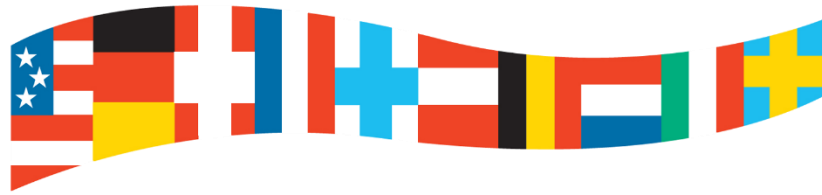


# blue lake INTERNATIONAL



## Student Handbook 2025

### Blue Lake International Exchange Program

This handbook is designed as a resource for students and their families as they prepare for participation in the International Exchange Program. It provides practical information relating to packing, travel, host families, and tour logistics. It also outlines Blue Lake's policies for safety, health, communication, and behavioral expectations.

*Revised 8 October 2024*

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Look for this globe symbol to find answers to the most frequently asked questions!

# **Blue Lake International Exchange Program Overview**

## **Decades of International Friendship**

Founded in 1969 by Gretchen Stansell, wife of Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp's founder Fritz Stansell and member of its Board of Trustees, the Blue Lake International Exchange Program is dedicated to international understanding through the universal language of the arts. Since its inception, nearly 30,000 young European, Asian, and American artists have exchanged performances and experienced the love, wonder, and excitement of living with host families in a foreign land. More than 115,000 families in Europe and America have provided generous hospitality for these participants. Countless concertgoers on both continents have been touched by these young ambassadors.

Students who show maturity, strong interpersonal skills, artistic ability, and an eagerness to learn about new cultures and countries are accepted in the program and act as goodwill ambassadors while touring in Europe and representing their schools, communities, Blue Lake, and the United States. Travelling with the Blue Lake International Exchange Program provides an opportunity for students to personally experience the history, culture, and charm of each European region and community. More than 150 students participate in the program annually, comprising five performing ensembles (an orchestra and band annually, with choir and jazz band in alternating years). Each group embarks upon a month-long tour of Europe, staying exclusively with host families and collectively performing in nearly 20 European communities.

In return for their generous hospitality, each European community visited by Blue Lake is invited to send a performing ensemble to the Midwest for a two-week tour under the auspices of the International Exchange Program. Additionally, the Blue Lake International Exchange Program awards special scholarships to each community so that young European artists can experience American culture by attending Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and the staying with American host families.

Since the beginning of the program, Blue Lake International has visited more than 1,700 communities in 19 different countries. Additionally, Blue Lake has welcomed thousands of visiting European and Asian campers and performing groups as a part of this unique exchange program. We are grateful to our many European partners and American hosts for their generous hospitality and continued support of our mission.

## **International Program Goals**

The Blue Lake International Exchange Program seeks to cultivate international understanding among our youth. It is our goal to help broaden a student's scope of the global community by demonstrating that we are more alike than not. With the expectation of fostering new friendships through common ground, we aim to create future leaders in all aspects of our society who can help promote peace through a broader appreciation of the world. On an individual level, the International Program offers students an opportunity to grow in maturity through international travel. Participants often enjoy many new experiences while traveling internationally, and each one creates a deeper appreciation for one's sense of individuality, self-confidence, and independence.

## **European Campers**

Every summer, Blue Lake welcomes young artists from the European communities that have generously hosted our international tour ensembles. As a gesture of appreciation, these communities receive scholarships to give to their students so they can attend a session of summer camp at Blue Lake. These European campers come from families who have hosted our tour participants in the past. For many of them, it will be their first journey to the United States.

As part of the International Exchange Program, tour participant families should plan to host European campers for 3 – 5 days following the completion of their summer camp session. Host families will provide meals, transportation, and lodging during this time. The International Office will collect hosting preferences from all families and confirm details before finalizing any arrangements. If there are any extenuating circumstances preventing your family from hosting, please contact the International Office.

## **Opportunities for Exchange**

The Blue Lake International Exchange Program visits approximately 20 communities in many countries across Europe throughout the summer. In return for their generous hospitality, we invite the European arts organizations that have hosted Blue Lake International ensembles to tour Michigan and the Midwest with a performance itinerary arranged through the Blue Lake International office. Blue Lake International also welcomes European students to study at camp and reside with American International Program families for 3–5 days after their camp session on a special scholarship provided to their community as a token of gratitude for hosting our own students. Hosting students and visiting groups in their home communities in the United States is a wonderful way for International Program families to give back, help to create a true cultural exchange, and create lifelong friendships.

## **Life-Changing Experience: Cultures, Customs, Languages**

From the moment Blue Lake International participants arrive overseas, they are immersed in European life. Our students experience the rich heritage of each country and region by learning languages, customs, history, and cultural similarities and differences with their host families throughout the tour. Students have many opportunities to enjoy everyday experiences with their host families, such as shopping, trying new cuisine, and enjoying routine activities.

## **First-Hand Learning**

Students also have the opportunity to experience unique aspects of European culture and historical heritage through first-hand learning. Seeing local sights with host families—whether they are historical monuments, artistic and cultural treasures, or regional festivals—offers our tour participants the chance to learn directly from European residents who are excited to share their history and culture. These experiences often create lasting impressions on our students—much stronger than those a textbook could offer.

## **Performances, Friendships, Achievement**

The Blue Lake International Exchange Program maintains an intense tour schedule resembling that of a professional ensemble. Participants rehearse and perform in a variety of venues, allowing for a level of artistic achievement far beyond similar student groups. These shared artistic achievements foster lifelong friendships and creates powerful memories. Upon their return, students often feel a remarkable sense of accomplishment as they realize their experience can help to broaden opportunities for future endeavors, whether college admissions, a career pathway, or additional travel and exchange.



## **The Tour**

Blue Lake International Exchange Program's European tours are three to four weeks long, depending on the ensemble. Blue Lake ensembles visit five to seven communities and perform at least one rehearsal and concert in each location. Depending on the ensemble and program, some students may also participate in select chamber ensembles or featured repertoire, either as a part of the primary performance or in a smaller concert event. In some instances, groups are given the opportunity to perform for community officials, dignitaries, and other leaders.

### **Performance Venues**

The Blue Lake International ensembles have appeared on some of the finest and most historically relevant stages in Europe, as well as in community centers, schools, churches, and amphitheaters. Blue Lake groups may perform in front of sold-out ticketed audiences in large concert halls as well as in local music festivals and at community celebrations.

### **Host Communities and Families**



Well-established and vetted community leaders, dignitaries, and educators serve as European chairpersons for our groups. These representatives coordinate Blue Lake's visit by organizing special events, rehearsals, performances, and most importantly, the selection of our host families. Host families are selected from the hosting organization, such as a school, community artistic ensemble, or church. Personal data is collected from Blue Lake students in order to make an appropriate host family assignment based on age, gender, instrument, and personal interests. Blue Lake students essentially become members of their European family for three to four days. Sightseeing, shopping, home-cooked meals, and community events are all part of a Blue Laker's schedule in each host community. At the conclusion of the stay, tears are common as students bid farewell to their host family and the motor coach departs for the next community.

### **Preparing for Tour**

The Blue Lake International Exchange Program holds several rehearsals throughout the year. Rehearsals take place on one Sunday in November, one Sunday in April, one weekend in May, and one week in early June. All rehearsals take place on the campus of Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. Students are expected to practice regularly on their own to master their music before arriving at rehearsals. Orientation, mini language classes, recitals, recreation, and typical camp fun are all part of the Blue Lake International rehearsals. At the conclusion of the rehearsal week in June, International ensembles offer a Bon Voyage performance for family and friends before boarding the motor coach and heading to the airport to begin their European adventure.

## **Bon Voyage Concert**

After rehearsing and bonding with their fellow tour members during Intensive Week, International ensembles offer a Bon Voyage performance at Blue Lake for family and friends. After this celebratory concert, students will hand off most of their Intensive Week camp gear to parents, say their goodbyes, and get to bed for an early start to the airport. The next morning, they board a motor coach to heading to the airport and begin their European adventure. The details regarding the days, times, and locations of each International Tour's outbound flight will be made available to parents once all plans are finalized. All student bedding and other personal belongings left behind at camp will be safely stored until families can pick them up on Homecoming Day. Please see the "Suggested Items for June Only" section under the *Blue Lake International Uniform & Equipment Regulations* section of this handbook for more.

## **Homecoming Performance Day**

The tour concludes with a performance at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp for the camp community, family members, and concertgoers. Homecoming performance days include an afternoon of rehearsal time, a recording session, reunion with friends, tour stories and photos, a meal and dessert reception, and a celebration of the ensemble's time together on tour. The homecoming performance is the perfect way to end an incredible musical journey and say farewell to newfound friends.

## **Student Membership: Acceptance**

Artistic ability, maturity, manners, and character play important roles in a student's acceptance. Members of the International Program not only perform at a high level of artistic proficiency but also serve as goodwill ambassadors for Blue Lake, the United States, and their own communities and families. Students enrolled in the International Exchange Program are expected to demonstrate a high standard of maturity and discipline, as well as an eagerness to travel to new countries and learn about new cultures.

