2027 Pre-Enrollment: Frequently Asked Questions

We are looking forward to traveling in 2027! As we connect with our long-time friends in Europe, collaborate with our hosting communities, and work to plan the many details of our tours, we also want to make sure that our students and their families are well informed regarding this commitment, the mission of our program, and the spirit of our expectations for participants.

This FAQ document serves as a helpful starting point for our Zoom meeting with you and your parents or guardians as part of your application process. Please review it prior to your scheduled Zoom with a Blue Lake International representative, and feel free to note any additional questions you have as you prepare. We look forward to speaking with you soon!

What are the commitment dates for this program?

ALL ENSEMBLES:	
Sunday, November 8, 2026	Rehearsal Day (8:00am–4:00pm)
Sunday, April 18, 2027	Rehearsal Day (8:00am–4:00pm)
Friday, May 14–Sunday, May 16, 2027	Intensive Rehearsal Weekend (arrive 7pm)
Friday, June 11, 2027	Intensive Rehearsal Week begins (arrive 7pm)
BAND:	
Friday, June 11–Thursday, June 17, 2027	Intensive Rehearsal Week
Thursday, June 17, 2027	Depart from Blue Lake for Europe! *(Ensemble departs from either Chicago or Detroit to Paris CDG)*
Wednesday, July 7, 2027	Return flight from Paris CDG to U.S. *(Ensemble returns to same port of departure &* *Parents meet students at airport or registered students use Optional Shuttle)*
Thursday, July 8, 2027	Homecoming Celebration Day at Blue Lake! (12pm–9pm) *(Parents bring or meet students at Blue Lake)*
ORCHESTRA & JAZZ:	
Friday, June 11–Friday, June 18, 2027	Intensive Rehearsal Week
Friday, June 18, 2026	Depart from Blue Lake for Europe! *(Ensemble departs from either Chicago or Detroit to Paris CDG)*
Friday, July 9, 2027	Return flight from Paris CDG to U.S. *(Ensemble returns to same port of departure &* *Parents meet students at airport or registered students use Optional Shuttle)*
Saturday, July 10, 2027	Homecoming Celebration Day at Blue Lake! (12pm–9pm) *(Parents bring or meet students at Blue Lake)*

What countries will my student visit?

The number of countries visited by each group varies by tour. Some tours highlight several unique regions of a single country while others will visit more than one country. The invitation, planning, and confirmation process of our host communities is of the utmost importance for the Blue Lake International Exchange Program, which is committed to offering an unparalleled experience for students. Therefore, detailed travel itineraries are not distributed until spring of the touring year, after the International staff confirms all arrangements with the hosting communities. Blue Lake ensembles visit approximately five communities on their tour along with several group excursions to culturally significant sites along the way.

What is the approximate cost of the tours?

The tuition for the program is $7,290, and includes all airfare, ground transportation, food, and lodging, supervision, and any group fees while on tour. This tuition also covers the 12 days of rehearsal and orientation time students receive on campus at Blue Lake. A deposit is due at the time of enrollment, and the remaining balance is payable in installments through June 1 of the tour year.

Are there scholarships available?

All Blue Lake Summer Camp students from 2025-2026 in good standing are eligible for a scholarship toward their International tuition. International Tour Alumni in good standing also qualify for a scholarship. Additionally, limited scholarships may be available based upon artistic merit, instrumentation needs, or financial need. All families are eligible for an additional discount of $475 if their tuition is paid in full at the time of enrollment. Outside fundraising efforts by participants are highly encouraged. If a student requires a letter of support for fundraising, the International Program office will provide one.

Are there any additional costs that I should anticipate?

There are a few required uniform items that International students will need to purchase for the tour (these costs total approximately $175 to $250). Several optional items, including souvenir t-shirts, photos, and Homecoming concert recordings, will be available for purchase as well. We also recommend that students bring a minimum of $300 in pocket money for incidentals, including souvenirs and occasional food and drink on excursion days, though this would be a low-end estimate. We also expect each student to leave a small token of their appreciation with each family they stay with in the form of a host family gift. These items may be homemade, crafted, or purchased at your discretion. More information and ideas for host family gifts will be provided upon enrollment. Additionally, Blue Lake offers an optional shuttle from the airport at the conclusion of the tour. This service requires advance registration and an additional fee.

How was my child evaluated and invited to interview?

