



# Parents' Guide STEM U 2026



*INSPIRATION OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM*



Hammock Expeditions, LLC  
51 Hillcrest Way  
Bluffton, SC 29909 USA  
P: 984.223.9866  
[www.HammockExpeditions.com](http://www.HammockExpeditions.com)  
[www.STEMStudyTours.com](http://www.STEMStudyTours.com)



# STEM U

## SUMMER RESIDENTIAL CAMP

A warm welcome to our students, parents and families!


I would like to personally thank each of you for supporting our educational programs and take a moment of your time to share some details that we feel will enhance your trip. At STEM Study Tours we strive to provide the highest levels of customer service and believe that sharing as much information as possible prior to your trip is of the utmost importance, allowing you to plan for a fabulous and successful trip. We sincerely hope that you and your students enjoy a trip of a lifetime!

In this document, we have tried to list items that we feel you need to be aware of to assist in planning your upcoming tour as well as adding a few hints and tips we have picked up over the years. Of course, we are always here for any questions and to help in any way. If you ever need assistance, you need only to ask.

Thank you for being our guest! We sincerely appreciate your business and will work hard to ensure this is an outstanding trip, inspiring your students in new and innovative ways.

Warmest Regards,

*Michele*

Michele Hammock 

**STEM Study Tours, Founder**

USA: 984.223.9866

E: [michele@stemstudytours.com](mailto:michele@stemstudytours.com)



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## Before You Travel

We understand that the biggest part of your job will be the work required before you even set foot out the door. To assist, below are some tips that we feel might assist you for your perfect trip.

- To research current exchange rates, we suggest that you visit the following link: [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com). This will give you the most up to date exchange rates for your global travels.
- Please note that many destinations do not offer currency exchange services and currency should be exchanged **prior** to departing on your trip, or at the airport upon arrival. Credit cards are widely accepted in destinations and most have ATM cash dispensers for emergency funds via credit card or debit card. (Note: If traveling in Germany, your student will want to bring several €1 coins for easy access. Toilet stops are usually paid in coin, and then the merchant will credit the amount back to the student to use for an in-store purchase – beverage, snack, souvenir, etc. Always best to be prepared!)
- We strongly recommend discontinuing use of mobile phones or using “Wi-Fi-only” settings to protect your student from unexpected data fees while traveling internationally. While it may be possible to use your mobile phone internationally, charges tend to be expensive. We therefore recommend you contact your network provider to understand these charges before you travel.
- We suggest that you print and bring a copy of your entire travel insurance policy, a photocopy of your passport, a photocopy of your Visa Waiver, and a copy of your medical release.
- Many suppliers require waivers to be completed prior to being able to participate in an activity. We will endeavor to get these to you prior to travel and ask for you to respond to them at your earliest convenience. No waivers = no participation in a specific activity.
- Check [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) for the weather forecast of your destination area.
- If you are traveling on our group flights and not traveling independently, we ask all students to wear the shirt included in your travel pack. This makes the group easily identifiable, especially as we may not personally know your student.
- If group members wear glasses or contact lenses, bring an extra pair packed in hand luggage in case of loss or damage. A suggestion for wearers of contact lenses is for the user to pack a small amount of solution in hand luggage (please check current Airport Security regulations concerning carrying liquids in hand luggage) in case it is needed during flight. We generally find that people who wear contact lenses prefer to take these out during longer flights as the aircraft typically creates a dryness which can bother the eyes.
- Pack a simple ‘first aid’ kit of items which may be needed during the trip. Include over-the-counter medicines, sunscreen, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, first aid supplies, insect repellent and other items your student may need. For a more complete list, please visit [CDC Pack Smart](#).
- Research your destination for recommended travel vaccines. Most importantly, everyone should talk to their family physician for guidance and recommendations related to health concerns. [CDC Travel Vaccines](#)



