



FRONT RANGE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NINTH GRADE TRIP

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September 2015

Dear Educator:

This is the 52nd year of the annual Unitarian-Universalist Ninth Grade Trip, a cooperative venture of ten front-range area churches. A student at your school has requested this letter of explanation regarding this year's trip, which runs April 15-24, 2016.

Each participating student attends classes on early southwestern history, Hopi and Navajo history/culture/religion, and current concerns of the Native Americans of the Southwest. They participate in retreats, help with fundraising projects (raising together over \$9000 this year), and each pays \$350 for their share of trip expenses.

We travel for ten days. We spend three days on the three mesas of the Hopi people, attending the Kachina dances, observing and respecting an important element of Hopi religion. We spend two days at a Navajo School in Tohaali experiencing a little of the life of a Navajo student. Each of our students spends a day attending classes with the Navajo students and they also participate in some Navajo rituals. We hike down Canyon de Chelly, visiting the National Park Service Visitor Center and Museum, the White House Ruins on the canyon floor, Spider Rock, and other sites along the rim. We spend a day at Hubbell's Trading Post at Ganado where the students see demonstrations of Navajo weaving and tour the oldest continuously operating trading post. In the Flagstaff area, we visit Sunset Crater (with a geology lesson), and the Sin Agua (Anasazi cousins) prehistoric ruins at Walnut Canyon and Wupatki. The National Park Service runs all these sites.

We trust that you will agree that participation in this trip warrants the student's absence from school during this period. We are unfortunately unable to schedule the trip during spring break because we have students from twenty school districts, many of which have different spring breaks. This year the Navajo school has the same break as many Front Range schools. We also made every attempt to avoid the TCAP window as much as possible while basing our schedule on the testing schedule of the schools we visit. We would be happy to help our student gather information about trip-related projects teachers might assign. We also encourage our young people to work on homework during the trip, especially on the long bus rides. If I can provide any additional information, or answer any questions please feel free to me at (303) 579-9868 or e-mail me at mitch@uu9gt.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mitch Pingel
9th Grade Trip Coordinator