Blue Lake International participants have been recommended for the program by their counselors and faculty members at Blue Lake during summer camp. They have also completed an application form indicating their wish to participate and their feelings about the program and their potential place in it. A limited number of students are invited based on auditions and applications that take place outside of summer camp.

How do you select host families my student will be staying with?

Blue Lake International ensembles are hosted by various musical organizations, schools, churches, or town councils. Host families are identified by our hosting representative, who is often a key leader within these various organizations. Organization members, families, and personal friends of Blue Lake's hosting committee serve as host families for our students. In many cases, students are paired with families who have children of similar age, gender, artistic endeavors, and interests.

Will my student be housed with other Blue Lakers on the tour?

We request that our hosts house two or more Blue Lakers together in each community that we visit. However, we cannot guarantee this arrangement, and all students should look forward to the possibility of being the only Blue Laker in a host family. Students will have one host family per community.

Does my student need to speak a particular language in order to participate?

There is no language requirement for the International program, but we expect students to be open to learning some rudimentary phrases in the languages spoken in their host communities as a mark of respect for and interest in their cultures. During Intensive Week, students take part in language classes and receive handouts of common travel phrases. We recommend that students engage in language study in school or on their own (Duolingo is a great place to start!) to boost their familiarity with other languages. Some host families speak limited English, and their children often speak even more and can assist with translation. Students are able to use cell phones and tools such as Google Translate, though we give them many other communication tips that don't require the use of technology.

What behavior and citizenship expectations are in place on the tour?

Blue Lake International students must sign and adhere to our Student Citizenship Pledge, which outlines the behavior of a goodwill ambassador. Students are expected to be outgoing and

friendly to new acquaintances, and to behave in a mature, polite, and dignified manner while touring with the group and while a guest in host family homes. Students are responsible for their actions and will be held accountable for their behavior during rehearsals in November, April, May, and June as well as on the tour itself. Unacceptable behavior may jeopardize a student's membership in Blue Lake's International Exchange Program and Summer Camp Divisions. All expectations are grounded in concepts of maturity and good citizenship. A complete pledge and policy document will be provided upon enrollment.

How do you manage health while traveling?

Students are expected to have an understanding of their own personal health maintenance and needs and to advocate for themselves if a concern arises. All staff are trained and certified in American Red Cross First Aid and CPR. Each ensemble also has a designated staff member who serves as a health manager for the group. This individual receives additional training in order to provide first-aid assistance and support to students during May, June, and the tour, as well as manage daily health check-ins with all participants. In the event of a significant medical concern or emergency, our leaders work closely with the chairperson, host family, and local on-call physician and/or medical facility in order to facilitate appropriate care and communication with parents.

We recommend that all tour participants are up-to-date with seasonal vaccinations and/or boosters prior to April 1, 2027. We also request that all participants screen for COVID-19 prior to arrival in June. Participants will be expected to complete a brief daily health screening during intensive week, and symptomatic individuals may be assessed or tested for COVID-19, as necessary. Depending on trends within the camp community, Blue Lake may take additional measures to ensure the health and well-being of all tour participants. While on tour, student participants will be expected to complete a brief daily health screening and symptomatic individuals will be assessed or tested for COVID-19 en route as necessary. Depending on health trends within the group, Blue Lake may require masks in some settings.

How do you manage personal safety and communications while on tour?

Staff, directors, and students participate in a series of orientation sessions focusing on smart traveling, personal safety, and group travel logistics. Students are coached on topics such as attendance expectations, personal advocacy, and communication strategies. Staff and students use the Remind app to create and disseminate important announcements, collect health screening information, and stay connected to one another. If a student has a concern about their health or safety while on tour, they are able to communicate immediately to their staff and director via the app even when the group is not physically together.

The International office will provide updates to parents via text and email as circumstances warrant, such as: significant student illness/injury, flight changes, or other significant events impacting the group's or student's experiences. The International office will not provide daily

updates to families on the amazing adventures of the groups—we'll leave it up to the students to fill you in on all the fun.

What is the program's cell phone and electronic device policy?

Student participants may travel with a personal cell phone or small personal electronic device (tablet) provided they use it according to the International Exchange Program's written policy. Students are expected to exhibit outstanding maturity and manners at all times on tour. Therefore, students must limit phone use to times when it is not a distraction from host family activities, group travel, scheduled events, or other times designated by tour staff. More information on Blue Lake International's behavioral expectations, including our cell phone policy, will be provided upon enrollment.

How do I know if my child is ready for this experience?