Students are selected who:

- Have met musical or artistic requirements
- Have received positive counselor and faculty recommendations
- Have successfully completed an interview and application
- Are between the ages of 12 and 19
  - Students who have attended camp the summer they graduated from high school will be able to tour with the International Program the following summer (after their freshman year of college)

International Members:

- Must be loyal to, and supportive of, Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and the goals, ideals, and policies set forth by its International Exchange Program.
- Must have a sincere interest in cultural exchange and presenting the best of American youth.
- Must agree to abide by and support the policies, behavioral expectations, and uniform regulations set forth in the pledge, code of conduct, and handbook.

- Must be positive and diplomatic in presenting America and Blue Lake to European hosts and audiences.
- Must be flexible and able to adjust to changing situations gracefully.

## **Getting Started: Basic Documents and Information**

### **Membership Contract**

All International Program students and staff must sign a contractual agreement with Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. This agreement outlines date commitments and member responsibilities and expectations for program involvement.

### **Health Form and Emergency Contact Form**

Students and staff are required to complete or update a health form to the International Office by January 1<sup>st</sup>. Any prescriptions should be scanned and uploaded to your online account along with a copy of your insurance card. This information is maintained by each group's Certified Health Assistant in order to assist members if health concerns arise. Visit [bluelake.org/ultracamp](http://bluelake.org/ultracamp), log into your account, and complete the forms in the document center.

All students and staff are also required to submit an extensive contact list of emails, phone numbers, and alternative contacts in the event of an emergency. If a student will be taking a personal cell phone with them to Europe, we request that the number is listed on the Emergency Contact Form so that we may include them in group logistical text announcements during the tour. To review the full Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy, please see *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information*.

### **Personal Information Sheet**

Personal Information sheets should be completed by each student and will include a photograph of the student and detailed information about the students and their families, such as hobbies, interests, backgrounds, and any allergies or dietary restrictions. These forms are duplicated and sent in advance to host families as a way for families to learn about their American guest(s).

### **Questions, Information, and Turning in Documents**

Please complete all required forms and document uploads via your online account. (Log in at: [bluelake.org/ultracamp](http://bluelake.org/ultracamp).) The International Office (temporarily located in the Marek North Conference Room for November and April and at the Administration Building for May and June) will be happy to help you if you have questions about required forms. The office staff will be on hand to address questions regarding forms, deadlines, uniforms, payments, travel preparations, and tours.

## **Informational Packets and Announcements**

At each rehearsal, important informational materials will be distributed to students. This information will be reviewed during the scheduled orientation meetings.

### **Correspondence from Music Directors**

Music Directors will correspond regularly with group members in the months between November and June. The International Office facilitates these communications, which generally consist of practice or study assignments, listening links for study, preparation for the next rehearsal or meeting, and information about the upcoming tour. For basic questions relating to preparations for the tour, please contact the International Office directly. Some Music Directors choose to provide online resources to assist your musical preparation as you practice your Blue Lake International music at home.

### **Music Folders**

For music performance ensembles, music folders are assembled by the Head Music Librarian and distributed as signed contracts are received, or at the first rehearsal. The Head Librarian is available during rehearsal days to assist with any music concerns.

All students are responsible for their own music. Students receive practice folders before the first rehearsal. With the exception of the International Choir students (whose music is included in their tuition fee), students in other musical ensembles must return all music to Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp immediately following their Homecoming Concert. Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp charges a fee of \$20 to replace music that is lost or damaged.

### **Attendance Records**

Students are required to submit absence requests in writing in advance to the International Office. To review the full student Absence Policy, please see *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information*. It is extremely important that students make every effort to be at all rehearsals. It is very difficult to prepare for touring without complete, prepared ensembles.

# What Students Will Need for Tour

## Suitcase



Students are required to take one suitcase with a maximum 26 inch measurement excluding the wheels and handles. It must have a metal frame OR be hard-sided (not free-form like a duffle bag).. “Traditional” suitcases with metal frames covered by fabric are acceptable. In order to facilitate packing of cargo hold in planes and busses on the tour, it is extremely important that suitcases do not exceed size requirements. Wheels are recommended for ease with travel.

Suitcase weight when packed will be limited to 40 pounds in order to allow for the extra instruments and equipment in the cargo bays. Be sure to consider the weight of the luggage itself. The heavier the suitcase, the less weight will be allowed for personal items. Please do not forget that this limit also applies to your trip home. Students should allow room for added items that they may accumulate on their tour.

## Items on the Packing List

Packing for any trip can be overwhelming. To aid this process, we have compiled a packing list. Mandatory uniform items are listed, in addition to other suggested travel items and things students will specifically need for Intensive Week at camp. For uniform and equipment regulations, personal appearance standards, and other essentials relating to packing for the tour, please see the student Enrollment Packet. Students and parents may also consult *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information* for a partial list of required and recommended items. Our full packing list appears online on Blue Lake ACCESS (log in credentials for this helpful site will be provided to you after enrollment).

## Backpack

Students will take their Blue Lake backpack on the plane with them as their carry-on baggage. Students with carry-on size instruments will take their backpack and instrument into the cabin for flight. Students with larger instruments will be allowed to carry their backpack and another personal item (purse or camera bag) in the cabin. Those with very small instruments (flute, piccolo, oboe, clarinet) may pack them inside their backpacks for ease. Please refer to *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information* for specific information about which instruments can be carried on the plane.

## Instrument

The majority of musical instruments will be transported in the cargo hold of the aircraft. We strongly recommend that you add padding to the inside of your case (at the time of packing/loading) to avoid potential damage. Sponges, foam, and bubble plastic work well. The camp will provide some of these materials to students during Intensive Week and staff will help with the safe packing of student instruments. The TSA need to be able to open all luggage (including instruments), so taping or strapping cases shut is strongly discouraged. Remember: all instruments must have hard cases. Again, please refer to *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information* for specific information about which instruments can be carried on the plane.

## **Music Stand** (Instrumentalists Only)

Members of the Orchestra, Band, & Jazz programs need a folding wire music stand for tour. This should be packed within the student's luggage (i.e. suitcase). Students will need this item for most rehearsals and concerts in Europe.

## **Luggage Tags**

Students should place personal luggage tags on all their items. This tag should include their name, address, home phone, and country. Blue Lake will provide numbered equipment tags for all instruments and luggage, but these are to assist with loading and unloading and only contain minimal information.

## **Passport Carrier with Neck Strap**

The Blue Lake passport carrier is a **required** item that students can purchase online via their Blue Lake accounts. When traveling to other countries, it is important to have a passport easily accessible. However, it should also be tucked away in a safe place to avoid the possibility of losing it. The carrier is the best way to keep your passport, as well as cash and credit cards safe. Students will need their passports to enter Europe, to return to the U.S., and throughout the tour. Staff members will check for passports on a daily basis (at least)! So that students will get in the habit of wearing their passport carrier daily and experiencing frequent passport checks, we will start this process at the beginning of Intensive Week.

## **Money**



### *Obtaining and Converting Money*

How much money should students take on tour? We recommend a minimum of \$300. However, it is up to each family to decide the best amount of money for their student to take. Students should be prepared to spend money on the following items: snacks and drinks, pay toilets, postage (for postcards, letters, or boxes), souvenirs, and gifts. We recommend obtaining foreign currency before coming to Intensive week, if at all possible. Euros are accepted throughout Europe, with the exception of Denmark, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland, so be sure to check your student's itinerary. For most banks, this process could take a couple of weeks, so please plan ahead. Your student will be able to exchange USD during the tour, but it is very difficult to arrange this as we first arrive.

### *Budgeting Money*

Remember that students will be traveling for several weeks, and that spending money should last throughout that time. Before traveling, we recommend that students divide their spending money equally among the places they will visit and make a list of those who they may be shopping for.

### *Traveler's Checks*

It is becoming increasingly difficult to cash traveler's checks throughout Europe. We do NOT recommend using this method of payment. Many of our students have had to visit several banks before locating one that will exchange their traveler's checks. If students do use this method, they must be sure to have

alternate sources of currency (i.e. Euros, U.S. dollars, or a debit/credit card) just in case students encounter problems in a particular community.

### *Credit Card*

Students can obtain low limit credit cards with a co-signature from a parent. Some families have opted to use credit cards because they offer safety and flexibility. The pros: no need for exchanging money or cashing checks at banks, money is readily available in all countries. The cons: credit cards, although common, are not always accepted everywhere, so a small amount of cash may be necessary for snacks and other small purchases. Visa cards seem to be the most widely accepted. Be sure that the credit card your family chooses utilizes chip and PIN technology, as this is the standard in Europe. Prepaid gift cards are not recommended.

### *Debit Card*

Debit cards are also an effective way to manage money on tour. The benefit to using a debit card is flexibility: students can withdraw money from an ATM in the currency they need without requiring a bank to be open. (Of course, there are fees for using an ATM not associated with your bank, just like there are at home). Debit cards can also be used for store purchases. Many parents also like having the ability to add funds to the account if necessary and watch how the funds are being spent. Be sure the debit card utilizes chip and PIN technology as well.

### *Changing Currency*

Avoid changing money at the airport. The exchange rate is poor and there is not enough time to complete this process before the tour group departs on the bus. Host families will be happy to help students at a local bank, if necessary. Coins cannot be exchanged, so be careful not to load up before returning home.

