

Preparing the trip

Good preparation is the key to a trip's success. It is important to us that preparation takes place over the course of a longer period of time (at least six months) and that while it is as binding as going on the trip itself, it is not viewed merely as a compulsory exercise.

In our experience preparation is good if it takes up anticipation of the group trip, if it is varied and multi-faceted, speaks to the participants' senses and is enjoyable for everyone involved. Good preparation awakens the participants' curiosity for new things and motivates them to occupy themselves with aspects of life that they had not perceived before in this way.

Diversity in one's own group

Intercultural life in one's own surroundings

This includes thinking about one's own roles, one's own gender role, one's own identity. Who am I, where do I come from, where do I want to go, who do I want to be?

Equally important is dealing with the issue of being foreign/being different. What opportunities do encounters with others offer? What prejudices exist? Why do people so often look first for what separates people rather than for what we have in common? Who takes what for granted?

Traveling to a different world can begin even in one's own neighborhood. Learning takes place via experiencing. Children/young people can explore their own immediate surroundings, they can find out who lives and works there, which stores, institutions, cultural organizations, churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and sports clubs exist, who runs them and who uses them. They can visit each other at home, get to know the others' customs, taste and cook each other's home cooking or «ev yemekler» together, try out traditional handicrafts, listen to family stories and look at family photos.

When preparing a visit to a partner school, students can deliberately examine their own school – how are classes conducted, what does the school building look like, what opportunities do they have to take part in decision-making, etc.

All this can be documented – with pictures, graphics, collages, photos, videos, diaries, poster presentations. The results can be shown to the partners in Turkey (before or during the visit) so that they can get an impression of their guests' home country.

Even while preparing a trip, we advise people to think about how it will be documented and evaluated. This makes it possible for everyone involved to collect material during the trip in a targeted manner.

Planning the trip

Many children and young people have never planned a trip before or have never traveled to another country with a group. For this reason, it is important to clarify in advance what their expectations, desires, hopes and fears are, and then to agree on a common approach and common goals.

Young people can be included in all parts of the preparation from the beginning. Which costs must be taken into account? How will the trip be financed? Who could provide assistance? What assistance is available for welfare recipients? How do you plan the route of a trip, how do you convert into a foreign currency, what will the weather be like, what temperatures are to be expected, what clothes should people take along? How will we do laundry? What do we need for personal hygiene? What else will we need? What is unnecessary ballast?

In Turkey, it is customary for guests to bring their hosts a gift. Berlin's district administrative offices are willing to supply "official" gifts. Otherwise, it is advisable to bring presents that benefit many people. And if the trip involves visiting families, a present for the family is an important gesture. Anyone who has experienced Turkish hospitality will be glad to be able to thank their hosts with a small gift.

Some chaperones establish a kind of "bank" for the young people to deposit their pocket money and withdraw it as needed. This protects them from losing their money and from squandering it thoughtlessly. If possible, all members of the group should have the same allowance with them. Sometimes, the travelers may be asked to bring back specific items, so they may have a larger amount of money with them.

If there is a partner group, establishing contact early on is a good idea. E-mail exchanges can enable the two groups to get to know each other a bit.

The young people can compile a little travel brochure with important information and a small Turkish phrase book.

The group can invite others who have taken part in such a trip in the past to talk with them. The group can look at reports, photos, documentation or exhibitions by other groups and benefit from their experiences. Especially if the particular institution/school has already undertaken trips to Turkey. There's no point in each group reinventing the wheel!

Students whose parents or grandparents are from Turkey are not necessarily experts on Turkey themselves. They are experts only on their lives in Germany. They, too, have to adapt to Turkey and Turkish society, and they are often much less at home there than they and others might think. They tend to be outsiders in Turkish society as well.

The host country Turkey

There is a great risk with this topic that "book learning" will cloud perception. That is why it is important to focus on discovering the new, being curious about other people and marveling about things one has never seen, smelled or tasted before. It is advisable to first concentrate on what people have in common rather than immediately nailing down what is "alien." Life in Turkey is just as diverse as life in Germany and everything should not be all lumped together.

Differences between Turkish and German cultural norms and values can be shown using topics such as hospitality, sexual and role identity, the meaning of the family, respect and authority as examples. If that happens, young people are usually able to develop their own rules for sensible behavior in the host country so that they do not offend their hosts. This part of the trip preparation can potentially take place in single-gender groups (when it comes to topics such as sexuality/women's roles, men's roles).

The head scarf need not be the focus of too much attention. It is as much the expression of a societal tradition (it is not all that long ago that in Germany, too, women would wear scarves in the country and hats or caps in the city) as it is the expression of a religious stance.

Additional topics when preparing a trip:

- Life in the city/in the village
- Geography and climate
- Flora and fauna
- Food and drink in Turkey
- The Turkish language
- Turkish literature/music/art
- History/relations with Germany

Economics/reasons for migration
Politics/the power of the government and the governmental apparatus
Religion/the secular principle of the Turkish state and attempts at re-Islamization
Ethnic minorities
Effects of tourism
Environmental problems

Staying in Afacan

Good preparation for the trip is advisable for stays at the Afacan meeting center – depending on whether the focus of the trip is an encounter, relaxation, evaluation or learning (more information: www.afacan.de). The ways that the resources available in Afacan are used by the groups is extremely stimulating. The opportunities for using the center are manifold, but not always obvious. Groups can find out in advance what is and is not possible, and can plan accordingly. They are responsible for themselves, but the Afacan team provides every imaginable kind of support.

If several groups are there at the same time, one can plan joint activities in advance.

Support from the *Er-Fahren working group*

A member of the *Er-Fahren working group* looks after each group. If the group wishes, we are happy to meet with them to answer questions or provide ideas. *Gençtur Berlin* can help with planning the trip, especially with arranging work projects.