Students travelling internationally need well-developed decision-making skills. Because they will be staying in private homes, students should also have excellent manners, a willingness to try new things (including new foods), and should have strong self-care and time-management skills. Students should feel comfortable initiating conversations with new acquaintances, including adults whose primary language is not English.

Due to the fluid natural of travel—and international travel in particular—students need to be flexible, take direction willingly, and remain open-minded about new experiences, schedule changes, and unfamiliar circumstances. It is important that students are able to communicate freely, easily, and respectfully with adults, which will include their staff and director as well as host families. The International Tour schedule is rigorous, and successful participants are able to exhibit the same level of maturity and friendliness when fully rested as they are when extremely tired.

Students who struggle with missing home, conversing with adults, or last-minute changes in routine, and/or students who are still learning to self-advocate and manage their mental health may find the tour to be challenging. Blue Lake International students are cultural ambassadors for the camp, their home states, and the United States while they are abroad. Maturity, self-confidence, and friendliness are the hallmarks of a student who is ready for tour.

Do you offer travel insurance?

Blue Lake does not offer travel insurance through our organization. However, we are able to recommend several travel insurance vendors for you to explore at the time of your enrollment in the program. We strongly recommend that you secure travel insurance to protect you from a number of concerns that may arise during the tour. Please see this document for more information.

What are our hosting obligations as an International Program participant family?

We expect that families in the Blue Lake International Program will help to host a European Camper as part of their Exchange Program experience. Our European host families generously open their homes to our students, and we aim to open our homes to their students just as willingly. Welcoming an exchange student into your home is an excellent way to extend your International experience and continue your student's exposure to different languages and cultures. Most importantly, this cultural exchange is part of a legacy stretching back more than 50 years, and is a small way for our participants to give back to the communities that welcomed them in Europe. Hosting a European exchange student includes either dropping them off or picking them up from a Blue Lake session, providing housing and hospitality for 3–5 days, and showing them the best in American culture. More information about hosting details will be made available upon enrollment.

What if my student's school year is still in session during Intensive Week or the European Tour?

The Blue Lake International Exchange Program offers a flexible attendance policy, which is outlined in the invitation and contract materials. However, most schools are willing to make special arrangements during end of year activities in order for full attendance at Blue Lake rehearsals. Most schools recognize the value of the International Program experience and permit students to have an alternate end-of-year schedule. Blue Lake recommends discussing arrangements with your school administration during the enrollment period.

Will I need to arrange transportation for my student for rehearsals and/or the tour beginning and end dates?

Yes. All travel to and from Blue Lake for rehearsals must be arranged by your family. We encourage carpooling with other Blue Lake International families in your area and provide rosters early on to encourage these connections. **Students are not permitted to drive themselves to residential rehearsals in May & June.** At the conclusion of the tour, you will pick your child up from the airport and secure local lodging for one evening if needed. The following day, families will bring students to Blue Lake for their Homecoming Concert and day of celebration. Discounts at several hotels will be made available, and participant families are welcome to secure lodging on their own. Many International program families coordinate carpooling and lodging with one another for this evening. Blue Lake will provide an optional shuttle from the airport to camp at the conclusion of tour. Students will be supervised by tour staff and spend one night on camp at Blue Lake. This service requires an additional fee and advanced registration.

What is the uniform and appearance policy while on tour?

Students will be expected to wear the Blue Lake uniform—with a few minor modifications—during air and ground travel, rehearsals, and during group sightseeing excursions. When they are performing, they are expected to wear the unique white International formal uniform. At all other times with host families, students may wear non-uniform clothing. A detailed uniform and appearance policy will be provided with the Participation Agreement.

Can I visit my student while they're in Europe?

The most impactful experiences take place when students are with their host families and ensemble members, so we recommend that families allow their students to proceed through their tour undisturbed. If you wish to see your child perform while they are on the tour, we ask that you contact the International Office well in advance of your own travel to coordinate these visits so that our generous host families can anticipate your appearance and will not have their own planned activities for your child cut short. We do not permit parents to join or follow the tour.

What can I expect for orientation and tour preparations?

Upon enrollment, families will receive a detailed student handbook, outlining policy, protocol, and helpful information relating to host families, group travel, packing, luggage and equipment, health, safety, communications, behavioral expectations, gift-giving, and more. A check list with due-dates for important tasks will be included. During rehearsal days, parent meetings and conferences will offer a one-on-one opportunity to discuss questions or concerns. Representatives from the Blue Lake administrative team are available at all times to answer questions!