Sharing Your Travels on Social Media

A best practice guide for ACIS Group Leaders

Keeping your students engaged is all about meeting them where they are, and in today's day and age, they're increasingly on social media. Don't consider yourself social media savvy? Not to worry. We've put together this handy guide for getting yourself up and running on social media.

These are the best practices for using the top social networks, **Instagram**, **Twitter,** and **Facebook**, to help you feel comfortable and prepared to communicate effectively on social media.

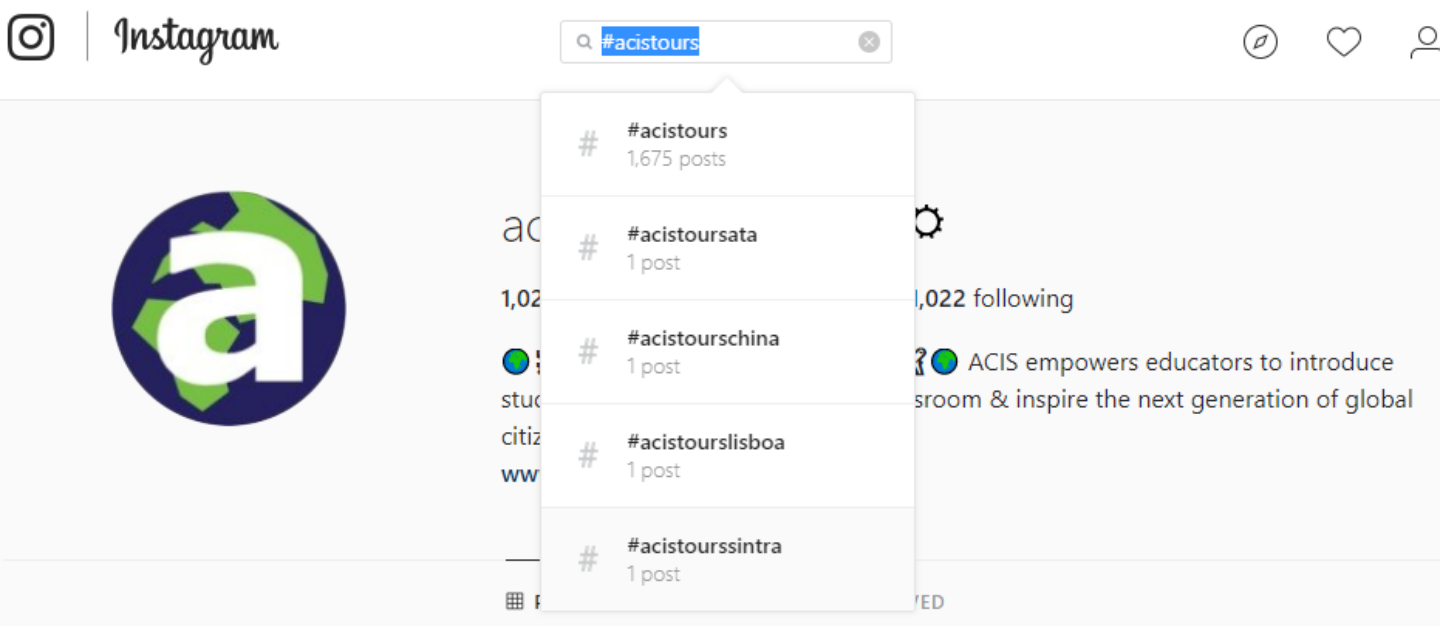
Instagram

Instagram is a social photo sharing app. It's mainly accessible on a smart phone and is less desktop friendly. It's a great platform to document your pictures while on the trip. You could either create an account specifically for the trip or if you already have one, you could use a trip-specific hashtag to group all the trip photos together.

Hashtags (**#**) are used on Instagram (as well as Twitter and Facebook) before a word to make it searchable when clicked. Adding the tag #ACISFrance to a picture would be an easy way to tag pictures of ACIS tours in France. Making your own group specific hashtag (#RHSTravels or #WesternEurope19 for example) and letting students know this is your group's "official" hashtag is a great way to help students and parents find your photos easily and quickly. It can be the same across Twitter and Instagram, although they're not searchable between the two programs.