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- Keep all prescription medication in original containers and bring a photocopy of the current prescription so they can be more easily replaced if lost.
- Apply early for passports. Personally check to make sure you are updated on the most recent compliance laws as this task falls under your responsibility. Additionally, please check to ensure you are in compliance with Visa requirements as these will vary by the individual nationality of each passenger traveling. Most countries – Europe, UK, Canada & USA - now have a Visa Waiver program in place. Please see more details on this below.
- Pack an electricity adaptor for appliances. Items may include electric shavers, hairdryers, camera and phone chargers and other small devices you may wish to carry. (Note: North American destinations run on 110V; most European destinations run on 220V.) You will need to purchase these prior to travel if you intend to bring them.
- Research checked luggage allowances for flights as they vary by airline and are subject to change.
- If you are traveling on a family program, please be aware that we cannot assist in booking childcare on your behalf as this is not a service that our group contacts may assist with. If you desire childcare arrangements, the best practice is to contact the individual hotel/resort via telephone and determine if they have programming available and the associated costs. You will need to make independent reservations for these services.

## Travel Dress Code

We understand that while on tour, participants want to feel relaxed and comfortable and we completely appreciate this. We do request that you specifically discuss a travel dress code with your student prior to travel. While forms of casual dress vary in different parts of the world, we need to be respectful to the culture we are visiting, not necessarily to what is considered appropriate in our home country.

As an example, in most countries, it is considered disrespectful to wear shorts that are so short that young ladies are not effectively covered. While we don't want to make any specific statements, we do want to ensure that all dress is always respectful. If you are traveling to Mexico, Costa Rica or other Latin American countries, this is even more important. If you are traveling to a beach destination, make sure swimsuit wear is appropriate and **conservative**. Your attention to this and discussion with your student is sincerely appreciated. If on tour and something is not appropriate, we have asked our Ambassadors to speak to any guests directly so the participant's clothing choice may be changed prior to continuing the tour.

Additionally, at no time will passengers be allowed to wear pajamas or sleepwear except while sleeping. We do not wear these to breakfast, on planes, or outside of their assigned hotel room. Please confirm that your student understands this.

We sincerely appreciate your help with this. We always want our programs showcased in the very best light and dressing appropriately will go a long way in international cultural relations.



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## Travel Insurance

All traveling parties are required to carry travel protection. To assist and as a convenience, we have partnered with a well-known and widely used travel insurance company called Travel Insured. The choice is completely yours on who you would like to use, we just mandate that a travel protection plan is in place prior to the time of travel. Unfortunately though, Travel Insured is only available to groups departing from the USA. If you are departing from outside the USA, please let us know if you need a recommendation. A copy of your policy must be submitted prior to travel. [LINK TO PURCHASE INSURANCE](#)

Many times, we get asked why insurance is necessary. It's a great question! Let us try to explain a few examples of why it is necessary:

- As travel operators, we take responsibility for booking independent elements of your trip – your flights, hotels, transportation, activities, meals, etc. We work hard to pull this all together but there are some instances when things aren't movable even though we absolutely try. A good example of this is flights. We had a group in Costa Rica a few years back and the trip went beautifully. The group were in route back to the airport to fly home and ran into a traffic delay due to an accident on the only highway. The delay caused them to miss their return flight and their airline was not able to reticket them on a later flight as the delay had nothing to do with them (airline) specifically. Because the group members had travel insurance, their insurance company set them up with an added night's lodging, meals, extra transportation and a revised flight to travel back home on the following day. Although no one's 'fault', these things do happen and can easily happen anywhere in the world. By ensuring you have travel protection, we are ensuring you will hopefully not be at a monetary loss for items outside of anyone's immediate control.
- What if you are all ready to go, but your student is also involved in sports and a few days before the trip, she breaks a leg and her doctor will not allow her to travel? All funds have been paid to us and we have paid them out to our suppliers to reserve the tour. With travel protection, the parent would generally get a refund based on the insurance policy that was purchased. We would never want anyone to be out of pocket financially, especially for something they weren't able to participate in. Having travel protection will ensure you are protected financially.
- If while on tour, your student has a minor accident – i.e. twisted ankle. We will ensure they get the medical treatment they need, but the hospital will require an immediate form of payment. The parent is then responsible for contacting the insurance carrier and having them liaise, negotiate and pay the medical facility directly. At times you may be asked to make the payment personally and then get reimbursed, but your insurance company is guiding you every step of the way so you are covered. If more of a serious incident and the passenger requires different airline seating, travel protection will not only take care of this from an administrative standpoint, but they will also usually cover the costs.
- Your student travels internationally, arrives at the hotel and finds that they have lost their passport. We will absolutely try contacting all resources but if not found, a replacement will be needed urgently. This means a trip to an embassy which generally means a flight for 2 people (student plus a staff member if unaccompanied), transportation costs, extra hotel costs, on and on. And your student misses the planned activities on top of this. Dependent upon your plan, travel protection will generally reimburse you for some of the unexpected costs, dependent upon your plan.