### *Prices*

Prices in Europe are high compared to the United States. Also, if the value of the dollar happens to be low during the trip, items will be even more expensive. Spend wisely. Purchasing items in another currency can be deceiving... calculate the U.S. dollar amount before spending money!

### *Souvenirs*

Students might find themselves thinking: a hiking stick from the Alps would be a great gift to take home to Dad! And Mom would just love the hand-cut lead crystal vase I found at that little shop in the town square! But consider this: How can a student get a six-foot hand-carved pole home on the plane? And what are the chances of that vase remaining in one piece while on tour? It is important to shop sensibly—items must fit in students' luggage, or students must be able to afford to mail them home. It is worthwhile to consider these challenges before making a purchase overseas. Remember: when traveling, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to exchange or return items. Students should make sure to purchase exactly what they want. Travel Tip: many shops will package and mail breakable items for a small fee. In some countries, they will remove the sales tax if students mail it home from the store.

If students intend to purchase souvenirs, we recommend asking their host families for suggestions. They can tell what items are made locally, what items are traditional for that area, the best places to buy them, and the best prices.



## Rehearsal Days in November and April

The November and April rehearsals provide an opportunity for students to meet their music director and the other students you will be traveling with. These first rehearsals are also critical to establishing common goals and helping students to understand the artistic expectations of their ensemble.

### Auditions

The music director of your ensemble will determine the process for auditions and chair placements. Placements may take place via video audition, or as a live audition during the April or May rehearsals. Smaller chamber ensembles may be formed within each ensemble. Membership and repertoire for chamber ensembles are at the director's discretion. More information will be provided prior to any requirements. Audition material will always come from your ensemble folder, so the best way to be prepared is to know your part!

### Questions

Time is scheduled for student questions during the November and April rehearsals. If parents have additional questions, they can attend a one-on-one conference with International administrative staff in the large dining hall. The specific times for these conferences will be indicated on the rehearsal schedule.



### Cell Phone Policy

To ensure that students are completely focused on the rehearsal and show respect to their director and other students, a strict no-cell-phone policy will be in place for the rehearsals. Students should leave their cell phones at home or hand them off to their parents-and guardians upon arrival to Blue Lake. During our May and June rehearsals, cell phones that are not left at home will be collected and stored in a secure location. At the conclusion of June Intensive Week, cell phones will be returned to students before they leave for the tour, however.

Again, students will have their cell phones while abroad, but should exercise excellent judgment regarding when and where to use them. To review the full Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy, please see *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information*.

## May and June Rehearsals

May Weekend and June Intensive Week offer the International groups an opportunity to meet and rehearse for extended blocks of time while living on Blue Lake's campus. Students participate in an intensive instructional schedule with limited free time, providing accelerated learning, bonding, and preparation for the tour. A detailed schedule will be provided prior to the May and June meetings. **Students may not drive themselves to May and June rehearsals and must be checked in by an adult.**

### Living on Camp

During May and June, International groups are in residence at camp and will need to embrace the traditional rustic camping lifestyle at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. This includes details such as cabin cleanliness, meal procedures, and general camp rules for supervision, behavior, boundaries, and group activities.

### Laundry (June only)

Laundry will be done every other day by staff members. All items must be marked with student names or initials. Staff will coordinate with each other to facilitate a big wash day just prior to departure so students can have fresh clothes for the trip.

### Basic Camp Rules During May and June

- Come with an open mind and a positive attitude! Be prepared to learn.
- Respect each other's space, privacy, belongings, and person.
- Come to staff members with concerns, questions, and needs. We're here to help!
- All scheduled events are required for all students. Students are expected to follow the printed instructional schedule.
- Students are not permitted to be at any location on camp without a staff member present.
- Students are permitted only in their rehearsal site, Marek North, or unit and cabin. Students are not permitted in other group areas or facilities. Students are not permitted in other students' cabins or units.
- The full camp uniform with badge is required at all rehearsals, meals, and group activities. Students can wear non-uniform clothes in the unit only.
- Do not come to camp sick! If you're not feeling well in the days leading up to rehearsal, please contact the International Office.

### Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy

No cell phones or devices that connect to cellular networks are permitted during the May and June rehearsals. As outlined in *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information*, cell phones and electronic devices with cellular capability are permitted on the European tour, but the devices that students plan to bring with them to Europe will be securely stored during May Weekend and June Intensive Week and returned prior to departure for Europe. Failure to abide by this policy will result in immediate confiscation

of the student's phone or electronic device. For more information, please refer to the Mail & Communication section of the handbook.

## **Student Health**

Students in the International Program are essentially responsible for their own basic health concerns and daily medications. However, staff members are always present and can assist with students' health needs. When in residence at camp, students will be expected to comply with camp rules requiring the storage of medication in the Health Lodge. At the point of departure, medications will be returned to families and students for travel. Students who feel ill or suffer a minor injury should approach a staff member so they can receive the help they need. Staff will ensure that the student gets the care they need immediately.

To review official health policies, please see *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information*. Tour participants will receive detailed information on our protocols for maintaining a healthy tour in a separate document.

## **Lost and Found**

Blue Lake is not responsible for lost or stolen items, so campers should mark their important belongings clearly with their name, address, and phone before coming to camp. The Administration Building maintains a Lost and Found depository. Parents or students with missing items can contact the office and leave a description. If the item is located, Blue Lake will contact them and return it.

## **Students Arriving Late or Leaving Camp Temporarily**

In some cases, it is necessary for students to miss a portion of the rehearsal time due to important school commitments. When an absence is deemed necessary, check-in or check-out times must be verified by the Director of the ensemble. Please refer to *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information* in this handbook for more detail on Blue Lake's absence and attendance policy. Students and parents should complete the following procedure for departing and/or returning:

1. Parents and students must sign out with the Music Director on the International Student sign-out sheet.
2. The Music Director is responsible for confirming the return time of the student, as well as providing the parents information on where to go upon return.
3. Parents and students must sign in with the Music Director on the sheet upon their return.
4. Under no circumstances should a student depart from camp without their Director knowing.

## Be a Great Guest: Pre-Tour Preparations

The host family experience is at the heart of the Blue Lake International tour, and it is important that students are prepared to make a good impression and be excellent guests. Please see the Student Behavioral Expectations section of this handbook for tips about host family etiquette, proper manners, how to converse with host families, and the importance of listening. In addition, please refer to Appendix B for valuable information on what it means to be a cultural ambassador.



### Gifts for your Host Families

Students should plan to leave a small gift with each host family to show appreciation for their hospitality. Students should choose items that are small, not breakable, and rather inexpensive (it's the thought that counts) so that it can fit easily into their luggage. Students often select items that represent their region of the United States, hometown, or family. Some students even make their gifts. Start thinking about gift ideas now! Here are a few suggestions:

1. Framed photograph of students and their families back home
2. Small memento from student's community, region, or home state
3. Holiday ornaments, framed needlepoint decorations, keychains, etc.
4. Unique items that display heritage, country, or family interests
5. A favorite family recipe translated into the languages spoken in the countries on the tour itinerary (be sure to convert to metric measurements too!)

All gifts should include a well-written thank-you card to the host family. Be sure to personalize the thank-you card with specific details from the visit, showing appreciation for their hospitality and generosity. If writing a thank-you card seems daunting, take the time to draft a few quality sentences that are ready to go when needed. Please see our [Host Family Gift Guide](#) on Blue Lake Access for further details and gift inspiration!

### Know Your Facts

Host families will be very interested in news about the United States, students' home states, and political views on current events. Be prepared and be informed. Also, students are advised to learn about the countries that they will visit so they can intelligently discuss their current issues. Here are some hints for students:

1. Know your state and hometown population.
2. Know the major industries in your state and town.
3. Know the latest issues affecting your region.
4. Know the latest issues involving the United States and the counties you will visit.
5. Know what countries are in contention for the World Cup or European Soccer championship!
6. Take a map of your state to show where you live.
7. Be prepared to discuss our constitution, social problems, and foreign policy.
8. Remember: not everyone will share your point of view. Be open-minded.

9. Practice encountering ideas you are unfamiliar with or topics you haven't yet formed an opinion on (e.g., "I don't know much about that topic, but I'd like to learn more! How do you feel about it?")

## **Photographs**

Students should take photos of themselves and their family, as well as their home, school events, pets, vacations, camp, etc. to share with their host families. They will be extremely interested in our life and lifestyle back home. Plan to leave a photograph of yourself with each host family—we recommend duplicating one great photo so that students can leave the same one with each family.

Also, as a kind gesture, students may wish to take a picture with their host family and send it to them later with a follow up thank-you note or Christmas card.

## **Journals**

A journal is an excellent way to keep track of the trip, and it can help students remember things to tell everyone when they get home. A journal is also the perfect way to keep track of host families and their addresses. Some students also collect souvenirs, such as boarding passes or mementos from each community, and build them into a scrapbook.

## **Electrical Appliances & Adapters**

Students will need an adapter for European outlets while traveling: look for European Type C adapters. Unlike the United States, most of Europe runs on 220 volts. Students should also ensure that their hair dryer, curling iron, electric razor, or other small travel appliances can be converted from 110v to 220v. Travel appliances and adapters are reasonably priced and available online or anywhere that specializes in travel supplies.

