as you go about the city.

NST will quote for a tour free of charge and once a trip is booked, teachers are paired with a dedicated educational tour co-ordinator with whom they'll work throughout the process. Further confidence is assured by the fact that the company is bonded through ABTA and ATOL, so you know that parents' money is protected. So on with the show!

For more information about booking a school tour with NST, visit www.nstgroup.co.uk.