



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures

Travel guidelines

The AFS travel guidelines apply to all AFS students regardless of their age.

General guidelines regarding travel

- The exchange student is allowed to travel with his/her host family in Finland and abroad without separate permission from the AFS office.
- The exchange student is allowed **maximum TWO INDEPENDENT** trips abroad and be absent from school maximum of ten days. "Abi" and "vanhojen" cruises are included in these two trips.
- "Abi" and "vanhojen" cruises are to be participated in by permission only. The student needs to ALWAYS apply for a travel permission from the AFS office.
- The AFS office in the student's home country or the natural parents do not grant travel permissions. Student needs to plan and negotiate trips with host family and the AFS office in Finland.
- The exchange student is responsible for all travel arrangements regarding his/her travel, for example possible VISAs and permissions required by airlines or cruise companies. Unfortunately AFS office doesn't have the time to organize these things for students.
- Travel permission applications have to be sent to AFS office well in advance but at latest 3 weeks prior to the planned trip. The student should not pay for trip before he/she has received a travel permission from AFS Finland. If the student books a trip before applying for the permission and AFS denies the application the student is responsible for the lost money.
- We recommend that year exchange students plan their independent trips for the spring season.
- The deadline for the travel permission applications is the 30th of April (the application has to be at the AFS office the latest 30th of April) for all the independent trips or other trips that require permission from AFS Finland that will take place in May or June. After that date AFS office will no longer handle any travel permission applications. This doesn't apply to trips with the host family.
- All trips should take place during school holidays or weekends. AFS doesn't grant permissions for travelling during exam periods. If the trip takes place during the school week, the student must always ask permission to be absent from the headmaster or contact teacher of the host school. The student can be absent from school maximum 5 school days per trip.

Trips that AFS Finland will not authorize

- Cruises to Stockholm and Tallinn and day cruises alone, with same age friends or with other exchange students are prohibited. There must always be a host parent or an adult supervisor approved by AFS on the cruise.
- InterRail trips are strictly prohibited in Finland and abroad!
- Sleeping over or camping at any music festivals (Provinssirock, Tuska etc.) or any similar event is strictly prohibited! Visiting music festivals during day time is allowed with the permission of the host family.
- Exchange students are not allowed to travel alone or with other exchange students, without a host family or an AFS approved supervisor “as tourists” in Finland and stay in cabins, holiday cabins, hotels, hostels, motels or as “tourists” in another city.
- The exchange students are not allowed to participate alone or with other exchange students in tourist trips abroad organized by travel agencies. Furthermore, exchange students are not allowed to travel abroad as a group of students and stay in hotels, hostels, cabins or motels.

Travelling with the host family

In Finland

AFS student is allowed to travel with his/her host family freely in Finland. AFS office does not need to be notified about domestic travel. However, travelling is not allowed during school weeks as school is a priority for all AFS students.

Abroad

AFS student is allowed to travel abroad with his/her host family without a specific permission from the AFS office. If the host family is planning a longer trip (more than few days) with the student, AFS office has to be notified about the destination and the duration of the trip. If the trip is during school week, the student also needs permission to be absent from his/her host school.

Travelling independently

If the student wants to travel alone, he/she must always ask for permission from the host family first. The host family has the right to say no to the plans, if they think it's a bad idea.

In Finland

The student can visit relatives of the host family, other exchange students or friends from school as long as the host family and the welcoming family agrees on the visit. Unnecessary absences from school must be avoided. If the student is planning for example a skiing trip or other activity trip with friends from school, a permission from the AFS office is needed.

All sleepovers at another host family/AFS family's house must be agreed upon between adults. Students don't make these plans among themselves on Facebook or WhatsApp.

Abroad

The purpose of an exchange year is not travelling, therefore the student needs a very good reason to travel independently abroad for example to visit a close relative who lives in another country in Europe or to visit a former AFS host sibling.

If an exchange student wants to travel abroad independently, he/she must ALWAYS ask for permission from the AFS office. Permission application form is found on the AFS website www.afs.fi/isantaperheeksi/materiaali. The exchange student must carefully fill in the form and send it to the AFS office. The AFS office will handle each travel application individually. The exchange student must apply for travel permission at least 3 weeks prior to the planned trip.

If AFS Finland allows student to travel independently abroad, AFS Finland will ask the AFS office in student's home country to deliver a *Travel Waiver* signed by student's natural parents or legal guardians. The *Travel Waiver* is a specific permission for the one trip the student has applied for and the *Travel Waiver* is always handled by the AFS office. The destination and duration of the trip are written on the travel waiver. By signing the *Travel Waiver*, the natural parents or legal guardians of the student take responsibility of the student during the trip abroad. The AFS Insurance is valid also during the trip abroad.

During the AFS program the student can be granted maximum of two permissions for independent trips abroad. "Abi" and "Vanhojen" cruises are included in these two trips.

The spring semester is always a very busy season at the AFS office because of the search for new host families. Therefore the deadline for all travel permission applications is April 30th. The AFS office will not handle travel permission applications after this date.

When the exchange student plans an independent trip abroad:

- The student needs a permission from the host family.
- The student **needs an invitation** from the family or the person whom the student is planning to visit. The invitation can be an informal letter or email that includes the contact information of the family/person whom the student is planning to visit. The invitation has to be attached to travel permission application. When travelling alone, the student is not allowed to stay in hotels or hostels or with strangers.
- The student needs a written permission from his/her school, if the planned trip is during school week. The trip can be a maximum of 5 school days. The permission has to be attached to travel permission application.
- The student needs to carefully fill out the travel permission application form, which can be found in ekstranet and return it to the AFS office (semester students: susanna.taskinen@afs.org or year students: eeva.link@afs.org).

Travelling with host school

In Finland

The exchange student can participate in school trips in Finland with the permission of the host family.

Abroad

If the students is planning on participating in a school trip abroad the same travel guidelines apply as travelling independently abroad. The student has to apply for travel permission from the AFS office with a travel permission application form. Trip schedule and contact information of the supervising teachers or chaperons have to be attached to the application.

Participating on “abi” and “vanhojen” cruises to Stockholm or Tallinn is allowed as long as all the required permissions are taken care of with the AFS office and the student has permission from the host family.

The exchange student is always responsible for any costs related to school trips abroad. AFS Finland does not pay for school trips abroad.

Please note:

All the AFS students must return home after the AFS program ends.

Semester students can not extend their Semester Program to a Year Program.