## **Cameras**

We recommend taking a small camera that can easily fit into a purse or fanny-pack. Avoid taking large, expensive models. Remember to bring spare batteries or a charger/adapter. Students may also use their phone as their camera, provided that they are using it within the appropriate guidelines (See *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information*)

## **Air Travel with the Group**

For the tour to run smoothly, it is critical that student members listen very carefully to all instructions from staff members when the group is traveling. Clear expectations will be outlined by staff during orientation sessions so they know what to expect at the airport, on the plane, and once traveling by bus in Europe.

### **Departing from Blue Lake**

The last morning of Intensive Week is a very exciting time, but there is a lot to do before boarding the bus for the airport. Students and staff will work together to ensure everyone is packed for the trip and the camp is left clean and in good condition. Students must listen for specific instructions from staff members so that this process is efficient—then they can hit the road for Europe!

Please note: there will be a designated time for parents to visit their students prior to their departure from camp to Europe. Parents may attend a dress rehearsal and meal the day before departure as well. More detailed information about this day's events will be provided in a separate handout. Parents should not come to the airport to see their students off: they will be very busy with their equipment, check-in, and group boarding procedures!

### **Airport and Check-In Procedures**

The airport check-in procedures will be discussed with students prior to camp departure and immediately before arrival at the terminal to assure an organized and orderly process. Students will check themselves in with assistance from staff members. The group will always stay together, moving from the ticket area through security and on to the departure gate. Please remember that airports are not a place for joking around or being overly loud. This is also a “no phones” time; staff will expect students to store their cell phones in order to stay focused on the check-in and airport security processes. Stay quiet, listen for instructions, stick together, and start looking forward to the trip!

### **Luggage & Equipment**

Group luggage, instruments, and equipment will be inspected, weighed, and tagged during June Intensive Week, and then transported with the group to the airport for check-in. Students will check in their own luggage and instrument.

Following the flights, each individual should inspect luggage and equipment for accidental damage. If there is a significant concern with damaged or missing equipment, students should notify staff prior to departing the customs area of the airport.

### **Behavior During the Flight**

During orientation in June, staff members will communicate the behavioral expectations for students during airport, flight, and bus times. When traveling with a large group, it can be easy to forget about the impact such a large group may have on other people nearby. Blue Lake students are expected to show exemplary behavior—representing the best of Blue Lake, America, and their families—including showing kindness, using proper manners and language, saying please and thank you, keeping voices at a soft level, and respecting the

airline personnel and property. Students may be seated in various configurations; seating is assigned by the airline and not by Blue Lake. We expect students to graciously accept their seating assignment, wherever it may be. Seatmate requests will not be accepted.

### **Landing in Europe**

Once the plane lands in Europe, the group is bound to be excited. In addition to excitement, students might start feeling the effects of jet-lag. Regardless, many important things have to occur to get the group safely off the plane, through customs, into the baggage area, and onto the buses. Here are some key things for students to remember:

- Ensure you disembark the aircraft with all personal items, double checking for your passport.
- Be attentive, always listening for staff instructions.
- Follow staff directions at baggage claim. Help make sure all group and personal items are accounted for and loaded onto luggage carts.
- Exit baggage claim and customs as a group, as directed by staff. They will lead you to the bus.
- Always use the buddy system while traveling, as instructed by staff.



## **On the Road in Europe**

### **Traveling by Bus**

Blue Lake International Groups will travel by bus for the majority of their trip. Groups will have the same busses and drivers throughout the entire tour. Staff will designate seating on the bus, and the group will travel this way throughout the tour. For longer bus trips, students should be prepared with any essentials (water, snack, book, etc.) in their backpacks, as suitcases will not be accessible while traveling on the bus.

### **Staying on Schedule**

Tour groups will be following strict schedules. Students must be sure to listen for announcements any time the bus stops so that they know exactly how long they have for a restroom/lunch break.

### **Excursions**

Students may have the opportunity to engage in group sightseeing excursions as they travel from one host community to another. Details about the location and duration of these excursions will be included in final detailed schedules distributed to families. Students will wear the Blue Lake blue uniform during these excursions and should plan to exhibit the same excellent manners and openness that they demonstrate with their host families.

### **Keep It Clean**

Staff members and students work closely with bus drivers to ensure that the bus, including the restroom, is maintained and clean. Students are expected to throw their trash away each time before departing the bus.

### **Eating on the Bus**

Many drivers do not allow the group to eat on the busses. Rather, the bus drivers will select well-timed breaks and stops for the students. Rest areas and parks offer nice locations for eating meals packed by host families. If the driver grants permission to eat on the bus, students will pitch in to pick up their garbage and remove it from the bus.

## **We're Here!—Host Communities**

Even though group members may be tired from a long bus trip, they must prepare to meet their new host family in a friendly, positive, and eager manner. Just before arrival, students will be reminded to be in proper travel uniform, organize personal belongings, and pick up trash from their area. Any schedule details will be discussed at this time as well. Upon arrival, students should listen for directions to the toilets, as well as instructions on where to put luggage, whether or not to unload instruments, and where to assemble after unloading.



### **Uniforms upon Arrival**

For the official International Uniform policy, please see *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information*. Remember that all students are to be in full uniform any time the group is together, including bus travel, air travel, rehearsals, group site-seeing, meeting host families, and group receptions. For some special events, such as meeting host families or greeting city officials, students are expected to wear their “better blues,” including dressier, longer shorts, capris, or slacks (no denim). Concert uniform is worn for performances or any special occasions, such as a reception following a performance or a formal ceremony with a special guest (e.g. the Mayor).

All group members are expected to adhere to the uniform policy at all times. Members are permitted to wear other clothes only when with individual host families.

### **Host Family Introductions**

When students are introduced to their host families, they are expected to greet them with a smile, a firm handshake, and a few words in their native language (they will learn appropriate phrases during June Intensive Week). Students: please be sure not to be chewing gum during this important moment. After group instructions have been given, students depart with their host families.

### **Host Family Housing**

An important part of the Blue Lake International Exchange Program is the unique opportunity to meet and live with a family in another country. It is extremely important that our students leave good impressions on their host families, who have generously offered their hospitality. Students are not permitted to request or alter housing assignments before or during a community visit. Occasionally, staff members may adjust housing if deemed necessary. Students will likely be housed with at least one other Blue Laker while they are in a host community.

### **Time with Host Families**

Time with host families is one of the most precious opportunities and experiences Blue Lake's International Exchange Program has to offer. Host families have often been planning for months in preparation for their Blue Laker's visit. It is important for students to acknowledge and appreciate this effort by getting to know them, spending time with them, and sharing about themselves and their family. Blue Lake students housed together should not isolate themselves and socialize separately from their host family.

## Language

Language is more than a matter of communicating: it is a matter of caring, politeness, and respect for the people of another country. This is a chance to be an ambassador for the United States. While traveling, students will encounter people who do not speak English. By simply being prepared with a few phrases, students will be able to make lasting impressions. Students should not expect their host families, or any European they may meet, to speak English. Granted, many Europeans can speak English and will be more than happy to communicate in that language, remember that they are not required to! Students are the guests in their country, and should demonstrate the proper respect for languages other than English and, most importantly, those who speak them.

Europeans will be particularly flattered if students make an effort to speak a few words in their language. By showing that they can make the effort to speak another language by trying to say something new, they will break the ice and make many new friends. We suggest that students obtain phrase books or language apps for the different countries you may visit.

During Intensive Week, each group will receive several short language classes to familiarize students with common phrases and words for the countries they will be visiting. Students will also receive “cheat sheets” to take on tour!



## Laundry

Although many host families will offer to help with laundry on tour, students should not expect it. Students should be prepared to launder their own clothes when necessary and/or ask for help. We encourage students to ask host families if there is a place where they can do laundry in the home. In most cases, host families will then offer to do it themselves, but students should be prepared to make good on their offer and actually do the laundry themselves! Families may simply show students where the machines are and how to use them.

Students should take a small amount of laundry soap with them. We suggest the small “one-load” liquid packets available at most laundromats or the travel-size aisle at most stores. Students can always wash their clothes in the bathroom sink or tub and hang them up to dry on a clothesline or hanger, making sure not to let wet clothes drip on carpet, rugs, wooden floors, or beds. Students should ask their host families where to let things dry. We suggest taking a few plastic bags (gallon-size Ziploc bags work well) for storing damp washcloths or swimsuits while traveling.

## **Mail and Communication**

### **Mailing Items Home**

Students are allowed one suitcase, one backpack, a small purse or small camera bag, and their instrument. So what should they do with all of the extra things they accumulate on their trip?

The easiest thing to do is to leave some extra room in the suitcase to allow for gifts and souvenirs that they will be bringing home. If this is not possible, the only other option is to mail the items home. Students must be prepared to purchase packing materials and postage. Shipping may be pricey and delivery can take up to 2-3 weeks or more. We recommend that students ask a host family to help mail their packages, as the process and postal forms can be a little complicated. Students will not be able to mail home any liquids (i.e., wine, perfume).

### **Stamps for Letters & Postcards**

Do not mail letters from another country with U.S. stamps. Students must use stamps from the country from which they are mailing. Host families can assist with purchasing the correct stamps for mailing items home.

### **Receiving Mail on Camp (June Intensive Week)**

Blue Lake recommends that parents allow at least four working days for mail to reach their International camper during June Intensive Week. Mail will be picked up at the main office daily throughout the week and delivered throughout the day. Blue Lake cannot be responsible for mail and packages that are not addressed correctly.

