

BLUEBIRD TOUR PROGRAM POLICY MANUAL

2009



Bluebird Tour Program

A Program of the Prince William
Area Agency on Aging
Operated By

Quality Tour Transport, Inc.

P.O. Box 1520

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Phone: 703-339-0333

Hotline: (703) 792-RIDE (7433)

www.pwcgov.org/aoa

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Introduction

Welcome! The Bluebird Tour Program is a program of the Prince William Area Agency on Aging (“Agency”), operated by Quality Tour Transport, Inc. (“QTT”), and has been serving Prince William County (“County”) and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park for over 25 years. ***The mission of the Bluebird Tour Program is to provide high quality trips at a low cost to the over 55 population who reside in the Prince William County and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park.***

Tour schedules are printed quarterly and are available at many locations throughout the County: the Agency’s Administrative Office, Manassas Senior Center, Woodbridge Senior Center, libraries, recreation centers and retirement communities. Schedules are also available on line at www.pwcgov.org/aoa under “Bluebird Tour” or at www.dctrails.com.

Committee

The Bluebird Travel Advisory Committee (“Committee”) is comprised of Bluebird Tour Program participants that are interested in the Bluebird Tour Program. The Committee is an ambassador for the program, providing riders with information about the program. The Committee advises the Agency and QTT on policies and trip suggestions. Committee members serve as volunteer escorts for the program on one-day trips and on other trips as necessary.

Meetings

The Committee meets quarterly and meetings are open to the public with open citizen time at the end of the meeting. All meetings will be posted following current County procedure.

Participants

- a. **Age:** The Bluebird Tour Program serves persons 55 and older and their spouses (regardless of age) in the Prince William County and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park. No one under the age of 18 may participate in the Tour Program unless otherwise stated in a tour description.
- b. **Health Status:** Participants should evaluate their physical status prior to signing up for a trip, and must feel comfortable that:
 - they can negotiate required walking, either by themselves or with their own prearranged assistance of a family member or friend;
 - they can manage medications on their own; and

- they can be away from home for a period of time.

It may be required that a participant obtain his/her physician's permission to participate on a trip. If necessary, it may be required that individuals no longer participate on tours because of frail health that may interfere with the individual's and other participants' ability to enjoy trips. If a participant falls ill on a trip and can no longer continue with the tour, it is the responsibility of the participant or the family to secure transportation home.

- Wheelchair Use:** If the participant is planning to bring a wheelchair on a trip, they must be accompanied by someone to serve as an assistant (over the age of 18). Information about the need for wheelchair use must be given to QTT at the time of reservation so reasonable accommodations can be made. A participant using a wheelchair on a trip must arrive 30 minutes before departure time to allow the driver time to get out the lift; get the rider and chair loaded and secured; and replace the lift once the participant is on board.
- Cell Phone:** Cell phone use for participants is not allowed on the coach, except in the event of an emergency. The coach will stop approximately every two to three hours for a rest stop; please wait until you are at the rest stop to make any phone calls.

Hotline

The Bluebird Travel Hotline has been established to better serve the participants. The hotline will provide up-to-date information on schedules, tours and inclement weather. 703-792-RIDE (7433)

Charter Service

A charter service will be used for all tours. Prince William County and its employees, agents and volunteers assume no responsibility for the acts or omissions of contractors.

Trips

There are approximately 150 trip days planned each year. The tours are categorized as follows: educational, recreational, historical, theatre and/or shopping.

- One-Day Tours:** Be sure to check the departure times and locations for day tours. Plan to arrive 15 minutes earlier than the departure time so you can check in with the Tour Escort. The bus will wait five minutes after the scheduled departure time, if a participant has not arrived. After the five-minute grace period, the tour will continue as scheduled.

- b. **Overnight Tours:** Participants must arrive to the departure location 20 minutes prior to departure time for an overnight tour in order to allow enough time to load luggage in the luggage compartment. There will be rest stops made approximately every two to three hours on overnight tours.
- c. **Missed Tours:** If a participant misses the tour, there will be no refund given for that tour (day or overnight).

Tour suggestions are always appreciated and can be written on your Tour Analysis Form at the completion of a tour.

Fees

The fees for tours are comprised of the transportation fee and the vendor fees. The transportation fees include the cost of the charter service. The vendor fees include the actual cost of entertainment, meals, attractions, hotels, etc.

Reservations

Reservations can be made by calling QTT at 703-339-0333. Reservation dates are listed in the Bluebird Tour schedules. On reservation day, reservations can be made for three additional persons. If your travel companion does not live in Prince William County, or the cities of Manassas or Manassas Park, or if a participant is not yet 55 years of age (unless the participant is your spouse), you cannot make a reservation for them on reservation day. Participants who do not live in the Prince William County and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park may sign up for tours, but must wait three calendar days after the original reservation date. If seats are available three days after a reservation date, anyone over the age of 18 may participate. QTT must be informed at the time of reservation if the coach wheelchair lift and space for a wheelchair will be needed and when an accessible or first floor hotel room is needed.

When the office is closed on the initial reservation day due to inclement weather or emergency, reservations will resume on the next day the office is open.