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- Your student travels by air but his/her bag doesn't arrive at the destination. They need toiletries, clothing, and other items to tide them over until the bag arrives, if it does arrive. All of these little needs add up and are generally covered by your travel protection plan.

There are so many elements that can unexpectedly pop up that are generally covered by travel protection. We hope this helps to explain why it is necessary and mandated for all traveling passengers. Please always ensure your policy has a travel cancellation protection component, a trip interruption component, and also a medical component. **Although a bit more expensive, we strongly suggest an “enhanced” or “cancel for any reason” policy.** Read your policy thoroughly and ask questions about what it does and does not cover so you are aware. Not every policy covers all instances. And make sure to bring a copy when you are on your trip. A little protection goes a long way.

## Flight Information, Luggage & Airline Meals

If traveling via flight, please know that your specific flight details are generally available approximately 60-days prior to departure. For most of our summer options, we offer a collective group flight, or you may book your flight independently and we will meet you on arrival. If traveling on our group flights, pre- and post-hotel stays are also optional. Let us know how we may best serve you.

Baggage weight and size restrictions vary and are subject to change. Please check your airline for the most up-to-date information as these do tend to change at times. We also suggest that all passengers weigh their baggage prior to embarking on their trip to ensure they meet any specific requirements.

If flying internationally, please understand that flights within the USA and Europe are virtually all non-catered or buy-on-board options. Any catering provided will be snack catering only. International flights, if over a specific amount of flight time, generally have meals offered, but not all do and some require additional payment for options. Please ask us and ensure your student has funds to cover buy-on-board options.

Please note that although we will submit your requests for medical dietary needs to our airline partners, they may not always be available. **Please reiterate this request directly with the airline at check-in, each way.** Be advised that dietary requests apply only to international transatlantic legs and do not apply to internal/domestic flights. As an example, if you have a connecting flight in North America and have a specific dietary request, the best practice is to **purchase a meal option prior to boarding** but after passing through security. Also, please note that on the majority of internal USA/Canada connecting flights, service is generally limited to drinks (coffee, tea, soft drinks) only. In most instances, these are free of charge. If in Europe, many times beverages are available for purchase only.

Please note that if your passenger suffers from a nut allergy, **airlines do not offer a ‘nut-free flight.’**

***BEST PRACTICE: Always have your passenger purchase a suitable meal prior to boarding to ensure they will be able to eat without issue.***

## Passport & Visa Requirements for Travel

In order for passenger information to be passed quickly to the airlines, coach companies, ferry companies and border security agencies, parents are required to enter all information related to your group's booking directly into a link we provide for trip registration, waiver collection and payment. This is the MOST IMPORTANT part of the pre-travel work. When registering, only include full legal names, including middle names. Please also know





that the waiver is mandated. A parent will not be able to complete registration without acknowledgement of all legal documents. Parents should double-check all information entered for accuracy as it will be forwarded to the airline/agency exactly as it is entered.

Failure to provide full legal names (no nicknames) and associated passport information by the required date can result in the travel suppliers releasing your passenger's seat from the booking. Any errors in the information provided, including the misspelling of names as per the passenger's passport can result in the levy of a charge and in some cases, necessitate re-ticketing. The fees for re-ticketing vary by supplier but can be in excess of \$300 / £200 per ticket. Any charges levied due to incorrect documentation or information not being received by us by the required timescales will be passed back to you for payment.

For dual nationals, where one of the nationalities held is USA, the passenger **must travel on their USA Passport**. For anyone born in the USA and traveling into the USA but not holding a USA passport, a visitor's visa must be obtained, or they will generally be denied entry into the USA.

