



# GRADWEEK

## 2016 Travel Tips - Valuable Travel Information

**\*\*\*Please Read the Following & Your Enclosed Itinerary for Bus Times and Check-In Location\*\*\***

- ✓ You must check-in a **minimum** of 30-minutes before your designated departure time (see enclosed itinerary).
- ✓ You must have a valid Photo ID in order to board the bus.
- ✓ You must **board the bus number listed on your itinerary**. NO exceptions.
- ✓ Baggage Allowance: 1 suitcase to check-in and 1 small carry-on, per traveler.
- ✓ **Make sure that you submitted the required Parent Signoff Notice about Student Drivers to the GradWeek office, so that you're not denied check-in at the hotel.**

**Be Respectful:** Everyone is on their Gradweek trip to have a great time, but please be respectful of those around you. Especially the people of the city that you are visiting and the resort condos that you are staying at. Every year several travelers never make it to their destination due to their behavior prior to or during their trip. **Misbehaving at the bus pick-up location could lead to being denied boarding.** Poor behavior during the bus trip may necessitate notification to your parents upon arrival, who will be responsible for your return home. **Bus companies will not tolerate bad behavior, eating of sunflower seeds or gum chewing on the bus. In addition, NO coolers/ice chests are permitted on the bus.**

If you need assistance while on the bus or the resort property, please be patient with both hotel and Gradweek staff. Rude behavior will not be tolerated. Travelers who lose all or a portion of their vacation due to their poor behavior or damaging hotel property will **not** be entitled to a refund.

**Spending Money** - We recommend using debit cards or credit cards and also taking a small amount of cash. You can walk to many locations but if you need to take a Taxi you'll need to have cash on hand for that. Traveling in groups is the safest and most economical way to go. How much money you take is up to you but, \$350 to \$500 is recommended for souvenirs, Action Pac, transportation, food and beverages.

**Day of Departure!** **DON'T BE LATE!** You are responsible for your own transportation to the airport and must arrive at least one hour prior to your scheduled flight time. We recommend checking the directions to your pick-up location online in advance, to ensure you arrive with plenty of time. When you arrive at your destination, make sure to retrieve your luggage from the bus and look for GradWeek Staff members wearing GradWeek shirts & ID Badges that will direct you to the hotel.

**GradWeek Staff** - While our adult Staff is available at your destination 24/7, the **Hotel Staff** can help you with daily requests, like more towels, more pillows and any questions about the hotel and nearby shopping, events, etc. The GradWeek Staff is there to ensure the program is running smoothly, coordinate buses for all the arrivals, present the Welcome Orientation, provide you with a Destination Guide that includes an area map, restaurants & Action Pac event schedule, and coordinate the activities listed in the "Action Pac" as well as assist with any serious emergencies or roommate situations.

**At Your Hotel** - Once you arrive at your hotel, you will be given a full orientation by a GradWeek Staff Member(s). They will explain the events that will be held during your stay and go over some basic guidelines and rules to make your trip awesome and worry free. There will be an "Action Pac" flyer in your departure packet listing the various events and price options as well as the application required to purchase an Action Pac on-site (only). You will be able to purchase your "Action Pac" on-site at the orientation by CASH ONLY.

**In-room Security** - Once you check in to your room, we strongly recommend you use your in-room safety deposit box to store your documents, cash and valuables including cell phones, cameras, etc., when not being used, ensuring that it is securely locked at all times. Room doors should not be left open and unsecured. If you have purchased our additional insurance please be aware that it **DOES NOT** cover you for loss of personal items such as Cell Phones. In the rare case **ANY** incidences of theft occur you **MUST** report it to the hotel first and while GradWeek will assist with any local authorities if theft or loss does occur, we are not responsible for the cost of any cell phone or item replacements. Take a few minutes to check that everything in your room is in good shape and in good working order. Please contact the GradWeek Staff or the Hotel's Front Desk personnel **immediately** if you see anything broken, damaged or not working properly, to ensure you will not be held responsible for pre-existing damaged items. If hotel reports any room or property damage from your room, all travelers in the room will be responsible for paying for those damages regardless of who in the room was at fault.