How to use Instagram

1. Sign up for an Instagram account and choose a username that clearly represents you
2. Add a profile photo and a biography
3. Link your account to Facebook and many other third-party sharing sites where you have an account. This will allow you to:
    - Share photos to those services.
    - Let your Facebook friends find you easily when using Instagram's Find Friends tool. It'll also create a news story in Instagram for anyone who follows you on Facebook and has linked their Facebook account to Instagram.
4. Announce to your Facebook followers that you're on Instagram. Let them know your Instagram username and show non-iPhone/Android followers where they can see your Instagram photos.
5. Start sharing photos on Instagram and across your other social networks.
6. Use your hashtag in your photo captions and encourage your participants to do the same. You can search hashtags to see photos from the trip in one convenient location.



Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging social network, which allows you to post images, links, and content in short 280 character-limited posts. Items like **hashtags** allow these posts to be easily searchable. If you're considering a more public version of your trip tracking, creating a professional twitter presence will allow you to do just that. Here are the best practices for creating a twitter page as a teacher:

1. Decide that this Twitter page is going to be for professional use. If you'd like to use Twitter for personal and social posts, feel free to create separate account. What you create for your student travels should be professional as well as fun, but know that your audience includes parents, colleagues and students.

2. If this Twitter presence is public, your posts will be visible to anyone who looks up your page – whether or not they have a Twitter account. If you make your twitter profile private, people will have to request to follow you to see your tweets, and they must have a twitter account to do so. It's your decision, but a public Twitter presence will most likely work best for showcasing pictures and updates on the trip itself – keeping in mind that this is PUBLIC.

3. Create your twitter user name. Twitter names contain the @ symbol to start, and can't have spaces or certain punctuation marks. Something like "HHS_Teacher" works, "HHS Teacher" does not. Add an image, and a brief biography on the profile if you'd like.

4. Not sure how to start posting on Twitter once your profile is set up? You don't have to dive right in. Check out a few other professional educators twitter pages, or listen in on conversations. The #edchat hashtag is a searchable hashtag that can provide lots of great content ideas for teachers using social media. Follow fellow teachers, and follow @ACIStours too!

5. Hashtags, **#,** are used on Twitter before a certain word, and make that word searchable when clicked. A great way to collectively tie all of your students and traveler updates together is to select one specific, unused hashtag that your class can use on all of their social media updates. #ReynoldsTravelGroup is a teacher who frequently travels and updates her stories on twitter. She tells her students to tag any twitter updates on the trip with this hashtag, so parents and teachers can easily follow along.

6. Understand the privacy features on Twitter. If you're choosing to use Twitter hashtags as a method to track your travel pictures and posts, those posts must be public, and not posted through a private page, in order to be visible.

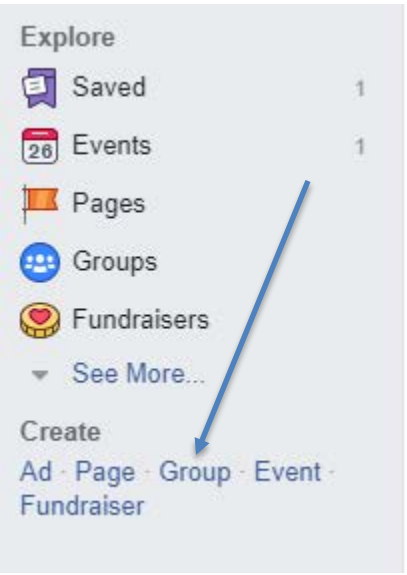
Twitter also offers guidelines for teachers on twitter in case privacy is a concern:
https://support.twitter.com/articles/20169992-teachers

