**Do we need visas?**

For all participants that have a passport from one of the countries in the European Union, visas are not required. If you have a different passport, please check: https://www.passportindex.org/travel-visa-checker/ or contact the local authorities of the countries. You are responsible for making sure you are allowed to stay in the countries for the time of the tour, and are as such also responsible for arranging visas when necessary.

**Do we need vaccines?**

There are no obligated/advised vaccines for the destination countries, however some vaccines may be optional to take. We will be inviting someone over from the GGD to come talk with all our participants in the break of Monday the 11th of December about this and other health advice for visiting the countries. This talk will start at 12:30 and the location will be made known to you via email. The talk will be over before the end of the break.

**Is travel insurance needed / provided?**

We will arrange travel insurance for the entire group via the tour operator we are working with, however if you, for some reason have all year travel insurance that also covers trips outside of Europe, please let us know, because that would mean we don’t have to arrange insurance for you and it would decrease the costs.

**How do we balance study visits, tourist activities, and free time?**

Because of the grants we apply to, we are obliged to spend 40% of the time of our trip on study related activities such as visiting companies and universities. Besides this, we will also plan some cultural activities for the whole group to see some highlights in the cities and nature. Finally, there will be some free time for you as well to spend on exploring the countries yourself.

**How much free time will we have for exploring?**

We don’t have our day to day schedule yet so we can only give some indications. During the STC 2022, they had 2 full days of free time along with several mornings/afternoons combining for about 5 days of free time in total during a three week trip. In general, the evenings will also be free for you to explore on your own. This is somewhat indicative but we will only know how much free time you will have exactly closer to the trip.

**What are the dress code and etiquette expectations for various activities?**

In any case you are obliged to the adhere to the local laws and make sure to not show any behavior that can get yourself or the study tour into problems. Furthermore, you are expected to be on your best behavior during all company and university visits. At these specific visits, the committee enforces a strict dress code. Not adhering to this dress code means that a fine will be imposed, worth the average daily allowance (‘pocket money’) of €21. All paid fines go towards the central budget and will be spent on activities for the whole group.

The dress code resembles the well-known ‘business casual’ dress code as a minimum. Business casual entails at least decent, long trousers, a long-sleeved shirt, and matching, decent closed shoes for men. And for women: long trousers or knee-length skirts, well-fitted shirts without ties or a mid-length dress or sleeveless blouse with a tuxedo blazer and decent closed-toe shoes. If you are unsure whether some of your clothing items adhere to these rules, please send a message to the committee for inquiry.

**How much is the pocket money?**

Right now the pocket money is estimated to be around €21 per day, but the exact amount will be determined before leaving for the tour as this may differ per visited country and depends on the overall status of the budget and whether breakfast is included or not. In principle the pocket money should be enough to cover breakfast, lunch and the average cost of a basic meal in the country.

**How much extra money should I expect to spend?**

In general all your basic necessities will be provided for you during the tour, this means accommodation, food and drinks, flights and travel are in principle covered by the study tour budget. However, how much you will spend will greatly depend on your own choices, for example the costs of going out to have a drink in a bar are not covered so if you choose to do this everyday, your costs will greatly increase. The pocket money should be enough to cover the costs of a basic meal for lunch and supper, but if you want to eat fancy, this also increases the costs of your trip. There will also be some days on which you have free time, so keep in mind that you might want to do something that costs money on those days. To give you an overview of some of the costs in the countries we will be visiting see the list below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Singapore** | **Taiwan** | **Japan** |
| Beer (large) | €12 | €4.50 | €6.50 |
| Basic meal | €10 | €5.50 | €10 |
| Big Mac | €4.37 | €2.16 | €2.84 |

**Is it safe to drink tap water?**

It is safe to drink in both Japan and Singapore, although it can taste a bit different in comparison to Dutch tap water. It is not advised to drink tap water in Taiwan, but to buy purified water bottles instead.

**What should I pack for the trip, considering the climate and activities?**

In general it is important to note that it will be quite hot, because we will be going in the summer. For Singapore the temperature will most likely be around 30 C, in Taiwan it will be between 30 and 35 C and in Japan between 25 and 30 C. These are only estimates so it could still be hotter/colder than this and you should take that into account with your clothing choices. Also, don’t forget to still pack enough formal clothing for the visits to companies/universities.

**Are there luggage restrictions on flights or during the trip?**

The current flight offers include one large suitcase with a maximum of 23kg per person. It is of course also very much recommended to bring a small backpack with you as hand luggage with some things you might need on the plane and which can later on be used to carry some water and other necessities on day trips.

**What is expected of us in terms of behavior and participation?**

The STC 2024 expects you to actively participate in all activities that are scheduled by the committee. At all times while on the tour, you are expected to adhere to local laws and etiquette. We are guests/visitors to the countries and institutions and should behave as such. You also have to oblige to the clothing rules for university and company visits as stated in the contract and are fined if you do not adhere to this.

**Are we required to go to an excursion in the Netherlands? If so, when is it?**

You are required to go to one excursion before leaving. An excursion will be planned for all study tour participants. This excursion will take place in Q3 or Q4. You are required to go on this excursion unless you have a valid reason. Not wanting to skip a lecture is not a valid reason. If you have a valid reason such as a mandatory practical, then you should contact the committee and go to another excursion during the year to make up for it.

**Are we allowed to travel on? How does that work?**

Yes. We have created an addendum for those that want to travel on after the tour. Signing this addendum means that you agree with the fact that Japie and the STC 2024 no longer have responsibility as of the return date of the tour. If you decide to travel on, you can book a new return flight in correspondence with the committee and the tour operator. You are responsible for the extra costs of traveling on and the possible higher flight prices. You will not get money back if the new return flights are less expensive, this will just flow back into the budget.

The procedure with this will go as follows:

1. The committee send out an email to all participants to ask who would be willing to travel onwards. We also send the addendum for this with the invitations. There will be a deadline in this email before which the participants will need to choose/react in order to get their new return flight compensated with the regular return flight.
2. Interested participants will need to email the committee back, with details on when and where they would want to fly back.
3. The committee makes sure the addendum is printed and signed by the interested participants.
4. The committee will arrange flights with tour operator and interested participants.
5. Participants get an invoice for possible additional costs.

If the participant decides to travel on after the deadline that will be indicated in step 1, the participant has to pay for their new flight as a whole; this will not be compensated with the previously booked flights. Furthermore, the participant will then book its own flight back. Still an addendum needs to be signed for the discontinued responsibility of Japie after the tour duration.

**Do we need a credit card?**

We of course cannot force you to arrange a credit card for this trip, but it might be handy to have one. Debit cards might not be accepted everywhere, while credit cards generally are in the countries we are visiting, even though the use of a credit card may cost you a bit more per transaction. It is also always advised to take cash with you in the right currency, because you might not be able to pay by card everywhere. It is advised by travel organizations to take different forms of payment with you, such as the debit card, credit card and cash so that you will always be able to pay in emergency situations.

Please take into account that some banks standardly block your card for outside of EU purposes. You may therefore be willing to contact your bank in advance of the trip so that you may also use it outside of the EU and that they remove this block.

**When do we need to have our passport (no ID card!)?**

For this tour, you need to have a passport. Your passport needs to be valid until 6 months after leaving the countries of residence, so six months after August 2024. We will also need the details of your passport later on in the process of booking our tour, for this we will send you an email to ask for these details. In order to be able to book our tour, we need everyone to have a valid passport close to when we are leaving, around June 2024. To be certain, we strongly advise you to not wait until the last moment with this. Cost for this passport can of course **not** be declared at the STC2024.