

RECOMMENDED GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL SOCCER TRAVEL AND TOURNAMENTS

Soccer travel will have soccer as its primary focus. Decisions about tournament selection, mode of travel, accommodations, meals, rest, etc. will be soccer decisions first. Normally teams (players and coaches) will travel together; players will room and take many of their meals together. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend these tournaments, but should not expect these trips to be a family vacation. Chaperons will be selected by the coach, with input from team manager and/or tournament coordinator.

Soccer travel is used to encounter different competition, to give players opportunities to learn to function on and off the field in different environments. It can also use the sport to broaden players' views of the world. Soccer travel should incorporate off-field activities to maximize the non-soccer benefits as well. It will be common, for example, for older teams to visit college campuses during their trips. BCF high school age teams will also be asked to consider the advantages of international soccer travel (typically at U16 or U15). U15-U18 teams generally travel more than U11-U14 teams.

Travel Basics: BCF Elite (*Red*) teams should expect to travel out of their states annually beginning with their U12 year. BCF Advance teams (Barca, Tar Heels, etc.) will typically travel to over night tournaments in Pueblo, Vail, or Durango. Out of state tournaments may include trips to New Mexico, Las Vegas, Arizona, California, Texas and the East Coast. There are literally hundreds of tournaments. The BCF Directors of Coaching are an excellent resource for selecting tournaments most appropriate for each team's needs. Tournaments should be chosen to provide appropriately challenging soccer competition, opportunities for "exposure" and player development. Younger teams should also use travel to stretch the "comfort zone" of the players so that they are better prepared to withstand the demands of the game. Older teams will travel in part to showcase their players to college coaches around the country.

Teams must be clear about purpose when they travel. Unless otherwise stated, these are soccer *trips*. They are not, to dispel the most common misconceptions of parents and players respectively, family vacations or extended slumber parties. While off-field activities are an element of decisions about which tournament to attend, successful soccer travel puts **soccer decisions first**. No different from decisions about practice content and organization, these decisions are made with an eye on creating an environment where the team will perform at its best - despite the challenges - both on the current trip and over the longer term.

Three critical elements in this are transportation, meals and rest. If teams need to fly to their destination, they should fly together. Where some drive and some fly, there must be a time when all are to be present, while travel to games should always be as a team. Similarly with meals, the more that can be taken in common the better. This enables more direct supervision of the nutritional needs of the players and may be the best venue there is for team interaction. It also takes some effort to do well - planning, making reservations (a must near many tournaments), settling the bill, and so forth.

By far the most important ingredient in successful soccer travel is adequate rest. Preparing to travel can be unsettling. Many players don't sleep well before trips, particularly if they haven't traveled much. Add to this the difficulty most people have sleeping the first night in a bed that's not their own, a couple of games a day and all the other things that are just "different" on the road. It takes much more rest than people think and much more than most teams provide.

When staying in hotels, **players need to have their own rooms**, (Four players to a room is

common.) In this arrangement there are no competing agendas. Players who must have "lights out" early will not be disturbed by adults coming in later or wanting to watch the late news. Similarly, players often need to get up very early for morning games - to eat, digest, get ready and be off to the fields in time. They should not feel the need to tiptoe around sleeping adults while doing this. **Make no mistake, supervision is required (parents in adjacent - or adjoining - rooms are a good idea for U11 and U12 teams traveling the first few times) and some players inevitably require stronger measures to ensure their respect for others' needs for rest, if not their own.** Still, no other arrangement provides as great a likelihood that that this most basic of player needs will be met.

There is much more to this game than just the game; soccer travel can provide experiences and benefits that extend way beyond the field. That said, if you're going to travel it makes sense to be the best on the field that you can be, and that priority needs to be clearly in focus both in the planning and execution of your trips.

TRAVEL BY THE NUMBERS

1. Tournament Selection: This is primarily a soccer decision, made by the coaching staff. Before all else, establish your purpose for playing tournaments - it will differ at different times - and select tournaments to meet those needs. If traveling, consider the other activities or events that might be available near the tournament. Tournament schedules should be presented as early as possible so that families can plan accordingly.