In addition to ensuring that all passport requirements are met, persons traveling into the USA, Canada, the UK, or Europe must apply online for a Visa Waiver prior to travel:

**FOR TRAVEL INTO USA:**

[USA ESTA](#)

**FOR TRAVEL INTO CANADA:**

[CANADA eTA](#)

**FOR TRAVEL INTO THE UNITED KINGDOM:**

[UK ETA](#)

**FOR TRAVEL INTO EUROPE:**

[EUROPE ETIAS](#)

All visiting passengers eligible for travel under the Visa Waiver Program must receive online approval a minimum of **72-hours** prior to departure. The Visa Waiver Program offers entry without the need for a visa to travelers from selected countries. The current list of countries covered can be found on the websites shown above. Boarding/entry on arrival may be denied if you have not received approval. Application takes just a few moments; please ensure that you have your passport in hand when logging in and print the final approval for your files.

**IMPORTANT:** If you get a new passport after receiving approval (lost/stolen/expired) you MUST re-apply as the document details will have changed. You will not be able to travel without your approval matching the details shown in your passport.

ALL PASSENGERS TRAVELING FROM ABROAD MUST HAVE AN APPROVAL IN ORDER TO BOARD THE PLANE (in many instances, there is also a set time limit in which this must be submitted). FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN DENIED BOARDING OR ENTRY. APPROVAL DOES NOT GUARANTEE ENTRY AT CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION. IT IS UP TO ALL PASSENGERS TO ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE SUBMITTED THEIR APPLICATION AND RECEIVED AN APPROVAL BEFORE TRAVEL. STEM STUDY TOURS / HAMMOCK EXPEDITIONS WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY REPATRIATION CHARGES INCURRED DUE TO DENIED ENTRY.

## Your Itinerary

Your Itinerary is the day-by-day schedule of daily activities, times, transfers, meals and excursions. This document will be custom-tailored specifically for your trip. Please note that our individual suppliers (activity providers, hotels and restaurants) make the final authorization as to times and dates of activities scheduled. You



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may expect to receive your final itinerary a minimum of 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE. The completion of your Itinerary depends on the successful submission of all required documents and payments being submitted.

Your Itinerary will have two tabs which can be found at the bottom of the electronic document. The first tab will have the day-by-day itinerary and scheduling for your group. The second tab will contain key details such as the name, address and contact details for your hotel(s) and motorcoach provider, emergency contact numbers and other key information. Please be sure to print both tabs and have your student carry them during the trip so they have this critical information available at all times.

## While Traveling

If you get delayed in transit, please immediately notify us by dialing our main office telephone (001) 984.223.9866. If after hours, this phone will be diverted to our Duty Manager. We will then alert your Tour Director and ground team. If you do not make us aware, your room accommodation could be in jeopardy so contact us once you have information.

- Please do not lock your luggage as the lock will be removed or broken by security checkers. If a lock is required, use a special "Transportation Safety Administration" (TSA) approved lock which can be opened by airport staff using special tools without damaging your lock.
- For hand/cabin luggage, please consult your individual airline websites for weight and size restrictions. Additionally, some airports have very specific regulations regarding sizing and allowances, so we encourage you to check the departure airport's website as well (London Gatwick specifically). Please also research duty-free limits for customs declarations if your passenger intends to purchase goods.
- Meals are generally only provided by the airline on transcontinental flights, however most airlines offer the facility to buy snacks and drinks on board. Please be advised that some airlines only accept payment by credit card, while others only accept cash in specific currencies.
- If your student requires medicine to be packed in carry-on luggage and taken on-board the aircraft, please remember these simple rules: a) Ensure all medication is in its original container with a full pharmaceutical label. b) Bring a doctor's note specifying the medication prescribed, whom it is prescribed for, and contact information for the doctor. c) If the medicine is in liquid form, ensure it meets specified regulations for carry-on purposes. At the time of this documentation, specifications include limitations on both size/quantity as well as placing the liquid in a clear, quart-sized, plastic sealable bag. Please consult your airline's website for the most up-to-date regulations concerning carry-on items.
- As mentioned in the pre-travel segment, please remember that if a member of your party suffers from an allergy or medical/dietary condition limiting what they may be able to consume, ***the best practice is to purchase a suitable meal option prior to boarding a flight.***
- When traveling internationally, all passengers will be required to clear Customs and Immigrations at their first point of entry. Most baggage will be through-checked to your final destination however it will require Customs clearance upon arrival.



