



HEAD TRIPS



Educational travel is a great way to go

EARLY THIS YEAR, Barbara Summey brought back sand from the Sahara Desert to share with her sixth-grade students at Endeavor Middle School in Lancaster.

“It’s red,” says Summey, a Teachers Association of Lancaster member. “We used it to talk about climate, geography, deserts. I talked to them about the indigenous peoples I met, about the language, culture and dynamics of the people and place.”

She had traveled to Morocco for 10 days on a teacher tour presented by Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO), a nonprofit that runs travel programs for educators and their guests at a discount rate. She’s also gone to Turkey with GEEO, and is considering a tour to the Baltic region this summer.

“Travel and doing things with people from other cultures validate you as a teacher,” Summey says. “I become a primary source doc for my students.”

Educators, not surprisingly, love to learn as well as teach. So summers — and even school breaks — are perfect opportunities to combine vacation with learning. In addition to expanding horizons and developing professional expertise, educational trips provide teachers with experiences and resources they can bring back to their classrooms.

It’s not too late to plan and book for 2016. Options include **teacher tours**, such as those offered by GEEO, which combine sightseeing, history, culture and school

visits, and offer graduate school and professional development credits. On GEEO trips, teachers submit action plans detailing what they want to learn and bring back to their students before departing; GEEO helps them meet their goals and serves as a hub for lesson plans and presentations (geeo.org).

Teachers who lead **education tours** travel for free and can often earn continuing education units. For example, EF Educational Tours, which offers language immersion and service tours as well as educational tours, covers your travel when you enroll six or more students (eftours.com).

Those who prefer to go it alone may still want to keep within the educator community. An easy way to do this is by swapping homes with teachers abroad. You can sign up for access to other educators interested in housing trades. Some sites, such as teacherstravelweb.com, lists teachers’ residences where you can stay (no home swap necessary) and even be hosted for free or for a nominal amount.

Grants for teachers taking educational trips help defray costs. Check out NEA’s article on available educator travel grants at bit.ly/1lczyL. Edutopia also lists possibilities at edutopia.org/teacher-travel-grants.

Finally, if you just can’t swing a trip this year, you can still learn about new people and places by hosting a visiting teacher. See educatorstravel.com for ways to do it.

Members on the Go

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