It is often possible to create several options for your schedule of tournaments, then to put them to a parent meeting for a decision. "Here's what we need to do from a soccer standpoint. Here are three ways to do it. Which one works for you?"

2. Pre-Meeting Research: In advance of a final decision about the travel part of your tournament schedule, have the team manager and treasurer - or your team's travel manager if you have one - look into the potential tournaments in depth. Talk to those in the club who've been there. Get information about the tournament's hotel program and rules.

Prepare a budget. Hotel expenses for players, including taxes and the full cost of the coach's room, are divided equally among the players attending - even those who might arrive late or leave early. (Hotels with continental breakfast can save money, but may not serve it before early tournament games.) The coach's airfare is also divided among the players. Van/bus rental expenses should include an estimate for gas, and extra insurance, again equally divided. Estimate food costs to include meals, tips, food between games. Now add in expected costs for souvenirs, tournament T's, entertainment like a team movie, admission fees to museums (or theme parks.) Some teams also make allowances for the expenses of those who will serve as chaperons or trip managers, splitting up to half their costs among the players. Finally, determine what portion of a guest player's tournament costs will be paid by the guests and which will be subsidized by the team.

3. The Coach Develops the Rules: But the team manager or your team's travel manager can help. Here is an example of "Behavior Guidelines":

Behavior Guidelines

All participants on the trip are expected to be polite, positive, well-mannered, cooperative, good sports, and respectful and considerate of others - those you encounter along the way as well as those with whom you are traveling. This will not always be easy. It will require your effort, your concentration and, on occasion, your willingness to "try, try again." *You will find that those who have the best time or; the trip are those who go out of their way to make the trip special for others.* It should be a goal of yours to be one of those who has the best time this way.

The few rules are for the health, safety and happiness of us all. Rooms, roommates are assigned so that everyone gets time with everyone else - and to avoid hassles and hurt feelings about who's with whom.

On the subject of rooms, no member of our group belongs in rooms not assigned to us without the express permission of one of the Tour's adult leaders. Similarly, nobody other than those assigned to our rooms should be in them unless specifically permitted by one of these adults.

There may be times when you'll be off without direct adult supervision. When this happens, one of the adults will expect to know where you are and when you'll be back. At the same time, it is always your responsibility a) to know how to find one of the adults, b) to know when and where to be next, and c) to be there on time. (Don't even think about using "I didn't know" as an excuse!) When you're off without adult supervision, we will insist on the "Rule of Three" (sometimes more, occasionally "Two", never "One"), that is, at least three players together. This rule, too, has very little room for "another chance".

That covers most of the issues. Note that, at minimum, a **BUDDY SYSTEM should be in place whenever players are out of their rooms**, even at things like movies, tournament dances and around the hotel. Decisions will need to be made, in advance, about travel to the tournament (if flying, the team should at least go together), provisions for meals together and rest, time that can be spent with parents, limits on non-soccer activity. Some teams will designate "room captains", the players who will be responsible for what goes on in their room. Know in advance how you will deal with serious violations of team rules and situations - especially those that might require a player to be sent home.

Room Captains

Chosen by the coach, one player per room for the entire tournament who is responsible for leading his/her roommates:

- Establishes that everyone has a BUDDY every time they go out of room
- Designates who has room keys and keeps rooms locked at all times
- Gets all roommates up on time for breakfast at the designated times
- Gets roommates to respect players pre-game rituals
- Gets roommates to get ready and to team meetings or game meeting sites on time
- Establishes shower schedules and makes certain that roommates stay on schedule
- Gets roommates to have uniforms ready for laundry at designated times
- Gets roommates to dinner and other set activities at set meeting times
- Makes sure all curfews are met and roommates in rooms at designated times
- Gets roommates to keep room organized so personal items can be found
- Communicates problems to Coach or other designated adult who's with the team
- Logs phone calls so proper payment can be made at check-out

If a problem occurs, the Room Captain is held as responsible as the player(s) involved and will face the same consequences.

