

The Council on Student Travel

What is the Council?

The Council on Student Travel is a non-profit coordinating agency with a nation-wide membership of 38 educational and religious organizations. Because these organizations believe in student exchange as a sound method of building international understanding, they conduct international student travel programs. The range of services which the Council provides is as extensive as the interests of its member organizations.

What services does the Council provide?

Its best-known services are the special student ships the Council makes available for students traveling to and from Europe. Each summer since 1947 the Council's student ships have crossed the Atlantic with groups of students bound for European summer schools, conferences, work camps, study tours and other educational ventures.

During the voyages educational staffs conduct intensive orientation programs designed to help students profit from their educational experience abroad. Among the offerings in the Council's unique program in 1954 were classes in twelve languages, forums on current European problems, illustrated art lectures and concerts. In 1955 this orientation service has been expanded to include travelers on trans-Atlantic ships throughout the year.

The Council also helps students with their travel and transportation problems at all seasons. And increasing numbers of European students are utilizing space offered by the Council to journey "abroad" to America.

The Council serves as a clearinghouse for information on student travel. For member organizations it handles inquiries on group travel. A tour referral service, initiated in 1953, aids individuals seeking student travel programs tailored to their interests. At an annual mid-winter conference, the Council invites several hundred educators and travel executives to explore their common problems and public responsibilities. In 1953 a two-day spring conference was initiated for training educational leaders on student ships.

Research on all phases of international travel continues to be a major service of the Council. In 1954 published studies ranged from students' medical problems abroad to students' availability for travel to non-European areas, and teachers' materials for the orientation of students, tourists and migrants. Governmental and private organizations from twenty-two nations cooperated in an Orientation Project for 1,000 Canadian migrants, a project sponsored and staffed by the Council.

Who may travel on Council ships?

Students, teachers and others traveling for purposes of education are accepted as passengers by the Council. During the eight years since the Council on Student Travel was organized, approximately 20,000 students from every region of the United States have traveled abroad via Council transportation. More than double that number of students have embarked for Europe during this period under the sponsorship of the Council's member agencies. Although not all of these agencies directly conduct exchange programs, the students they send abroad each year number approximately 5,000, and 2,000 of these students are passengers on the Council's ships. In 1954 student passengers came from 47 states where they attended 329 colleges and 150 high schools. They joined students from more than 30 foreign countries in the exciting exchange of ideas that always characterizes student travel.

Why was the Council organized?

The need for trans-Atlantic ship passage is not a new one. The Council itself grew out of the problem of reviving student exchange programs after World War II in spite of the shortage of trans-Atlantic passage. In 1947 groups of organizations sought assistance from the Department of State. Reliable, but "austere" C-4 transports were furnished by the U. S. Maritime Commission, under the sponsorship of the Department of State, for operation by United States Lines.

Gradually the Council on Student Travel developed into a permanent organization with a year-round staff and services. The year 1950 marked a change in the Council's student ship program. The U. S. Government decided it could no longer make transports available for student travel. Minimal student ship space was obtainable that year. To rectify that situation, in 1951 the Council began to charter ships from European ship owners. Since the shortage of transportation for students continues to exist, the Council continues to charter ships, assume financial responsibility for them, and handle other technical arrangements.

What is the Council's function today?

Eight years have seen a shift in emphasis from providing student ships during the summer months to servicing the year-round needs of the educational traveler. Today the wide range of educational services of the Council is an essential part of the student travel movement. Informational services for travelers, conferences for educators and travel executives, and research continue to meet the changing needs of students at home and abroad. The extension of shipboard orientation programs to trans-Atlantic travelers throughout the year foreshadows an extension of the Council's service to a wider public.

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