

From Land Footprints to Virtual Footprints: Transforming School Tours for Distance Learning



Below are some of the questions we considered when taking our school tours online. Use them to help plan the logistics for your virtual tour.

- What is your **goal** for taking your tour online? What are the **needs** of your audience?
- What **imagery** will support your goal? Do you plan to use live video, prerecorded video, still images, or some combination of all three?
- If you plan to use live video, what will you use as a **camera**?
Do you have adequate **lighting**?
- Do you have reliable **Wi-Fi access**?
- What **virtual meeting platform** will you use? Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Zoom, or something else?
- What will the **docent, volunteer, and staff assignments** be?
Who will manage the Zoom room? Who will operate the camera?
Who will be on-camera? What behind-the-scenes support do you need?
- What is your **back-up plan** in case of tech failure?

We use the following equipment on our virtual tours. Use this list as a starting point for building your own toolkit. What does your institution already have? What might you need to purchase?

- **iPhone 11 Pro Max*** – we use this smartphone as our camera
- **DJI Osmo Mobile 3*** – this is a gimbal designed for smartphones. It stabilizes the video footage. We purchased a kit that included a carrying case and mini tripod stand
- **Wi-Fi Access Point, Extension Cords, & Ethernet Cables*** – without sitewide Wi-Fi, this allows us to access the internet for filming our tours live on location
- **Zoom** – this is the online meeting platform we use to host our virtual field trips
- **Rev Live Captions** – this software provides automatic live captioning for Zoom and works well in our experience
- **Microsoft PowerPoint** – we use this software to create a slide deck for each virtual tour with historic and contemporary imagery and polls

** There are newer models available, but we've found that older models can be just as functional and more cost-effective*

These are strategies we used to build student engagement on virtual tours.

What could you apply at your site?

- Including **dialogue** between several docents and between docents and students
- Panning the **camera** while docents are presenting and focusing in on important details
- Sharing **primary sources** on slides in between tour stops
- Posing **questions to students** with Zoom polls, asking them to raise their hands, put a thumbs up, or use the reaction buttons, inviting them to respond in the chat
- Sharing **vocabulary** in the chat and on slides
- While they are **muted**, asking students to repeat key terms out loud or share an idea with a classmate
- Including a **brief “moment of chaos”** at the beginning and end (i.e., everyone unmutes and says hello or goodbye)

Your turn! Think of a tour you give in-person that you could take online or a virtual tour you already lead. How might you transform one stop on the tour for distance learning?

- What could you show on camera?
- What Zoom features could you use to engage your audience and encourage active participation?
- What supplemental visuals could you share to help visitors connect with the tour content?