

Frequently Asked Questions About The Washington Youth Tour

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions about the Washington Youth Tour.

What is the Washington Youth Tour?

The Washington Youth Tour is an annual gathering of more than 1,300 teenagers sponsored by electric co-ops from approximately 39 states. It was started in 1957 at the suggestion of then-Senator Lyndon Johnson to develop in rural and suburban youth a greater understanding and appreciation of their heritage as American citizens. It is a trip steeped in culture, living history and fun. South Carolina sends from 42 to 47 students and 6 chaperones each year.

Who pays for the trip?

Your local electric cooperative will sponsor the trip.

Why?

The electric cooperatives of South Carolina see this trip as an opportunity to reach young people and to encourage them to be the best that they can be. Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders. Your electric co-op believes it is important to give you every opportunity to prepare yourself for a successful future.

What is an electric cooperative?

Electric cooperatives are the utilities the customers own. The co-ops supply electricity to all 46 counties in South Carolina on a nonprofit basis. Anyone who receives electricity from a co-op is part owner of that co-op, with the right to vote on business matters at the annual meeting. Co-op customers elect a board of directors, made up of fellow consumers, which sets policies, including the price to be charged for electricity.

Not all participants on the youth tour get their electricity from co-ops, but most are from rural or suburban areas.

Do the electric cooperatives sponsor any other trips?

As a matter of fact, one participant on this year's tour will be chosen to represent South Carolina on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Leadership Council (YLC). This special student will attend a leadership training seminar in Lincoln, Nebraska, this summer and spend a week behind the scenes at our national annual meeting next spring. More information on the Youth Leadership Council will be in each youth tour delegates' package. Applications are voluntary, but delegates are encouraged to apply.

How will I get to Washington?

South Carolina Youth Tour Delegates fly to Washington. The flight leaves the Columbia, SC airport, flies to Atlanta where delegates change planes, and then flies on to Washington, DC.

Where will I stay in Washington?

The majority of Youth Tour delegates, and we're talking about a total of 1,300 delegates more or less, stay at the Hyatt-Crystal City in Arlington, VA. Because of the number of delegates that come to Washington at the same time, some stay at the Hilton Hotel in Arlington, right down the street from the Hyatt. States are assigned to the Hilton on a rotating basis.

What are the sleeping arrangements?

Delegates are assigned three or four to a room. The assignments may seem random, but are made to encourage you to interact with delegates from other South Carolina cooperatives.

How will I get around Washington?

Transportation to all destinations is provided. Each state charters a bus for the week.

Will I need spending money?

Your meals, lodging, travel, tours and admission fees are paid for by your electric cooperative. If you want souvenirs, cards, stamps, film or snacks, bring along your own cash. A little bit of pocket money is a good idea. We suggest bringing traveler's checks just in case they are lost or stolen. You can obtain these from your bank where you or your parents have an account.

How will I know what to wear?

After your selection as a Youth Tour delegate, your name will be turned in to our statewide office. They will take over from there. You will receive a large packet of information about the tour that will answer most of your questions, including what to wear.

What about chaperones?

In most cases the Youth Tour coordinators at each cooperative are the chaperones, but occasionally another cooperative staff member may volunteer to go. Generally, there are six chaperones for the 42 to 47 delegates.

What about security?

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the organization that organizes the tour, provides security within the hotel during the Washington Youth Tour week. Additional security is provided by the Hyatt and Marriott.