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- Please note that luggage assistance is not included as part of your tour. Each passenger will need to be able to carry/pull their own baggage. This will include loading and unloading the luggage on the motorcoach used to transport your group, and to/from hotel rooms.
- If you encounter lost baggage while traveling, it is imperative that you report any lost bags **prior to departing from the airport**. Our ground team will assist your student during this process. In most circumstances, lost baggage will be returned directly to your accommodation although this will be dependent upon your airline's policy with regards to lost luggage. Generally, items may be traced via the airline website as well as by phone. The website is more productive whereas phone communication may take an extended period of time. Lost bags often take up to 48-hours to return. We strongly advise that passengers are aware of the insurance coverage for such events and have a plan in place in the event luggage is lost.

## On Tour

- Please note that as a general rule, we have a 10:00 PM curfew for all passengers to be in their bedrooms and a 10:30 PM 'no-noise' curfew. If for any reason your group arrives at the hotel later than this time, we ask that all parties be considerate of other guests and go quietly to hotel rooms.
- **Alcohol and tobacco use is not permitted by students, at any time.** If your passenger is found using a substance such as these, they will be asked to leave the trip immediately, at the parent's expense.
- It is especially important to ensure you **discuss the use of sunscreen and bug repellent directly with your student**. While our team will touch on this, it is important **that you make it your responsibility** to review this directly with your student prior to travel. If anyone in your party needs to purchase additional supplies, please alert your Tour Director who can determine appropriate sources for purchase. With so many unknown possibilities, we want to make sure you are always able to help your student protect themselves from harm.
- If equipment used on tour is lost or damaged, you will be required to submit funds to cover the loss. Please check the terms and conditions of your travel insurance to determine if these charges may be appropriate for reimbursement and what paperwork will be required to support your insurance claim.
- If at any time you have concerns over your group's instruction, activities, meals, accommodation or other factors of your trip, we ask you please bring this to the attention of our Head Office immediately. This allows us an opportunity to work on your behalf and try to resolve the issue. If we are made aware, we can usually assist you. Please do not attempt to contact your student's Tour Director while they are on tour. All communications should **ONLY** go through our head offices.
- If your passenger has lost a specific item during the trip that you are unable to recover while visiting, the *best practice is to contact the location directly for follow-up*. Unfortunately, Tour Directors are only in the area for the duration of your trip, so they are generally not local nor able to assist you after your group has departed. The *best practice is for you to contact the destination via telephone and request the Lost & Found extension*. From there, the staff responsible for this area will be able to check and let you know if items have been located and determine applicable costs for mailing the



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item(s) back to you. In most cases, you should be able to give a credit card directly to the vendor to cover any additional fees required for postage.

- If your passenger has sustained an injury which requires enhanced airline services (seat type change, delayed flight, or other special circumstance), please note that this **must be handled by a parent or guardian directly with your travel insurance company**. While we would like to assist, our contract with airlines is for group seating requirements only and does not allow us to change any individual details. All requests for services are handled by your insurance company who work directly with the airlines to secure your needs as per the physician's advice.

## Loss of Passport

Every year we have travelers who inadvertently lose their passports. The replacement process is not usually an easy one, so we wanted to share this with you to make sure everyone is 'in the know.'

### **Best Practice:**

- Make a photocopy of the passport that is clear and easy to view. Check the actual copy to make sure it is not too light/dark or unreadable. You should keep a copy and then each passenger should also keep a photocopy of their passport in their hand luggage.
- If a Visa Waiver is required, all passengers should bring a photocopy of this authorization in their carry-on luggage in case of need.
- Upon arrival at the departure airport, students will be broken into small groups of 10 or less with one staff member assigned to each set of students for passport collection. During the international flight, passengers will use their passport photocopy to gather information necessary if they are required to fill out immigration forms during flight.
- When entering Customs & Immigrations, students will gather in their small pre-assigned groups and be cleared through with the staff member assigned to assist them. After clearance, this staff member will again collect all passports. The passports will not be given out again until the return journey home. Upon arrival at the hotel, all passports will be locked/held in a safety deposit box or the hotel safe until it is time to return home.

