

THE PARK SCHOOL *of* BALTIMORE

COVID-19 and Park School Student International Travel

Park Families,

You all have undoubtedly been tracking the news regarding the worldwide spread of COVID-19. I am certain that there are varying levels of concern among this group regarding the international trips that have been planned for our students.

In light of the rapidly changing information regarding COVID-19, I have consulted with medical experts both within and outside the Park community — specifically, with individuals who are nationally recognized experts in public health and infectious diseases — about the most important factors to consider. Further, I have been in communication with colleagues at other independent schools who are similarly assessing the risks associated with pursuing international travel plans with students in the near future. *Out of an abundance of caution, I have made the decision to postpone our three trips — to France, Spain, and South Africa.* When there is more certainty about the threat of COVID-19, we will look for opportunities to reschedule those trips.

The health and well-being of our students and faculty chaperones are our primary concerns.

Should any of our students or chaperones fall ill while abroad, we would be in a challenging situation. Ensuring that adequate care could be procured given the current circumstances could be problematic. If medical interventions are needed, providing the required support *in loco parentis* would potentially stretch our ability to responsibly chaperone the trips.

At this point, we are seeing information about COVID-19 rapidly evolving. We cannot predict with any degree of certainty what the conditions will be for international travel in the coming weeks. Nor can we predict what the conditions and available resources in our host cities will be. Hearing more about major cultural institutions closing (e.g. the Louvre in Paris), prohibitions on public gatherings, and possibility of school closings — the potential for disruption is real. Even if we have the good fortune of remaining healthy, the overall experience may be seriously altered.

Additional uncertainty surrounds how local, regional, and federal governments might respond to the particular set of challenges before them. Already in the past week, we have seen the Japanese government close all schools; and we've seen travel in and out of northern Italy restricted. Just today, French officials closed 120 schools near Paris. These are early indicators of how rapidly and how unpredictably major shifts are happening around the globe.

Thank you for your understanding and I sincerely hope we can pursue these remarkable experiences in the not-too-distant future.

For any expenses already incurred, the school is working to recoup these funds and is prepared to assume financial responsibility for all costs except airfare. We are working with our travel agencies to investigate the options regarding airfare, and will be back in touch with you as we know more. If your family has already been billed for expenses beyond airfare, our Business Office will work with you to fulfill your refund.

Please expect to hear more from me regarding the steps that we are taking here at school to prepare for a range of circumstances that may result from the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Dan Paradis
Head of School