



College Visits 101: Top 5 Tips for Your Spring-Break College Road Trip

Every spring, high school juniors everywhere start gearing up to hit the road over spring break to visit colleges with their parents. While you can get a tremendous amount of valuable college information online, there's no substitute for an in-person visit to get a true feel for an institution, its campus and its students.

Here are five tips to organize your spring break college trips to make them more fun and informative for you and your parents alike.

Start by casting a wide net.

If you haven't already done so, start by putting together a long list of schools of potential interest — up to 20 — for further investigation and research.

Finalize your target tour list.

Once you have compiled your initial pool of possible target schools, narrow down that list to a more realistic number of schools to visit — schools that genuinely meet the specific criteria for you. Fine-tune your list by visiting schools' websites, reviewing college guides from the library or bookstore and, of course, by working with your school guidance counselor.

Visit while college is in session.

Everyone's final "visit" list of schools is different. Some of your friends will travel to 12 or more campuses, while others only visit a handful. Regardless of how many campuses you visit, make sure to schedule your visits while college is in session and students are attending classes. Don't visit during midterms or finals, and avoid weekend visits if at all possible, since classes are seldom held then. Be sure to call ahead and check on tour times, dates offices are closed, and visit/interview policies.

Remember the 2/2/2 rule.

- Two schools a day. Don't try to visit more than two schools a day, especially if the schools aren't close to one another. Any more than that and you'll never have enough time to really get a fair sense of the school, which after all, is the entire point of taking the road trip.
- Two question limit. Your parents can be embarrassing under any circumstances; it can be even more so when they keep asking questions. Talk to them beforehand about the questions you both have and try to limit questions to two vital topics.
- Speak with at least two professors or students representing your intended major. Now is your time to determine if this learning environment is right for you. Speak to a professor about general education requirements, which classes are most popular and fill up quickly, and which classes should be completed in the first year.



Go beyond the official campus tour to get the "inside skinny."

Official campus tours are almost always 30- to 60-minute, student-led affairs that provide a good, basic overview of the college, its facilities, academic offerings and student life. While they're a good place to start, you should do a little advance homework to scope out other campus experiences that can help you round out your visit and get the "inside skinny" on the school.