#### **Address mail to:**

[International Camper's Name]  
[International Tour Group Name]  
[Unit - Cabin]  
Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp  
300 East Crystal Lake Rd.  
Twin Lake, MI 49457-9592

### **Telephone Calls on Camp**

Through our years of experience, we have found that it is best if communication between campers and family consists of letters and care packages. Telephone calls for campers are permitted only in the event of an emergency, or if the International staff deems them necessary.

If parents must reach a camper, we request that they call the main camp number at (231) 894-1966 and leave a message. We will deliver it as soon as possible, but the campers will most likely be in rehearsal and unable to be reached by phone. Please do not contact students on their personal cell phones: students are expected to keep personal cell phones securely stored during the June Intensive week prior to travel.



## Receiving Mail on Tour

Parents will receive a list of Chairpersons for the host communities in late May. Mail should be addressed to their care for International campers. Parents should send their letters by airmail and allow at least 10 days for delivery. Upon arrival in a new community, the Chairperson will deliver mail to the group and will do so throughout their stay.

Students should not open their mail and read it in front of their new host family while they are trying to get acquainted. Instead, we recommend that students wait to open their mail until they are in their rooms for the night. Students will enjoy their mail much more and will not appear rude to their host family.

## Telephone Calls on Tour

Parents: please be advised that the groups will be very busy while in Europe (e.g. traveling, rehearsing, presenting concerts, communicating with their host families). If a family emergency should arise, please call Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. We will get the message to the group immediately and see that the student calls home as soon as possible. Please remember, these things do take time and there is at least a six-hour time difference between students' home states and Europe.

We encourage students to stay in touch with their families at home but kindly request that they correspond via letters and postcards rather than engaging in regular telephone conversations. If students plan to make a call from their personal cell phone while staying with a host family, we urge them to be extremely considerate and keep their calls brief. Phone calls should never be made during family visiting time, in the middle of a conversation, or at a meal. When necessary, this sort of communication should occur in a private location, at the end of the day. Host families will be very eager to spend time with students. Please refer to *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information for the full Cell Phone Policy*.

Under no circumstances should any telephone calls—local or long distance—be made on a host family's phone without permission! If a host family has given permission for a student to use their phone, here are the guidelines:

1. Students should only use host family telephones for local calls to Blue Lake Staff if they have a serious emergency. In this case, students must always ask permission to use the telephone.
2. Students are not permitted to contact other members on the telephone. They will have all of their bus trips to talk with their friends in person, and should instead spend their time getting to know their host family and their culture.
3. Students should use their own cell phone or electronic device to call or contact their home rather than using the devices of other students or host families.
4. Above all, students must make sure that they do not leave their family with phone charges!

## Email & Internet Use on Tour

Students should not, under any circumstances, ask their host family if they can use their computer to send an email. However, if it is offered, it is OK to accept, but please keep it brief. Host families in Europe have eagerly looked forward to the students' visit for months, and it is not polite to disappoint them by wanting to spend time on the computer instead of getting acquainted and communicating with them. Students

should limit their computer time to no more than 15 minutes, which is more than adequate for updating friends and family on their well-being.

### **Data Usage**

If a host family offers to provide their Wi-Fi password for student cell phones or electronic devices, the same protocols apply. **Under no circumstances should students download files, stream music and video, play games, or otherwise incur data charges or excess usage on their host family's computer or electronic devices.** Please refer to *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information* for the full Electronic Device Policy.

# Performances and Rehearsals on Tour

## Rehearsals

Group rehearsals will be scheduled in each community, and the time, location, and duration will be included in your local itinerary. Students can expect to rehearse at least once for 2 to 3 hours in each community.

## Performances

In each community, groups will give at least one performance. This is meant as a huge THANK YOU to the hosting community, local Chairperson, and host families. Usually, these performances are very well-attended and are popular events within the region. Friends and family will be able to follow along and see when performances will take place once the detailed tour schedule is provided closer to the tour.

## Recordings

Blue Lake Public Radio will record the Homecoming Concerts. Students will be able to purchase these recordings in CD format at the end of the summer.



## Visiting Family & Relatives

Each year we have a number of parents and/or relatives who wish to attend concerts in Europe, or European relatives who may wish to serve as host families and/or attend concerts while we are traveling near their communities.

We are able, in some cases, to facilitate this; however, it is important to understand that our European Chairpersons have put forth enormous efforts to arrange the schedule, concerts, and host families for each Blue Lake group. To respect our hosts, and to avoid problems that have occasionally happened in the past, we have established the following procedures:

1. If students have relatives in Europe who would like to hear one of our concerts, please send us their name and contact information. We will, in turn, send it to our nearest hosting Chairperson, who will then inform these relatives of our concert/schedule details.
2. If students have relatives in Europe who are near enough to serve as a host family, again, send us their name, address, and telephone number by May 1. We will notify our Chairperson, who will then contact these relatives and ask that they be a host family while the group is in their area. We cannot guarantee the inclusion of European family members as host families.
3. Parents who plan to be in Europe at the time of our groups' tours will have the time and place of each European concert before the group's departure. Parents are certainly welcome and encouraged to attend concerts, but are kindly requested not to interfere with plans of Chairpersons or host families.
4. Parents who plan to be in Europe at the time of our groups' tours and staying in the area can serve as a host family for their son/daughter while there, though this is not recommended. Students may stay in a hotel room with parents, but this should be arranged by May 1 as well.

These procedures have been established to avoid parents and relatives showing up unannounced, potentially inconveniencing our Chairpersons and host families who have made special arrangements for each group's visit.

A complete listing of the name and address of each hosting Chairperson will be submitted to parents in May. A listing of the tour itinerary will be available in April.

The goal and objective of the Blue Lake International Exchange Program is to make friends and create goodwill between our Blue Lake students in each community they visit. We appreciate your understanding and willingness to follow these outlined guidelines should you or a relative plan to visit our group in Europe.



## **Returning to the United States**

In the final community, it is important to take the time necessary to prepare for the flight home. Just like the preparations at camp for the flight over to Europe, students should plan to organize their belongings, pack carefully, and keep their passports and money handy. Passports must be shown at check in and again during entry into the United States.

Parents should visit [www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com) for the most up-to-date and accurate information on our return flight. They are expected to meet their students upon the return of our flight.

### **U.S. Customs**

Once flights land back in the U.S., there are a few procedures to handle before students reunite with their parents. After clearing Immigration, the group will proceed to Customs.

At Customs, each student will visit a kiosk where they will scan their passport, have their photo taken, answer some basic questions from a Customs agent, and then proceed to a meeting point with their ensemble before entering the baggage claim area. Students are responsible for retrieving their own belongings, and once everyone has their things in hand, the group will emerge through the exit area where parents will be waiting.

If a connecting flight is necessary, please refer to *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information* for more information.

### **End-of-Tour Accommodations**

Your Homecoming Concert will take place the day after you arrive home from Europe. You will be due to report to Blue Lake by noon. If your family lives near the arrival airport, you may wish to go home that evening. If your family is picking you up from farther away, they may wish to secure lodging at a local hotel for the evening. Blue Lake will provide families with a list of a few hotels at which we've reserved rooms for you to purchase at a special rate, but you are free to make your own accommodations. Students may also wish to make carpooling arrangements with other students in their ensemble, and our program rosters are great for helping to make this happen! Please contact the International Office if you have additional questions about carpooling.

### **Blue Lake's Policy on Personal Belongings**

Each group member is responsible for his/her own instrument and personal belongings. Blue Lake will not be responsible for transporting and/or securing personal belongings during travel for any members who may be traveling separately from the group.

Students should make sure that they leave the airport with all of their belongings, including instruments they may have borrowed from their school.

## Homecoming Day

After an exciting tour through Europe and a break at home to rejuvenate, all Blue Lake International groups will reunite for a Homecoming Day at Blue Lake to culminate their experience. This is a **REQUIRED** event for all group members. When families check in on Homecoming Day, they will pick up luggage and bedding from Intensive Week if they did not pick it up before their student departed for Europe. Then, students and families can expect a rehearsal and recording session, time to share stories and photos, and a celebratory meal. The day concludes with a Homecoming Performance for family, friends, and the camp community. A detailed schedule for this day will be provided ahead of time.

# **Student Behavioral Expectations**

## **Manners and Etiquette: A Reminder for Students**

You were selected to represent the best of our American youth. In many ways, the country and family you will live with for a short time will think of all Americans as they think of you. The impression you leave with your families is crucial to successful tours both now and in the future. Therefore, it is important to always use proper etiquette and manners.

You should try to relate to your host family as you do your own family: confide in them, ask them to help when you need it, let them know how you feel, take an interest in their lives and culture, and show your appreciation for their kindness and hospitality.

Here are some helpful reminders:

1. Say “please and “thank you” in the language of the country you’re visiting.
2. Say “Good Morning” and “Good Night!” Greet your family each time you see them.
3. Keep your room clean. Don’t leave your stuff everywhere!
4. Engage in conversation. Break the ice! Share things about yourself. Ask questions.
5. ASK FIRST before you use anything. Never borrow things without asking.
6. Don’t assume. Don’t take anything for granted.
7. Don’t spend excessive time in the bathroom or the room where you will sleep!
8. Do not ask your host family to use their phone, computer, or other electronics. Put your phone away and enjoy your immersive experience!