4. Meet With Parents: Set the tournament schedule. For a particular trip, establish the dates, discuss the budget and payment schedule and set out the rules. Find out who will be traveling with the team and will need air and hotel arrangements. Assign parent duties: checkbook, laundry, meal reservations, van drivers, grocery duty, medical coordinator and supervision of meals and curfews.

5. Use A Travel Agency: They are experts at finding group rates. Give them the tournament's hotel information, rooms requirements (with a list of names if possible), dates of arrival and departure, van requirements, etc. Parent rooms should be reserved in their own names with their own credit cards, as should airfares - although this is sometimes difficult with a group purchase.

If traveling by air, be sure to use an agent who has done a lot of group work. (Get recommendations from other teams.) There can be deep discounts, time extensions on payments and the dates to put names on tickets, free tickets_ Fares vary greatly, but it's best to plan and buy as far ahead as possible. But be sure of tournament acceptance before buying your tickets.

If you are planning to use a check to pay for vans or hotel rooms, make sure that this is approved *in advance*, before you leave for the tournament. Also be aware that van drivers will be asked to leave a credit card slip equal to the amount of the van's expected rental price, and will need to make sure the credit limit on the card can handle this.

6. Team Travel Papers. These must be submitted to your state association at least 30 days prior to domestic travel, earlier for international travel.

7. Tournament Application. Be aware of deadlines.

8. Passports. If you will need these, start early. The time to process applications varies a lot. Those with passports should double check the expiration dates.

9. Packing List. Player's soccer bags must include all uniform items: shorts, shirts, socks, practice wear, cleats and shin guards. Players must double check these bags before leaving home. NEVER, NEVER, NEVER CHECK THESE ITEMS WITH THE AIRLINE. Plan for unusual weather conditions - rain (umbrella), hot sun (sun screen), cold (gloves), wet fields (extra socks). The coach must let players know if they need to bring a ball and/or water bottle. Players should be encouraged to travel light. If there's room, players may want to bring their own pillow from home; it does help them to sleep better

10. Travel Clothing. Players need to wear the same BC Force outfit for easy identification in airports and other places where there will be crowds. The Club warm-up - at least the top - is recommended, as is the use of matching shirts (though not uniform shirts.)

11. Final Documents. An itinerary with flight times, hotel information (name, address, phone, fax), game times & field directions, team meals and planned activities and other pertinent information should be distributed about a week before departure. Players and parents should have their own copies. At the same time **make sure that you have at least two copies Medical Release Form**, one for the coach, the other for the team or travel manager.

12. And Finally. Seek out those who have traveled with teams to pick up their tricks of the trade.

TRAVEL TIPS - DURING THE TRIP

1. Set departure meeting time and place for all players, coaches and parents to meet before group check-in. At airports, this should be at least 2 hours before departure.
2. Have player passes at airport for the Photo ID required at check-in
3. Triple check the carry on bans for required uniform items
4. Designate who has is managing the team expenses and finances for team meals, vans, etc.
5. The coach plans meeting place and departure time for all soccer events. The Team Manager, Chaperons and Coach plan -schedule for eating and other activities around the game schedule.
6. At the first meeting after arrival, go over all the rules again and set the schedule for the coming day.
7. A 3-step bedtime process works well. First a time when players must be in their rooms and end contact with other rooms. Next a time for the room to be quiet (TV off, quiet talk or silence so that teammates who want to sleep can do so) which is often called "Lights out with lights on.". And finally, Lights Out.
8. Coaches control most of the schedule for players in order to have the best rested and mentally prepared team possible. Parents are not to take their children for activities without consulting the coach first. The coach may say no.
9. Designate someone to call the parents who've stayed home to confirm arrival, report game results, etc. Or use a web site. Designate who to call and have them start a phone tree. Players' calls home should be collect or with a phone card to minimize the check-out process.
10. Players' names need to be on anything valuable. Better yet, leave all valuables at home.
11. Sending players to tournaments with large sums of cash is to be avoided, in any event, players will be responsible for their own money.