Payment

All payments for tours should be made to QTT. To ensure a reservation, all fees for one-day tours must be paid in full two weeks after a reservation has been confirmed. For most overnight tours, fees can be paid in installments. Please ask QTT staff for a payment schedule when making reservations for an overnight tour. Tour monies should not be paid to the Tour Escort.

Payment is accepted by check, cash, money order, exact change or credit card. Do not send cash in the mail. Mail payments to: Quality Tour Transport, Inc., P.O. Box 1520, Lorton, VA 22079. If paying by check, please indicate the trip date on the check.

Cancellations

A tour may be cancelled if there are not 20 paid reservations for a one-day tour and 30 paid reservations for an overnight tour. If a trip is cancelled due to low enrollment, a refund will be given without penalty. A standby list will be maintained for all tours. Participants should call QTT to report their cancellation as soon as possible. QTT will call the next individual on the list. No attempt will be made to fill a seat if a cancellation is received after 12:00 p.m. on the day before a tour.

Participants will not receive a refund or credit, regardless of the reason, unless there is someone on a standby list who can replace them and this is confirmed by QTT. It is the responsibility of the participant to find a replacement or else pay for the tour if there is not a replacement confirmed by the QTT.

Refunds

Requests for refunds must be made to QTT. If approved, a refund will be processed, which may require 14 days or more for processing. A \$5.00 cancellation fee for a one-day tour and a \$10.00 cancellation fee for an overnight tour will be charged. A refund will only be granted if there is someone on the standby list to take the place of a participant or if a refund from the vendor can be secured.

Participants should consider purchasing commercial trip insurance.

Safety

For participant safety, it is recommended that the "buddy system" be used. Participants are encouraged to stay in groups with at least one other participant while away from the group. It is required that all participants remain seated while the coach is in motion. For safety reason, all participants must get off of the coach at each destination.

Inclement Weather

If Prince William County Schools are closed due to inclement weather, tours will be cancelled unless otherwise stated in the schedule. If school is not in session, tours are also cancelled when Prince William County Government employees have "Unscheduled Leave" due to inclement weather. For notification of cancelled tours on holidays and weekends, call **(703) 792-RIDE (7433)** for a recorded message up to two hours before the tour is to depart from the first pick-up location. **It is the participant's responsibility to call the Bluebird Travel Hotline to find out if a tour has been cancelled due to inclement weather.** If money has been paid out to a vendor for a tour that has been cancelled due to inclement weather, a refund will only be given if QTT can secure a refund from the vendor or if money has not already been paid out. Attempts are made to reschedule a tour when it is cancelled due to inclement weather. If a tour can be rescheduled and an individual is unable to participate in the new date, a refund will only be given if there is a refund secured from the vendor or there is someone on the standby list to take the seat.

In the event that there is inclement weather while a tour is taking place and additional day(s)/night(s) on the road are necessary, the cost of the lodging and meals will be at the expense of the participants. It is at the discretion of the Tour Escort and/or Driver to decide when a tour will be postponed due to inclement weather while a tour is taking place.

Emergencies

If a medical emergency should occur, the Tour Escort will contact appropriate medical personnel and local authorities as necessary. **It is the participants' responsibility to carry pertinent medical and emergency contract information with them at all times.** Depending on the situation, the Tour Escort will follow the instructions of family member(s) or the emergency contact person. Once a participant's situation is stable, the tour will continue as scheduled.

Departure Locations (Subject to Change)

One-day tours depart from two locations: in Manassas at the Davis Ford Crossing Shopping Center located at the corner of Liberia Avenue and Prince William Parkway; and in Woodbridge at the Featherstone Shopping Center located at the corner of Featherstone Road and Route 1.

Overnight tours also depart from two locations: in Manassas from the parking lot adjacent to the Manassas Senior Center (the public parking lot next door to the senior center), 9320 Mosby Street, Manassas, VA 20110; and in Woodbridge from the Dr. A.J. Ferlazzo Building, 15941 Donald Curtis Drive, Woodbridge, VA 22191.

Luggage

Luggage space is limited. Each participant may bring one suitcase no larger than 27 inches in length. In addition, participants may take one small carryon bag which may be stored in the overhead bin, under the seat, or on the lap. Purchases made on a tour must be able to be carried on by the participant, or fit in his/her luggage, overhead bin, or beneath his/her seat. Please understand that all purchases made by participants that are carried on or stored on the bus are at the participant's own risk. Prince William County and Quality Tour Transport, Inc. will not take responsibility for lost or broken items.

Seating

On day-tours, the participants who board in Manassas will sit on the left side of the coach behind the bus driver. Participants who board in Woodbridge sit on the right side of the coach. This policy is in place to assure front of the coach seating for both departure locations. On overnight tours, a seating chart will be mailed to each participant along with the itinerary for the overnight tour.

If a tour participant is in need of more than one seat while riding the coach, it must be requested at the time of reservation. If more than one seat is requested, the participant will be charged the transportation fee for the extra seat(s).

Gratuities

The price of the trips **does not** include gratuities for step-on guides or for commercial coach drivers. The Agency staff and Volunteer escorts are not allowed to accept gratuities.