Facebook

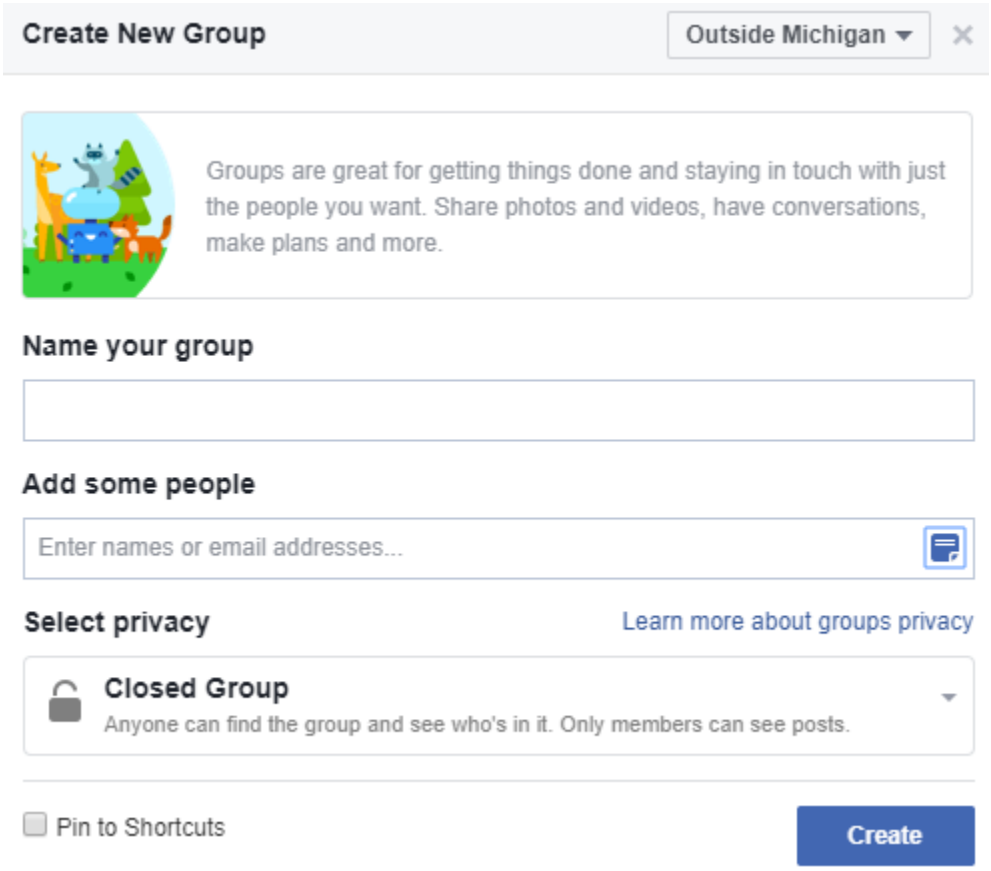
When deciding to use social media as a medium to communicate with students and parents, some teachers may be hesitant to connect their personal social media presence with students. Instead of "friending" students, teachers can create a private Facebook group to document the trip's upcoming plans and travels, without having to connect their personal Facebook with students' pages.

Here's how:

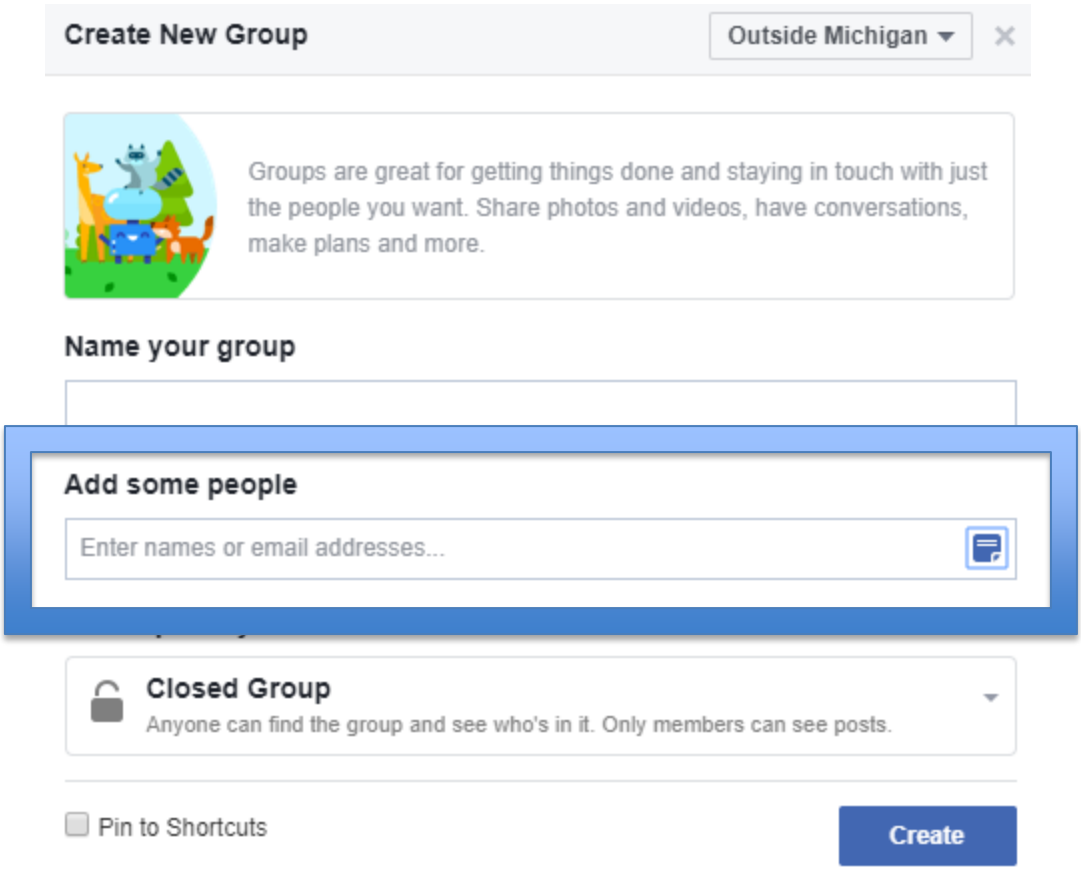
1) Sign into Facebook and click "Create Group" on the left hand side of the newsfeed.