EXAMPLE OF A PRELIMINARY PLANNING LETTER, ESTIMATE OF EXPENSES & BUDGET

Sereno Soccer Classic
January 12 – 15, 2007
Phoenix, AZ
Preliminary Plan & Estimate of Expenses
October 30, 2006

The BCF U15G Red Team has been accepted to participate in the Sereno Soccer Classic. What follows is a preliminary plan for the tournament. The team will depart Denver on Friday, January 12th and return on Monday January 15th (Martin Luther King Holiday).

This team will travel as a group with soccer as it's primary focus. Travel and hotel arrangements will be planned to facilitate a soccer environment, which will allow the team to perform at its best on the current trip and on future trips. This is a preliminary plan and will be updated as arrangements are firmed up and as more information (like costs, the game schedule and field assignments) becomes available.

Link to the tournament website:

http://www.serenosoccer.com/tournaments_soccer_classic.php

Air Travel

A "courtesy hold" has been placed for a block of 24 tickets to:

Depart Denver	Friday, January 12 th	6:40 PM	Frontier
Arrive Phoenix		8:30 PM	
Depart Phoenix	Mon, January 15 th	7:55 PM	Frontier
Arrive Denver		9:40 PM	

The cost of the flight is \$238.60 per person. Player's costs will also include the cost of the coach's flights and one/half of the chaperones.

I (tournament coordinator) will need to collect a deposit of \$60 per player for the plane tickets by Monday, November 6th. The balance will be collected 30+ days prior to departure.

Flight times were made to allow players to attend school on Friday and the championship game, which could be played as late as 3:00 on Monday. Also, I'm trying to get an additional block of tickets to make available to parents who would like to fly with the team.

Rental Vehicles & Gas

The team will need 4 mini-vans to be driven by 4 chaperones. Each van can hold as many as 7 passengers. We will plan on each van holding 6 passengers and their luggage. The coaches will be passengers, but will be added as drivers for emergencies and so they can drive if they choose.

A preliminary search finds the cost at about \$300 per van; the cost to includes all taxes and fees. The total cost will be approximately \$1200. An additional amount for gas will be added on to estimated costs in the budget of expenses.

The individual's that drive the rental vehicles must rent them as well. Usually, your private insurance will cover rentals, but you will want to confirm that with your insurance agent. A plan will be made to go through the same agency and the chaperones must be prepared to rent a vehicle and pay the charges via a charge card. Rental agreements cannot be made with a debit card. Each chaperone will make arrangements for "Express Pick-up" in advance. The team will reimburse expenses incurred by the chaperones.

* Also, please know that the Rental Car facility at the Phoenix Airport is located about 15 minutes by shuttle from the airport. We must allow 30-45 minutes to complete the vehicle pick-up.

Hotel

The Tournament requires that all participating teams use Anthony Travel and stay in designated hotels. The team has reservations for 15 rooms, held by credit card, at the

Embassy Suites – Tempe
4400 South Rural Road
Tempe, AZ
480-897-7444

Link to the hotel website for complete information and all amenities:

<http://www.embassysuites.com/en/es/hotels/index.jhtml?ctyhocn=PHXTPEs>

The cost is about \$165 per night (\$149 + \$15 taxes) and includes:

Each unit is a suite with 2 beds in the bedroom and a pull out coach in the outer suite. The suite includes a microwave and refrigerator. One great advantage and reason for the choice of this hotel is the complimentary cooked-to-order breakfasts each morning. The cooks open the kitchen early to accommodate teams with 8:00 am games. The hotel offers a shuttle to/from the airport and we will check to see if there is any advantage to using this service and renting our vehicles at the hotel over renting at the airport.