## **Trying New Languages and Foods: A Note for Students**

All members should make a sincere effort to use the language of the countries being visited. Your attempts will be greatly appreciated. During June Intensive Week, you will be provided with a “cheat sheet” and have an informal lesson on pronunciation. Upon first meeting, greet the members of your host family with a smile, a firm handshake, and “hello” in their language. First impressions are important!

Trying new foods is a very exciting and rewarding part of this experience! Be grateful for, and eat appreciatively, the delicious foods which you will be tasting. Some of these wonderful dishes represent the heritage and culture of the region you are visiting or country itself. Keep an open mind and be prepared, because the food might be quite different than what you are accustomed to. Just try it! You might come away with a new favorite food.

## **Rules and Regulations**

All rules and regulations are clearly stated for students in the pledge. By signing the pledge, all members agree to abide by the Blue Lake International Exchange Program’s rules and regulations. Please see *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information* to review the Student Pledge.

## Guests

With the exception of scheduled concert programs, guests of Blue Lake International Students are not permitted on camp or on tour at any time.

## No-Smoking Policy

Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp maintains a strict no-smoking policy. All parents, visitors, and participants are requested to refrain from smoking in any camp building or on the grounds, including rehearsal sites and the International Office. Any student will be expelled immediately for storing or consuming tobacco products while participating in the International Exchange Program.

## Student Pledge

Every student must sign the Student Pledge, which indicates that they will adhere to the performance, appearance, behavior, and uniform expectations of the International Exchange Program. This pledge is strictly enforced from the onset of rehearsals until the conclusion of the tour and Homecoming Concert.

In addition, students are required to follow the policies and guidelines established by Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp when in residence or on tour. This includes camp uniform requirements, dining hall behavior, pool use guidelines, cell phone and electronic device policy, and cabin responsibilities.

Students and parents who have signed the pledge indicate their understanding and acceptance of Blue Lake's policies and expectations. Students who do not comply will be sent home at their parents' expense. Students with significant behavioral concerns will not be taken on tour. The Director of International Tours or Interim President shall have the right to dismiss any student or staff member without notice for any behavior or action that is deemed to be not in the best interest of the organization or its participants. Violating the code of conduct or pledge, or exhibiting undesirable behaviors or attitudes is grounds for immediate dismissal. To review the Student Pledge, please see *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information*.



## Drinking Alcohol

It is not unusual for a Blue Lake student to be offered beer or wine with a meal in their host family. No harm is meant by making this gesture, as it is culturally accepted in Europe.

The Blue Lake alcohol policy and Student Pledge will be reviewed extensively during the orientation sessions. Our policy on alcohol has been explained to all of our chairpersons, and they have passed the information on to all host families. Although we do not object to students trying one glass of beer or wine with their host families during a meal, we do ask host family assistance to see that our students do not over-consume. Under no circumstances should students drink with their friends. Our European host families and community leaders understand the Blue Lake policy on alcohol and will have other options available (e.g. juice, soft drinks, water).

Parents are encouraged to discuss their expectations with their children. Students should not feel pressured to have beer or wine, and should feel comfortable asking for another beverage if preferred.

Indiscreet and excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages by Blue Lake students will not be tolerated. Abuse of the privilege will result in dismissal from the group and a speedy return home to the United States at their parents' expense. To review the Alcohol Policy, please see *Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information*.

### **Public Displays of Affection**

Public displays of affection should be limited to hand-holding. Anything beyond that is considered inappropriate and unacceptable at any time. Students are expected to possess the maturity to realize what is inappropriate, but staff members will be prepared to address any concerns.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How do I keep my suitcase light enough to meet the weight restriction?**

Follow our packing list precisely! We have refined this document over countless tours, and packing exactly what we recommend will help. Beyond that, here are some additional tips:

- You won't need as many non-uniform outfits as you think you will. Don't forget that you can re-wear outfits in each community (it's new to them!)
- Pack light, nonbreakable host family gifts, and consult the Host Family Gift Guide for more ideas.
- Wear your heaviest shoes on the airplane.
- Be careful with liquids such as shampoo: they get heavy! And remember that host families will usually be able to assist if you run out of something.

### **How does my student communicate with staff?**

We use the Remind app to keep students and staff connected on tour. Students can use the app to contact staff or Blue Lake Administration whenever the group is not together.

### **What happens if my student gets sick on tour?**

Host families will manage minor student illnesses (i.e., if the student simply needs to rest). If additional care by a physician is required, the Music Director will contact the physician we have on call in every community to secure care for the student. The Blue Lake Certified Health Assistant (CHA) will also support students and provide medical records to health professionals when seeking care.

### **How do I get foreign currency before traveling?**

Banks are able to order foreign currency for customers. Your family should place an order for cash Euros well in advance of your travel. We also advise students to travel with a credit or debit card that uses chip and PIN technology. "Tap to Pay" technology is also widely used in most of the regions of Europe where we travel.

### **Explain homecoming day to me. What can we expect?**

Homecoming Day is a full day of celebration! Students will check in at noon, then have a rehearsal of approximately three hours. After that, there will be a recording session of all tour repertoire that won't be performed at the Homecoming Concert (which will also be recorded). Then, students change into their performance uniforms and share a final meal together. Parents are then invited to join for a dessert reception, a photo slideshow and an announcement of photo contest winners, and closing remarks from the Music Director. Then our Homecoming Concerts begin! Afterward, students have a chance to say their final goodbyes to their new friends.



**We have date conflicts with the end of the school year. What do we do?**

The Blue Lake International Exchange Program offers a flexible attendance policy, which is outlined in the invitation and contract materials. However, most schools are willing to make special arrangements during end of year activities in order for full attendance at Blue Lake rehearsals. Most schools recognize the value of the International Program experience and permit students to have an alternate end of year schedule. Blue Lake recommends discussing arrangements with your school during the enrollment period.

# **Blue Lake International Uniform & Equipment Regulations**

## **Two Blue Lake International Uniforms**

The traditional Blue Lake uniform is worn any time the group is together (e.g., while traveling, rehearsals, group sightseeing). The concert attire uniform is worn for performances or any special events specified by staff. Students are welcome to wear non-uniform items when with host families. International students are required to obtain the minimum number of each uniform item.

## **Personal Appearance Expectations**

An International participant's first impression, actions, attitude, and appearance are direct reflections of Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and the International Exchange Program. Participants are therefore expected to maintain a professional appearance through attire, grooming, and hygiene at all times.

Hairstyles and facial hair should be clean, neatly groomed, and well maintained. Extreme non-natural hair colorings are not permitted.

Participants may maintain basic earrings, discreet facial piercings (single micro studs or thin rings), spacers, retainers, or plugs in body piercings. Facial or body piercings, alteration, or modification that detract from a professional environment are prohibited. Examples include but are not limited to: septum piercing, extreme facial piercings, body piercing, oral piercings, tongue splitting, tooth filing, earlobe expansion, branding, and disfiguring skin implants.

Visible tattoos are permitted, with the exception of coverage of full body, arm, or leg; or placement on face, head, or neck. Fabric tattoo sleeves, white long sleeved t-shirts under uniform, or pants may be worn for coverage of full arm or leg tattoos.

Participants may not wear or display anything that depicts nudity, offensive or inappropriate language or images, represents themes of violence, sexuality, drugs or alcohol, hate speech or groups, or any other references that may be considered offensive, harassing, or otherwise inappropriate. Anything that does not promote a safe and inclusive environment or is contrary to the objective of creating an environment free from distractions will not be permitted.

## **The Blue Lake International Exchange Program Uniform**

The traditional Blue Lake uniform, slightly adjusted for International travel, is worn any time the group is together (e.g., while traveling, at rehearsals, during group sight-seeing). Concert attire is worn for performances or any special events specified by staff. Students are welcome to wear non-uniform items when with host families. International students are required to obtain the minimum number of each uniform item.

## **Daily International Uniform (Better Blues)\***

Participants are required to wear the Better Blues Daily Uniform when on campus, traveling as a group, or specified by staff. Students are not required to be in uniform within their residential housing area (unit) or when with their host family. Uniform guidelines are provided within contract materials.

*\*Better Blues consists of clean uniform items, in good shape, without tears, stains, rips, or fades.*

- Identification Badge (while on campus, and when staff specify on tour)



- Blue Lake light-blue polo shirt (tucked in)
- Jeans, pants, capris, skirts, skorts, or shorts of navy twill or navy denim  
(Shorts must have at least a 5" inseam; Skirts and skorts must have at least a 7" inseam)
- Blue Lake crew-neck sweatshirt, quarter-zip, fleece, or V-neck sweater (if necessary)  
(Hoodies are not permitted on tour)
- Solid white short-sleeved or long-sleeved undershirt (if necessary)
- Walking or athletic shoes – comfortable and a solid color of white, brown, blue, grey, or black
- White or no-show socks

### **International Concert Attire**

Participants wear the International Concert Attire for performances or special events designated by International Staff.