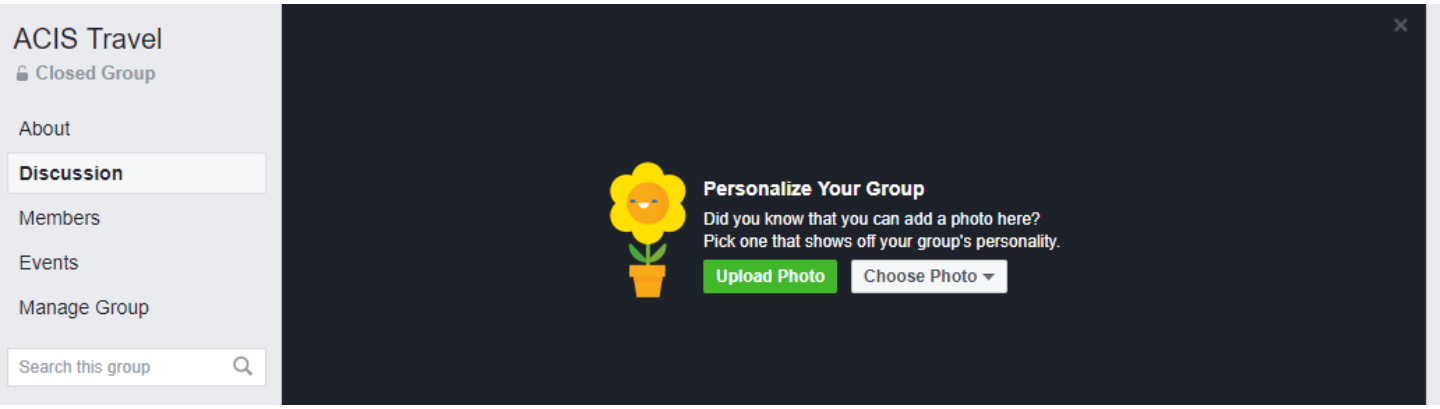
2) Enter the Group name and select "closed" as your privacy option. This will create your group and keep it private, so that only group members can see the information shared.