**Calling Home** – Parents want to know you arrived ok and to provide them with your room number in case they need to reach you at the hotel; so a quick call, text or e-mail home to say you arrived and provide them with a room number is **highly recommended**. It is very expensive to call from your hotel room. If you do not want to take your cell phone, the next best thing is to buy a long distance calling card that can be accessed by any public phone.

**Ahhh...Paradise!** This is your time to relax and have a good time. **But, that does not mean you can do anything you want.** All local laws are strictly enforced in and outside of the hotel. GradWeek and the hotel will not tolerate disorderly conduct or any property damage and you will be required to pay for any damages (i.e. loss of hotel security deposit and paying for any overage) and risk being evicted from your hotel at your own expense; **no exceptions!** GradWeek is not responsible for travelers that lose all or a portion of their vacation due to their behavior issues or damages and will **not** be entitled to a refund. Be smart, behave appropriately and stay safe by traveling in a group whenever leaving your hotel and especially when going back to your hotel at night. We highly recommend using the buddy system! Always remember that there is safety in numbers and it doesn't hurt to always tell a friend if you are leaving the hotel or event before everyone else. Please be aware if you violate the hotel or programs rules and are evicted from the property or program it will be at your own expense.

**Returning Home** – Your GradWeek staff will post the time you need to be ready to board the bus for your trip home in the lobby of the student hotel. Make sure you have checked out of your room and have paid for any incidental charges not included in your package price. Have your Travel Documents in hand to check-in at the bus. Make sure your luggage gets loaded on your bus and keep your valuables with you at all times.

**How to use the Emergency Medical Coverage** - Even though over 95% of our travelers never encounter any sickness or injury, it still may occur. If sickness or injury occurs that requires medical attention, GradWeek or hotel staff can direct you to the medical facility at your destination. If you purchased a Travel Protection Plan, through Travel Insured International, your plan helps provide coverage for medical emergencies and emergency medical evacuation. To receive assistance, you can call toll free from the U.S. at (866) 684-0218. The agent will guide you through the process of how to get reimbursed for your approved medical costs up to the limits of the plan.

**Policy on Alcohol Consumption** - GradWeek does not promote the use of alcohol to its tour participants. Each participant chooses for themselves whether or not to consume alcohol. Please be aware that you will still be in the United States so the legal drinking age in Panama City Beach is 21! All local and federal laws are strictly enforced and you will be held responsible if caught violating those laws.

**Money Wire Transfers** – Should you run out of money at your destination, GradWeek provides a money wire transfer service for those students who may need additional funds onsite. This service is **only available during normal business hours, Monday thru Friday from 8:30am-300pm PST**. If you need this service, have someone from home go to our website at [www.gradweek.com](http://www.gradweek.com) and print out the "Wire Transfer Authorization" form located under FORMS on our website. Please fill out the form completely and email it to [ist\\_info@istours.com](mailto:ist_info@istours.com) **BEFORE 3:00PM PST**, Monday through Friday

The traveler receiving the money can pick up the cash with a photo ID from our 24 hour GradWeek staff room at their hotel **after 7:00pm** (Florida local time). The limit is \$300 and there is a \$25 service charge per wire transfer.

**Parents wishing to Contact their Son/Daughter** - If a parent needs to contact their son/daughter, the hotel phone numbers are listed below. The hotels do not always list everyone in the room, so please find out all your student's roommate first & last names (listed on your most recent invoice) before you call so you can be connected to the correct room. The corporate office **cannot** call the hotel on yours or anyone's behalf. However, the Customer Service agents are available to answer general questions Monday through Friday from 8:30AM to 5:00 PM PST at (800) 448-4444. During our GradWeek program, we do operate a 24-hour emergency line **ONLY in case of a medical or family emergency**. Calls not deemed to be an emergency will be returned during normal business hours. If your son or daughter are having an issue at the hotel, please do not call the corporate office – there is GradWeek Staff and a GradWeek Manager at the hotel to handle any on-site problems.

Please visit our website at [www.gradweek.com](http://www.gradweek.com) under "Forms" to view all the valuable travel/trip information and forms we provide including Travel Tips, Action Pac, Destination Guide and Travel Protection/Insurance information.

### **Hotel Information**

Shores of Panama - Phone: (855) 545-3722 | Website: [www.shoresofpanama.com](http://www.shoresofpanama.com)