

25 Tips for College Tours

The college tour experience is an important factor in deciding where you'll spend four years of your life. Chances are, you've traveled a long way and spent a good bit of money just to look at this campus, so it's important to get as much out of it as possible. Here are 25 tips to make the most of your day.

Start Off on the Right Foot

1. **Get There Early** - Most college campuses are pretty confusing, and buildings can be difficult to find on the first try. Not to mention you may have a good walk ahead. Plan to get there a half hour early to make sure you find parking and your first session.
2. **Wear Walking Shoes** - Don't wear shoes that are hard to trek around in. Chances are you'll be walking all day around a large campus. Stick with sneakers or comfortable sandals.
3. **Pay Attention to the Weather** - You'll likely be outside for a good portion of the day. Bundle up, bring umbrellas or wear sunscreen — whatever makes sense. You don't want to zone out and miss important information because you are freezing the whole day!
4. **Read the Handouts** - The folders, brochures and stickers colleges hand out are easy to just throw out, but they actually have a lot of information about the college that could guide your choice, such as average class size, cost and admission standards for acceptance. Keep the handouts to compare these factors to other colleges you're considering.
5. **Ask for Directions** - If you get lost moving from session to session, don't be too proud to ask a student for directions. It can speak volumes about a college to see how its students react to incoming students.
6. **Don't Form an Opinion** - Don't start the day already thinking that you'll hate/love the school. Keep your mind open, at least until the drive home, and experience everything before forming an opinion.
7. **Take Notes** - After a while, all the colleges you visit will run together, and it will be hard to remember all the information and statistics. Take notes on important information that you can look over later.

Take Initiative

8. **Find a Friend** - Find a student at the university, whether it's an old family friend, cousin or recommended mutual friend, who can sit down for a meal with you between sessions and tell you about the school. They will be able to show you a more personal view — and they love free food!
9. **Ask Questions** - It can be embarrassing when your mom asks the tour guide a bunch of questions. But that's what they're for! You'll thank her later when you need the information.
10. **Meet an Admissions Officer** - Figure out who oversees the applicants to the college from your state or county, and go introduce yourself! This can be very impressive, and forming a personal relationship with this person will be helpful when you have questions or concerns about your application.
11. **Explore Your Interests** - Walk around the department for your major, and talk to some professors and students involved in your intended major. This will give you a feel for the program.
12. **Observe the Students** - Does the school have a lot of diversity? Are students active or sedentary? Look around to see if the college is a place that will expand your worldview and fit your personality. If you're excited to learn about other cultures, but the college is very homogenous, it may not be for you.
13. **Don't Skip Things** - You'll get bored going to session after session, but you're only at the university for a short amount of time. Don't get lazy and skip out. Learn all you can.
14. **Try to Stay** - Some colleges let you stay overnight in a dorm or shadow a current student for a weekend. This will give you the best view of what the day-to-day life of college is like.

Explore — A Lot

15. **Take the Walking Tour** - While most colleges require you to sit in on information sessions, an actual walking tour is often another option during the day. Don't skip it! This can give you a more comprehensive view of the school, and you'll get to see students in action.
16. **Eat in the Dining Hall** - Many schools will give you a free pass to their dining halls for the day — use it! It's important to see what the food will be like since you might be eating it for four years.
17. **See a Model Dorm** - The housing spectrum on college campuses is vast, and you'll want to know if the dorms were built in 1800 or were renovated in more recent years. Where you live is important and can greatly impact the positivity of your college experience.

18. **Get a Feel for the Size** - Walk around, stroll through the buildings and look at the amount of people around the school. Get a feel for how big or small the campus is. If you're already bored and feel like you've seen everything, maybe the college is too small for you. If you feel overwhelmed and lost, maybe the college is too big.
19. **Sit in on a Class** - One class does not a college make, but it may give you a basic idea of typical coursework and the environment of the college. If the class seems far too easy or impossibly difficult, the college may not be a good academic fit for you.
20. **Check out Student Life** - Many colleges have rec centers or hotspots where students congregate, such as quads and courtyards. Walk around these, look at fliers and booths and get a feel for what activities and events go on around campus.
21. **Explore the Town** - Most universities are situated around "college towns." Walk around off campus for a bit. It's probably where you'll go to hang out on weekends, or possibly get a job. If there's nothing around your school, that could be a deal breaker.

Don't Leave Without Making Sure To ...

22. **Go Somewhere Iconic** - Every college has that one spot. Whether it's a campus bell tower, chapel, sports stadium or impressively constructed performing arts building, get a feel for the history behind the school.
 23. **Go to a Student Panel** - Colleges often have a session where students from different activities and majors will answer questions. This can give you a very broad view of the college and show you the different types of people succeeding at the university.
 24. **Take a Picture** - If you do end up going there, you'll be happy to have a picture of the first time you visited as a throwback!
 25. **Visit the Bookstore** - It seems cheesy, but grab a T-shirt or sweatshirt from the college if you like it there. You'll have a keepsake from your visit, and if you end up going there you'll be grateful for that!
- Choosing the perfect college fit is one of the most important decisions you'll make, so don't go into your tour without a plan. You'll thank yourself later!