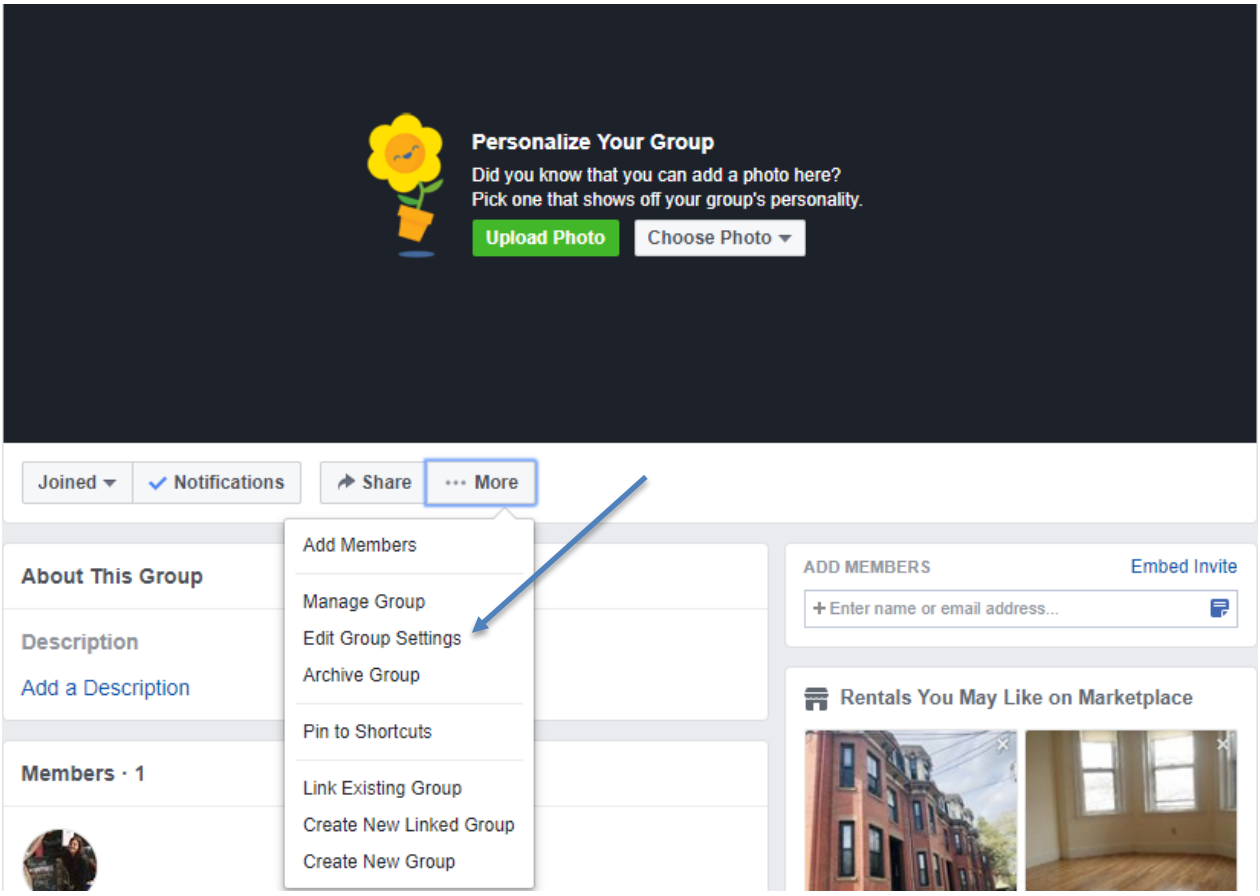
3) You'll then be prompted to invite a Facebook friend to the group. Enter a friend. If you're not friends with any group travelers, invite a Facebook friend who doesn't mind being deleted later if they are not traveling with you. Facebook won't let you create the group without adding at least one friend at first, but you can add group members by email (instead of from your friends list) in step 7.

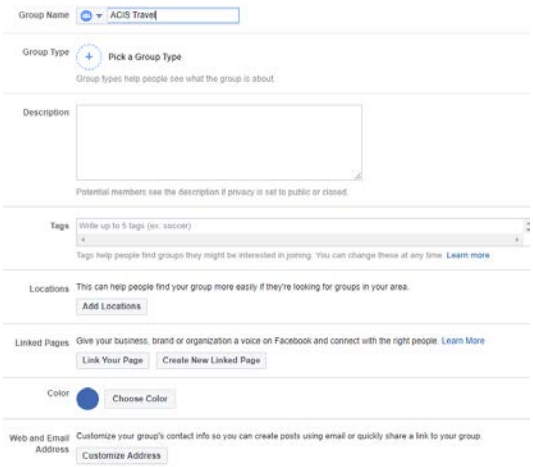


4) Once you hit create you can start personalizing your page! Add a group image, or images you'd like to use to represent the trip.