If a passport is lost, please understand there are strict procedures that are required for replacement. For more information, please visit our [Documents Library](#).

## Accommodations

- Please note that all chargeable hotel items, including telephone calls, movies and other purchases, must be settled prior to hotel departure. If you would like to activate room charging, a credit card or cash deposit should be left with the front desk for authorization.
- Many facilities have a swimming pool available for your use. Please note that in most cases, **lifeguards are not on duty**. If your child is not a strong swimmer, we highly suggest they do not swim. Please alert us if your child is not authorized to swim.



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- To avoid any unnecessary room damage fees, we suggest that all occupants of each room take a few moments to inspect the room and record any deficiencies / damage directly after check-in. This information will be shared with the front desk and photocopied in case of later reference or need.

## Meals

Please be aware that meals will often not be identical to the type of meals you may be used to. The following are some notes we'd like to share and items to be aware of:

- Daily breakfasts are held at the hotel. In Europe, breakfasts are typically 'continental' and consist of breads, cheeses, fruits and meats. As this might be different than what is usually consumed, we recommend that if students would like to have different items, these are purchased independently.
- Please note that trips do not offer a choice in meal plans. Meals are served for the entire group and we do not order individual plates off of a menu. Most times we will try to seek a few different options, but in some cases, the meal is a set plate and identical for all participants. We will always cater for specific food allergies as well as Vegetarian and Halal, however Vegan and Organic food options are generally not able to be catered for. In order to ensure you have the meal needed, it is imperative you note this in the dietary section of your registration. If it is not noted prior to travel, meal preferences may not be granted. Additionally, please understand we are not able to cater to personal likes and dislikes, only serious food allergies may be accommodated.
- If your group is set up to participate in a pizza night, please understand that in most locations, pizzas include cheese. When we order pizzas, we will try to also include at least one pizza with no cheese if a request is shown within your dietary requirements. Pizzas are ordered for the entire group's consumption and are not ordered per passenger. If your passenger cannot eat cheese, it is important that this is noted in their dietary information.
- For family groups, if adults wish to purchase alcoholic beverages or if any group member desires an option that is not included in the standard meal plan, you are welcome to have these added but also must be responsible for full payment at the time service is rendered.

## Your Tour Director & Chaperone Team:

The "STEM Study Tours Difference" means more than just incredible destinations, awesome trips and brilliant education. In our quest to provide our guests with the highest levels of service, a dedicated Tour Director will accompany each group in addition to chaperone staff. As highly trained travel professionals, Directors deliver outstanding customer service, handle special requests and assist in emergency situations.

Please note that your Tour Director is not a 'local guide' nor should they be considered one. They are highly trained in specific operations and placed in their role to serve as a management tool representing both your interests as well as the overall interests of our Company. The direct oversight of the scheduled itinerary including ensuring rooms and meals served are good experiences, instructors are on time and classes progress accordingly, and most importantly, injury protocol and emergency management operations, all combine to create their key focus. If you have specific questions that relate to the area you are visiting, please feel free to enquire and our team will seek an answer.



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A few more points for your consideration....

- Please note that our Director is here to serve your student and ensure they receive the highest level of service. If they come across any area which requires assistance, please immediately have your student notify their Director so that he/she may investigate and initiate a plan for rectification.
- One of the ways we measure progress is by requesting your student's feedback. We ask them to assist us by filling in an End-of-Trip Report with their overall feedback once they return. This is optional but we greatly value their response and comments as we use this feedback to continue to build great experiences! Requests will be emailed upon return.

We look forward to serving your family! If we may be of service in any way, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Warm regards,

*Michele*

Michele Hammock 

**STEM Study Tours, Founder**

USA: 984.223.9866

E: [michele@stemstudytours.com](mailto:michele@stemstudytours.com)



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