The players will share 4 rooms. (We'll request a roll-away for the 17th player.) Coach Hardy will make the room assignments. One room will have a designated "study time", once we get a game schedule, for those players who need to prepare for final exams.

This hotel is centrally located to the possible game sites, to the Arizona State University (<http://www.asu.edu/>), and numerous restaurants, bowling alley's and theaters.

Meals, groceries, water, snacks, incidentals:

Breakfast is covered at the Embassy Suite. We will MapQuest player favorites (Qdoba, Subway, Fazolli's, etc) for easy and quick lunches and seek out a couple of restaurants for sit down team dinners. Chaperones may make a Subway run for a quick lunch to be eaten at the game site or at the hotel. Chaperones will also make grocery store runs for snacks, water and incidentals. Player and parent input on possible restaurants are welcome!

Other:

Coach will discuss with the players the behavior guidelines, player responsibilities, and rules (like the Buddy System whenever players are out of their rooms). They will make the room assignments.

There will be a packing list with weight limits on baggage. A preliminary packing list will follow. It will be updated prior to the trip.

There will be a detailed Itinerary sent out about a week prior to the trip. It will include the time and location to meet at the airport for departure, the game schedule, when and where to meet for meals and departure from hotel for games, and anything else pertinent to the trip.

Estimated Budget - Sereno Soccer Classic – January 12 - 15

Team Only

October 30, 2006

	<u>Group Cost</u>	<u>Per Player</u>
Airfare:	\$5520	
Coach Airfare: \$240 x 2 = \$480		
Chaperone: \$120 x 4 = \$480		
 Player:	 \$240 x 17+\$4080	
 Total	 \$5040 (/17)	 \$300*
Car Rental	\$1200	
& Gas:	\$ 500	
	\$1700	\$100
Hotel:		
-5 rooms (w/ Chaperones using sofa sleeper in player suites)		
\$149/night x 3 nights = \$447		
\$447 + 10% tax = \$492/room		
x 5 rooms =	\$2458.50	\$150
OR- 6 rooms (Chap w/room)	\$2952.00	OR \$175
 Meals, water, snack, entertainment:	 \$2550.00	 \$150
 —		
 Total:		 \$700

*If a player's parent is a chaperone, add \$140 for half of airfare.

Method of Payment:

We plan to use a pre-paid team credit card or debit card account to pay expenses for the trip. The expense estimates above have been padded. (We'd rather overestimate and return funds than come up short on the trip.) A record will be kept of all deposits from families and all expenses on the trip. Upon return, expenses will be accounted for and reported. Remaining funds will be dispersed back to player families.

A calendar of due dates for deposits to cover expenses is being developed.

The first due date is November 6th when \$60 is due for the deposit on the airline tickets. Information on who to make your check to will be available by the end of the week.

Travel Clothing & Packing List

To Wear On the Plane:

- Players will all wear the same clothing for travel for easy identification. (i.e. a practice jersey & warm-up pant) The coach and players will discuss clothing at practice, and the final choice will be on an update.)
- Warm-up

Soccer Bag (Carry-on) Weight limit = 10 pounds, a little more with school books.

All soccer game gear (that can't be easily replaced)

- Game Shorts & Jerseys
- Game Socks (extra pair highly recommended)
- BCF T-shirts and training shirts
- Shin guards
- Cleats
- Change of underclothing
- Book, journal
- Disposable Camera, film
- Empty water bottle
- Cash for souvenir t-shirts, etc.
- Medications w/ written instructions
- Homework/study materials
- Deflated soccer ball

Documents:

- ID (school is fine)
- Insurance Card
- Debit/prepaid Credit card
(i.e. for souvenir t-shirts, possible entertainment)

Travel Bag (Checked-in) Weight limit 23.5 pounds:

- long pants and/or capri's
- shirts and t's
- flipflops, casual shoes
- underclothing
- swimwear
- sleepwear
- personal (bathroom gear)
- sweatshirt/hoodies
- socks
- pillow if room in bag
- small alarm clock

Chaperones:

- add medical kit/supplies