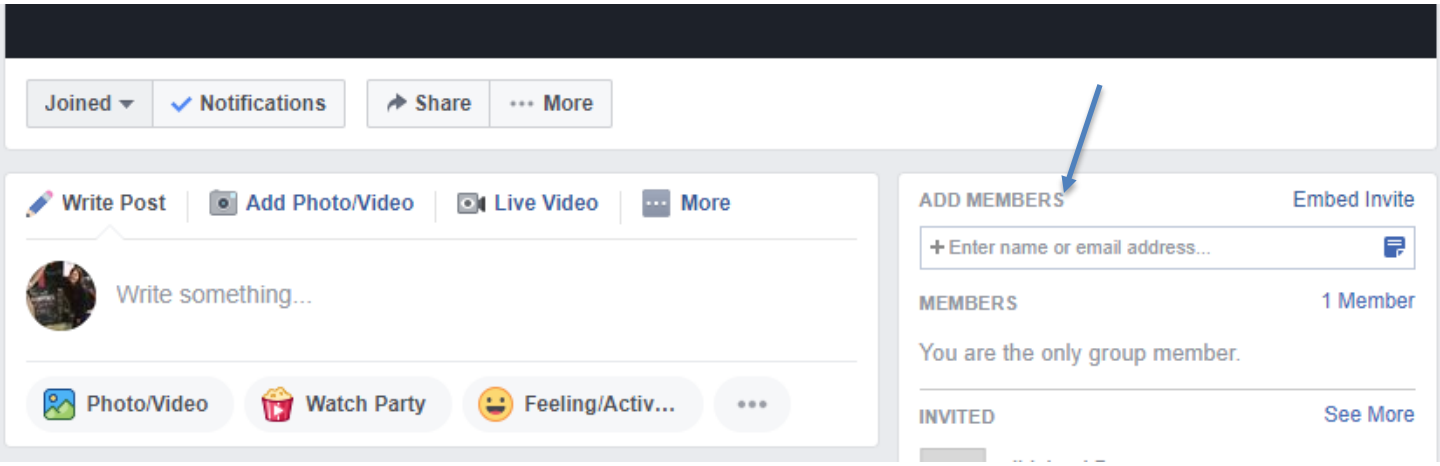


5) Include information about the upcoming trip, travel dates, or how often you plan to make updates to this group page leading up to and during the trip. Set your permissions, allowing group members and admins to post to the group. You can add group address information if appropriate. Then save your changes.





6) In the right corner, invite friends by email to the group.



7) Start posting! Add your first message welcoming parents and students to the group, where they'll be able to find information about their upcoming travels.

Congratulations! You just made a private Facebook group!

It will be an easily-accessible, central location for trip information and updates, and shouldn't be neglected. While this is an excellent location for recruitment and pre-departure information, it may not be the first place students and travelers think to post while they're on the tour. We recommend that the group leader take on the task of a once per day update to the Facebook group, whether a picture or status update, so that parents and families can be kept in the loop. The ultimate goal is for the page to stay current with group updates before departure as well as while on the trip.

Using Social Media Before, During and After Your Educational Tour:

Now that you know how to use these social networking sites, we recommend using them before, during and after the trip! Social media is also a fantastic place to engage your most enthusiastic participants. Use the trip Facebook group and hashtag to help them create more buzz for your travels.

Here's what we recommend for each stage of your travel:

Before the trip:

- Follow ACIS Tours @acistours on Instagram and Facebook. We love to highlight photos from the trips, which may help your students get excited for the adventure ahead!
- Email parents with links to Facebook group, Twitter or Instagram hashtags that will be the "official" group social media presence. Remind students to tag their pictures/status updates/tweets with the hashtag.
- Start using those mediums yourself! Get comfortable with the social networking platforms you've decided to use.
- Reiterate important dates and deadlines as well as other important information
- Create a buzz about your trip, help recruit students, and spread the inspiration to travel!

During the trip:

- Tag @acistours in your Instagram and Twitter photos for a feature on our feed!
- If you decided a private Facebook group was your best bet, keep in mind that you'll most likely be in charge of updating the group page while on the trip. Commit to a once a day post (where WiFi is available, of course) so that parents and travelers can be kept in the loop.
- Here are ideas for Facebook status uploads:
    - Take class photos
    - Chronicle adventures in dining
    - Where did your tour take you today?
    - What was unusual? What was exciting?

After the trip:

- Your Twitter and Instagram hashtags are searchable! Click the #RHSTravels hashtag on twitter or Instagram and see the flow of pictures that appear!
- Recap and save these images or future trip recruiting!
- Did you have a great time? Consider nominating a student for a traveler spotlight on the ACIS blog, where their pictures can be featured as well!