- International white polo shirt (tucked in)
- White undershirt, tank, or camisole highly recommended
- Blue Lake v-neck sweater (if necessary)
- Bottoms - Female: International navy palazzo pants, with natural or navy knee-highs or no-show footies, and black or navy dress flats or low heels
- Bottoms - Male: Navy blue dress pants, with black belt, black dress socks, black dress shoes

### **What not to wear:**

- Ripped, frayed, bleached, super-faded, embroidered, striped, or torn jeans or shorts
- Cut-off or frayed shorts, bib-overalls, suspenders
- Shorts or skirts with inseams less than specified above in uniform policy
- Sweatpants, joggers, or gym shorts/pants may not be worn with the International Better-Blues daily uniform
- Bottoms with logos, emblems, or text larger than 3"; Stripes on bottoms
- Extreme footwear (such as high heels, extreme boots, patterns, and colors)
- Soiled uniform shirts, shoes, or other clothing; shoes in disrepair
- Excessive, extreme, gaudy jewelry (keep it simple and subtle)
- Sandals or open-toe/heel shoes
- Non-Blue Lake sweaters or sweatshirts; Hoodies are not permitted on tour
- Royal blue, aqua, or turquoise bottoms
- Colored undershirts (t-shirts worn under the Blue Lake uniform must be solid white)
- Hats, bandanas, or head coverings\*

\*Headwear is not permitted unless necessary due to religious, medical, or hygienic reasons.

### **Required Uniform Items Available Only through Blue Lake**

- 3 Blue Lake light blue polo shirts
- 1 Blue Lake V-neck sweater
- 2 Blue Lake white International concert uniform shirts
- 1 Blue Lake back pack
- 1 Blue Lake passport carrier with neck strap
- 1 Blue Lake pair of navy palazzo pants (concert-attire female)

### **Required Uniform Items to Acquire On Your Own**

Walking or athletic shoes — comfortable and a solid color of white, brown, blue, grey, or black  
Blue jeans — newer and dark blue, no extreme styling, rips or holes, or faded lighter blue  
Shorts — navy twill or navy denim, finger-tip length (**5" inseam**) or longer  
White or no-show socks

Required items to complete male concert attire:

- 1 pair navy blue dress pants
- 1 black dress belt
- 1 pair black dress shoes
- Black dress socks, mid-calf (covers your ankles when seated)

Required items to complete female concert attire:

- 1 pair navy or black flats or low heels - closed toe and heel
- Knee-highs (nude/natural or navy color), or no-show footies to wear with dress shoes

### **Optional Uniform Items for Daily Better Blues**

Cropped pants — navy twill or navy denim, such as capris or gauchos  
Skirt or skort — navy fabric or denim (**7" inseam**) or longer  
Blue Lake jacket (If you choose to wear a jacket on tour while in uniform, it must be the Blue Lake jacket)  
Blue Lake crewneck sweatshirt  
Blue Lake quarter-zip top

### **Other Recommended Items**

Purse, mini-backpack, or fanny pack — solid color, cross-body or smaller size, no extreme styling or patterns  
3 non-uniform outfits (1 appropriate for dinner in a nice restaurant, 2 appropriate for outdoor sightseeing)  
Bathing suit  
Underclothes essentials  
Pajamas  
Wash cloth, stored in plastic bag for travel  
Travel alarm and wrist watch  
Personal toiletries, health supplies, medications, first-aid items, etc.

### **Suggested Items for June Only**

Because you will be camping for a week at Blue Lake prior to your departure, there are a few essentials for “camp” that you will not need on tour (e.g., bedding, insect repellent, flashlight). Also, to help preserve your nicer clothing for tour, you may bring an additional small backpack or duffle bag containing older jeans and shoes, other camp clothing, as well as additional socks and underwear.

These items will not be traveling on tour. Any “camp” items should be taken home at the conclusion of Intensive Week by family members (on the day of departure), or may be labeled and stored in a garbage bag at Blue Lake on site until homecoming day.

### **Luggage and Equipment Requirements**

- 1 Suitcase maximum 26" that must have an interior frame framed (not free-form like a duffle bag). The 26" measurement will be the largest dimension of the suitcase, and does not include wheels or handles. In order to facilitate packing of the cargo-hold in aircraft and busses on the tour, it is extremely important that suitcases do not exceed size requirements. Suitcase weight when packed will be limited to 40 pounds in order to allow for the extra instruments and equipment in the cargo bays. If purchasing a suitcase, be sure to consider the weight of the suitcase itself.
- Blue Lake backpack (as listed above)
- 1 folding wire music stand (instrumentalists only: to be packed in your suitcase)
- Instrumentalists: Instrument cases must be hard-sided and sturdy. No soft-sided gig bags. Packing straps and extra padding within the case are recommended for traveling.

### **Carry-On Luggage/Instruments During Flight**

Students are allowed two carry-on items for flights. One item will be the official Blue Lake backpack. The second item will be a personal item (purse, fanny pack, or instrument). Carry-on instruments must be within the official airline carry-on dimension guidelines: The sum of all dimensions (length, plus width, plus height) may not exceed 45 inches.

**For example:** 20 (length) + 14 (width) + 10 (height) = 44 – carried on the plane.

**For example:** 20 (length) + 14 (width) + 12 (height) = 46 – checked under the plane.

Any instrument where the sum of all dimensions is **45 inches or less** will be carried on the plane. Some examples of instruments that typically fall into this category are: flute, oboe, clarinet, alto sax, trumpet, violin.

Any instrument where the sum of all dimensions is **46 inches or greater** will be checked under the plane. Some examples of instruments that typically fall into this category are: bassoon, bass clarinet, tenor sax, baritone sax, horn, trombone, euphonium, tuba, viola, cello, bass.

## Appendix A: Essential Student/Parent Information

This appendix contains critical information regarding the following:

- Attendance, Transportation, Photo/Media, and Health Policies
- International Student Pledge
- Alcohol Policy & Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy



### Blue Lake International Absence, Transportation, Photo/Media, and Health Policies

#### Absence Policy

Full attendance is expected of every member of the International Exchange Program. All rehearsals are extremely important to the ensembles. Each group will accomplish significant progress during scheduled rehearsals, due in part to the continuity, consistency, intensity, and *full attendance* at our rehearsals. We recognize and appreciate the personal sacrifices made by students and family members in order to attend these crucial rehearsals. Students and staff alike are under the same set of rules and policies, including those concerning attendance. Please do not ask for an exception -- we appreciate your understanding and cooperation. Following is a summary of the International Exchange Program's absence policy.

1. Absences will be excused for the following reasons:
  - a. Illness
  - b. Performance of school or Honors group
  - c. Family emergency
  - d. Senior graduation (not to exceed one day)
  - e. Upper Classmen Prom
    - i. Students will be allowed to miss no more than one day or one evening of rehearsal activities in order to attend prom. If prom falls on a Saturday night, students are expected to return to international rehearsals the morning following the event (Sunday)
  - f. Final exams
    - i. Students will not be excused in order to study for exams. If a conflict exists, every effort should be made to reschedule final exams in order to provide participation in International Program rehearsals. This should be addressed early in the school year, not in the spring semester. Blue Lake recommends acquiring an exam schedule change in writing from principals or teachers. Most school districts/educators have been very accommodating with regard to this issue.
2. The International Program Office must be notified **in writing at least 30 days in advance** via email at [interantional@bluelake.org](mailto:interantional@bluelake.org). Written notification must contain name, date, time, place of event, and

how long absence will be. The office should receive written notification of family emergency or illness as soon as possible. (Notice of illness must be accompanied by a physician's recommendation).

3. Effort must be made to miss as little of a scheduled International Rehearsal as possible. Written notification must inform the office of the exact time student will leave and return to Blue Lake.
  
4. Absences are subject to review by International Program administrators.
  - a. Absences will receive confirmation (via phone or email) from the International Office.
  - b. Unexcused absences may result in dismissal from the International Exchange Program.

### **Transportation Policy**

Blue Lake expects parents to transport students to/from rehearsals, and the Homecoming Day, all of which will take place at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. Rosters of International participants will be distributed to group members in order to help facilitate car-pooling needs. Students are not permitted to drive themselves to the May Weekend or June Intensive Week.

Parents are also expected to pick up their student at the Detroit or Chicago Airport (to be determined) when the group returns from Europe, and strongly discourages connecting flights. This recommendation is the result of past experiences with delayed or canceled flights, airline restrictions for unaccompanied minors, and the resulting concerns leading to additional expenses, logistical challenges, and stress for both students and parents. In the event that it is necessary to use a connecting flight, parents must check with connecting airlines for possible age restrictions (i.e. unaccompanied minors). Although a Blue Lake Staff member will escort any connecting flight students to the front doors of the domestic check-in facility for connecting flights, Blue Lake cannot be responsible for problems which may ensue as a result of airline restriction, flight delays, or flight cancellation. Please refer to Item No. 14 (Parents transportation obligation) in contract.

### **Health Policy**

Guardians are expected to submit records for common vaccinations as a part of the tour preparations process. We also recommend that all tour participants are up-to-date with COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations and/or boosters prior to April 1, 2025. All participants will be required to complete a health screening prior to arrival, which will include an at-home COVID-19 test. Those who test positive or have other concerning symptoms (fever, sore throat) must consult with Blue Lake Health Services, and will not be permitted to check in until they are no longer considered contagious per CDC health guidelines.

Blue Lake's staff provides general care and first-aid, support for off-site care, and emergency care on a 24/7 schedule to those within our camp community and programs. Our staff work to keep our campus healthy by adhering to standard practices under the careful supervision of our consulting physicians, on-site medical staff, and our Director of Health Services. Participants are expected to do their part in keeping our community healthy by practicing healthy habits such as maintaining hand hygiene, staying hydrated and making balanced nutritional choices, monitoring personal health, and seeking treatment if needed. All International participants are expected to have the maturity to monitor and respond to their health needs as well as manage any medications on their own while in residence and on tour.

Student participants will be expected to complete a brief daily health screening during camp and tour, and symptomatic individuals will be assessed or tested for COVID-19, as necessary. Depending on current recommendations for travel as well as trends within the group and the communities that we are visiting, Blue Lake may require masks in some settings. Any student who is unable to attend or remain at camp, or complete the tour, due to a significant medical concern will have the option to attend the following summer without additional expense, or receive a refund per Blue Lake's refund policy. Please refer to paragraph No. 8 of the contract for more information.

For more information about our plans to maintain group health, please see the Plans for a Healthy Tour section of these enrollment materials.

### **Photo/Media Policy**

The Blue Lake International Exchange Program occasionally uses professional and amateur photographers and videographers during the summer season to acquire images for promotional purposes. Students may be photographed in the camp or travel setting. Names are never published with images.

### **Blue Lake International Student Citizenship Pledge**

As a goodwill ambassador for the Blue Lake International Exchange Program, my family, my community, and my country, I, the undersigned, understand the importance of the rules and policies as stated in this pledge:

I understand that my host families in Europe and the United States will be encouraged to submit an evaluation of my performance and behavior as a guest in their homes, and that this evaluation may be shared with my parents at the discretion of the International Program.

I understand that my mission as a member of Blue Lake's International Exchange Program is to present artful performances for our audiences, to learn about the culture, communities, and countries I am visiting, and to establish friendships with my host families. I will behave in a mature, polite, dignified, and friendly manner while touring with the group and while a guest in my hosts' homes.

I understand that my host families will prepare nourishing food for meals which may be typical of the country and/or area, and that this food may be different to that which I am accustomed to eating in my own home and country. I agree to be gracious and appreciative of the food offered to me by my host families, and agree to display appropriate table manners at all times. (Note: students with dietary restrictions must indicate so on the health form and student information sheet, and should be prepared to self-advocate regarding any restrictions to host families).

I understand that I am expected to behave in a professional manner before, during, and after all performances. I understand the importance of presenting a well-disciplined and mature image on stage, in addition to an excellent artistic performance. I further understand that all members of the International Program are responsible for taking their instrument and/or other equipment from the stage or performance area to the bus for loading after each event, and that I will be responsible for my own belongings.

As a member of the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp International Exchange Program, I agree to abide by the following rules and regulations which will prevail beginning with the first rehearsal in November and continuing in April and throughout the May and June residency, the European tours, and homecoming events during the summer.

1. Students are required to comply with the Uniform & Equipment Regulations throughout the entire program.
2. Students are not permitted to store or consume alcohol, tobacco or vaping products, marijuana, or illegal drugs on the campus of Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. Students are expected to follow the International Program Alcohol Policy while on tour (refer to the complete Alcohol Policy in this packet). Those who violate the camp and/or international policy on campus or on tour will be expelled immediately.
3. Threats or acts of violence will be treated as criminal activity and addressed as such by the appropriate authorities. Students will be expelled immediately for actions involving objects used as weapons, or threats or harassment of a violent, discriminatory, or sexual nature.
4. Intentional personal harm to self or others, threats of personal harm to self or others, or other actions resulting from severe emotional distress or disturbance will result in release from the program.
5. Vandalism, theft, destruction or defacement of camp, public, or private property, and graffiti of any kind will not be permitted, and is cause for expulsion.
6. Hazing, bullying, teasing, fighting, inappropriate joking, harassment, or actions risking the safety of others will not be tolerated and is cause for expulsion at the discretion of the International Program staff and administration.
7. Inappropriate communications (disparaging or threatening remarks, comments, or photographs about/of the organization, participants, or events) via letter, email, or social media will not be tolerated and is a cause for expulsion. The use of the copyrighted camp names and logos are not allowed without written permission.
8. Unless accompanied by faculty, staff, or host family, students are not permitted under any circumstances to go out of bounds or travel alone.
9. Attendance at all scheduled rehearsals, performances, and other events is required, unless an excused absence has been granted by the International Program administration.
10. Public displays of affection between students will be limited to holding hands only.
11. Students are expected to adhere to Blue Lake International Program's policy relating to the use of cell phones and electronic devices for the duration of the rehearsals, camp residency, and tour. Failure to do so will result in immediate confiscation of the phone or electronic device. Please refer to the complete Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy below, for further information.

I understand that I am responsible for my actions and will be held accountable for my behavior. I further understand that unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated, and may jeopardize my membership in both Blue Lake's International Exchange Program and Summer Camp Divisions.

## Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy

As you may know, Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp has found that enforcing a “no cell phone” policy among campers contributes to our goal of providing a creative and distraction-free environment within a natural setting, where students can focus on their artistic endeavors and personal growth, without outside distractions. This philosophy extends—in a slightly modified form—to the Blue Lake International Exchange Program to ensure that students are properly focused on their artistic and personal growth, their host families, and the overall European cultural experience and tour.

**While at Camp:** All cell phones and personal electronic devices must be turned off and stowed away during day rehearsals (November and April). While in residence at camp during May Weekend and June Intensive Week, students are not permitted to carry cell phones or other devices at any time. Upon arrival, students will be asked to turn them in for secure storage, or return them to their parents. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in immediate confiscation of the phone or electronic device. Devices that *do not* connect to a cellular network are permitted only for reading and listening to music during down time at the unit, but nowhere else on campus.

**While on Tour:** Cell phones and small personal electronic devices are permitted on tour. Larger devices, such as laptops or Chromebooks, are not permitted on tour. Students are expected to have the maturity to recognize when and when not to engage in use of electronic devices, and self-control to limit their usage. Devices may be confiscated by staff members at any time if a student fails to show maturity or good judgement. Please note that Blue Lake is not responsible for damaged, lost, or stolen items.

**When with Host Family:** Use of cell phones or personal electronic devices should be limited to time away from host family members. Students must refrain from using cell phones or personal electronic devices during family activities, events, meals, conversation, or other gathering times. Students should not place or receive calls or texts while engaged in any activity with the host family. Avoid excessive data or roaming fees by limiting usage and keeping your device in Airplane mode when not in use. Best times for use include early in the morning prior to breakfast, and in the evening prior to bedtime.

**When with the Group:** Use of cell phones or personal electronic devices will be limited during group travel times. Students must refrain from using cell phones or personal electronic devices during group activities, sight-seeing, or other times as indicated by the staff. While it is recognized that cell phones and electronic devices are often used as cameras, listening devices, and reading devices, students should NOT use devices for call, text, email, or social media when the group is assembled. Best times for use include early morning prior to breakfast, and in the evening prior to bedtime.



## Alcohol Policy

Many of the countries that Blue Lake students will visit have lower drinking ages (for example: Germany and France allow alcohol at 16, and spirits at 18). Therefore, some of our host families find it strange that our students are not accustomed to drinking beer or wine. They mean no harm in offering a taste to their Blue Lake guests: it is one common way that Europeans show hospitality.

Parents are encouraged to discuss their expectations with their children. Students should not feel pressured to have beer or wine, and should feel comfortable asking for another beverage if preferred.

The following is Blue Lake's policy with regard to the drinking of alcoholic beverages:

1. Blue Lake students are not permitted to request alcoholic beverages from host families or others.
2. Blue Lake students are not permitted to drink alcoholic beverages if it goes against the wishes of their parents.
3. Blue Lake students may taste beer or wine only if it is: 1) offered, 2) with a meal, and 3) with your host family.
4. Blue Lake students must limit their drinking of beer or wine to one glass. Consuming hard alcohol of any kind (schnapps, liquors, spirits, etc.) is strictly prohibited.
5. Blue Lake students are not permitted to drink alcoholic beverages with each other at any time. Drinking alcoholic beverages is only permitted as a host family experience.
6. Blue Lake students are not permitted to consume alcoholic beverages directly before a concert.
7. If a Blue Lake student does not wish to taste an alcoholic beverage, he/she must make their wishes known to the host family.
8. Drinking alcohol at an official reception is forbidden.

Blue Lake's policy on alcohol has been explained to all of our hosting chairpersons, and they have passed the information on to all host families. Although Blue Lake does not object to students trying a glass of beer or wine with their host families at a meal, we ask host family assistance to see that our students do not over-consume. Under no circumstances should students drink with their friends, and without the presence of a hosting adult. Drinking alcohol at an official reception is forbidden.

Indiscreet and excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages by Blue Lake students will not be tolerated. Abuse of the privilege will result in dismissal from the group and a speedy return home to the United States at your parents' expense.

## Final Notes

Parents, if you or your student have any questions that are not answered by this handbook, please feel free to contact the Blue Lake International Office at (800) 221-3796 or send an email to [international@bluelake.org](mailto:international@bluelake.org).

Students: Above all, perform your best, be your best self, and have the *best* time on your trip overseas!